

12-2022

## Forging Community in the Ouachita Foothills of Southwest Arkansas: Duckett Township, Homesteading, Distilling and Race

Lisa C. Childs  
*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd>



Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), and  
the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Citation

Childs, L. C. (2022). Forging Community in the Ouachita Foothills of Southwest Arkansas: Duckett Township, Homesteading, Distilling and Race. *Graduate Theses and Dissertations* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/4782>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [scholar@uark.edu](mailto:scholar@uark.edu).

Forging Community in the Ouachita Foothills of Southwest Arkansas:  
Duckett Township, Homesteading, Distilling and Race

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in History

by

Lisa C. Childs  
Rice University  
Bachelor of Arts in Biochemistry, 1987  
North Carolina State University  
Doctor of Philosophy in Genetics, 1994  
Loyola University-Chicago  
Juris Doctor, 1997

December 2022  
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

---

Michael C. Pierce, Ph.D.  
Thesis Director

---

Patrick G. Williams, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Jeannie Whayne, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

## Abstract

Community was key to successful subsistence agriculture in Arkansas, especially in the Ouachita foothills in southwest Arkansas (including Polk, Howard, Montgomery, Pike, Garland Counties) and Oklahoma (McCurtain, Pittsburgh, LeFlore Counties) until the 1940s. Nearly a quarter of Arkansas's land remained in the federal government's name twenty years after statehood, and even more of the land in the western Ouachita foothills. Much remains unknown about how farming communities were formed in this area from the end of the Civil War until approximately World War II. As seen in the Duckett community in northern Howard County, while family connections were important to supporting farming communities, these communities also needed people who were not related to each other, in part, so that marriages and family growth could occur. Studying white women homesteaders in north Howard and south Polk Counties shows that Ouachita women homesteaded in community because subsistence farming was family-labor based. Some women used homesteading as an alternative to family building. In the late nineteenth century, distillers were a part of every rural Ouachita community, providing access to cash and to local alcohol. An 1894 campaign by the Democratic administration to "exterminate" distillers focused on so-called Populist strongholds in an effort to increase federal revenue from distilling while cutting tariffs. Once a dozen distillers were sent to prison in New York, the revenueurs began cutting deals with other distillers. By 1896, the Kansas City Southern Railroad's arrival opened other ways to access cash and alcohol. The apparent disappearance of Black people in parts of the Ouachitas (like Polk County) was a pragmatic response by Black people to their communities' lack of size. Black people, like white people, moved to places where they could marry, send their kids to school, and go to church. When Black people could choose where to live, most chose to live in communities where they could grow their families and farm together. When they disappeared from an area, white people might use their disappearance as evidence of modernity. The relatively successful response of the

Black community to horrifying white violence in Buckville on the edge of Montgomery and Garland Counties in 1919 shows the advantages of living in community. After two white men were convicted, a nearby Black community in Caddo Gap grew in number and percentage in 1920 versus 1910. That said, many Buckville residents continued moving (already begun before 1919) to other nearby Black farming communities in Yell County, Peno (Le Flore County), Oklahoma, and elsewhere. Finally, I return to Duckett community, where connections formed in Duckett persist for decades. Current residents of the Duckett area have to make decisions about whether the advantages of staying are outweighed by the disadvantages, just as was true a hundred years ago. Decoration, burials, and family reunions continue even though many families no longer live in the Ouachitas. Through all of these chapters, we see a common thread of community, of mutual assistance, and reliance on each other.

© 2022 by Lisa C. Childs  
All Rights Reserved

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful for all the help along my rather-non-linear way to getting this thesis finished. I expect that I will leave out some important acknowledgements, and (of course) all errors and omissions are my own fault.

My family began the antiquarian tradition of collecting stories and places long ago. Around 1973, my grandmother Floy (Turrentine) Childs (1909-1987) wrote third-grader me about her great-aunts and great-uncle Brock who were homesteading in southern Polk County (Ark.), staking claims to three homesteads with a single house at the intersection. A decade later, my great aunt Blanche (Turrentine) Gardner (Floy's sister) gave me an annotated copy of a history of the Turrentine family still referred to as the Orange Book (complete with a pocket in the front where she put pages she had ripped out of phonebooks across the United States to demonstrate the ubiquity of streets named for Turrentines) for my high school graduation.<sup>1</sup> Around 1990, their fourth cousin Durward Turrentine Stokes (1908-1991) invited me and other North Carolina cousins on an expedition to the original burial grounds of the immigrant Turrentines in Orange County, North Carolina, a graveyard which he was the first white Turrentine to have seen in decades, and which had been maintained and used by descendants of formerly enslaved Black Turrentines who shared it with him in 1957. (I remain grateful that I didn't have to fetch any of these not-young cousins back over the fence we climbed over to get in. I was the youngest of the group by five decades.) Around that same time, my mother Holly (Hartrick) Childs found that Floy's father's memoir in the Orange Book had been bowdlerized, when compared to the original version in the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives. Probably also in the 1970s, Floy and (as I understand it) our cousin Lavelle (Owen) Sanford (1917-1993) were in Little Rock and decided to look up Lenard Fite's grave at the Little Rock National Cemetery, only to discover that he had died while in the Union Army – a story which continues to

---

<sup>1</sup> George Ruford Turrentine, *The Turrentine Family* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (n.p., 1972).

be retold in our family. These and other events helped me recognize that history doesn't just happen to other people and that sometimes history is not what you expect it to be. In North Carolina and Chicago (through the Newberry Library), I learned how to document family history and the importance of looking at the community around the family. Perhaps a decade after my grandmother died, I learned I could order homestead files from the National Archives, and I acquired a handful of them, including those of the homesteading siblings. Forty-five years after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I learned about the homesteading siblings, Jeannie (Nelson) Bismark (niece to Floy and Blanche) passed on Aunt Blanche's notes about the homesteading Brock siblings to me, notes which played an important role in Chapter 3. Around the same time, my uncle S. Bart Childs shared Floy's memoir with me. While this thesis is mostly not about the Turrentines and Fites, these stories helped me remember to try to hold space for surprising answers.

My mother Holly (Hartrick) Childs asked my grandparents Childs (especially my grandmother) and my great uncle Guy Turrentine and my great uncle V. L. Childs about their family, and, importantly, she wrote down what she learned. I also appreciate the proofreading she and Carolyn Gray Mahady did for me.

My grandfather Orval A. Childs (1910-1998) was probably responsible for making Duckett Decoration on the first Sunday in June and the Childs-Duckett Reunion the preceding Saturday the go-to event for his children and grandchildren. But, he couldn't have made it happen on his own. His in-laws, siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews, and other relatives have all played a role. Since we meet on neutral territory (a restaurant or the Cossatot River State Park, or before that, the Wickes Community Center), we can spend more time visiting than fussing. Without neighbors still living in the area and willing to keep the cemetery up, Decoration would be much harder.

My second cousin (once removed) Ronnie Duckett persisted in getting his father Jim Ed's cousins to write down stories about growing up in Duckett, and then he got them typed up and

printed in the early 1990s. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, he organized several meetings of friends and family from north Howard County, including one where my father's first cousin O.L. Childs (1931-2014) told me about the time the FBI came to Wickes to investigate Mrs. Otsune (Terede) Hotovec. Ronnie pushed me to do something with these stories – starting by asking me to tell family about them at our Childs-Duckett reunions. Around 2008, Mollie (Brantley) Thomas gave me a check to support more studies of these folks, which is why I have a copy of the Mexican War pension file for Sarah (Baldwin) Thomas (1860-1931) (her husband's grandmother). My uncle Bart Childs collected more stories and was willing to be the extravert on a road trip across Texas (where we learned how much bigger Texas is on the ground than on the computer screen and we got to experience dueling GPS travel instructions). He has also done an amazing job of identifying people in photographs printed from negatives my grandmother left in the downright freezer when she died. Without those stories and the memoirs Ronnie lent me from Olen A. Stewart (1918-1999) and Elva Stewart Williams (1931-2017), the descriptions of Duckett Township would have been much duller.

Support from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville and the Arkansas Historical Association has also been important. I received travel funds from the Mary Hudgins Arkansas History Research Fund from the History Department at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, which subsidized my trip to the National Archives where I copied a hundred or so homestead files, Civil War pension files, presidential pardons, and the FBI file for Mrs. Hotovec. ILLIAD's Robin Roggio was amazing at finding arcane books and theses across the country. I appreciate being encouraged to present bits of this research at the Arkansas Historical Association's conference. The anonymous reviewers of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* and Patrick Williams' writing an article course helped me get Chapter 3 right.

The larger community of historians and friends has also been important. I might not have ever started without my grandmother encouraging me to take American history from Dr. Robert



Walz at Southern Arkansas University in summer 1982. That led to me taking Old South and New South from Dr. John Boles at Rice University in 1986-1987. Somebody (perhaps Greg Herman) introduced me to the Arkansas History list-serv, where I first tried out being in a community of historians. The online Historians Working Group (brainchild of Liz Covart) has provided me with a reason to show up and sit down most Monday evenings since September 2021.

My husband, Donald R. Hendrix, has listened to me practice talks, driven me to cemeteries and courthouses, gone halfway across the country to get me to the National Archives, and taken me for emergency ice cream. Without his help, encouragement, and love of road trips and our daughter Maggie's tolerance, this wouldn't have been as much fun.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Duckett Township, North Howard County, Ark. (Formation through 1940): Moving in and Living in Community.....	8
Chapter 3: “I Know How to Farm”: Women Homesteaders in the Ouachita Foothills .....	66
Chapter 4: Political Violence Against Illicit Distillers in “Populist Strongholds” of the Ouachita Mountains.....	102
Chapter 5: “The Only One of His Color in the Country”: Race and Community in the Ouachita Foothills.....	139
Chapter 6: Leaving Duckett and Staying Connected.....	187
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	205
Bibliography .....	207

List of Tables

Table 1: Grandparents' Birth States Arranged Semi-Geographically.....	36
Table 2. North Howard County Congressional Townships Containing Duckett Township.....	63
Table 3a. 1892 Gubernatorial Election: Selected Arkansas Results .....	112
Table 3b. 1892 Presidential Election: Selected Arkansas Results .....	112
Table 4. Polk County Townships Population by Race (1860).....	145
Table 5. Black People in Three Polk County Townships (1860-1900).....	146
Table 6. Black People in Selected Townships of Montgomery County (1860-1900) .....	171
Table 7. Black People in Montgomery and Garland County Townships (1910 and 1920) .....	175
Table 8. 1920 Locations of 1910 Black Buckville Residents .....	183
Table 9. Appendix. Distribution of Black People in Polk County (1850-1900).....	185
Table 10. Location of 1930 Duckett Residents in 1940.....	192

## List of Figures

- Figure 1. Duckett Township area. The arrows, going from north to south, point to Mena (the county seat of Polk County), Wickes, Duckett Township, De Queen (the county seat of Sevier County), and Center Point (the former county seat of Howard County).....16
- Figure 2. The number of land patents granted increased after the train arrived in 1896, with most patents granted by 1914.....21
- Figure 3. Population and household numbers both peaked in 1920, while the average household size peaked in 1910. The number of people per square mile (not shown on the graph) ranged from 12.5 (1910), 18.1 (1920), 7.1 (1930), and 5.9 (1940). .....22
- Figure 4. The number of homesteaders and the number of households peaked in 1920, although most future homesteaders were already living in Duckett in 1910. In 1940, four households were headed by men (Galord Baker, Charlie Musgrave, Ira Stewart, James Lee Musgrave) whose parents homesteaded previously (not included in this tally).....22
- Figure 5. Grandparents' states of birth, reported for children in 1910 census. Note the change in scale for the three bar charts.....35
- Figure 6. Average value of farmland per acre in Arkansas in 1910. The Ouachitas and some of the Ozarks are valued at less than \$10 per acre. Arkansas' average value was \$14.18/acre. Polk County was \$7.14 and Howard County (including the more farmable southern Gulf Coastal Plain) was \$8.51. The arrow identifies north Howard County.....37
- Figure 7. Education (1940) Duckett Township. Although many people who grew up in Duckett seem to have completed their eight years plus, many of those still living in Duckett in 1940 had less than that. None attended college, and just one had finished high school. ....43
- Figure 8. The number of children born to girls and women who lived in Duckett in 1910 declined over time. Women born later had fewer children over their lifetimes. (Note that this does not capture data for women who lived in Duckett but died before 1910.) .....48
- Figure 9. Agricultural regions in Arkansas. Duckett Township is the section labeled "B. Fruit." .....51
- Figure 10. The homesteading area studied (the large rectangle made up of smaller squares) is in southern Polk County and northern Howard County. The Kansas City Southern railroad runs roughly parallel to US Highway 71. Although the towns are now located on US Highway 71, most of them were formed because of the railroad. Cartography by: Jack Critser.....72
- Figure 11. Acres transferred 1870-1935 (all grantees and women). Vertical black lines show acres transferred in a calendar year. The line moves up, showing the total acres transferred to date, just over 220,000 acres by 1935, including approximately 3200 acres acquired directly by timbermen. Land transferred to women (lower graph) followed a similar pattern and approached 22,100 acres, about ten percent of the total.....75

Figure 12. Polk and Howard Counties: farms and people (1880-1930). The decennial censuses reported farm numbers and people by county, not congressional township, but this gives an idea of the rapid growth and then leveling off from the date of the area's first homestead grant.....	76
Figure 13. The percent of women (W) is based on actual numbers (168 grants), while the percent of men (M) is extrapolated from a sample of ten percent of men (144 grants). Women's patents are about eleven percent of the total.....	77
Figure 14. The timing of land patent grants to individuals is similar for men and women. The pendency from proof to grant for area patents granted after 1890 was about eight months (data not shown). (The scale is different for men and women. This graph omits 26 patents to four timbermen.) .....	82
Figure 15. Over two-thirds of women or their birth families were in the area more than ten years before acquiring land. Around 55% of men or their birth families were in the area more than ten years. ....	83
Figure 16. More women homesteaders (34%) were born in Arkansas than any other state. Nearly three-quarters came from the Southeast, including Arkansas. Similarly, about a third of men homesteaders were born in Arkansas, and nearly three-quarters from the Southeast, including Arkansas. (No Northwest-born men or Northeast-born women homesteaded in this sample.).....	84
Figure 17. A majority of both men and women stayed long after obtaining land. Women's median time staying in the area was nine years, and men, twelve years. Women's median age at grant was 46, and men's, 38. ....	96
Figure 18. Thomas L. Martin, Oath of Office, February 9, 1894.....	122
Figure 19. Deputy T. B. Grissom and Deputy Martin, The Murdered Deputy Marshals. ....	125
Figure 20. F. J. Carpenter, U.S. Deputy Revenue Collector, Abner Gaines, U. S. Marshal, R. T. Cook, Collector of Internal Revenue. ....	130
Figure 21. Arrows identifying Black communities in the 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries and other Ouachita locations as discussed in the text. ....	143
Figure 22. "Notice for Publication," Mena Weekly Star, Aug. 1, 1907, p. 5.....	156
Figure 23. Pictures of some of the stragglers in the Ouachitas, clockwise from upper left, Tone Hays from "Jonquils Bloom, Some Still Remember," Looking Glass, December 4, 1977, pp. 6-7; Elizabeth Duff Henderson, from "Death Overtakes Aged Negress Long Faithful," Tucson Citizen, June 15, 1940, p. 4; Otsune (Terede) Hotovec by Floy (Turrentine) Childs (author's collection); Mrs. Cicero "Aunt Cush" Cole and two grandchildren, from Inez Lane, "Little Africa T128," Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), History of Polk County, Arkansas (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73. ....	165
Figure 24. Percent of Black population by Arkansas counties (1910). ....	176

Figure 25. Advertisement for “The Birth of a Nation,” *Hot Springs New Era*, Jan. 11, 1916, p. 8. ... 178

Figure 26. The distribution of household sizes in Duckett Township. The 1910 household sizes were a narrower range, with most (73%) being from two to five people. The 1920 household sizes show a wider distribution, and about two-thirds (66%) were in the range of two to five. In 1930, as the household number shrank, the distribution remained wide, with 61% in the household size of 2 to 5. In 1940, the household size distribution remained similar (62%).  
..... 189

Figure 27. Burial location for Duckett heads of household. Whether you look at homesteaders as a class, or heads of household by census, most are buried fairly near Duckett Township. Overall, the number buried nearby increases for heads in the later censuses. Homesteaders were least likely to be buried nearby. Very few were buried east of Duckett, probably because the river acted as a barrier. (One didn’t want to risk tipping the casket into the Cossatot.) 196

Figure 28. Locations of some cemeteries near Duckett. From top to bottom, Witherspoon (in Vandervoort), Daniel (in Wickes), Crystal Hill, Duckett, Baker, Galena, Grannis, Overturf, and Gillham. Duckett Ford on the Cossatot River is shown between Baker Cemetery and Galena Cemetery. .... 197

Figure 29. Percent of household heads related to Turner Duckett. Another indicium of community is whether inter-marriage occurs (whether before or after living in the community). Most people who lived in Duckett were related to each other, but we see fewer related homesteaders than any other group, and the largest number in 1910..... 198

## Chapter 1. Introduction

In 1895, a Fort Smith lawyer described the residents of the Ouachita [pronounced wash-it-ah] foothills as “densely ignorant” and their communities as “thinly populated.”<sup>2</sup> While certainly not as crowded as Fort Smith, the people living in Ouachita foothills were more representative of much of late nineteenth century Arkansas. Ouachitans were skilled farmers living in communities.

Arkansas was, and is, a state of farmers. Understanding these communities helps to understand Arkansas.

The better studied Arkansas farmers are those in the ecoregions of the Delta to the east and the Gulf Coastal Plain across most of southern Arkansas. Probably because these ecoregions were more conducive to the large-scale farming that made large-scale enslavement profitable, wealthier white people lived there, and brought with them more enslaved Black people, than those living in the Ouachita Mountains before the Civil War. After the Civil War, these planting estates powered by enslaved people were reorganized into farms with sharecroppers and tenant farmers. The white people in these regions left more trace, as one would expect of those with money. Like the drunk looking for his keys under the streetlight because that is where the light is, these farming regions have been studied because that is where the documents are. Of course, these regions also contributed to the state’s economy, but they are not all of the state.

The Ozarks are also well-studied. Settled in the 1830s, Fayetteville got its start as a gateway to Indian Territory and the government money there. The Unionists in northwest Arkansas and across the Ozarks made up a large number of the white soldiers who joined the Union Army during the Civil War, which left them well-situated politically afterwards to stake a claim to government largesse like the land grant university now known as the University of Arkansas. One of the first colleges in Arkansas, Cane Hill, was also in the Ozarks. Other colleges are scattered across the

---

<sup>2</sup> James F. Read, May 25, 1895 letter to the U.S. Attorney General in Penny Frasier’s Clemency File.

Ozarks of Arkansas and Missouri. Three Fortune500 companies are now headquartered in northwest Arkansas. The Ozarks are well-studied in part because libraries, folklorists, and historians in these colleges and universities have been collecting information about these areas.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, the Ouachitas are under-studied. Except for Hot Springs and (in the 20th century) Mena, there are no towns of any size. There are no Fortune500 companies. Commonwealth College came and went. A couple of community colleges, like Rich Mountain, remain. The Ouachitas are often overlooked by historians. But, they cover a good chunk of the western part of the state and lap over into Oklahoma. Studying the Ouachitas can help explain things like: How was nearly a third of Arkansas' land transferred from the federal government to private hands after the Civil War? What happened to the white yeoman farmers after the Civil War? Where did the Black people who were enslaved in the mountains go? What did Ouachita farming communities look like?<sup>4</sup>

In Chapter 2, I examine one community, Duckett, in north Howard County, and in particular the movement into the community and living in the community. At the end of the Civil War, the federal government still owned nearly all of its land, but that did not mean it was unsettled. White people, and their few enslaved Black people, lived in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains around Duckett before the Civil War. Many of these early settlers, even those few who enslaved other people, didn't have title to the land they farmed. They squatted and the community respected their informal claims. Others joined these farming communities over time. The families of Turner Duckett (for whom the community is named) and his sister Lina Stewart were among the first to move to the area after the Civil War, moving from Washburn in the hills of Sebastian County. By the time they moved to what was then Sulphur Springs Township in southern Polk County, it was

---

<sup>3</sup> Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and Their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: The Old Ozarks*, Vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018); Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: The Conflicted Ozarks*, Vol. 2 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: The Ozarkers*, Vol. 3 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Bill Bowden, "Ouachita Mountains Lack Recognition of Ozarks," *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, Dec. 31, 2017, 1A and 8A.



nearly entirely white. Relatedness was not necessary to join the Duckett community, although many were related to each other. Many more became related through their children's marriages. As the numbers grew and access to the region improved, people began formalizing land ownership by buying and homesteading federal land, including land they had been squatting on for decades. These farming communities were small, but their members worked to ensure they had access to the specializations they needed, such as millers and distillers to process corn, midwives, country doctors and coffin makers to deal with life and death. As seen in Duckett, Ouachitans shared labor within families and within communities. Most families featured a married man as the head of household, but there were always some widowed women and a few widowed men (usually with women in their household) running their own homes and their own farms. As education became important (and state funding available), they built a one-room school which also served as a church and a community meeting place. While the level of education increased for younger members of the Duckett community, the district was not able to support a high school. Parents who wanted more for their children had to come up with ways to make high school accessible to them. Early on, before the train, Turner Duckett's son went to school for a few months in Polk County's Center Point. Later, in the twentieth century, some children boarded with relatives in nearby Wickes. Others went to the agricultural school in Magnolia. At the same time, women gave birth to fewer children, perhaps contributing to Duckett School's closure. When the railroad arrived, Duckett farmers could continue subsistence farming, but they often diversified into garden truck and fruit, which the train made it possible to sell.

In the third chapter, I look at settlement through land acquisition from the federal government via homesteading across a larger area in south Polk County and north Howard County. This region, also in the Ouachita foothills and including Duckett, stretches from Oklahoma on its west past Athens and Umpire to the east, clear to the eastern edge of Pike County. Homesteading

became a way to obtain land after the Civil War, but people in this region did not focus on formalizing their title to land until around the time the Kansas City Southern Railroad finally arrived in 1896. When the land became more accessible and thus more desirable, the rate of acquiring title accelerated. I particularly focus on women who successfully homesteaded, but to do so, I also compare them to men who homesteaded in the same area and to homesteaders in the west. Western homesteaders were likely to be from somewhere else. Western women homesteaders often had ways to make a living besides farming. In contrast, Ouachita homesteaders came from nearby in Arkansas or from elsewhere in the southeast, and farming was what they could do at home. Some of them claimed the very land they lived on for decades. Ouachita women who homesteaded employed different strategies. Some claimed land shortly before marriage. Others acquired land with no evident plans to marry. Still others acquired land after widowhood or grass widowhood. Single women had to deal with alone-ness, the challenge of living on their own land. Some widows finished homesteading land they had claimed with their husbands, while others started out fresh. But, most Ouachita homesteaders, especially women, already, as homesteader Sarah Thomas told the Pension Bureau, “know how to farm.”

In the fourth chapter, I use the Democrats’ 1894 war against illicit distilling in southern Polk County and northern Howard County to examine political violence directed against people perceived as living in “Populist strongholds.” Distilling was one of many specializations in the rural Ouachitas. The Ouachita farmers were subsistence yeoman farmers, who lacked cash and ready transport to buy liquor. Turning excess corn into local liquor was part of making do. In spring 1894, nearly a dozen men convicted of illicit distilling or unlicensed retail liquor sales were sent to prison in Brooklyn for fifteen months and a hefty fine. Many of the distillers were recent arrivals in Polk County, having taken the train or other means of transportation from places far away. They were not mountaineers with no connections to the outside world. As the Panic of 1893 deepened and

Democrats struggled to replace the federal tax revenue lost from cutting tariffs in the midst of the economic depression known as the Panic of 1893, the U.S. district attorney and the chief revenue man in Arkansas were on a campaign to “exterminate the hardy moonshiner from mountain fastnesses.” After the distillers’ convictions and two deputy marshals’ murders, the community brokered a settlement with the feds. In October 1894, between twenty and seventy men brought their stills to Cove and Dallas, surrendering the stills in exchange for a sentence of thirty days and a nominal fine imposed by Judge Isaac Parker. In summer 1895, after the Democrats lost the U.S. House in a blowout, two of the Polk County distillers obtained pardons from President Grover Cleveland. The clemency files show that their Fort Smith attorney, the U.S. District Attorney, and Judge Parker all agreed that the distillers couldn’t help themselves, coming as they had from generations of ignorant hill people. While the communities did not quit distilling, law enforcement nonetheless turned its attention elsewhere. When the Kansas City Southern arrived in 1896, selling truck and fruit and buying legal liquor became easier, reducing the market for illicit distilling.

In the fifth chapter, I consider Black Ouachitans. Black Ouachitans were, in fact, “thinly populated,” and they (like white Ouachitans) worked to find ways to form community, to continue farming in families in the Ouachitas. Enslaved Polk Countians came from North Carolina, Mississippi, and the Gulf Coastal Plain of southern Arkansas. Between the 1860 and 1870 censuses (and after the Civil War), many disappeared from Polk County, but they probably traveled within the Ouachitas and possibly within the Gulf Coastal Plain to rejoin their nearby families. From 1870 forward, we can trace the movement of Black Ouachitans within the area, forming clusters of families in places like Center Township (around Mena in Polk County), Muddy Fork Township (Howard County), Caddo Gap (Montgomery County), and Buckville (Montgomery and Garland Counties). Some of them had surnames that matched those of local enslavers and were born in places that the enslavers had lived. Some lived with former enslavers. They were not outsiders,

moving into the Ouachitas (although that probably also happened). Black people homesteaded in all of these areas. They married within clusters and across clusters. While some Black people moved to Charleston in Franklin County or Fort Smith in the 1880s, these were not faraway places. Censuses, marriage licenses, and birth certificates show a regular flow back and forth for decades among these clusters. The clusters were, at times, large enough to support schools, churches, and cemeteries. When Black people left Polk County's Center Township, after the 1901 lynching of a Black Caddo Gap man named Peter Berryman, they didn't disappear. They moved to other clusters. And some of them took decades to move. Some, in fact, never moved, choosing to stay in white communities rather than to move and marry. Many moved nearby. In 1919, when white men tried to wipe out Black people living in Buckville with dynamite and fire, Black people didn't disappear. They regrouped and persuaded the Garland County district attorney to press charges against the men. They came to court, testified, and got white men convicted and sent to prison. Black people from Buckville did move, but they had started moving even before the dynamite, as evidenced by World War I draft cards and other records. The preacher Doss Haley's family and another family stayed. But even the Black people who left didn't go far. Many went to places like Yell County and Peno in Le Flore County, Oklahoma, where they could continue to farm in familiar geography and climate. It's just that they were so few in number that their movement could look like vanishing into thin air.

In the sixth chapter, I return to the Duckett community. I examine people who left Duckett between 1910 and 1940, and the ties among those who stayed and those who left. These small spread-out farming communities were great for raising families, but their very size made it hard for kids in the second or third generations to find acceptable spouses. Their connections within the Duckett community persisted even after they moved away. But, even when they moved away, many of them (at least through the 1940 census) stayed in the area. They were not part of the Great Migration so much as part of an ongoing effort to find a congenial mate and a place to farm.

Like Brooks Blevins' Ozarkers, Ouachitans are "a people with no single story to tell."<sup>5</sup> Black Ouachitans have stories about forming community from very small numbers. White women homesteaders have stories about their struggles with alone-ness, stories that are different from those of their husbands, brothers, and fathers. Ouachitans' stories of post-Civil War settlement lag those of their Ozarker counterparts by decades. These farming communities were fluid, with people moving in and out of communities (or, put another way, moving from one community to another). The families who formed these communities defied the expected east-west migration from other parts of the upland South – the pattern seen in the Ozarks. Also in contrast to the Ozarkers, who had Fayetteville, Springfield, Joplin, and other towns of significant size even in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ouachitans have almost no towns of any size save Hot Springs. Although Ouachitans were nearly all US-born, white families also came from the old Northwest Territory, the deep South, and Texas in search of affordable land, land which had not yet been bought up. Black and white Ouachitans alike often stayed in the Ouachitas, where they could use the farming and community-support skills they had already acquired, like distilling, midwifery, and sorghum syrup making.

---

<sup>5</sup> Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: The Ozarkers*, Vol. 3 Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 8.

## Chapter 2: Duckett Township, North Howard County, Ark. (Formation through 1940): Moving in and Living in Community

### I. Introduction

In early 1914, recently-widowed Mellie (Duckett) Childs and her four living children moved back to Duckett community in north Howard County, where she was born to Turner and Sarah (Bell) Duckett in 1882. She had just buried her husband Vandiver L. “Buster” Childs and oldest son Oren in Duckett Cemetery. They had homesteaded a quarter section across the Cossatot River from Duckett and perfected that claim in 1913. They and their five children then moved across the Cossatot River to the railroad town of Wickes, about six miles west of Duckett (but with no river between them and Duckett), to try running a store with W. H. Sullivan. Buster, a part-time country doctor, had quit the store and sold his share to Sullivan that November. He was probably still thinking about “where he would locate” as the Mena paper put it when their nine-year-old son Oren got sick with typhoid fever. The family lore is that the community well was the original source of the typhus. In a dramatic and stupid move, Buster had wiped his handkerchief across his son’s face and then smeared it on his own face, declaring that he wouldn’t let Oren die. As it turned out, he didn’t have the final say. Oren died a week before Christmas and Buster died a week after the new year. Mellie was just barely pregnant with her sixth and last child. She decided to return to the community where she grew up. Her brothers and their families were there. There was enough schooling to get her children started with, and she could sell the three little farms she and her husband had acquired to get one of the nicer pieces of land in the community. Mellie never remarried. She did some midwifing, but mostly she farmed. Her youngest son remembered her as “the bravest person he ever knew.” She didn’t leave Duckett again until her home burned in the early 1940s, when she became a migrant mother, living with her adult children (who had all left the Duckett community) by turns, eventually settling in Magnolia, where her sons Orval and Leonard lived. When she died in 1972, her

remains were returned to Duckett and buried next to her husband in Duckett Cemetery.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, in 1927, her seventeen-year-old son Orval Childs left Duckett, never to return permanently, until he, too, was buried at Duckett Cemetery in 1998. He had finished eighth grade there in the one room-one teacher schoolhouse, but he wanted more. Or maybe his mother wanted more for him. He went to Magnolia, first for high school and then a couple of years of college. When he got there, he had just one sweater, which he promptly ruined playing football. Somewhere, he renewed his acquaintance with Floy Turrentine. She was a third cousin by blood and a sort of step-cousin as well because Floy's aunt Sally was Orval's mother's stepmother. (Sally Brock married Turner Duckett in 1895, a couple of years after his first wife Sarah (Bell) Duckett died.) Floy grew up just across the Arkansas border in McCurtain County, Oklahoma. She already had some college and was teaching in one room schools in the area. Orval and Floy went to Stillwater, Oklahoma where they married in 1932 and he finished off a degree in agricultural economics in summer 1934. Floy earned another 47 college credits at Oklahoma A & M and got pregnant. She went to Duckett to stay with Mellie until their first son was born in summer 1934. Orval started teaching more or less simultaneously with their marriage, first without a bachelor's degree, at places like Brushy Ridge in McCurtain County. Eventually he began teaching vocational agriculture at high schools in Cale (Nevada County) and Magnolia, and then, college at Magnolia A & M (now Southern Arkansas University). Eventually, he earned a master's degree from Louisiana State University in 1948. Floy finished her bachelor's degree in 1952. Although he spent the rest of his life in Magnolia teaching agriculture (except for one brief stint selling fertilizer in Texarkana during World War II in hopes of leaving his family enough money to live on if he got drafted), his heart was always with the farm boys (and girls) back in the foothills of the Ouachitas. He wanted them to have choices, and he

---

<sup>6</sup> V. L. Childs, Bart Childs, and Holly [Hartrick] Childs, "Mellie Mae Duckett," *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; "V. L. Childs," *Mena Weekly Star*, Nov. 27, 1913, p. 4.

wanted them to know how to farm if they chose to stay in the Ouachitas. He returned to the Ouachitas regularly, recruiting at FFA banquets, putting together what we would call financial aid packages to make it possible for kids like him to get through college and have the option of going back home. In later years, he made it back for Decoration the first Sunday in June at Duckett Cemetery and the Childs-Duckett family reunion the preceding Saturday at the Wickes Community Center. He may even have been who organized it. I'm sure he was who added it to the list of things he expected his four sons and their families to participate in, and he was who reserved rooms every year at Mena's Harvey House, and (when it failed him) the Limetree Inn, and (when it failed him) the Sun Country Inn, and (yes, when it failed him) the Ozark Inn, which, besides being geographically confusing, featured paper bathmats. (It may have been a relief when he died, and we could stay at the Sun Country Inn once again.) Orval and Floy (and two of their sons and all but one of Orval's siblings) are buried at Duckett. He and his siblings left Duckett for other opportunities, but they felt a connection with those who stayed home.

By the time Mellie moved back in 1914, Duckett was one of those communities where most everybody was a little bit kin to each other. The land was largely privatized, but not too expensive. The train was just six miles away. The timber industry hadn't yet played out. Truck and fruit farming provided access to cash, but most people were still farming more for themselves than for the market. The eighth-grade education at Duckett School was better than most of the adults had. They were relatively insulated from market forces, while they could still figure on their children having more opportunities than they had. All this combined to make Duckett an appealing place to people who wanted certainty while raising their kids, but it also made it less appealing to those who wanted to try something new, maybe even not-farm, to stretch, or meet someone you didn't already know. Duckett was not unique. Rural subsistence-farming communities across Arkansas had the same appeal and the same limitations.



Arkansas was built by farming families. Although many of them lived in the better-studied Delta, Gulf Coastal Plains, and the Arkansas River Valley, perhaps a third of Arkansas lies in the hills of the Ouachitas and the Ozarks, where yeoman farming families took up residence. Long perceived as “thinly settled” and “densely ignorant,” they were neither.<sup>7</sup> Successful farming required skilled family labor. Forming and maintaining a rural community was work. People moved because they would rather be somewhere else than where they are, and they could scratch up the resources to make the move happen. Especially before the train came to the western Ouachitas, newcomers to Duckett often already had some family in the area. But, relatedness was not a prerequisite for being accepted into the community. Nor did families always take a traditional linear westward path to become a part of the community. Even before the Kansas City Southern’s arrival, families moved from all over, including the old Northwest Territory and Texas. Within the community, residents exchanged labor and looked out for each other and sometimes fought with each other. People at home were connected to the world through having family elsewhere, through letters, newspapers, magazines, and all the other things that their peers living elsewhere also had access to. When they moved away, they remained connected to people still living at home.

Kinship has been important in Arkansas, but it is understudied. Arkansans are used to being kidded about marrying their cousins. Arkansans still ask about kinship to someone with the same last name. However, kinship among the literate and the wealthy is easier to study than among the illiterate and the poor. We may be familiar with the Family, the political alliance who dominated Arkansas politics before the Civil War. Wealthy and literate people were more common in Arkansas’ flatlands and river country than in Arkansas’ hills. In fact, people in general were more common outside of Arkansas’ hills. Arkansas kinship and community studies seem largely limited to relatively rich white people before the Civil War and most often outside the hill country. For instance, Mary L.

---

<sup>7</sup> Quote from James F. Read, May 25, 1895 letter to the U.S. Attorney General in Penny Frasier’s Clemency File.

Kwas' biography of Simon Sanders (1797-1882) focused on his family connections and alliances in Hempstead County before the Civil War. Carolyn Earle Billingsley studied a kinship group in Saline County, focusing, as her subtitle put it, on "Antebellum Families and the Settlement of the Cotton Frontier." Andrew Scott Bledsoe argued that kinship within the Confederate Third Arkansas Infantry "seems to have fostered a family feeling within the regiment." Three exceptions are Billy D. Higgins' biography of Peter Caulder, Ruth Polk Patterson's *The Seed of Sally Good'n*, and Margaret Jones Bolsterli's *Kaleidoscope: Redrawing an American Family Tree*. Both Patterson and Higgins described Black families in community. Higgins focused on the pre-Civil War time frame, while Patterson focused on the post-Civil War community. Both Black families ended up in the foothills – Caulder in the Ozarks, and Patterson's family on the edge of the Ouachitas at Muddy Fork in present-day Howard County. Bolsterli's family were free persons of color who became white when they moved from Mississippi to Arkansas in 1859. None of these used data for an entire community over a long period of time.<sup>8</sup>

Farming in Duckett was different from what most southern farming historians write about, the bigger operations with sharecroppers and tenant farmers providing labor (and labor trouble) for landowners. You can catch glimpses of post-Civil War mountain farmers in the backstories of Appalachian millhands described by historians Ronald Eller and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al. Jack Temple Kirby, writing about 1920-1960, touches on fruit and truck gardening as one of the types of southern farming, while overlooking the Ouachitas and the Kansas City Southern as a locus for Arkansas farming of this type, focusing on northwest Arkansas. William Thomas Okie's recent

---

<sup>8</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, "The Family [Political Dynasty]," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed September 16, 2022); Mary L. Kwas, "Simon T. Sanders and the Meredith Clan: The Case for Kinship Studies," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2006) 65(3), 250-273; Carolyn Earle Billingsley, *Communities of Kinship: Antebellum Families and the Settlement of the Cotton Frontier* (University of Georgia Press: 2004); Andrew Scott Bledsoe, "The Homecircle: Kinship and Community in the Third Arkansas Infantry, Texas Brigade," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2012) 71(1), 22-43 at 29; Billy D. Higgins, *A Stranger and a Sojourner: Peter Caulder, Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum Arkansas*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2004); Ruth Polk Patterson, *The Seed of Sally Good'n: A Black Family of Arkansas 1833-1893* (University Press of Kentucky, 1985; Margaret Jones Bolsterli, *Kaleidoscope: Redrawing an American Family Tree* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015).

chapter, like Kirby, recognizes the fruit and truck gardening south, and credits refrigerated transport with its rise in prominence in the 1880s. James L. McCorkle, Jr. writes about the ties between southern truck farmers (including Arkansans) and urban mid-America, facilitated by trains, cooperative associations, agricultural experiment stations, and unpredictable cotton prices. Kelly Kean Sharp argues that white South Carolinians relied on African Americans' skills (gained before the Civil War) to succeed in truck farming after the Civil War's end. There may be multiple origin stories for the success of post-Civil War truck farming. Preliminary research suggests that some of the truck and other specialty crop knowledge in Arkansas came from Europe to western Arkansas.<sup>9</sup>

The history of Duckett community in the early twentieth century is a story of connections. This chapter is in two parts: moving to Duckett and living in Duckett, while Chapter 6 covers leaving Duckett and staying connected to Duckett. Through it all, we see how connections kept a rural community working. People who moved to north Howard County were moving to a place that required diversified farming (or an independent income) to succeed. Cotton, corn, and hogs were not enough. Successful farming meant family labor. Duckett is a microcosm of the yeoman farming experience in the Ouachitas in the early twentieth century. Families seeking affordable land moved there, and, to succeed, they worked with others, taking advantage of their various talents and skills.

---

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture 1865-1980* (University Press of Kentucky, 1984); Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880* (University of Illinois Press, 1986); Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); William Thomas Okie, "Agriculture and Rural Life in the South, 1900-1945," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias, American History* (2020); James L. McCorkle, Jr., "Truck Farming in Arkansas: A Half-Century of Feeding Urban America," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 58(2) (1999): 180-195; "Moving Perishables to Market: Southern Railroads and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of Southern Truck Farming," *Agricultural History* 66(1) (1992): 42-62; "Agricultural Experiment Stations and Southern Truck Farming," *Agricultural History* 62(2) (1988): 234-243; Kelly Kean Sharp, "Sowing Diversity: The Horticultural Roots of Truck Farming in Coastal South Carolina," *Agricultural History* 94(3): 362-384; "Where King Cotton Has No Place," *The Fruit Grower* 28(8), May 1, 1917, 4, 12; "Another Old Citizen Gone to Rest," *Fayetteville Weekly Democrat*, Oct. 5, 1878, 3; Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1920* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James L. Leloudis, Robert R. Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

## II. Moving to Duckett

*Yes, my native land, I love thee,  
All thy scenes, I love them well,  
Can I leave you,  
Far in distant lands to dwell?*<sup>10</sup>

When families moved to what became Duckett community, in the Ouachita foothills of southwest Arkansas, they had to leave somewhere else. One lure was that, at least well into the 1920s, farmable land remained affordable. Subsistence farming, the kind of yeoman farming many of the families had grown up doing, was possible. Many, but not all, emigrants already had some sort of family connections in the area. Another lure was the family connections that gave the emigrants an entrée into the network of farming specialists that even a subsistence farming community needed, from blacksmiths to distillers, from midwives to coffin builders, grist mills and sorghum mills. The connections also made borrowing money a little easier. The emigrants left their former homes for a variety of reasons. Some probably left to avoid the law. Some left to avoid drink. Some probably left home because they had too much family and not enough potential mates. They were drawn by the availability of land and the opportunity for a subsistence farming community. Family, affordable land, and the promise of something new brought farmers to Duckett community.

Altogether, about 140 individuals acquired land from the federal government from before the Civil War to 1942. Ten farm owners acquired their land from the federal government before the Civil War. An additional one acquired land in 1876. The rest acquired land from 1880 until 1929, except Charles E. Kesterson, who got the last 117 acres in 1942 (which may have been a reissued certificate). Some farmers lived on federal land and never tried to obtain title to the land while others

---

<sup>10</sup> Lyrics excerpted from Samuel F. Smith, "Can I Leave You?," in *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Revision* (n.p., Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 385. A longer version appears in Richard Fuller, Jeremiah Bell Jeter, *The Psalmist: A New Collection of Hymns for the Use of Baptist Churches* (Boston: Gould, and Lincoln, 1847). Smith also wrote the lyrics for *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*.

delayed ownership for decades. There were, roughly speaking, three phases of in-migration: pre-Civil War, post-Homestead Act, and post-trains.

Duckett community's formation can shine some light on an understudied aspect of Arkansas settlement, yeoman farming families moving to unsettled land after the Civil War. About a quarter of Arkansas' land was privatized after 1862, including most of Duckett Township. Understanding the particulars of how and why people moved to Duckett can help explain more about the later settlement of Arkansas' hill country, especially the Ouachitas. In the Ozarks, a significant amount of settlement occurred before the Civil War and by upland Southerners. Although there were squatters there, they were largely gone (or transformed into land owners) before the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, the western Ouachitas were settled by a mishmash of Americans after the Civil War. Squatters in Duckett Township persisted into the twentieth century.

---

<sup>11</sup> Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: The Old Ozarks*, Vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

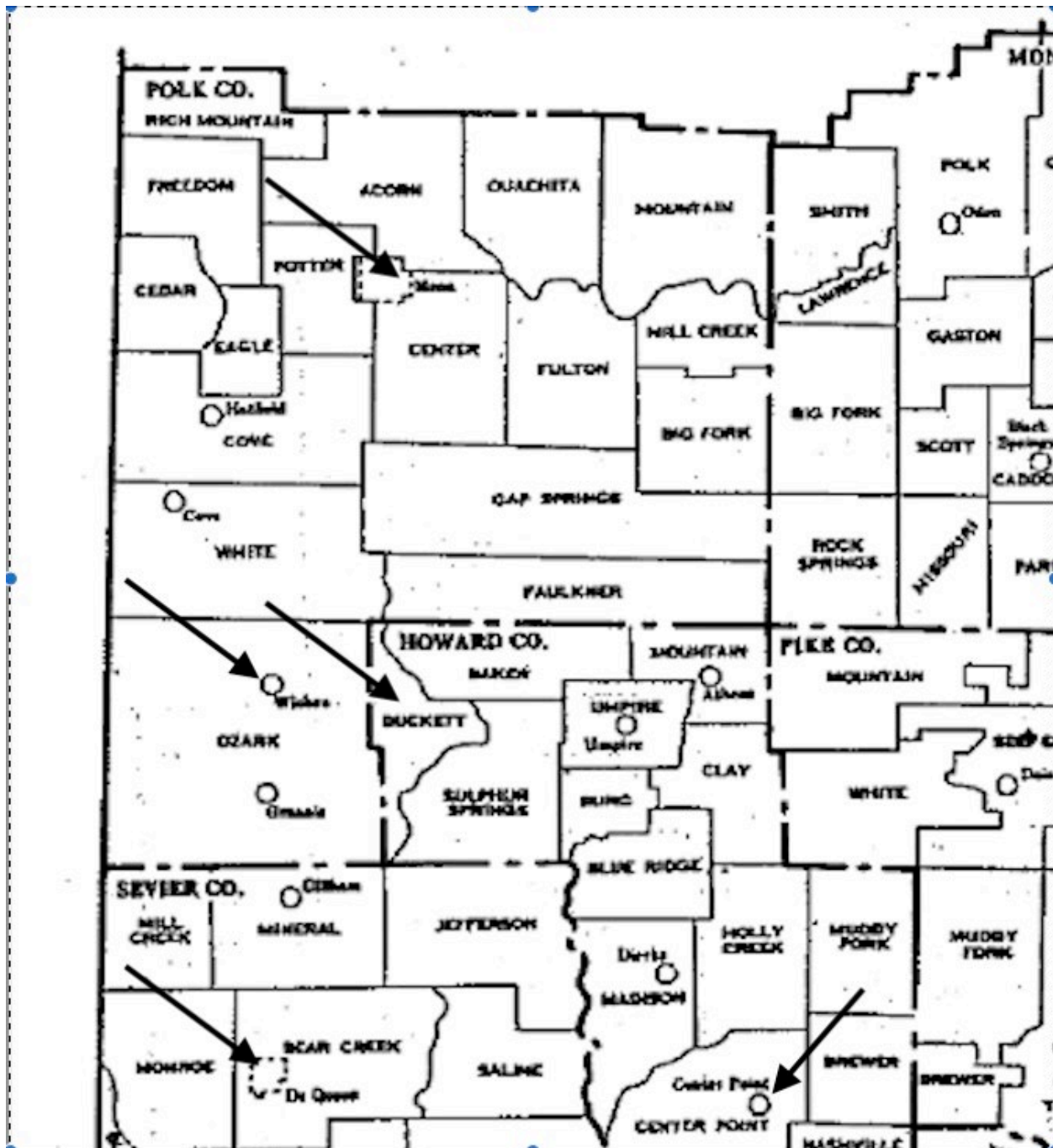


Figure 1. Duckett Township area. The arrows, going from north to south, point to Mena (the county seat of Polk County), Wickes, Duckett Township, De Queen (the county seat of Sevier County), and Center Point (the former county seat of Howard County).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Map modified from "Arkansas Minor Civil Divisions – Townships," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961) Title No. 168490 (digitized by familysearch.org).

The political region now called Duckett Township went through four counties without moving an inch, and the township itself wasn't formed until 1901. Comprising 20.3 square miles, it has parts of two Congressional Townships, Townships 5S and 6S, Range 30 West. Figure 1 shows Duckett Township as it and its neighboring townships were arranged in 1960. It started in Hempstead County but became part of Jackson Township in newly-formed Sevier County in 1827, and then part of Sulphur Springs Township in newly-formed Polk County in 1844. It finally became part of newly-formed Howard County in 1873. Likewise, the township was reduced in size as it was transferred from county to county. After part of Sulphur Springs Township was transferred to Howard County, it was carved up into Baker or Baker Springs (between 1880 and 1890), Burg (1906), and Duckett (1906), and the remains designated as Sulphur Springs. (Baker had some of its land transferred to Umpire Township in 1901.) Duckett Township has few connections to southern Howard County, even today. Its northern and western borders are the boundary between Howard and Polk Counties; its short southern border abuts Sevier County; and its eastern border is the Cossatot River. The Cossatot River was never particularly navigable, acting as a barrier between Duckett Township and the rest of Howard County. A 1917 map identified twelve fords or ferries on the Cossatot's length between Duckett and Baker Townships, including Duckett Ford, located on Sarah (Brock) Duckett's 1895 homestead claim, which provided the best access to the town of Galena. Sarah's stepdaughter Mellie sometimes ran the ferry across the Cossatot. The ferry was probably similar to one Floy (Turrentine) Childs remembered in north McCurtain County, Oklahoma, which she placed at no later than 1909: "I remember the River (Mountain Fork) was so up from rains that the horse drawn wagon (or buggy) couldn't ford it. ... So we had to take a ferry boat across. The ferry was a flat raft type boat that was fastened to a large rope, the ends of which were tied to trees on either riverbank. I believe mules on each bank pulled the ferry back and forth. Someone on the bank had a pole they used to keep the boat going straight." Duckett was not easy to

get to.<sup>13</sup>

The ten pre-Civil War land buyers and the 1876 buyer James Beatie did not leave much trace in the Duckett community, but some of their families lived in the area long before formalizing title to their land. Samuel G. Witherspoon (1792-1865) was the earliest to buy land from the federal government, in 1858. He lived in White Township (Polk County) in 1850 and 1860. According to a 1965 cenotaph in Witherspoon Cemetery (near the railroad town Vandervoort in Polk County and a bit north of Duckett Township), he “selected this burial site in the 1850’s and was the first person interred here.”<sup>14</sup> He probably never lived in the future Duckett Township. Five more, James G. McFarland, James Brown Baker, John Edmondson, James R. Baker, and Elizabeth A. Davis, bought land in April 1860. McFarland may be the man who married Malinda Sultoss in Polk County in 1857. J. B. Baker (1821-1873?) and Edmondson (1810-after 1860) were brothers-in-law, having married James sisters in the 1840s. Another likely relative, James R. Baker, may be the namesake of later Bakers named James Rector Baker. The James family, Joseph Beatie, Elizabeth Davis all lived in sparsely-settled Jackson Township, Sevier County (part of which became Duckett Township) in 1840. The Bakers settled in the area in the 1830s. (They were very fertile and not terribly creative in their family naming schemes.) The Bakers are not recorded as acquiring any land in what are now Polk and Howard Counties from the federal government before 1850. The township Baker Springs

---

<sup>13</sup> William Thorndale and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1987); Russell Pierce Baker, *Township Atlas of Arkansas* (Arkansas Genealogical Society, 1984); North Howard County Youth Group, *The Unfinished Story of North Howard County* (n.p., 1982); North Howard Historical Group, *More of the Unfinished Story of North Howard County* (n.p., 1989); “A New Township, A Petition for One Filed With the County Court,” *Nashville News*, June 26, 1901, p. 1. “Howard County Court Was in Session Monday and Transacted Much Important Business — New Townships,” *Nashville News*, July 3, 1901, p. 1; “Duckett township, Howard County, AR,” <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US0506191152-duckett-township-howard-county-ar/> (accessed September 16, 2022); “No Official Count: Three Townships Had Not Reported Saturday,” *Nashville News*, Apr. 4, 1906, p. 2 (“the river being up was surmised as being the cause of the delay of the returns”); “Soil Map of Howard County, Arkansas,” Map1939 (1917), Map Collection, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas; V. L. Childs interview, May 1992 (as recorded by Holly (Hartrick) Childs, his mother Mellie “ran a ferry across the Cossatot at times when the men were not around. V.L. recalled her telling about having to ferry someone once when she was 11 years old”); Floy Turrentine Childs, “Memoirs” (1976) (handwritten mss., original in possession of S. Bart Childs, typed copy in possession of author).

<sup>14</sup> Samuel G. Witherspoon, FindAGrave Mem. 23727249.



(or Baker in Figure 1) just east of Duckett was named for them.<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth A. (nee Davis) Davis (1837-1913) bought land in her own name in 1860, although she had been married to Peyton N. Davis since 1851. She also, according to the 1860 census, owned one person in her own name. In August 1860, two men, John Dickson and Richard A. White, bought land, but I have found no further trace of them. In 1861, Elizabeth's husband Peyton N. Davis bought land. The Baker and James families did not leave a record of enslaving people, but the Davis family was one of the largest enslaving families in the area. After the Civil War, the first person (and the only for a couple more years) to acquire land (41 acres) from the federal government was Joseph Beatie in 1876. In 1850, the census taker recorded his real estate in Sulphur Springs as worth \$3200, and in 1860, real estate worth \$1000 and personal property worth \$1500. He reported no enslaved people in either of these censuses, although his reported property values were higher than most in the area. (Perhaps he bought land in private transactions or owned land or people outside the county.)<sup>16</sup> Even though these families had lived in the area for decades, they waited to formalize title to land.<sup>17</sup>

Black people never were many, either in numbers or as a percent of the population, in Sulphur Springs (the area including the future Duckett Township) in the nineteenth century. They left the area over time, disappearing entirely before Duckett Township became an organized political township in Howard County. That said, Black people lived in Sulphur Springs when they had no choice. In 1860, 47 Black people, all enslaved, were counted in twelve households and they made up

---

<sup>15</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Western Arkansas* (Chicago: Southern Publishing Co., 1891), 439. A search of <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> for Baker before January 1850 had no results in Polk or Howard Counties. (The results are based on current county lines.) (Accessed Oct. 23, 2022.)

<sup>16</sup> Without obtaining his land patent file, it is impossible to be sure whether this acquisition was via homesteading, commutation, or purchase.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx> (accessed September 18, 2022) ("GLO Records"); Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com. I may have missed some of their land purchases outside of the future Duckett Township, but they did not buy land within Duckett Township.

5.5% of the population in Sulphur Springs. By 1870, the number in Sulphur Springs had declined to ten – three young men living in three different white households and two families headed by Black women, Elisa Choat and Elvira Counts. (The Choat and Counts surnames probably came from their former enslavers.) These numbers were not enough to support a farming community, and they continued to decline as Black people moved elsewhere. In 1880, there were two Black families, both named Counts, comprising eight people and a single Black man, named Andy Vaughn.<sup>18</sup> By 1900, even these few Black families had moved away, leaving just Andy Vaughn, who has not been found in the 1910 census. They left, many of them to join other Black people, forming communities of their own.

After the Civil War, white people acquired land from the federal government in what eventually became Duckett Township via homesteading, commutation, or purchase. The General Land Office sought enough information to establish that the homestead applicant had indeed “settled” (i.e., lived on the land they were claiming) and “cultivated” the land, as required by the 1862 Homestead Act. Although specifics changed over time, a claimant was expected to live on and farm the land, without significant absences, for five years (reduced to three years by the Homestead Act of 1912), and then to “prove up” -- prove they had met the requirements -- within seven years after filing their claim.<sup>19</sup> Military service could reduce the required time. A homesteader had to be the head of a family (i.e., married or a parent) or over the age of 21. Land in the five southern public land grant states, including Arkansas, was not generally available for homesteading until 1868, due first to secession and then to the 1866 Southern Homestead Act’s restrictions.<sup>20</sup> Not all “settlers”

---

<sup>18</sup> Manuscript census returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules and slave schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules.

<sup>19</sup> E. Wade Howe, “Federal-Land States,” 101-177, in *Land & Property Research in the United States* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Inc., 1997); Malcolm J. Rohrbaugh, “Bureau of Land Management,” in Donald R. Whitnah (ed.), *Government Agencies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 24; Hannah Haksgaard, “The Homesteading Rights of Deserted Wives: A History,” *Nebraska Law Review* 99(2) (2020): 419-476.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Wallace Gates, “The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935,” 28-62, in Howard W. Ottoson, ed., *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).

rushed to formalize their claims. Many squatted for years, even decades, before filing their claims. As seen in Figure 2, the Kansas City Southern Railroad's 1896 arrival in Wickes spurred land acquisition, with the peak occurring in the period 1905-1909 followed by a decline in population and households, as seen in Figures 3 and 4 and consistent with other areas of the western Ouachitas. The median homestead grant date in Duckett Township was 1909, so half the homesteads were yet to be perfected in 1909. The Homestead Act was intended to encourage people to move from other places to settle and cultivate land, but many homesteaders in Duckett Township came from nearby.

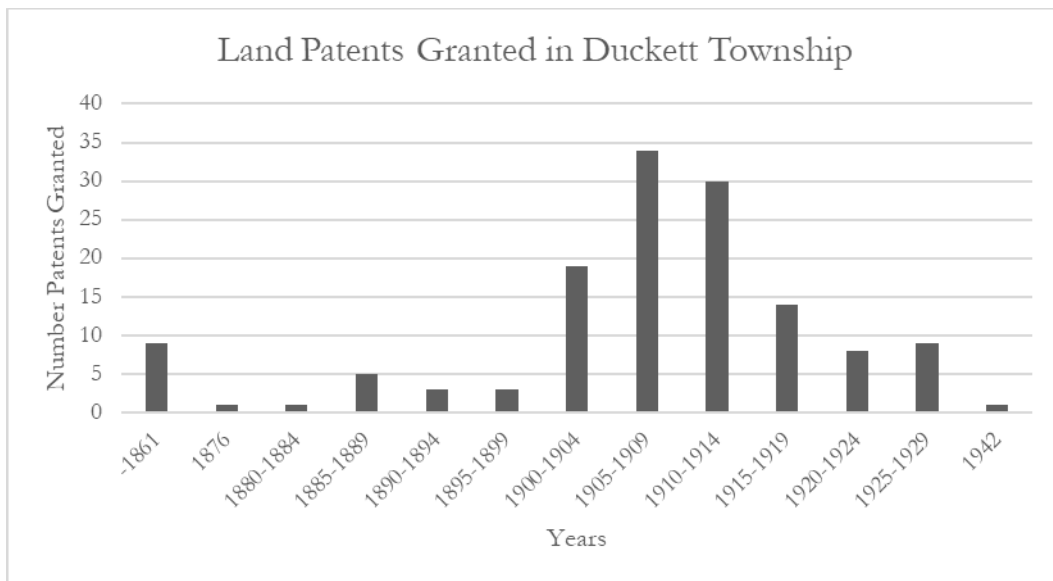


Figure 2. The number of land patents granted increased after the train arrived in 1896, with most patents granted by 1914.

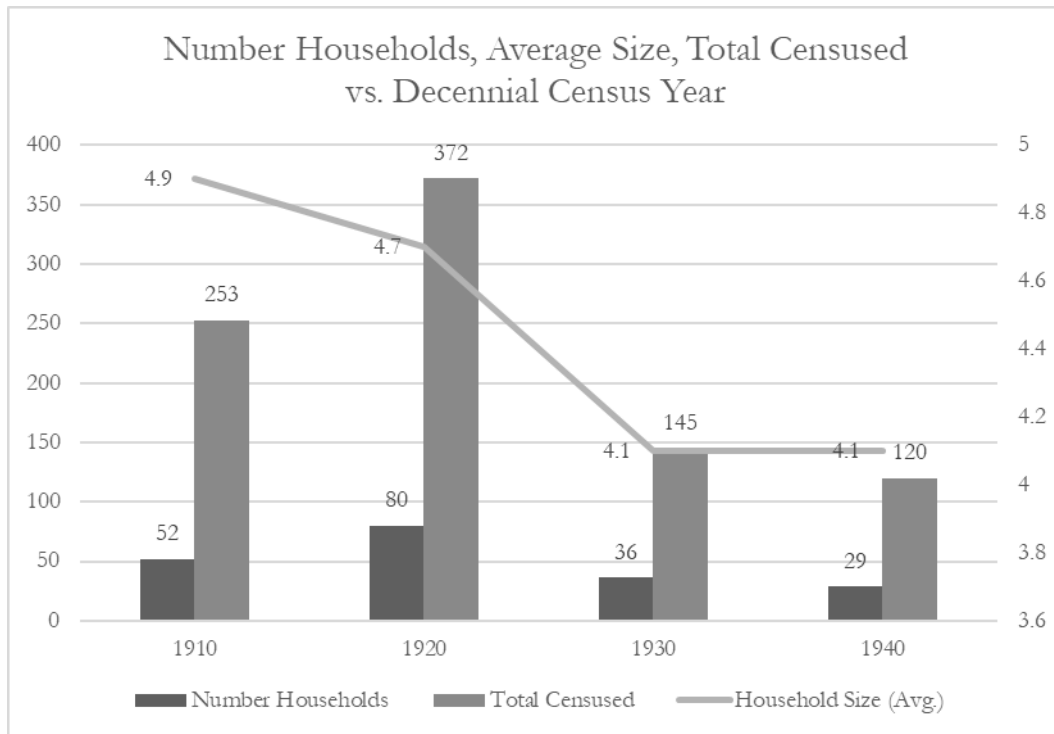


Figure 3. Population and household numbers both peaked in 1920, while the average household size peaked in 1910. The number of people per square mile (not shown on the graph) ranged from 12.5 (1910), 18.1 (1920), 7.1 (1930), and 5.9 (1940).

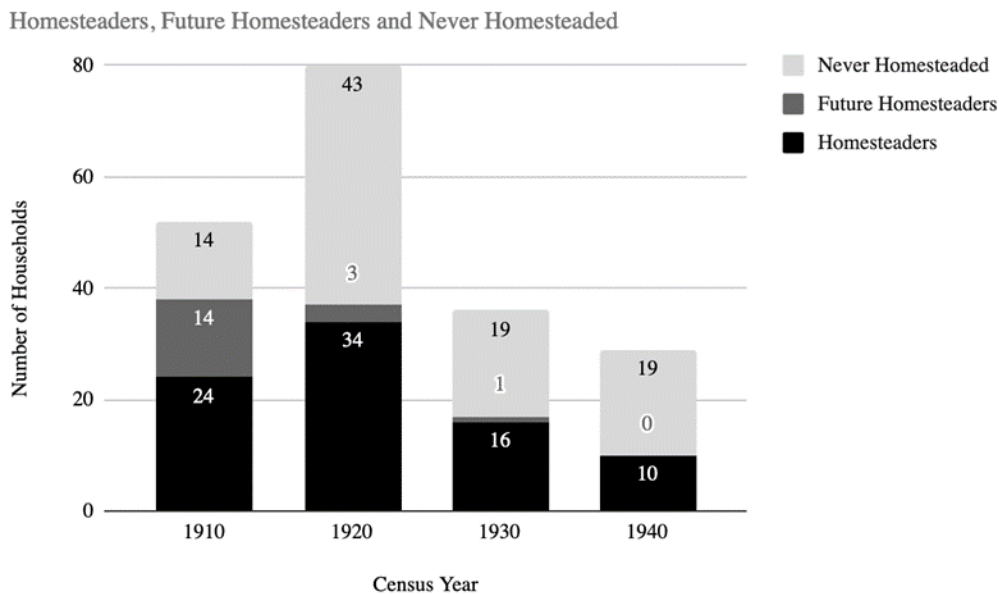


Figure 4. The number of homesteaders and the number of households peaked in 1920, although most future homesteaders were already living in Duckett in 1910. In 1940, four households were headed by men (Galord Baker, Charlie Musgrave, Ira Stewart, James Lee Musgrave) whose parents homesteaded previously (not included in this tally).

Informal staking of claims or squatting was remembered as common, benign, and recognized by the community, but claims were enforced by the threat of violence. Delayed claims were not uncommon. For example, in 1876, the Turner Duckett family moved into the area, and, according to family tradition and his son Selma Duckett's own homestead file, they built the home that Selma Duckett grew old in, conveniently near a spring. They squatted on that land until 1896, when Selma was old enough to file a claim and after Turner Duckett had moved east to land along the Cossatot River, where his second wife staked her own claim in 1895 and where they ran a ferry when the river was too high to ford. In 1922, Nat Allen (1844-1933), who grew up in nearby Old Cove, remembered squatting as harmless. (In 1839, his father, Peter B. Allen (1811-1901), moved his family from Indiana to Jackson Township, Sevier County, which eventually became Sulphur Springs Township in south Polk County. Nat moved to Texas in the 1870s, and then returned to south Polk County in the 1890s.) "Back in those days no one entered land. They would just take up a claim where there was a spring for no one could afford to dig a well then for there was nothing to dig with. A man would lay his claim by making law or three brush heaps, girdling a half dozen trees and a poll pen two or three rounds high. The man would sometimes sell his claim for \$8 or \$10, but no one would ever try to take a claim away from him." Likewise in the 1970s, Inez Lane, a local historian, remembered these informal claims as benign, mentioning that many members of the Rich Mountain community in north Polk County were "likely living on their land before the Homestead Act was passed." However, in the 1930s, John W. Cook recalled he paid a squatter \$300 for his claim in 1881, even though "he could have dispossessed the squatter," but that "sometimes caused serious trouble and even murder." In 1904, Turner Duckett threatened violence when W. L. Cornell's homestead claim infringed on his ability to run his ferry. Duckett had rerouted the public road two hundred yards, probably to make his ferry that connected Wickes to Galena more inviting, but Cornell (sic, probably Carroll) was interfering with the re-routed road. Turner Duckett posted a

notice: “No man on earth or in hell can homestead this land and live on it. Cornell, if you interfere with this fence or road, you may take what follows. I am none but a bullet hole, and all that interfere can take warning.” The newspaper reported that he had previously threatened the land office (probably in Camden), with a communication “written in blood,” “stating that if his possession was interfered with, that the kind of ink his warning was written in would flow like water.” (Willis L. Carroll sued Turner Duckett the next year.) Claiming land required more than compliance with federal laws. It required understanding community mores.<sup>21</sup>

The settlers of what would become Duckett Township, as often as not, were not entirely logical about their relocation plans. They did not always follow Horace Greeley’s advice to go west, or at least not due west. They did not always settle in places that reminded them of home. Local historian Inez Lane explained that people moved north to the Ouachitas from “the low river valleys” of Louisiana and Texas to escape the malarial fevers of the lowlands. Sometimes, they hadn’t decided where they were going, but “the community chosen for their homesteads was determined by the lameness of a horse, the ‘breaking down’ of a wagon or the severe illness of a member of the party.” Other early settlers followed family connections. Sometimes, they came in search of a place without saloons. All of these moves required them to leave somewhere else to come to Duckett.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Nat Allen, “In Polk County in Ye Olden Times: N. O. Allen on Early Days in Polk County,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Feb. 2, 1922, p. 8; Inez Lane, “Down Back Roads: Then and Now on the Talimena Scenic Drive,” *Looking Glass*, Oct. 30, 1975, p. 14; Inez Lane, “Down Back Roads: Rich Mountain Community 50 Years Ago,” *Looking Glass*, Oct. 23, 1975, p. 14; “newspaper article on John W Cook,” originally shared by William Cook on ancestry.com Nov. 20, 2009 (probably from the *Mena Star* around 1930); “Agin the Gov’ment: Resisting a Homestead; A. T. Duckett Has Seceded from the Union and Makes Threats Against the Owner - Changed the Public Road Without Permission,” *Nashville News*, Apr. 20, 1904, p. 1; “Docket for May Term of the Howard County Chancery Courts,” *Nashville News*, Apr. 12, 1905, p. 2. Nat Allen’s “making law” may refer to formally filing a claim with the federal government.

<sup>22</sup> Inez Lane, “Down Back Roads: Then and Now on the Talimena Scenic Drive,” *Looking Glass*, Oct. 30, 1975, p. 14; Inez Lane, “Down Back Roads,” *Looking Glass*, May 22, 1975, p. 14. Inez (Bennett) Lane (1906-1996), a regular columnist for *The Looking Glass*, moved with her parents from Wisconsin to Mena in about 1921. She taught school in many of the small communities, including Potter, and married Lloyd Lane (1905-1975) in 1955. Lloyd grew up in Potter. He and his parents moved to Cove in the 1930s. J. J. Propps, “My Childhood and Youth in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26(4) (1967): 310-352.

The 129 Duckett Township homesteaders, although a small fraction of the 1,835 homesteaders studied in Chapter 3, were similar to those of the larger area (including Duckett Township), which extends from the Oklahoma border to east of Umpire and Athens). Duckett homesteading, like the region overall, took place over a long period of time, from 1876 until 1942, although the majority of homesteads were claimed by 1908, and three-quarters by 1914. As with the homesteaders across the larger region, a plurality of Duckett Township homesteaders were born in Arkansas and elsewhere in the southeast. When compared to homesteaders in the Chapter 3 region, slightly more Duckett homesteaders were born in Arkansas (38% vs. 32%) and fewer born elsewhere in the Southeast (25% vs. 40%) than those in the larger group. At 15%, almost twice as many were born in the Great Plains (15 from Texas, 1 each from Nebraska and Kansas) than were in the larger sample (8.4%) and about twice as many from the Midwest (9.3% vs. 5.6%). Four were born in Illinois, three each in Indiana and Missouri, and two in Ohio. These changes in distribution might suggest that the train encouraged them to come, but not all of their movement can be explained by the train. The Kansas City Southern was more convenient to Duckett than it was to Athens or Umpire, but less convenient than it was to about half of the area studied in Chapter 3. It might be more accurate to say that the train encouraged earlier settlers to formalize their claims.<sup>23</sup>

Duckett homesteaders were mostly married at the time of grant. About three-quarters (98) of the 129 post-Civil War homesteaders were married at the time of grant; another 7% were widowed; just one was separated and five were single. (Twelve, or about 9%, were of unknown status.) Thirteen (10%) were women and 108 were men. (Of the remaining seven, six are quite likely

---

<sup>23</sup> GLO Records; Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

to be men and one, Francis C. White, is unknown.) These numbers relating to marital status are similar to the larger sample in Chapter 3. These similarities suggest that it is fair to use Duckett to generalize to the experiences of other homesteaders in the Ouachita foothills.<sup>24</sup>

Eleven homesteaders from Texas and four from Midwestern states came to Arkansas long before the train's arrival, suggesting other reasons to choose this area. For example, Sarah Thomas and her three homesteading children came from Texas with her husband in 1884 and moved from nearby land in Polk County, settling in Duckett by 1899, the year after her husband's death.<sup>25</sup> The Gammon family had five homesteaders born in Texas, with the father (George W. Gammon) born in Missouri. They perfected their homestead claims a bit later, starting in 1901, but they also moved to Howard County around 1887 or 1888 – before the trains came. Two homesteaders from the old Northwest Territory, James and Burrell Kuykendall, were born in Vincennes, Indiana, and moved to Van Buren, Arkansas with their parents by 1840. They stayed in the Van Buren area until after 1870, not moving to the Duckett area until they were in their 40s. They proved up their Duckett Township homesteads in the 1880s.<sup>26</sup> The Kuykendall story shows that birthplace may not reflect all of a person's lived experience. Birthplace alone does not tell the whole story.

---

<sup>24</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

<sup>25</sup> "All Over the State," *Arkansas Democrat*, Aug. 5, 1899, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> GLO Records; Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.



John Mallon (1855-1900?), one of two Duckett homesteaders born outside the United States, arrived in the area by 1880. In 1880, Mallon, born in Armagh, Ireland, was living next to the John Murphy family in Ozark Township, Polk County (just west of what is now Duckett Township). John Murphy was also Irish and had lived in Arkansas since the 1860s. Although John Mallon was identified as the head of his own 1880 household, his relationship was described as “tenant” and his occupation as “miner.”<sup>27</sup> Nobody else in the seven pages of the 1880 Ozark Township census was described as either a tenant or a miner. Combining this information with the family story that he “purchased the old saloon of the forsaken Antimony City,” which was made of “sawed boards ... freighted in by wagons” to have it “haul[ed] across the river to build a new home for his bride,” we could speculate that he was initially drawn to the area by the short-lived antimony mining around Gillham in northern Sevier County.<sup>28</sup> John Mallon’s wife Molly (nee Frachiseur) was the widow of another Irish miner Tom Greeley. She married Greeley in Georgia, and Mallon in Arkansas. She persuaded more of her family, including her brother Penny Frachiseur’s family, to move from Gwinnett County, Georgia. In 1890, they came by train to Hope, and then took a “three days wagon ride through the wilderness” to reach Duckett. Their daughter Bessie (Mallon) Blanton would perfect her own homestead of 122 acres in Duckett in 1922, after her husband’s death.<sup>29</sup>

Sometime after they married in 1877, D. H. and Nannie (Haller) Propps moved to what is now north Howard County to leave behind Centre Point’s saloons, even though it was “wild, unsettled country with no schools or churches.” Nannie Propps did not approve of D. H. going to

---

<sup>27</sup> Ozark Township, Polk County, Arkansas, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules. John Mallon left a family story that he died in the September 1900 Galveston hurricane, but this seems likely to be a fairy tale for his daughter Bessie, who was just about to turn ten. Rena Reid Frachiseur, “The Frachiseurs of Grannis,” posted by David Frachiseur on ancestry.com July 7, 2010. His wife sued him the next year. “Warning Order,” *Nashville News*, March 30, 1901, p. 3. And his wife identified as a widow in the census, which was taken July 1, two months before the hurricane. Ozark Township, Polk County, Ark. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules. (I have often seen abandoned or divorced women identify as widows in censuses.)

<sup>28</sup> “The Howard County Advocate says,” *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, May 5, 1877, p. 2; Rena Reid Frachiseur, “The Frachiseurs of Grannis,” posted by David Frachiseur on ancestry.com, July 7, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Patent 862,372 (May 11, 1922).

saloons, and “decided that she would break my father of his drinking. So she prevailed upon him to move to where he could not get liquor.” The Propps family returned to the Center Point area around 1891, ten years after the first law closing Center Point’s saloons.<sup>30</sup>

Early settlers took a variety of routes to Duckett. The first land buyer, Samuel G. Witherspoon, was born in North Carolina, moved to Shelby County, Illinois, around 1825, then to Conway County, Arkansas, around 1835, and finally White Township (Polk County) by 1850, where he and his wife are buried. In 1860, recently-widowed Melenda (Brock) Duckett moved with her five living children (including Salina and Turner) and some of her extended family from the hills of Habersham/White County, Georgia to Washburn in the hills of Sebastian County. (A family story was that they left Georgia due to slavery and the looming war.) Jerry and Eva (Awalt) Bell had moved from North Carolina to Tennessee, and then to western Arkansas in the 1840s. During the Civil War, the Bell family refugeed to Anderson County, Kansas and returned to Washburn afterwards. (Their son William served in the Confederate Army before refugeeing in Kansas. I haven’t found any Bell relatives in the Union Army, although Jerry’s half-brother, Moses Bell, ran as a Republican candidate from Sebastian County for the 1868 Arkansas Constitutional Convention.) Jeremiah Stewart’s folks moved out of Missouri after 1820 and into the area that is now Howard County by 1837. Jeremiah and his wife Sarah (Young) Stewart moved east to Montgomery County before 1845. In 1850, Jeremiah Stewart’s family was back in Sulphur Springs. Sometime between 1860 and 1870, the Stewarts also moved north to Washburn before moving south and east to Garland County by 1880. While they lived in Washburn, several of their children married, creating family ties between the Ducketts, Bells, and Stewarts that would follow them from Washburn to Duckett Township. Their daughter Emily Stewart married Jeremiah and Eva Bell’s son William, and three of Emily’s siblings married three children of Melenda (Brock) Duckett. A Bell daughter, Sarah

---

<sup>30</sup> J. J. Propps, “My Childhood and Youth in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26(4) (1967): 310-352.

(1852-1893), married Melenda Duckett's son Allen Turner Duckett (1846-1907) in 1872 in Washburn. Two of the Stewart-Duckett families do not seem to have lived in Sulphur Springs. The third did. John S. Stewart married Sarah Salina "Liney" Duckett in about 1865 in Washburn and moved to Howard County in 1874. By 1880, John and Liney had moved east to Montgomery County, but they moved back again to Duckett by 1887. Around 1876, Turner and Sarah (Bell) Duckett family moved to Sulphur Springs to the area now known as the Duckett community.<sup>31</sup>

Duckett Township would be named for Liney's brother Allen Turner Duckett. Turner and Sarah Duckett arrived in what was then Polk County around 1876, a couple of years after Turner's sister Liney (Duckett) Stewart had first moved there. Turner and his wife Sarah had homesteaded near Washburn and, just before he submitted his final proofs in February 1876, he had a falling out with his fellow distillers. He sold his homestead (which is now on the border of Sebastian County and Logan County) in April, before he even got the grant issued. They hightailed it out of there to points south – namely Sulphur Springs. Besides his sister Liney, Turner had Brock cousins who had moved from Smith County, Texas to south Polk County. Although he had homesteaded in Washburn, Turner never sought to own land in Sulphur Springs (perhaps because he had exhausted his one free claim). Instead, his son Selma filed on that land in 1896, nearly twenty years later (a year after Turner's second wife filed her own claim on land east of Selma's childhood home).<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Hannah Rosén, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) (Moses Bell); Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

<sup>32</sup> Feb. 17, 1876, proofs in Allen Turner Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,232 (Dardanelle Office); "State Items," *Arkansas Gazette*, Mar. 28, 1876, p. 3 (from *Fort Smith Independent*); Turner Duckett, Jacket No. 58, *Defendant Jacket Files for U.S. District Court Western Division of Arkansas, Fort Smith Division, 1866 - 1900*. Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2004, ARC ID: 201532. Record Group Number 21, National Archives at Fort Worth. Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A. (ancestry.com) (Mar. 27, 1876, writs re Duckett acting as an unlicensed retail liquor dealer and illicit distilling in

Not everyone who lived in the future Duckett Township before the train's arrival was already related to the Bakers, Ducketts, Bells, or Stewarts. Four homesteaders had patents issued on June 27, 1889. George W. Church (1835-1907) was born in New York, served in the Second Kansas Cavalry (USA), moved his family from Indiana to Howard County between 1870 and 1880, proved up his land by 1889, and sold out and moved to Canadian County, Oklahoma the next year, never forming an alliance with others in the area by marriage. (Although his departure coincides with the 1889 Oklahoma Land Rush, no Churches in Canadian County obtained issued land grants.) John Wesley Cook (1844-1931) left his first wife and moved from Anderson County, South Carolina to Washington County in 1881 "by wagon and mule team." He sold the outfit and came by hack to south Polk County, where he remarried and proved up his homestead in Duckett Township in 1889. Forty years later he recalled paying \$300 for the improvements. He didn't become related to the Ducketts until his granddaughter married a Brock in 1940. Burrell Kuykendall (a Confederate veteran) moved to Sulphur Springs in the late 1870s, homesteaded, and moved back to Crawford County by 1893, only to return to Polk County by 1900. His brother James Kuykendall (a 2<sup>nd</sup> Arkansas Cavalry (USA) veteran) lived in Scott County in 1880, and moved to Sulphur Springs in the early 1880s, where he stayed after his successful homesteading. James' daughter married a Baker in 1884 – after the Kuykendalls' arrival but before they proved their claims.<sup>33</sup>

Some homesteaders who acquired land after the train's arrival had already lived in Duckett Township or very nearby. V. L. "Buster" Childs and his sisters Seady and Laura Childs grew up just

---

Feb. 1876); Logan County deed re-recorded in 1946 (dated Apr. 18, 1876); Allen T. Duckett Patent 1232, dated Jun. 30, 1876 (GLO Records); Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; (Turner's uncle, John Henry Brock, and extended family were among his family in the area); Selma E. Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 9,777; Sarah (Brock) Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,170.

<sup>33</sup> GLO Records; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; "newspaper article on John W Cook," originally shared by William Cook on ancestry.com Nov. 20, 2009 (probably from the *Mena Star* around 1930); Arkansas, Confederate Pension Records; U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files.

across the Cossatot River, where their parents Lewellen Moore “Lewis” and Tennessee (Fite) Childs arrived in January 1878, having moved most recently from Montgomery County. Buster got his homestead grant in Baker Springs in 1913, after he married Turner Duckett’s daughter Mellie in 1904. Buster’s sister Seady married Mellie’s brother Selma Duckett in 1898. Selma had already applied for a homestead in 1896, as a person over age 21, on the land he grew up on. Buster’s sister Laura married W. Barney Thomas in 1906 and they obtained a Duckett homestead in 1910. Their father Lewis Childs was born in Fayette County, Alabama in 1851, soon after his parents moved from Pike County. By 1860, his family had moved again to Choctaw County, Mississippi. By 1870, his dad had moved most of the family to Monroe County in Arkansas’s Delta. Somehow, Lewis left Monroe County and went two hundred miles west to the hills of Montgomery County, where he met and married Martha Tennessee Fite in June 1877. Tennessee’s parents had moved from Smith County, Tennessee to Dallas County, Arkansas in 1848, and then to Montgomery County, where Tennessee and her siblings were raised by a first cousin near Cedar Glades, Mountain Township, Montgomery County after her father died of disease soon after joining the Union Army.<sup>34</sup> On December 23, 1877, Lewis cleared some land and built a 14 by 15 foot house of logs in Sulphur Springs Township, about fifty miles west and a good bit south of Cedar Glades on the east side of the Cossatot River. Another nearby homesteader, Joseph Johnson “Joe” Ross (1872-1925), was born in the area that became Duckett and he married Turner Duckett’s daughter Allie Italy in 1894. They perfected their Duckett homestead claim in 1906, and then moved to Wickes. Ross’s father had moved from Bossier Parish (around Shreveport), Louisiana, a hundred miles north to Sevier County, and then another forty miles or so north to Sulphur Springs by 1864, where he met his wife Martha

---

<sup>34</sup> Neither Avants nor Leonard Fite’s second wife wanted much to do with the Fite children. Tennessee sought a pension for her father’s Civil War service. Moses Avant wrote to the Pension Bureau, claiming that she and all her siblings were dead, which left Tennessee in the awkward position of proving that she was not. The Pension Bureau denied her application because her father did not enlist for three years.

Burgess, who had moved from Alabama. Joe Ross's first cousin Albert E. Ross (who married a Baker) had a similar migration path and got his land patent the same day Joe did. (The only other Childs or Fite relative who moved to Sulphur Springs was Lewis Childs's niece Asenath Pearson. She married Hugh Ross, an uncle to Joe and Albert, in 1878. They set up housekeeping in Sulphur Springs.) Barney's mother Sarah (Baldwin) Thomas (1861-1931) homesteaded her own land in Duckett in 1905. Sarah grew up in Kimble County, Texas, where she met and married Barnard Thomas (1817-1898) after he was mauled by either a panther or a bear (depending on which family member told the story) and she nursed him back to health. They married in Kimble County in 1880, and moved to Sherman, Texas later that year (nearly 340 miles northeast). Three years later they moved to Sulphur Springs, a move of about 185 miles east and north, where they settled in October 1883, filed a claim in what is now Ozark Township in Polk County (west of Duckett) in 1888, and proved it up in 1891.<sup>35</sup> After her husband's death in 1898, Sarah Thomas moved to Duckett by 1899. Much as the Bells, Stewarts, and Ducketts had intermarried in Washburn, some of these families' children intermarried after they arrived. Two Duckett children married two Childs children. A third Duckett child married a Thomas child, and a third Childs child married a Thomas child, forming a triangle of marital alliances. Another Duckett child married one of the ubiquitous Bakers, and his son by a non-Baker marriage also married a Baker.<sup>36</sup>

Some families did move from east to west, in the more traditional migration path. Monroe and Elizabeth (Taylor) Stewart (apparently no close relation to the Stewarts who married into the

---

<sup>35</sup> Barnard Thomas, Homestead File, Final Cert. 6,082.

<sup>36</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

Duckett and Bell families) came from Anderson County, South Carolina around 1883 – more than 750 miles, mostly straight west. I have not identified any relatives or friends who made the move with them, although John W. Cook came from Anderson County six or eight years later. The Stewarts did not marry into the Childs, Thomas, or Duckett families, although they were related through marriages to various Brocks, who were related to Turner Duckett’s mother. Monroe Stewart was the first postmaster of Duckett Post Office, appointed in 1889.<sup>37</sup>

Most of these moves did not happen in a linear east-to-west pattern. The 1910 census gives us another way to look at movement to Duckett because it reported the birthplaces of every person and their parents. If a child was living with their birth parents, we can easily determine where their grandparents were born. (Otherwise, it takes a little more sleuthing.) The seventy-one children in the 1910 census who were born between 1895 and 1905 show, as seen in Figure 5, that families of children living in Duckett in 1910 came from a variety of places. However, this is impacted by gender. Although half of the grandmothers were born in Arkansas, most grandfathers were born in Tennessee or Alabama. Men apparently moved to Arkansas and married Arkansas women, who in turn produced future Duckett residents with small children in 1910. That most children’s grandparents were born in Arkansas suggests that it was not the train alone that brought their families to Duckett. This census data confirms that many families moved in patterns other than the expected east-to-west pattern, where South Carolinians move west to Georgia, then to Alabama, then to Mississippi, and then to Duckett. Instead, as many as 40% (118) came from states north of Arkansas, including states like New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. So, while there is some

---

<sup>37</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

latitudinal influence on migration, it is not determinative. In contrast, Otterstrom and Bunker, who also studied family relationships over time in search of “complex generational migration patterns associated with family groups and communities,” reported that grandparents of persons born around 1900 in Tulsa, Fayetteville, Little Rock, and Dallas were born (on average) directly to their east, in central or western Kentucky or Tennessee, and thus moved west along the same longitudinal lines.<sup>38</sup> Finally, looking at the parents’ birth states suggests that the grandparents, especially the grandfathers, did the bulk of the interstate moving. Mothers of 48 children and fathers of 45 children were born in Arkansas. Eleven parents (mothers of seven and fathers of four) were born in Missouri. No other states cracked double digits. (Data not shown.) Because these moves took place before 1910 and are into the South (rather than exiting), they complicate the narrative of the great migration.<sup>39</sup> Besides the bar charts shown in Figure 5, Table 1 arranges them to approximate their arrangement geographically. The table has the total grandparents in each state, followed by grandfathers + grandmothers in parentheses. The table is arranged in tiers of states, approximately reflecting their locations relative to Duckett Township, which, as the crow flies, is east of the state of Mississippi. Two grandparents (born in England and Ireland) are not in the table.

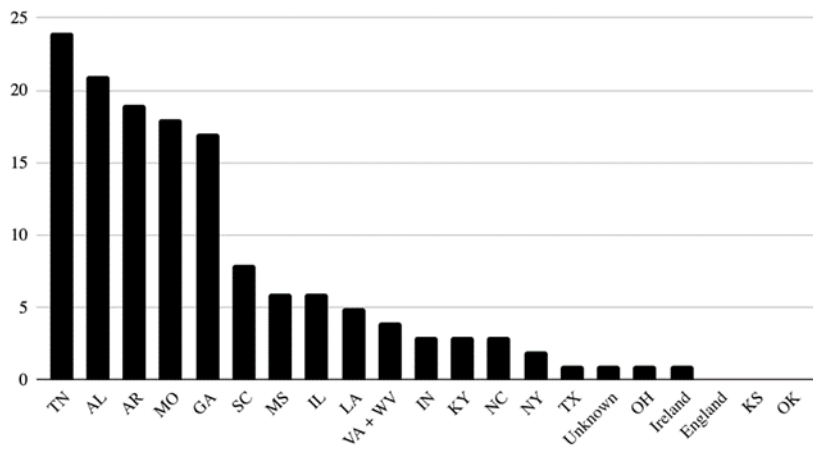
---

<sup>38</sup> Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Samuel M. Otterstrom and Brian E. Bunker, “Genealogy, Migration, and the Intertwined Geographies of Personal Pasts,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2013) 103(3), 544-568; John C. Hudson, “North American Origins of Middlewestern Frontier Populations,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1988) 78(3), 395-413 (people who moved to the middle west generally kept to the same spatial order of birth states so that people from the northern part of the eastern seaboard ended up in the northern part of the middle west). Otterstrom and Bunker had a much larger sample of people than I do.

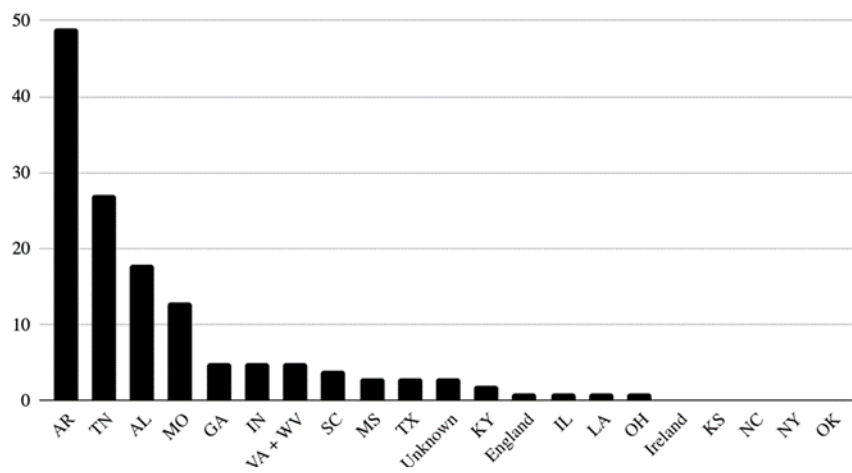
<sup>39</sup> James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).



Grandfathers' Birth States



Grandmothers' Birth States



All Grandparents' Birth States

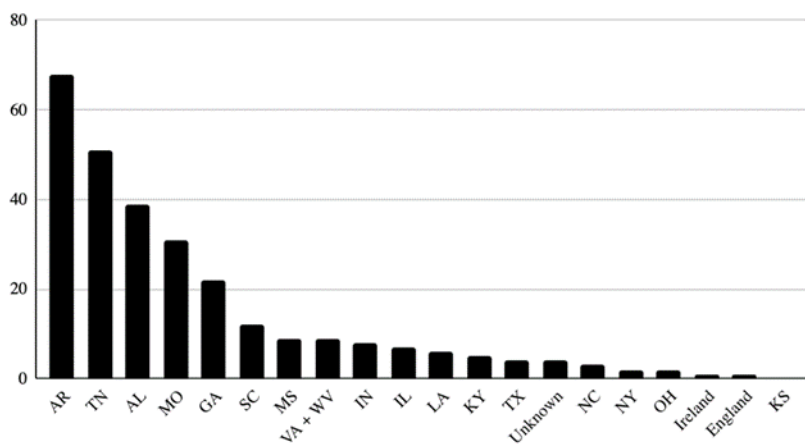


Figure 5. Grandparents' states of birth, reported for children in 1910 census. Note the change in scale for the three bar charts.

	IL 7 (6+1)	IN 8 (3+5)	OH 2 (1+1)	NY 5 (3+2)
	MO 31 (18+13)	KY 5 (3+2)	WV/VA 9 (4+5)	
	TN 51 (24+27)		NC 3 (3+0)	
AR 68 (19+49)	MS 9 (6+3)	AL 39 (21+18)	GA 22 (17+5)	SC 12 (8+4)
	TX 4 (3+1)	LA 6 (5+1)		

Even after most land had been privatized, cheap land made moving into Duckett Township attractive, especially when there was family around. Figure 6 shows that land in Polk and Howard Counties cost less than 60% of average farmland in Arkansas in 1910. In 1924, Ira Stewart, who was John and Liney Stewart's grandson and Turner Duckett's great-nephew, moved into Duckett Township. He was born in Latimer County in Indian Territory in 1892, but he grew up in north Howard County. He married Laura Lou Duncan in 1917. Laura's parents married in Coffee County, Tennessee in 1882 and moved near Dallas, Texas about 1894, where Laura was born in 1895. The Duncans soon moved to north Howard County. When Ira and Laura married, they lived in the Galena area on the east side of the Cossatot River until they bought eighty acres from Jimmy Baker in Duckett for \$200 in 1924. As their son Olen remembered, Ira "sold all his cattle except one bred milk cow to furnish milk for the family. He kept his wagon, plows and other tools and of course, his team of work mules." He was still thirty-five dollars short, so he borrowed the rest from Mellie's brother Marvin W. Duckett. It took him another three years to pay Marvin back.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Olen A. Stewart, *Growing up in Cossatot Country with Ira and Laura Stewart*, self-published pamphlet (about 1985), pp. 7-8.

AVERAGE VALUE OF FARM LAND PER ACRE.

[Average for the state, \$14.18.]

When the value is less than \$10 per acre, it is inserted under the county name.

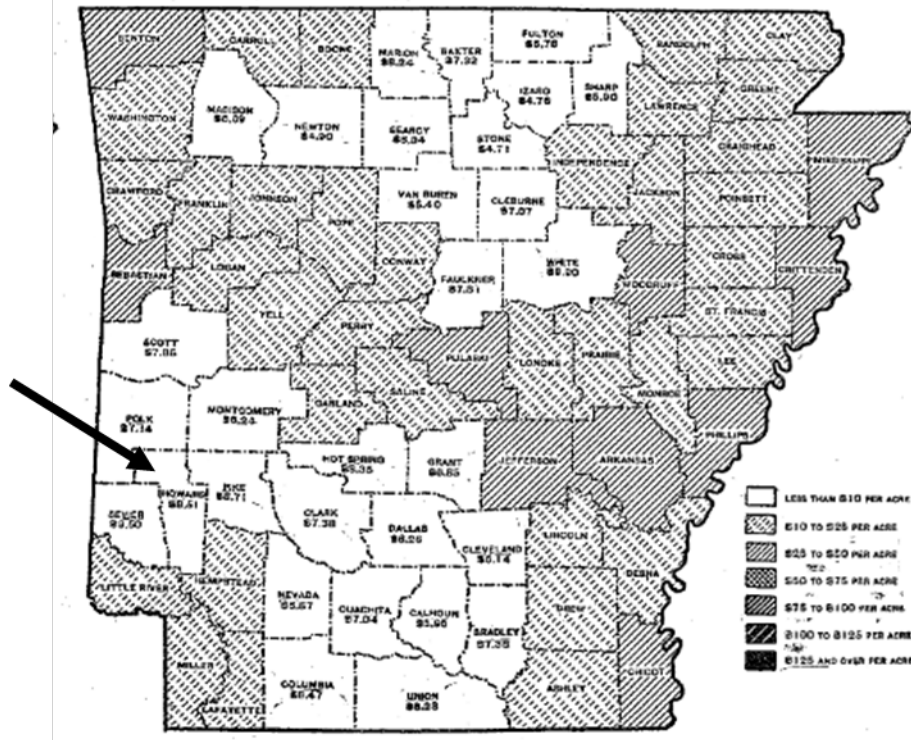


Figure 6. Average value of farmland per acre in Arkansas in 1910. The Ouachitas and some of the Ozarks are valued at less than \$10 per acre. Arkansas' average value was \$14.18/acre. Polk County was \$7.14 and Howard County (including the more farmable southern Gulf Coastal Plain) was \$8.51. The arrow identifies north Howard County.<sup>41</sup>

When husbands died, moving back home meant you didn't have to remarry in a hurry. After the death of her husband and their oldest son in 1914, Mellie (Duckett) Childs (1882-1972) moved back from Wickes to Duckett to be near her birth family. She had five living children, the youngest of whom was born almost seven months after his father's death. Her son Orval wrote in 1992 "about our mother moving her family back into the Duckett community near her 3 brothers and a sister, Aunt Ova Thomas. In the next two years, our mother had bought about 120 acres and had a house built on it. This was one of the best homes in the community. It was near Duckett School.

<sup>41</sup> Map from "Supplement for Arkansas," from Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Abstract of the Census (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 616.

There was some open land on the place, and we soon started to farm. Of course, at first it was mostly growing crops to eat, however, I recall Effie Petros[s] working for my mother and taking potatoes and lard as pay.” Like her sister Mellie (Duckett) Childs had done in the previous decade, Allie (Duckett) Ross (1877-1956) moved back to the Duckett community when her husband Joe J. Ross died in 1925. Allie’s daughter Laverne (Ross) Lay remembered how “two aunts, three uncles, their families, and lots of cousins lived between our place and the Cossatot River.” Both women had successfully homesteaded with their husbands in the area and then bought land, probably from other homesteaders, near their birth family. Allie soon returned to Wickes, six or seven miles west of Duckett, but maintained her ties with Duckett community. Lizzie (Luster) Musgrave, another widow, returned to Duckett around 1934. She had moved from Missouri to Arkansas with her birth family in about 1890. She lived in nearby Sulphur Springs until after 1920, when she and her husband Dempsey moved to Texas with their large family. Dempsey died in 1929. By 1935, she, along with seven of her eight living children, moved back to Duckett Township, perhaps like Mellie Childs and Allie Ross to draw from support of extended family.<sup>42</sup>

Family connections weren’t necessary to make the move. The Isaac and Carrie (Koons) Curry family left Indiana when they were in their late 30s, and moved to Texas in about 1909, and then to elsewhere in Arkansas and finally to Duckett Township by 1920. They came to Duckett although they had no family waiting there for them. Their seven youngest children (born between 1891 and 1905) came with their parents on these moves, while the oldest two, having married, did

---

<sup>42</sup> Orval A. Childs, “Remembrances,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]. Mellie’s father Turner Duckett and brother-in-law Joe Ross were charged with illicit distilling in 1876 and 1894, respectively, so she could have provided corn to be converted into liquor, despite the business itself being largely men’s work. Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Laverne (Ross) Lay, “Allie Italy Duckett,” *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]. Llewellyn M. Childs, Homestead File, Final Cert. 4,843; Joseph J. Ross, Final Cert. 12,743; Manuscript census returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com and ancestry.com.

not. Some made the move without children. In 1917, a retired firefighter from Chicago named Charles J. Rowe and his wife moved to Duckett where he raised hogs and cattle “so that he can market his crops on foot, and also getting something to turn back on the soil.”<sup>43</sup> The Stricklands moved to Duckett about the same time. The Rowes moved away, but the Stricklands stayed. In the mid-1920s, the Hotovecs also settled in Duckett. Otsune (Terede) Hotovec was a Japanese national and her husband Jim was a retired soldier from Nebraska. They also had no children and no connections to Duckett. They may have visited previously since they lived in Beaumont, Texas, near the end of the Kansas City Southern line. They could have taken the train up to Wickes, going to the resort of Baker Springs and, like so many people still do, finding the Ouachita foothills worth their time. The Hotovecs took advantage of his military benefit of homesteading time credit, something that would make homesteading on even the hilliest land fairly straightforward. They found a quarter section and staked their claim, and their patent was granted January 24, 1928.<sup>44</sup>

People moved to Duckett because they wanted affordable land in a subsistence farming community. People came from all over, but most of them came from Arkansas. In 1910, at the point when most of the land had either been privatized or was in the process of being privatized, a majority of the families came from Arkansas. The grandfathers of children living in Duckett in 1910 were more likely to have moved from another state than their grandmothers. Migration did not happen in an east-to-west fashion. Coming back to Duckett made sense for some recently-widowed people because they could draw on the support of a community they already had ties to. That said, family connections made the move easier, but they weren't a requirement.

---

<sup>43</sup> “Retired Fire Fighter Buys Home,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Aug. 17, 1911, p. 5; “Another Prosperous Farmer,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Dec. 20, 1917, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988) 241; “The Ozark Mountain Region of Missouri and Arkansas along the Kansas City Southern Railway,” advertisement, *Traffic World* 35(24), June 13, 1925, p. 1543 (“larger summer resorts” include Baker Springs, touting “Kansas City Southern Ozarks” booklet); “Baker Springs, Howard County, Arkansas,” *Port Arthur Route Agricultural and Industrial Bulletin* 5(7), June 1924, p. 3.

### III. Living in Duckett

*Friends, connections, happy country,  
Can I bid you all farewell?  
Home, thy joys are passing lovely,  
Joys no stranger heart can tell.*<sup>45</sup>

As people settled into Duckett, they re-formed community with their neighbors, making new friends while maintaining connections with their home folks. A functioning yeoman farming community needed specialists, millers and distillers, midwives and coffin builders. As Lavelle Sanford wrote in 1990, “at the time I was born in July 1917 in the community known as Duckett, Arkansas it was a thriving community with its own post office, school and social activities.”<sup>46</sup> When the land was still being privatized, the community needed people who could go to the county seat to support a farmer’s homestead claim and who could provide the cash required as filing fees. Parents expected some sort of schooling to be available, and enough people for their children to find spouses. Rituals, such as church, or at least Sunday school, Easter egg hunts, a community Christmas, decoration at the community cemetery, pie sales, brush arbor revivals, all contributed to building a community.

In Duckett, people acquired land and started farming. They married. They had children. They built a school, which doubled as a church and community building. They found teachers for the short sessions, squeezed in between farming seasons. They died. They laid out a cemetery. They supported a post office. When women could vote, Duckett made up a third of their election officials with women. The area became known as Duckett. The community was always connected to the outside world although the methods changed over time, via ferries, roads, rail, mail, newspapers, magazines, radio, phones, church, decoration at the community cemetery, singings.

---

<sup>45</sup> Lyrics excerpted from Samuel F. Smith, “Can I Leave You?” in *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Revision* (n.p., Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 385.

<sup>46</sup> Lavelle O. Sanford, “Selma Era Duckett,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated].

Duckett became a community. Allen Turner Duckett and his family left Sebastian County rather abruptly in 1876 after he and his fellow illicit distillers had a falling out over a still they were operating together. He ended up in what was then the southernmost part of Polk County, west of the Cossatot River, and helped to form the community. Twenty-five years after his arrival, his family was the core of a Howard County political township created in 1901 and named for him. Duckett's first postmaster, Monroe Stewart, was appointed in March 1887, although later censuses placed him in Baker Township, just east of Duckett.<sup>47</sup> Duckett's cemetery had its first three documented burials, two of Turner Duckett's children and his first wife (the mother of these children), in 1890, 1891, and 1893.<sup>48</sup> Duckett Cemetery is on land on which Turner's son Selma filed a claim the year after his mother died. The cemetery remains active today, with its Decoration Day being the first Sunday in June. 1890 was the earliest I've found Duckett on a map.<sup>49</sup> Although it is not on the newer state highway maps, it is still on the Howard County map.<sup>50</sup> Duckett School, reportedly organized in 1881 as Scrougeout (sic), was the center of many of its community activities. From at least 1910 forward, Duckett was also, like its neighboring communities, white, unless you count Otsune (Terede) Hotovec, who was Japanese and thus not-white, who moved to the community in the 1920s.

Duckett school was a true one-room schoolhouse, with a single teacher responsible for as many as sixty students in a session. The school eventually went through eighth grade. When Orval graduated in 1927 (age 17), he "believed I was the first student to get an eighth grade diploma from Duckett school." As shown in Figure 7, the persons who lived in Duckett in 1940 (born in 1920 or

---

<sup>47</sup> *Official Register of the United States, Containing a List of the Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service as of July 1, 1889* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), Vol. 2, p. 468; Manuscript census returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules.

<sup>48</sup> Ozie Duckett (1889-1890), FindAGrave Mem. 24712342; C. B. D. Duckett (1875-1891), FindAGrave Mem. 24712265; Sarah E. Duckett (1852-1892), FindAGrave Mem. 24712317.

<sup>49</sup> *Indexed Atlas of the World* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1890).

<sup>50</sup> Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, "General Highway Map: Howard County, Arkansas" (2020), <https://www.ardot.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/HowardCounty.pdf> (accessed June 29, 2022); Arkansas State Highway (Tourist Map) (2022).

earlier) had an average of 7 years school and just one had twelve years. Men had about one year more schooling than women. Of those who had more than eight years, seven were men and two were women. That said, Duckett parents seem to have valued education, even when it meant their children left. Turner Duckett's son Selma spent several months at a school in Center Point in 1895. Selma's brother Malvin was sent to Washburn to live with Turner's brother Jim Duckett and go to school (Orval wrote that "He was smart to never go back home.") Floy (Turrentine) Childs, herself a schoolteacher with experience with both the one-room and one-class variety, wrote in 1976, "Today [sixty students in mixed grades] sounds like an impossible teaching load, but I can count at least nine of the [Duckett students] who became successful teachers themselves." All six of Turner Duckett's children whom I could locate in the 1940 census reported at least a seventh-grade education, which is unusual for Arkansans born in nineteenth century rural Arkansas. Sarah Thomas's children likewise had an eighth grade or better education, with at least two having some college. Lewis and Tennessee Childs' two children that survived into 1940 had at least a year of high school, even though their mother couldn't write. As I understand it, because Wickes High School was in a different school district, Duckett residents couldn't attend or at least couldn't take a bus there. Some boarded in Wickes to go to school. Eventually a compromise was reached, allowing Duckett students to attend the Wickes high school even before consolidation. Mellie June (Duckett) Thornton recalled starting school at Wickes in 1940, "the first year for the children from Duckett to go to Wickes." After a hard-fought battle, Duckett school was closed. The schoolhouse remained until it was destroyed by fire sometime after 2006. Arson was suspected.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules (cannot read or write); Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules (can read, cannot write); Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules (can read and write); Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules (can read, cannot write); Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules (can read and write). Orval Childs remembered his grandmother as illiterate. There is some conflict in the censuses, but it seems likely that she couldn't write. Orval A. Childs, "Duckett School," in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992); Orval A. Childs, "Marvin Duckett," in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992);



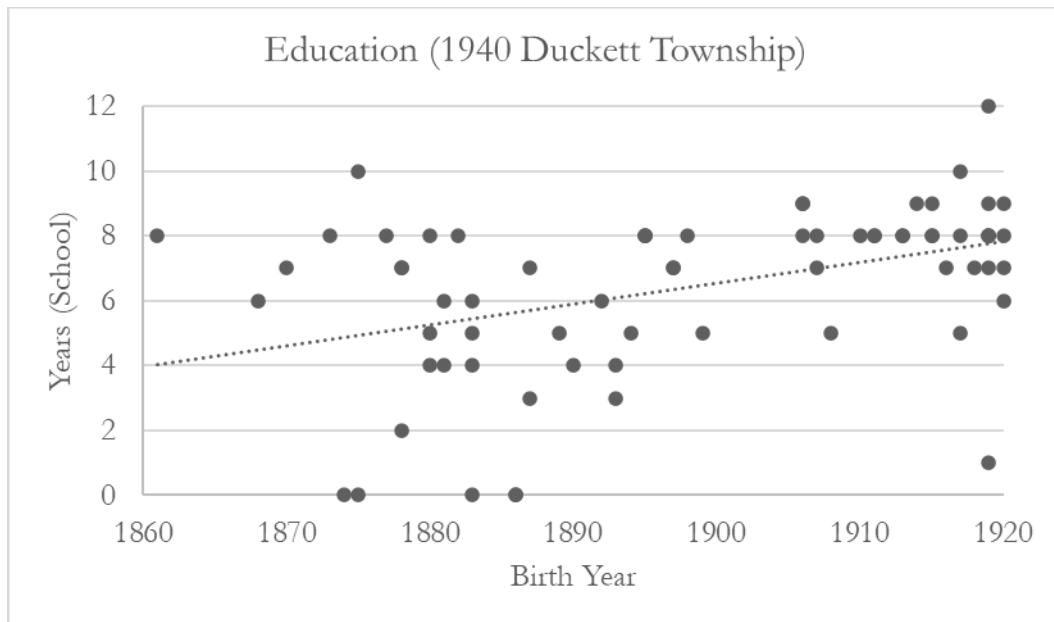


Figure 7. Education (1940) Duckett Township. Although many people who grew up in Duckett seem to have completed their eight years plus, many of those still living in Duckett in 1940 had less than that. None attended college, and just one had finished high school.

The school was also a community center and a church. Santa came there for Christmas. Easter egg hunts, cake walks, spelling bees, and other community events were held there. Although no regular church denomination was housed at Duckett, church was held at the school, whenever a preacher was there on his circuit. “The first Duckett school building was small and was equipped with split logs for seats.” The new school, built in the early 1920s by Marvin Duckett and Russell Thomas from the community, had desks, a wood burning cast iron heater, blackboards (“just boards painted black”), and a “drilled well” for water (except during the summer when water had to be brought in from Downing Spring). Sunday school was held every Sunday. These days, Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist, a couple of miles west of Duckett, is the nearest church. It has services

---

Selma E. Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 9,777; Leonard Fite Pension Application (widow, minor child), Civil War and Later Pension Files, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, NARA (shared with the author by Douglas C. Sandridge); Mellie June (Duckett) Thornton, “Duckett Goes to Wickes,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992); Marc J. Holling, “School Consolidation,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Oct. 24, 2022).

irregularly, but often enough to keep the land from reverting to the Thomas family. There were regular brush arbor meetings in the area.<sup>52</sup>

Duckett did not have many ties with the rest of Howard County. Because the Cossatot River was between them and the rest of Howard County, Duckett residents found it easier to go to county seats in Polk or Sevier Counties for things like marriage licenses or testimony for homestead applications, especially after the train arrived in 1896. As Mary Jane Brock explained in 1907, going to Mena rather than Howard's county seat of Nashville "avoids an overland trip. It is nearer to Mena, can go by Rail Road, and in case there should be high water ... I have two rivers to cross to go to Nashville and no boats to go on."<sup>53</sup> Duckett was always hard to get to. When John Burris, the raiding deputy for Arkansas, came from Texarkana to Duckett in 1898 to catch illicit distillers, he had to go a circuitous route. First, he took the train from Texarkana to Nashville. Then, he "hired conveyance" and went thirty-five miles to get to Duckett Ford. After they took Duckett's ferry across (leaving the conveyance and driver with Duckett), they had to walk another six miles across country to reach the still (described only as three miles from Grannis) and scout out a place to hide

---

<sup>52</sup> North Howard County Youth Group, *The Unfinished Story of North Howard County* (n.p., 1982) 150-157 (reproduction of Register); Selma E. Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 9,777; Selma E. Duckett (1872-1959), Duckett, Howard, AR 1940 census (8<sup>th</sup> grade); Allie I. Ross (1877-1956), Ozark, Polk, AR 1940 census (7<sup>th</sup> grade); Elza R. Duckett (1879-1962), Duckett, Howard, AR 1940 census (8<sup>th</sup> grade); Malvin A. Duckett (1885-1967), Washburn, Sebastian, AR 1940 Census (1<sup>st</sup> year high school); Marvin W. Duckett (1887-1949), Duckett, Howard, AR 1940 Census (7<sup>th</sup> grade); Ova Thomas (1891-1987), Ozark, Polk, AR 1940 Census (8<sup>th</sup> grade); Howard H. Thomas (1880-1946), San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA 1940 Census (5<sup>th</sup> year college); Willard Barney Thomas (1882-1974), Nashville, Howard, AR 1940 Census (2<sup>nd</sup> year college); George Russell Thomas (1887-1952), Ozark, Polk, AR 1940 Census (8<sup>th</sup> grade); Laura (Childs) Thomas (1889-1951), Nashville, Howard, AR 1940 Census (4<sup>th</sup> year high school); Callis Childs (1904-1981), Texarkana, Bowie, TX 1940 Census (1<sup>st</sup> year high school); Orval A. Childs, "Duckett School," *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; V. L. Duckett (sic, Childs), "Duckett School," *ibid.*; Lois Duckett Phipps and O. D. Duckett Roberts, "School Days," *ibid.*; Mrs. O. A. [Floy (Turrentine)] Childs, "Letters." *Looking Glass*, April 15, 1976, p. 2; Olen A. Stewart, *Growing up in Cossatot Country with Ira and Laura Stewart* (self-published pamphlet, about 1985); Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, about 1985), pp. 28-31; J. J. Propps, "My Childhood and Youth in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26(4) (1967): 310-352.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Jane Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,095.

until morning. After making the arrests, they returned to Duckett's place, only to find the driver and team had left so they hired a farm wagon. The round trip took them five days.<sup>54</sup>

Besides being isolated, Duckett lacked political clout. In 1906, Duckett Township had "only about 28 votes" while the rest of Howard County had more than 1800.<sup>55</sup> In its early days, Duckett Township voters skipped matters hotly contested by others in the county, not even voting on moving the county seat in 1904.<sup>56</sup> Their interests as hill country farmers in a nearly all-white community were different from the residents in the southern two-thirds of Howard County in the Gulf Coastal Plains, where more than 20% of the people living there were Black.

Duckett's lack of Black people was not because Black people never lived in the Ouachitas, nor was it because Duckett's white residents never enslaved people.<sup>57</sup> I traced the paternal lines of two overlapping types of white people who lived in Duckett Township: (1) homesteaders who acquired land after the Homestead Act was passed, and (2) heads of household in the 1910 census, when half of the federal land had been successfully privatized in Duckett Township. In the 1860 census, I found 86 paternal ancestors (or even themselves) of the 128 homesteaders. Twelve of these 86 (14%) had enslaved people. In the same census, I also found 42 paternal ancestors of the 51 household heads in the 1910 census. Two of these 42 (5%) descended in the paternal line from persons who enslaved other people. Ancestors of people who lived in Duckett Township in 1910 or

---

<sup>54</sup> "Jim Davis, a Notorious Moonshiner, Caught at Last," *Arkansas Gazette*, Oct. 30, 1898, p. 1; "Notorious Bandit Taken," *Nebraska State Journal*, Oct. 31, 1898, p. 2; "Mountain Stills: Federal Authorities Breaking Them Up in Arkansas," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 21, 1894, p. 31; Isaac Stapleton, *Moonshiners in Arkansas* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1948), 29-31; "Moonshine Crusade: A Relentless Pursuit," *Arkansas Democrat*, November 4, 1898, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> "No Official Count: Three Townships Had Not Reported Saturday," *Nashville News*, Apr. 4, 1906, p. 2; "Incomplete and Unofficial Returns," *Nashville News*, Apr. 4, 1906, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> "Official Count Today," *Nashville News*, Oct. 12, 1904; "No Official Count: Three Townships Had Not Reported Saturday," *Nashville News*, Apr. 4, 1906, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Among Turner Duckett's descendants, the story has been passed down that his mother and their family left Georgia because of slavery. V. L Childs, May 1992. Turner Duckett's father's June 1860 estate inventory identified less than \$3500 in property (real and personal) and no enslaved people. White County (Ga.), Inventories and Appraisements 1859-1875, Vol. 1, pp. 41-43, 46-48, 54 (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-893B-R8TZ?cc=1999178&wc=9SB6-RM9%3A267829001%2C267835801>, accessed June 27, 2022).

who homesteaded in Duckett Township generally lacked the capital to enslave people. While it is not true that white people in Duckett Township did not come from people who enslaved other people, enslavers' descendants were a relatively small part of this settlement in the early twentieth century just as they were in the years before the Civil War.<sup>58</sup> At most, this was a community with enslaved people, not an enslaving community. They were not vital to the area's economy.

After decades of growth after the Civil War, Duckett Township stopped growing in the 1920s. With the train and better roads, the community's households could be smaller and still effective at supporting themselves. They no longer had to make nearly everything themselves. Also, most federal land had been privatized (Figure 2). From 1910 to 1920, the number of households declined by more than half, and their average size declined by about 15%, from nearly five people (4.7) to a bit more than four people (4.1) (Figure 3). These households were mostly nuclear families, although extended family was often nearby. The population density declined from 12.5 people per square mile in 1910 to 5.9 people per square mile in 1940. (In 2020, there were 104 people, or 5.1 people per square mile.) Using the definition of frontier as 2 to 6 people per square mile, Duckett Township went from settled to returning to frontier over just thirty years, and there it seems to have settled, except on the first Sunday in June or a well-attended burial, when the population may increase by fifty or a hundred percent, all gathered at the cemetery to memorialize the dead and visit with the living.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> GLO Records; Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

<sup>59</sup> GLO Records; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Cheryl Elman, Barbara Wittman, Kathryn M. Feltey, Corey Stevens, and Molly Hartsough, "Women in Frontier Arkansas: Settlement in a Post-Reconstruction Racial State," *Du Bois Review* 16(2) (2019): 575-612.

Later-born women had fewer children. Better transportation made it easier to buy consumer goods and sell farm products so less farm labor was required for a viable farm. Probably, more children also survived to adulthood. As shown in Figure 8, younger females who lived in Duckett in 1910 had fewer children. Women born around 1880 had around six children, while women born around 1850 (thirty years earlier) averaged nearly eight children. Women born around 1905 would go on to have about four children. Childbirth became something doctors were involved with. In 1914, Duckett Township began recording births. Of the 76 birth certificates (between 1914 and 1919) which are available through ancestry.com, 52 were reported by a doctor, 21 by a midwife, and two by a grandmother (acting as a midwife). Mary (Hembree) Cupp (1860-1947) delivered at least seventeen babies in this period. Born in 1860, she divorced Wash Petross around 1892 and remarried John Henry Cupp (1844-1924) around 1893. Between the two marriages she had seven children, of whom five were still living in 1910. In 1910, her husband (now 65) was working as a laborer in a sawmill. Although the 1920 census said he owned his own farm, one wonders if acting as a midwife helped to support her family. Probably most of the births attended by the doctor also had a midwife present. Orval Childs recalled that “a large percent of the women, when they were fixing to give birth, would come to my mother.” For instance, Arvazine Duckett’s baby was reported by a Dr. White from Umpire. Mellie (Duckett) Childs also attended this birth, leaving Arvazine’s son Donald to stay the night at Mellie’s house with Orval and his siblings and their grandmother Tennessee (Fite) Childs. Donald learned his mother died (of a ruptured uterus) when Orval’s grandmother told him over breakfast. “He left home without taking another bite.” Orval thought then, and still thought it seventy years later, that she should have waited until he finished breakfast. The practice of having a midwife attend and home births continued well into the 1930s. “[O]ld Dr. Rawlings [sic, Rollins], assisted by midwife and neighbor Mellie Childs,” delivered Elva Stewart in 1931. Mellie attended her daughter-in-law Floy Childs’ four births, all of which were delivered

before the doctor arrived (and all weighed more than ten pounds). Mellie aimed to be at the birth of all of her grandchildren.<sup>60</sup>

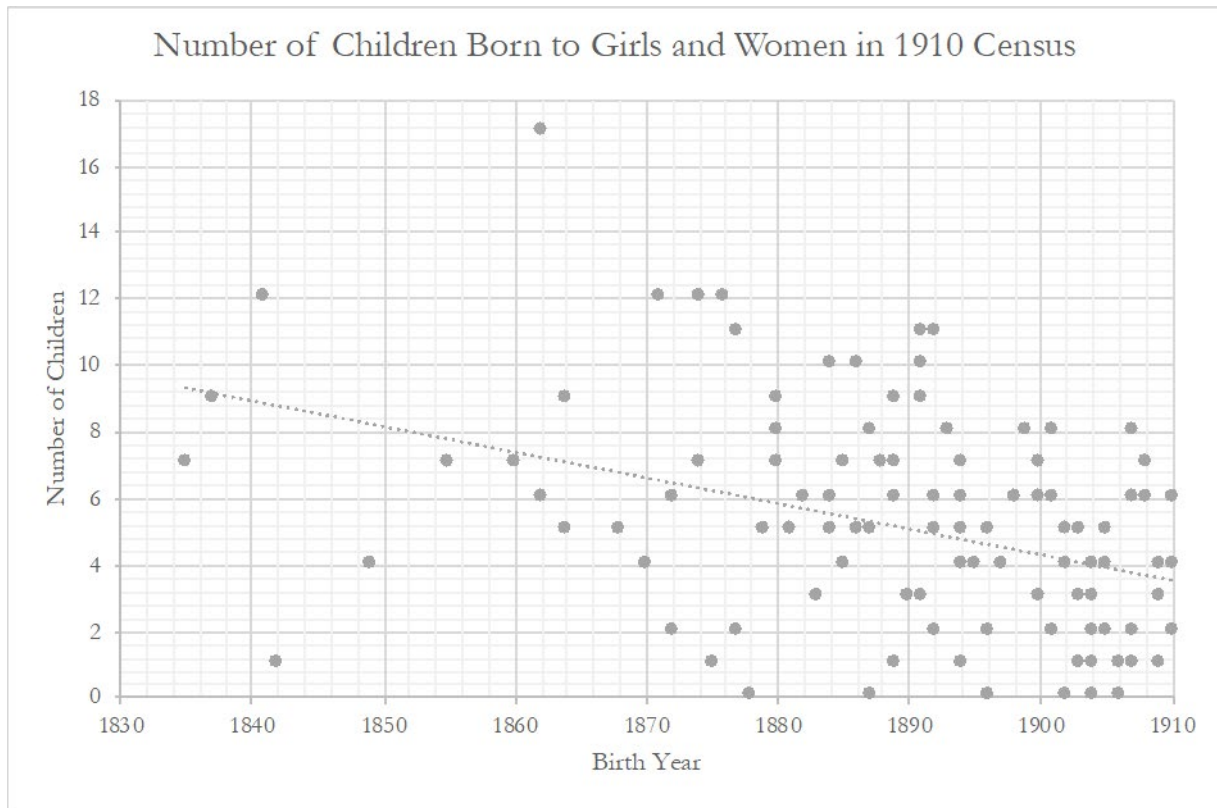


Figure 8. The number of children born to girls and women who lived in Duckett in 1910 declined over time. Women born later had fewer children over their lifetimes. (Note that this does not capture data for women who lived in Duckett but died before 1910.)

<sup>60</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules; Arkansas, Birth Certificates, 1914-1917 (ancestry.com); Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, about 1985), p. 3. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com. Lee L. Bean, Geraldine P. Mineau, and Douglas L. Anderton, *Fertility Change on the American Frontier: Adaptation and Innovation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) (comparing family size as reported in the 1900 census to two different mountain communities in the Appalachian Mountains), 20-21; Orval A. Childs, "Remembrances," *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Elsie Childs, "Mellie Mae Duckett," *ibid.*

Just as living in community involved birth, it also involved death. People in Duckett (like other people in the early twentieth century) were often confronted with death. But death was still trauma. Orval's earliest memory dated to before he turned four. He was sitting on his Aunt Laura (Childs) Thomas's lap, rocking at his father's funeral, with his Aunt Laura worrying, not about her dead brother, but about whatever would happen to Mellie and all those children. A few years later, when Laura's only child died, Mellie worried, "poor Laura, what will she do?" Selma and his wife Seady (Duckett) Childs took pride in taking care of the dead. He used his blacksmith shop to make coffins, and Seady carded cotton batts to line them with. He was the undertaker for his stepmother's brother-in-law when Alvah Marlow died in 1915. When the pandemic of 1918 came through Duckett, Seady "was attacked with Spanish influenza." His daughter Bonnie remembered that he couldn't bear to make her coffin, and someone else in the community did it for them. Selma's brother Elza was on the death certificate as the undertaker. Orval Childs recalled that Elza Duckett "kept a reserve of good pine lumber that was cut from his best trees to make coffins. He furnished a considerable amount of the lumber – gratis." When Elza's wife Arvazine died, giving birth to a baby who also died, Selma returned the favor, acting as their undertaker in 1924. Although he wasn't related to anyone in the community, Elvin Strickland was the undertaker for neighbors. Sam Miles took care of an old man named Chadwell (1850-1922) who had lived in the area since at least 1900 and died of pellagra. Orval remembered the death of two little Luster sisters, Ola Mae and Birdie Lee, who died of the bloody flux (dysentery). "Yes, my mother was down there [in the river bottom] helping care for them when they died. I remember when she came home she was so tired and sad. ... [M]y mother had curled their hair and they looked so pretty." (Strickland was identified as the

undertaker.) He also “recall[ed] a Mr. Cooper singing at his wife’s funeral. Oh, how he struggled to hold back the tears.” The community took care of the dead as well as the living.<sup>61</sup>

Duckett was, and remains, a place for farming, but the nature of farming changed. During the period of this study, which ends about 1940, the first farming families were yeoman farmers, focused on subsistence farming. They grew what they needed. They raised a little cotton, and sometimes turned their excess corn into cash, either directly or through a neighbor’s distillery. Their cattle and hogs were free-range. They usually killed the hogs for their own use, but, sometimes, they could sell their cattle if someone came through looking to buy them. Even into the 1940s, cows “add[ed] to our meager cash flow. A cow trader would come once or twice a year to check if Daddy had any livestock he could buy. . . . Daddy had no way of getting his livestock to market and usually there was only one cow buyer who came by to buy cows.”<sup>62</sup> As transportation improved, they diversified to take advantage of access to more markets. They began to grow more truck and fruit than they needed for themselves. At the same time, more households became renters.

---

<sup>61</sup> V. L. Childs, Bart Childs, and Holly Childs, “Mellie Mae Duckett,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Lavelle O. Sanford, “Selma Era Duckett,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Orval A. Childs, “Elza Duckett,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Orval A. Childs, “Remembrances,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Saddy [sic, Seady] T. Duckett Death Cert. 646 (E. R. Duckett undertaker); Oler May Luster, Death Cert. 376 (Strickland undertaker); Arbizene Duckett, Death Cert. 525 (S. E. Duckett undertaker); Alvah Marlow, Death Cert. 552 (S. E. Duckett undertaker); Dan Chadwell, Death Cert. 751 (undertaker Sam Miles). These all were recorded in Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark.

<sup>62</sup> Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, about 1985), pp. 12-13.





Figure 9. Agricultural regions in Arkansas. Duckett Township is the section labeled “B. Fruit.”<sup>63</sup>

After returning to Duckett in 1914, Mellie (Duckett) Childs grew truck and fruit for her own family and to sell to other markets. As seen in Figure 9, north Howard County was in the fruit agricultural region. The 1920 agriculture census for Arkansas collected information about the value of various crops in each county in 1919. Polk County’s fruits and nuts made up a larger percentage of the value of its total crops than the state as a whole, although Howard County’s did not. (It is problematic to generalize Howard County’s results to north Howard County because most of Howard County is in the cotton and corn region. The Polk County numbers are likely more like those of north Howard County.)<sup>64</sup> Orval Childs remembered, “Our mother was a good mother and

<sup>63</sup> “Main agricultural regions in Arkansas,” from R. W. Wells, “Arkansas,” in L. H. Bailey, *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture, Farms* (Vol. I) (New York: Macmillan Co., 1907), 61. The original caption: “Main agricultural regions in Arkansas. A. fruit and general farming; B. fruit; C. rice; D. cotton and corn; E. alfalfa. Much of the state is in forest.”

<sup>64</sup> “Agriculture: Arkansas, Statistics for the State and its Counties,” *Nineteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Bulletin* (Bureau of the Census, 1922).

a good farm manager. We would clear some new ground every winter. In spring, make rails and use oak poles to make the ground warm on which to build the rail fence. We would cut wood in the summer for the school, teacher, and old folks. If it was raining, as it is today, we would shell corn for making meal. ... Picking peanuts from the vine was another wet weather job. ... We grew cucumbers to ship. Somedays we would have 15 to 20 bushels. For several years, we had an acre of blackberries – sold them to a cannery at Wickes. ... We grew more acres of cotton and corn as we grew larger. Our mother used as [word missing?] an incentive for us to get our crops harvested, so we could pick cotton for farmers such as Mr. Kirton, to get money to buy us two pairs of overalls, and ... a pair of heavy working shoes that we wore 7 days a week most of the time. We lived mainly from the vegetables we grew. I recall one year we helped our mother pick and can 40 gallons of wild blackberries.” Mellie (Duckett) Childs thus implemented a combination of strategies, including subsistence farming (much like the yeoman farming her family practiced before the Civil War and after), truck farming (taking advantage of the train’s arrival in western Arkansas), day labor for neighbors, and corn and cotton farming for the more certain, though slim, cash it would bring. “[Malvin] and her other three brothers did things for us, too, but it was often reciprocal.”<sup>65</sup>

According to Orval (who was head of the agriculture degree program at Southern Arkansas University for forty years and thus would know), Mellie was “a good farm manager.” Orval Childs was writing from the perspective of a retired agriculture professor when he wrote admiringly about his mother’s diverse farming practices. He had spent his career recruiting hundreds of young people, at first just farm boys and later farm girls, and especially those from the Ouachita foothills, to come to Magnolia and learn more about farming.<sup>66</sup> As he remembered, his mother focused on “growing

---

<sup>65</sup> Orval A. Childs, “Remembrances,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]. Mellie’s father Turner Duckett and brother-in-law Joe Ross were charged with illicit distilling in 1876 and 1894, respectively, so she could have provided corn to be converted into liquor, despite the business itself being men’s work.

<sup>66</sup> “Class I, Orval A. Childs, Arkansas Agricultural Hall of Fame.”  
<https://www.arkansasaghalloffame.org/members/member/childs-orval-a/> (Accessed July 2, 2022).

crops to eat,” along with peanuts, cucumbers, vegetables, and blackberries. Only as her children grew older did they grow “more acres of cotton and corn” and “pick cotton for [neighboring] farmers” to “get money.” She was not the only farmer with a diverse set of crops. Her brother Selma’s family “knew how to be self-sufficient.” He was Duckett’s blacksmith. His cellar had “cabbage heads, turnips, potatoes and pumpkins.” His smokehouse had “cured hams, bacon, sausage, and salt meat.” They raised chickens, hogs, and cows, and canned fruits and vegetables. The wood harvested from his property was sold or used as fuel. He was particular about which timber was cut, not wanting it cut below a certain diameter. He lived until 1959, and his children “casually wire[d] the house for electricity,” supplying an electric refrigerator and a television. He “studied sports to understand them,” and a son-in-law brought him a bowling ball to study “as he had never seen one.” Being curious about how the world works would make a person a better farmer.<sup>67</sup>

Although Sarah Thomas described the land as “to[o] poor to rent” in 1898, by the 1920s, the land was no longer free, having been privatized, and if you didn’t have the scratch to buy it or if, like the Hotovecs, you had built your barn on someone else’s land, you had to rent. Some folks would rent from family, a parent or grandparent who was no longer farming. In 1920, fifty-six of the eighty household heads owned their own farms, and just one was mortgaged. (Two of the owners did not respond as to whether they owned the farm free or mortgaged.) Twenty-two (27%) were renters. Three did not respond.<sup>68</sup> Elsewhere in Arkansas, the percentage of farms operated by tenants of any sort was 51%, with Howard County coming in at 46% and Polk County, at less than half the state percentage at 25%.<sup>69</sup> When it came to land ownership versus rental, Duckett Township farmers were

---

<sup>67</sup> Lavelle O. Sanford, “Selma Era Duckett,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated].

<sup>68</sup> Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Barnard and Sarah E. Thomas, [hereinafter Thomas Pension File] Case Files of Mexican War Pension Applications, ca. 1887 - ca. 1926, Records of the Department of Veteran Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives & Records Administration, Washington, DC.

<sup>69</sup> “Agriculture: Arkansas, Statistics for the State and its Counties,” *Nineteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Bulletin* (Bureau of the Census, 1922). Except for north Howard County, the rest of Howard County is in the ecoregion of the Gulf Coastal Plain.

more like Polk County farmers than their fellow Howard Countians in the Gulf Coastal Plain.

A quarter of the men (19 of 72) and a third of the women (3 of 9) were renting in 1920. Toliver M. Fowler probably rented land as well as owning his own forty acres, which wasn't much in the scheme of farming in Duckett. Although he had proved up his claim on forty acres in Duckett Township in 1911 and still owned land in 1920, his son's obituary remembered him otherwise. When Carson Fowler (1911-1973) died, his origin story (probably from interviewing his widow) had him growing up in the Duckett community, but as a transient. "His father was a hard worker, a hard drinker, and couldn't stay in any one place very long. He was a sharecropper." Carson and his wife Willa Mae (Taylor) (1911-1986) started out married life in 1927 as very young sharecroppers themselves. Homesteading was not a guarantee to continued property ownership. Two of the 1920 renters (Joe W. Martin, age 38, and Cornelius Owen, age 23) had fathers who had homesteaded in Duckett Township. Charlotte Bard, one of the women renters, had successfully homesteaded in 1906, having been widowed once and deserted once. Another woman renter, Luvena Stewart, had left her first husband before the 1920 census. Four of the ten renters in 1930 had parents who had homesteaded in Duckett Township or who had previously homesteaded land themselves.<sup>70</sup>

Luvena Stewart had a hard time just surviving. She probably suffered from severe depression. Her son George Cooper (1925-) remembered her as unable to get out bed, and he and his older brother had to figure out how to fend for themselves. They learned to roast eggs in the coals, and to time visits to their mother's cousin Mellie (Duckett) Childs so that they could join that family for a good meal. Later in fall 1920, she remarried. Unfortunately, that marriage was also not destined to last. William W. Cooper died just three days after her last son was born in February

---

<sup>70</sup> Manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; GLO Records; "The Late Carson C. Fowler: The Man Who Loved Work," *Looking Glass*, Sept. 11, 1975, pp. 7-8; Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules One renter, C. Lovings, was recorded as not living on a farm. The status of five households was not recorded. Of those, one (Luvena Cooper) was a duplicate. Another, Mellie Childs, should have been recorded as living on a farm.

1924. (She married a third time in 1933.) Between Cooper's children from an earlier marriage and hers, his death left eight children ages thirteen and under. The oldest, Bertie, used a strategy her mother had used and married Sam Miles in October 1924. She was thirteen. He was 41. George Cooper remembered the community standing ready to help, but he remembered it as a recipient of much-needed help which he couldn't easily reciprocate.<sup>71</sup>

The farming community worked together. Irwin Hedge (1915-2005) "remember[ed] as a boy [in the early 1920s] our whole community being always ready to help one another in whatever the emergency was. ... Everyone seemed to enjoy doing whatever he had to do to help in the best way he could, whether it was building, plowing, planting, gathering corn, picking cotton, or cutting wood." Hedge recalled how the men and boys of the community worked to improve a road connecting the small communities and giving them access to the train at Wickes. (This road became Arkansas Highway 4, now US 278.) Road building to build community was an ongoing project, which started at least as early as 1911. Without maintaining the road that connected Duckett to the train, it would be impossible to get truck and fruit there in good condition. It remained difficult to sell livestock.<sup>72</sup>

Farm families were sometimes multi-generational. Kizzie (Rigsby) Hargis, age 65, had acquired federal land via homesteading in 1908, shortly after her husband's death. In 1920, she had a houseful, with her single daughter Velma (age 22) and two more "adopted" children, Jessie and Goldie Stephens (ages 7 and 4). Their mother had died in the flu pandemic the year before, and somehow they ended up with Kizzie rather than any number of other relatives, including their father, their maternal grandparents, and their two older siblings from their mother's previous

---

<sup>71</sup> Discussion with George Cooper, Sep. 2014; Doug Cooper, ed., *The Descendants of Cornelius Stewart, 1995 Prototype* (self published, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, July 1995) (copy in possession of S. Bart Childs).

<sup>72</sup> Irwin Hedge, "A Letter Home," *Looking Glass*, February 1977, 36-37; "Family of 11 Lose Home in Fire, Neighbors Come to Aid," *Dixon (Ill.) Evening Telegraph*, Feb. 16, 1951, 1; "Most Everybody Signs Up for Good Roads at Wickes [sic]," *Mena Weekly Star*, September 7, 1911, p. 1; Irwin Jerry Hedge (1915-2005), FindAGrave Mem. 15795500; Erwin Jerry Hedge, May 23, 1915, Birth Certificate No. 1734 (filed June 10, 1915) (ancestry.com).

marriage. Christopher C. and Martha L. Maddox (ages 71 and 68), next to Kizzie in the census, were likewise an older couple with their grandson Homer, age 14, in the household. Homer's father lived nearby.<sup>73</sup> In 1930, the Stewarts included husband Ira (brother to Luvena) and wife Laura, their three children, Ira's father, and Laura's mother. Laura's mother moved from Galena, eight miles east of Duckett across the Cossatot. Midwife Mary Cupp, widowed in 1924 and a successful homesteader, owned her place and her brother J. W. Hembree lived with her. John M. and Lou Katherine (Searcy) Jones still had their grandson Lee Roy in their home. Their son (Lee Roy's father) Linza lived nearby with his new wife and her seventeen-year-old son by a previous marriage.<sup>74</sup>

Tensions existed in the community and sometimes erupted in violence. As described earlier, in 1904, Turner Duckett threatened a neighbor with violence if he didn't back off and quit re-routing the public road. In 1906, Monroe Stewart (the former postmaster) was identified as the murderer of Turner Duckett due to "a grudge of long standing," in what turned out to be a mistake. Duckett was not dead; he was at the grand jury in Texarkana. No word as to whether there was indeed a grudge. In 1907, Penny Frachiseur's son Luch killed Milo Wagner over comments Milo had made about Luch's fourteen-year-old wife after a Farmers' Union meeting at the Holly Grove school house. (Luch's wife divorced him the next year.) Luch got off on self-defense. In 1919, an unknown Black man was murdered in Duckett Township after a multi-day hunt stretching from De Queen into the area. In 1928, Bush McCraven ambushed Milo's brother Bert while he was talking with Luch's sister-in-law Susanna (Maddox) Frachiseur (married to Jim). (Further complicating matters, Bush McCraven was married to Milo Wagner's sister Lula.) McCraven "was acquitted on the grounds that he feared for his life and had been ordered by Wagner to leave the county." One man

---

<sup>73</sup> Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules. In 1890, when Kizzie's fifth child was born, her husband was reportedly a miner in Antimony. Lee Andrew Hargis, Delayed Birth Certificate 354 (affidavit executed Dec. 28, 1942).

<sup>74</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules. Linzey was 30, his new wife was 44, and her son was 17. Lee Roy's mother died a week after Lee Roy's birth.

thought the violence, however, was “a great improvement in the ways of the people” compared to earlier days. Between J. W. Cook’s arrival in 1881 and the train’s arrival in 1896, he knew of eight or ten murders within fifteen miles of his home. In the 33 years since, “only three or four murders have taken place and that with a much greater population.”<sup>75</sup>

Duckett adapted to the changing times as funds permitted. The Hotovecs were remembered for being early adapters of technology, from a kerosene refrigerator to a gasoline-powered ice cream maker. Elza Duckett used a motor on his sorghum mill rather than the traditional mule. With the advent of woman suffrage, Duckett Township ended up with women as a third of their election officials in 1926. Three sisters and sisters-in-law Mellie (Duckett) Childs, Selma Duckett’s second wife Lillie (Dyer) Hobson Duckett, and Marvin’s wife Lizzie (Williams) Duckett joined eight men, Marvin Duckett, Ira Stewart, Ira’s father Albert Stewart, Galord Baker, Latimer Cook and his brother Frank Cook, Joe Mayo, and W. H. Downing.<sup>76</sup> Olen Stewart bought his own radio in about 1941. His mother saved almost all his CCC salary, but she finally agreed to use some of his CCC money “to buy a ‘store bought’ cold pack canner and enough screen to nail to the windows (bottoms only) and to make screen doors.”<sup>77</sup>

Even as the population declined, most people (33 of 36 households) in 1930 were working on their own farms, although twelve of them were renting. One head was farm labor, and another, Linza Jones, made railroad ties. Luvena Cooper (enumerated twice) was either keeping house or

---

<sup>75</sup> “Agin the Gov’ment; Resisting a Homestead; A. T. Duckett Has Seceded from the Union and Makes Threats Against the Owner - Changed the Public Road Without Permission,” *Nashville News*, Apr. 20, 1904, p. 1; “Docket for May Term of the Howard County Chancery Courts,” *Nashville News*, Apr. 12, 1905, p. 2; “Old Grudge Causes Killing,” *Mena Weekly Star*, May 9, 1907, p. 5; “Hatton News,” *Mena Weekly Star*, May 16, 1907, p. 8; “A Fight Ends with a Killing,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Sep. 19, 1907, p. 5; “Heavy Fine and Jail Sentence,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Apr. 29, 1909, p. 1; “Frachiseur Is Acquitted by Jury,” *Mena Weekly Star*, May 7, 1908, p. 3; “unknown,” Duckett Township, Howard County, Arkansas Death Certificate 320; “Black Ravisher Shot to Death,” *Mena (Ark.) Weekly Star*, Aug. 14, 1919, p. 1; Estalee Branson, “Life Along the Cossatot,” undated clipping shared by user LynnMcKinney49 on ancestry.com; “newspaper article on John W Cook,” originally shared by William Cook on ancestry.com Nov. 20, 2009 (probably from the *Mena Star* around 1930).

<sup>76</sup> GLO Records; Manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; “The Ballot,” *Nashville News*, Aug. 7, 1926, p. 2. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com and ancestry.com.

<sup>77</sup> Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, undated, about 1985), pp. 4, 22-23.

working at odd jobs, depending on the census entry. John Marlow was the only single person identified as a head of household in 1930, but he was living with his widowed aunt Sarah (Brock) Duckett. Sarah probably still owned the land she had filed a claim on a couple of weeks before she married Turner Duckett. According to family, the land eventually passed to her youngest stepdaughter Ova (Duckett) Thomas (1891-1987), who raised her son Clyde (1910-1995) there.<sup>78</sup> The Kansas City Southern had encouraged truck farming, and three of the farmers were specializing in truck farming (A. C. Shipman, James A. Hotovec, and midwife Mary Cupp). One farmer (John M. Jones, age 84) was retired.<sup>79</sup> Although Hotovec reported that his occupation was “farm operator,” the neighborhood memories were of a couple who had a reliable army pension and did not need the income. He sometimes hired neighbors to work for him. Hotovec’s farm was allegedly so hilly that you couldn’t set a bucket down flat on it, and he ended up renting land from Mellie (Duckett) Childs. She sometimes had to get after him for the money he owed her.<sup>80</sup>

The twenty-nine families living in Duckett Township in 1940 mostly worked on their own farms, although a few rented their farms or did wage labor for the lumber companies. Twenty-five owned their own farms (range in value from \$50 to \$1500, average \$432, median value \$350), and just four rented (\$2-\$10 per month). Just five household heads reported not being employed for pay, the four women and Richard H. Jones, a 57-year-old man who reported he was unable to work. For the most part, the men were either farm owners or farm operators, although two wage-earning men

---

<sup>78</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Inez Thomas Jones, “Double 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration, 1933-1983,” *Rural Arkansas* (Sep. 1983), p. 12-15. Ova married one of Sarah Thomas’s children, George Russell Thomas. He did not successfully homestead any land.

<sup>79</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules.

<sup>80</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett, Howard County, Ark. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Federal Bureau of Investigation Records received Jul. 11, 2019, under the Freedom of Information Act, in response to 100-HQ-190055 (in possession of the author); Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, undated, about 1985), pp. 25-26; Olen A. Stewart, *Growing up in Cossatot Country with Ira and Laura Stewart*, self-published pamphlet (about 1985), p. 18; V. L. Childs, Bart Childs, and Holly [Hartrick] Childs, “Mellie Mae Duckett,” *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated].



were saw milling for the Watkins Lumber Company. One earned \$150 the previous year, and the other, \$357. Orval Childs and his brother V. L. cut ties from timber on their property, using an ax their uncle Selma Duckett, a blacksmith, had made. Orval “recall[ed] hauling the ties to town, and that a wheel ran off the wagon twice in that seven mile trip, and I had to unload the ties and reload them by myself – about the hardest work I ever remember doing.” Jim Philpot (born in 1935 in Cherry Hill, fourteen miles east of Mena), remembered, “Back in those days, and it wasn't all that long ago, farmers eked out livings raising cotton and corn and doing a little sawmilling and logging on the side.” Other men probably picked up some work at the sawmills, like other men in the Ouachitas.<sup>81</sup>

Two single men were censused alone in 1940 – almost the only households featuring single men without women and without previous connections to Duckett in all four censuses. Joseph E. Hornsby had come from Carthage, Texas, before 1930, and the census claimed he was “widowed,” but he was divorced, either by law or by understanding. His family lived in Shreveport, and his wife had remarried in 1934. Hornsby moved to the Arkansas State Hospital in 1945, where he died in 1949. The other single man, Arbie V. Hutchens, had moved from Deaf Smith County, Texas. He led a relatively peripatetic life, starting in Washington County, Arkansas, moving to western Oklahoma (1910), then to California (1918-1929) (where he was a machinist’s helper on the railroad in 1920). He was in Le Flore County in eastern Oklahoma (1930), Deaf Smith County in west Texas (1935), and Duckett Township in 1937. He farmed around Wickes from January 1937 until 1941, when he sold out and moved to San Bernardino, California. Hutchens then worked for the Northern Pacific

---

<sup>81</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; “The Late Carson C. Fowler: The Man Who Loved Work,” *Looking Glass*, Sept. 11, 1975, pp. 7-8; “Down Highland Road,” *Looking Glass*, Dec. 18, 1975, p. 18 (one of a series of interviews sponsored by Lane Poultry of people who have moved or returned to the Ouachitas); Walter L. Brown (ed.), “Life of an Arkansas Logger in 1901,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21(1):44-74, (1962); Orval A. Childs, “Remembrances,” in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Kenneth L. Smith, *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1986).

Railway for a couple of months in Montana, until he resigned and went back to California (1942), where he farmed or ranched. Hutchens died in southeastern Oklahoma in 1970. There were a few other men living alone, or with their sons or brothers, in earlier censuses. Jasper Day (1862-?) and his brother Marion Day were censused in Duckett in the 1920 census. Jasper had homesteaded land in Howard County in 1920. The Days disappeared from the area. In 1930, William McCarley was a widower with three teenaged sons in the household. The McCarleys were relatively new to Duckett community. They had lived in Texas until around 1920. McCarley's wife (who died in New Mexico in 1924) is buried in nearby Gillham (Sevier County). Also in 1930, Joel Ewing lived alone in Duckett, while his wife kept house for their son George McNaught Ewing in Columbia, Missouri, where he earned a Ph.D. in mathematics. Sam Miles was a widower with a twelve-year-old son in the 1920 census, but he had lived in Duckett Township for decades, possibly his entire life. Most men did not live alone, especially without women, in Duckett community.<sup>82</sup>

Although it might seem reasonable to expect that you must be related to members of the community to be included in a rural farming community, the Hotovecs, the Stricklands and the Rowes integrated into the community despite not being related to anyone in the community. Although the Rowes did not stay long in the Duckett area, the newspapers report community visits. In October 1918, Sarah Thomas and her daughter Edith went visiting to the Rowes, and the next week the Rowes visited with Arvazine (Baker) Duckett. When Selma Duckett's daughter Ola was sick in May 1919 (the year after her mother died in the influenza pandemic), she stayed with the Rowes. In May 1919, Mrs. Rowe "entertained the young ladies on Sunday." In 1920, Marvin and

---

<sup>82</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett, Howard County, Ark. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; A. V. Hutchens, Northern Pacific Railway Company Personnel Files, 1890-1963, Box 1068; File Number: 201698 (Minnesota Historical Society, ancestry.com); Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules; Arkansas, Death Certificates. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com and ancestry.com.

Sarah Duckett visited the Rowes. The exchange of visiting was part of community life. Neither the Hotovecs nor the Stricklands had children (and Mrs. Rowe's son from a previous marriage didn't move with them). Stories from Duckett and Wickes are filled with tidbits that show the importance of the Hotovecs and the Stricklands to the community. James A. Hotovec (1879-1946) was a first-generation Bohemian American from Nebraska and his wife Otsune (Terede) Hotovec (1886-1964) was born in Nagasaki, Japan. They probably arrived in the area around 1923. The Hotovecs shared their resources, from magazine subscriptions to ice cream, with the community. The Stricklands moved from Kansas to Duckett between 1910 and 1917. In Duckett, he sometimes acted as the undertaker. Mrs. Strickland was a bit eccentric. She was remembered by Elva (Stewart) Williams as the cat lady "because she loved cats. She had at least 75 cats in, under, on, and over everything in the house. They would even walk on the table or on the cold cookstove. She did have a screen to keep them out of the bedroom."<sup>83</sup>

Neighbors reciprocated in sharing their resources with the Stricklands and the Hotovecs. In about 1941 (as Elva remembered it), neighbor girls, Elva and Oza Stewart, "sat up several nights" with Mrs. Strickland, and "[o]ne night, we sat up all night and did her milking chores the next morning before going home." Mrs. Hotovec lived with the family of O. L. and Elsie Childs for a while after she was widowed. By the time Mr. Strickland died in 1944 (after being crushed by runaway horses along highway 71), the undertaker business had been professionalized and the Beasley-Wood Funeral Home took care of what needed to be done, but his six pallbearers included five who qualified as related. Two local pastors, E. G. Winfield and S. W. Kirton, officiated and were

---

<sup>83</sup> "Wickes and Duckett Drips," *Mena Weekly Star*, Oct. 3, 1918, p. 8; "Duckett Drops," *Mena Weekly Star*, Oct. 10, 1918, p. 8; "Duckett Drips," *Mena Weekly Star*, Apr. 3, 1919, p. 8; "Duckett Dots," *Mena Weekly Star*, May 8, 1919, p. 12; "Wickes Waves," *Mena Weekly Star*, Mar. 25, 1920, p. 10; Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark. Death Certificates for Oler May Luster (Cert. 376, filed Aug. 10, 1921), Roy Calvin Miller (Cert. 876, filed Sep. 27, 1921), Perry Demorist (Cert. 557, filed May 27, 1923) (ancestry.com); Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, undated, about 1985), p. 6.

also related. The Hotovecs and the Stricklands are buried in Duckett Cemetery.<sup>84</sup>

Duckett Township in the early twentieth century was made up of small, diversified farms, usually run by their owners or relatives. They raised crops for themselves and eventually for the markets the Kansas City Southern brought them. Even these farmers, though, still raised a dab of cotton and corn, and, later, truck crops, to transform into spending money, overalls, shoes, and whiskey. To live in Duckett sometimes meant you died in Duckett. Neighbors helped with delivering babies and with burying. Farmers needed more than their own family to succeed at farming, but having their own family made it easier.

#### IV. Conclusion

Duckett Township was largely settled after the Civil War by white farming families. Although they were not always already related to other farming families in the area, being related was not unusual. Many formed alliances through marriage to other families in the area. Although many of the heads of these farming families were from Arkansas, being from the Old Northwest Territory or other non-Upland South places was also not unusual. (As seen in Chapter 3, this trend holds true for homesteaders across southern Polk County and northern Howard County, and may be true elsewhere in the Ouachitas.) Many delayed formalizing title to land they lived on until the Kansas City Southern arrived. It was a farming community like places where many other Arkansans lived. It transitioned from mostly subsistence farming to truck and vegetable farming over time. To succeed in farming in Duckett meant raising much of your own food and feed, but farming families also raised truck and fruit to ship on the KCS. Over time, their family size declined while education levels increased. A high school education required leaving Duckett, and its eight-grade school. Leaving for school was often a first step to leaving the community.

---

<sup>84</sup> Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, undated, about 1985), p. 6; *Mena Star*, April 20, 1944 (from transcription on FindAGrave Mem. 3414822) (pallbearers Lee Musgraves, James Miller [sic, possibly Miles?], Whit Price, Marvin Duckett, Ira Stewart, and Pearl Bradley); FindAGrave.com.

## METHODS

**Homesteading:** I collected Bureau of Land Management (BLM) information on all patentees in the Howard County congressional townships in which Duckett Township is located, shown in Table 2 below.<sup>85</sup> I also used the maps in Gregory A. Boyd, *Family Maps of Howard County, Arkansas* (Norman, OK: Arphax Publishing Co., 2006) and Boyd, *Family Maps of Polk County, Arkansas* (Norman, OK: Arphax Publishing Co., 2010). MG# in the table refers to the Map Groups in those books. Boyd's maps show the location of homesteads, roads, railroads, waterways, towns, and cemeteries. Boyd's maps are, however, incomplete. Besides omitting the original buyers of Sections 16, it also left out about twenty-five homesteaders in Duckett Township.

Table 2 below provides, by Congressional township, (a) the number of copied homestead files, and (b) total land grants (including pre-1862 and timbermen's grants) and grants to women after 1862 in these two Congressional townships. 140 of the 347 land grants in these two Congressional townships included parts of Duckett Township, and I have copies of nine of them (about 6%).

Table 2. North Howard County Congressional Townships Containing Duckett Township
T5S R30W (MG1) Men (copied): 6 Women (copied): 3 Total Grants: 190 Women's Grants: 15
T6S R30W (MG4) Men (copied): 1 Women (copied): 3 Total Grants: 157 Women's Grants: 7

---

<sup>85</sup> "The Official Federal Land Records Site, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx> (accessed November 13, 2019).

An as-yet unanswered question about homesteaders and other residents in the Ouachita foothills is: What did the men and women who successfully obtained land from the federal government after the Civil War do with this land?

To answer this question, I intend to examine the property records at the Howard County courthouse in Nashville, where nearly all the property transactions should be recorded, since nearly all occurred after the county's formation in 1873. This has the added benefit that Howard County has not suffered the record loss seen by Polk County. (Any Polk County property transactions recorded before 1873 were destroyed in its 1883 courthouse fire. They may have been subsequently re-recorded in Howard County.) I would start with the homesteaders who acquired land in Duckett Township, identify when they recorded their land grant, when they transferred their land, and to whom. I would like to also look at the people census takers identified as property holders in Duckett Township. I would like to ask the same questions of the 170 Howard County homesteaders (all the identified women and a comparable sample of men) which I also used in Chapter 3. I would especially like to look at the mystery homesteaders and the mystery property owners in the census. When did they sell their land and to whom? Also, the women in the 1940 census who owned land would be of interest. Unfortunately, because of the ongoing pandemic, I have not gone to Nashville.

**Grandparents:** To get an idea about whether Duckett Township families had the same latitudinal bias seen in other places, I identified the seventy-one children living in Duckett Township, between five and fifteen years old, who were on the 1910 census. I determined their grandparents' natal states (or countries) based on census records and other sources. As always, census records may be inconsistent. I tried to identify a consensus natal state when the sources were in conflict. Also, some of these children are siblings or cousins, which results in some grandparents being counted multiple times. Although I haven't done the numbers, I suspect that paternal grandparents will tend to be older than maternal grandparents, and that maternal grandmothers will

be younger than the other grandparents because, when women died in this area, leaving half-grown children behind, men often remarried, and usually to younger women. Thus, it is not uncommon to see twenty or more years difference between the father and mother of these children. That age difference would be amplified at the grandparent level. So, although Table 1 reflects grandparents' natal states, the year when that grandparent was born varies.

### Chapter 3: “I Know How to Farm”: Women Homesteaders in the Ouachita Foothills

Sarah Thomas filed her homestead claim for 160 acres on the border between south Polk and north Howard Counties, Arkansas, in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains, in July 1898, just six months after her husband Barnard died. They had moved to the area from Texas in 1883 and successfully homesteaded 160 acres before Barnard and their fourteen-year-old son died of typhoid. She was left with a life estate in their land (assessed at \$300), the prospect of a pension for his Mexican War service (\$6/month), five children ranging in age from nine to eighteen, about \$100 in animals (two cows, three heifers, twelve head of hogs, and one mare, which was soon to die), and \$100 in doctor bills. When the Bureau of Pensions asked her why she couldn't simply rent out her land, she wrote back, a bit sharply, that “the land ... in this country is to[o] poor to rent and we had no money to hire help. ...” Why would anyone rent land that they could get for (nearly) free? With the Kansas City Southern Railroad and sawmills newly come to southern Polk County, three-fourths of the nearby land had not yet been claimed. She continued, “[Y]ou asked what kind of work I do. I plow or do any thing else on the farm except making rails. I know how to farm.”<sup>86</sup>

Even though the federal government transferred nearly a quarter of Arkansas's land to private use after the Homestead Act of 1862 was enacted (and Arkansas rejoined the Union), little has been written about this transfer, and even less about women homesteaders in Arkansas. This data-driven essay focuses on women in an area in south Polk and north Howard counties that was nearly entirely settled after the Civil War, with most of the land being transferred after the Kansas City Southern Railroad's arrival in the late 1890s. It seems likely that other women homesteaders in the Ouachita foothills would also have chosen to file for land in their communities, near their

---

This chapter, in a slightly different form, was awarded the Arkansas Women's History Institute's 2020 Susie Pryor Award. Some of the research was made possible by the Mary Hudgins Arkansas History Research Award (UA Department of History).

<sup>86</sup> Barnard and Sarah E. Thomas, [hereinafter Thomas Pension File] Case Files of Mexican War Pension Applications, ca. 1887 - ca. 1926, Records of the Department of Veteran Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives & Records Administration, Washington, DC [hereinafter NARA].



extended families, and where they already knew how to farm. Land became “choice” (to use Robert B. Walz’s term) only after transportation made already-farmable land accessible. The essay further compares women acquiring Ouachita land to women farther west and to men nearby. Long-distance traveling to settle new lands is often thought of as the quintessential homesteading experience – going West to conquer new lands by settlement and cultivation. This is not what we see in the Ouachitas.

Ouachita women homesteaded within their kinship communities but could use their own land as a means for economic independence in a time and place where women’s opportunities were few. Ouachita homesteading women were already part of their communities when they began homesteading. Being single, widowed, or deserted didn’t mean they homesteaded alone. They, like homesteading men around them, farmed in a community of yeoman farming families, all trying to make do with what they could at home. They participated in the network of farmers to trade labor with others, just like men did. They didn’t have to make rails if somebody else in the community could, just as not all men were blacksmiths or distillers. Although unmarried homesteading women were uncomfortable with being alone, they figured out ways to compensate by living with family while homesteading. In contrast to homesteading women farther west, women in the Ouachitas like Sarah Thomas had ties to the area – they already knew how to farm.

The Homestead Act of 1862 was intended to encourage “actual settlers” to create farms in exchange for cheap (but not quite free) land.<sup>87</sup> Women were always a part of this, getting land in their own name as heads of households as well as when they were a part of farming families. Yet it can be difficult to compare the experience of southern homesteading women to that of either the men in their communities or with other homesteading women because most of the homesteading

---

<sup>87</sup> “An Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain” (May 22, 1862), <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/37th-congress/session-2/c37s2ch75.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2019).

historiography is anecdotal and focused west of the 100<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian.<sup>88</sup> To the extent a southern homesteading historiography exists, it focuses on the Southern Homestead Act (in force only from 1866 until 1876), and not the longer arc of the Homestead Act (which distributed land until 1930 and beyond).<sup>89</sup>

The Arkansas homesteading historiography is descriptive, focused on white men, and mostly produced by archaeologists, although Arkansas historians have noted a few African American homesteading instances.<sup>90</sup> They do not use homestead files to study the process of homesteading in Arkansas. Brennan comes closest to a study like this one where she considered a dozen homestead application files and the GLO digitized records in Pope County (in the Ozarks) to conclude that the earliest lands patented were located ... where the terrain is more suitable for cultivation (i.e., bottom lands with ready access to water).<sup>91</sup> The others acknowledge that land patents were obtained, but do

---

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

<sup>89</sup> Michael L. Lanza, *Agrarianism and Reconstruction Politics: The Southern Homestead Act* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 61-66; Neil Canaday, Charles Reback, and Kristin Stowe, "Race and Local Knowledge: New Evidence from the Southern Homestead Act," *Review of Black Economy* 42(4) (2015): 399-413.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Z. Brennan, "Sense of Place: Reconstructing Community through Archeology, Oral History, and GIS" (PhD Diss., University of Arkansas, 2009), 64 and Bibliography; Mary Z. Brennan, "Reconstructing the Genealogical Landscape: Kinship and Settlement along Moccasin and Indian Creeks, Pope County," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* [hereinafter *AHQ*] 67 (Winter 2008): 386-397; Leslie C. Stewart-Abernathy, *The Moser Farmstead, Independent but not Isolated: The Archeology of a Late Nineteenth Century Ozark Farmstead*, Research Series No. 26 (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1986); William M. Jurgelski, "Homesteads and Homesteaders in the Ouachita National Forest" (master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1996); Roger E. Coleman, "Archeological Investigations at Boggs Homestead (3MN781), Oden Ranger District, Ouachita National Forest, Montgomery County, Arkansas," Cultural Resources Report 83, Ouachita National Forest, Hot Springs, Arkansas (1993); Roger Coleman, Paul S. Gardner, Jerry Hilliard, Michael A. Pfeiffer, and Jack Stewart (ed. Hester A. Davis), "Excavations in the Shady Lake Recreation Area and Vicinity, 1992-1993, Ouachita National Forest," *Arkansas Archeologist* 38 (1995, published in 1997): 1-54; G. Meeks Etchieson, Enid Erickson, Michael A. Pfeiffer, Roger E. Coleman, Larry D. Haikey, William F. Pell, Daniel J. Nolan, Jr., Chapter 1, "Archeological and Historical Background," 1-22, in *Ozark-Ouachita Highlands Assessment: Social and Economic Conditions*, United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station, General Technical Report SRS-34, Report 4 of 5 (1999); Bobby L. Lovett, "African Americans, Civil War, and Aftermath in Arkansas," *AHQ* 54 (Fall 1995): 304-58; Story Matkin-Rawn, "'The Great Negro State of the Country': Arkansas's Reconstruction and the Other Great Migration," *AHQ* 72 (Spring 2013): 1-41; Guy Lancaster, "'There Are Not Many Colored People Here': African Americans in Polk County, Arkansas, 1896-1937," *AHQ* 70 (Winter 2011): 429-449 (four African American men homesteading in Polk County's T3S R30W, just north of the study region); Guy Lancaster, "Nightriding and Racial Cleansing in the Arkansas River Valley," *AHQ* 72 (Autumn 2013): 242-264 (federal case re deprivation of right to pursue a homestead).

<sup>91</sup> Mary Z. Brennan, "Sense of Place: Reconstructing Community through Archeology, Oral History, and GIS" (PhD Diss., University of Arkansas, 2009), 64 and Bibliography.

not really consider the process. For instance, Guy Lancaster's 2011 article connects the names of Black families who lived in Little Africa, east of Mena, to land patents digitized by the BLM in the same area, but he did not retrieve the corresponding land patent files. Lancaster's 2013 article dug into a court case in which night riders threatened a Black homesteader in Van Buren County (in the Arkansas River valley) and were charged by federal authorities as a consequence, but this article did not consider the mechanics of homesteading or the impact of homesteading within a community. (It would be interesting to obtain multiple case files for these two areas.) The rest are archeological studies of single homesteads now within the Ouachita National Forest. Recent general textbooks on Arkansas history do not mention the Homestead Act or the Southern Homestead Act, even though the federal government's land transfer via homesteading or commutation was second in acreage only to the earlier Swamp Land Act, which is mentioned.<sup>92</sup> (Commutation allowed a homesteader to reduce the time residing on the land before obtaining clear title from five years to fourteen months in exchange for increased fees.)

Under the 1862 Homestead Act, farmers could acquire up to 160 acres in exchange for committing their time and what the government considered a small amount of money (\$14 to enter a claim plus fees for affidavits and perfecting the claim and advertisements), building a house, and cultivating a percentage of the land. Although specifics changed over time, a claimant was expected to live on and farm the land, without significant absences, for five years (reduced to three years by the Homestead Act of 1912), and then to "prove up" -- prove they had met the requirements -- within seven years after filing their claim.<sup>93</sup> This land was land that the federal government had not

---

<sup>92</sup> Jeannie M. Whyne, Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris S. Arnold, *Arkansas: A Concise History* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2019), 113-114, 243; S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 16 and 20.

<sup>93</sup> E. Wade Howe, "Federal-Land States," 101-177, in *Land & Property Research in the United States* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Inc., 1997); Malcolm J. Rohrbaugh, "Bureau of Land Management," in Donald R. Whitnah (ed.), *Government Agencies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 24; Hannah Haksgaard, "The Homesteading Rights of Deserted Wives: A History," *Nebraska Law Review* 99(2) (2020): 419-476.

managed to sell previously – either because nobody cared to buy it or because, in the case of the western territories, it had not been surveyed and made available for purchase. Robert B. Walz has argued that the “choicest public acreage in Arkansas had been claimed long before the homestead act became operative.”<sup>94</sup> Land in the five southern public land grant states, including Arkansas, was not generally available for homesteading until 1868, due first to secession and then to the 1866 Southern Homestead Act’s restrictions.<sup>95</sup>

As seen in Figure 10, this study focuses on a region about 18 miles east to west by 12 miles north to south, in what is now the southern part of Polk County and the northern part of Howard County. In 1860, this area was entirely within Polk County and largely encompassed by the political townships of White and Sulphur Springs, and enslaved people were less than 4% of the population of this region. (The southern part of White Township is now Ozark Township, and Sulphur Springs Township is now in Howard County, and has been split into Duckett, Baker, Sulphur Springs, Umpire, Mountain, Burg, Clay, and part of Blue Ridge Townships.<sup>96</sup>) This land remained in Polk County until 1873, when the state took the eastern part to make up the northern portion of the newly-formed Howard County. The communities anchoring the east and west ends of this region are Wickes (created with the coming of the Kansas City Southern in about 1896) and Umpire (named around 1900 when it acquired a post office). Athens had the first (and for many years, only) high school. Once the railroad came in, new farms, lumber businesses, and two resorts (Bogg Springs and Baker Springs) followed, as did people.<sup>97</sup> By 1900, this region was even more white. The handful of Black people found in the 1880, 1900, and 1910 censuses were not successful

---

<sup>94</sup> Robert B. Walz, "Migration into Arkansas, 1820-1880: Incentives and Means of Travel," *AHQ* 17 (Winter 1958): 309-324.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Wallace Gates, "The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935," 28-62, in Howard W. Ottoson, ed., *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).

<sup>96</sup> Russell P. Baker, *Arkansas Township Atlas, 1819-1930: History of the Minor Civil Divisions in Each County* (rev. 2006).

<sup>97</sup> "The Ozark Mountain Region of Missouri and Arkansas," *Port Arthur Route Agricultural and Industrial Bulletin*, vol. 5(7) (Kansas City, Mo. June 1924): 1-3; Kenneth L. Smith, *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1986), overleaf map and 18-22.

homesteaders, although Black people did obtain homesteads in central Polk County around Mena.<sup>98</sup> Black Ouachitans, like white Ouachitans, tended to obtain homesteads in communities, and not enough of them stayed in this region to support a homesteading community.<sup>99</sup>

Even though the federal government had opened the land for settlement by 1846, it still owned ninety percent of this land in 1880 (Figure 11). Although not flat like the Gulf Coastal Plains (including Howard County's present-day county seat of Nashville) to its south, this region is gently rolling hills, threaded with creeks and rivers, and springs. The 1842 surveyors described the region as "hilly and poor," including areas that were "gently rolling, soil thin but fit for cultivation."<sup>100</sup> What the area lacked was navigable streams and roads. Like much of Arkansas, this area was not terribly accessible until the railroads came in. The land was largely cultivable once the issue of access was dealt with, making it useful for studying the later phases of land acquisition from the federal government.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Guy Lancaster, "'There Are Not Many Colored People Here': African Americans in Polk County, Arkansas, 1896-1937," *AHQ* 70 (Winter 2011): 429-449.

<sup>99</sup> Data not shown. Besides the cluster Guy Lancaster noticed in Center Township (Polk County), I have identified clusters of Black Ouachitan homesteaders in Gap, Fir, and Mountain Townships (Montgomery County), Muddy Fork Township, Polk County (the community described in Ruth Polk Patterson, *The Seed of Sally Good'n: A Black Family of Arkansas 1833-1893* (University Press of Kentucky, 1985). There is another cluster near Center Point (Howard County) in the Gulf Coastal Plain.

<sup>100</sup> "Compared Copy of Original Field Notes of East and South Boundary Lines, Book 678A, Bunder 137 of the Following Ranges and Townships..." Typed transcript, Township 5S Range 30W. [https://geostor-glo.s3.amazonaws.com/Township\\_05\\_South/T05S\\_R30W-ORIG\\_BDRY.pdf](https://geostor-glo.s3.amazonaws.com/Township_05_South/T05S_R30W-ORIG_BDRY.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Local Tract Books for Arkansas, 1837?-1946?, vols. 50-53, Bureau of Land Management Records, Record Group 49, NARA, 53:36 (T5S R32W), 52:105 (T5S R31W), 51:178 (T5S R30W), 51:61 (T5S R29W), 50:134 (T5S R28W), 53:54 (T6S R33W), 53:45 (T6S R32W), 52:114 (T6S R31W), 51:187 (T6S T30W), 51:70 (T6S R29W), 50:143 (T6S R28W), familysearch.org.

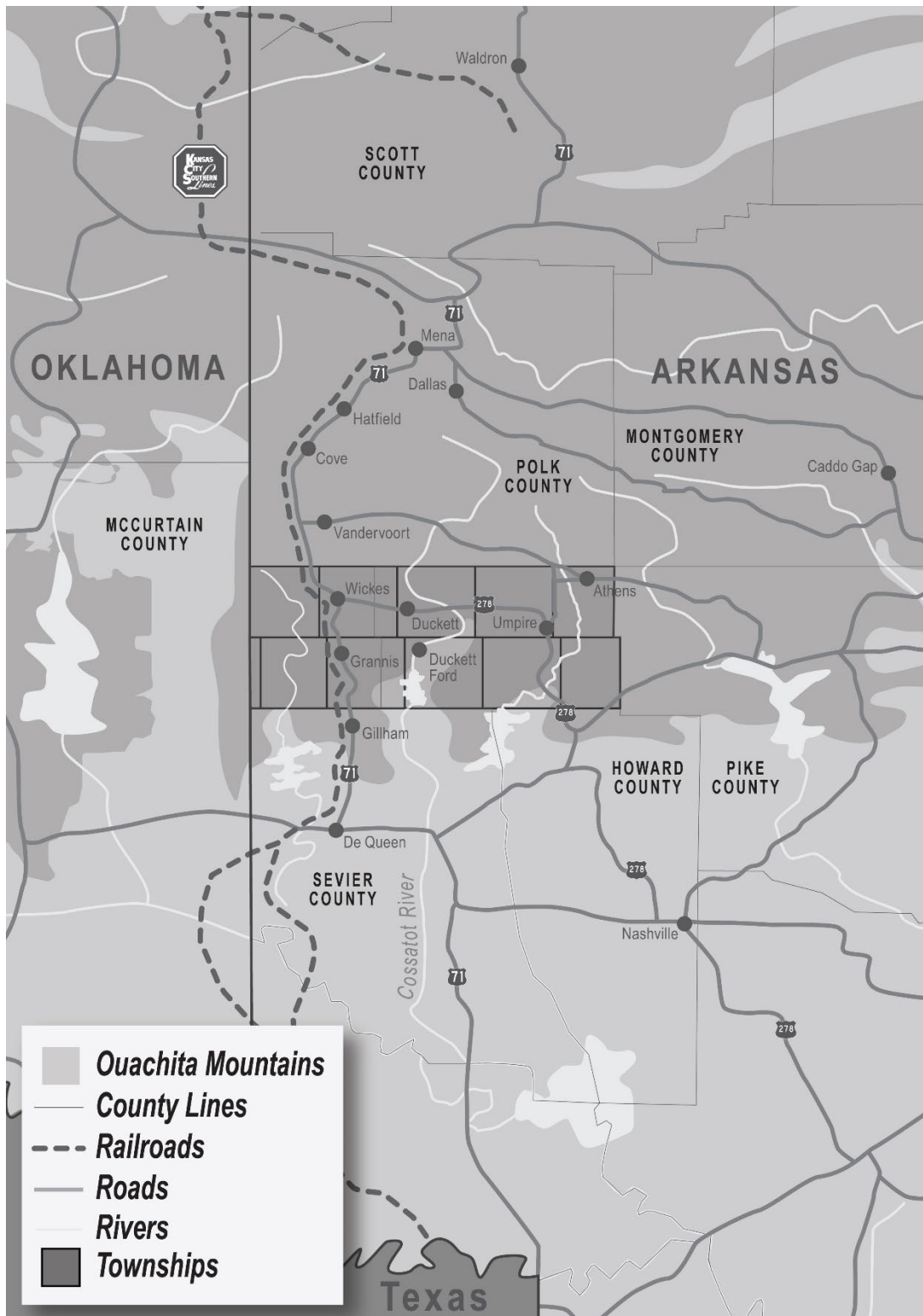


Figure 10. The homesteading area studied (the large rectangle made up of smaller squares) is in southern Polk County and northern Howard County. The Kansas City Southern railroad runs roughly parallel to US Highway 71. Although the towns are now located on US Highway 71, most of them were formed because of the railroad. Cartography by: Jack Critser.

Farmers wanted good land and good transportation so homesteading applications accelerated when the trains came. Fewer than two percent, just 44 patents between 1875 and 1882, may have been obtained under the Southern Homestead Act.<sup>102</sup> As seen in Figure 12, the number of farms and people in Polk and Howard Counties increased in the years following the Kansas City Southern's arrival, peaking in about 1910, but reverting to 1900 levels by 1930.<sup>103</sup> Figure 11 shows that three-fourths of the land in the study area was not yet in private hands until after 1900. These data contradict Kenneth L. Smith's claim that "by 1900, latecomers [to the Ouachitas] found very little [land for homesteading] that was both available and cultivable."<sup>104</sup> Neil Canaday et al. found that Louisiana homesteaders in the 1870s who were farther from transportation (railroads or navigable rivers) were more likely to succeed at proving up their homesteads, which suggests that people chose not to buy land nearer transportation before the Civil War because it was less suitable for farming. In contrast to this study, Canaday et al. did not identify any regions in their study with changed access to transportation.<sup>105</sup> In 1917, a forester for the Arkansas National Forest examined two Range 28W townships, 5S (the township in the northeast corner of the study area) and 4S (just north of 5S and in much steeper terrain). Township 4S, he wrote, was doomed to "always be a nonproducer of agriculture" due to its hilliness, poor soils, and inaccessibility, but "almost the whole of Township 5[S] ... farmed intensively" because it was considerably less hilly.<sup>106</sup> Range 28W, Township 5S, like the rest of the area considered in this article, was suitable for farming once the access problem was addressed.

---

<sup>102</sup> Paul W. Gates, "Federal Land Policies in the Southern Public Land States," *Agricultural History* 53(1) (1979): 206-227.

<sup>103</sup> Farm data from <https://www.socialexplorer.com/explore-maps> (accessed November 21, 2019). Population data from Richard L. Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790-1990* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1996).

<sup>104</sup> Smith, *Sawmill*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Canaday, et al., "Race and Local Knowledge," 408.

<sup>106</sup> William E. Wootten, *Extensive and Intensive Land Classification of the Arkansas National Forest, 1917*, Vol. 1 (Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 2005), 114-118.

Women homesteaders in this area were limited in how they could earn money in ways that men were not. Men could “split rails,” while women, or at least Sarah Thomas, did not. Men could work in the growing timber industry or the illicit distilling industry. Women did not. Women were left “know[ing] how to farm” to make a living. Although most of the homestead files are silent as to what was farmed, women and men nearly uniformly reported raising corn and having an orchard. To a lesser extent, men and women alike reported garden truck, hay, cane, and various specialty crops. However, women homesteaders seemed more likely to report growing cotton than their male counterparts. Eight of nine women (89%), who were asked to list their crops, included cotton. The ninth, Bedy Murphy, did not raise cotton, but she picked cotton when she was absent from her claim.<sup>107</sup> Just fifteen of the twenty-one men (71%) raised cotton – a significant number, but not all. Corn, orchards, garden truck, cane sorghum, and other crops were all important to keeping Ouachita farmers from needing much in the way of cash, but men and women still needed some cash. Cotton was one way women could convert their labor into cash.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Bedy Murphy, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,512.

<sup>108</sup> J. A. Dickey, “Three-Year Study of Farm Management and Incomes in a Typical Upland Section of Arkansas,” Bulletin 262 (Fayetteville, Ark., 1931) (study of Faulkner County); W. C. Lassetter, “The Home Vegetable Garden in Arkansas,” Circular No. 89 (Fayetteville, Ark., 1920). Holly (Hartrick) Childs remembers that picking cotton was the job of women and children in rural Ashley County in the 1940s. (Text conversation, June 3, 2022.)



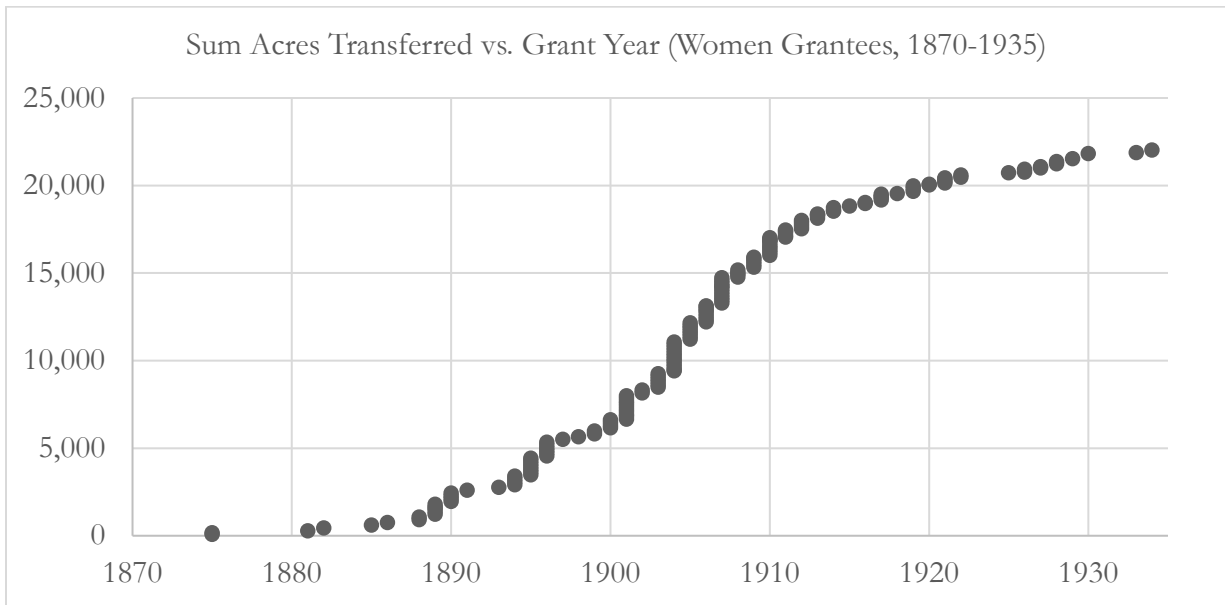
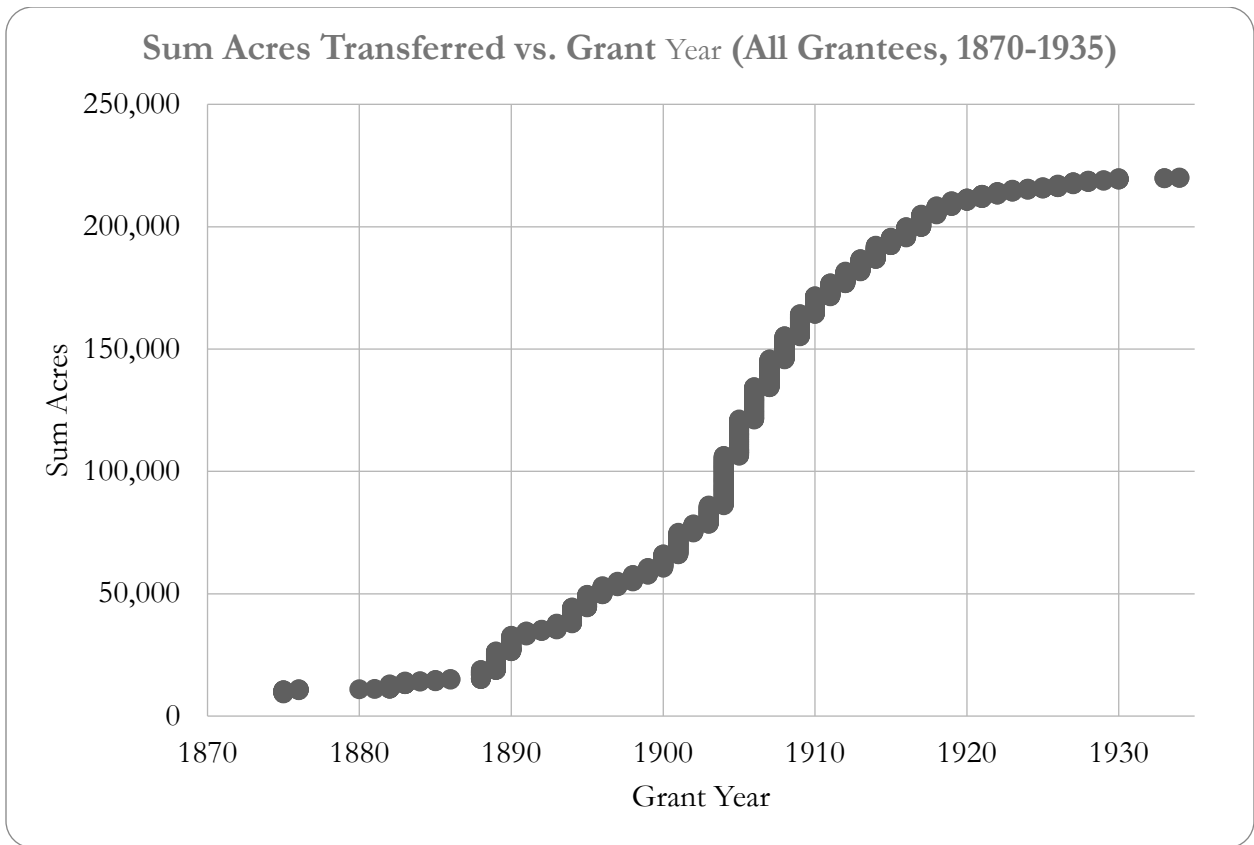


Figure 11. Acres transferred 1870-1935 (all grantees and women). Vertical black lines show acres transferred in a calendar year. The line moves up, showing the total acres transferred to date, just over 220,000 acres by 1935, including approximately 3200 acres acquired directly by timbermen. Land transferred to women (lower graph) followed a similar pattern and approached 22,100 acres, about ten percent of the total.

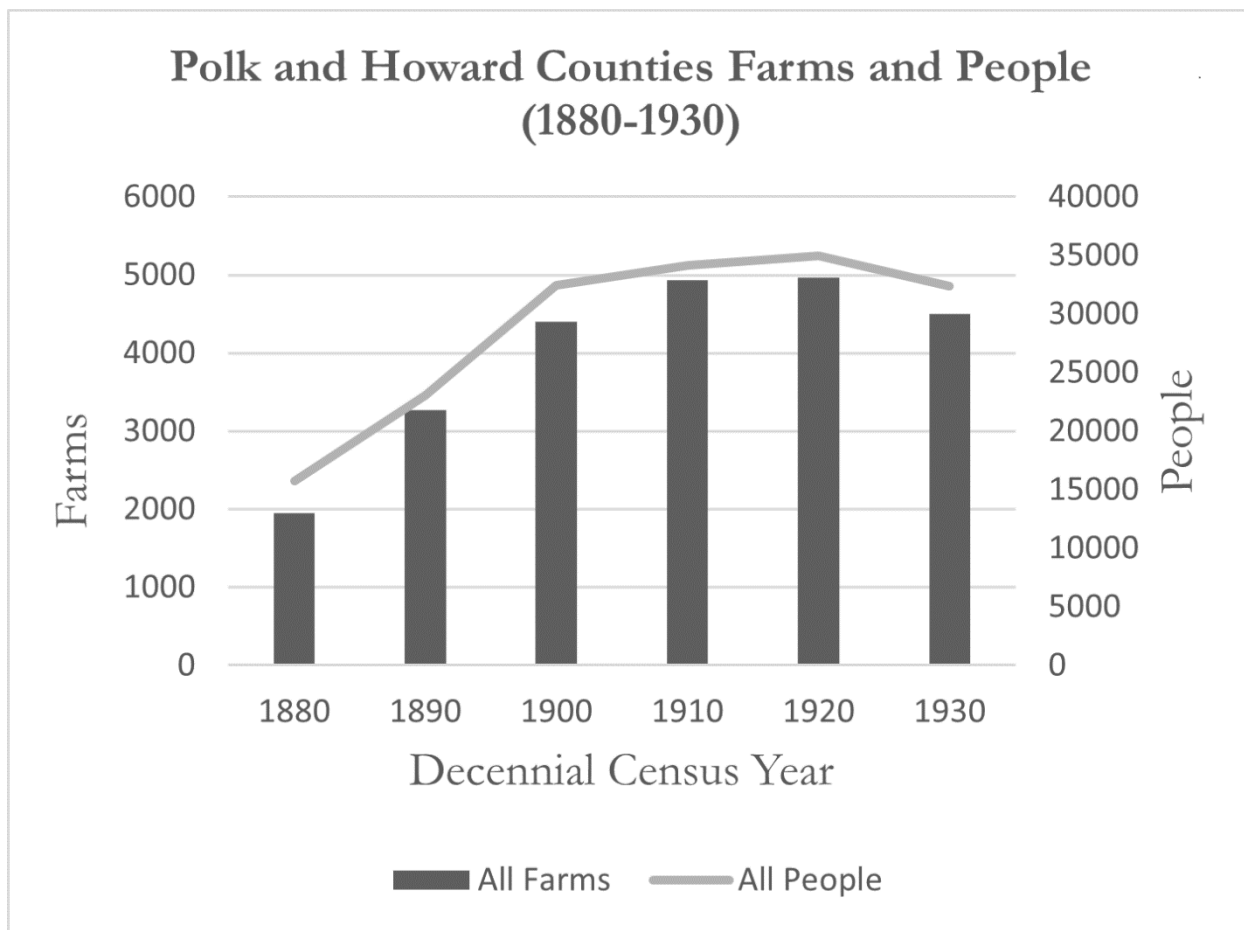


Figure 12. Polk and Howard Counties: farms and people (1880-1930). The decennial censuses reported farm numbers and people by county, not congressional township, but this gives an idea of the rapid growth and then leveling off from the date of the area’s first homestead grant.

Most homesteaders, and most heads of household, in the Ouachitas were married. Married was the default status for a farming household. Almost three-quarters of all post-Civil War land grants in this region went to married men, as shown in Figure 13.<sup>109</sup> About eleven percent (168) were to women and about eight percent to men who were single, widowed, or deserted.<sup>110</sup> The

<sup>109</sup> This study considers all patentees, whether homesteaders or commutators. Richard Edwards, “To Commute or Not Commute, The Homesteader’s Dilemma” *Great Plains Quarterly* 38(2) (Spring 2018), 129-150.

<sup>110</sup> Eight percent of the men and eleven percent of the women were not identified, mostly latecomers. Railroads likely increased salability of the land, so latecomers could homestead land, sell it, and move on, leaving no trace in a census. Some may be, like Augusta (Jacobson) Palmquist, outsiders who assigned their homestead rights to a timberman (Herman Dierks in her case). Congress had allowed her (and others) to trade a Wisconsin homestead claim, mistakenly

percentages of widowed men (5%) and widowed women (4%) are similar. Homesteading women's marital status and the percentage receiving patents in this region are similar to those reported in other regions. Richard Edwards, et al., found about 85% of women acquiring land in Nebraska and about 75% of men were presently or had been married. Edwards et al. and other studies report five

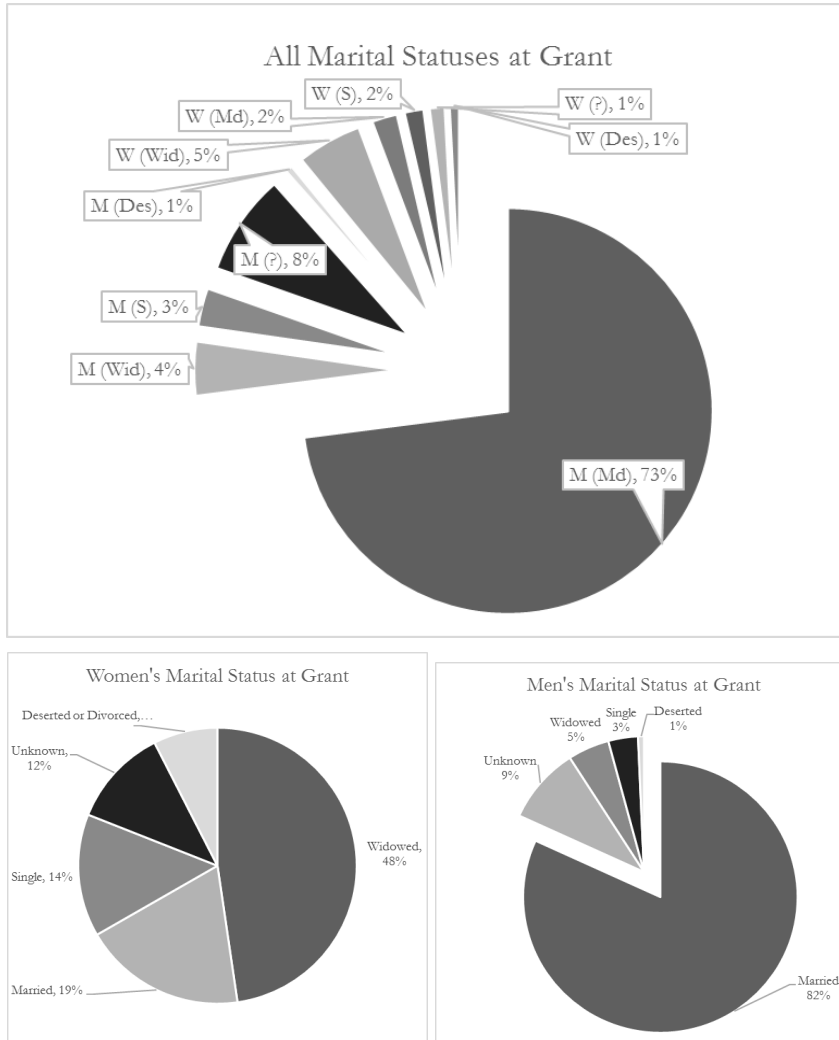


Figure 13. The percent of women (W) is based on actual numbers (168 grants), while the percent of men (M) is extrapolated from a sample of ten percent of men (144 grants). Women's patents are about eleven percent of the total.

on railroad lands, for a homestead elsewhere. Augusta (Jacobson) Palmquist, Land Entry Case Files: Homestead Final Cert. 3,815 (Camden Land Office), Bureau of Land Management Records, Record Group 49, NARA. [Land Entry Case Files hereinafter cited: Name, Homestead File, Final Cert. ###. A woman's name change in the homesteading process is shown by parentheticals around her earlier surname. All cited homestead files originated from the Camden Land Office through about August 1923, and from the Little Rock Land Office afterwards, unless the citation identifies another Land Office.]

to ten percent of successful homesteaders were women.<sup>111</sup>

In some instances, women's experiences can tell us about homesteading in the Ouachitas more generally. Even after railroads were built, travel could be difficult. It often remained a case of can't-get-there-from-here. The northwestern part of Howard County was bounded by the Cossatot River on its east and south, and its residents often found it easier to go to the county seats of Polk and Sevier Counties than to Howard County's seat. Likewise, some western Polk County residents found it easier to get to Sevier County's seat than to their own.<sup>112</sup> The homestead files are filled with affidavits explaining why the claimants and witnesses went somewhere other than their own county seat or missed their advertised date to prove up their claim. In July 1895, Julia Boucher missed her hearing because "the excessive rains raised the waters of the creeks to such an extent that we were unable [to] cross said creeks." In 1908, Mary Jane Brock justified her plans to go to Mena for proving up by explaining that "it avoids an overland Trip. It is nearer to Mena, can go by Rail Road, and in case thare [*sic*] should be high water at the Time of making Final Proof, I have Two Rivers to cross to go to Nashville and no boats to go on."<sup>113</sup>

Women's claims also showed that getting a land patent required attention to detail. Homesteaders submitted many affidavits regarding lost documents, misstated property descriptions, and not knowing the law. Fortunately, Congress authorized the Board of Equitable Adjudication to transfer title to an applicant who had "tried to comply with the law, but had failed in some particular

---

<sup>111</sup> Edwards et al., *Homesteading the Plains*, 130-138. See also Tonia M. Compton, "Challenging Imperial Expectations: Black and White Female Homesteaders in Kansas," *Great Plains Quarterly* 33(1) (2013): 49-61; Anne B. Webb, "Minnesota Women Homesteaders: 1863-1889," *Journal of Social History* 23(1) (Autumn 1989): 115-136; Lanza, *Agrarianism and Reconstruction Politics*, Appendix A.

<sup>112</sup> Traveling troubles continued throughout this time, although the county seats themselves changed frequently. "No Official Count: Three Townships Had Not Reported Saturday," *Nashville News*, April 4, 1906, p. 2 ("river being up was surmised as the cause of the delay of the [election] returns" from northern Howard County).

<sup>113</sup> Julia Boucher, Homestead File, Final Cert. 7,642; Mary Jane Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,095. See also Barney Thomas, Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,410; Bedy Murphy, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,512.

through ignorance, error, or obstacle over which he had no control.”<sup>114</sup> Mary Eberle missed the deadline in 1894 because she “was ignorant of the H’d [homestead] laws and did not know until my attention was called to it that the law required proof in seven 7 years.” In 1903, Ardena F. Duggan missed her deadline because her now-dead husband had been of “unsound mind for the last three years and not capable of attending to business.” In 1911, Sidney A. Chadwick’s wife Mattie became his legal guardian, just in time to make the final proofs in his absence, caused by his return to the insane asylum a year earlier.” She was able to do so because the BEA had ruled that persons who were absent due to “judicial restraint” (whether prison or insane asylum) could not have that absence held against them.<sup>115</sup>

Sometimes women were broke or at least claimed they were. Lack of cash in the Ouachitas, an area made attractive because it was affordable, was not unusual. The \$14 filing fee would have taken more than two months of Sarah Thomas’ pension. Maryland Tennessee (McMillan) Kemp was 53 when she made her final proofs, almost two years late. She asserted poverty. “Owing to short crops I did not have and was unable to procure the necessary money to make said proof. ... I made every effort to do so and wholly [*sic*] failed ... [.] I now make proof at the very earliest time possible.” She had indeed tried to “make proof” the previous year and had to pay for a second run of legal notices in the newspaper. Sarah (Billings) Hale’s brother, an attorney, inquired after her claim’s status because she was “entirely destitute and has not got a dollar to pay a lawyer to look

---

<sup>114</sup> George L. Anderson, “The Board of Equitable Adjudication, 1846-1930,” *Agricultural History*, 29(2) (April 1955): 65-72; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office for 1877*, 100-101 (Rule 24); 10 Land Decision 502-503 (1890) (Rule 33). Land Decisions (LD) were published in *Decisions of the Department of the Interior and General Land Office in Cases Relating to the Public Lands* (Washington D.C.), <https://www.doi.gov/solicitor/decisions> (accessed November 15, 2019). Although the Board called them rules, they were really lists of reasons that an equitable adjustment was appropriate. For instance, Rule 24 collects several justifications for untimely proof: “All homestead entries in which, by reason of ignorance of the law, sickness of the party or his family, the final proof was not made within the period prescribed by statute, but in other respects the law has been complied with.”

<sup>115</sup> Mary Eberle, Homestead File, Final Cert. 7,123; Ardena F. Duggan, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,337. Sidney A. Chadwick, Final Cert. 7,243; “Chadwick Grows Worse,” *Nashville News*, October 5, 1901, p. 1; “Allen Chadwick Insane,” *Nashville News*, January 29, 1908, p. 3; “Back to Asylum,” *Nashville News*, April 30, 1910, p. 1; “Letters of Guardianship,” *Nashville News*, February 8, 1911, p. 1; “Notice for Publication,” *Nashville News*, February 15, 1911, p. 2. See *Arnold v. Cooley*, 10 LD 551 (1890) (absence due to “judicial restraint” does not interrupt residence).

after it for her.” In 1908, Laura (Lein) Long required a leave of absence “to seek employment elsewhere” after her crops failed. Bedy Murphy left her homestead in late 1915 to pick cotton. Men could earn the fees locally, although two men in my sample, Joseph N. Attebery and James S. Lackey, were unable to timely pay their fees. Lackey and his family first went away to pick cotton in 1909 and then worked on shares elsewhere in 1913 after his horse stock died. He eventually borrowed the money in 1914. Bedy’s brother George Murphy took his family elsewhere to work for wages in 1908 and 1909. In 1912, another man, Alvah Marlow, excused his late settlement because he couldn’t “build [his house] any sooner from the fact that I did not have the money to buy the material until I could work for wages sufficient to purchase same.” Men, unlike women, could work for wages nearby.<sup>116</sup>

Women also needed accommodations from the Land Office for illness, including childbirth. In December 1874, Susan M. Sale, age 42, could not travel to Camden to make her final proofs because she was “bedfast laboring under a very serious attack of erysipelas.” Sarah (Billings) Hale “did not make my proof on the 4th day of January 1908 ... because I was sick at that time and have been unable to come to the clerk's office sooner than on this 14th day of January, 1908; ... I have an infant child which is now only three weeks old... [.] I made my proof as soon as it was possible for me to do so.” Trannie (Stewart) Myers started out filing as a single woman, but soon married. Before she finished proving up, she took a leave of absence to be near a doctor for unstated reasons. In the middle of that time, she gave birth.<sup>117</sup>

The Board of Equitable Adjudication forgave these defects, but it seemed that every little

---

<sup>116</sup> Mary T. (McMillan) Kemp, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,450; Sarah (Billings) Hale, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,045 (outside the area but in Howard County); Laura Leins Long, Homestead File, Final Cert. 376,066; Bedy Murphy, Homestead File, Final Cert. 609,386; Joseph N. Attebery, Homestead File, Final Cert. 12,108; James S. Lackey, Homestead File, Final Cert. 44,075; Alvah Marlow, Homestead File, Final Cert. 284,145.

<sup>117</sup> Susan M. Sale, Homestead File, Final Cert. 435; Sarah (Billings) Hale, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,045 (outside the area in Howard County); Trannie (Stewart) Myers, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,733; Hubert Myers (1914-2002), FindAGrave Mem. 26810937, FindAGrave.com (Langley Hall Cemetery, Langley, Pike County, AR). See Sarah E. Atchley, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,029.

thing needed an affidavit. The applicants may have felt like Sarah Thomas, pleading “[I]f it is not entirely necessary please do not send me any more affidavits to fill out as I have to go from 5 to 10 miles and it takes money and I have such a time getting it.”<sup>118</sup>

In southwestern Arkansas, the timing for men and women to acquire land was similar. Unfortunately, no other historians appear to have compared timing head-to-head and year-by-year, although Edwards et al. conclude that Nebraska patent grants, viewed in five-year tranches, are largely similar for men and women.<sup>119</sup> Figure 11 shows that the total acreage acquisition rate for all people (including timbermen) is similar to women’s acquisition rate.<sup>120</sup> Figure 14 shows the timing for men and women to perfect their claims was generally similar; they were similarly influenced by economic conditions, as shown by the 1893 dip and the increase after the train’s arrival. Because the pipeline of women’s patent applications is relatively small, and grants to women never exceed a dozen in any given year, a woman’s decision to convert in one year, delay to the next, or allow her application to go abandoned can have an outsize impact on the apparent trends.

Although historian Daniel P. Carpenter called the time from proof to issuance too long with “[s]ettlers’ land claims ... continually subject to delays of several years,” Ouachita patentees did not seem to suffer such long delays.<sup>121</sup> I have data for the time from the date advertised for proving up to the date patented for one hundred successful patents granted between the years 1875 and 1925. Forty-one issued within six months, 78 within the year, and 93 within two years. The longest delays were in the 16 patents issued before 1891, but even then, six issued in less than a year. Of the 84

---

<sup>118</sup> Thomas Pension File.

<sup>119</sup> Edwards et al., *Homesteading the Plains*, 135.

<sup>120</sup> Arkansas National Foresters inspected land in these townships after the National Forest’s formation in 1907 to ensure that they were being cultivated and not merely claimed for access to timber, homesteads continued to be granted. No acres in the townships considered in this article were actually transferred to the Forest. The National Foresters’ examination of these claims provides another glimpse into the homesteading process, as well as sometimes slowing down the process.

<sup>121</sup> Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 57.

patents issued after 1890, all but three issued in less than 500 days, and the average was about 8 months.

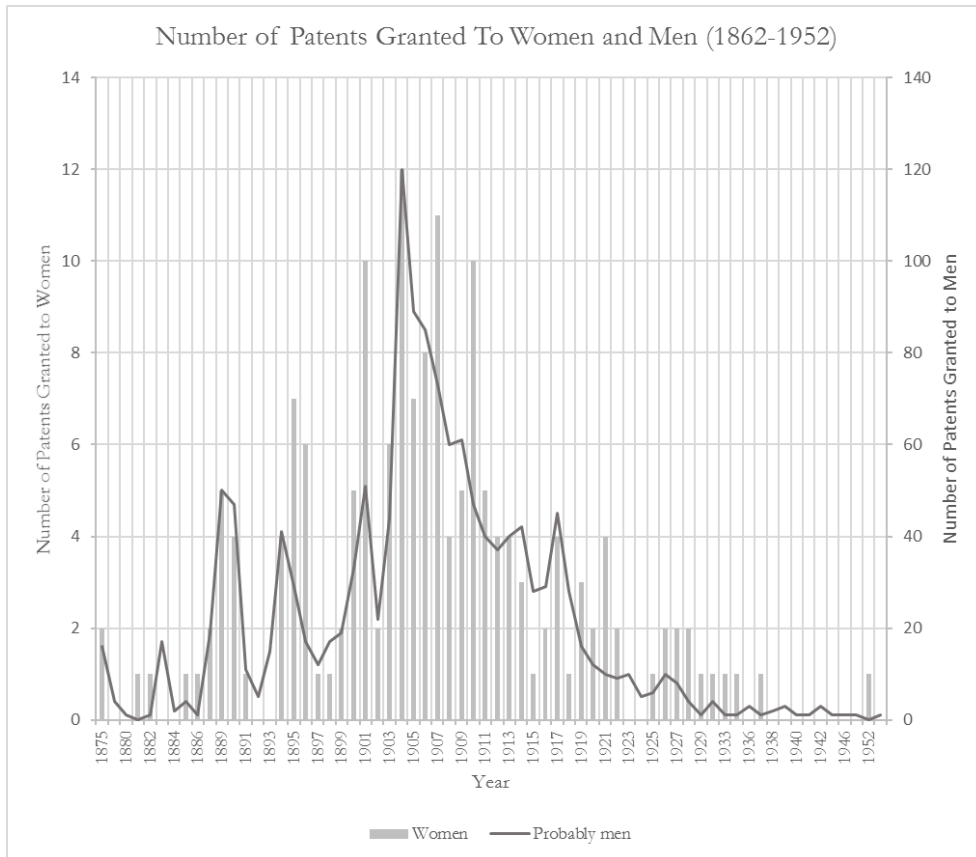


Figure 14. The timing of land patent grants to individuals is similar for men and women. The pendency from proof to grant for area patents granted after 1890 was about eight months (data not shown). (The scale is different for men and women. This graph omits 26 patents to four timbermen.)





Figure 15. Over two-thirds of women or their birth families were in the area more than ten years before acquiring land. Around 55% of men or their birth families were in the area more than ten years.

In contrast to homesteaders who moved west, many women homesteaders, like the men, were familiar with Ouachita farming since they had lived there considerably longer than the five years required for proving up a homestead. Neil Canaday et al. reported something similar: most Louisiana homesteaders sought land near home, and locals were more likely to succeed. They speculate that this was due to “better support networks and/or superior knowledge of the land.”<sup>122</sup> Though, as seen in Figure 15, the majority of men and women had been in the area more than ten years at the time of grant, the women’s roots were deeper.<sup>123</sup> Median time in the area before grant was twelve years for men and twenty-two years for women. Women were about twice as likely to be buried in the area as outside the area, and men, about thirty percent more likely (data not shown). These landowners could be documented as staying in the area for a median of nine years for women and twelve years for men after grant, suggesting an affinity for their community. About a third of men and women were born in Arkansas, and more than two-thirds were born in the Southeast, as shown in Figure 16. In contrast, less than ten percent of Edwards et al.’s Nebraska homesteaders

<sup>122</sup> Canaday et al., “Race and Local Knowledge,” 407.

<sup>123</sup> The area is defined as Polk, Howard, Montgomery, Pike, and Sevier Counties in Arkansas, McCurtain, and LeFlore Counties in Oklahoma. These comprise the counties surrounding Polk and Howard Counties. Before 1873, the area includes Hempstead County.

were born in Nebraska, with another handful from nearby Kansas, while twenty-one percent were immigrants.<sup>124</sup> Ouachita women show, as Brian Q. Cannon argues, that “homesteaders were not self-reliant – they depended upon government for their land – and they symbolized rootedness, community, and civilization rather than rugged individualism.”<sup>125</sup>

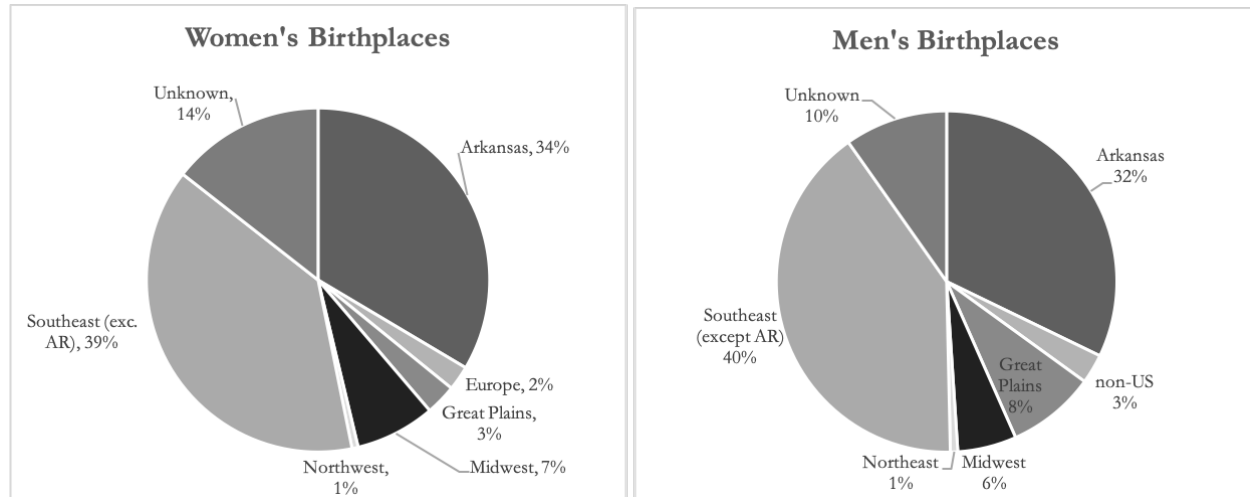


Figure 16. More women homesteaders (34%) were born in Arkansas than any other state. Nearly three-quarters came from the Southeast, including Arkansas. Similarly, about a third of men homesteaders were born in Arkansas, and nearly three-quarters from the Southeast, including Arkansas. (No Northwest-born men or Northeast-born women homesteaded in this sample.)

Homesteading women’s success can be measured in a number of ways, from supporting themselves to being able to help their neighbors. As Robert Cherny has argued with respect to Kansas, there is “more than one kind of successful homesteader.”<sup>126</sup> Some Ouachita women stayed put. Others traded their land for something better for them, yet still nearby. Even those who left the area after proving up their claims had succeeded in settling and cultivating – the stated goals of the Homestead Act. As Edwards put it, “After they proved up, women had choices to make: they could remain on the farm working the land, lease their ground, or sell their claims. The first directly empowered the woman homesteader, but the second and third did too: homesteading was one of

<sup>124</sup> Edwards et al., *Homesteading the Plains*, 170-171.

<sup>125</sup> Brian Q. Cannon, “Homesteading Remembered: A Sesquicentennial Perspective,” *Agricultural History* 87(1) (Winter 2013): 1-29.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Cherny, “A Longitudinal Study of Three Homesteader Families in Marshall County, Kansas,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 38(4) (Fall 2018): 335-355.

the few avenues open to women to accumulate savings or a capital stock.”<sup>127</sup>

It was hard to make crops and keep up with the household at the same time. A whole family’s labor was often necessary. Census records uniformly credit the farming wife with “keeping house,” which was a key part of keeping a rural household going. Widow Affey (Faulkner) Tipton’s experience was recalled as a family experience, despite the patent issuing in her name. Affey’s descendants recalled that, after her husband was killed in the Civil War, “His widow, along with their four children, ... came back to Arkansas in a wagon train and settled.... They homesteaded 160 acres, and the old homestead deed was signed by Abraham Lincoln.”<sup>128</sup> (Tipton’s land patent was actually signed by the less romantic Benjamin Harrison in 1889, long after Lincoln signed the 1862 Homestead Act and long after Arkansas rejoined the Union.) Other reminiscences explicitly identified the contributions of all the family and the involvement of an extended family in establishing a successful farming group. For instance, the Baber family recalled that, soon after her first baby was born, Sarah Jane (Nelson) Baber chose a homestead site and then got the opinion of her husband Daniel Baber along with much of their extended family. At the same time, Sarah’s brother Robert Nelson filed a claim on land that was adjacent to their widowed mother Catherine Nelson’s farm. By claiming land, he could marry Catherine Leeper.<sup>129</sup> Daniel Baber’s aunt, Marguerite (Henry) Wakeley, after settling on the homestead she and her husband Benton would prove up in 1883, “would go into the fields and work with the oldest children in spring and fall,”

---

<sup>127</sup> Richard Edwards, “Invited Essay: The New Learning about Homesteading,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 38 (Winter 2018): 1-23.

<sup>128</sup> *The Unfinished Story of North Howard County* (Umpire, AR: North Howard County Youth Group for Historical Research, 1982), 181; Affey Tipton, Final Cert. 4,603.

<sup>129</sup> Lee Sanders and Nola Green, *Sarah Jane: Reminiscences of a Family and a Community* (n.p. 1961), 141-148. The story is not supported by the documents. According to the BLM website, Robert Nelson acquired his homestead in 1890 (thirteen years after their first child William was born in 1877), and his mother Catherine eleven years after that (1901). Daniel Morgan Baber’s grant was not found, but two of Sarah and Daniel’s children (William and Harrison) homesteaded. Robert Nelson, Final Cert. 5,411; Catherine Nelson, Final Cert. 10,237; William R. Baber, Final Cert. 13,037 (August 10, 1906); Harrison M. Baber, Final Cert. 6,029. (June 5, 1919); William J. Nelson (1877-1953), FindAGrave Mem. 91828551, FindAGrave.com.

while the children were “taking their turns of work both in the house and on the farm.”<sup>130</sup> Some single women traded labor with their family. In 1908, Laura Lein asked for a leave of absence from her land, explaining, “I am a single woman and am dependent upon myself for support. By exchanging work with my brother, I cleared and fenced some land on my homestead, which I planted in cotton. On account of the cold wet spring, I failed to get a stand, it was then too late to plant it in any other crop that would help support me. Consequently I have had to seek employment elsewhere.”<sup>131</sup> Single men also had trouble managing both crops and household. In 1903, Rogers H. Stone blamed a five-month absence on his former wife. “We have never been absent except a temporary absence on account of a difficulty that arose. My former wife & me seperated [sic] and I had to take my meals away from home while I was working. I could not cook my own meals, therefore I was absent about 5 months, notwithstanding this being my home during my absence & all my personal property kept on the land.” After this five-month absence, Rogers Stone “married again,” presumably solving his meals difficulty.<sup>132</sup> Men needed someone to cook their meals, to support the settling side of the homesteading obligation, to succeed at cultivating.

Although men and women who acquired land from the federal government had hard work and much else in common, the Ouachita experience also shows women faced distinct legal and societal challenges. Women, upon marriage, lost their legal status as independent persons and were subsumed by their husbands’ legal status (known as coverture). Upon a man’s death, his widow had a statutory right to a life estate in just one-third of any land her husband owned.<sup>133</sup> The widow could live on, rent out, even sell her life estate, and otherwise control the land for her life, but could not control what happened to it after her death – when it became, again, part of her dead husband’s

---

<sup>130</sup> Maudine Wakeley, *Aunt Marg, Little Mother of the Hills* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1954), 24. Benton Wakley [sic], Final Cert. 2,888.

<sup>131</sup> Laura (Lein) Long, Homestead File, Final Cert. 976.

<sup>132</sup> Rogers H. Stone, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,514.

<sup>133</sup> Michael B. Dougan, “The Arkansas Married Woman’s Property Law,” *AHQ* 46 (Spring 1987): 3-26; *Digest of the Statutes of Arkansas* (1894), “Dower,” Chapter 55, Section 2520.

estate and was disposed of accordingly.<sup>134</sup> In Sarah Thomas's case, for instance, she inherited a life estate in the land, with the land going to their children upon her death.<sup>135</sup> But, the Homestead Statute provided that women who perfected their dead husbands' homestead claims obtained full title, not just a life estate. A half dozen Ouachita widows obtained title to their husbands' homestead entries this way.<sup>136</sup>

Women who sought to acquire land directly via the Homestead Act also faced legal challenges peculiar to their sex. Faced with the doctrine of coverture and the plain language of the statute, the General Land Office (GLO) had to determine what happened when a single woman filed on land, but then married, or when a woman claiming land as head of household was, in fact, married but her husband had left her. By 1886, the Secretary of the Interior had decided that the woman's marital status at filing (single, widowed, or deserted) was key to whether she could obtain a homestead, even if married at the time of proving up, leaving the only questions for final proof "those relevant to residency, cultivation, and alienation."<sup>137</sup>

After March 1907's Expatriation Act's passage and before the 1922 Cable Act, if a US woman married a non-US citizen, she acquired his citizenship status, complicating the homestead process since a homesteader had to be a citizen at proving up. And the GLO generally asked about the new husband's place of birth. Several Arkansas women had to supplement their proofs with their deserted husbands' place of birth. For example, the widow Mary L. James (later McCown) filed her application in 1904, six years after her first husband died. In 1910, she married T. F. McKaughan. Just eight months later, he left. She had to explain that she didn't know where he was

---

<sup>134</sup> *Kempson v. Goss*, 69 Ark. S. Ct. 451 (1901) (homesteader's widower held a life estate in the land).

<sup>135</sup> Sarah E. Thomas, Homestead File, Final Cert. 12,637.

<sup>136</sup> Lucinda Hardaway, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,321; Ardena Duggan, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,337; Hettie (Johnson) Nash, Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,277; Mary (Baggett) Hurley, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,802.

<sup>137</sup> *Maria Good*, 5 LD 17 (1886). Alienation means transferring real property rights. James Muhn, "Women and the Homestead Act: Land Department Administration of a Legal Imbroglia, 1863-1934," *Western Legal History: The Journal of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society*, 7(2): 283-308.

born (let alone how to spell his name), though she did “remember of hearing him say that he was reared in Oklahoma.”<sup>138</sup> Conversely, Mary (Wavrick) Forgy was born in Germany, but she acquired her husband’s US citizenship when she married, simplifying the proving up of her late husband’s claim.<sup>139</sup>

Ouachita women did not always stay married until death. Like other American women in the early twentieth century, they separated or divorced, even during the homesteading process. A widowed woman was presumed to be the head of household, while a divorced or deserted woman could prove she was the head of household.<sup>140</sup> Mary C. (Bard) Hudgens was first widowed and then deserted. She began the homesteading process as a widow. She then married a man named Hudgens who didn’t stick. As Mary put it when proving up, her household was “self and 5 children (seperated [sic] from husband).” The patent issued in her name. Nevada G. Estes took over her husband’s entry. As she explained, “after he received the leave of absence he has never returned.” So, on October 23, 1907, she “entered the land as his deserted wife.” Nevada may have later reconciled with John Estes. They appeared together in the 1910 census, although she is identified as the head of household.<sup>141</sup> In the Ouachitas, divorced or deserted women seeking homesteads sometimes used the language of widowhood, even though the published cases identified them as divorced or deserted. For instance, in 1896, Nancy C. Martin, age 52, “was a widow.... At the time of entry, she held a divorce from her husband.”

That a new husband had previously obtained a homestead or chose to seek one later did not

---

<sup>138</sup> Meg Hacker, “When Saying ‘I Do’ Meant Giving Up Your U.S. Citizenship,” *Prologue*, Spring 2014: 56-61; Mary L. (James) McCown Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,971; Marriage License for T. F. McKaughan and Mrs. Mary James, Howard County, Arkansas, April 11, 1908 (familysearch.com) (McCauley is inked out and McKaughan written in).

<sup>139</sup> Mary Forgy Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,996. The Cable Act left some U.S.-born women in limbo, requiring still more acts of Congress to cure.

<sup>140</sup> *Wilber v. Goode*, 10 LD 527 (1890) (“a deserted wife depending upon her own resources for support is qualified to make homestead entry”).

<sup>141</sup> Nancy C. Martin, Homestead File, Final Cert. 7,778; Mary C. (Bard) Hudgens, Homestead File, Final Cert. 3,192; Nevada G. Estes, Homestead File, Final Cert. 970; 1910 Federal Census, Forest Reserves, Mountain Township, Howard County, Arkansas (ancestry.com) (accessed November 17, 2019).

necessarily raise legal barriers to a woman obtaining property. The timing of a woman filing her claim and obtaining a marriage license were key. Land must come before marriage. In August 1895, just two weeks before they married, Sarah Brock traveled with her future husband, Allen Turner Duckett, from north Howard County to the Land Office in Camden so she could file on land including the future Duckett Ford on the Cossatot River. Her husband had exhausted his homestead right twenty years earlier in Sebastian County and had been squatting on other land in northwest Howard County ever since. She was free to claim her own so long as she filed before marriage.<sup>142</sup> She was not the only woman to file for land on the eve of marriage. Harriet L. E. (Stewart) Choate was another quick-marrying woman in the area whose husband also obtained a homestead grant – but his came seven years later in 1907.<sup>143</sup> Others also filed shortly before marriage, but their husbands seem not to have obtained their own land.<sup>144</sup>

Not all women homesteaders who filed as single women and later married appeared to have marriage on their minds when filing their claims in the Ouachitas. Of the area's women, at least eight married two years or more after filing. Two did not marry until after proving up, and two more married after grant. Another didn't marry until after refileing her previously-denied application. Six of these women were of childbearing age when they filed, suggesting they may have seen homesteading

---

<sup>142</sup> Sarah (Brock) Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,170; Allen Turner Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,232 (Dardanelle Office); A. T. Duckett and Miss Sallie Brock, September 11, 1895 Marriage License, Howard County Marriage Book D (familysearch.org); Selma E. Duckett, Homestead File, Final Cert. 9,777. Sarah Brock had previously married James Van Pate in 1888. Family reports are that they subsequently divorced. (Guy Turrentine interview, undated, visiting Stillwater MN home of W. Ves and Holly Hartrick Childs.) Pate filed for land in February 1895 and remarried in September 1896. James V. Pate, Homestead File, Final Cert. 275; J. V. Pate and S. D. Brock, September 23, 1888 Marriage License, Polk County; J. V. Pate and M. A. Burton, September 2, 1896 Marriage License, Polk County (familysearch.org).

<sup>143</sup> Harriet L. E. (Stewart) Choate [sic], Homestead File, Final Cert. 9,704; John L. Choate, Homestead File, Final Cert. 13,621.

<sup>144</sup> Minnie (Wilkerson) Luster, Homestead File, Final Cert. 3,510; Mary (Bard) Hudgens, Homestead File, Final Cert. 3,192. Just outside the area in Howard County are two additional examples. Mary (Bagley) Chandler, Homestead File, Final Cert. 13,005; Sarah (Billings) Hale, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,045.

as providing choices other than marriage and the baby carriage that usually followed.<sup>145</sup>

Many Ouachita women homesteaders struggled with living alone, but a woman who filed as a single woman could not use her status to excuse her from residing on the land. Although this theme of alone-ness is not identified in the existing historiography, the GLO recognized the challenge, holding, “However great the improvements may be, actual residence on the land is a prerequisite to entitle one to the public lands.”<sup>146</sup> One of Sarah (Brock) Duckett’s younger sisters, Mary Jane Brock, settled on her land in 1899 and filed her claim in 1901, but she had trouble finding someone to stay with her. In 1905 she “boarded away” on her brother-in-law’s farm and then her father’s place because “she could not stay at home alone.” As she put it, “I merely boarded with them and was on my place and helped to tend it almost ever [sic] day.” In 1912, a witness for Elizabeth J. Chambers explained that “being unmarried and alone she would occasionally spend a few weeks with friends and at her father’s house.” Trannie (Stewart) Myers’ first commutation proof was contested and canceled “because of my not making my home all the time on same. I endeavored to comply with what I thought was the law and kept my household effects on the entry all the time and what time I was absent I was forced to be because of the fact that I am single.” Sarah Thomas’s son Barney likewise needed to stay with his mother. He did not settle on his land promptly after filing because he “was living on an adjoining farm at the time with my mother who was a widow and as it would have been inconvenient for her to move at that time I didn’t wish to leave her alone.”<sup>147</sup> That said, not all single women raised the issue of alone-ness. Some were widowed even before moving to Arkansas with their extended families. These long-widowed homesteaders did not raise

---

<sup>145</sup> Mary T. (McMillan) Kemp, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,450; Laura (Lein) Long, Homestead File, Final Cert. 976; Elizabeth J. Chambers, Homestead File, Final Cert. 2,974; Mary L. (James) McCown, Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,971 (just outside the area, Howard County); Laura G. Dean, Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,499; Cora E. Floyd, Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,071; Trannie (Stewart) Myers, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,733; Mary Jane Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,095.

<sup>146</sup> *Green v. Berdan*, 10 LD 294 (1890).

<sup>147</sup> Mary Jane Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 14,095; Elizabeth J. Chambers, Homestead File, Final Cert. 2,974; Trannie (Stewart) Myers, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,733; Barney Thomas, Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,410.



alone-ness as an issue.<sup>148</sup>

The Brock siblings' homesteading experience, spanning two decades, illustrates the challenges of being a single woman as well as the benefits of being part of a family who knew how to farm. The Brock sisters, Lucinda ("Cindy") and Purmela ("Melia"), filed adjoining homestead claims in 1882, just north of this region, near present-day Vandervoort. Their bachelor brother Lawrance filed his claim on the same day, but his was canceled in 1890. (Mary Jane Brock and her sister Sarah (Brock) Duckett were their nieces.) Cindy claimed the land their parents had settled on in 1877, including the house her father and brother built. She had no trouble proving it up in 1889, even though she had "no family of my own," "but live with my bro. and sister." (The delay between settlement and seeking ownership is similar to the Pope County kin-based communities described by Mary Brennan. Nathaniel O. Allen reported similar delays in Polk County.<sup>149</sup>) At the same time, Melia conceded that she "never did actually live on the claim but lived with my sister being single and unmarried." Melia's proving-up process required her to repeatedly explain her status as a single woman. "Having no family, I have lived with my sister, but visited my improvements and was on my claim almost daily from the date of settlement to the present time." "I have no family. Being a lone woman, I could not conveniently live on my claim." Despite having cultivated 16 acres, and living just 25 yards off the claim, her protestations did not suffice. So, in 1892, she built a house and established actual residence. In 1898, she finally got her patent, twenty-one years after her family settled on Cindy's land and sixteen years after she claimed her own land.<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Martha Watkins, Homestead File, Final Cert. 1,313; Sarah Sims, Homestead File, Final Cert. 4,140; Eliza Pinkerton, Homestead File, Final Cert. 3,834; Martha A. Brewer, Homestead File, Final Cert. 384; Susan M. Sale, Homestead File, Final Cert. 435.

<sup>149</sup> Mary Z. Brennan, "Archaeology of Kinship at Treat, Arkansas: Intersections of Past Lives, Memory, and Identity on the Landscape," 23-43, in Carl G. Drexler, ed., *Historical Archaeology of Arkansas: A Hidden Diversity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016); Nathaniel O. Allen, "In Polk County in Ye Olden Time: N. O. Allen on Early Days in Polk County," *Mena (Ark.) Weekly Star*, Feb. 2, 1922, p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> Lucinda Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,501; Purmela Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 5,552; Lawrance Brock, Homestead File, Final Cert. 8,497 (all just outside the area in Polk County, but in the Ouachitas). In about 1961,

In contrast, women who were widowed during the proving-up process were allowed to leave their land so as not to have to stay alone. In fact, the GLO specifically allowed newly-widowed women to skip out on their obligation to settle the land so long as they arranged for the land to be cultivated. As the Department of the Interior held, “Upon the death of a husband and protector, it might, and in many cases would, be impossible, by reason of ill health, remoteness from neighbors, natural timidity, poverty, or other causes, for the widow to remain upon land which had been entered by her husband and resided upon by him and her.”<sup>151</sup> Rather than forcing widows to choose between land and alone-ness, the government found a middle ground.

Widowed women made different choices about how to complete the process of proving up on Ouachita land they had entered on together with their now-dead husbands. Mary (Peringer) Ashford had lived on the land five or six years when her husband filed on it. On his death, she remained on the land, proved it up, and eventually remarried. In another example, in 1902, Mary Forgy had “no one now except myself. Husband and only child dead.” Since then, she “had no one to live with me and have lived with my parents nearby and kept the place in repair and cultivation.” Emma (Baggett) Hurley started out homesteading as the wife of Elisha M. Baggett. He died in April 1900. She moved in with her father. She then married Robert Hurley in August 1902 and returned to her homestead. Emma and Robert disagreed, and her status as Baggett’s widow meant that in November, (as her first husband’s brother testified) “she again went back to her father’s. She being alone with only a small child, it was not considered safe for her to reside on place.” Emma herself explained, “We disagreed . . . , and I went back to my father’s house. Did not consider it safe to live

---

Tom Brock, a descendant of a sibling of these Brocks, told my great aunt Blanche (Turrentine) Gardner (probably his first cousin) that these three siblings had built a single house and homesteaded together. Another version she credited to Leonard and Jim Brock (1973) was that “they built a house on the corners where they joined.” She added, “Learned later – each had a room on his own land.” She told her sister Floy (Turrentine) Childs, who then shared it with me. At the time I was reading Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* books, so I was enchanted with the idea of outwitting the federal government. I was a little disappointed to learn that the government won.

<sup>151</sup> *Tanrer v. Heirs of Walter A. Mann*, 4 LD 435 (1886).

alone.” This absence from the claim did not endanger her rights to her first husband’s claim because it was as his widow that she was vested with the right to the claim. Six months later, Emma gave birth. Like Nevada Estes, she and Hurley apparently reconciled. In Emma’s case, she had five more children with Robert and shared the census four times as well as a gravestone in the Harlingen (Texas) City Cemetery.<sup>152</sup> In contrast to the reported cases considered by Hannah Haksgaard, the GLO required little more than a statement by the deserted wife before these women could obtain a patent.<sup>153</sup>

Recently widowed women often filed a claim within a few months of their change in marital status. Perhaps they were seeking to secure a place of their own, to secure land they had been squatting on with their husbands, or to move near their birth family. Julia Boucher’s husband died in February 1882 and she settled on new land that December (although she did not make her claim until 1888). Cynthia A. Attebery’s second husband died in September, and she filed her claim in October 1894, testifying that “I with my husband who is now dead established actual residence thereon the 2 day of January 1889.” (She repeated the process with her third husband Orville A. Borden – only this time they had filed on the land before he died.) Amanda Martin filed in January 1895, about six months after her husband Thomas, a United States deputy marshal, was killed on their gallery. Sarah Thomas, as we have seen, filed for her own homestead claim six months after her husband died in 1898.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Mary (Peringer) Ashford, Homestead File, Final Cert. 7,673; Mary Forgy, Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,996; Emma (Baggett) Hurley, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,802; Robert S. Hurley, FindAGrave Mem. 36146868, Emma Baggett Hurley, FindAGrave Mem. 36146850, FindAGrave.com (accessed November 17, 2019); Umpire, Howard, Arkansas, 1910 Federal Census; Sulphur Springs, Howard, Arkansas, 1920 Federal Census; Precinct 3, Motley, Texas, 1930 Federal Census; Harlingen, Cameron, Texas, 1940 Federal Census.

<sup>153</sup> Hannah Haksgaard, “The Homesteading Rights of Deserted Wives: A History,” *Nebraska Law Review* 99(2) (2020): 419-476.

<sup>154</sup> Julia F. Boucher, Homestead File, Final Cert. 7,642; Cynthia A. Attebery, Homestead File, Final Cert. 7,593; Cynthia A. Borden, Final Cert. 11,516; Amanda Martin, Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,239; “Deputy U. S. Marshal Murdered,” *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, June 15, 1894, p. 1; Sarah E. Thomas, Homestead File, Final Cert. 12,637. See also Elora Forgy, Homestead File, Final Cert. 11,166 (filed two months after husband’s death).

In contrast to what Western homesteading studies found, there was little evidence of Ouachita homesteading women working for wages locally, perhaps because little wage work for women existed. H. Elaine Lindgren, for example, found more than two-thirds of her North Dakota homesteading women doing other work while homesteading. (Some were teachers, seamstresses, or postmistresses.)<sup>155</sup> But women in the Ouachitas sometimes left their land to get work or for their husbands to get work. In 1915-1916, Bedy Murphy obtained a leave of absence “to get work” picking cotton. Mary Jane Brock went to Little Rock in 1902 to work. Sarah (Billings) Hale’s new husband’s outside employment meant he had to work elsewhere so they moved off the land periodically. Her witness explained, “Her husband had a mail contract first time and for other times to make part of his crop on my place.” As she said, they were “making crops on land which we had to rent on account of not having enough land on entry to make support.” She also moved off the land when her first house burned in 1901.

Women thus used a variety of strategies to acquire land in the Ouachita foothills. They took advantage of living in an area they understood with a community and extended family to help them. These “settlements of kin,” to use Carolyn Earle Billingsley’s phrase, helped Ouachita women homesteaders to obtain homes of their own within their community.<sup>156</sup> As seen in Figure 17, women who acquired land in their own name tended to stay in the area about the same length of time as their male counterparts on average (14.9 years vs. 15.6 years) although their median stay was shorter (9 vs. 12). Women lived in the area longer before acquiring land, as shown in Figure 15. Some women needed their extended family since otherwise they would be single in a work environment that favored a large, family-based labor system. Some, especially widowed women, were older and

---

<sup>155</sup> H. Elaine Lindgren, *Land in Her Own Name: Women as Homesteaders in North Dakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 118. Edwards et al. identified “off-land occupations” for three homesteading women in their Nebraska sample. Edwards et al., *Homesteading the Plains*, 148-149.

<sup>156</sup> Carolyn Earle Billingsley, *Communities of Kinship: Antebellum Families and the Settlement of the Cotton Frontier* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2004), 147-148.

more settled when they proved up their land and could work with their children for a support, while men tended to file soon after marriage. Women all too often ended up proving up the land their husbands left behind upon death. They knew how to farm.

In the historiography and public perception, homesteading women were young, single, and from somewhere else.<sup>157</sup> In contrast, homesteading women obtaining land in the Ouachitas in their own name were usually in their forties – older than homesteading men. Women tended to have been previously married (48% widowed and 7% deserted or divorced) or were currently married (19%). Of course, most women on Ouachita homesteads were married to men who obtained land – 73% of all grants were to married men. People getting land in the Ouachitas were from nearby. About a third were born in Arkansas. Two-thirds of the women and more than half of the men had been in the area more than ten years. Of the women considered in this essay, Laura G. Dean would seem to have come closest to the Western homesteading woman model. According to her homestead file, she turned 21 in January 1896, came to the area that same month, filed a claim that October, and did not marry until a month after she proved up her claim in 1901. The only child of her parents known to survive childhood, she moved to the area from Missouri after her parents' deaths. However, closer examination finds an aunt and a number of cousins living in Sevier County by the late 1880s. Forty-five years later, she told the *Arkansas Gazette* that she had moved to Sevier County with her parents, and then “personally homesteaded 160 acres west of Hatton and ‘proved it out.’” Perhaps in hindsight, she thought her move to rural Polk County with almost no familial connections and no knowledge of how to farm implausible.<sup>158</sup> Although historians argue that Western women worked elsewhere and hired out much of their cultivating, very little of that was seen in the Ouachita

---

<sup>157</sup> E.g., Edwards et al., *Homesteading the Plains*, 129-161.

<sup>158</sup> Laura G. Dean, Homestead File, Final Cert. 10,499. Her parents, however, died in 1887 and 1893. David Dean (1823-1887), FindAGrave Mem. 132525273; Anna Marie Dean (1833-1893), FindAGrave Mem. 167602708; Ralph B. Kite, “Botanist of the Ouachitas,” *Arkansas Gazette Sunday Magazine*, March 26, 1939, p. 3.

foothills. Instead, women traded labor with others in their family and community and identified as farmers on censuses and homestead applications.

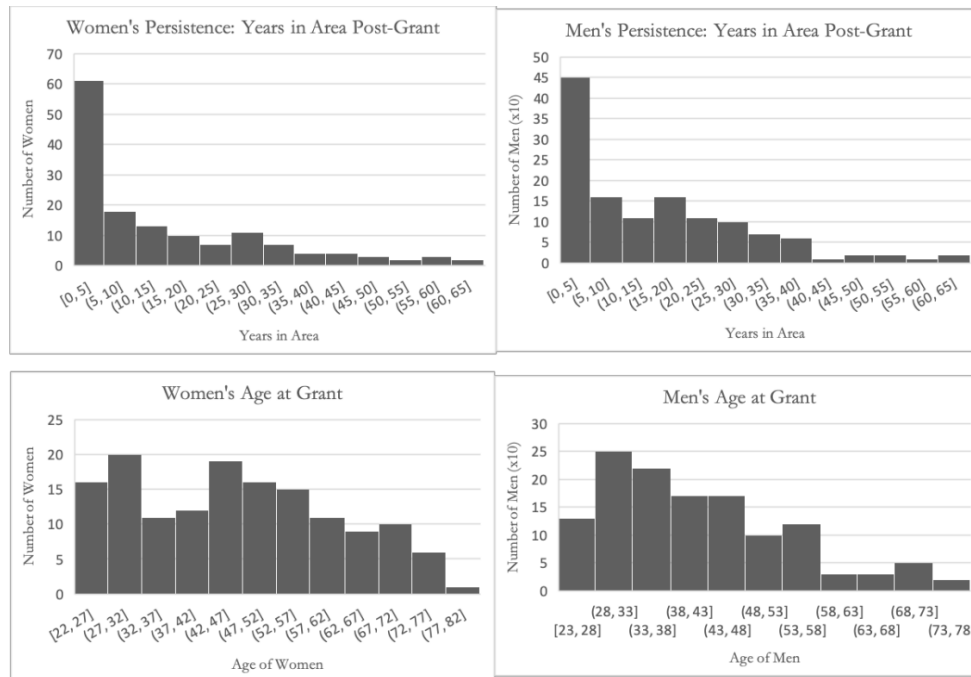


Figure 17. A majority of both men and women stayed long after obtaining land. Women’s median time staying in the area was nine years, and men, twelve years. Women’s median age at grant was 46, and men’s, 38.

Just 14% of the Ouachita women had apparently never been married at the time of grant, although that was still nearly five times the 3% of Ouachita homesteading men who were single and unmarried. These numbers of single people are small. It may be risky to read too much into them, but they are almost the opposite of the Nebraska numbers, 1.5% always-single women and 19% always-single men.<sup>159</sup> Some of the single people (Selma Duckett and Cindy Brock, for example) filed on land their parents had settled. I suspect that single women and their families were aware that a woman’s chance of acquiring her “own” family (to use Cindy’s phrase) by marriage and procreation declined as she grew older. They may have seen homesteading as a chance to provide unmarried women with security and a way to belong to their community if, as Laura (Lein) Long wrote, they

<sup>159</sup> Edwards et al., *Homesteading the Plains*, Tables 6.1 and 6.2, 130, 138.

were left “dependent upon myself for support.” If marriage happened, owning land could mitigate the challenges of relying on a life estate in their husband’s real property and the kindness of stepchildren for security in their old age. Men, in contrast, had other options, from delayed marriage, which could still produce their “own” family, to leaving the region for work.

Men and women acquiring land in the Ouachitas had much in common: their origins, their marital status, their accelerating land acquisition when the railroad came, their decisions about when and whether to prove up their claims. People who acquired land here stuck around.

They had differences, too. Women who acquired land in their own name were older and more likely to be widowed. Some widows chose to prove up land filed on before their husbands died, but others chose to file for their own land. Women homesteaders’ widowhood status makes sense since one of the most likely ways for a woman to become the named homestead applicant was for her husband to die. Surprisingly similar (and small) percentages of the total land grantee population were widowed men (4%) and widowed women (5%), suggesting something about the need to be currently married to successfully prove up a claim.

But Cindy and Melia Brock never did marry. Their niece Eliza (Brock) Turrentine was 33 years old when they died in 1909, twenty years after they obtained their first section of land. Eliza’s oldest child, Blanche, remembered years later how her mother “admired their appearance for they were always dressed in the mode when they went out. Mamma said most people would make a Sunday dress and wear it for years. But the two spinster aunts made a new Sun. dress each year & took the old ‘Sun.’ dress for every day.” Blanche went on to recall, “Mamma also took pride in the maiden aunts being well-read for their day & time. She mentioned a neighbor man who enjoyed arguing politics. But the aunts could down him in an argument. They subscribed for a newspaper

(not a local one) & apparently read it with understanding.”<sup>160</sup> Having land gave them some freedom to do what they chose.

Women in the Ouachita foothills homesteaded land in their own name as well as in partnership with their husbands, just as women did in all the public land states. Like Ouachita men, they homesteaded more land when the trains came, making the land more desirable because more accessible. They chose to homestead within their kinship communities, to take advantage of labor exchanges – of knowing how to farm. Owning land made it easier to choose when and whether to marry. And after they perfected their claims, women stayed in the area, continuing to farm.

---

<sup>160</sup> Blanche Turrentine Gardner, “Reminiscences – Brocks & Towrys,” manuscript, April 15, 1976, rewritten June 12, 1979. (Thank you to Blanche’s niece, Jeanie Nelson Bismark.)



## Appendix: Methods.

I collected Bureau of Land Management (BLM) information on all patentees in the portions of the congressional townships located in Polk and Howard Counties, Arkansas, shown in the table below.<sup>161</sup> I also used the maps in Gregory A. Boyd, *Family Maps of Howard County, Arkansas* (Norman, OK: Arphax Publishing Co., 2006) and Boyd, *Family Maps of Polk County, Arkansas* (Norman, OK: Arphax Publishing Co., 2010). *MG#* in the table refers to the Map Groups in those books. Boyd’s maps show the location of homesteads, roads, railroads, waterways, towns, and cemeteries. Boyd’s maps occasionally omit patentees, leaving apparently unclaimed land on the map. In such instances, it is straightforward to search the BLM website to identify the missing patentees.

South Polk County Townships			North Howard County Townships		
	T5S R32W <i>MG24</i>	T5S R31W <i>MG25</i>	T5S R30W <i>MG1</i>	T5S R29W <i>MG2</i>	T5S R28W <i>MG3</i>
T6S R33W <i>MG26</i>	T6S R32W <i>MG27</i>	T6S R31W <i>MG28</i>	T6S R30W <i>MG4</i>	T6S R29W <i>MG5</i>	T6S R28W <i>MG6</i>

Congressional townships are nominally made up of 36 sections in a grid six sections wide by six sections deep, each section comprising 640 acres (one square mile). A homesteader could acquire up to the equivalent of a quarter section (160 acres). However, townships do not always measure precisely 36 sections, and not all quarter sections are exactly 160 acres. Because T6S R33W bumped up against Indian Territory (later Oklahoma), it contained just six sections in the study area.

BLM information includes the patentee’s name, date issued, acres transferred, applicable statute, and (through fall 1910) the patentee’s sex. Because later patents did not identify patentees by sex, I tried to identify their sex using other means, including census, marriage, and other records. I counted most land claimants who could not be identified as women as men. I counted a few people as women, despite lacking other information, who were named Carolyn, Eliza, Elizabeth, Emily, Fannie, Jennie, Martha, Mary, Mary Esther, Mamie, Sarah, or Sophia. (Francis/Frances was counted as male in the absence of other information.) I identified 168 women homesteaders in these townships.

<sup>161</sup> “The Official Federal Land Records Site, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx> (accessed November 13, 2019).

To understand women in the larger context, I selected ten percent of the homesteading men during the same period. I combined the BLM lists for men from these same congressional townships, sorting first alphabetically and then by grant date. After removing people who acquired land before the 1862 Homestead Act, women, and four timbermen, I selected every tenth man (n=144) for further research. (All together, the four timbermen acquired about 3200 acres: Herman and Herbert Dierks for the Dierks Lumber and Coal Company, Roy McDonald for A. L. Clark Lumber Company, and Frank W. Brodnax for a presently unidentified company.<sup>162</sup>)

For the 168 women who acquired land in their own names and these 144 men, I tried to identify their birth date, birth state, and earliest settlement by their family in the area (Polk, Howard, Montgomery, Pike, and Sevier Counties in Arkansas, McCurtain and LeFlore Counties in present-day Oklahoma), age and marital status at grant, last presence in the area, death date, and burial place. I consulted the manuscript census returns, population schedules, from the Sixth United States Census (1840) through the Sixteenth United States Census (1940), findagrave.com, and other material (including marriage licenses, social security indexes, probate records, and death certificates). None of these homesteading people were identified as anything other than white in the sources examined.

In addition to looking at the non-homestead file information about all 168 women and the sample of 144 men, I also used 106 homestead entry files (including those of forty women) from the area studied and nearby to learn more about the details of the process of obtaining patents. These files, kept by the BLM, had all the paperwork required to prove up a claim, including the initial application, the legal notice posted in a local newspaper, and affidavits made by the applicant and two neighbors to establish that the applicant had actually settled and cultivated their claim and met any other requirements of the Homestead Act. Because I am interested in marriage strategies and the influence of kinship and community, I chose files for women who changed names during the homesteading process, files coming from women with family in the area, and files from some related men. This strategy resulted in under-sampling homestead files with few connections

---

<sup>162</sup>Smith, Kenneth L., *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1986), 218 n. 11; "Former Warden Dies," *Arkansas Gazette*, February 13, 1923, p. 12.

to the area. I did not use this information for numerical analysis, except for determining the time from submitting evidence for proving up to time of issuance.

The table below provides, by township, (a) the number of copied homestead files (in roman type), and (b) total land grants (including pre-1862 and timbermen’s grants) and grants to women after 1862 (in *italics*). As seen, some homestead files were obtained from every township in the region.

South Polk County Townships			North Howard County Townships		
n/a	<b>T5S R32W</b> Men: 5 Women: 5	<b>T5S R31W</b> Men: 5 Women: 2	<b>T5S R30W</b> Men: 6 Women: 3	<b>T5S R29W</b> Men: 2 Women: 5	<b>T5S R28W</b> Men: 1 Women: 2
	<i>Total: 179</i> <i>Women: 19</i>	<i>Total: 180</i> <i>Women: 15</i>	<i>Total: 190</i> <i>Women: 15</i>	<i>Total: 207</i> <i>Women: 20</i>	<i>Total: 211</i> <i>Women: 17</i>
<b>T6S R33W</b> Men: 2 Women: 0	<b>T6S R32W</b> Men: 3 Women: 2	<b>T6S R31W</b> Men: 6 Women: 4	<b>T6S R30W</b> Men: 1 Women: 3	<b>T6S R29W</b> Men: 4 Women: 5	<b>T6S R28W</b> Men: 0 Women: 4
<i>Total: 29</i> <i>Women: 3</i>	<i>Total: 162</i> <i>Women: 11</i>	<i>Total: 168</i> <i>Women: 22</i>	<i>Total: 157</i> <i>Women: 7</i>	<i>Total: 181</i> <i>Women: 16</i>	<i>Total: 200</i> <i>Women: 25</i>

These 106 homestead entry files were the source for what homesteaders cultivated. From about 1895 to 1910, applicants were not asked to identify their crops, but they did identify crops before and after that time. Throughout the entire period, applicants described their home and outbuildings to support their claim of actual settlement, required by the statute. Listing a crib or orchard as an outbuilding was tallied as raising corn or fruit, respectively.

## Chapter 4: Political Violence Against Illicit Distillers in “Populist Strongholds” of the Ouachita Mountains

### I. Introduction

At 9:30 on a brisk Sunday morning in late January 1894, seven lawmen snuck up on a still some three miles north of a small farming community known as Duckett in the Ouachita foothills in southwest Arkansas. The still was on the Cossatot River, and they’d allegedly just learned of its existence from a sixteen-year-old girl who wanted to protect her beau who was working there. Even the local deputy, Tom Martin, didn’t know it was there. When the three distillers saw the lawmen, they fired off a series of warning shots. The lawmen returned fire and escalated. After as many as forty or fifty shots were fired, the three distillers (probably named Monroe Johnson, Dick Dover, and his son George Dover) were grievously wounded. The lawmen, Flave Carpenter, Tom Grissom, Tom Martin, Fred and John Green, and two men named Reed and Witt, were unhurt, although Grissom and Martin would both be killed before the year was out. This “battle royal,” as Carpenter called it in a telegram to Little Rock, was an early foray by Democratic-appointed lawmen into what they perceived as Populist territory. In using political violence aimed at “exterminating the hardy moonshiners in the mountain fastnesses,” they hoped to earn political capital in advance of the mid-terms and financial capital for the federal treasury. The distillers, on the other hand, were trying to make a living while helping their rural community transform excess corn into something “now ready for use at dances and country picnics . . . ready for anyone who is willing to make a fool of himself and be laughed at by sensible people.”<sup>163</sup>

Distillers played an important role in rural Ouachita communities. Converting corn into

---

<sup>163</sup> Isaac Stapleton, *Moonshiners in Arkansas* (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1948), 23; “The Cold Snap,” *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Feb. 2, 1894, p. 1; “A Battle Royal, Desperate Fight Between Revenue Officers and Moonshiners,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 1. (N.b., the newspapers gave a variety of names to the distillers. These are my best guess.)

whiskey meant that farmers could use their cash to buy other goods, or even make a little cash. Especially as the Panic of 1893 deepened, farmers appreciated the flexibility that local distilling brought them. The federal government, however, needed that same cash. Democratic-appointed law enforcement sought to make examples of the distillers in so-called Populist strongholds. Democrats were using violence across Arkansas, including assassinations and lynchings, to ensure they stayed in power going forward and that election fraud would be unnecessary. The western Ouachita distilling industry would soon take a back seat to other ways to make a little money like truck farming, lumber, and the railroad.

## II. Distilling in the Ouachita Foothills

### A. Community and Money

Probably every rural community in the late nineteenth century Ouachitas had access to distilling. Although not everyone drank, everyone raised corn. Excess corn, left over after enough was set aside for the family's cornbread, the livestock's feed, and seed for the next year, could be transformed into whiskey. Distilling was something that could be done in winter when other farming activity was in a lull. A farmer could pay the distiller on shares or with labor, saving cash for other things, like coffee and calico, that couldn't be made at home. Making whiskey locally saved on taxes, too. And drinking was a part of community life.

Members of late nineteenth-century farming families in the Ouachita foothills wore many hats. To operate a household that was a day's ride or more to town, they were responsible for generating their own food, fodder, and fiber. As seen in the homesteading land grant files, they grew a variety of crops and raised a variety of animals. They were responsible for processing them in ways that allowed safe storage over the winter into spring. They kept their wagons and "horsepower" working. They also had to figure out how to get access to specialty goods, like calico, coffee, and sugar. A farming community had further specialization within it. Some people were also midwives,

teachers, blacksmiths, house carpenters, chimney makers, doctors, millers, saddlers, sorghum processors, gingers, merchants, preachers, undertakers, and distillers. These specializations needed access to some combination of capital, tools, and knowledge. They often were not full-time jobs.

Just like learning other farming skills, distillers learned the art of distilling from others. Law enforcement and the press described illicit distillers as carrying on a family tradition, often suggesting that the distillers couldn't have known any better, when it was a job which the community needed. As U.S. District Attorney James F. Read wrote, "These people live in a rough and thinly settled section of the country, are densely ignorant and very poor. They and their ancestors have believed they had the right to make whisky without leave of the government and have done so for years." Similarly, newspapers reported, "From time immemorial the simple minded and, as a rule, honest mountaineers have manufactured their few spare bushels of corn into a very pure article of whisky, and thus earned a few dollars, almost the only cash they ever handled." Many did learn from their family or at least started at a young age. Fate Robertson, who was distilling off and on for thirty years in nearby Montgomery County, said he had "been making whiskey nearly all my life, or since I was 14 years old" and that he had been going to stills since he was "a mere tot." Distilling was a round-the-clock, multi-person job to transform corn into something more portable and potable.<sup>164</sup>

Corn was bulky and not worth much per unit volume. Farming families were not interested in spending two days in transit to take twenty bushels of corn (one wagon load) to town, where there may or may not have been a licensed distiller willing to buy their corn, grossing perhaps \$10, when they could process it locally for the same or better return (as much as \$75). The other crop

---

<sup>164</sup> "Moonshiners' To Buy Wife Clothes," *McCurtain (OK) Gazette*, Oct. 18, 1916, p 1 (Elisha Lafayette Robertson "been making whiskey nearly all my life, or since I was 14 years old"); "Uncle' Fate Robertson," *(Memphis) Commercial Appeal*, Oct. 3, 1926, p. 81 ("the first still he ever saw ... he visited when a mere tot"); James F. Read, May 25, 1895 letter to the U.S. Attorney General in Penny Frasier's Clemency File; Jerome Jaquin, "War on Moonshiners," *Wilkes-Barre (Pa.) News*, Nov. 12, 1894, p. 7; Isaac Stapleton, *Moonshiners in Arkansas* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1948), 23.

most farmers grew, cotton, was also bulky, and it needed to be transformed either into homespun or sold elsewhere. Corn, however, could be transformed into “a commodity more salable, less bulky and more palatable” at home once “the family and the stock have eaten sufficiently of the corn.”<sup>165</sup> One-room schools existed because it was hard to get to bigger schools in town and the return for the effort was not enough; small unlicensed distillers existed because it was hard to get to bigger licensed distillers and the return for the effort was not enough. Unlicensed distillers, like millers, worked on shares so that the farmer could turn their corn into whiskey for home consumption.<sup>166</sup>

Getting distilling licenses and following federal regulations made no economic sense for these yeoman farmers in Polk County in 1894. “He makes illicit whisky to sell to his neighbors to obtain money with which to purchase such articles necessary for his use which he is unable to raise upon his farm.” Farmers didn’t need to take their corn or their liquor elsewhere. They could convert their smaller volumes of excess corn locally. Historians Claire Strom and Blake Perkins come at a similar issue, southern yeoman farmers who resisted tick eradication for cattle in the early twentieth century, from two viewpoints, but both agree tick dipping made no economic sense for some farmers. Certain segments of the cattle market did not care about eradicating ticks, so the cattlemen selling to those segments saw no reason to comply with the law. Some of these small cattle farmers responded with violence to tick dipping, as Strom wrote, “not [as] a reflection of ignorance but [as] the frustration and political expression of the marginalized.” Or, as Perkins argued, “the costs and inconvenience of dipping were great enough that earning a few dollars less could be overlooked.” Likewise, even though the U.S. district attorney asserted otherwise, distillers and their suppliers and consumers were well aware of the laws, but they could also do the numbers. As a joke went at the

---

<sup>165</sup> “Expert Disserts on Moonshining,” *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Oct. 15, 1916 (Elisha Lafayette Robertson of Montgomery County).

<sup>166</sup> Ben F. Johnson III, *John Barleycorn Must Die: The War Against Drink in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005), 24; Fort Smith Defendant Jacket 393 (John W. May and John W. Cook); Fort Smith Defendant Jacket 230 (John May and John W. Cook) (defendants distilling peach liquor on shares).

time, “From a bushel of corn a distiller gets four gallons of whiskey, which retail at \$16. The government gets \$3.60, the farmer who raised the corn gets 40 cents, the railroad gets \$1, the manufacturer gets \$4, the retailer gets \$7, the consumer gets six months and the policeman gets paid for running him in.” Legal distilling, inconveniently far from corn and home, was not useful for rural Ouachitans. Violence could serve to discourage enforcement of the revenue laws.<sup>167</sup>

It might take a week or more to get to a finished product, one that “when used according to directions, will make a rabbit spit in a bull-dog’s face.” Charlie Hogue, who was born in 1870 and grew up in the Arkansas Ozarks, recalled that “[this] kind of work [was] strenuous, and those on duty were kept busy. Some of them were too lazy to go to the spring and fetch a bucket of water around their homes, but it seemed as if they delighted in doing the hardest kind of work around the stills.” Raiding deputy John T. Burris reported, “They often operate in communities...” Hogue knew “The stills had to be operated on Sundays as well as on weekdays.” Indeed, the January 1894 raid on Johnson’s still happened on a Sunday morning, and the still was boiling away, with three men tending it.<sup>168</sup> It was also a social event, where any number of men (and some women) might show up to help out.

## B. Government Regulation and Taxes

Distillers, in contrast to other skilled farming jobs, had the misfortune of their job running into changing mores of some of their community. The distillers got caught in a bind. Much of their community wanted to turn corn and peaches into alcohol to consume locally, but others wanted to

---

<sup>167</sup> “Murderous Moonshiners,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 16, 1894, p. 4; “A Little Old, But Good,” *Pine Bluff (Ark.) Daily Graphic*, p. 1; Claire Strom, “Texas Fever and the Dispossession of the Southern Yeoman Farmer,” *Journal of Southern History*, 66(1) (Feb. 2000): 49-74; Susan Ditto, “Yeoman Farmers,” *Mississippi Encyclopedia* (accessed Aug. 23, 2022); J. Blake Perkins, “The Arkansas Tick Eradication Murder: Rethinking Yeoman Resistance in the ‘Marginal’ South,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70(4) (2011): 363-397.

<sup>168</sup> Isaac Stapleton, *Moonshiners in Arkansas* (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1948), 24; Charles W. Hogue, *Back Yonder: An Ozark Chronicle* (University of Arkansas Press, 2016) (originally published 1932), 263; “Moonshine Crusade: A Relentless Pursuit,” *Arkansas Democrat*, Nov. 4, 1898, p. 6; “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6.



turn alcohol into slop for the hogs. Revenue officers wanted to turn alcohol into revenue for the government. In 1894, there were only sixty licensed distillers in the state, including one in Waldron in nearby Scott County.<sup>169</sup> Unlicensed distillers and increased regulation of licensed distillers made the revenue officers' job difficult.

Revenue officers were supposed to collect revenue that resulted from licensed distilling. In 1894, the nation was in the midst of a depression, and the federal government needed the money from the whiskey tax. In 1893, "industrial production and wholesale prices fell by 25 and 18 percent, respectively." The depression made the whiskey tax more burdensome since it was fixed at 90 cents per gallon rather than as a percentage of sales, even before the federal government increased tax rates by 22% in August 1894. The cost to build illegal stills was "virtually nothing." This meant there was both a market need for cheap liquor and farmers' need for cash, while revenue officers also needed to pull in more revenue from somewhere. Until the 16th amendment was passed in 1913, about a third of the federal tax revenue came from alcohol of one sort or another. Between fiscal year 1893 and 1894, distilled spirits' contribution to total tax revenue jumped from 26% to 30.56%. And, with the tariff cuts late in 1894, an even larger percentage of the federal budget would rest on the distilling revenue.<sup>170</sup>

Although legitimate distilleries existed in Arkansas, they found it hard to compete with the illicit ones. The federal government made it even harder in April 1894, when the Commissioner of Internal Revenue issued an order that required licensed distilleries to produce more ethanol per

---

<sup>169</sup> "Commissioner of Internal Revenue's Recent Order Will Crush Distilleries," *Arkansas Gazette*, Apr. 8, 1894, p. 3.

<sup>170</sup> Karen Clay and Wener Troesken, "Strategic Behavior in Whiskey Distilling, 1887-1895," *Journal of Economic History*, 62(4) (Dec. 2002): 999-1023. Clay and Troesken remind the reader that illicit distilling "was all over the country" at the turn of the last century, and not just in remote locations. Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Laws in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Charles B. Thompson, III, *Spirits of Just Men: Mountaineers, Liquor Bosses, and Lawmen in the Moonshine Capital of the World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 156; Tun Yuan Hu, *The Liquor Tax in the United States 1791-1947: A History of the Internal Revenue Taxes Imposed on Distilled Spirits by the Federal Government* (New York: Columbia University, 1950), Appendix 1.

bushel of grain (or, more to the point, to pay taxes as if they made more ethanol). These licensed distilleries, mostly in the South, were small stills which paid taxes based on estimated production.<sup>171</sup> Arkansas' licensed distillers and Revenue Collector R. T. Cook pushed back, claiming that they couldn't be that efficient and the sixty licensed distillers would have to close down entirely, leaving the field open to "illicit plants [which would] spring into existence and set the law at defiance." Yet, the regulations went into place anyway. In 1890, Arkansas had 31 men working in the distilling industry (less than one percent of the 3314 distillers and rectifiers in the United States). If Cook's numbers were correct, they had doubled to 60 in 1894. To put this into context, Arkansas had 62 clock and watch makers and repairers and 58 cotton mill operatives. Despite Cook's war on illicit distillers, the number employed by licensed distillers in 1900 (38) were about two-thirds what they reportedly were in 1894 (60). The number of licensed distillers declined, from 18 in 1890 to 14 in 1900. The illicit distilled liquor industry swamped the licit industry in Arkansas and Cook's war did little to stem it. In fact, it may have made it worse.<sup>172</sup>

Not everyone in the Ouachita foothills was in favor of drink. Even in the mountains, some people were against drink or against drinking in saloons. Soon after marrying in 1877, D. H. and Nannie (Haller) Propps moved to north Howard County, "wild, unsettled country with no schools or churches," to leave behind Centre Point's saloons. As their son remembered, "Since papa could not get liquor he quit drinking. He as well as my mother came to hate liquor, and none of their children ever drank to any extent. So the years spent in the mountains ended that problem." Barnard and Sarah Thomas signed temperance pledges in 1883 in their family Bible, just after they moved to

---

<sup>171</sup> Karen Clay and Wener Troesken, "Strategic Behavior in Whiskey Distilling, 1887-1895," *Journal of Economic History*, 62(4) (Dec. 2002): 999-1023.

<sup>172</sup> "Commissioner of Internal Revenue's Recent Order Will Crush Distilleries," *Arkansas Gazette*, Apr. 8, 1894, p. 3; Ellwod Wilson, "The Morals of the Whiskey-Tax," *The Sewanee Review* 2, no. 1 (1893): 115-28; *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Manufacturing Schedule* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), Table 73, p. 398 and 404; John H. Garber, "Alcoholic Liquors," in *Census Reports: Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Manufactures, Part III, Special Reports on Selected Industries* (Washington, D. C. 1902): 597-636.

north Howard County. Howard County had gone dry by the strategic passage of local regulations by 1895, so that areas around certain churches and schools, which happened to cover all of Howard County, were dry. People who were against drink or who had a bone to pick with relatives or neighbors may have aligned with the law and against others in their community when it came time to choose sides.<sup>173</sup>

### III. U.S. Government Wages War on Distillers

In 1893, the federal government needed more revenue and the Democrats wanted fewer Populists. In Arkansas, that translated into a war on distillers in the perceived Populist stronghold of the Ouachitas once newly-inaugurated President Grover Cleveland got his men in place in federal law enforcement and internal revenue. Meanwhile, the Democrats worked to reduce tariffs, increasing the need for revenue from other sources. As historian Kenneth C. Barnes argues, in the late nineteenth century, men used political violence to obtain and retain political power in Arkansas. Here, political violence was directed against relatively anonymous moonshiners in the mountain fastnesses where Populists were believed to live.<sup>174</sup>

#### A. Decision to Prosecute

The people who led the war against distilling in the Ouachita foothills in 1893 were all appointees of the recently elected Grover Cleveland administration. In April 1893, President Cleveland nominated James F. Read (Sebastian County), Robert T. Cook (Arkadelphia, Clark County), and George J. Crump (Boone County) to key positions for federal law enforcement in the Western District of Arkansas. “The political corpse of the Republican administration was hardly dead” before “candidates began swarming thick and fast for official plums” in the second Cleveland

---

<sup>173</sup> J. J. Propps, “My Childhood and Youth in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26(4) (1967): 310-352; *Pictorial Family Bible* (Philadelphia: A. J. Homan & Co.) (in possession of the author); “Special Acts which Operate to Keep Howard County Dry,” *Nashville News*, Sep. 23, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>174</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

administration. Read, Cook, and Crump were all tight with Arkansas' Democratic Party. Read and Crump were well known to James Berry when he was governor. Berry was no longer governor, but, even better, he was now U.S. senator, having replaced Augustus H. Garland when Garland became Grover Cleveland's U.S. Attorney General in 1885. Berry was the conduit through which most Democratic patronage ran. Cook had an even easier in with the Democrats. His mother's only siblings were Augustus H. and Rufus K. Garland. A. H. Garland stayed in Washington after Cleveland's first term, and Rufus had died without issue, leaving just his sister's children to look after. (He had already had his sister appointed postmistress of Arkadelphia.) Cook had been a deputy internal revenue agent during Cleveland's first term, so he even had some relevant experience. As a result, all three had a strong claim on appointments in Cleveland's new administration. Once they were confirmed, they seemed to have coordinated an approach to get tough on illicit distilling. But they did not go to war on distillers where their Democratic voters were, in cities and towns and well-populated areas. Instead, they went to perceived Populist strongholds to build their case against distillers in the Ouachita Mountains.<sup>175</sup>

#### B. War Against Populist Strongholds

R. T. Cook was waging war in the six counties of Pike, Polk, Sevier, Montgomery, Howard, and Little River, which he characterized as "an area fully as large as the entire state of Rhode Island," against the distillers he claimed had already been driven into Arkansas from Tennessee, North and South Carolina, and Georgia. In discussing this war on alcohol production, an article first published by the *New York Sun*, and picked up by papers across the nation, claimed this area was "a populist

---

<sup>175</sup> "Message from the Governor," *Arkansas Democrat*, Mar. 23, 1883, p. 4; "Extracts from an Address to the Voters of Sebastian County," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 1, 1892, p. 5; "Office Seekers," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 16, 1892, p. 4; "Arkansas Office Seekers," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Mar. 10, 1893, p. 6; "Judge James F. Read an Applicant," *Kentucky Advocate*, Feb. 18, 1893, p. 1; "Work of the Senate," *National Tribune*, Apr. 20, 1893, p. 12; George W. Balogh, "James Henderson Berry (1841-1913)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Sep. 19, 2022); Fay Hempstead, "James F. Read" in *Historical Review of Arkansas: Its Commerce, Industry and Modern Affairs* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), 917-918; "Senator Berry Denies Any Connection," *Arkansas Gazette*, Aug. 30, 1855, p. 2; "Attorney-General Garland's Brother," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 14, 1886, p. 2.

stronghold,” implying that these targets were selected for partisan reasons. Another article claimed the distillers were “uppermost in Polk-county politics.” These six counties were not strongholds for any party, having neither the people nor the votes to worry about. As shown in Table 3, Fishback won all but Polk County in his successful bid for governor. (The Populist candidate won Polk County.) Likewise, Cleveland carried all six counties, but they were hardly necessary in a state he carried by nearly 41,000, with an overall margin of more than 27%. Cleveland received 59% of all Arkansas votes. These six counties accounted for 7,339 votes, or just five percent of all the votes in Arkansas, and 4,178 of those votes (57%) went to Cleveland. That said, 12% of all the Populist votes for president statewide came from these six counties. To the extent there was a Populist stronghold in Arkansas, these counties would be a part of it. Pike County had the largest percentage (28%) voting Populist. Polk County had the largest percentage voting Republican, and the largest percentage voting for either Populist or Republican. In fact, if Polk County had not split the vote, Cleveland might have lost that county.<sup>176</sup>

Polk County was described as a “Populist stronghold.” The Populists were blamed for tolerating the distillers’ existence. It is true that every one of Polk County’s local offices were won by the Populist Party in 1892. Congressman John Sebastian “Bass” Little spent two weeks in Polk and Montgomery counties in early September 1894 and described that area as “one of the hottest Populite districts in Arkansas.” In interviews shared by newspapers across the country, law enforcement described Polk County as “politically a Populist stronghold, its local authorities being ... in covert sympathy with the moonshining element.” The perception of federal law enforcement across the United States was that “seven-eighths of the inhabitants [of moonshining counties] are

---

<sup>176</sup> “Arkansas Moonshiners: Nip and Tuck Between Them and the Revenue Officers,” *New York Sun*, Oct. 7, 1894, p. 6; “The Youngest Moonshiner,” *Buffalo (NY) Morning Express*, Feb. 17, 1894, p. 10; Wikipedia contributors, “1892 United States presidential election in Arkansas,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1892\\_United\\_States\\_presidential\\_election\\_in\\_Arkansas&oldid=106586818](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1892_United_States_presidential_election_in_Arkansas&oldid=106586818) (accessed Sep. 20, 2022).

connected to the illicit liquor business in some way.” The Democrats may have targeted stills and distillers in these unpopulated and un-Democratic counties as a result.<sup>177</sup>

<i>County</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Democratic Party (W. M. Fishback)</i>	<i>People’s Party (J. C. Carnahan)</i>	<i>Republican Party (W. G. Whipple)</i>	<i>Prohibition (Nelson)</i>	<i>Sum of non-Democrat votes</i>
Pike	1360	704 (52%)	601 (44%)	47	8	656 (48%)
Polk	1392	561 (40%)	741 (53%)	84	6	831 (60%)
Sevier	1556	815 (52%)	674 (43%)	62	5	741 (48%)
Montgomery	1142	692 (61%)	279 (24%)	126	45	450 (39%)
Howard	2060	1264 (61%)	594 (29%)	195	7	796 (39%)
Little River	1297	616 (47%)	196 (15%)	481	4	681 (52%)
All six counties	8807	4652 (53%)	3085 (35%)	995 (11%)	75 (1%)	4155 (47%)
Arkansas	156,246	90,115 (58%)	31,177 (20%)	33,644 (21%)	1310 (1%)	66,131 (42%)
Six counties/Arkansas	5.6%	5.2%	9.9%	3.0%	5.7%	6.2%

<i>County</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Democratic Party (Grover Cleveland)</i>	<i>People’s Party (James Baird Weaver)</i>	<i>Republican Party (Benjamin Harrison)</i>	<i>People’s + GOP</i>
Pike	1,226	656 (53%)	338 (28%)	231 (19%)	569 (46%)
Polk	1,041	455 (44%)	192 (18%)	394 (38%)	586 (56%)
Sevier	1,217	757 (62%)	274 (23%)	186 (15%)	460 (38%)
Montgomery	904	612 (68%)	137 (15%)	155 (17%)	292 (32%)
Howard	1,704	1,071 (63%)	278 (16%)	354 (21%)	632 (37%)
Little River	1,247	627 (50%)	209 (17%)	411 (33%)	620 (50%)
All six counties	7,339	4,178 (57%)	1,428 (19%)	1,731 (24%)	3159 (43%)
Arkansas	148,028	87,834 (59%)	11,831 (8.0%)	46,983 (32%)	58,814 (40%)
Six counties/Arkansas	5.0%	4.8%	12%	3.7%	5.4%

The federal agents described the distillers as “uppermost in Polk County politics.” That was

<sup>177</sup> “Bass’ Little in Town: On His Way Home from Washington and Polk Counties, He Visits Fort Smith,” *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, Sep. 15, 1894, p. 1; Willard B. Gatewood, “John Sebastian Little (1851-1916),” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Aug. 23, 2022); “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6; Stephen Cresswell, *Mormons and Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870-1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 156 (date of source not entirely clear).

<sup>178</sup> “Official Returns,” *Russellville (Ark.) Democrat*, Sept. 22, 192, p. 4.

<sup>179</sup> Wikipedia contributors, “1892 United States presidential election in Arkansas,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1892\\_United\\_States\\_presidential\\_election\\_in\\_Arkansas&oldid=106586818](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1892_United_States_presidential_election_in_Arkansas&oldid=106586818) 2 (accessed Sep. 20, 2022). This Wikipedia entry provides entries by county and by percentages which are otherwise paywalled.

not true. These distillers lacked any connection to Polk County politics (or Howard County politics) or prominence of any sort. Historian Blake Perkins argues that the moonshine wars in Cleburne County in 1898 were evidence of a complicated “history of rural populism and intraregional conflict between the haves and the have-nots in the Ozarks.” Despite the claim that Polk County was a Populists’ stronghold, I do not see such a class distinction between local law enforcement and illicit distillers in Polk and Howard Counties, perhaps because nobody in the area had much money. These men were not politically active in the years leading up to their arrests.<sup>180</sup>

### C. Battles in the Mountain Fastnesses

In 1894, the internal revenue collectors were hot to capture wildcatters in the Ouachitas, and even hotter to make sure the press covered their successes. R. T. Cook aimed to have “every moonshiner killed, captured or driven out of the state.” (Although illicit distillers were arrested elsewhere in Arkansas that year, the focus was on the Ouachitas.) Revenuers were most successful in Polk County and northern Howard County although they reported forays in Sevier County, Pike County, and Montgomery County. Flavius Josephus “Flave” Carpenter (1851-1933) and Revenue Collector Robert McClure bragged about their January raids across the Ouachitas, in Polk, Howard, and Sevier counties, where revenuers destroyed nine or ten stills, 250 gallons of whiskey, 2500 gallons of beer mash, and arrested fifteen illicit distillers over two weeks. This brought the total to thirty-seven in the “Cositot” mountains. By February 4, 1894, R. T. Cook was claiming credit for

---

<sup>180</sup> “The Youngest Moonshiner,” *Buffalo (NY) Morning Express*, Feb. 17, 1894, p. 10; *Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Western Arkansas; Yell, Pope, Johnson, Logan, Scott, Polk, Montgomery, and Conway Counties* (Chicago: Southern Publishing Co., 1891) (searched for names of distillers and their families in the biographies and Polk County’s elected officials); “Nevada Picayune: We see,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Aug. 9, 1893, p. 4 (“People’s party has had control of that county for several years”); “Polk county enjoys,” *Forrest City Times*, Sep. 23, 1892, p. 1 (“only county to give a majority to the P.P. state ticket”); “Polk County: Locally It Is the P.P.,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 11, 1892, p. 2 (took every county office); J. Blake Perkins, *Hillbilly Heltraisers: Federal Power and Populist Defiance in the Ozarks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 65.

shutting down fifty illicit distilleries, and the *Arkansas Gazette* was crediting the Democrats with the success.<sup>181</sup>

To find stills, you had to know where to look. In November 1893, Polk County sheriff's deputy Tom Martin (1842-1894) and others began to collect information about still operations. As told in October of 1894, "Martin was formerly Deputy Sheriff of Polk County. In the beginning of these troubles he lent valuable assistance to the officers in many of the raids they made in that county, ... where some of the most tragic events of the [wildcat] war have occurred."<sup>182</sup> Tom was relatively new to Polk County. He was born in Mississippi, where he served in Company D, 42<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Mississippi Infantry, during the Civil War, but later moved to White County, Arkansas.<sup>183</sup> He met and married his wife Amanda (Fisher) there in 1868. (Amanda's father had moved the Fisher family from Tennessee to White County in 1860.)<sup>184</sup> Sometime in the 1870s, the Martins moved from White County to Faulkner County, and then around 1888 they moved to Polk County.

The later-issued indictments suggest that nearly every distiller in Polk and north Howard Counties was busy distilling on November 10 and 11, 1893, or at least that Martin was willing to testify to that. Joe Ross was charged with illicit distilling and selling for actions on November 10, 1893, in Polk County. Elias Moore, David Dover, James Dugan, William D. Ward, John Ward, Lee Ward, Nannie Jordan, Will Lackey, and Sam Lackey, were uniformly accused of distilling or selling liquor on November 10 or 11, 1893 in Polk County. Andy Bowen likewise was accused of illicit

---

<sup>181</sup> "Mountain Stills," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31; "A Battle Royal," *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; "We are glad to see," *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Feb. 9, 1894, p. 2; "The Youngest Moonshiner," *Buffalo (NY) Morning Express*, Feb. 17, 1894, p. 10; "Raided the Moonshiners," *Green Forest Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 1; "Whisky Gone to Waste," *Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 9, 1894, p. 3; "Fifteen Moonshiners Bagged," *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, Feb. 12, 1894, p. 3; "Fifty Wild-cat Distilleries Broken Up," *Arkansas Gazette*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 4.

<sup>182</sup> "Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6.

<sup>183</sup> Amanda Martin, Widow's Application for Pension (Polk County, Arkansas), Jul. 9, 1901.

<sup>184</sup> "W.E. Fisher," *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishers, 1890), 160-161; "Office of Attorney General," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Oct. 31, 2022).



distilling and unlawful sale on November 10, 1893, in Polk County. The lone exception, Z. P. “Penny” Frachiseur, was accused of illicit distilling and selling in December 1893.

The distillers fought back. On Saturday, January 27, 1894, Frank Park (age 25) was “shot down like a dog” near Norwoodville in Sevier County, allegedly in response to his grand jury testimony disclosing “the moonshiners’ methods and secrets.” Frank and his wife Jodie (Norwood) were both born in Sevier County. Jodie was the granddaughter of B. F. Norwood (1802-1876), founder of the little community, and first cousin to Hal Norwood, who would be elected Arkansas attorney general in 1909 and 1929. According to the *Arkansas Gazette’s* breathless retelling, the organization was “oath bound” and “resembles somewhat the dreaded Mafia in its methods.”<sup>185</sup>

The next morning, Sunday, January 28, 1894, the bloodiest fight happened about three miles north of Duckett, on the border between Howard and Polk Counties. Flave Carpenter called it a “Battle Royal.” Seven lawmen engaged three distillers in a shootout, in which all three wildcatters were shot. None of the lawmen were injured, either by the three men or by the alleged “fifty natives” who later “threatened to kill” the lawmen. The still, “unknown to the officers, even to Deputy Martin, was pointed out to the revenue agents by a sixteen-year-old girl, who had a sweetheart working at the still, and who was anxious to have it suppressed in order to save him from death or imprisonment.” (Not to cast aspersions on Carpenter’s October account, but I am having trouble envisioning how that conversation came about.) “The still was in full operation, . . . and the three men inside were hard at work.” The operation was in “a valley of the Cossattet [sic] mountains” on the “Cossatot River, [and] had been running two weeks. . . . Their still was located in a little hut built of pine puncheons, which furnished a shelter for their unlawful work.” The building

---

<sup>185</sup> “Oath Bound,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Feb. 4, 1894, p. 2.

was “40 by 50 feet and shaped something like the letter F.”<sup>186</sup> Although Carpenter called this building small, a two thousand square foot building would not have been small, even for a barn. The “operators being Monroe Johnson, alias Stone, a fine looking but desperate fellow about 28 years of age, ... and a man named Driver [sic, Dover], about 48 years of age, who, with his family, ... had lived in the locality about two years.” Dover’s son was also there.

The battle reportedly began when the distillers saw the lawmen. The agents reached the still at 9:30 that Sunday morning, but the distillers spotted them before they were ready to move in. The distillers allegedly fired the first shots, but they “flew over [the lawmen’s] heads, doing no harm.” These warning shots were seen as a challenge by the seven lawmen, who fired back. After exchanging 18 shots (or 40 or 50 by Carpenter’s October account), Johnson and the two Dovers surrendered. Johnson had “a load of buckshot in his groin and a Winchester ball in each leg” while the elder Dover was “shot twice in the head, once in the neck, and once in the left side.” Another account put it more succinctly: “Monroe Jackson [sic] was shot three times and will die. The other, an old man named Dunn [sic, probably Dover], was shot in four places, but not mortally.”<sup>187</sup> (None did die.)

Law enforcement destroyed the still before they carried the wounded men out. According to Flave Carpenter, they “hadn’t gotten two miles when we were forced to stop and send a distance to get a country doctor, who dressed the wounds of the three men; they were bleeding to death.” At some point, perhaps while the doctor worked to stop the bleeding, “fully fifty natives had gathered eyeing us with ominous look which boded no good to the posse.” They were “armed with pistols and guns, ... and threatened to kill us and take the prisoners.” Carpenter did not explain how the

---

<sup>186</sup> “Battle in the Mountains,” *Emporia (KS) Daily Republican*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 1; “A Battle Royal,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; “Deputy United States Marshal,” *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Feb. 2, 1894, p. 2; “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6.

<sup>187</sup> “Raided the Moonshiners,” *Green Forest Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 1.

seven lawmen escaped.<sup>188</sup> After all this, the wounded men were left behind. One man (probably one or both Dovers) was left with William Elmo Porter in Baker community. Another (probably Monroe Johnson) was left with his family since he wasn't expected to live. By October, Carpenter reported that "strange to say, Diver [sic, Dover] and his son are yet living; Johnson wasn't hurt much."<sup>189</sup>

The lawmen, Flave Carpenter, T. B. Grissom, Tom Martin, Fred and John Green, and two men named Reed and Witt, were all unhurt after this exchange. Flavius Josephus "Flave" Carpenter (1851-1933), like R. T. Cook, was from Arkadelphia. Carpenter would parlay his experience in finding stills into a job for Harvey Couch, finding sites for hydroelectric dams. Carpenter Dam, near Hot Springs, is named for him. Tom Grissom was twenty-seven years old and possibly had more bravado than sense. The *Arkansas Gazette* correspondent called him "as brave a young man as I have ever met." He was single, reportedly from Chicot County (but Clay County is another possibility) and lived in Little Rock. Fred and John Green may have been John F. Green (either alone or along with another relative of his). John F. Green's mother Hannah (1817-1902) was a sister to many of the Dovers living around Cove so it would be entirely likely that they would have known where Dover's still was, without the need for a sixteen-year-old girl to make a *deus ex machina* appearance. Reed and Witt, like Martin and the Greens, were probably local men.<sup>190</sup>

After spending Sunday night "on the road to Nashville" the lawmen and their prisoners (the ones who weren't half-dead) "traveled all day Monday," January 29, when "[they] captured Joe Ross, another moonshiner in upper Howard, and sent him, under guard of Grissom... to Umpire, where

---

<sup>188</sup> "Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6; "A Battle Royal," *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; "Raided the Moonshiners," *Green Forest Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>189</sup> "A Battle Royal," *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; "Raided the Moonshiners," *Green Forest Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 1; The New 'Squires," *Nashville News*, Sep. 21, 1898; Mahalia Jane (Tipton) Porter (1855-1907), FindAGrave Mem. 158950072; "A Woman Fell Dead at Her Home in Baker Springs," *Nashville News*, Jun. 1, 1907, p. 1; "Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6.

<sup>190</sup> Wendy Richter, "Flavius Josephus (Flave) Carpenter (1851-1933)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Oct. 13, 2022); Stephen Wilson, *Harvey Couch: An Entrepreneur Brings Electricity to Arkansas* (Little Rock: August House, 1986); "A Battle Royal," *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; "Dale Barnes Is Resourceful," *Mena Weekly Star*, Dec. 20, 1917, p. 1.

we afterwards joined them.” The lawmen somehow got everyone “back to the railroad.”<sup>191</sup> Four men were reported captured, three of whom were seriously wounded and left behind, but lawmen brought fifteen accused distillers to the state penitentiary in Little Rock. Ross and three others made bond before the others were transported to Fort Smith, where they awaited trial.

Not all battles involved guns. Some involved cameras and little kids. During the January raids, Stephen Ashby and his three-year-old son Ed were arrested near Baker in north Howard County. In contrast to most of the men who were arrested on this trip, little Ed had no ma and his pa had no wife, and “he had no relatives in Polk County.” The feds brought Ed to Fort Smith, where Deputy Robert McClure kept him. Ed was so ignorant that he was afraid the camera was “some sort of weapon and plaintively begged ‘Don’t ye shoot me ner my pa.’” He was “raised on beer and whisky just as the ordinary babe was raised on milk” and his “clothes were of the most dilapidated description.” The citizens of Fort Smith “outfitted him in raiment” including a “most resplendent . . . red shirt with polka dots.”<sup>192</sup> Even Ouachita kids were seen as uncivilized.

Distillers continued to be brought in. In early February, John Kaiser (sic, probably Kizer) and Frank Conway were captured in Sevier County and brought to Little Rock. They may have been from Pike County, where a John Kizer played a role in capturing the Cook brothers, but they probably had nothing to do with Frank Park’s death in January. They played to the press, writing a poem “in defense of illicit distilling, condemning their captors.” Kaiser had “hair reaching to his waist” and “never intended to get his hair cut until there was free whisky.” Conway and Kaiser tried to cut a deal right off and delay their trial until their “pal” was captured.<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6; “A Battle Royal,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; “Raided the Moonshiners,” *Green Forest Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>192</sup> “The Youngest Moonshiner,” *Buffalo (NY) Morning Express*, Feb. 17, 1894, p. 10.

<sup>193</sup> “Two Wildcatters: One Refused to Cut His Hair Until the Country Had Free Whisky,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Feb. 6, 1894, p. 8. Unfortunately, the newspaper did not publish their poem.

Four of the fifteen January wildcatters posted bond, while Robert McClure brought the remaining eleven Polk Countians from Little Rock to the Fort Smith jail the week of February 9, where they were “enjoying themselves as best they can, . . . getting better and square meals than they have had for many days,” while awaiting trial.<sup>194</sup> The eleven were: “Stephen Ashley [sic, Ashby], Dick Dover (aka James Thompson), W. D. Ward, James Burke, Will Lackey, J. B. Frazier [sic, Z. P. Frachiseur], Ed Ross [or Rose], Jim Duggan, Elias Moore, J. S. Lackey, and John R. Miller.” The four who were released were not named, but probably included Joe Ross, some of the Ward/Jordan family, and possibly Stephen Ashby’s young son Ed. Frachiseur’s bond was set at a thousand dollars bond, and it seems likely the others would have had a similar bond requirement.<sup>195</sup>

The press coverage suggested these men were uncivilized mountaineers who had never been out of the Ouachitas. Contrary to this perception, the men arrested in the Ouachitas were not young reprobates or marginalized mountain men. They came from across the United States, born in Indiana, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. Frachiseur’s family had come from Georgia on the rails, and then taken a three day ride cross country to get to their new home. Just one was in Arkansas before 1850, and most did not move to Polk County, with their families, until after the Civil War. They were also family men. They all were married (or widowed) by the end of 1894. Their median age was 40, with a range from 21 to 69. Joe Ross, the youngest, was married that spring. Most of them stayed in the area long enough to prove up their homesteads. They had traveled across the country to reach Polk County. They were not ignorant ruffians.<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>194</sup> “Whisky Gone to Waste,” *Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 9, 1894, p. 3; “U. S. Court Notes,” *Fort Smith Elevator*, Feb. 16, 1894, p. 3.

<sup>195</sup> Fort Smith Defendant Jackets (digitized by ancestry.com).

<sup>196</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Rena Reid Frachiseur, “The Frachiseurs of Grannis,” posted by David Frachiseur on ancestry.com, July 7, 2010; Arkansas Marriage Certificates; GLO Records.

The week of March 16 saw Dick Dover and Noley Dover (perhaps the Dovers arrested in the “battle royal” or their relatives) discharged on bond. Deputy marshals kept bringing in more Polk County distillers. Deputy marshal S. T. Minor (another former Polk County deputy sheriff) brought in three Polk Countians, James Baker, Lum Cole, and Andy Bowen, while Martin brought in L. H. Hardaway, from near Baker. J. H. Johnson (probably Monroe Johnson from January’s battle royal) was also brought in, having been “shot in a fight with the deputies of the Eastern district a few days before Robt. McClure made the raid which bagged so many makers of the ‘pine top.’”<sup>197</sup>

Carpenter continued raiding. In mid-March, he “returned to Little Rock the other night from a successful raid in Montgomery, Pike and Howard counties,” where he destroyed six stills but captured no men because distillers were “exceedingly wary” after the battle royal. Carpenter apparently went right back out, destroying four more stills and capturing two unnamed men in Pike and Montgomery counties.<sup>198</sup>

#### D. Prosecution in the Western District of Arkansas

In February 1894, most of the Polk County wildcatters were brought to trial, about to be made examples of. The ones who hadn’t made bail or been left at home were brought up on charges of illicit distilling and selling. It is unclear whether the distillers expected the sort of vigorous enforcement they were about to receive.

The Ward/Jordan case seems to have been split into two trials, based on the sentencing book transcription. William Ward and his daughter Nannie Jordan were found guilty in a jury trial. William Ward was sentenced to serve time in Fort Smith February 12, and he and Nannie Jordan were sentenced to time at Fort Smith, March 22, 1894. Nannie’s brothers John and Lee Ward (who were indicted in February) were sentenced to Fort Smith October 10, 1894, suggesting they were

---

<sup>197</sup> “U. S. Court,” *Fort Smith Elevator*, Mar. 16, 1894, p. 3.

<sup>198</sup> “Raided Six Illicit Stills,” *Forrest City Times*, Mar. 23, 1879, p. 5; “A Desperate Moonshiner,” *Forrest City Times*, Mar. 30, 1894, p. 8.

part of the compromise. (They probably made bond like Joe Ross did, and when they got wind of the long sentences and high fines, decided not to come back to Fort Smith.)<sup>199</sup>

On February 9, 1894, Judge Isaac Parker swore in Thomas L. Martin of Baker, Polk County, as a deputy marshal. Although he was sworn in after the battles, it seems likely he was being given an official role in preparation for his testimony before the grand jury. As seen in Figure 18, Tom's signature was a bit cramped, and missing the cross-hatch on the *t* in Martin, suggesting that he was not accustomed to signing his name or, perhaps, that he was nervous about what he was going to get himself into. Judge Parker's signature, on the other hand, was large and more or less legible, not that different from the other fifty plus oaths he signed that year for other deputy marshals.<sup>200</sup>

The federal court in Fort Smith got the January distillers indicted and tried quickly. In February 1894, the federal grand jury for the Western District of Arkansas indicted them, including Frachiseur, Joe Ross, Elias Moore, David Dovers, James Dugan, William D. Ward, John Ward, Lee Ward, Nannie Jordan, Will Lackey, and Sam Lackey. Tom Martin was still in town since he served a writ of arrest on Frachiseur in Fort Smith on February 18. Except for Joe Ross, their trials or pleas took place in February. Ross had made bond, and his trial was set for May 7, 1894.

---

<sup>199</sup> Finding aid, sentencing books, Fort Smith criminal files, <https://www.archives.gov/files/fort-worth/finding-aids/fort-smith-case-files/sentence-books.pdf> (accessed Sep. 22, 2022).

<sup>200</sup> Thomas L. Martin, Oath of Office, Feb. 9, 1894, from "U.S. Marshals: Oaths of Office 1868-1945 Western District of Arkansas," FortSmithNPS, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/132910783@N03/36494003954/in/album-72157689298048265/> (accessed Aug. 13, 2022); Christopher Hager, *Word by Word: Emancipation and the Act of Writing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). "Oaths of Deputy Marshals, 1865-1971," U.S. District Court for the Fort Smith Division of the Western District of Arkansas, RG 21, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/3020892>

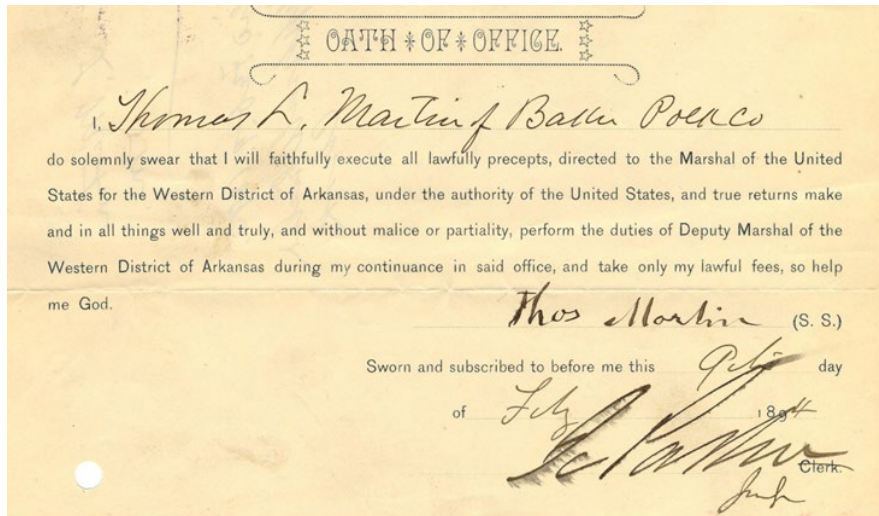


Figure 18. Thomas L. Martin, Oath of Office, February 9, 1894.<sup>201</sup>

Later in February 1894, Judge Parker accepted pleas and held trials of most of the fifteen Polk County moonshiners. Elias Moore, David Dovers, Will Lackey, and Sam Lackey were found guilty by a jury. A jury found Frachiseur guilty on one count of illicit distilling, and not guilty for selling. Bowen pleaded guilty. Lee Ward and Nannie Jordan were convicted by a jury. On March 31, 1894, Judge Parker sentenced eight of the Polk County men to eighteen months at Kings County Penitentiary (Brooklyn, New York) and as much as a five hundred dollar fine for illicit distilling.<sup>202</sup> Sterling P. Davis, Sam Lackey, Dick Dover, Ed Ross (or Rose), Lind [probably Suid or Sude] Dover, Elias Moore, and Z. P. Frachiseur (aka Penny Fraser or Frazier) and Andy Bowen were all sent to prison.<sup>203</sup> Bowen, perhaps because he pleaded guilty, was to pay \$100. Little Ed Ashby's Pa was sentenced to do time in the Fort Smith jail.<sup>204</sup> The finding aid for Fort Smith's sentencing books

<sup>201</sup> Thomas L. Martin, Oath of Office, Feb. 9, 1894, from "U.S. Marshals: Oaths of Office 1868-1945 Western District of Arkansas," FortSmithNPS, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/132910783@N03/36494003954/in/album-72157689298048265/> (accessed Aug. 13, 2022).

<sup>202</sup> Because I don't know how the court records were filed, some of the following is a best guess.

<sup>203</sup> "Whisky Gone to Waste," *Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 9, 1894, p. 3; "Six Convicts Discharged," *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Standard Union*, Jul. 31, 1895, p. 2; "Warden Hayes Loses Six," *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 31, 1895, p. 10. <https://www.archives.gov/files/fort-worth/finding-aids/fort-smith-case-files/sentence-books.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> Stephen Ashby, Fort Smith Case Files Sentence Books Finding Aid, <https://www.archives.gov/files/fort-worth/finding-aids/fort-smith-case-files/sentence-books.pdf> (accessed Aug. 25, 2022).



shows that most men sent to Brooklyn for liquor-related violations went in spring 1894. Outside of that time, most men sent to Brooklyn were sentenced for other crimes, from committing adultery in Indian Territory to violating postal laws. U.S. Attorney James F. Read probably pushed for and got heavy sentences that March.

Joe Ross did not return to Fort Smith for his May 7 trial. Instead, he got married. The family story, as told by Joe and Allie's daughter, is that Allie Duckett, age 17, had to swim the Cossatot River to meet Joe at the Duckett Ford. "[T]hey rode to Waldron and got married at the Courthouse." The Howard County marriage license was "issued on order from young ladies' [sic] father" on April 16, 1894. (Allie's father Turner Duckett had moved south from the hills of Sebastian County in 1876 after his own run-in involving illicit distilling and Judge Parker.) The Howard County license was not returned until May 21<sup>st</sup> and the man who signed it, Free Malone, was a Scott County Justice of the Peace, who ran a hotel in Waldron, between Fort Smith and Duckett. (Prior to that, he was a grocer who was charged with retail liquor and tobacco violations in 1874.) The family stories don't account for just what Joe was up to at the time, but perhaps he was aiming to get back to Fort Smith and got distracted by true love.<sup>205</sup>

These trials and convictions seem to have been an even mix between retail liquor distribution and illicit distilling, with perhaps a slight preference to charging illicit distilling, although I haven't gone back to count them. In contrast, historian Stephen Cresswell writes it was easier to prove retail distribution than distilling so "[a]bout 80 percent of these cases [in eastern Tennessee] were for retailing liquor without a license." Historian Wilbur Miller makes the same point, but also

---

<sup>205</sup> Howard County, Arkansas Marriages, Book E (1894-1898), Joe J. Ross and Allie Duckett, May 21, 1894, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:N93X-XYD> (accessed Aug. 14, 2022); Manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules (Hickman Township, Scott County, Arkansas) (hotel keeper); Manuscript census returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules (Waldron, Hickman Township, Scott County, Arkansas) (hotel proprietor); Manuscript census returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules (Hickman Township, Scott County, Arkansas) (grocer); Fort Smith Defendant Jacket 131, Free Malone and Ceclops Malone; Laverne Ross Lay, "Allie Italy Duckett," in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., Jun. 1992) [unpaginated].

claims that most every distiller was also selling. Perhaps distillers in the Ouachitas were not selling, but sharing. Miller described an ebb and flow of sentencing and clemency across the Appalachians, with leniency and fierce enforcement to be used in turns, depending on what seemed best for the community and the federal government, while Cresswell found that Tennessee federal judges were “exceptionally lenient” when it came to sentencing, citing the percentage of cases with a sentence of three months or less and the number of cases with a suspended sentence, all resulting in an average sentence of less than thirty days in 1893. Comparing Cresswell’s data to that for Judge Parker, I would say that judges in both locations were ordinarily lenient, rather than exceptionally lenient.<sup>206</sup>

Two lawmen were murdered in the Ouachitas, after most of the January wildcatters were tried and convicted. Deputy Marshal Tom Martin, age 52, was killed in early June 1894, months after most of the distillers from the January raid went to prison. He was murdered at home near Grannis in south Polk County. He was a victim “of the whisky troubles that have created much strife in that section of the county for the past six months,” perhaps stemming from having helped to plan the January raids.<sup>207</sup> He was “called to the door of his home one night. He lived on a farm far from any town, but he had no fear, and when he stepped on the porch he was shot dead by an unknown horseman who quickly disappeared in the darkness,” having “fir[ed] from the cover of some bushes some 150 to 200 yards distant.”<sup>208</sup> When his widow applied for a Confederate widow’s pension seven years later, she wrote, “my said husband died 4<sup>th</sup> day of June 1894. He was a U S Deputy Marshal and was shot from the Brush while at Home in Polk Co Ark.”<sup>209</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> Stephen Cresswell, *Mormons and Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870-1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 135, 165-167; Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>207</sup> “Deputy U. S. Marshal Murdered,” *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Jun. 15, 1894, p. 1 (wrongly identifying the county as Poinsett).

<sup>208</sup> “Mountain Stills: Federal Authorities Breaking Them Up in Arkansas,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31; “Deputy U. S. Marshal Murdered,” *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Jun. 15, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> Amanda Martin, Widow’s Application for Pension, Polk County, Arkansas, Jul. 9, 1901.

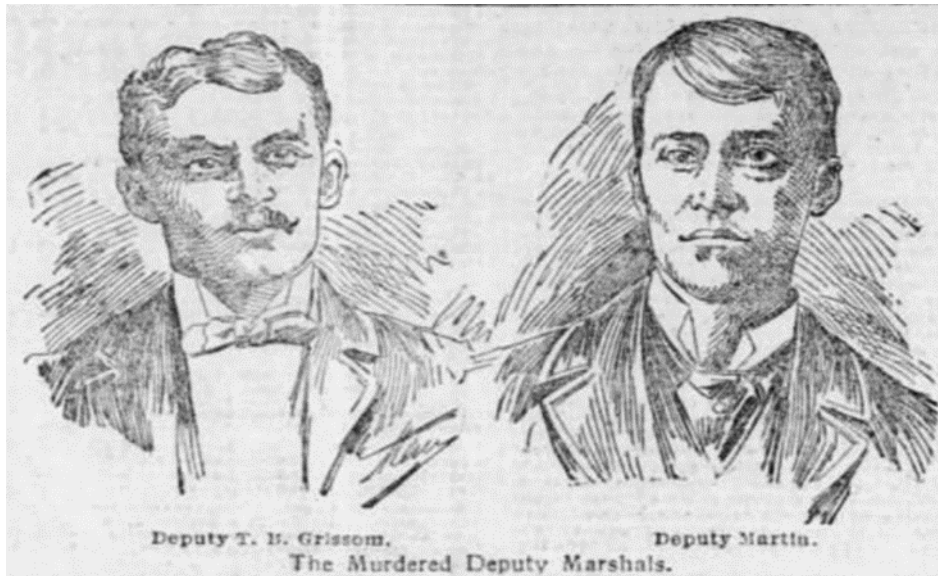


Figure 19. Deputy T. B. Grissom and Deputy Martin, The Murdered Deputy Marshals.<sup>210</sup>

Then, in September 1894, Deputy Marshal Tom Grissom was murdered in Pike County when the Cook brothers, Jim and John, drew on him first. (These Cooks were not kin to Garland’s nephew R. T. Cook.) Grissom was the man who took Joe Ross to Umpire. He went after the Cooks, for he thought they had killed Martin. His friends urged him to make out his will before he left Little Rock, and he promised to leave a lock of hair to one of them. He stopped at a Little Rock cigar shop to buy some tobacco. He joked with the shopkeeper that it “may yet prove to be his last trip.” Then he took the train from Little Rock to Arkadelphia and went from there to Pike County. He and two other lawmen (Deputy Marshal Green and Deputy Sheriff Jim Jones) “managed to catch the Cooks at Bear Creek church [near Kirby] in Pike county, late on a Sunday afternoon.” (More likely it was Friday night since Grissom’s body was sent back to Little Rock on a Saturday afternoon train.) They “were not more than ten feet apart when the trouble occurred.” “[N]o sooner had [Grissom] said ‘warrant’ than both the men opened fire with Winchesters, which they carried, although going to church. The officers replied with revolvers. The shots flew thick and fast, so that the congregation

---

<sup>210</sup> “Mountain Stills: Federal Authorities Breaking Them Up in Arkansas,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31.

fled from the church and took refuge in the woods. After a fight of half an hour, Grissom lay dead, his [heart] pierced by a bullet from Jim Cook's rifle, and [another lawman] was wounded. The Cook brothers rode away to the mountains, although Jim had been shot in the shoulder." "The brave deputy was shot down like a dog in the discharge of a duty imposed upon him by the Government of the United States." Grissom's body was returned to Little Rock on the 1 o'clock train Saturday, and he was buried that night in Oakland Cemetery.<sup>211</sup>

John Cook was quickly caught. In contrast to other moonshine districts, where historians Cresswell and Miller argue the state was allied with the distillers and against federal law enforcement, Governor Fishback posted a reward of \$200 for John's brother Jim. The U.S. Attorney General added \$200. U.S. Marshal Abner Gaines pitched in \$100. By October, the story was being told that Jim "escaped from a cave ... by digging a tunnel to the opposite side of the mountain." He was "like a wild bear." Jim was 5'10" or 11", 140 pounds, blue or gray eyes, sandy hair and a mustache, with just four toes on one foot. He was allegedly "organizing a band of moonshiners, forty or more in number, who are as desperate as he." Flave Carpenter believed "Cook and his gang would never be captured alive." The "king bee of Southwestern Arkansas's moonshiners," John Kizer, was reportedly released "on condition that he would assist in capturing Cook." (Kizer was probably the John Kaiser captured in early February 1894 in Sevier County.) Whether Kizer was any help, Jim was caught in January 1895, and acquitted at Murfreesboro of Grissom's murder that November. Historian Cresswell asserts that distillers in eastern Tennessee were similarly acquitted of murder,

---

<sup>211</sup> "A Battle Royal," *Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1894, p. 4; "The Murdered Deputy," *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 16, 1894, p. 3; "Murderous Moonshiners," *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 16, 1894, p. 4; "Murdered by Moonshiners," *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Sept. 21, 1894, p. 2; "Murderous Moonshine," *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 16, 1894, p. 4; Thomas B. Grissom, FindAGrave Mem. 199574376; "Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6; "Mountain Stills: Federal Authorities Breaking Them Up in Arkansas," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31.

crediting sympathetic juries.<sup>212</sup>

#### E. Prison

Sending distillers away to prison was a new strategy for the Western District of Arkansas. Perhaps intended to scare other Ouachitans straight, or to demonstrate that Democrats cared about revenue collection and the law, it took nearly a dozen men out of their rural, subsistence-farming communities, leaving a gap not quickly filled. It also alarmed their communities.

In April 1894, Marshal Crump and his wife Josephine B. (Greenlee) Crump took the eight distillers along with “a crowd” of other convicts by train to Brooklyn. Crump’s watch was not quite close enough for one prisoner. Henry Retter had stolen and sold liquor from a bonded warehouse in Waldron, and he escaped near Portsmouth, Virginia. Retter had been shackled to Redbird Stanley, but “somehow or other he got loose and made his escape.” They probably came on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and went from the Liberty Street Ferry to “the gray building on Crow Hill, like gentlemen, in two tally-hoes,” open wagons used to carry dignitaries in parades.<sup>213</sup>

New Yorkers and Arkansas revenue officers had similar opinions of these distillers. New Yorkers didn’t think much of “wild and woolly westerners.” The federal government paid the state

---

<sup>212</sup> “Marshal Gaines at Home,” *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 24, 1894, p. 2; “Reward for a Murderer,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, Oct. 5, 1894, p. 4; Jerome Jaquin, “War on Moonshiners: Waging a Vigorous Campaign in Western Arkansas,” *Wilkes-Barre (Pa.) News*, Nov. 12, 1894, p. 7. Much of the Cook family is buried in Bear Creek Cemetery. “Murderous Moonshine,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 16, 1894, p. 4; “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6; “A Noted Outlaw Landed Behind the Bars,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Jan. 8, 1895, p. 7; “Kizer, The Moonshiner,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 8, 1894, p. 2; “John Kizer, Chief of the Moonshiners, Turned State’s Evidence,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 4, 1894, p. 6; “Cook Acquitted,” *Osceola (Ark.) Times*, Nov. 9, 1895, p. 2; “Jim Cook Again in Hoc [sic]” *Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1895, p. 6 (previous federal conviction at Texarkana); Stephen Cresswell, *Mormons and Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870-1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 158-159; Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) (states allied with moonshiners).

<sup>213</sup> Josephine B. Crump papers: papers and journal, 1894-1920, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. It reportedly includes “a description of a journey she took with ... Crump, a United States marshal in Fort Smith (Sebastian County), who was transporting prisoners to Kings County Prison in New York City.” Unfortunately, I cannot get an appointment at Special Collections any time soon. “Escaped,” *Fort Smith Elevator*, Apr. 27, 1894, p. 4; “U.S. Courts,” *Fort Smith Elevator*, Feb. 16, 1894, p. 3; “Western Prisoners Arrive,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Aug. 29, 1894, p. 2; “Century Wheelmen Win Again,” *Philadelphia Times*, Jun. 24, 1894, p. 5 (“two tally-hoes filled with the embers of the Beach Band and the Mayor and Councils”).

of New York \$2.10 per week for their room and board – the highest rate, but that didn't mean they had to like them. They were unchurched, unwashed, and bad characters. The prison was about forty percent federal prisoners from the West and Southwest, “horse thieves, murderers, highwaymen, illicit whisky dealers, train robbers and general all-around desperadoes from the Indian Territory, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma.” Many “never saw a Bible until they entered the Kings County Penitentiary,” “a motley crew, many of them Greasers with hair unkempt, shabbily dressed, and the faces of typical Western ruffians.” “[T]he most disreputable looking federal prisoners” included “white men of the Western horse thief type,” sentenced for “burglaries, counterfeiting, horse stealing, smuggling liquor into the territory and a multitude of other crimes.” On arrival, they were “bathed, shaved and put into prison stripes” and vaccinated against smallpox. The prison had work for them. The prison's chaplain and physician were intrigued by the westerners, “who it seems cannot get accustomed to this climate” and “the most interesting class of convicts.” Their cells were “8 by 5.8,” and segregated by race. The food was better than Sing Sing, with “[t]he tea and coffee ... of good quality and the bread and meat sound.”<sup>214</sup>

With stills in every ravine, even enthusiastic federal agents had to think about what to do with the people making whiskey. The federal government had to pay states for prison space, and there were rumblings in New York of abolishing contract labor of prisoners, which could result in refusing to take federal prisoners. (In 1896, when New Yorkers amended their constitution, they

---

<sup>214</sup> “For Prisoner's Board,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Oct. 1, 1895, p. 4; “Western Prisoners Arrive,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Aug. 29, 1894, p. 2; “Started out as a Patriot,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Aug. 16, 1895, 1; “Filled with Thugs,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 27, 1894, 12. Harry McGlynn, “Chaplain Bass,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Oct. 14, 1894, 6 (“all classes of citizens, except reporters”); “Thirty Years a Prison Chaplain,” *The Outlook*, vol. 54(9), Aug. 29, 1896, p. 394. Harry McGlynn, “Chaplain Bass,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Oct. 14, 1894, p. 6; “Luxuries for Greasers, Indian Territory Convicts Bathed and Fed at Crow Hill,” (*New York World*, Jan. 2, 1894, p. 10; “A Batch of Convicts: Thirty Federal Prisoners Received at Crow Hill,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 27, 1894, p. 5; “Schenck's Request Refused,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Jan. 12, 1895, p. 12; “Crow Hill Recruits,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Nov. 13, 1895, p. 4; “Caning Chairs,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Mar. 26, 1894, p. 2; “Western Prisoners Arrive,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Aug. 29, 1894, p. 2; “Convicts in Dark Cells,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Jan. 31, 1896, p. 4; “Convicts Will Give Weekly Musicales,” *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 1894, p. 11.

quit taking federal prisoners altogether.) When prisoners were unable to pay fines, the usual response was to extend their sentence by another month, which further increased the cost to the federal government.<sup>215</sup>

#### IV. Armistice: The Great Compromise

Having implemented harsh prison sentences, the revenueurs could now turn to leniency. As described by historian Wilbur Miller, this strategy was first implemented in the 1870s. The Bureau of Internal Revenue believed these cycles were necessary to remind distillers of the law (like speed traps are intended to remind drivers of speed limits). The combination of strength and restraint could serve to encourage even the most populist regions of the country to comply with the law.<sup>216</sup>

In September and October 1894, somebody (probably R. T. Cook) got three national papers to write similar stories, all of which leveraged the martyrs, Grissom and Martin, to the cause of stopping illicit distilling in the mountains. Alert newspaper readers might have recognized that this action was made possible by Democratic appointees who took law enforcement seriously. The first story dropped in New York on October 7. The second and third stories dropped in St. Louis and Cincinnati two weeks later, on October 21 and October 22. (Although two of the newspapers, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and Pulitzer's *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, were Cleveland supporters, the third, Charles A. Dana's *New York Sun*, was only nominally Democratic by this point, and had railed against Cleveland during his first and second terms.) The stories were rerun across the country. Each story took up most of a page, and portrayed the distillers as ignorant, violent mountain men battling virtuous government men. R. T. Cook was the only person quoted in one article, and all three stories called him out by name. The St. Louis article started by quoting R. T. Cook, "The fight will

---

<sup>215</sup> "No More Federal Convicts," *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, May 6, 1896, p. 4; "Six Convicts Discharged," (*Brooklyn, N.Y.) Standard Union*, July 31, 1895, p. 2; "Warden Hayes Loses Six," *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, July 31, 1895, p. 10.

<sup>216</sup> Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenueurs and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

continue until every moonshiner is killed, captured or driven out of the state.’ [Cook] was discussing with The Enquirer correspondent the moonshiners’ war now being waged in seven counties in the western portion of the state.” The Cincinnati article also got some of the story from Flave Carpenter, who, like Cook, was from Arkadelphia. The so-called great compromise between the distillers and the law was being consummated at the same time.<sup>217</sup>

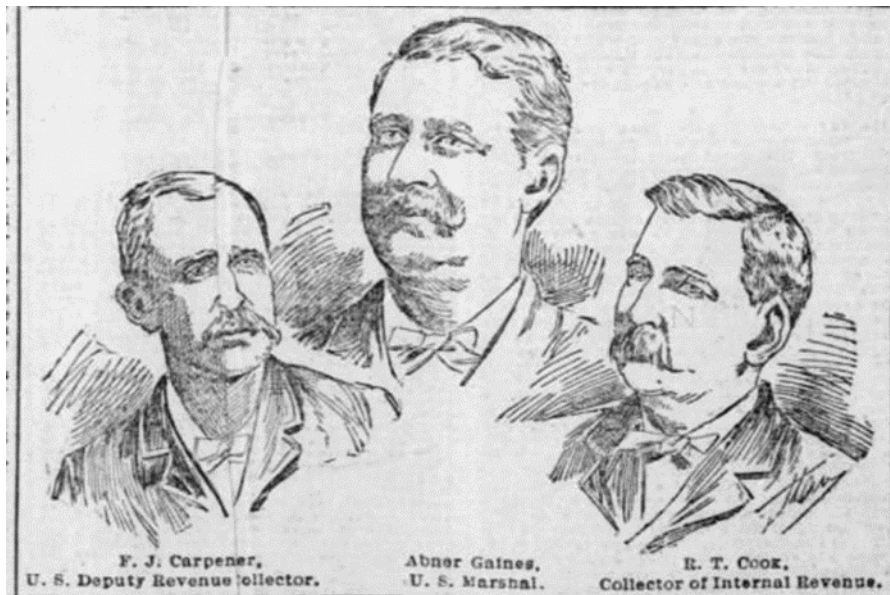


Figure 20. F. J. Carpenter, U.S. Deputy Revenue Collector, Abner Gaines, U. S. Marshal, R. T. Cook, Collector of Internal Revenue.<sup>218</sup>

The great compromise of October 1894 put Polk and Howard County wildcatters back to where they were in 1893, except possibly with fewer stills. Distillers would receive light sentences, to be served locally, in exchange for surrendering their stills. The deal was brokered by State Sen. Napoleon Bonaparte “Pole” McPhetridge (1844-1928) for the distillers, and Flave Carpenter for the federal authorities. McPhetridge had moved from Virginia to Arkansas after the Civil War’s end and had been living in Polk County since at least 1880. He was “a well-known lawyer who addressed a letter to President Cleveland in behalf of the illicit distillers,” giving “a succinct history of the

<sup>217</sup> “Arkansas Moonshiners: Nip and Tuck Between Them and the Revenue Officers,” *New York Sun*, Oct. 7, 1894, p. 6; “Mountain Stills,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31; “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6.

<sup>218</sup> Image from “Mountain Stills: Federal Authorities Breaking Them Up in Arkansas,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31.



troubles” and laying the groundwork for “clemency should it be required.”<sup>219</sup>

Despite the claim that this mass surrender of distillers and their equipment was the first on “American soil,” Arkansas was not the first place the Internal Revenue Collectors tried their strategy of a brokered mass surrender. In fact, “a hundred masked men [who were] armed and prepared to have their own way or trouble” captured a freight car filled with stills in Calhoun, Georgia in January 1894 and then “departed for their mountain homes.” These stills probably came from a mass surrender. Similarly, the very week of the great compromise, a United States marshal and his deputies in Kentucky were destroying thirty-seven stills and arresting 106 distillers, ranging in age from 15 to 50, with boys and “several women ... among the lot.” Historian Wilbur Miller described a surrender of a hundred in 1888.<sup>220</sup> Nor did this compromise permanently shut down illicit distilling in Arkansas, or even the Ouachitas.

The great compromise was trumpeted as a win for law enforcement. “Revenue officers have been pressing them for several months, and succeeded in getting to a point where they are compelled to surrender.” On Saturday, September 29, the revenueurs headed to Cove, Polk County, where they expected twenty moonshiners to surrender “next Monday.” Newspapers across the country picked up the two-paragraph squib and ran it. “[T]he fight ... waged broke the opposition of the moonshiners, and they offered to surrender to the Government and accept such punishment as Judge Parker ... might impose.... Up till October 8 the moonshiners came into Cove and Dallas and gave themselves up. They came singly and in squads, bringing their stills in ox-wagons. No such scene has ever before been witnessed on American soil.” Revenue officers came from Little Rock, “to take charge of the illicit distillers and destroy their stills,” which “were broken to pieces.” The

---

<sup>219</sup> “Arkansas Moonshiners: Nip and Tuck Between Them and the Revenue Officers,” *New York Sun*, Oct. 7, 1894, p. 6. No correspondence from McPhetridge was found in Cleveland’s papers. Library of Congress. Manuscript Division. *Index to the Grover Cleveland papers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1965) <https://www.loc.gov/item/64060012/>.

<sup>220</sup> “Recapture Their Stills,” *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, Jan. 5, 1894, p. 2; “A Bad Gang Found,” *South Bend Tribune*, Oct. 3, 1894, p. 1; Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenueurs and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Laws in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 154 (location not clear).

distillers agreed to “plead guilty to illicit distilling and receive the minimum sentence.” “Altogether about 70 men will yield to the law. All of them live within a radius of 20 miles of each other.” A circle of twenty miles radius covers about 125 square miles. This great compromise, whether seventy men or twenty, meant less than one distiller per square mile (and fewer distilling groups). Even in covering the compromise, newspapers reported “after this surrender, Officers Carpenter, Green and King made a series of raids in Howard, Montgomery, Pike, Sevier, Columbia and Lafayette Counties, resulting in the destruction of twenty stills and the seizure of a large quantity of whisky.” In December 1894, five men were arrested in Polk County, running a sixty gallon still. The great compromise was not the win law enforcement claimed.<sup>221</sup>

Eight months later, in May 1895, U. S. Attorney Read and Judge Parker reported that the revenue officers consulted with the good citizens of the area, who approved the compromise. Parker recalled that after the first round of men were sent to prison, “the persons (most generally) charged with these offenses in that County have surrendered, the Court letting them off with the lowest sentence, 30 days, they promising the Court to abandon the business. This action of the Court has had a most salutary effect, there having been no arrests or violations of the law in that regard in Polk County for some months.” Similarly, Read wrote, “since [Franchiseur’s] arrest and conviction a large number of persons engaged in the illicit manufacture and sale of whiskey have been arrested and given light sentences in jail. This was done in pursuance of a compromise the officers of the law made with these people. When the first arrests were made, ... they were tried and being convicted were sentenced to the penitentiary. When the other of their neighbors and friends heard of it they were very much alarmed and at once made overtures to the officers here, promising that if they were

---

<sup>221</sup> “Exterminating the Hardy Moonshiner in the Mountain Fastnesses of Arkansas,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1894, p. 6; “Mountain Stills: Federal Authorities Breaking Them Up in Arkansas,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 31; “Will Surrender: Twenty Moonshiners in Pope [sic] County Will Give Up Their Liberty,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 29, 1894, p. 3; “Moonshiners at the Bar,” *Cullman (Ala.) Tribune*, Oct. 4, 1894, p. 1; “Fort Smith Notes,” *Vinita (Okla.) Weekly Chieftain*, Dec. 27, 1894, p. 2.

permitted to come in and surrender and given jail sentences that they would break up their stills and quit the business. After consulting with the law abiding citizens of the County the officers here thought it better to accept the offer. The result was a large number surrendered and were given from 30 to 60 days in jail and a fine. Since then, so far as we can judge, the county has been very quiet and the promise has been kept by the majority if not all of the ‘moonshiners.’”<sup>222</sup> Read and Parker thus claimed victory in the battle to exterminate moonshiners. Left unasked was whether the deputy marshals were still looking for distillers in the mountain fastnesses.

It was not a permanent fix, even in the mountain fastnesses. Over the next thirty years, Elisha Robinson, of Story, Montgomery County, was sentenced at least six times for illicit distilling. He was probably among the Ouachitans caught up in the great compromise for “he was convicted the first time of making illicit whisky in 1894.” He served thirty days for that offense. In 1905, he served five months in the Pulaski County jail. He also “served a 60 day sentence at the ‘walls,’ then followed two years at Tucker farm, a sentence at Atlanta, and then his last sentence in the Garland County jail.” He also served time in 1916 for moonshining. These multiple sentences were not the sign of a wildcatter who was scared straight. Historians of other mountain regions acknowledge that illicit distilling “continued unabated until the early years of the twentieth century.”<sup>223</sup>

## V. The Aftermath: Clemency and the Train’s Arrival

After the great compromise, the Ouachitas returned to normal. No targeted raids against

---

<sup>222</sup> “In re Application for Executive Clemency of Penny Frazier, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 110, Year 1895,” Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD; “In re Application for Executive Clemency of Andy Bowen, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 108, Year 1895,” Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD.

<sup>223</sup> “Uncle’ Fate Robertson,” (*Memphis*) *Commercial Appeal*, Oct. 3, 1926, p. 81; “‘Moonshines’ to Buy Wife Clothes,” *McCurtain (OK) Gazette*, Oct. 18, 1916, p 1; Stephen Cresswell, *Mormons and Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870-1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 144 (quote, Eastern Tennessee); J. Blake Perkins, “First Tastes: Moonshiners and G-Men,” in *Hillbilly Hellraisers: Federal Power and Populist Defiance in the Ozarks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 35-66 (1898 battle in the Ozarks); Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Populist strongholds were reported the next winter. Except for the men still in prison in New York, corn was planted that spring and harvested that fall. Farmers set aside a share for seed, a share for feed, and a share for meal. They could decide if they wanted to turn leftover corn into whiskey.

On November 6, 1894, a year into the Panic of 1893, the Democrats lost the U.S. House in a blowout. Arkansas, however, went solidly Democratic. In related news, the tax receipts for spirits dropped by nine percent across the nation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1894, though perhaps not as dramatic a loss as the election. The tax losses due to alcohol, however, made up more than three-quarters of the financial loss to the federal government. Both the Democrats' loss and the loss in revenue were tied to the Panic.<sup>224</sup>

While the compromise meant that some wildcatters were sentenced to jail time and a fine, others were acquitted. In November 1894, Joe Ross, one of the January wildcatters, was finally sentenced to thirty days in the local jail and a hundred dollar fine. The U.S. Court in Fort Smith heard six cases involving liquor that day. Joe Ross's was the only conviction of the six and his was by pleading, not trial. This low conviction rate (though a small sample) contrasts with "in most years a conviction rate of 65 to 89 percent" reported by historian Cresswell for eastern Tennessee.<sup>225</sup>

While the federal court went easy on distillers, the state turned its attention to the killers of Thomas Martin. In November 1894, Governor Fishback posted a "reward of \$200 for the arrest and conviction of the unknown murderers of ... Thos. Martin, ... murdered in Polk County last June, supposedly by moonshiners." Joe Ross was to be released on December 22, but instead he was held over, accused of being involved in Martin's murder. He was one of the men captured in January 1894 due to Martin's help and, unlike most of Polk County's distillers, he was not in prison in New

---

<sup>224</sup> "The Next House: Republicans Will Have About a Two-Thirds Majority," *Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 29, 1894, p. 1; "Internal Revenue Receipts: A General Falling Off," *Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 29, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>225</sup> Stephen Cresswell, *Mormons and Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870-1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 155.

York so he had no good alibi. Joe's wife Allie gave birth to their son Jim Selma in December 1896, so he was probably released by March 1896. (She had previously lost a baby, probably in 1895.) Nobody was ever convicted of murdering Martin, and, as far as I can tell, the accusations against Joe Ross went no further.<sup>226</sup>

In summer 1895, two of the eight distillers still in prison sought and obtained a presidential pardon, arguing that, as poor ignorant mountain folk, they couldn't have known any better. They were nearing the end of their prison term. U.S. Attorney Read and Judge Murphy endorsed their release, saying their convictions encouraged others to surrender. They urged Cleveland to pardon Bowen and Frachiseur as a matter of fairness.<sup>227</sup>

On May 27, 1895, Cleveland's pardon attorney recommended clemency for Andy Bowen and Penny Frachiseur. He reiterated and summarized their files, focusing on the record made by their Fort Smith lawyer and Read and Parker, saying that they couldn't have known any better, having grown up ignorant of outsiders' ways. Similar arguments were made for Andy Bowen. Grover Cleveland pardoned them both in June 1895. As he wrote, "Granted. This prisoner term of imprisonment is nearly completed and considering the fact that many (here he struck through *others*) of his neighbors convicted since his sentence, of like crimes, were sentenced to shorter time of imprisonment, the Judge and District Attorney both express the opinion that it is justice to release this convict."<sup>228</sup>

---

<sup>226</sup> "A Reward Offered," *Arkansas Gazette*, Nov. 28, 1894; p. 4; "Joe Ross," *Muskogee (Okla.) Phoenix*, Dec. 22, 1894, p. 2; "Considered a Hard Character," *Arkadelphia Southern Standard*, Nov. 4, 1898, p. 1; James Selma Duckett, Umpire, Mountain Township, Howard County, Ark., Delayed Birth Certificate 3979 (signed by Allie Italy (Duckett) Ross Mar. 23, 1942).

<sup>227</sup> "In re Application for Executive Clemency of Penny Frazier, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 110, Year 1895," Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD; "In re Application for Executive Clemency of Andy Bowen, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 108, Year 1895," Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD.

<sup>228</sup> "In re Application for Executive Clemency of Penny Frazier, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 110, Year 1895," Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD; "In re Application for Executive Clemency of Andy Bowen, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 108, Year 1895," Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD. P. S. Ruckman, Jr., "Federal Executive Clemency in United States, 1789-1995: A Preliminary Report,"

Although Bowen and Frachiseur were pardoned, the other six served out their sentences plus an extra month to cover the \$500 fine. They were finally released a month later, in late July 1895. After they took “the pauper convicts’ oath” that they “were not worth \$20,” they were discharged with “new suits, shoes and broad sombrero hats.” A Brooklyn newspaper reported, “The suits were nothing to boast of though the trousers had beautiful creases in them.” All eight probably received five dollars and a train ticket home, or at least to Fort Smith.<sup>229</sup>

Within a year of the distillers’ return home in the western Ouachitas, the train also came, bringing other ways to earn cash and easier ways to get alcohol than the week-long process of distilling in secret. These farmers finally had ready access to the markets, where they could sell farm goods and buy other goods. Railroads, newspapers, and land grant colleges urged farmers to take advantage of this change. As the *Arkansas Gazette* advised, “More food crops, more truck farms, more cattle, hogs and sheep, and less cotton is a good rule for Southern farmers to follow this year. Raise enough to live on and a surplus over, and that surplus will bring better prices than cotton.” The Kansas City Southern Railway advertised the availability of land suitable for “fruits and berries; for commercial cantaloupe, potato, tomato, and general truck farms.” The Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station asserted that “truck gardening may be made profitable in Arkansas,” given Arkansas’ “favorable soil and climate, the increasing population of cities, and better transportation facilities..., whether the product is intended for home or Northern markets.” Ouachita farmers paid

---

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110326045557/http://ednet.rvc.cc.il.us/~PeterR/Papers/paper3.htm> (accessed Jan. 10, 2021) (472 in his first term, 692 (est.) in his second term); “The Day’s Record of the President’s Exercise of the Pardoning Power,” *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, Jun. 6, 1895, p. 1 (noting reasons for each pardon). When I was at the National Archives, I examined the shoebox containing the files for Bowen and Frachiseur, and found four other clemency requests from the Western District of Arkansas. None were liquor-related and none were prepared by counsel for Bowen and Frachiseur.

<sup>229</sup> “Keenan Released from Crow Hill,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Aug. 23, 1895, p. 1; “Two Federal Convicts Discharged,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Oct. 30, 1895, p. 1; Harry McGlynn, “Chaplain Bass,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*, Oct. 14, 1894, p. 6; “Six Convicts Discharged,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Standard Union*, Jul. 31, 1895, p. 2; “Warden Hayes Loses Six,” *Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 31, 1895, p. 10.

attention.<sup>230</sup>

The arrival of the train meant that farmers no longer had to make the trek to Fort Smith or Mansfield or Hot Springs to buy their supplies. Now, they could buy what they wanted nearer home. Or, as a Kansas City newspaper reported, as the railroad neared completion, “The inhabitants [of Polk County] live on corn bread and bacon; the women make their clothes with the crudest spinning wheel; they have had absolutely no commerce with the outside world. Land values are at a minimum. The soil is adapted to the cultivation of wheat, corn, barley and oats and small fruits.” Now that the trains were coming, farming families could “go into some other work, such as cutting or hauling lumber or ties, or working in the mills.” Implicit in this, as historian Ronald D. Eller has argued, was that wage labor could help civilize the uncivilized mountaineers. The trains meant that some members of a farming family could work in Mena or De Queen and come home for a visit. The trains also meant that liquor could be shipped to the railroad towns, even into dry counties.<sup>231</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

Politically appointed law enforcement wanted outsiders to believe that illicit distillers “care[d] nothing for society and respect[ed] no law, ... [They] seldom come[] in contact with men.”<sup>232</sup> These folks “deny moral turpitude in their business and will argue to the end that it is their natural right.”<sup>233</sup> Contrary to this perception, the men arrested in the Ouachitas were not young reprobates or marginalized mountain men. They came from across the United States, and they mostly moved to Polk County after the Civil War. They were also family men. Their median age was 40, with a range

---

<sup>230</sup> “The Nashville American gives,” *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Feb. 28, 1895, p. 4; *K.C.S. Advertisement, Arkansas Democrat*, Mar. 11, 1903, p. 6; “Vegetable Gardening,” *Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 44* (Fayetteville, Ark.), Jan. 1897.

<sup>231</sup> “To Open a New Empire, The Pittsburg & Gulf Will Run a Big Excursion to Arkansas,” *Kansas City Star*, Jun. 13, 1896, p. 8; “The Way to Prosperity,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Oct. 29, 1908, p. 4; “Grim Reaper at Family Reunion,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Nov 24, 1921, p. 3; “Real Prohibition in Scott County Chancellor Bourland Enjoins Delivery of Liquor by Railroads without Prior Notice to Officers,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Sep. 9, 1909, p. 2; Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1920* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

<sup>232</sup> “Murderous Moonshiners,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Sep. 16, 1894, p. 4.

<sup>233</sup> “Moonshine Crusade: A Relentless Pursuit,” *Arkansas Democrat*, Nov. 4, 1898, p. 6.

from 21 to 69. Joe Ross, the youngest, was married that spring. Most of them stayed in the area long enough to prove up their homesteads. They had traveled across the country to reach Polk County. Bowen and Frachiseur and their families were connected enough to engage an attorney to send off for a presidential pardon. Distillers were not just hill folk, trapped in another time.

Just like preachers, teachers, and millers, distillers existed because there was a market for their services. Corn in the Ouachitas was more versatile than cotton. Its value was driven less by market prices and more by its use on the farm, and (as seen in Chapter 3) practically every farming family raised some corn. So long as the farmer reserved enough for meal, feed, and seed, the distiller could transform the excess into a value-added product. Drinking local meant that farmers did not have to transport wagon loads of bulky corn to sell at uncertain market prices, and risk not even covering the costs of transportation. However, the government and public opinion was turning against the illicit distiller. In early 1894, Robert T. Cook declared war on the distillers in the mountains of southwest Arkansas, which he believed was a Populist stronghold. The distillers fought back. For their troubles, eight went to a New York prison that spring. By the time they returned in summer 1895, as many as seventy others had brokered a compromise, spent a month or two in the Fort Smith jail, and returned home to their families and farms. The train was nearly to south Polk County. On August 19, 1896, the first train arrived in Mena, which marked the beginning of the end of the need for local distillers to turn corn into cash and social lubrication. While illicit distilling continued, the market for distillers' services seems to have shrunk as more people turned "hard" against liquor and, simultaneously, consumers in Polk and north Howard Counties could buy it store-made. The need to turn corn into cash diminished at the same time since the trains brought access to other ways to enter the cash economy, from truck farming to train-related work.<sup>234</sup>

---

<sup>234</sup> Inez Lane, "Down Back Roads: Rich Mountain Community 50 Years Ago," *Looking Glass*, Oct. 23, 1975, p. 14 (describing theft of cases of whiskey which were shipped by train); Elza Ray Duckett, Turner Duckett's grandson, was puzzled when I talked about Turner's initial run-in with distilling because his dad was "hard against drinking."



## Chapter 5: “The Only One of His Color in the Country”: Race and Community in the Ouachita Foothills

On August 10, 1919, an “unknown” Black man was dead, “shot by An officier . . . at least 6 times in Body.” He died in Duckett Township “on the banks of the Cossatot, east of Wickes” six weeks before hundreds of Black people would be murdered in Elaine. He “was the only one of his color in the country he so vainly sought to find cover in, and was shot at and harassed at every turn he made.” He had allegedly committed “an awful crime” against a seven-year-old girl in Sevier County before fleeing north. Between 50 and 100 white men chased him in a “thrilling weekend man hunt” “thruout the south end of Polk County until brought to a grim conclusion three days later on the river’s bank on the edge of Howard County.” His body was sent to De Queen, where it was not buried, but “Burned,” “a mob of angry citizens having determined, it was said, to burn it.”<sup>235</sup> Although you wouldn’t guess it from twentieth century censuses, Black people did once live in this “country,” both when enslaved and free.

Some areas of the Ouachitas are now among the whitest places in America. Historians have used events like this August 1919 killing as a just-so story to explain the origins of the white foothills.<sup>236</sup> The explanation goes like this: Violent white people didn’t want Black people around, so they killed some of them, often in gruesome and horrible ways, as a warning to others, who wisely fled. Perhaps one or two Black people stayed, but they stayed because they were under the

---

<sup>235</sup> Duckett Township, Howard County, Arkansas Death Certificate 320 (“unknown,” “shot by An officier . . .” and “Burned”); “Black Ravisher Shot to Death,” *Mena (Ark.) Weekly Star*, Aug. 14, 1919, p. 1 (all other quotations). Something awful did happen to the little girl, whether or not it was this man who did it. Her great-great-niece, decades later, recalled that she was “assaulted as a child [in a way] that made her unable to carry children.” FindAGrave Mem. 75117119.

<sup>236</sup> Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction - 15th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 156-157; Kimberly Harper, *White Man’s Heaven: The Lynching and Expulsion of Blacks in the Southern Ozarks, 1894-1909* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010) xxv; Guy Lancaster, “Unknown and Multivalent Causes,” in *Racial Cleansing in Arkansas, 1883–1924 : Politics, Land, Labor, and Criminality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014) (accessed September 3, 2022); Guy Lancaster, “‘There Are Not Many Colored People Here’: African Americans in Polk County, Arkansas, 1896-1937,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70(4) (2011): 429-449.

protection of wealthy white people, who wanted their cook or maid to continue to live conveniently nearby. None of them focus on farming communities in the thinly populated parts of the Arkansas hills. But just as Kipling's just-so stories were fables, created as bedtime stories to answer the *whys* of a small child, this explanation of whiteness is too simple. It misses important parts of the whiteness origin story in the rural Ouachitas.

Black people didn't all get up and leave the Ouachitas so much as decide to reorganize and consolidate into clusters or communities. Certainly, some left, but others stayed. After all, violent white people could be found just about anywhere in the United States. Leaving home was no guarantee of safety. In the early 1900s, as seen in Figure 21, we can find clusters of Black people in Center Township, Polk County (home of its county seat, first Dallas and later Mena), in Muddy Fork Township, Howard County, in Caddo Gap (Gap Township) on the border of Montgomery and Pike Counties, and in Buckville (Fir and Mountain [later renamed Buckville] Townships) on the border of Montgomery and Garland Counties. Black people from other parts of the Ouachitas moved in and out of these rural communities. A larger, urban Black community formed in Garland County's Hot Springs, the only real metropolis in the Ouachitas, although a Black community also formed near Mena, dispersing before 1920. Moreover, the non-white, farming people who chose to live in nearly entirely white communities were a part of their communities, not because they were protected by the powerful, but because they contributed to and participated in their communities. And because they chose to stay. When Black people chose to consolidate, they became larger in number in their community, which meant they were able to find mates, form schools, support churches, and farm together in a geography and climate they already understood and on land they could afford. And, when confronted with white violence against their larger (but still small) community in Buckville in 1919, Black Ouachitans were able to work together and with white allies to successfully confront them, obtaining two convictions and prison sentences. Although most of the Black community in

Buckville moved away in a process which started before 1919, the Caddo Gap community nearby grew in total numbers and in the percentage of the population. The Buckville residents re-formed farming communities when they moved in family groups to communities like Peno, Le Flore County (Okla.), Moore Township, Muskogee County (Okla.), Yell County (Ark.) and elsewhere. In this chapter, I argue that family, both building and maintaining family within a community, provided a reason for Black people to consolidate and reorganize rural communities in the Ouachitas.

In a country where there never were plantations and there was very little wealth (either before or after the Civil War), there never were many Black people. Black Ouachitans (like white ones) needed community, which included schools, churches, people their children could marry, neighbors to help with farming chores, witnesses for homesteading purposes, midwives, and undertakers. It's hard to find a mate when the brush revivals, decoration days at the scattered community cemeteries, all-day singings, sorghum syrup cooking, and court day at the county seat have a handful of other Black people, many of whom you know too well to marry. Because they were very few, Black people would need to relocate and consolidate to find mates they weren't already related to or to make up enough children to support a school. When they moved and consolidated into neighborhoods, their absence or near-absence that they left behind became visible to white people. The Black people who stayed in the communities they grew up in became "the last negro in Polk County" or "the last negro couple in Mena." It was as if they were the remnant Indians of New England that white people wanted to disappear, to leave in the past, so that white people could be properly modern, as argued by historian Jean O'Brien.<sup>237</sup> When Black people left Mena, Mena's newspaper used whiteness as a selling point. But, the vanishingly few non-white people who stayed also lost their racial identifiers. Newspaper stories sometimes named Black

---

<sup>237</sup> Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

people without signaling their race. They ate and drank with their white neighbors. They competed in county fairs. When a Japanese woman and her husband moved into north Howard County in the 1920s, she was treated as if she were white. Federal employees, from the census taker to the Wickes postmaster, seemed not to notice that she was another race. Her neighbors treated her as part of the community. In the rural Ouachitas, a stray Black or Japanese person was a part of their community; they contributed to the community and the community reciprocated. However, their consolidated presence, visible in schools, churches, and land ownership, also became visible to white people in places like Muddy Fork, Buckville, or Mena. When white people in Buckville tried to expel them with violence and dynamite in May 1919 (just months before the unknown Black man was murdered in Duckett Township), Black people worked together and with white allies to successfully confront them, obtaining convictions and prison sentences. Black people left Buckville, but they went to places not that far away, where they could continue farming in communities with other Black people. Non-white Ouachitans thus made choices about where and whether to stay in the Ouachitas, and these choices were not driven solely by white violence.

Figure 21 orients you to the places in this chapter. It is pretty close to how the townships were arranged and named in 1920 (at least in Polk, Montgomery, Garland, and Howard Counties) even though it is from 1961. Starting with Polk County (to the northwest), the three arrows identify Cove Township (and the Hatfield community), Cove community (which is two or three miles east of Old Cove, which was known as Cove until 1896, when the community moved to the train), and Center Township (which includes the county seat Mena and the former county seat of Dallas, not shown). Montgomery County is the next county to the east, with arrows pointing to Gap Township (Caddo Gap community) and Fir Township. Garland County is the next county to the east, with arrows pointing to Buckville Township (which, until 1917, was Mountain Township and located in Montgomery County) and the city of Hot Springs. The Buckville community bridged Fir Township

and Buckville Township. Returning to the west, the arrow pointing to Duckett Township (Howard County) is also roughly in the center of Sulphur Springs Township as it existed before Howard County was formed in 1873. In its early days when it was still in Polk County, Sulphur Springs Township included Cove and Hatfield. The second arrow in Howard County identifies Muddy Fork Township. (Note that there is an adjacent Muddy Fork Township directly to its east in Pike County. I think that the township was split in two when Howard County was formed.)

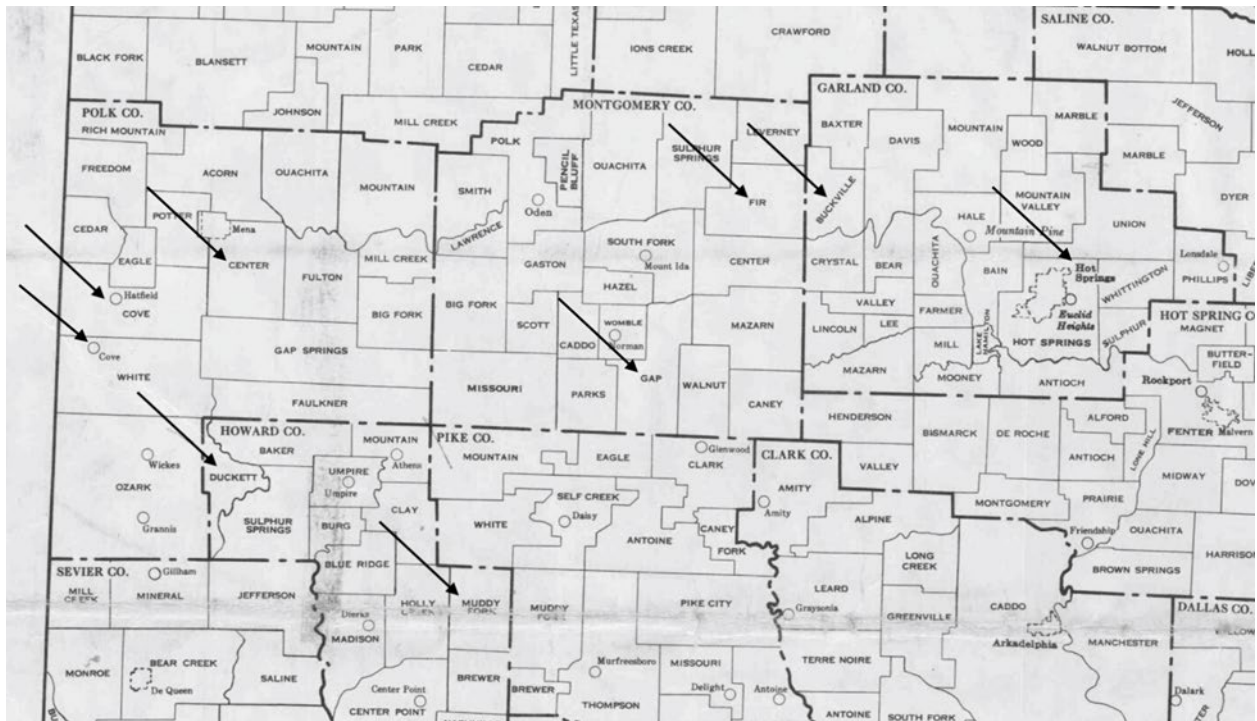


Figure 21. Arrows identifying Black communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and other Ouachita locations as discussed in the text.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Map modified from “Arkansas Minor Civil Divisions – Townships,” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961) Title No. 168490 (digitized by familysearch.org).

## I. Black Community in Polk County

Black people first came to the Ouachitas when they had no choice. In 1860, Polk County (which included what was to become north Howard County's Duckett Township) was so thinly populated that it still qualified as frontier two decades after statehood. It had about four people per square mile, and only four percent of them were Black, which works out to about four Black people per twenty-three square miles. 174 enslaved Black people spread across nearly a thousand square miles and surrounded by 4,090 white people wasn't much of a community, although it was more than the 67 enslaved people living in Polk County ten years earlier (1850). The state as a whole was more populous, with 8.3 people per square mile, but the Civil War was going to drag the state right back to where Polk County already was, a frontier. On the eve of freedom, across Polk County's eight political townships, as seen in Table 4, the percentage of Black people ranged from almost invisible (1.1%, seven Black people, in Mountain Township) to almost visible (7.6%, but just twenty-five people, in the ironically named Freedom Township). In 1860, nearly three-quarters of the enslaved people (122) lived in three townships, Sulphur Springs, Cove, and Center. But none of these townships had enough Black people to form a sustainable, subsistence-farming family community like those formed by white people all around them. Consolidation would be necessary to succeed. They, like the white women homesteaders of Chapter 3, knew how to farm in this geography, but they needed enough community for it to be feasible.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> Cheryl Elman, Barbara Wittman, Kathryn M. Feltey, Corey Stevens, and Molly Hartsough, "Women in Frontier Arkansas: Settlement in a Post-Reconstruction Racial State," *Du Bois Review* 16(2) (2019): 575-612 (citing S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas 1800-1880: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998)); 1860 Population Schedules and Slave Schedules for Polk County, Arkansas.

<i>Township</i>	<i>Black People</i>	<i>White People</i>	<i>Total People</i>	<i>% Black People</i>
Center	51 <sup>240</sup>	708	759	6.7%
Sulphur Springs	47	843	890	5.2%
Cove	27	493	517	5.2%
Freedom	25	302	327	7.6%
Mountain	7	608	615	1.1%
Fulton	7	494	501	1.4%
White	5	260	265	1.9%
Big Fork	5	316	321	1.6%
Total	174	4024	4195	4.1%

Enslaved people in Polk County, like most white people around them, were farmers. Polk County was nearly entirely rural until after the train came in 1896. That said, Sulphur Springs, Cove, and Center had different patterns of enslaving and in-migration. Center, located in the center of Polk County, was the home to the county seat (first Dallas and later Mena), such as it was. Until the train's arrival in 1896, people went to Mansfield or Fort Smith once or twice a year to buy supplies, and not to the Polk County seat.<sup>241</sup> The entire township of Center in 1860, including the county seat, had fewer people than Sulphur Springs, about 18% of the county's population. Sulphur Springs took up the southern part of the county. Cove was to the west and shared a border with Indian Territory. Table 5 shows how the number of Black people in Polk County plummeted immediately after the Civil War, and how Center Township's Black population then grew. Table 9 (in the Appendix at the end of the chapter) also shows the names of some of the enslaver families and which appear in the post-Civil War censuses as the surnames of Black people. Although not conclusive, this naming pattern does suggest that families of these same Black people lived in the area before freedom. After the train came in 1896, the Black population of Center Township (home to the county seat) temporarily exploded, as did the white population, while the rest of Polk County's Black population

---

<sup>240</sup> While just 49 Black people lived in Center Township, two more were owned by white people who lived in Center Township.

<sup>241</sup> Inez Lane, "Down Back Roads," *Looking Glass*, May 22, 1975, p. 14; Inez Lane, "Down Back Roads: Christmas Shopping," *Looking Glass*, Dec. 11, 1975, p. 12.

continued to decline.

Table 6. Black People in Three Polk County Townships (1860-1900)				
<i>Township</i>	<i>Black People (1860)</i>	<i>Black People (1870)</i>	<i>Black People (1880)</i>	<i>Black People (1900)</i>
Center	49 <sup>242</sup>	16	51	158
Sulphur Springs	47	10	9	1
Cove	27	9	8	3
Total	174	35	68	161

In 1860, Center Township’s forty-nine enslaved people were owned by families of four farmers (30 enslaved people) and three non-farmers (19). Ten years earlier, Center Township enslavers of 1860 were somewhat spread out across the country, so when enslaved people moved to Polk County, they would have to make a new community, although the move did offer the chance to find potential mates they weren’t related to. B. B. Dickinson was in Sevier County, and his future wife (likely the source of Dickinson’s enslaved people) was in Hot Spring County. Preston Ward, Henry Counts, and possibly Green D. Robbins lived in Tishomingo County, Mississippi. Dr. Archibald Ray and his daughter lived in Catawba County, North Carolina. The Boyles family lived in Forsyth County, Georgia. Just two Center enslavers lived in Polk County in 1850: Lauderdale M. Jones lived in Center Township, and James Quinton lived in Freedom Township. The non-farmers were disproportionately represented since they made up barely more than ten percent of the heads of household in Center Township. Although home to the county seat, Center had only one lawyer and one tavern keeper in 1860 (and fifteen other non-farmers) out of 144 heads of household, barely enough to support the circuit court when it came to town. One farmer (Henry Counts) enslaved nineteen people. The other three farmers were Lauderdale M. Jones (three enslaved people), Joseph Cagle (four enslaved people), and Green D. Robbins (four enslaved people in his household plus two others). The three non-farming enslavers were probably using enslaved people primarily as a

---

<sup>242</sup> The owners of two enslaved people lived in Center, but the enslaved people lived elsewhere and are not included in the 49.



vehicle to invest and grow their wealth. B. B. Dickinson was a merchant who enslaved six people (who probably came from his wife Xalisco (Stribling) Dickinson's family). Preston Ward, a tavern keeper, enslaved one three-year-old girl. Archibald Ray, a physician, enslaved seven people, and his widowed daughter Margaret (Ray) Wilson enslaved two people. (Dr. Ray was the Polk County delegate to Arkansas' 1861 Secession Convention.<sup>243</sup>) Two other enslavers were sisters Cansada Boyles and Carolina Boyles, who lived with their stepfather and mother, Green D. and Lena Robbins. The Boyles sisters enslaved two people, who were hired out to farmer G. M. Cauthran and a "m. carpenter" John Cassady, both in Center Township. (Two others, owned by other Boyles siblings, were leased in White Township and Fulton Township.) James Quinton, a blacksmith related to the Shults and Wintons of Cove Township, enslaved one eleven-year-old girl.<sup>244</sup>

Sulphur Springs' 47 Black people in 1860 also came from different parts of the South, but the enslavers were all farmers, in contrast to Center Township. In 1850, Sulphur Springs' eleven enslavers lived in five different counties in three states, and so the enslaved people who came with them from those different places were not related to each other prior to their arrival in Polk County. Between 1850 and 1860, one Sulphur Springs enslaver (Thomas Jackson, seven enslaved people) moved from Carroll County, Mississippi, and one (George W. Bradley, one enslaved man) moved from Christian County, Kentucky. Two of Henry Counts' enslaved people were in Nathan Eldridge's household, suggesting that Eldridge was leasing them. They probably moved from Tishomingo County, Mississippi with Henry Counts. (Henry Counts thus owned at least twenty-one people in Polk County in 1860.) John W. Page (one enslaved person) moved from Saline County.

---

<sup>243</sup> Roy Vail and revised by David Sesser, "Polk County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 20, 2022).

<sup>244</sup> One Black teenager named Wesley Stribling lived in Polk County in 1870, who may have been enslaved by the Stribling Dickinson family. Xalisco (Stribling) Dickinson's mother's maiden name was Clark, and some Black people named Clark also lived in Polk County after the Civil War. Several Black people named Counts lived in Polk County after the Civil War, who were probably enslaved by the white Counts family. A number of Black people named Ray lived in Center Township after freedom. The older ones were born in North Carolina, tending to confirm that the Archibald Ray family enslaved them.

Four of these 1860 enslavers (Nathaniel Davis, Elizabeth Davis, and their stepfather Samuel Grey, and Harriet McAtee) already lived in Polk County in 1850. They owned 31 people in 1850, and 24 people (of the township's 47) in 1860. Three other enslavers (Nicholas Hunter, nine enslaved, William Coughran, one enslaved, and John B. Choat, two enslaved) came from nearby counties (Pike and Sevier Counties) and their families still enslaved people there in 1860 so their enslaved people probably had family (whether by blood, marriage, or otherwise) in those counties. The enslaved people in Sulphur Springs Township in 1860 were evenly distributed by gender, with 24 males and 23 females. Of these, ten women and sixteen men were at least 18 years old. Ten girls and sixteen boys were under age eighteen. Despite these numbers, Sulphur Springs Township did not become a mecca for Black people. By 1900, Andy Vaughn was the only Black person living in Sulphur Springs Township. After freedom, some or all of the enslaved people may have reunited with their families nearby.

In contrast to Center and Sulphur Springs, most of Cove's 1860 enslavers came from just one family so their nineteen enslaved people were probably related to each other before they moved to Polk County. Matilda (Duff) Shults and her sister Catherine (Duff) Winton and their children and sons-in-law and Johnson McDaniel (who was the father of two of Matilda's sons-in-law) made up thirteen of the seventeen enslavers and these thirteen people owned nineteen of the twenty-seven Black people in Cove Township in 1860. (James Quinton in Center was also a part of this enslaving family.) Two of these twenty-seven, Elizabeth Duff Henderson and Tone Hays, returned to Cove after freedom. Elizabeth Duff Henderson was one of the enslaved people in Matilda (Duff) Shults' household and Tone Hays was enslaved by Johnson McDaniel. The Cove enslavers' families probably had a practice of splitting up their enslaved families. In 1860, three white people in Matilda's household were identified as enslavers of five people. Matilda enslaved three people; her son John, one; and her daughter Narcissus' husband William A. Henderson enslaved a five-year-old

girl, Elizabeth Duff Henderson. Her 1940 obituary stated that she was “sold in slavery March 23, 1858, to William A. Henderson of Polk county, Ark.” If this date was correctly reported, the transfer came soon after Narcissus Henderson had their first child (or the first child to live long enough to be recorded in the 1860 census). Matilda probably transferred title of enslaved people to Henderson and her other sons-in-law when they married her daughters or when their first child was born. Matilda’s sister and her children as well as two of Matilda’s sons-in-law, James and Josiah McDaniel, also enslaved people in Cove. In 1860, Johnson McDaniel (1806-1884) (father of James and Josiah) owned a twenty-year-old woman and her two-year-old son, who was probably Tone Hayes. Despite slavery being a family affair in Cove, Black men and boys were missing. Overall, the twenty-seven enslaved people comprised nineteen females and just eight males. The nineteen enslaved females included ten women of reproductive years (ages 18-43) plus a fifteen-year-old girl. Only one enslaved man (age 42) and two older teenaged boys (both age 17) lived in all of Cove township. The forty-two-year-old man’s enslaver D. W. Rush was not related to the Shults family. Even the enslaved kids skewed female, with twice as many girls (8) under age fifteen as boys (4). Their owners may have deliberately sold the men and boys or transferred them to family not living in Cove Township. The lack of men would not bode well for successful farming or family making.<sup>245</sup>

The Civil War seemed to touch relatively lightly on the people of Polk and north Howard Counties. There were no pitched battles, just the continuing grind of guerilla warfare, as seen across most of the trans-Mississippi. In January 1864, there was a skirmish near present-day Cove at

---

<sup>245</sup> “Death Overtakes Aged Negress Long Faithful,” *Tucson Citizen*, June 15, 1940, p. 4. Elizabeth’s first census record I have found after slavery (1880) gave her last name as Duff (Matilda’s maiden name), which suggests that her father may have been enslaved by Matilda’s family or perhaps was a member of Matilda’s white family. (She was also consistently reported as mulatto.) When she continued to live with the Hendersons, later records used the name Henderson, or, in the case of the 1920 census, the census taker wrote, in tiny cursive, *name not known*. (The transcriber of that census for ancestry.com read that as *Newart*, and Lancaster repeated that mistake in his publications.) Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules and slave schedules.

Sulphur Springs, and another one at Baker Springs, west of present-day Duckett.<sup>246</sup> There are at least eight Federal soldiers buried out in the woods at White Oak Cemetery near Mena.<sup>247</sup> No formerly enslaved people seem to have sought compensation from the Southern Claims Commission. Probably because there were few Black people in the area, I haven't found interviews with formerly enslaved people from the area or other documentary evidence about the war and emancipation. However, that is not to say Black people didn't notice the war and emancipation. After the war's end, we can see a change in where Black people lived when they had a choice.

Most Black people (like most white people) in post-Civil War Arkansas were farmers living in what was still a rural, frontier state, and the Ouachitas were even more rural than most of Arkansas. To be successful, farms required labor, and the usual source for farm labor in the Ouachitas was the family. Although, as seen in Chapter 3, white women without husbands were more successful than white men without wives (at least in proving up a homestead), they were not the usual model. Single white women still needed community to succeed at farming. Thus, as described in Chapter 2, when white women became widows and chose not to remarry, they sometimes moved nearer their brothers. After freedom, formerly enslaved women could join their husbands or extended family nearby to re-form family units for farming, and younger women and girls (as they grew up) could leave to find husbands outside of their family units. Or they could decide to homestead. All of these choices could mean that they could continue to make a living using the skills they already had, since they, like white Ouachitans, knew how to farm in the Ouachitas. The "opportunistic mass settlement" seen by Elman et al. in the interregnum between the end of slavery and the enactment of Jim Crow laws and described by Story Matkin-Rawn did not

---

<sup>246</sup> Steven Teske, "Cove (Polk County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 21, 2022); Mark K. Christ, "Scout from Waldron to Baker's Springs," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 21, 2022).

<sup>247</sup> Peter Berryman, FindAGrave Mem. 144482728, White Oak Cemetery, Mena, Polk, Arkansas ("Pete is buried off in the woods adjoining the cemetery, along with at least eight Union soldiers.")

reach the Ouachitas quickly. Most of the Black people in the western Ouachitas before 1895 (when the Kansas City Southern arrived) were probably either formerly enslaved in southwest Arkansas or their descendants, but they began to consolidate their communities in the Ouachitas much earlier than 1890, contrary to what historians James Loewen and Guy Lancaster suggest when they study the disappearance of Black people from sundown towns or from the area around Mena after the train arrived. They began moving when freedom came.<sup>248</sup>

From the beginning of freedom, Black Ouachitans did not stay where their enslavers had left them, at least not in Polk County. As seen in Table 5, in 1870, the census taker found just ten Black people in Sulphur Springs, down from 47 in 1860; nine in Cove, down from 27; and sixteen in Center, down from 49. As described above, these three townships had different patterns of enslavement, from a single family enslaving most people (Cove), to multiple groups of farming enslavers (Sulphur Springs), to enslavement by farmers and professionals and leasing (Center). Black people living in these three townships, however, had a common response to freedom: they chose where they wanted to live and with whom.

In the first years after the Civil War, some Black Polk Countians stayed where they had grown up, sometimes as part of a white household, even with their former enslavers, and sometimes on their own. In 1870, two young Black men who were farm laborers, Minor Counts (age 25, born in Mississippi) and Jacob Gordan (age 20, born in Arkansas), lived in Sulphur Springs households

---

<sup>248</sup> Cheryl Elman, Barbara Wittman, Kathryn M. Feltey, Corey Stevens, and Molly Hartsough, “Women in Frontier Arkansas: Settlement in a Post-Reconstruction Racial State,” *Du Bois Review* 16(2) (2019): 575-612; James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: New Press, 2005); Guy Lancaster, “Unknown and Multivalent Causes,” in *Racial Cleansing in Arkansas, 1883–1924 : Politics, Land, Labor, and Criminality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014) (accessed September 3, 2022); Guy Lancaster, “There Are Not Many Colored People Here’: African Americans in Polk County, Arkansas, 1896-1937,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70(4) (2011): 429-449; Story Matkin-Rawn, “‘The Great Negro State of the Country’: Arkansas’s Reconstruction and the Other Great Migration,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2013) 72 (1): 1–41.

headed by white men, and they were probably living in the area before the Civil War.<sup>249</sup> Wesley Stribling (age 16, probably enslaved by B. B. Dickinson's family in Center Township) now lived in Cove, where he lived with a different white Williams family, who had moved to Cove from Montgomery County after 1860. Asa Davis (age 18) was living with a white Davis family (former enslavers) in Center Township. The white family, and probably Asa Davis, had lived in Sulphur Springs in 1860.<sup>250</sup> Two older Black women, Elvira Counts and Elisa Choat, lived in family units. Elvira Counts (age 40) and two sons were in their own household.<sup>251</sup> Elisa Choat (age 44) and her daughter Mary J. (age 24), and granddaughter Elisa A. (age 5) lived in Celia Choat's household (a white woman, age 59). Celia was the widow of enslaver John D. Choat.<sup>252</sup> Four other Black people named Counts (Mary Counts and her three daughters) probably moved from Center in 1860 to Ouachita Township in 1870, where they lived with a white family named Flynn, headed by Addison Flynn.<sup>253</sup> Pompey Lebow (age 26) still lived in his former enslaver Hiram Lebow's household, where the 1870 census taker identified him as an idiot. The Lebow household was no longer in White Township (as it had been in 1860), but in Ozark Township.

Both Addison D. Flynn and Hiram Lebow participated in a June 29, 1867, meeting of Polk County Republicans, endorsing both the Fort Smith and Little Rock conventions, and

---

<sup>249</sup> Minor Counts lived with a white family headed by Nathaniel Davis (age 35, born in Arkansas). Nathaniel Davis was the same Nathaniel Davis who enslaved seven people in the 1860 census. Later in 1860, Nathaniel married Henry Counts' daughter Minerva. Minor Counts was born in Mississippi (when the Counts lived until sometime between 1851 and 1860), so he probably was previously enslaved by Henry Counts' family. Jacob Gordan lived in David Nelson's otherwise-white household. Nelson, himself just 21, had two younger Nelsons (probably his brothers) also living with him.

<sup>250</sup> B. B. Dickinson had probably died around 1865. His widow married William Brents in 1868 in Hot Spring County, where she had lived before she and Dickinson married. The Brents family moved to Benton in Saline County, where she died in 1916. This is the only plausible trace of the six people enslaved by the Dickinsons that I have found.

<sup>251</sup> Because Elvira Counts' two older children were born in Mississippi in 1851 and 1852, her family was also probably enslaved by the Henry Counts family.

<sup>252</sup> The white Choats enslaved a thirty-four-year-old woman and a fifteen-year-old girl in Sulphur Springs in 1860, and in 1850, a twenty-four-year-old woman and a five-year-old girl in Pike County in 1850. The consistency in age and birth states of Elisa Choat and her daughter tend to confirm that they are the same people. Elisa and Celia Choat families' birth states tell the history of a westward trek of enslavers and enslaved, with Elisa and Celia both born in North Carolina, Celia's daughter and Mary born in Mississippi, and Celia's son and the younger Elisa born in Arkansas, probably Pike County.

<sup>253</sup> Mary Counts, age 35, was born in Mississippi so she also was probably enslaved by Henry Counts.

“recommend[ing] a through organization of the Radical Union party of this county” to ensure only “the most reliable, true, able and best men” represent Polk County at the upcoming constitutional convention. They were both on the initial call for the Fort Smith convention, along with Peter B. Allen, although Flinn’s name was rendered R. Flinn. Flinn was “unanimously elected to the chair.” Their endorsement of the Fort Smith convention was probably meant to indicate their support of Black suffrage and other Radical Republican concepts. Stephen Winton (Freedom Township), another enslaver, also attended.<sup>254</sup> These men were in the upper economic echelons of Polk County (such as it was) as well as Radical Republicans.

Definite examples of Black people moving into Polk County by 1870 from outside the Arkansas Ouachitas are fewer, but I can identify two. William Duncan (age 16, born in Missouri), a farm laborer, lived in John Birrell’s white household. In Cove, John Williams (age 17, born in Kentucky) was living with his former enslavers, having moved with the Roland P. Williams white family from near Hopkinsville, Kentucky to Cedar County, Missouri by 1860 (where he was the only enslaved person in the household), and then to Cove by 1870.

By 1880, the number of Black people in Sulphur Springs and Cove had declined to nine and eight (a decrease of one each over ten years) respectively, even as the number of Black people in Center Township grew to fifty-one (from 16 in 1870). Sulphur Springs Township was home to one Black man named Andy Vaughn and two families of Black people, both named Counts: Ann and her son Minor Counts lived in Benjamin Counts’ white household (Henry Counts’ youngest son), and a family, headed by Wesley Counts, with his mother Emeline and four siblings.<sup>255</sup> These Counts were also probably related to the Black Counts from the 1870 census by blood, marriage, or previous enslavement by the white Counts family in Center Township in 1860. Andy Vaughn (age

---

<sup>254</sup> “Republican Meeting in Polk County.” *Little Rock Morning Republican*, Aug. 29, 1867, p.3; Lisa C. Childs, “Reexamining the Origins of Arkansas’s Republican Party,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 79 (4): 317–47.

<sup>255</sup> Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules, Sulphur Springs, Howard, Arkansas.

23, born in Mississippi or Arkansas) lived with a white couple, Joseph and Maria (Anderson) Stuart. In the 1860 census for Hempstead County, Joseph Stuart's father owned thirty people, including a three-year-old boy, possibly the same Andy Vaughn, although Maria also came from an enslaving family.<sup>256</sup>

Cove Township had grown in the intervening ten years, to around 1300 people in 1880, but the number of Black people had declined by one to eight. They all lived in white households. Five of them appear to be two sibling groups from Arkansas, two teenagers named Wright and three youngsters named Russell, all boarding with a white family headed by Henry Durham. The Durhams came to Cove via Louisiana after the end of the Civil War, although there is no evidence that either of the sibling groups were with them in Louisiana or that the Durhams were enslavers. The other three were single and had lived in Cove previously: Tone Hays (age 23) in the white Finis McDaniel's household (the son of his former enslaver), Elizabeth Duff (age 25) in her former enslaver Henderson household and John Williams (age 27), still in his former enslavers' household. Tone Hays and Elizabeth Duff Henderson, unlike John Williams, were not found in Cove in 1870.

Black people continued to leave Polk county's townships of Sulphur Springs, Cove, and Center, but some of them did not go far. Some of the fourteen Black people, who lived in Sulphur Springs in 1870, still lived nearby in 1880. William Duncan, though, disappeared as mysteriously as he appeared, perhaps returning to Missouri. Jacob Gordan moved over to Caddo Gap Township in Montgomery County, where he married Ellen Hill in 1878, and they had at least two children. Minor Counts still lived in Sulphur Springs in 1880. Elvira Counts joined her daughter Chaney Kidd's family in Blackwood Township in Howard County. (The younger Elisa Choat, Mary's putative daughter, has not been found.) Elvira's son Harrison married Elisa Choat's daughter Mary. Harrison,

---

<sup>256</sup> In 1860, the Stuart household reported \$8720 in real estate and \$34,050 in personal estate. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules and slave schedules, Hempstead County, Arkansas.



his wife Mary, his brother John, and Mary's mother Elisa lived together with a cluster of other Black people in Muddy Fork Township (by then part of Howard County) in 1880.<sup>257</sup>

The number of Black people living in Center Township, including the county seat of Dallas, grew more than three-fold (from sixteen to fifty-one in ten households) between 1870 and 1880. They made up about 5% of the 1,017 people in 176 households in 1880. Three of these ten families lived in Polk County in 1870: Nelson and Mary Ray and their son Charles Ray lived in Center Township itself and Mary Counts and her children lived in Addison Flynn's household in Ouachita Township. Based on their names and states of birth, the Rays and Counts had connections to the Polk County enslavers Archibald Ray and Henry Counts. By 1880, Mary Counts had two more children, named Flynn, and her oldest daughter Julia had married John R. "Dick" Taft. (Julia's maiden name is sometimes given as Cole, which was the name of a number of Black people living in Center Township in 1870 and later.) The Coles were born in Arkansas, and they may have been enslaved in the Ouachitas before the Civil War. Cicero Cole's second wife had family in Caddo Gap in Montgomery County. By 1900 or so, there were enough Black people in the area to support a church, a school, and a cemetery.<sup>258</sup>

Black families in Center Township obtained at least eight patents in Polk County. Most of Polk County land had not yet been privatized, which meant it was available to anyone who could follow the rules and make the claims. These eight land patents show that they successfully proved to the federal government that they had settled and cultivated the land, with the timely submittal of proofs, witness testimony, and affidavits. Five of Center's 1880 census Black households (those of Thomas Moore, Nelson Ray, Cicero Cole, Rebecca Ray, and Mariah Johnson) were responsible for

---

<sup>257</sup> Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Arkansas Marriage Certificates.

<sup>258</sup> Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Inez Lane, "Little Africa T128," Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73 (condensed from an article Lane wrote for *The Looking Glass* "several years ago").

these eight successful homestead claims. When Bina Johnson named her four homesteading witnesses in 1907, they were all Black. As seen in Figure 22, she named Cicero Cole and his son James, William J. Ray, and John W. Matthews (then living in Mena, having moved from Caddo Gap, Montgomery County). Bina Johnson had a choice. She could have asked one of the white families she did washing for, like the Titsworths, but she chose her Black neighbors instead. As with white homesteading Ouachitans, Black Ouachitans found it easier to homestead, and to farm, in a community where they already understood how to farm. There were other alliances between the Center Township Black families. Thomas Moore's daughter married Cicero Cole's son. Cicero Cole's stepson married Rebecca Ray's daughter. Rebecca Ray's son William J. Ray married Mariah Johnson's daughter Mary Jane. It took longer for Black people to disappear from Center Township than elsewhere in Polk County, perhaps because they could inter-marry, because they owned land, and because the train made it easier for others to get there.<sup>259</sup>

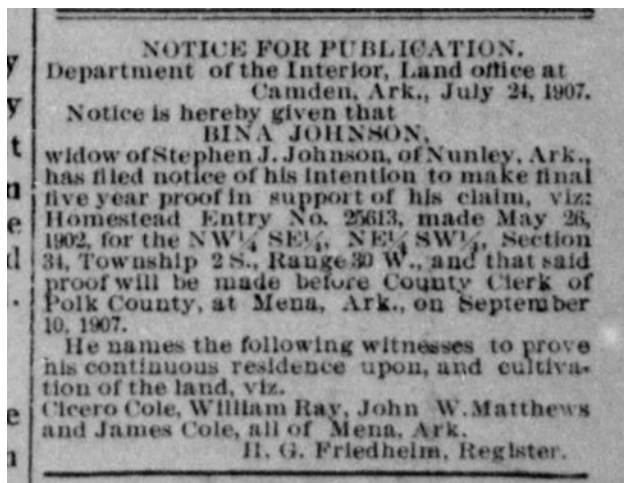


Figure 22. “Notice for Publication,” Mena Weekly Star, Aug. 1, 1907, p. 5.

<sup>259</sup> Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017) (homesteading witnesses are clues about connections); “Notice for Publication,” Mena Weekly Star, Aug. 1, 1907, p. 5; GLO Land Records; Arkansas Marriage Certificates; Inez Lane, “Little Africa T128,” Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73; Guy Lancaster, “Unknown and Multivalent Causes,” in *Racial Cleansing in Arkansas, 1883–1924: Politics, Land, Labor, and Criminality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014) (accessed September 3, 2022) (identifying four patents).

The Mena newspaper suggested that Black people in Polk County got along generally well with white people, even after Peter Berryman's murder in 1901. They were considered "well-behaved." In 1908, when Mena's staging of "The Clansman" suffered from poor attendance, despite having three horses on stage, the reviewer noted it was "an illustration of an extreme condition that was supposed to have existed at the time of the Ku Klux Klan, where the ignorant blacks were lead [sic] by misguided or rascally whites." Fortunately, Mena was not "a locality where negroes had been troublesome."<sup>260</sup> In March 1910, the *Mena Star* reported, "The people of Polk County ARE nearly all white - all but about 40 industrious, well-behaved negroes. Others not needed."<sup>261</sup> Even after the former Wizard of the first Ku Klux Klan, Robert G. Shaver, moved to Mena in 1911, and started sharing tales about "the methods taken to preserve the supremacy of the supreme race when it seemed that the South was to be inundated beneath the turgid tide of negro rule," black people still got along well enough with white people.<sup>262</sup> After the November 1920 elections, eight Polk County people were reported to have voted for Josiah H. Blount, the first Black gubernatorial candidate. The *Star* knew just two Black people had poll tax receipts, "and at least one of these voting 'white' - just how would you explain it?"<sup>263</sup> Black people tried to get along with their white neighbors.

Black people in Center Township did not avoid white people. Veller (Titworth) Howell (a white person born in 1897 and a near neighbor to the Black community there) remembered going to their church for revivals and Easter egg hunts. Her father tried to give a Black woman a ride to Nunley, where she would "sell her eggs and buy her other necessities, ... but on the way, the team became frightened and began running away. Aunt Fanny touched Newt's arm and said, 'Let me out,

---

<sup>260</sup> "The Clansman' Pleased: Small Audience Saw Drama Splendidly Given Tuesday Night," *Mena Weekly Star*, December 10, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> "Just a Little Experience," *Mena Weekly Star*, March 24, 1910, p. 10.

<sup>262</sup> "Gen. Shaver Tells of Ku Klux Klan," *Mena Weekly Star*, August 17, 1911, p. 2; Harold Coogan, "Robert Glenn Shaver (1831-1915)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed August 27, 2022).

<sup>263</sup> "It is feared," *Mena Weekly Star*, November 11, 1920, p. 4; James Medrick "Butch" Warren, "Josiah Homer Blount (1860-1938)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed August 27, 2022).

Mr. Titsworth. I feel safer with my feet on the ground.” Besides selling their eggs to white people, the Black families worked with white people, too. “The black farmers not only tilled their own small acreage but also worked by the day for the larger landowners. The women also helped support their families by doing housework and washing for the ‘white’ families.” Nelson Ray won a prize for his basket in the county fair, which was judged by white people. The Black community included skilled labor. Nelson and his son Will Ray were blacksmiths. Their Black community relied on them for their tools, and “whites came from miles around to have horses and mules shod or tools repaired.” Tom (1849-?) and Jennie (Marshall) Moore (1854-?) ran a sorghum mill, with him pressing the juice and tending the fire, while she made the syrup. “Each farmer brought his cane to the mill and Tom took a ‘toll’ of the finished sorghum.” In the rural Ouachitas, Black and white people collaborated.<sup>264</sup>

The Black community in Muddy Fork (Howard County) collaborated in farming and family building, like the Black community in Center (Polk County). Harrison Counts and his family left Polk County’s Sulphur Springs to join six other Black families in successfully homesteading twenty-four quarter sections (about 960 acres) around Muddy Forks from 1875 to 1895. Harrison Counts himself acquired 160 acres of land via homesteading, proving his claim in 1890. Many of these Black families were relatives of the formerly enslaved Polks described by historian Ruth Polk Patterson. Harrison’s brother John Counts married Jane Polk in Howard County in 1881, with his brother Harrison standing surety for him. Emeline Counts (born about 1840) and her daughter Susie (Counts) Taylor’s family, like Harrison Counts, moved from Sulphur Springs to Muddy Fork. Muddy Fork had Black people to marry, a Black school as early as 1880, and a Black church, amenities which some communities lacked.<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>264</sup> Inez Lane, “Little Africa T128,” Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73; “Premium Awards at Fair, Department H,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Aug. 29, 1907, p. 5.

<sup>265</sup> GLO Records; Ruth Polk Patterson, *The Seed of Sally Good’n: A Black Family of Arkansas 1833-1893* (University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 118-124. Harrison and his family and his sister Chaney Kidd’s family eventually moved to Bain in nearby Garland County.

Black people also had connections outside the Ouachitas, before and after the Civil War. As described earlier, many of the Black people were moved to the Ouachitas from other areas of the country by their enslavers. Muddy Fork's Spencer Polk married "a Turrentine woman' from Sevier County" probably around 1850. One of Emeline Counts' children, Taylor Counts, married Mattie Turrentine from Sevier County in 1886. Pompey Lebow stayed home in Hiram Lebow's white household until after 1880, but he eventually left the Ouachitas and found a wife. He moved to Little River County, where he married a woman named Angie Copeland in 1893. In 1873, Henderson Berryman's son Joseph Sims lived in Little Rock, where he died in 1911.<sup>266</sup> After his first wife died, Cicero Cole remarried in 1899 to Mrs. Ella (Crofton) Hatchett, from Saratoga (southern Howard County).<sup>267</sup> These networks beyond the Ouachitas were also important to making and supporting family.

As Black families left the region or consolidated within it, Cove and Sulphur Springs were down to just four Black people in 1900: Tone Hays, Elizabeth Duff Henderson, Andy Vaughn, and a man named John McKissick. They were all single and living there either with white people or due to the largesse of white people. Around this time, Tone Hays ended up with what was reportedly a life estate in forty acres and a little cottage which was a part of the old McDaniel place. It wasn't much. Its "thin soil" made a good spring garden and then it would burn up in the summer, and it was probably a gift from the McDaniels. Andy Vaughn, in Sulphur Springs Township, was enumerated as a pauper, living in the household of the daughter of his probable enslaver (George W.

---

<sup>266</sup> Joseph Sims, Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874. Microfilm Series: M816, Roll 03: Little Rock, Arkansas; Feb 27, 1871-Jul 15, 1874 (National Archives, Washington, DC) (digitized by ancestry.com); Arkansas Marriage Certificates.

<sup>267</sup> Ella's parents were likely Washington and Ellen Crofton of Tollette, a largely Black community in Blackland township in southern Howard County. Ellen was born in Virginia and taken to Mississippi. Her husband Washington was reportedly "an Indian who was stolen and enslaved." Ella's parents were moved by their enslavers to Hempstead County, where they lived the rest of their lives. "Andrew Brown was a Bigamist," shared by Scoob201 on ancestry.com, Jul. 27, 2017 (sharing a Jun. 8, 2010 rootsweb message from Denise Johnson to VAFAUQUI, subject line: [VAFAUQUI] EMMONS). Washington Crofton homesteaded land in south Howard County (just north of Tollette) in 1876. GLO Records.

Musgrave's wife Josie). The census taker added him at the end of the census, with a note that the Musgraves "failed to report" him.<sup>268</sup> Elizabeth Duff Henderson was living with her former enslavers, the Hendersons, in Cove. A nineteen-year-old farm laborer named John McKissick may have been from Scott County. He was born in Arkansas, and was now living in Cove with a white Johnson family, who didn't leave Walker County, Alabama for Arkansas until sometime after 1875. (They likely already had relatives in Polk County, though, because a good many Walker County residents moved to Polk County.) I don't know what McKissick did next, but it wasn't in Cove. These four people, alone, could not make much of a community.

That the only Black people who stayed in Cove or Sulphur Springs were unmarried suggests why others decided to leave: they wanted to marry or to make it easier for their children to marry. Elizabeth Duff Henderson's obituary stated that "One thing she didn't care about was marriage – for herself. She liked to tell visitors who asked, 'Why didn't you go off and get married when you were freed?' this story: 'I reckon you ain't heard about that boy a long time ago in the field what edged up close and said, 'What yo' name, brown girl?' But I didn't like that tirflin' [sic, trifling] buck so I run him off the farm with a shovel.'"<sup>269</sup> Andy Vaughn, Elizabeth Duff, and Tone Hayes chose to stay home, but they also chose not to marry. Pompey Lebow stayed in Hiram Lebow's white household until after 1880, but he eventually left and found a wife elsewhere. These very small groups of Black people would quickly run out of candidates for marriage and need to go elsewhere if they wanted to marry.

The Black folks in Center Township could, at least initially, find marriage partners in this community. In 1897, James Cole married Caledonia "Dona" Moore (1879-after 1918) in Polk County. Dona was the daughter of Thomas L. and Jennie Moore, and she grew up in Center

---

<sup>268</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sulphur Springs Township, Howard County, Ark., Twelfth Census of the United States, 1910.

<sup>269</sup> "Death Overtakes Aged Negress Long Faithful," *Tucson Citizen*, June 15, 1940, p. 4.

Township. Her parents homesteaded a quarter section, getting the grant in 1884. When they married, James and Dona lived in Center Township. Between 1907 and 1910, they moved to the edge of the Ouachitas, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, along with her little brother Wallace G. Moore. James worked in the lumber yard there, Wallace had no occupation, and their boarder Sam Boyd was a preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Their ten-year-old daughter Lee Etta reported that she had attended school within the year (and in 1940, she reported two years of high school). Cicero's daughter Trissie Cole (1886-?) married H. L. Smith (1872-?) in 1904. Both the bride and groom lived in Mena. Smith was literate. His surety, F.B. Brown, was not. F. B. Brown, who was also Black, was born about 1853, and he married Mollie Edwards in Mena in 1901.<sup>270</sup>

But not everyone living in Center Township could find a person to marry there. In 1902, George Cole (1877-1954), then living in Mena, married Mittie Beam (1882-1969) of Scott County. Like Polk County, Scott County was also thin on Black people. Mittie lived in Park. George moved up north, first to Park where their first son was born, and then further north to Sebastian County, (1910) where he farmed for a while before turning to wage labor. In 1910, their seven-year-old son went to school (and by 1940 he had completed eight grades). In 1920, George was a digger in a coal mine. In 1930, he worked in a brick plant. In 1940, he was doing road work for the government. By 1950, he was 73 years old and unable to work. George and Mittie are buried in the Cherokee African American Cemetery in Huntington, Sebastian County.<sup>271</sup> George and Mittie went places that had enough Black people to support schools and a cemetery of their own.

---

<sup>270</sup> "Notice for Publication," Mena Weekly Star, Aug. 1, 1907, p. 5; GLO Land Records; Manuscript census returns, Hartshorne Ward 2, Pittsburg, Okla., Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Detroit, Wayne, Mich., Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Arkansas Marriage Certificates.

<sup>271</sup> Arkansas Marriage Certificate; Arkansas World War II Registration Card (Oscar Lewel Cole); Sugarloaf, Sebastian, Ark. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Diamond, Sebastian, Ark. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Diamond, Sebastian, Ark. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Huntington, Sebastian, Ark. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Huntington, Sebastian, Ark. Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules; George C. Cole, FindAGrave Mem. 122916281; Mittie Beam Cole, FindAGrave Mem. 225276403.

Like other people who lived in the Ouachita foothills, Black people living in Polk County did not stay put, but they maintained connections with friends from home. As historian Guy Lancaster noticed, Black people left Center Township after the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>272</sup> In an interview reported by local historian Inez Lane, Veller (Titsworth) Howell (1897-1990) remembered that soon after Peter Berryman was lynched in 1901, “the black families had left their farms and Polk County, some moving south to locate near Texarkana, others to Caddo Gap.”<sup>273</sup> (Peter Berryman was the son of Henderson and Ellie Berryman, who had moved from Mississippi to Arkansas between 1855 and 1862. They lived in Montgomery County at least as early as 1870.) Some left before 1900, and many did not necessarily go far. The John R. “Dick” Taft household moved to one of Franklin County’s two county seats, Charleston on the south side of the Arkansas River, probably between 1884 and 1890. (Charleston was to have the first white school in a southern state to voluntarily desegregate.) Some of this family later moved from Charleston to Fort Smith. They probably kept up with their friends in Polk County, like James and Ann Daniels (ages 70 and 50), who lived in Center Township in 1880. Ann probably died soon thereafter, and James remarried Ellen Talley, of Charleston, in 1884. Ellen may have been introduced to him by the Taft family. Some of the Moores and Coles moved to Hartshorne in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma (on the edge of the Ouachitas) by 1910. George W. Cole married a woman from Scott County and moved there and eventually settled in Diamond Township in Sebastian County. Veller’s neighbor and homesteader, Bina Jackson, moved her family to Texarkana. Cicero Cole’s wife and grandchildren moved to Caddo Gap, Montgomery County, where she had family, sometime after 1920. The Black community in Center

---

<sup>272</sup> Guy Lancaster, “Unknown and Multivalent Causes,” in *Racial Cleansing in Arkansas, 1883–1924 : Politics, Land, Labor, and Criminality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014) (accessed September 3, 2022); Guy Lancaster, “There Are Not Many Colored People Here?: African Americans in Polk County, Arkansas, 1896-1937,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70(4) (2011): 429-449.

<sup>273</sup> Inez Lane, “Little Africa T128,” Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73. (I think Veller (Titsworth) Howell compressed the chronology. She would have been just four when Peter Berryman was killed. She married in 1913. I do think most of these memories are from before her marriage.)



Township had connections across the Ouachitas.

By the time the unknown Black man was hunted down and shot at least six times on August 10, 1919, the people in Duckett Township and its sibling townships that were subdivided out of Sulphur Springs Township had nearly forgotten that they once lived in an area that was a little bit Black. They now lived in an area that advertised its whiteness as a symbol of its modernity and a recruiting tool.<sup>274</sup> The Mena newspaper knew he “was the only one of his color in the country.”<sup>275</sup> Polk County and north Howard County were nearly all white in 1920. According to the published 1920 census, nine Black people (four male, five female) and fourteen people of other races lived in all of Polk County, out of 16,412 people. There were about eighteen times as many (162) foreign-born white people as there were Black people. This was a decline in numbers (from 46 Black, 201 foreign born white) although the total population had also declined (from 17,216). No Black people lived in Duckett Township in 1920, but most of Howard County was in the Gulf Coastal Plain and was where many Black people and their enslavers had first settled when moving to Arkansas. At the same time Polk County saw its numbers of Black people decline, neighboring Howard County saw an increase in numbers. Thus, Howard County, taken as a whole, was 23% Black (4,265 people) in 1920, which was an increase in both percentages and total numbers from 20.7% (3,498) in 1910.<sup>276</sup> As we saw with the Counts family moving east to join other Black people in Howard County’s Muddy Fork and Black people moving to Caddo Gap from Polk County, consolidation of Black people into bigger communities.

---

<sup>274</sup> “Pertinent Points,” *Mena Weekly Star*, March 18, 1920, p. 5.

<sup>275</sup> “Black Ravisher Shot to Death,” *Mena (Ark.) Weekly Star*, Aug. 14, 1919, p. 1; Grif Stockley, “Elaine Massacre of 1919,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed August 27, 2022).

<sup>276</sup> *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Arkansas* (Washington, D.C.: 1924), Population Table 9, pp. 35 and 38. The 1920 census category *other races* included Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Filipino, and Korean people. It seems likely most of these fourteen Polk Countians were Indian.

## II. Non-White People in White Communities in Polk and North Howard Counties

Even as Polk and north Howard Counties began to see themselves as 100% white, people of color still lived there. A Japanese American woman and her Nebraskan husband moved into north Howard County in the 1920s. She stayed there until she died in 1964. Some Black people chose to stay in their Polk County communities even after most Black people left. Tone Hays, Elizabeth Duff Henderson, Andy Vaughn, and Pompey Lebow stayed in Cove or Sulphur Springs Townships for decades, living with or benefiting from their enslavers. Cicero and Ella Cole stayed in Center Township into the 1920s, finally moving to Caddo Gap, where they had family. Nelson Ray and his son Will's family also stayed in Center Township at least until 1910. (Nelson, at that point, was in his late eighties. His son finally moved to Caddo Gap by 1918.) These people were still a part of their now practically all-white communities.



Figure 23. Pictures of some of the stragglers in the Ouachitas, clockwise from upper left, Tone Hays from “Jonquils Bloom, Some Still Remember,” *Looking Glass*, December 4, 1977, pp. 6-7; Elizabeth Duff Henderson, from “Death Overtakes Aged Negress Long Faithful,” *Tucson Citizen*, June 15, 1940, p. 4; Otsune (Terede) Hotovec by Floy (Turrentine) Childs (author’s collection); Mrs. Cicero “Aunt Cush” Cole and two grandchildren, from Inez Lane, “Little Africa T128,” Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73.

In the early twentieth century, the Mena newspaper often as not ignored the color of the few Black people still in Polk County. Historian Harold Coogan writes that C. C. Cole was one of the five men in charge of collecting a reward for the arrest and conviction of the men who lynched Peter

Berryman in 1901.<sup>277</sup> His article didn't identify Cole's race, suggesting that it was not identified in the original source. In 1916, Tone Hayes went with two white couples and "spent Sunday" with their brother. The *Mena Star* correspondent didn't characterize him as "old Uncle" or "our colored friend," but simply wrote that "Tone Hayes, Will Belknap and wife, and Jim Sigler and family spent Sunday at the C. Liner home."<sup>278</sup> In 1918, Cicero Cole of Reglub (not a typo) was among the first arrests for failing to dip cattle for tick eradication. In reporting the case, the paper did not mention his color. When he was brought back in 1919 for failure to dip, he was convicted and fined one dollar. The paper did not mention his race (or that this was a repeat offense). In November 1919, when the hounds "jumped a wild cat near the Cicero Cole farms," his race again was omitted. In June 1920, Cicero Cole was involved in litigation with John R. Neal (possibly over a chattel mortgage from the year before), and the newspaper merely identified their names and the outcome.<sup>279</sup> By 1921, Cicero and Ella Cole, the "last negro couple," were living "near Shady," and she was only infrequently seen in Mena. (They may have lived near Shady all along.) In 1921, Hayes was the center of attention at a Fourth of July gathering at Ed Myers' farm, where Tone was "presiding at the roasting of an ox." J. A. Slote wrote to the Mena newspaper about it, never referring to Tone's race, saying, "There may be some who can roast an ox as good as Tone, but certainly none better."<sup>280</sup>

When Elizabeth Duff Henderson left Cove Township for Arizona with the white

---

<sup>277</sup> Harold Coogan, "The Lynching of 'Nigger Pete' T136," in Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), p. 78. (See also Harold Coogan, "The Lynching of Peter Berryman, February 20, 1901," *The Looking Glass* 19 (Fall 1993), 9, which I have not read.)

<sup>278</sup> "Old Cove," *Mena Weekly Star*, May 4, 1916, p. 8; "Old Cove Communique," *Mena Weekly News*, Nov. 14, 1918, p. 8. (Mrs. Belknap and Mrs. Sigler were sisters, and their parents, the Liners, bought the McDaniel place where Tone Hayes lived. Their brother Samuel C. Liner went by "C.")

<sup>279</sup> "Failed to Dip, Five Are Fined," *Mena Star*, Jun. 27, 1918, p. 1; "Criminal Cases in Circuit Court," *Mena Star*, May 1, 1919, p. 7; "Ransom Rambles," *Mena Star*, Nov. 6, 1919, p. 8; "Notice of Sale," *Mena Star*, Jul. 24, 1919, p. 7; John R. Neal Appeal, *Mena Star*, Jun. 15, 1920, p. 6; John R. Neal Appeal, *Mena Star*, Jun. 21, 1920, p. 5. (The *Mena Star* has not been digitized after the first few months of 1922. There may be more references in later years.)

<sup>280</sup> J. A. Slote, "The Big Fourth at Ed Myers as Seen by J. A. Slote," *Mena Weekly News*, July 14, 1921, p. 8.

Henderson family around 1926 and the Coles had moved to Caddo Gap, Tone Hays began to be referred to as “Polk County’s only negro.” He remained Polk County’s “only negro” for the next ten or eleven years, until his death. He was not ostracized from the Cove Township community. Instead, he was drawn into, or he drew himself into, the community. At some point, he became the groundskeeper for Six Mile Cemetery. His neighbors shared their whiskey with him. He’d bring a glass of jelly if a neighbor got sick. His syrup cakes “were the best thing I ever tasted” according to Ruby Martin. He worked with white people, killing hogs, mending fences, planting gardens. Dora Cook, called him “my right arm.” He was invited to sit at the table and eat with his neighbors – something that historians Cheryl Elman et al. report was considered, in most parts of the South, the “most severe rule violation under rural segregation etiquette,” although historian Mark Schultz found exceptions to this taboo in rural Hancock County, Georgia (a much Blacker area than Polk County) in the early twentieth century. Hays’ home was always open to his neighbors. He gave to the Red Cross Mississippi River flood relief fund. He testified on behalf of his whiskey-sharing neighbors, so persuasively that they were found not guilty. As he got older and frail, his white neighbors cared for him in return. They brought him meals, stopped in to see whether he needed anything in town, got him long handles for the winter, and, when he died in 1937, they buried him at the white cemetery he had tended. A white Methodist preacher, James Buchanan Williams, preached the funeral. They’d known each other for sixty-five years.<sup>281</sup>

---

<sup>281</sup> Cheryl Elman, Barbara Wittman, Kathryn M. Feltey, Corey Stevens, and Molly Hartsough, “Women in Frontier Arkansas: Settlement in a Post-Reconstruction Racial State,” *Du Bois Review* 16(2) (2019): 575–612; Mark Schultz, *The Rural Face of White Supremacy: Beyond Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); “Jonquils Bloom, Some Still Remember,” *Looking Glass*, Dec. 4, 1975, pp. 6-7; Ola Parham Barnett, “Dear Editor,” *Looking Glass*, December 18, 1975, p. 2; “A First Christmas in Arkansas,” *Looking Glass*, Dec. 25, 1975, pp. 8-9; “Negro Occupied Witness Stand,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Apr. 28, 1927, p. 1; “Quick Response Follows Call for Flood Relief,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Apr. 28, 1927, p. 1; “Negro Aids Flood Fund,” *Arkansas Gazette*, April 29, 1927, p. 2.; Pete Daniel, *Deep’n as It Come: The 1927 Mississippi River Flood* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996); “Many Drown in Flood Refuge,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Apr. 28, 1927, p. 1; “Polk County’s Only Negro Dies in Flames: Tone Hays, Ex-Slave, Fell into Fireplace at His Home Near Hatfield, Cottage Was Destroyed,” *Mena Weekly Star*, Dec. 9, 1937, p. 1.

Another person who was defined as of the Japanese race under U. S. law (and thus not white), Mrs. Otsune (Terede) Hotovec, and her husband James A. Hotovec moved into north Howard County in the 1920s. She was born in Nagasaki, Japan and he was born in Nebraska. They had met and married in the Philippines, where he was in the Army. They were probably in Duckett Township by about 1926, perhaps attracted by Kansas City Southern's brochures and advertisements promoting resorts in north Howard County. The Hotovecs may have taken the train from Beaumont (Texas), where they were living, up to Wickes, and gone to Baker Springs and, like so many people still do, they found the Ouachita foothills to be worth their time and homesteaded a quarter section. Like the Black stragglers in Polk County, Mrs. Hotovec also became a part of her community.

The Duckett community found a path that allowed her to be white even though she was of the Japanese race and thus "an alien ineligible to citizenship" under U.S. law. The Hotovecs had his army pension, which went a long way in north Howard County, and they were what we'd call early adapters of technology. They had an indoor toilet, a kerosene refrigerator, a battery powered radio, and an ice cream machine – and they shared with their community. It seems as if every child who grew up there had a story about them. My grandfather Orval Childs remembered all the magazines they subscribed to and how reading them made him better prepared for college and his brother V.L. better prepared for the Civil Service Exam. Elva Stewart remembered getting a Shirley Temple doll for Christmas. Everyone got nickels and Christmas stockings and Easter baskets. In 1943, when the FBI came because she hadn't registered as an alien enemy, the neighborhood sprang to her defense. (She had believed her marriage meant she was a naturalized citizen.) They quizzed the postmaster (who claimed not to know her first name) and Sam Miles, among others, all of whom gave a positive recommendation. The FBI also interrogated Olnie Childs, who owned a general store in Wickes. His son O.L. was ten and a half years old when the FBI came to his folks' general store. Some sixty years

later, he remembered the FBI coming to Wickes to investigate Mrs. Hotovec. According to O.L., Olnie said, “‘Let me tell you something.’ He said, ‘I don’t care what nationality she is. I would trust that lady just like I trust my wife.’ He told my dad, ‘Thank you, Mr. Childs. Have a good day.’” My dad’s first cousin Wanda (Childs) Barton has told me of her desserts. Mrs. Hotovec lived with Wanda’s family after her husband died. She babysat another of my dad’s cousins, Van Bonds, while his mother taught school. When my parents married in 1962, Mrs. Hotovec gave them seven tea towels, embroidered with playful cats, one for each day of the week. The Hotovecs were regulars at the community church and the church school. To this day, people in Wickes remember her pickles and how she terraced her back yard at Wickes.<sup>282</sup>

Their childlessness, like that of Tone Hayes, Andy Vaughn, and Elizabeth Duff Henderson, probably helped them integrate into the community. Nobody had to worry about their children falling in love with a Japanese person and navigating their own interracial relationships. North Howard County’s whiteness may also have helped. With only one race category in the community, Mrs. Hotovec almost had to be “white” since she wasn’t Black. Indeed, in 1940, she was censused as white, and she was always referred to as “Mrs.” (pronounced *Miz*) Hotovec. In 1943, the Wickes postmaster told the FBI that he didn’t even know her first name.<sup>283</sup> Calling her Mrs. Hotovec, acknowledging her generosity, and sharing their homes as equals were all signifiers that she was white.

---

<sup>282</sup> O. L. Childs, interview, Mena, Ark., 2013; Federal Bureau of Investigation Records received Jul. 11, 2019, under the Freedom of Information Act, in response to 100-HQ-190055 (in possession of the author); Olen A. Stewart, *Growing up in Cossatot Country with Ira and Laura Stewart* (self-published pamphlet, about 1985); Elva Stewart Williams, *Peach Tree Tea and Other Reflections* (self-published pamphlet, about 1985); *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; June 2021 conversation with Wanda (Childs) Barton; Fall 2022 conversation with Pat Bonds; Responses to query in “Remember When in Wickes” Facebook Group.

<sup>283</sup> Duckett, Howard, Ark., Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Federal Bureau of Investigation Records received Jul. 11, 2019, under the Freedom of Information Act, in response to 100-HQ-190055 (in possession of the author).

Ornithologists have a number of words they use to describe birds who seem to be separated from their flock and outside their usual range: vagrant, straggler, accidental, casual, or alien. As Marion Renault wrote, “vagrancy [of a bird] does not always represent ... misfortune.” And even a single straggler can impact its environment, for better or for worse. Most of the Japanese American historiography and the Black Arkansan historiography is about people who were living in community with others who looked like them.<sup>284</sup> These persons who were not white were still in community with their neighbors, giving and also receiving help in turn.

### III. Black Community in Montgomery and Garland Counties

While the number of Black people in Polk and north Howard Counties in the western Ouachitas dwindled, the number in Caddo Gap, on the border of Montgomery and Pike Counties, and Buckville, on the border of Montgomery and Garland Counties, grew. Although Buckville is now mostly under Lake Ouachita, these communities started from numbers similar to those of Polk County’s Sulphur Springs, Cove, and Center Townships. Enslavers in Mountain Township included H. B. Greenwood and Jeff Cunningham, names which are also used by Black people. As seen in Table 6, the 1860 column tallies all the enslaved people in the county, while later columns do not incorporate the newly-created townships except for those which would become part of Fir Township (where part of the Buckville community was located). It is outside the scope of this chapter to do the connective work across these seventy years, but my review of the censuses suggest that there is more connective work to be done. (Between 1900 and 1910, Fir Township was formed from parts of South Fork, Center, and Sulphur Spring Townships, which were themselves changed over time. Unfortunately, it is hard to figure out the changes. For instance, I don’t know why Caddo was cut up into smaller bits.) Just as with Polk County, Black people moved

---

<sup>284</sup> Marion Renault, “These Birds Aren’t Lost, Just Adapting,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, July 11, 2022, p. 1D and 6D (from *New York Times*).



after emancipation. Just within Montgomery County, we see some areas growing in Black people and others declining. By 1900, they were concentrated in Gap Township (Caddo Gap community) and Mountain Township (Buckville community). Like Muddy Fork in Howard County, Caddo Gap and Buckville were enclaves of Black people tucked into the Ouachita foothills.<sup>285</sup>

<i>Township</i>	<i>1860</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>1880</i>	<i>1900</i>
Caddo	8	38	141	0
Center	n/a	n/a	4	6
Gap	28	35	146	119
Mountain	22	47	72	112
South Fork	33	12	11	0
Sulphur Spring	1	8	8	44

Black people lived in this area of the Ouachitas before the Civil War. Eli Bledsoe (1812-1898) was one of the earliest settlers of any color in the region. He arrived with his enslaver Tyra H. Bledsoe in 1839, in time to be on the 1840 census as Tyra's only enslaved person. Eli and Susan (Williamson) Bledsoe (1843-1924) (probably his second wife) had ten or eleven children before his death. Susan and her sister Harriet (Williamson) Greenwood (1848-after 1920) were born in Tennessee in the 1840s, but they had lived in Montgomery County since at least the 1860s. Susan was kin to many in the Black community and she was familiar with the white people, too. She likely knew not just where the bodies were buried, but who put them there.<sup>286</sup>

The Civil War left more visible traces on the lives of Black people in Montgomery County than those in Polk and north Howard Counties. Throughout 1863, there were skirmishes. The same expedition out of Waldron that resulted in the skirmish at Baker Springs also resulted in a skirmish

---

<sup>285</sup> Ruth Polk Patterson, *The Seed of Sally Good'n: A Black Family of Arkansas 1833-1893* (University Press of Kentucky, 1985); Russell Pierce Baker, *Arkansas Township Atlas: A History of the Minor Civil Divisions in Each Arkansas County* (n. p. 1984); W. A. Talley, "A Visit to Polk County," *Mena Weekly Star*, Oct. 9, 1910, p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> It is possible that Tyra Bledsoe was kin to Hiram Lebow's wife, who was also a Bledsoe. (Hiram Lebow enslaved Pompey Lebow in Polk County.) The father of Susan Williamson and her sister, Peter Williamson, may have been enslaved by William M. Williamson of Montgomery County, who, like Eli Bledsoe, sought to recover damages from the Southern Claims Commission and acknowledged owning one man.

at Caddo Mill in December 1863, with the federal army reportedly capturing “1 prisoner, 8 negroes, 3 wagons, 6 mules, 6 horses, and a number of worthless arms.” The report is silent as to what was done with the Black people and the white prisoner. The Mount Ida Expedition of November 1863 enlisted three hundred Union men at Caddo Gap (then Centreville).<sup>287</sup> It also resulted in Eli Bledsoe losing his mule to the Fourth Arkansas Cavalry and his son to Marmaduke’s CSA men. Eli Bledsoe later tried to get paid for the mule, leaving us testimony about how he came to own the mule and lose the mule, how he avoided the rebels, and his attitudes about the war. His enslaver Tyra H. Bledsoe had died in 1858, but, in 1877, Eli testified that he (Eli) was still living on Tyra’s property in 1863 and had lived there thirty-nine years, putting him there just after statehood. Eli Bledsoe was not a friend of the rebels and he had expected freedom. “I never done a thing for the rebels for I was afeard of them and run off every time they came and of Marmaduke’s I was afraid as of the devil.” The “rebels stole [my son] and took off to Texas. I was afraid of Marmaduke’s men because they run thro’ here and took off the darkies. I never gave any aid or comfort to the rebellion. No way. I always gave them the dodge.” He added, “My old boss used to tell me that perhaps in his day & sure anyhow in my day, I would be free and when the fighting commenced, I thought that was what he meant and I wanted the Yankees to whip and I wanted the rebels whipped, they cut and slashed.” (His testimony seemed to go on a tangent here, but I think he was remembering what a literal whipping was like, and he wanted to make clear that he was in favor of the rebels being literally whipped.) Eli said, “As I am 59 years old but was never lashed to exceed 50 lashes in all my life, but I saw many whipped, and I just hoped the Yankees would win.”<sup>288</sup> He was not paid for the mule.

---

<sup>287</sup> “Montgomery County,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 21, 2022); *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Vol. 22, p. 778.

<sup>288</sup> Eli Bledsoe, Southern Claims Commission, Disallowed and Barred Claims, 1871-1880, NARA, <https://www.ancestry.com/sharing/30272564?h=0a91bc>

Montgomery County experienced more than organic growth. Black people moved to Buckville and Caddo Gap from other farming communities in the Ouachitas. Cicero Cole's stepson, John Franklin Hill, moved his family from Polk County's Center Township to Caddo Gap. Jacob Gordan came from Polk County's Sulphur Springs and married Ellen Hill. Mary Eliza (Willis) Polk and her two children, Minnie and Mamie, left Polk County's Muddy Fork and moved to Caddo Gap. Liddy (Jackson) Hill was born in Muddy Fork in 1869, but she moved to Caddo Gap when her mother married Henderson Berryman in 1879. Some reverse and re-migration also occurred. John W. Mathews lived in Caddo Gap in 1886 before he and his wife Susie (Smith) Mathews moved their family to Mena. His son George returned to Montgomery County and married Samuel and Ellen (Sims) Crowley's daughter Pauline in 1908. Black people living in Caddo Gap or Buckville could meet and marry other Black people from Montgomery County, instead of having to travel across the Ouachitas to find someone to marry. The censuses show Black people could specialize. There was a blacksmith. One year, there was a midwife, something I've never seen in other censuses in the Ouachitas. The Buckville and Caddo Gap communities were big enough to support a church, a school, a cemetery.<sup>289</sup>

Buckville and Caddo Gap were filled with Black landowners, both men and women. In 1910, a white man and eight or ten family members took a tour, beginning in Beaudry in Garland County and heading west to his wife's family in Big Fork, Polk County – about eighty miles as the crow flies (and not much more for them because they could ford the rivers or take ferries). (These days, it takes considerably longer due to the manmade lakes and cars which are not designed to drive

---

<sup>289</sup> Manuscript census returns, Montgomery County, Ark., Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Montgomery County, Ark., Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Montgomery County, Ark., Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Montgomery County, Ark., Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Arkansas Marriage Certificates; Black Cemetery (near Caddo Gap), <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/53092/black-cemetery>; Brooks Cemetery (near Buckville), <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/53203/brooks-cemetery>; "Kill Negro, Burn house and Church," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Jan. 17, 1916, p. 8. The 1900 and 1910 censuses report school attendance by Black children in both townships. The Buckville church that was burned in 1916 was also a school.

through water.) As best understood, they went through Buckville. He described it as “a place originally called Buck Town. Here we found the Bucks but no town; it being almost exclusively a village of negroes, who seemed to be enjoying the benefits and pleasures of a free country, where every person is granted citizenship, regardless of race, color or previous condition.” It was four miles west of Cedar Glades and on the Hot Springs and Mount Ida Road. After white men did their best to destroy it in 1919, the *Hot Springs New Era* wrote, “The lands around the village are of the choicest Ouachita valley lands, and a great deal of the best is said to be owned by the negroes.” Black people acquired at least some of this land by homesteading. In 1876, Samuel Crowley homesteaded at Caddo Gap after finishing up his tour with the 113<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops in 1866. (He and his family moved to Caddo Gap by 1870. In 1882, he began drawing a pension from the U.S. government for his service, meaning that he and his wife had a steady bit of cash coming in.) In 1877, Eli Bledsoe testified that he homesteaded some of the state’s so-called swamp lands. “I live on land that I entered myself, homesteaded it as swamp lands.” In Buckville, William Evans and Richard Cunningham homesteaded in 1882 and 1903. Richard’s mother-in-law Vina (Housley) Wilson also homesteaded eighty acres, although she died before she finished proving it up, so the title was issued in the name of her four “infant orphan children” in 1889. Henderson Berryman homesteaded in the area in 1899. Susan Bledsoe’s son-in-law George W. Hardnett (aka George Warren) homesteaded 160 acres in 1901. In 1908, Susan Bledsoe, now Eli’s widow, homesteaded eighty acres of federal lands. Richard’s sister Gincy (Cunningham) Hill successfully homesteaded 120 acres in 1913. By 1917, many of these homesteads were now on the Garland side of the county line, and some Black people from Buckville had moved to Hot Springs, where they

could work as bath attendants, washwomen, porters, and other support positions in what was becoming a medical tourist spot.<sup>290</sup>

Township	1910		1920	
	Total	Black	Total	Black
Fir	555	97 (17%)	459	19 (4%)
Mountain (Buckville)	669	90 (13%)	563	0 (0)
Gap	909	100 (11%)	1018	169 (17%)

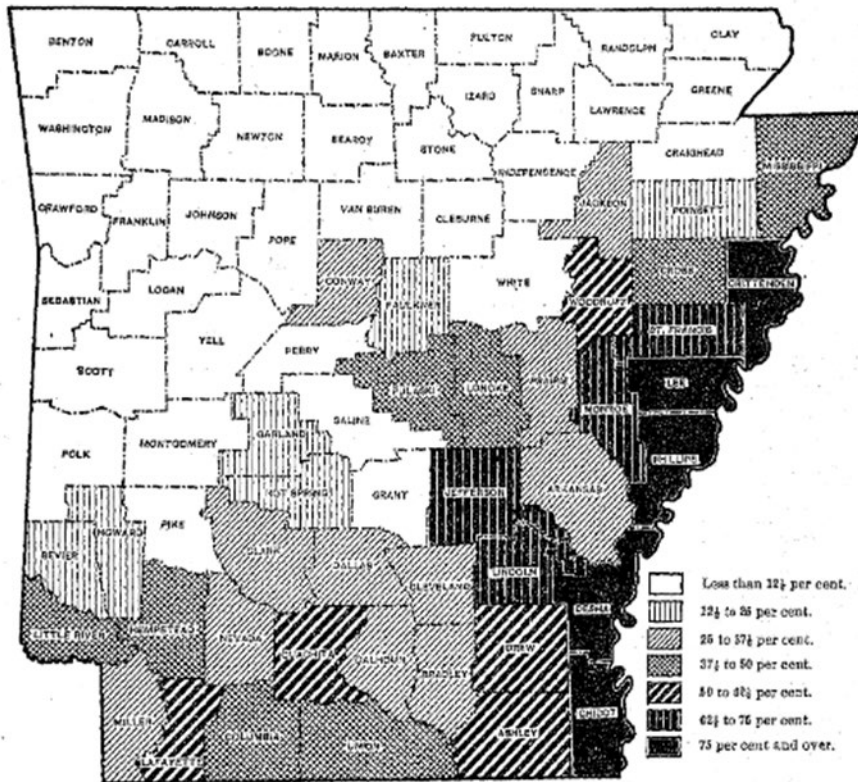
As seen in Table 7, more than 94% of all the Black people (287 of 304) in Montgomery County lived in just three townships (of twenty-four) in 1910: Fir (97), Mountain (90), and Gap (100). (One family of five was censused in both Mountain and Fir Townships.) Caddo Gap was in Gap Township, while the Buckville community lay on the border of Fir Township and Mountain Township. Mountain Township was one of four townships (the others being Crystal, Bear, and Cedar Glades) that jutted into Garland County. In 1917, those four townships were transferred to Garland County, and Mountain Township was renamed Buckville. (Garland County already had a Mountain Township and a Mountain Valley Township.) The Buckville community was already known as Buckville or Bucktown, probably because of the higher percentage of Black people living there. If you were to look at the census map (Figure 24), you would miss these Black communities, and just see that Montgomery County was about as white as the rest of the Ouachitas, save Garland

---

<sup>290</sup> W. A. Talley, "A Visit to Polk County," *Mena Weekly Star*, October 9, 1910, p. 2; "Sheriff After Night-Riding Suspects: Six Prominent Men Are Charged with Arson, Night-Riding and Worse," *Hot Springs New Era*, May 30, 1919, p. 1. Samuel and his wife Ellen (Sims) Crowley and their oldest child were born in Mississippi, but by 1863 they had moved to Arkansas, where their son Marshall was born in 1863. They may have refuged to Fort Smith since Samuel Crowley enlisted at Fort Smith in January 1864. Like many other Black soldiers, he was not sent home at war's end, but continued to serve until the end of 1866. Manuscript census returns, Gap, Montgomery County, Ark., Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Gap, Montgomery County, Ark., Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Gap, Montgomery County, Ark., Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Samuel Crowley, Civil War Pension File Index (filed Aug. 26, 1882, service Co. E, 113<sup>th</sup> USCT). Eli Bledsoe, Southern Claims Commission, Disallowed and Barred Claims, 1871-1880, NARA; Susan Bledsoe, Patent 13822, September 3, 1908; Gincy Hill, Patent 03459, February 13, 1913; William Evans, Patent 10570, January 31, 1903; Richard Cunningham, Patent 2362, December 1, 1882; Vina Wilson, Patent 5000, Aug. 1, 1889; George W Hardnett, Patent 10021, Aug. 12, 1901; in GLO Records (accessed September 5, 2022). Likely still more of the homesteaders in this area were Black.

County. You might also conclude that Howard County was as Black as Garland County. You wouldn't see the whiteness of north Howard County.<sup>291</sup>

PER CENT OF NEGROES IN TOTAL POPULATION OF ARKANSAS, BY COUNTIES: 1910.



(395)

Figure 24. Percent of Black population by Arkansas counties (1910).<sup>292</sup>

In January 1916, some white people began a campaign to get rid of the Black people in Buckville, the same week that D. W. Griffin's *Birth of a Nation* came to Hot Springs. They started by killing one of Susan Bledsoe's grandsons, William J. Hardnett (also known as Will Warren). Hardnett was almost twenty-seven, and he'd been married going on four years to Isabelle Brown. In

<sup>291</sup> The published census data reported 304 Black people in Montgomery County, but one family of five was counted in both Mountain and Fir Townships. Whether it is 287 of 304 or 282 of 299 Black people, nearly all Black people lived in these three townships in 1910.

<sup>292</sup> *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Abstract of the Census, "Supplement for Arkansas: Population, Agriculture, Manufactures, Mines and Quarries,"* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913).

November 1914, they had their second baby, whom they named Estelle. Estelle's birth certificate was signed by a white doctor, Dr. M. V. Pool, and filed by the registrar the next day. Less than fourteen months later. Dr. Pool signed Estelle's father's death certificate, while Estelle's great-grandmother gave him the information about his parents and age and all those details that are asked for on a death certificate (which might explain why his father's place of birth was given as Florida). His cause of death was "gun shot wound by unknown party caused instant [sic] death."<sup>293</sup> Newspaper accounts said his body was "riddl[ed] with bullets." He was buried three days later at the "Negro Cemetery." The undertaker was W. M. Kilburn "col." (Kilburn's wife Mollie (Holley) was Nelson Ray's granddaughter. Born in 1878, she grew up in Montgomery County, even while Nelson and his wife continued to live in Polk County.) Will had apparently upset some white kids, possibly even slapping one of them, and their parents decided to "get even" by murdering him in his home, and then burning the home and the only Black school and church "in that community." Apparently, these parents skipped the part of the Old Testament that called for proportionality, an eye for an eye. The Garland County prosecuting attorney, Gibson Witt, said he'd look into it once the roads cleared, but nothing more seemed to have come of it. Since Mountain Township was still in Montgomery County, he may have realized he lacked jurisdiction.

---

<sup>293</sup> Willie Hardnett, Buckville, Mountain Township, Montgomery County, Arkansas Death Certificate No. 1125, Jan. 15, 1916, burial Negro Cemetery. Willie's nephew and Susan Bledsoe's great grandson Jesse Cunningham died that month of la grippe.

THE NEW ERA

# AUDITORIUM THEATRE

**THREE NIGHTS** Starting Monday **JANUARY 17** Matinees Tuesday and Wednesday  
Curtain at 2:30 and 8:15

## World's Mightiest Spectacle

D. W. GRIFFITH'S


Plantation  
Days in the  
Sunny South

Gathering of  
War Clouds

Sherman's  
March  
to the Sea

Battle  
of Petersburg

Lee & Grant  
at  
Appomattox



Assassination  
of Lincoln

Horrors of  
Carpetbag  
Rule

Founding  
the Invisible  
Empire

Wild Rides of  
the KuKlux  
Klans

The South  
Restored to  
Love and  
Laughter

18,000  
PEOPLE

Grand Operatic Score Interpreted by Symphony  
Orchestra of 30 Musicians Brought From New York

3,000  
HORSES

**PRICES** NIGHTS, Lower Floor \$1.00, 2.00; Balcony 50c, \$1.00; Gallery 25c  
Matinees, Lower Floor \$1.00 Balcony 50c Gallery 25c

Figure 25. Advertisement for "The Birth of a Nation," *Hot Springs New Era*, Jan. 11, 1916, p. 8.

White people probably continued their harassment campaign over the next three years, but the next big event was in March 1919. Several white men spent at least a month working up a plan to "run certain negroes out of the Little Georgia settlement by dynamiting and burning their houses." Two of them, Porter Brown and Virgil Housley, approached other white men about



running off Garland Carroll, a Black man who owed Housley money, or going to Little Georgia (as they referred to the Black part of Buckville) to “clean up on them and maybe dynamite or kill one,” or running off a bootlegger named Andy Greenwood (Susan Bledsoe’s nephew) and getting his whiskey plus reward money from the feds. As it happened, Housley, Brown and four or five other white men followed through on their plans. On Saturday morning, March 29, 1919, they led the sheriff, two deputies, and an internal revenue agent to a still owned by Greenwood and Dave Hill. (Dave’s wife Ida Lee (Pettis) was one of homesteader Vina (Housley) Wilson’s grandchildren.) Hill and Greenwood allegedly refused to immediately surrender, instead engaging in “a pistol duel.” Greenwood “escaped to the mountains,” but Hill eventually surrendered.<sup>294</sup>

That same afternoon, probably still excited about how well their morning plans had come off, Brown and Housley went to Little Georgia to give the Black community a word of warning that they would need to leave by sundown. Brown went into their houses to warn them while Housley waited outside. One of the people he warned was Susan Bledsoe. She took the warning seriously and left. She later testified that she “saw her home and all her possessions burned and dynamited by the seven mounted men.” In an apocalyptic scene, “seven horsemen, armed with high-powered rifles, invaded ‘Little Georgia’ and set the firebrand to six negro cabins,” including homes belonging to Susan Bledsoe, Jeff Kelly, and Ginny Hill. Their barns, filled with “grain and hay,” were also torched. “[I]he house of Jeff Hollis [sic, Holley] was blown off the face of the earth by dynamite” even though he had moved his family to Wagoner County, Oklahoma the year before. Virgil Housley left his rifle at the scene. The next day, Housley “had come into the neighborhood inquiring as to what had become of the people.”<sup>295</sup>

---

<sup>294</sup> “Officers in Fight with Moonshiners,” *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, Mar. 30, 1919, p. 32; “Six Men Are Brought In,” *Hot Springs New Era*, May 31, 1919, p. 1. The Housleys were former enslavers. Several Black people in the area were also named Housley, including Dave Hill’s mother-in-law.

<sup>295</sup> “Sheriff After Night-Riding Suspects: Six Prominent Men Are Charged with Arson, Night-Riding and Worse,” *Hot Springs New Era*, May 30, 1919, p. 1; Thomas Jefferson Holley, World War I Draft Registration Card (Sept. 12, 1918) (ancestry.com); Creek, Wagoner County, Okla., Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules.

The usual course, as set forth in the historiography, would be for Black Ouachitans to leave and never come back. This is not exactly what happened. Because there was a critical mass of Black people, because Black people in Garland County were still voters, and probably because Susan Bledsoe had had enough, they could influence decision makers. In 1919, the Black people of Buckville in Montgomery and Garland Counties pushed back against the idea that getting burned out and dynamited wasn't that big a deal, that maybe they should be grateful that they hadn't been burned up along with their homes. While the Black people wisely left their homes that afternoon in March 1919 rather than get blown up along with their homes and barns still filled with grain and hay from the previous fall, they then regrouped. A preacher named Doss Haley stayed behind. Some of the others must not have gone far. Some probably went to stay with family in Hot Springs, and that might be where the beginning of a plan came together.<sup>296</sup>

The Black people of Buckville persuaded the Garland County prosecuting attorney to listen to them. The newspapers are silent as to who persuaded him, but I suspect Susan Bledsoe and perhaps Doss Haley played a part. The Montgomery County prosecuting attorney, like Witt previously, declined to convene a grand jury, but the Garland County prosecuting attorney, John D. Hoskins, listened. Black people were still voters in Garland County, which may have played a role. Hoskins called a grand jury and took two days of testimony. According to Hoskins, white people in the Buckville community got wind of his interest and went to Hot Springs to persuade him to back off, to "recognize that "he would find it extremely unpopular to 'dig into' this matter." Instead, Hoskins wrote "a strong letter" to these citizens, who responded by claiming they were misunderstood and "promising to use their best efforts to see that the law was enforced." The Garland County grand jury indicted six men, all of whom were arrested in May. Each posted \$4000

---

<sup>296</sup> "Sheriff After Night-Riding Suspects: Six Prominent Men Are Charged with Arson, Night-Riding and Worse," *Hot Springs New Era*, May 30, 1919, p. 1.

bond and was released pending trial. (Two were dismissed prior to trial.)<sup>297</sup>

The first two, Virgil Housley and Porter Brown, went to trial in November 1919. According to the newspaper coverage, most of the evidence was “testimony coming mostly from negro witnesses.” The Arkansas Supreme Court’s opinion also identified several white men who testified about the attempts by Brown and Housley to get them to help expel or destroy the Black community. The “most telling evidence” came from “an aged negress known as Aunt Susan.” Susan Bledsoe’s testimony must have been persuasive indeed to result in two convictions and sentences of two years in the penitentiary.<sup>298</sup> Although all were to have gone to trial one after the other (after the judge granted their request to sever the trials), the judge put a halt to it after the first two, claiming that the “farmer witnesses” had crops to tend to.<sup>299</sup> After that, the same judge vacated Brown’s conviction (because Brown had agreed to take something less than a unanimous decision, which the judge had allowed at trial) and the Arkansas Supreme Court vacated Housley’s (because the testimony about what happened after the conspiracy was complete should not have been admitted). Hoskins was a one-term prosecuting attorney. The next prosecuting attorney probably decided not to bring Porter Brown and Virgil Housley back to trial or to try Porter Brown’s father and brother.

The Buckville community in Fir and Buckville Townships did disperse, but about a third of them left before 1919, when the troubles escalated. As shown in Table 8, by 1920, many of them moved to Pennington in Le Flore County or Haskell in Muskogee County (Okla.), but a similar fraction stayed in Montgomery County. Nearly a third (at least 32 of the 106 individuals I found) had already left Fir and Mountain Townships before 1919, when the troubles escalated. In other words, not

---

<sup>297</sup> Lorraine Gates Schuyler, “To Hold the Lady Votes: Southern Politics Ten Years after Suffrage” in *The Weight of Their Votes: Southern Women and Political Leverage in the 1920s* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 189-226 (in 1927, Garland County Black voters combined forces with women voters to vote for an independent Democratic candidate, and against the regular Democratic nominee, for mayor); “Sheriff After Night-Riding Suspects: Six Prominent Men Are Charged with Arson, Night-Riding and Worse,” *Hot Springs New Era*, May 30, 1919, p. 1.

<sup>298</sup> “Another Nightrider Gets Prison Sentence,” *Arkansas Democrat*, Nov. 14, 1919, p. 2; “Second Conviction in Buckville Cases,” *Hot Springs New Era*, Nov. 14, 1919, p. 14.

<sup>299</sup> “‘Little Georgia’ Cases Continued,” *Arkansas Democrat*, Nov. 18, 1919, p. 2.

every Black person left because they were burned out. Some chose to leave before then, perhaps looking for a better chance to find someone to marry or to get their own homestead in Oklahoma. Nearly all of them continued farming.<sup>300</sup> And, the number of Black people living in Caddo Gap (Gap Township) grew between 1910 and 1920. The Black people living in Gap Township were not just consolidation of the two communities of Caddo Gap and Buckville. I only found one Black person (Lena Todd) of the 182 Black people who lived in Fir or Mountain Townships in 1910 who moved to Gap Township by 1920. Despite this dispersal, when it came time to prove up a date of birth for a delayed birth certificate, Black people still had access to their neighbors, their aunts, their cousins, who could bear witness to their age and knew who their parents were. They, like white Ouachitans, stayed connected.<sup>301</sup>

---

<sup>300</sup> All but ten of the 101 people lived in 1920 households where the head was in farming, and most of the household heads were farmers (and not farm labor). The exceptions were: three people in Hot Springs (a preacher, his wife who did laundry, and a waiter), George Greenwood in Briggsville (Yell County) (“labor”), two people in Oklahoma City (an oil mill worker and a butcher), and Cordelia (Bledsoe) Kirksey (St. Clair County, AL) (a washwoman whose husband had no employment and would die in February).

<sup>301</sup> Manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Arkansas delayed birth certificates. Thelma Ada (Jordan) Lee, for instance, was born in Buckville in 1907. By the time she applied for a birth certificate (in 1969), her parents had died. She had an “old family bible record” and the affidavit of her cousin Milton Jordan, age 71. Milton had left Buckville before 1918 to move to Penno. In 1920, he and Thelma were both living with Thelma’s parents. They both later moved to Carlsbad, New Mexico, where they were living when Thelma sought a delayed birth certificate. Milton had sought his ten years earlier, in 1959, and his aunt Georgia (Williams) Jordan (age 79), while she was in New Mexico, made the affidavit about his birth. (She was Thelma’s mother. I suspect she was visiting family in New Mexico since the records suggest she didn’t move again after getting to Penno.).

<i>Location</i>	<i>1910 Heads</i>	<i>% of Heads</i>	<i>1910 Individuals</i>	<i>% of Individuals</i>
Not found	11	33%	66	36%
Peno, Le Flore County, OK	5	15%	27	15%
Montgomery County (Fir, Gap, and Center), AR	4	12%	18	10%
Muskogee County, OK	4	12%	24	13%
Probably dead	3	9%	12	7%
Yell County, AR	2	6%	10	5%
Garland County, AR	2	6%	13	7%
Wagoner County, OK	1	3%	7	4%
McIntosh County, OK	1	3%	3	2%
Oklahoma City, OK	-	-	2	1%
Payne County, OK	-	-	1	1%
Alabama	-	-	1	1%
Total	33		184	

#### IV. Conclusion

Black people in the Ouachitas formed a network with other Black Ouachitans, perhaps larger in square miles than that of white people, but smaller in total numbers. They also were in community with white people. Some stayed in the area for decades after the Civil War. However, they were always a small minority in the area, so most left to join other Black people, forming communities of their own, but still in the Ouachitas. Present-day studies suggest that you need some minimum percentage of a minority group in a majority group for the minority group to be something other than tokens or stereotypes.<sup>302</sup> Similarly, people interested in enhancing the economic performance of a region these days talk about economic clusters, which are companies near each other doing related things. (Think of Silicon Valley.) Economic clusters are important because they mean that if people want to change jobs, they can shift to a different firm without leaving the region.<sup>303</sup> These rural communities of Ouachitans (whether Black or white) are a bit like

<sup>302</sup> Jasmin Joecks, Kerstin Pull, and Karin Vetter, “Gender Diversity in the Boardroom and Firm Performance: What Exactly Constitutes a ‘Critical Mass?’” *Journal of Business Ethics* 118(1) (2013): 61–72 (thirty percent is critical mass).

<sup>303</sup> Hector Rocha, Martin Kunc, David B. Audretsch, “Clusters, Economic Performance, and Social Cohesion: A System Dynamics Approach,” *Journal of Regional Studies* (2020) 54(8): 1098-1011.

the clusters of today. They could shift from one farming family to another by marriage and they could also draw on their interconnected firms (farms) to find the expertise they needed. Especially when laws make clear that you will always be other and you cannot join the majority community via marriage, moving to form your own community makes sense. Black people thus moved from Polk and north Howard Counties to places like Buckville, Charleston, Fort Smith, and Peno (Okla.) – places that were still in or near the hills, but which had churches and schools and other Black people to be around, to marry, to form families, and to form community.

Black people thus did more than simply disappear from the Ouachitas in the sixty years after the Civil War. Although racial violence certainly drove some Black people out of the Ouachitas, the story is more complicated than that. As Medgar Evers said in a 1958 interview about why he stayed in Mississippi, “The state is beautiful. It is home. I love it here. A man’s state is like his house. If it has defects, he tries to remedy them. That’s what my job is here.”<sup>304</sup> Some Black Ouachitans stayed, trying to remedy the defects of home. They looked for and created community within the Ouachitas. They had families. They supported schools and churches and each other. They homesteaded. They sold eggs to buy necessities. They invited white kids to their revivals. They processed sorghum. They were good blacksmiths. They acted as undertaker when someone in their community died. They stayed connected after they left the Ouachitas. They had friends in the white communities. And they used the law when they could to resist the destruction of their communities. Black Ouachitans used a wide network of connections to be more than “the only one of his color in the country.”

---

<sup>304</sup> Medgar Evers, “Why I Live in Mississippi,” *Ebony*, Nov. 1958, pp. 65-70.

Table 10. Appendix. Distribution of Black People in Polk County (1850-1900)

1850 Enslavers' Surnames	Township	1860 Enslavers' Surnames	1870 Black People's Surnames	1880 Black People's Surnames	1900 Black People's Surnames
67 enslaved: McAtee (23), Quinton/ Winton/ Duff/ Shults/ Nobles (16), Scott (10), Gray (8), Powell (3), Ladd (2), Gillam (2), Carman (1), Ellis (1), Jackson (1)	Center (county seat)	49: Counts (19), Ray (9), (Stribling) Dickinson (6), Boyle (6), Cagle (4), Jones (3), Quinton/Winton/Duff (1), Ward (1)	16: Ray (7), Cole (6), Daniels (2), Davis (1)	48 ( <i>Center</i> ): Ray (13), Nichols (7), Moore (6), Cole (5), Johnson (4), Taft (4), Counts (3), Flynn (3), Daniels (2), Chasteen (1).  3 ( <i>Dallas</i> ): Ashby (1), Beck (1), Walker (1).	24 ( <i>Center</i> ): Cahill (3), Courts (3), Fletcher (2), Floyd (3), Hamilton (1), Jones (3), McKissick (1), Miles (1), Reed (2), Russell (2), Turner (1), Wakefield (2).  136 ( <i>Mena</i> ): Beckman (1), Berryman (1), Boyd (5), Brown (1), Busch (1), Coats (4), Cole (11), Cooper (4), Crow (2), Evans (1), Gantt (1), Gerald (2), Goodwin (1), Gray (8), Guinn (1), Hill (3), Hudson (6), Johnson (6), Jones (2), Lee (12), Mathews (3), McFadden (1), McKissick (4), Mitchell (1), Moon (7), Moore (8), Moring (1), Perry (2), Ray (8), Rector (5), Richards (3), Russ (1), Russell (1), Russie (4), Scott (2), Starks (2), Terry (1), Wallace (1), White (1), Whitmore (4), Wilson (3).
	Sulphur Spring (Howard Co. after 187x)	47: Davis/Gray (15), Hunter (9), McAtee (9), Jackson (7), Caughran (3), Choat (2), Bradley (1), Page (1)	5: Counts (1), Gordan (1), Duncan (1), Choat (3)	9: Counts (8), Vaughn (1)	1: Vaughn (1)

Table 10. Appendix. Distribution of Black People in Polk County (1850-1900)

1850 Enslavers' Surnames	Township	1860 Enslavers' Surnames	1870 Black People's Surnames	1880 Black People's Surnames	1900 Black People's Surnames
	Freedom	26: Quinton/Henderson (7), Phillips (5), Powell (5), Border (4), White (2), Walker (2), Pollock (1)	11: Beck (4), Quinton (7)	None	None
	Cove	27: Winton/Shults/Duff/McDaniel/Henderson/Nobles (19), Ladd (3), Nichols (2), Rush (2), Stinnett (1)	9: Jones (3), Temple (2), Chatwell (1), Hart (1), Stribling (1), Williams (1)	5: Wright (2), Russell (3),	2: Henderson (1), McKissick (1)
	Mountain	7: Bonham (6), Whisenant (1)	None	None	1: Flowers (1),
	Fulton	7: Barkers (3), Boyle (2), Rider (2)	None	None	None
	White	5: Boyle (1), Moore (2), Copeland (1), Lebow (1)	None	1: Lebow (1)	None (including Janssen, later Wickes).
	Big Fork	5: Wallace (4), Whisenant (1)	2: Starks (2)	None	None
	Ouachita	-	4: Counts (4)	None	1: Ellis (1)
	Ozark	-	1: Lebow (1)	None	None
	Gap Springs	-	-	None	None
	Cedar	-	-	-	None
	Eagle	-	-	-	None
	Eagle Gap	-	-	-	20: Various railroad employees (20)
	Faulkner	-	-	-	None
	Potter	-	-	-	None
	Rich Mountain	-	-	-	None



## Chapter 6: Leaving Duckett and Staying Connected

Not everyone who lived in Duckett stayed in Duckett, and not everyone who left Duckett cut all ties with Duckett. When Duckett household heads left, they often stayed nearby where they could use their knowledge of farming in the Ouachitas, but with a different subset of Ouachitans. Although household heads' departures slowed between 1930 and 1940 (with the coming of the Great Depression), their adult children continued to leave. Their departures were often started by the desire for more education. People who left Duckett still kept up with each other. Many continue to return to the area for family reunions, funerals, decoration of community cemeteries and, eventually, their own burials.

### I. Leaving Duckett

*Happy home, indeed, I love thee,  
Can I, can I, say "Farewell"?*<sup>305</sup>

When families or individuals left Duckett, they had to go somewhere. Just as when they moved to Duckett, they needed a reason to leave and the resources to go. Some wanted better or more schools for their kids. Sometimes, kids left for school while parents stayed. Others wanted a better chance to find a spouse or a job that wasn't farming. Or they wanted to try farming somewhere else. Families followed the lumber industry to McCurtain County or Idaho. Slightly more homesteaders left than censused household heads. Both the number of households and the number of people living in Duckett Township peaked in 1920. The household size declined from 5.0 in 1910 to around 4.2 to 4.4 people per household for the censuses of 1920, 1930, and 1940, as seen in Figure 26. Until about 1920, there was still a reasonable amount of federal land available, which may explain the stop in growth. Often, people didn't go far. With the trains and lumber mills, a family could combine wage labor with truck farming and subsistence farming. As a result, they no

---

<sup>305</sup> Lyrics excerpted from Samuel F. Smith, "Can I Leave You?," in *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Revision* (n.p., Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 385.

longer needed to spend as much time farming, or to have as many family members farming to make a living. The birth rate slowed. However, the thinner population meant that their opportunities to build families and get enough schooling were limited. Families began to scatter.

Between the 1910 census and the 1920 census, the people living in Duckett Township had the opportunity to leave or change their occupations, and a few did. Thirty-nine of the fifty-two heads of 1910 households or their surviving spouses were still farming. Thirty-eight (73%) lived in or near Duckett Township in 1920. These thirty-eight included: twenty-three who still lived in Duckett Township, seven who lived very nearby: two in Sulphur Spring Township (Howard County) and five in Ozark Township, Polk County (just west of Duckett Township, including Wickes), and eight who lived in McCurtain County, Oklahoma (the next county west of Polk County). One lived in Sevier County. Two were dead and two were missing. Two of the people living in Ozark Township took advantage of the town of Wickes to not farm. One was a bank cashier and the other, a salesman. The other eight were scattered. Four were still farming, while four were doing wage labor: Pope County, Arkansas; Bauxite, Arkansas (mining); Grant County, Arkansas (teamster); Colorado; Enid, Oklahoma; Pittsburg County, Oklahoma; Paris, Texas (factory); Indiana (iron worker); and Georgia. The one in Georgia had returned to his former home, apparently finding Duckett not to his liking.<sup>306</sup>

---

<sup>306</sup> Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules.



Figure 26. The distribution of household sizes in Duckett Township. The 1910 household sizes were a narrower range, with most (73%) being from two to five people. The 1920 household sizes show a wider distribution, and about two-thirds (66%) were in the range of two to five. In 1930, as the household number shrank, the distribution remained wide, with 61% in the household size of 2 to 5. In 1940, the household size distribution remained similar (62%).

Between 1920 and 1930, some people living in Duckett Township left, while some stayed put. More household heads (both as a percentage and in numbers) moved in this decade than in any other, and they moved to a lot of places. Of the sixty-six heads of household in 1920, I found fifty-six heads or their surviving spouses in 1930. Three had died, leaving no surviving spouse, six were missing in 1930, and one had died (Luvena Stewart's husband), but Luvena remarried another 1920 household head so I chose not to double-count her. Fifteen of the fifty-six (27%) stayed in Duckett Township. Nine (16%) moved elsewhere in Howard County and fifteen (27%) moved to nearby Polk County (ten or 18%) or McCurtain County, Oklahoma (five or 9%). The remaining twenty-eight (52%) moved elsewhere in the state (eight: two to Pike County, one to Pope, three to Sevier, and two to Union County) or across the country (twenty: nine to different counties in Texas, one to Kansas, three to Louisiana, and seven to Oklahoma counties other than McCurtain County). Although forty-three were still farming, these moves and changing times brought different jobs, too. Three household heads worked in oil production (two in Louisiana and two in Union County). Five more worked to make it easier to consume oil (two worked for railroads, one garage mechanic, one filling station proprietor, and one automobile factory worker in Hughes County, Oklahoma). Three worked in making wood usable (sawmill, planing mill, and lumber mill). One moved to Kansas and worked at a brick plant. There was a grocery store proprietor and a schoolteacher, and a couple of retired folks. Firefighter Rowe and his wife moved back to Illinois briefly, and then to De Queen, and, after she died in 1925, he moved to Alabama. Arthur Stewart (Luvena's brother) moved from Duckett to Tarrant County, Texas, where he and four of his brothers ran a dairy near Fort Worth. Since Arthur's mother was born near Dallas, Texas, they probably had friends or relatives in the area.<sup>307</sup>

---

<sup>307</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Dora M. Rowe, De Queen,

In the late 1920s, many of the Gammons moved across the state line to north McCurtain County, Oklahoma. As Orval Childs recalled, “There was a community about a mile east of Duckett School that was populated by the Gammons clan. They were good, law abiding people. Their land was unusually rough. These people grew their sheep – sheared the wool, spun it, and knitted their socks and sweaters. ... These people, nearly as a unit, sold out and moved to Oklahoma. Dierks Lumber Company bought most of the land, and Weyerhaeuser Company now owns most of Duckett Township as well as most of Howard County.” They maintained connections with Arkansas. When Oscar Gammon married for the third time in 1949, he came to Sevier County for the marriage license. When he died in 1960, he was buried in Duckett Cemetery, where his first wife (who died in 1921) and two of their children are buried.<sup>308</sup>

In the decade spanning 1930 to 1940, people continued to move in and out of Duckett Township, but at a slower pace and, generally, not as far. Of the thirty-five household heads, I couldn't find traces of two in 1940 and another three died and were not survived by a spouse, leaving thirty. Eighteen (60%) stayed in Duckett. Seven more (23%) stayed in Howard County or in Ozark Township (Polk County). Five (17%) went elsewhere. One went to Scott County to continue farming. One ended up in the State Hospital for Nervous Diseases in Saline County. One moved to Columbia, Missouri where her son was a mathematics professor. John Marlow moved his family to Idaho, where some of his father's siblings had previously moved. Luvena (Stewart) Cooper moved her family to Tarrant County to join her brothers at the dairy farm.<sup>309</sup>

---

Sevier, Ark., Jun. 22, 1925 Death Cert. No. 2119; “Charles Rowe, Hero Fireman, Dies in South,” *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 1, 1931, p. 16.

<sup>308</sup> Orval A. Childs, “Remembrances,” *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated]; Manuscript census returns, Sulphur Township, McCurtain County, Okla., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Aug. 2, 1949 “Statistical Transcript of Marriage Certificate,” No. 46254 (both of McCurtain County); Oscar Lee Gammon (1882-1960) FindAGrave Mem. 53340355; Della (Atkinson) Gammon (1887-1921) FindAGrave Mem. 53340284; Henry Gammon (1919-1936) FindAGrave Mem. 53340417; Willie W. Gammon (1904-1906) FindAGrave Mem. 53340241.

<sup>309</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules.

You see a different picture when you look at the children of these 1930 household heads. Rather than staying put, the children went somewhere else. In Table 10 below, I looked at just the oldest of each of the twenty-five households with children. Although some moved with their parents, the children were more likely to leave Duckett, and more likely to go farther away. Donald Duckett had enlisted in the army and was stationed in Bexar County, Texas. Ralph Baker was in the CCC camp at Waldron. What the table doesn't show is that the children often moved somewhere else with their spouse. Oza (Childs) Bonds was in Little Rock where her husband had a government job in the railway mail, and they both had some college under the belt. Elsa Hobson had married her step-brother Olnie Childs, and they were living in Wickes where he worked in a store. And, two of the six adult children living in Duckett (Mable Kirton and Mary Cook) were women who had married, but were now single, repeating the pattern of previous generations of coming home. (The records are unclear whether they were divorced, widowed, or grass widows.) Duckett continued to be a good place to live if you needed security, but not a place to do something other than farm.<sup>310</sup>

Table 11. Location of 1930 Duckett Residents in 1940

<i>Location in 1940</i>	<i>Household heads (n=30)</i>	<i>Oldest child (n=24)</i>	<i>Approx. Miles</i>
Duckett, Howard County	18	6	0
Ozark Township, Polk County or Howard County	7	11	9
Scott County	1	1	67
McCurtain County, OK	-	1	37
Tarrant County, TX	1	1	264
Saline County	1	-	108
Colombia, Missouri	1	-	481
Idaho	1		1,612
CCC Camp (Waldron)	-	1	67
Bexar County, TX	-	1	500
Dallas, TX	-	1	227
Little Rock, AR	-	1	132

<sup>310</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules.

As Luvena's son George remembered it, around 1935, not long after she married her third husband and her father had died, she and her entire family picked up their commodities from a government office in Gillham and walked to Fort Worth, Texas to join five of her brothers, who ran a dairy there. The family got a lift just a handful of times in more than three hundred miles. George was hatless and barefoot for that whole, long, hot walk. While George stayed in Texas, his mother moved back to Wickes by 1942. Not long after George Cooper's long, hot walk, his first cousin Olen Stewart (Ira Stewart's son) joined him for "the summer at Fort Worth, TX where all five of Grandpa Ira's brothers were engaged in the dairy business. They gave me work for the summer plowing, baling hay and helping with dairy chores. ... This summer was a very big help in educating a young man who had never been out of Polk and Howard Counties, Arkansas." Olen, too, eventually left Duckett for good.<sup>311</sup>

In the decade between 1940 and 1950, in contrast to earlier household heads, the twenty-nine household heads mostly stayed put or died. Eight died. Of these, four were survived by their wives and one by an ex-wife. I couldn't find what happened to another three. Of the twenty-three I have data for, sixteen stayed in Duckett and six in Polk County's Ozark Township (including four in Wickes). The only one who lived elsewhere was the ex-wife of Joseph E. Hornsby, but she never had lived in Duckett. Mellie (Duckett) Childs was not on the 1940 census, but she was still living there. Mellie stayed in the Duckett community until her home burned in the early 1940s, when she began staying with one or another of her children on rotation, until her son Leonard needed help

---

<sup>311</sup> "Albert T. Stewart," Fort Worth (Tex.) Star-Telegram, May 16, 1933, p. 13; Discussion with George Cooper, Sep. 2014; Doug Cooper, ed., *The Descendants of Cornelius Stewart, 1995 Prototype* (self published, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, July 1995) (copy in possession of S. Bart Childs); Olen A. Stewart, *Growing up in Cossatot Country with Ira and Laura Stewart*, self-published pamphlet (about 1985).

with Parkinson's disease. She and Leonard settled in Magnolia in a little green house Orval had moved onto his farm near Magnolia for them to live in.<sup>312</sup>

George Cooper and Olen Stewart were not the only people who grew up in Duckett and left in the 1930s and 1940s. Some started out by going away for high school. Olen Stewart himself boarded in Wickes with his second cousin Lois Duckett (Turner's granddaughter). She was keeping house in Wickes for her two brothers Keith and Doyle, who were also going to high school there since Duckett's school ended at eighth grade. Olen recalled that a compromise was reached, allowing Duckett students to attend the Wickes high school even before consolidation, so he took the Wickes bus to the county line as a high school junior and senior. Mellie (Duckett) Childs's son Orval went to Magnolia for high school and two years college at the nearest agricultural school, Magnolia A&M (now Southern Arkansas University). He started high school in 1930 (when he was twenty). The school in Magnolia had only just had two years of college added in 1925. When it opened in 1911, there were rumblings about the decision to have all four agricultural schools located in "the lowlands among the negroes and mosquitoes," which meant that students from "their high, healthy mountain homes" would have to go elsewhere to learn how to farm, not "in their own kind of soil and climate." He then went on to Stillwater, Oklahoma, to go to college at Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University). He left Duckett for good by 1932, when he and Floy Turrentine married in Stillwater, Oklahoma. (Although Floy was born in Sevier County and grew up in northern McCurtain County, Oklahoma, she had family connections in Duckett. Her aunt Sarah (Brock) Duckett was Turner Duckett's second wife, and Floy's grandfather John Henry Brock was Turner Duckett's maternal uncle.) Floy stayed at Duckett in summer 1934, when Orval's mother acted as midwife to their first child while Orval finished college at Oklahoma A&M. Others of Mellie's

---

<sup>312</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; discussion with S. Bart Childs and Elva (Stewart) Williams (Mena, Ark. 2013); V. L. Childs, Bart Childs, and Holly [Hartrick] Childs, "Mellie Mae Duckett," *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated].



children also left Duckett and then the area. Orval's brother Leonard did his degree at Oklahoma A&M in 1936 and taught agriculture, but never at Duckett. Their brother V.L. took the civil service exam and made a career at various Fish and Wildlife Refuges at the Department of the Interior, including ones in Louisiana and Tennessee. (Orval always claimed that V.L. passed the civil service exam thanks to the magazines the Hotovecs shared with them.) Their brother Olnie did not leave quite as fast, but he moved to Wickes and eventually to Texas. Olnie's widow and some of their children moved back to the area over time, although not to Duckett Township. Likewise, their sister Oza (Childs) Bonds taught school before she ever went to college, and eventually graduated from Arkansas State and moved to Texas. By 1992, Orval Childs was noticing, "Did you ever stop to think that we don't have any living relatives in Duckett Township." All of Mellie's children except Oza are buried at Duckett Cemetery.<sup>313</sup>

The final decision about where you live has to do with where your remains are buried. Figure 27 illustrates that many Duckett residents chose to await eternity near home. Of the 52 household heads in 1910, I found 47 gravesites. Twenty-two (47%) were buried nearby at Duckett (6), Baker (5), Crystal Hill (5), Overturf (4), and Daniel (2). Five others were buried a little further off, one each at Galena (across the Cossatot River in Howard County), Gillham (Sevier County), IOOF (Mena), Pleasant Grove (Wickes), and Witherspoon (Polk). (Some locations are shown in Figure 28.) Nine were buried in cemeteries in McCurtain County, Oklahoma. The other eleven were scattered in Arkansas' counties of Pope (1) and Saline (2), Louisiana's parishes of Grant (1) and Rapides (1), Oklahoma's counties of Kingfisher (1), McAlester (1), and McClain (1), and the states of Georgia

---

<sup>313</sup> Olen A. Stewart, *Growing up in Cossatot Country with Ira and Laura Stewart*, self-published pamphlet (about 1985), p. 12; "With Four Agricultural Schools Located," *Mena Weekly Star*, Apr. 14, 1910, p. 4; Orval A. Childs, "Malvin Duckett," in *Pioneers of the Duckett Community, Limited Edition* (n.p., June 1992) [unpaginated].

(1), Kansas (1), and Texas (1). Another indicator of community ties is that ninety-two percent of the 1910 household heads were related to Turner Duckett (as shown in Figure 29).<sup>314</sup>

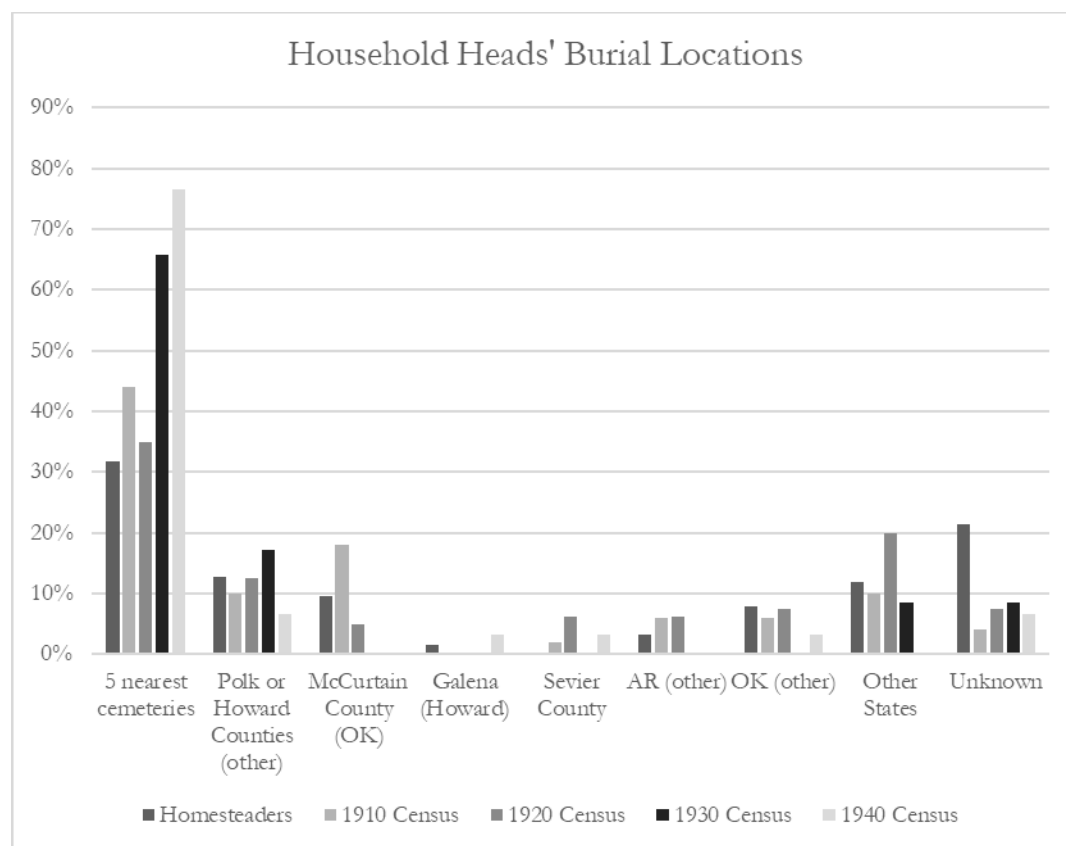


Figure 27. Burial location for Duckett heads of household. Whether you look at homesteaders as a class, or heads of household by census, most are buried fairly near Duckett Township. Overall, the number buried nearby increases for heads in the later censuses. Homesteaders were least likely to be buried nearby. Very few were buried east of Duckett, probably because the river acted as a barrier. (One didn't want to risk tipping the casket into the Cossatot.)

<sup>314</sup> John T. Atkison has no stone at Duckett Cemetery, but he died by suicide in Duckett Township soon after the 1910 census so I counted him at Duckett. "J. T. Atkison Committed Suicide," *Nashville News*, Aug. 27, 1910, p. 1; Manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules. Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

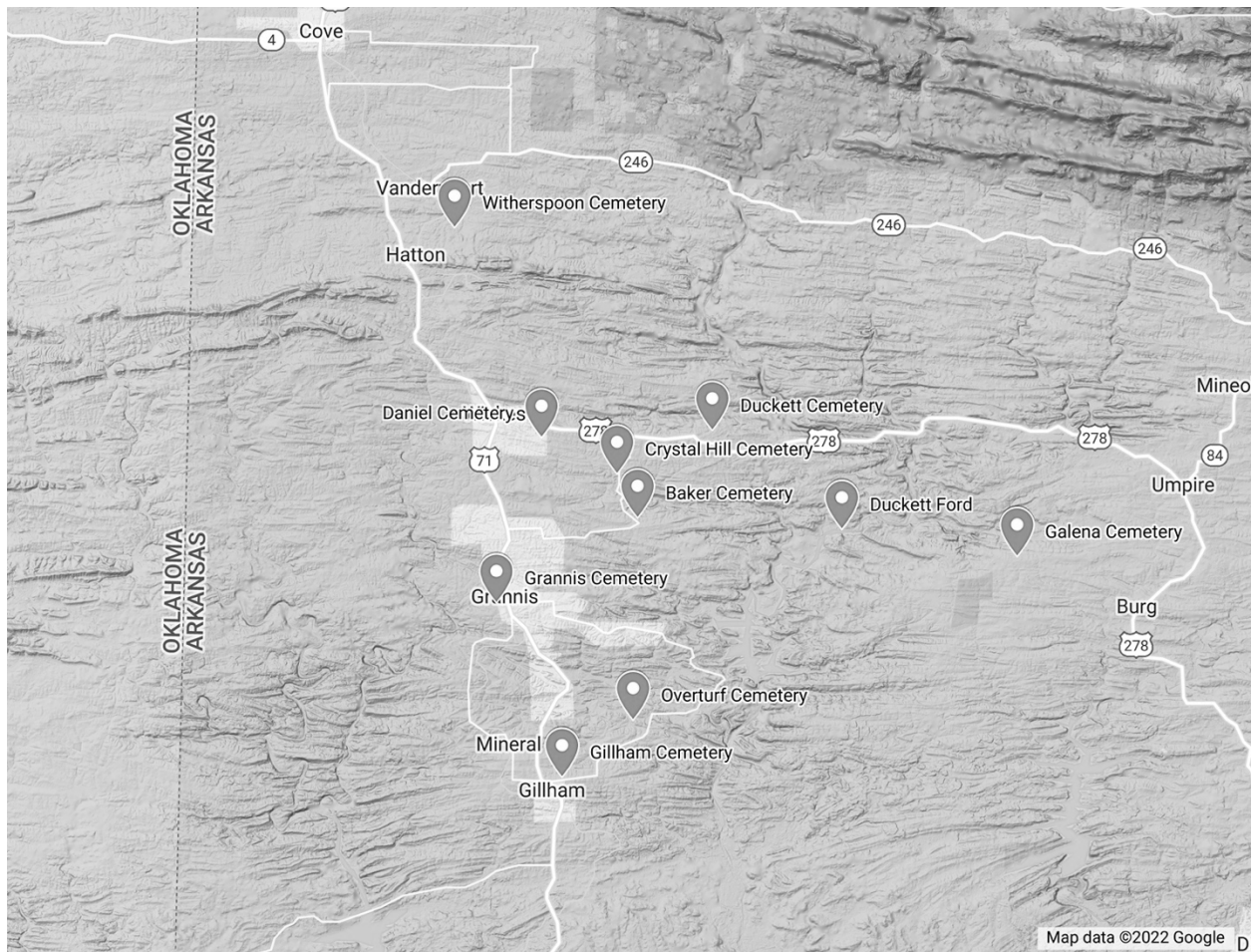


Figure 28. Locations of some cemeteries near Duckett. From top to bottom, Witherspoon (in Vandervoort), Daniel (in Wickes), Crystal Hill, Duckett, Baker, Galena, Grannis, Overturf, and Gillham. Duckett Ford on the Cossatot River is shown between Baker Cemetery and Galena Cemetery.

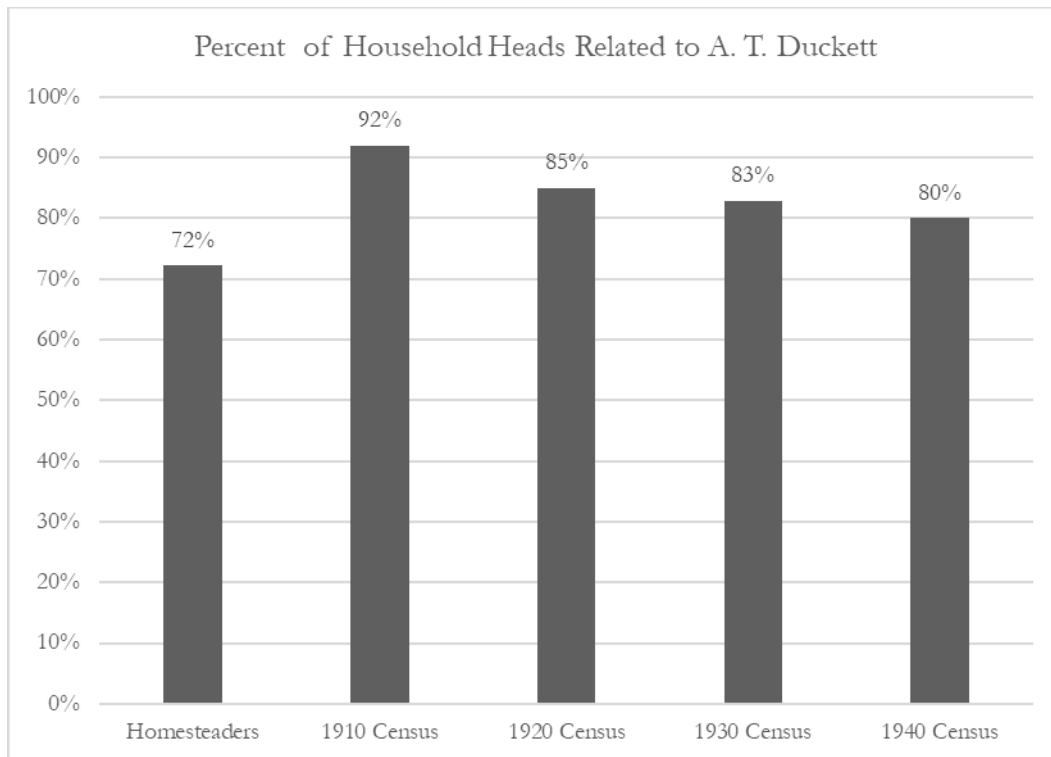


Figure 29. Percent of household heads related to Turner Duckett. Another indicium of community is whether inter-marriage occurs (whether before or after living in the community). Most people who lived in Duckett were related to each other, but we see fewer related homesteaders than any other group, and the largest number in 1910.

For the eighty-one household heads in the 1920 census, as you might expect, given the degree of scattering when living, nearly half (37) of their bodies were somewhere else. Five were buried elsewhere in Arkansas, including two at the Benton State Hospital and one each in Columbia, Craig, Montgomery, and Saline Counties. Six were buried in six Oklahoma counties other than McCurtain County; nine in nine Texas counties, two in California, two in Missouri, two in Louisiana, and one in Kansas. Six (including one of the unrelated heads) have not had a gravesite identified. Just over half of the remaining 75 (38) were buried in Howard County or other counties adjacent to Howard County. More than a third of the 81 household heads (28) were buried in five nearby cemeteries, namely, Duckett (eight), Baker (seven), Overturf (six), Crystal Hill (five), and Daniel (two). Another 19 were buried elsewhere in Howard County or adjacent counties in Arkansas or Oklahoma: six were buried in five other Howard County cemeteries (Old Union (Athens), Bluff

Springs, Cedar Hill, Galena (two), and Mineola); four in three other Polk County cemeteries (Grannis (two), IOOF (Mena), and Witherspoon (Vandervoort)); five in Sevier County cemeteries (Cossatot, Gillham, New Hope, and Redmen (two)); and four in McCurtain County, Oklahoma. Sixty-eight (85%) were related to Turner Duckett.<sup>315</sup>

Most heads of household living in Duckett in 1930 were buried nearby and were related to others in the community. I located burial sites for 33 of the 36 heads of household. Thirteen were buried at Duckett Cemetery, six at Crystal Hill, four at Baker Cemetery, and one each at Burg, Galena, Gillham, Little River, Old Union, and Overturf (all in Polk or Howard Counties). One each was buried in California, Texas, and Missouri. (Of the three unknown burials, one, Henry Chamber, buried his wife at Daniel Cemetery in 1932 before he disappeared from the historical record.) Twenty-nine of the thirty-six (83%) were related to Turner Duckett.<sup>316</sup>

Likewise, most 1940 household heads were buried in Duckett Cemetery or nearby. And most of the heads of household were related to Turner Duckett. In the 1940 census, just five of the 29 heads of household were not related to Allen Turner Duckett. Two of these people (James A. Hotovec and Elvin J. Strickland) are buried in Duckett Cemetery and were definitely part of the Duckett community. Three others (Maudie Bruce, A. V. Hutchens, and J. E. Hornsby) are not. These latter three either disappeared from the record (Maudie Bruce) or moved away. Hutchens is buried in Le Flore County, Oklahoma. Hornsby is probably buried at the State Hospital in Saline

---

<sup>315</sup> Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; FindAGrave.com.

<sup>316</sup> Manuscript census returns, Duckett Township, Howard County, Ark., Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules. Additional information was found in FindAGrave.com, ancestry.com, and fold3.com.

County. Of the other 24, all but one are buried nearby and on the west side of the Cossatot River. Two are buried at Baker Cemetery, in nearby Baker Township. Six are buried at Crystal Hill Cemetery (Wickes, Polk County). Thirteen are buried at Duckett. One each are in Gillham (Sevier County), Oak Grove (Wickes), and Pleasant Grove (Cove, Polk County). The outlier is buried at Galena (Howard County), the other side of the Cossatot. Household heads still in Duckett in 1940 by and large had already lived there a long time and had ties to their community. They had buried their friends and family in nearby cemeteries, and it made sense to be buried nearby.<sup>317</sup>

Throughout the early twentieth century, the community of Duckett was a subsistence farming community, with school and church, midwives and casket makers, millers and distillers. They were not isolated so much as hard to get to. Even their burial choices show a network of relationships extending throughout the region, although generally west of the Cossatot River.

## II. Staying Connected

*Richest, brightest, sweetest treasure,  
Can I say a last farewell?*<sup>318</sup>

Many people who left Duckett community remained connected to Duckett. (Some disappeared.) Their families were still at home or in the cemetery. Some families cycled in and out of Duckett. After a life-changing event like losing a spouse, some chose to come back to home, where they didn't have to re-create a support network. Others came home to visit. Orval Childs' wife Floy came to Duckett to give birth. Orval Childs came home to encourage others to go to college. Others came home when it was time for burying. Some came as heritage tourists, interested in finding out more about where their people came from or finding people who remembered their folks or tending

---

<sup>317</sup> Manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules; FindAGrave.com.

<sup>318</sup> Lyrics excerpted from Samuel F. Smith, "Can I Leave You?" in *The Sacred Harp, 1991 Revision* (n.p., Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 385.

their family's graves. In the 21st century, Mellie Childs' great-granddaughter came (and left) to try organic farming. There were letters, telephone calls, and visiting.

People who lived in Duckett maintained their ties with others who lived elsewhere. For instance, in 1959, Mellie Childs's grandson Ves Childs started graduate school at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Mellie wrote to Ves's mother to have her tell Ves to look up her first cousin Ila (Ford) Wolf, who lived on Maple Street in Fayetteville. Mellie was 77 and Ila was 81. They had both been widowed young and never remarried. They had never lived in the same community, although Ila did grow up in Washburn, where their mutual grandparents Bell lived and where Turner and Sarah Duckett lived until their abrupt departure in 1876. Their mothers were born just two years apart. (Their mutual grandparents, including a step-grandmother, had all died by 1906.) Nonetheless, they knew each other well enough to expect a grandson to make connections in 1959. Similarly, in 1983, I moved to Houston to go to Rice University. My grandfather Orval expected me to look up Mollie (Wilkerson) Stephens, who had left Duckett prior to 1940. So, I did. Her daughter drove up from Pasadena to have me spend a weekend with them – people I had never met and who had not spent much time with Orval in fifty years.

Homesteaders, as a class, were less connected to Duckett than those who were heads of household in any census. I compared the homesteaders to the census heads in burial locations and relatedness. I was surprised to learn that, as a class, a smaller percentage of homesteaders were buried in Howard and Polk Counties than otherwise, and that fewer were related to others in the community, as seen in Figures 27 and 29. Having gone to the trouble to settle and cultivate as the law required, one might think they would want to stick around in the community. Instead, though, it seems some of them had become accustomed, even addicted, to migration. Of the 128 people who acquired Duckett Township land from the federal government after the Civil War, nearly 30% were not related to Turner Duckett (a proxy for being related to the community). Twenty-seven

homesteaders for whom I could find some clues of origin were not related, while ten were so transient that they left only the trace of the homestead grant, leaving 91, or about 72%, related to Turner Duckett — a smaller percentage than any of the groups of heads of households found in the decennial censuses.<sup>319</sup> Those who came, conquered the homestead challenges, and left, were not connected to the Duckett community.

Of the 101 homesteaders whose burial sites have been identified, 72 were buried relatively near Duckett Township. Fifty were buried within perhaps ten miles (as the crow flies) of Duckett Cemetery (Baker Cemetery (10), Daniel Cemetery (10), Duckett (9), Crystal Hill (6), Overturf (5), Gillham (3), Witherspoon (3), Grannis (2), and Galena (2)) as seen in Figure 27. Of these, just Galena Cemetery required fording the Cossatot River, most likely at Duckett Ford. Twenty-two homesteaders were buried further away, but still within counties adjacent to Duckett Township. Four of these were buried elsewhere in Howard County (Fellowship and Bluff Springs in Nashville, Shiloh in Umpire, and Athens) and four elsewhere in Polk County (Center, Pleasant Grove [Cove], and two in the IOOF Cemetery [Mena]). Twelve were buried across the Oklahoma state line in McCurtain County (5 in Battiest, 1 in Bethel, 4 in Broken Bow, 1 in Hochatown, and 1 in Watson). Just one was buried in Sevier County. Twenty-nine homesteaders were buried further away, including four elsewhere in Arkansas (Crawford, Garland, and Saline (2) counties), ten elsewhere in Oklahoma, six in Texas, and nine in other states (California (2), Florida (1), Georgia (1), Kansas (1), Louisiana (3), and Missouri (1)). However, like the rest of the Ouachita foothills homesteaders in the region, most Duckett township homesteaders came from families who had been in the area for a long time before they filed their claims.<sup>320</sup>

---

<sup>319</sup> GLO Records; FindAGrave.com.

<sup>320</sup> GLO Records; FindAGrave.com.



As seen in Figure 27, the trends are largely similar for burial locations over time. The largest number of heads of household (whether homesteaders or any of the decennial censuses) are buried in one of the five cemeteries located near Duckett and west of the Cossatot River (Duckett Cemetery, Baker Cemetery, Crystal Hill Cemetery, Daniel Cemetery and Overturf Cemetery). Although Galena Cemetery, as the crow flies, is not much further from Duckett than the Overturf Cemetery, the Cossatot River lies between Galena and Duckett. Just two heads of household are known to be buried at Galena. The Cossatot River remained a psychological barrier, if less of a physical barrier, between Duckett and the rest of Howard County. Now that the river cannot be forded, it's a ninety minute drive (nineteen miles) from the east side of Duckett Ford to Duckett Cemetery when it used to be an easy walk, and just another four miles to Galena Cemetery. As seen in Figure 29, at least 80% of the heads of household found in Duckett Township during each decennial census and nearly three-quarters of homesteaders are related to Turner Duckett. Despite this, most heads of household were not buried in Duckett Cemetery, but instead are buried nearby in larger cemeteries.

Duckett Cemetery remains an active cemetery, with 188 known burials, as compared to the 104 people living in Duckett Township in 2020. Four of Mellie and Buster's five children (except for their daughter Oza Bonds) are buried in Duckett Cemetery, near their parents and grandparents even though they had moved out of Duckett Township by 1930. Their descendants, even Oza Bonds' daughter-in-law, come when they can to Duckett Decoration and the family reunion the preceding Saturday. (Turner Duckett's second wife is not buried there. She is buried on Brock Row in Witherspoon Cemetery at Vandervoort.) And it carries on to the next generation and beyond. My father and uncle and my first cousin Adrienne (Childs) Young are buried at Duckett. Olnie's sons O.L. and J.C. and his son-in-law are buried there. The remains of V.L.'s son Buster who died in Vietnam were moved from Paris, Tennessee decades after his death and placed near the plots his

parents had chosen for themselves.<sup>321</sup> Weyerhaeuser owns most of the land around the cemetery, but it transferred some land to the cemetery so that it can continue to grow.

Duckett community, like so many rural communities in Arkansas, was important to people who grew up there. The memories of Orval Childs, Irvin Hedge, Elva (Stewart) Williams, Olen Stewart, and George Cooper all identified the importance of their extended community. The people who lived in the Ouachitas, or even just in Duckett Township, were complicated. It was not a static backwater. When the school consolidated with Wickes, it accelerated the end of the community. While knowing where people came from and where they went can give us clues about how and why they made those choices, those choices are also driven by other factors — whether your mother could manage to get out of bed in the morning or she was a good farm manager could mean the difference between walking to Fort Worth to work at a dairy versus taking the train to Magnolia for high school and what turned into a career as an agriculture professor at Southern Arkansas University.

---

<sup>321</sup> “Duckett Cemetery, Duckett, Howard County, Arkansas, USA,” FindAGrave.com (Cemetery 53726) <https://www.FindAGrave.com/cemetery/53726/duckett-cemetery> (accessed Oct. 25, 2022).

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The 21<sup>st</sup> century versions of the Duckett community are different from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century version. Folks who now live around Duckett still have to decide whether the region provides what they need. Duckett Township has just forty households now, with 104 people in them. The people who live in Duckett Township are white and native-born, and mostly living in households headed by married couples. Schools have continued to consolidate. Wickes High School closed in 2011, and the district merged with the VanCove district (itself a merger of Vandervoort and Cove schools) to form the Cossatot River School District. The new school district covers 475 square miles across Polk, Sevier, and Howard Counties – a far cry from the 20 square miles or so that Duckett School served. The student-teacher ratio is better. Nobody expects one teacher to teach sixty students through the eighth grade anymore. But, parents still struggle with whether this is the right place to raise their children. Some send them to the Arkansas School for Math, Sciences, and the Arts in Hot Springs. Some move away. Parents worry about the distances kids drive to hang out with their friends. And single people struggle with whether there are acceptable mates. Medical care is hard to manage. If you need rehab, you may have to move to Fort Smith or Texarkana to get the help you need. Living in a place where you know most of the people means that you have to give up something else.

Another version of community is seen on the first Sunday in June, when people return to Duckett Cemetery. There's dinner on the grounds and preaching by a local preacher and singing. But, the pole shed has folding metal chairs, electricity, and ceiling fans, and the outhouse is now a Port-A-Potty. You can get cell phone reception if you stand in the right place. Some of us don't listen to the preaching, but instead we set up our stadium chairs in the shade of the oak tree the other side of the long tables, which are plywood rather than rough sawn boards on sawhorses and covered with plastic tablecloths rather than cotton, But they still hold all sorts of food. The flowers

are plastic, and those of us who have come in from somewhere else (and are perhaps less organized) stopped at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Mena on Saturday night to get whatever flowers are left after Memorial Day and maybe a big box of chocolate chip cookies to put on the long tables. We may run into cousins at the Supercenter, doing the same last-minute shopping. Some of our cousins and folks who still live in the area work at cleaning up the cemetery and getting their own decorations out ahead of time. I suspect they're glad that Orval Childs encouraged cutting down a couple of the spreading oaks back in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as it makes maintenance a bit easier. But some traces of the past persist. When we buried my father in 2009, my mother and I met with a member of the cemetery committee who dowsed the plot we had in mind to be at ease that the plot had not previously been used. The community at the cemetery changes over time, as marriages and divorces, births and deaths, change who comes.

Another version of community is virtual although it's not that different from letter writing and the telephone. Our family reunion is now hybrid, with visiting via Zoom and in person. After my uncle died of complications from spinocerebellar ataxia (an autosomal dominant genetic disorder), Milly (Cotten) Temple, a granddaughter of Hugh and Asenath Ross, sent a condolence note via the funeral home website. She had seen the obituary in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, and she knew the Childses from growing up in the Wickes area. Although she lives in the Little Rock area, she still owns her family's house on old Highway 4 (US Highway 278) between Wickes and Duckett. And, she also has spinocerebellar ataxia. Through community connections, she and my family are participating in studies to see if the cause of this ataxia can be found. These are very 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches to sharing labor and building community.

The rural Ouachitas remain a place people connect, where people know your name and try to figure out how you're related. These connections are rooted in the past. But it is not, and never has been, a place stuck in the past.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Newspapers

*Arkadelphia Southern Standard*  
*Arkansas Democrat*  
*Arkansas Gazette*  
*Brooklyn (N.Y.) Citizen*  
*Brooklyn (N.Y.) Daily Eagle*  
*Brooklyn (N.Y.) Standard Union*  
*Buffalo (N.Y.) Morning Express*  
*Cincinnati Enquirer*  
*Cullman (Ala.) Tribune*  
*Emporia (KS) Daily Republican*  
*Forrest City Times*  
*Fort Smith Elevator*  
*Green Forest Tribune*  
*Hot Springs New Era*  
*Kansas City Star*  
*Kentucky Advocate*  
*McCurtain (OK) Gazette*  
*Memphis Commercial Appeal*  
*Mena Weekly Star*  
*Muskogee (OK) Phoenix*  
*Nashville (Ark.) News*  
*National Tribune*

*Nebraska State Journal*

*New Orleans Times-Picayune*

*New York Sun*

*New York Times*

*New York World*

*Osceola (Ark.) Times*

*Philadelphia Times*

*Pine Bluff (Ark.) Daily Graphic*

*South Bend Tribune*

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

*The Looking Glass: Reflecting Life in the Ouachitas* (Murfreesboro, AR: Looking Glass Graphics) (n.b., limited to 1975 and 1976.)

*The Outlook*

*Tucson Citizen*

*Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*

*Wilkes-Barre (Pa.) News*

#### Censuses and Related Materials

Manuscript census returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, slave schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, slave schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules.

Manuscript census returns, Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, population schedules.

*Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium* Arkansas (Washington, D.C.: 1924).

“Arkansas Minor Civil Divisions – Townships,” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961) Title No. 168490 (digitized by familysearch.org).

*Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Abstract of the Census, “Supplement for Arkansas: Population, Agriculture, Manufactures, Mines and Quarries,”* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913).

“Agriculture: Arkansas, Statistics for the State and its Counties,” *Nineteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Bulletin* (Bureau of the Census, 1922).

*Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Manufacturing Schedule* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894).

Garber, John H., “Alcoholic Liquors,” in *Census Reports: Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Manufactures, Part III, Special Reports on Selected Industries* (Washington, D. C. 1902): 597-636.

#### Statutes and Cases

“An Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain” (May 22, 1862), <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/37th-congress/session-2/c37s2ch75.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2019).

*Annual Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office for 1877*, 100-101 (Rule 24), 10 Land Decision 502-503 (1890) (Rule 33) (published in *Decisions of the Department of the Interior and General Land Office in Cases Relating to the Public Lands* (Washington D.C.)), <https://www.doi.gov/solicitor/decisions> (accessed November 15, 2019).

*Arnold v. Cooley*, 10 LD 551 (1890).

*Digest of the Statutes of Arkansas* (1894), “Dower,” Chapter 55, Section 2520.

Green v. Berdan, 10 LD 294 (1890).

Kempson v. Goss, 69 Ark. S. Ct. 451 (1901).

Maria Good, 5 LD 17 (1886).

Taurer v. Heirs of Walter A. Mann, 4 LD 435 (1886).

Wilber v. Goode, 10 LD 527 (1890).

#### Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, “General Land Office Records,” <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed Oct. 22, 2022).

“The Official Federal Land Records Site, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx> (accessed November 13, 2019).

Land Entry Case Files, Bureau of Land Management Records, Record Group 49, NARA.

“Compared Copy of Original Field Notes of East and South Boundary Lines, Book 678A, Bunder 137 of the Following Ranges and Townships...,” Typed transcript, Township 5S Range 30W. [https://geostor-glo.s3.amazonaws.com/Township\\_05\\_South/T05S\\_R30W-ORIG\\_BDRY.pdf](https://geostor-glo.s3.amazonaws.com/Township_05_South/T05S_R30W-ORIG_BDRY.pdf).

Local Tract Books for Arkansas, 1837?-1946?, vols. 50-53, Bureau of Land Management Records, Record Group 49, NARA, 53:36 (T5S R32W), 52:105 (T5S R31W), 51:178 (T5S R30W), 51:61 (T5S R29W), 50:134 (T5S R28W), 53:54 (T6S R33W), 53:45 (T6S R32W), 52:114 (T6S R31W), 51:187 (T6S T30W), 51:70 (T6S R29W), 50:143 (T6S R28W), [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org).

#### Western District of Arkansas (USA) Related Materials

“In re Application for Executive Clemency of Andy Bowen, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 108, Year 1895,” Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD.

“In re Application for Executive Clemency of Penny Frazier, W. Dist. Ark. Record P, Page 110, Year 1895,” Pardon Case Files, 1853-1946, Record Group 204, NARA, College Park, MD

“Oaths of Deputy Marshals, 1865-1971,” U.S. District Court for the Fort Smith Division of the Western District of Arkansas, RG 21, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/3020892>

Defendant Jackets (digitized on [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com))



Finding aid, sentencing books, Fort Smith criminal file,  
<https://www.archives.gov/files/fort-worth/finding-aids/fort-smith-case-files/sentence-books.pdf> (accessed Sep. 22, 2022).

#### Other Government Records

Arkansas Birth Certificates.

Arkansas Death Certificates.

Arkansas Marriage Licenses.

Federal Bureau of Investigation file for Otsune Hotovec (in author's possession).

Pension Files (Civil War, Federal and Confederate, and Mexican War).

Southern Claims Commission, Disallowed and Barred Claims, 1871-1880, National Archives and Records Administration.

U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918 (ancestry.com), from United States, Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

#### Memoirs

Barnett, Ola Parham, "Dear Editor," *Looking Glass*, Dec. 18, 1975, p. 2.

Childs, Floy Turrentine, "Memoirs" (1976) (handwritten ms., original in possession of S. Bart Childs, typed copy in possession of author).

Frachiseur, Rena Reid, "The Frachiseurs of Grannis," posted by David Frachiseur on ancestry.com, July 7, 2010.

Gardner, Blanche Turrentine, "Reminiscences – Brocks & Towrys," manuscript, April 15, 1976, rewritten June 12, 1979 (in possession of the author).

Hogue, Charles W., *Back Yonder: An Ozark Chronicle* (University of Arkansas Press, 2016) (originally published 1932).

Jones, Inez Thomas, "Double 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration, 1933-1983," *Rural Arkansas* (Sep. 1983), p. 12-15.

*Pioneers of the Duckett Community*, Limited Edition (n.p., Jun. 1992) [unpaginated].

Propps, J. J., "My Childhood and Youth in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26(4) (1967): 310-352.

Sanders, Lee and Nola Green, *Sarah Jane: Reminiscences of a Family and a Community* (n.p. 1961).

Stapleton, Isaac, *Moonshiners in Arkansas* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1948).

Wakeley, Maudine, *Aunt Marg, Little Mother of the Hills* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1954).

## Other

"The Ozark Mountain Region of Missouri and Arkansas," *Port Arthur Route Agricultural and Industrial Bulletin*, vol. 5(7) (Kansas City, Mo. June 1924): 1-3.

"Vegetable Gardening," Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 44 (Fayetteville, Ark.), Jan. 1897.

*Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishers, 1890).

*Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Western Arkansas* (Chicago: Southern Publishing Co., 1891).

Dickey, J. A., "Three-Year Study of Farm Management and Incomes in a Typical Upland Section of Arkansas," Bulletin 262 (Fayetteville, Ark., 1931).

Farm data from <https://www.socialexplorer.com/explore-maps> (accessed November 21, 2019).

## FindAGrave Memorials

Forstall, Richard L, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790-1990* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1996).

Hempstead, Fay, "James F. Read" in *Historical Review of Arkansas: Its Commerce, Industry and Modern Affairs* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), 917-918.

Josephine B. Crump papers: papers and journal, 1894-1920, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville finding aid.

Lassetter, W. C., "The Home Vegetable Garden in Arkansas," Circular No. 89 (Fayetteville, Ark., 1920).

*Pictorial Family Bible* (Philadelphia: A. J. Homan & Co.) (originally belonging to Sarah (Baldwin) Thomas, in possession of the author).

Wikipedia contributors, "1892 United States presidential election in Arkansas," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1892\\_United\\_States\\_presidential\\_election\\_in\\_Arkansas&oldid=1065868182](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1892_United_States_presidential_election_in_Arkansas&oldid=1065868182) (accessed Sep. 20, 2022).

Wilson, Ellwod, "The Morals of the Whiskey-Tax," *The Sewanee Review* 2(1) (1893): 115–28.

Wootten, William E., *Extensive and Intensive Land Classification of the Arkansas National Forest*, 1917, Vol. 1 (Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 2005), 114-118.

## Secondary Sources:

“A First Christmas in Arkansas,” *Looking Glass*, Dec. 25, 1975, pp. 8-9.

“Jonquils Bloom, Some Still Remember,” *Looking Glass*, Dec. 4, 1975, pp. 6-7.

“Office of Attorney General,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Oct. 31, 2022).

Anderson, George L., “The Board of Equitable Adjudication, 1846-1930,” *Agricultural History* 29(2) (April 1955): 65-72.

Ayers, Edward L., *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction - 15th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Baker, Russell P., *Arkansas Township Atlas, 1819-1930: History of the Minor Civil Divisions in Each County* (rev. 2006).

Baker, Russell Pierce, *Arkansas Township Atlas: A History of the Minor Civil Divisions in Each Arkansas County* (n. p. 1984).

Balogh, George W., “James Henderson Berry (1841-1913),” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Sep. 19, 2022).

Barnes, Kenneth C., *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

Billingsley, Carolyn Earle, *Communities of Kinship: Antebellum Families and the Settlement of the Cotton Frontier* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2004).

Bledsoe, Andrew Scott, “The Homecircle: Kinship and Community in the Third Arkansas Infantry, Texas Brigade,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2012) 71(1), 22-43.

Blevins, Brooks, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and Their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Blevins, Brooks, *A History of the Ozarks: The Old Ozarks*, Vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

Blevins, Brooks, *A History of the Ozarks: The Conflicted Ozarks*, Vol. 2 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019).

Blevins, Brooks, *A History of the Ozarks: The Ozarkers*, Vol. 3 Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

Bolsterli, Margaret Jones, *Kaleidoscope: Redrawing an American Family Tree* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015).

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

Bowden, Bill, "Ouachita Mountains Lack Recognition of Ozarks," *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, Dec. 31, 2017, 1A and 8A.

Brennan, Mary Z., "Archaeology of Kinship at Treat, Arkansas: Intersections of Past Lives, Memory, and Identity on the Landscape," 23-43, in Carl G. Drexler, ed., *Historical Archaeology of Arkansas: A Hidden Diversity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016).

Brennan, Mary Z., "Reconstructing the Genealogical Landscape: Kinship and Settlement along Moccasin and Indian Creeks, Pope County," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (Winter 2008) 67: 386-397.

Brennan, Mary Z., "Sense of Place: Reconstructing Community through Archeology, Oral History, and GIS" (PhD Diss., University of Arkansas, 2009).

Canaday, Neil, Charles Reback, and Kristin Stowe, "Race and Local Knowledge: New Evidence from the Southern Homestead Act," *Review of Black Economy* 42(4) (2015): 399-413.

Cannon, Brian Q., "Homesteading Remembered: A Sesquicentennial Perspective," *Agricultural History* 87(1) (Winter 2013): 1-29.

Carpenter, Daniel P., *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Cherny, Robert, "A Longitudinal Study of Three Homesteader Families in Marshall County, Kansas," *Great Plains Quarterly* 38(4) (Fall 2018): 335-355.

Childs, Lisa C., "Reexamining the Origins of Arkansas's Republican Party," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2020) 79(4): 317-47.

Christ, Mark K., "Scout from Waldron to Baker's Springs," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 21, 2022).

Clay, Karen and Wener Troesken, "Strategic Behavior in Whiskey Distilling, 1887-1895," *Journal of Economic History*, 62(4) (Dec. 2002): 999-1023.

Coleman, Roger E., "Archeological Investigations at Boggs Homestead (3MN781), Oden Ranger District, Ouachita National Forest, Montgomery County, Arkansas," *Cultural Resources Report* 83, Ouachita National Forest, Hot Springs, Arkansas (1993).

Coleman, Roger, Paul S. Gardner, Jerry Hilliard, Michael A. Pfeiffer, and Jack Stewart (ed. Hester A. Davis), "Excavations in the Shady Lake Recreation Area and Vicinity, 1992-1993, Ouachita National Forest," *Arkansas Archeologist* 38 (1995, published in 1997): 1-54.

Coogan, Harold, "Robert Glenn Shaver (1831-1915)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed August 27, 2022).

Coogan, Harold, "The Lynching of 'Nigger Pete' T136," in Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), p. 78.

- Cresswell, Stephen, *Mormons and Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870-1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).
- Daniel, Pete, *Deep'n as It Come: The 1927 Mississippi River Flood* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996)
- Ditto, Susan, "Yeoman Farmers," *Mississippi Encyclopedia* (accessed Aug. 23, 2022).
- Dougan, Michael B., "The Arkansas Married Woman's Property Law," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 46 (Spring 1987): 3-26.
- Edwards, Richard, "Invited Essay: The New Learning about Homesteading," *Great Plains Quarterly* 38 (Winter 2018): 1-23.
- Edwards, Richard, "To Commute or Not Commute, The Homesteader's Dilemma," *Great Plains Quarterly* 38(2) (Spring 2018), 129-150.
- Edwards, Richard, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).
- Eller, Ronald D., *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1920* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).
- Elman, Cheryl, Barbara Wittman, Kathryn M. Feltey, Corey Stevens, and Molly Hartsough, "Women in Frontier Arkansas: Settlement in a Post-Reconstruction Racial State," *Du Bois Review* 16(2) (2019): 575-612.
- Etchieson, G. Meeks, Enid Erickson, Michael A. Pfeiffer, Roger E. Coleman, Larry D. Haikey, William F. Pell, Daniel J. Nolan, Jr., Chapter 1, "Archeological and Historical Background," 1-22, in *Ozark-Ouachita Highlands Assessment: Social and Economic Conditions*, United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station, General Technical Report SRS-34, Report 4 of 5 (1999).
- Evers, Medgar, "Why I Live in Mississippi," *Ebony*, Nov. 1958, pp. 65-70.
- Gates, Paul W., "Federal Land Policies in the Southern Public Land States," *Agricultural History* 53(1) (1979): 206-227.
- Gates, Paul Wallace, "The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935," 28-62, in Howard W. Ottoson, ed., *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).
- Gatewood, Willard B., "John Sebastian Little (1851-1916)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Aug. 23, 2022).
- Hager, Christopher, *Word by Word: Emancipation and the Act of Writing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

- Haksgaard, Hannah, "The Homesteading Rights of Deserted Wives: A History," *Nebraska Law Review* 99(2) (2020): 419-476.
- Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, James L. Leloudis, Robert R. Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
- Harper, Kimberly, *White Man's Heaven: The Lynching and Expulsion of Blacks in the Southern Ozarks, 1894-1909* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010).
- Higgins, Billy D., *A Stranger and a Sojourner: Peter Caulder, Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum Arkansas*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2004).
- Holling, Marc J., "School Consolidation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Oct. 24, 2022).
- Howe, E. Wade, "Federal-Land States," 101-177, in *Land & Property Research in the United States* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Inc., 1997).
- Hu, Tun Yuan, *The Liquor Tax in the United States 1791-1947: A History of the Internal Revenue Taxes Imposed on Distilled Spirits by the Federal Government* (New York: Columbia University, 1950).
- Joecks, Jasmin, Kerstin Pull, and Karin Vetter, "Gender Diversity in the Boardroom and Firm Performance: What Exactly Constitutes a 'Critical Mass?'" *Journal of Business Ethics* 118(1) (2013): 61-72.
- Johnson, Ben F., III, *John Barleycorn Must Die: The War Against Drink in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005).
- Jurgelski, William M., "Homesteads and Homesteaders in the Ouachita National Forest" (master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1996).
- Lancaster, Guy Lancaster, *Racial Cleansing in Arkansas, 1883-1924: Politics, Land, Labor, and Criminality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014) (accessed September 3, 2022).
- Lancaster, Guy, "'There Are Not Many Colored People Here': African Americans in Polk County, Arkansas, 1896-1937," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70 (Winter 2011): 429-449.
- Lancaster, Guy, "Nightriding and Racial Cleansing in the Arkansas River Valley," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 72 (Autumn 2013): 242-264.
- Lane, Inez, "Down Back Roads," *Looking Glass*, May 22, 1975, p. 14.
- Lane, Inez, "Down Back Roads: Christmas Shopping," *Looking Glass*, Dec. 11, 1975, p. 12.
- Lane, Inez, "Down Back Roads: Rich Mountain Community 50 Years Ago," *Looking Glass*, Oct. 23, 1975, p. 14.

- Lane, Inez, "Little Africa T128," in Troy Williams and Leon Toon (eds.), *History of Polk County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp. 1988), 72-73.
- Lanza, Michael L., *Agrarianism and Reconstruction Politics: The Southern Homestead Act* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).
- Lindgren, H. Elaine, *Land in Her Own Name: Women as Homesteaders in North Dakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).
- Loewen, James, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: New Press, 2005).
- Lovett, Bobby L., "African Americans, Civil War, and Aftermath in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 54 (Fall 1995): 304-58.
- Lysobey, Mary B., "Montgomery County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 21, 2022).
- Matkin-Rawn, Story, "'The Great Negro State of the Country': Arkansas's Reconstruction and the Other Great Migration," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2013) 72 (1): 1-41.
- Miller, Wilbur R., *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Laws in the Mountain South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).
- More of the Unfinished Story of North Howard County* (Umpire, Ark.: North Howard Historical Group, 1989).
- Muhn, James, "Women and the Homestead Act: Land Department Administration of a Legal Imbroglio, 1863-1934," *Western Legal History: The Journal of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society* 7(2): 283-308.
- O'Brien, Jean M., *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
- Patterson, Ruth Polk, *The Seed of Sally Good'n: A Black Family of Arkansas 1833-1893* (University Press of Kentucky, 1985).
- Perkins, J. Blake, "The Arkansas Tick Eradication Murder: Rethinking Yeoman Resistance in the 'Marginal' South," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70(4) (2011): 363-397.
- Perkins, J. Blake, *Hillbilly Hellraisers: Federal Power and Populist Defiance in the Ozarks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
- Renault, Marion, "These Birds Aren't Lost, Just Adapting," *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, July 11, 2022, p. 1D and 6D (from *New York Times*).
- Richter, Wendy, "Flavius Josephus (Flave) Carpenter (1851-1933)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed Oct. 13, 2022).



- Rocha, Hector, Martin Kunc, David B. Audretsch, "Clusters, Economic Performance, and Social Cohesion: A System Dynamics Approach," *Journal of Regional Studies* (2020) 54(8): 1098-1011.
- Rohrbaugh, Malcolm J., "Bureau of Land Management," in Donald R. Whitnah (ed.), *Government Agencies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).
- Rosén, Hannah, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
- Ruckman, P. S., Jr., "Federal Executive Clemency in United States, 1789-1995: A Preliminary Report,"  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20110326045557/http://ednet.rvc.cc.il.us/~PeterR/Papers/paper3.htm> (accessed Jan. 10, 2021).
- Schultz, Mark, *The Rural Face of White Supremacy: Beyond Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
- Schuyler, Lorraine Gates, "To Hold the Lady Votes: Southern Politics Ten Years after Suffrage" in *The Weight of Their Votes: Southern Women and Political Leverage in the 1920s* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 189-226.
- Smith, Kenneth L., *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1986).
- Stewart-Abernathy, Leslie C., *The Moser Farmstead, Independent but not Isolated: The Archeology of a Late Nineteenth Century Ozark Farmstead*, Research Series No. 26 (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1986).
- Stockley, Grif, "Elaine Massacre of 1919," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed August 27, 2022).
- Strom, Claire, "Texas Fever and the Dispossession of the Southern Yeoman Farmer," *Journal of Southern History* 66(1) (Feb. 2000): 49-74.
- Teske, Steven, "Cove (Polk County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 21, 2022).
- The Unfinished Story of North Howard County* (Umpire, AR: North Howard County Youth Group for Historical Research, 1982).
- Thompson, Charles B., III, *Spirits of Just Men: Mountaineers, Liquor Bosses, and Lawmen in the Moonshine Capital of the World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).
- Vail, Roy and revised by David Sesser, "Polk County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed October 20, 2022).
- Walz, Robert B., "Migration into Arkansas, 1820-1880: Incentives and Means of Travel," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (Winter 1958): 309-324.

Warren, James Medrick “Butch,” “Josiah Homer Blount (1860-1938),” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (accessed August 27, 2022).

Webb, Anne B., “Minnesota Women Homesteaders: 1863-1889,” *Journal of Social History* 23(1) (Autumn 1989): 115-136.

Whyne, Jeannie M., Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris S. Arnold, *Arkansas: A Concise History* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2019).

Wilson, Stephen, *Harvey Couch: An Entrepreneur Brings Electricity to Arkansas* (Little Rock: August House, 1986).