

# The JOURNAL



## *The Meek Family and Fort Smith Coca-Cola Bottling Company*



*Winslow Park  
Mountain Resort Memories*



*Hangin' Times in  
Fort Smith, Part IX*



*The Ayers House  
of Fort Smith*

*Vol. 29, No. 1, April 2005*



**MISSION:** The mission of the Fort Smith Historical Society, Inc., founded in 1977, is to publish The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society and through The Journal and other activities to locate, identify and collect historical data; to publish source materials and historical articles, all pertaining to the City of Fort Smith and the immediate surrounding area. Preservation of Fort Smith history is our primary mission and to this end, we always welcome the loan of Fort Smith historical material and will return promptly.

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See the Query page on our website for a bulletin board of current research questions. Readers may post their own research questions or topics in hopes of furthering their own research.

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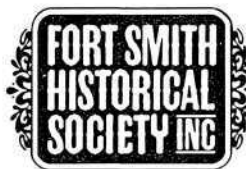
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# The JOURNAL

## Contents

VOL. 29, NO. 1

April 2005

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Contents  | 1  |
| News & Opportunities                                | 2  |
| History Recreated in Oak Cemetery                   | 5  |
| Book Review: Billy Higgins Examines A Black Pioneer | 6  |
| Internet Research Resources for Sebastian County    | 7  |
| Zachary Taylor's Fort Smith Days                    | 10 |
| First Christian Church's Renewed Life               | 14 |
| The Putnam, Whitman and Dalton Families             | 17 |
| The Meek Family and Fort Smith Coca-Cola Bottling   | 22 |
| Memories of the Winslow Park Summer Resort          | 30 |
| Winslow's Centennial Celebration                    | 40 |
| The Ayers House of Belle Grove Historic District    | 42 |
| Hangin' Times in Fort Smith                         | 45 |
| 1905 News   | 49 |
| Index   | 53 |

**COVER:** Coca-Cola and J.W. and Robert Meek "Jobbers of Guler Ice Cream" advertising on a Ferris Wheel at the 900 block of Rogers Avenue. Note the unusual passenger near the top and the steeple of Immaculate Conception Church visible over the O'Shea-Hinch hardware warehouse, pre-World War I. Photo courtesy of the Meek family.

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# *News & Opportunities*

## **From the Editors**

Twenty-eight years ago, on April 15, 1977 the Fort Smith Historical Society was formed to meet a long-standing need for an organization with the specific purpose of collecting, identifying, preserving and publishing the written and oral history of the Fort Smith area. Many books and articles had been written about the fort built at the confluence of the Poteau and Arkansas rivers that was named Fort Smith, and the town by the same name that grew around it, but this did not serve the purpose mentioned above, and much Fort Smith historical information was being destroyed and lost forever as attics and storerooms were cleaned and old diaries, letters, ledgers, photographs, etc. were discarded.

Keenly aware of the need to preserve Fort Smith history, 11 concerned persons met in the community room of the Fort Smith Public library on Oct. 29, 1976, to discuss the possibility of organizing a historical society in Fort Smith. Those in attendance were Carolyn Pollan, moderator, Fado Cravens, Jr., Amelia Martin, Christine Allen, Thelma Wray, Gladys Krone, Doris West, Taylor A. Joyce, Edwin P. Hicks, Eloise Barksdale, and Violet Burton. There was a discussion about the need for protecting written and oral history and for a Fort Smith publication. The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society was born as a result of the efforts of this group. It was first published in April, 1977, and 56 issues later it is still being published, and is an award-winning journal.

Your editors have been involved in a trial and error learning process in the last year. After the death in January, 2004 of our long-time editor, Amelia Martin, we were forced to step up and get on with it. We've put in many long hours, had some great learning experiences, and with a lot of help from all of you we have managed to put together three journals in the last fourteen months. We are proud of the great stories submitted by old and new authors. We hope you will enjoy them as much as we have enjoyed getting the stories and photographs into print. Thank you to everyone who has helped us this last year. Please continue to send your stories and photographs, your suggestions, and new ideas. We appreciate all the support and words of encouragement.

Your Editors,  
*Carole Barger*  
*Ben Boulden*  
*Joe Wasson*

## **2005 Frontier Achievement Awards**

The 24th Annual Frontier Achievement Awards will be presented on April 21 at the River Front Park Events Building. The Secondary Social Studies Educators of Fort Smith will recognize various individuals, businesses, or industries who have made an outstanding contribution to the historical development of our city and/or helped to preserve the heritage of Fort Smith. A social with refreshments begins at 6:30 p.m. with the awards program at 7 p.m. The public is invited.

## **Board and General Membership Meeting**

Immediately following the presentation of the Frontier Achievement Awards the Fort Smith Historical Society will hold its Board and General Membership Meeting. An election of officers and new board members will be followed by the Incoming President's comments. Everyone is welcome to attend.

## **Saturday Afternoon History Discussions**

The Fort Smith Historical Society has begun organizing informal and general discussions of local history at the Fort Smith Public Library, main library. Notice of these Saturday afternoon gatherings will be on the home page of the society's Web site at [www.fortsmithhistory.com](http://www.fortsmithhistory.com) and be posted there well in advance of the meeting dates.

No lectures or set topics are planned for these gatherings. They are an opportunity for people to ask questions of one another regarding local history, learn about historical sources and simply share stories and knowledge. Feel free to bring your research or collections to share with others. Come join us.

## **Arkansas Historical Association Conference**

The Arkansas Historical Association's 2005 annual conference will be held at DeGray Lake State Park Lodge in Arkadelphia, April 14-16. Its theme is "Arkansas: South of the Arkansas River."

For information on attending the conference or to subscribe to the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, phone (479) 575-5884 or read more on the internet at [www.uark.edu/depts/arkhist/home/annual.html](http://www.uark.edu/depts/arkhist/home/annual.html).



## Fort Smith Historical Society Web Site Extends our History to the Internet

While the Fort Smith Historical Society reflects on life as early as the 19th century, it has moved ahead to the 21st century in publishing. In order to reach even more readers and scholars, the society launched a web site in 2004 that extends our knowledge and publications to the entire internet at [www.fortsmithhistory.com](http://www.fortsmithhistory.com).

Ben Boulden volunteers as webmaster to the web site project, which includes scores of images from the archives of the Society and from collectors who have offered their holdings for display.

The image galleries online grow regularly and currently include photographs, newspaper clippings, photographs, historic publications, postcard images and maps.

It also includes a cooperative chronology of significant dates in Fort Smith history, a page of biographies, and current information about joining the Historical Society.

Sharing this valuable information, rather than archiving or collecting all of the original documents,

exemplifies the philosophy of the Fort Smith Historical Society that these important materials should be preserved, catalogued and the information they contain made accessible to as many interested users as possible. Like the National Archives or the Smithsonian web sites, the Fort Smith Historical Society is endeavoring to make our history and heritage available to remote readers who may never have the opportunity to travel here where the documents physically exist.

The Society also hopes that the web site will attract or reveal even more material and information to be added to the historical record of Fort Smith and the surrounding area.

The Society is currently seeking donations or a single sponsor to support the cost of maintaining the web site. While the publication of the Journal is supported by membership, the web site is available to everyone with internet access.

Contact [benboulden@sbcglobal.net](mailto:benboulden@sbcglobal.net) to contribute materials or donations to the web site project.

**FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

**The JOURNAL**

The Society's award winning publication, The Journal, is completely indexed and published in April and September.

**Fort Smith's Flood History Gallery**

A second update will occur on March 6. The Webmaster is ill and was unable to complete a full update on March 1. We apologize for the delay.

**Next Monthly Update: Monday, April 4, 2005**

"Prof. Buttinski" drew this portrait, right, of "Judge Boles" for publication in the Fort Smith News Record in 1904. Do you know anything more about him? Is he the son of Thomas Boles? E-mail us and let us know.

**Next Meeting:**  
The society will lead a general discussion of local history and research resources at 1 p.m., March 12, 2005, in the overflow room on the first floor of the main building of the Fort Smith Public Library.

**Fort Smith's Flood History**

By Leon J. Guthrie, Local Forecaster

Rainfall sufficient to produce a flood at Fort Smith may occur any month of the year, although there is no record of floods in September. Heavy rains over Oklahoma and southeastern Kansas are the only flood producing factor, which refutes deep-rooted tradition, "snows in the mountains." An example of this is the fact that changes in the stage of the river at Wichita, Kan., have a practically negligible effect at Fort Smith.

**GREAT BOTTLING FIRM ORGANIZES**

Coca Cola Bottling Company Organizes a \$50,000 Corporation to Take Over Seven Factories in This Section.

The Fort Smith Historical Society web site at [www.fortsmithhistory.com](http://www.fortsmithhistory.com).

## **Booknotes: Higgins details life of a black pioneer in Arkansas**

***A Stranger and a Sojourner, Peter Caulder, Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum Arkansas***

Billy D. Higgins

The University of Arkansas Press 2004

Reviewed by  
Tom Wing



Without connections between the past, present, and future, there is no way to understand the value of history. Billy D. Higgins in his new book ***A Stranger and Sojourner: Peter Caulder, Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum Arkansas*** published by the University of Arkansas Press, uses an abundance of connections between the past and present to illustrate the life of Peter Caulder, an illiterate, freeman of color from South Carolina. Some connections include important military leaders, scientists and a future president.

Caulder came as a soldier in the elite Rifle Regiment to establish Fort Smith in 1817. Proving his abilities in the military arts, he was a witness to the effects of Indian Removal. He retired from the Army, taking a land bounty in Arkansas for his service in the War of 1812. The light Higgins sheds on Caulder will contribute to an understanding of Arkansas history, long into the future. At the same time, this book will add to a greater understanding of the African-American experience.

Tracing the life and times of an illiterate soldier and pioneer is not an easy task. Higgins' research took him from South Carolina to Kansas and from the hills of north central Arkansas to Pennsylvania. Higgins used an abundance of primary and secondary sources to discover this exciting story. The author gives the reader an important lesson in race relations, military service, and life in Arkansas from territory to statehood. While much of the story takes place in Arkansas, Higgins raises questions that are of national significance.

Written in a narrative style that is both clear and sensitive, the work also includes charts, tables, maps and illustrations to add to the story.

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### *Recent Memorial Donations*

**In Honor of Amelia Martin**

by Belle Fort Smith Tours

**In Honor of Mary Lou Jacobson**

by Belle Fort Smith Tours

Photographs of descendants draw the reader closer to identifying the mystery of Peter Caulder.

Insightful, thought-provoking and full of detail, the reader will feel as if they truly know Peter Caulder, share in his triumphs, and witness the pain of his adversity. Higgins' research already has changed historical interpretation at the Fort Smith National Historic Site. The completed book will continue to shape the understanding of Fort Smith and Arkansas for many years to come.

**Tom Wing** has taught western civilization, U.S. history, and currently Arkansas history at University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. Previously, he was park ranger/historian at Fort Smith National Historic Site.

*Review copies of books are placed in the Genealogy Room of the Fort Smith Public Library as a gift from the author and the Fort Smith Historical Society.*

# Award-winning, unusual Tales of the Crypt tells Oak Cemetery's stories

The living "meet" the dead on Memorial Day when "Tales of the Crypt," an interpretive history program, is held for the 8th year at Oak Cemetery in Fort Smith.

As visitors stroll through the monuments and tombstones on the afternoon walking tour, they encounter actors who give biographical sketches in character as the deceased. The program has gained in popularity each year. Hundreds of visitors have enjoyed the chance to hear and talk with the characters and hear the highlights of their lives and significance in Fort Smith history.

The program has been recognized with many awards since its creation. The most recent, and highest, is the Dorothy Mullen Arts & Humanities Award, presented by the National Recreation and Park Association at its annual Congress in Saint Louis, Mo. in 2003.

The Arkansas Historical Association, the Oklahoma Historical Society, and Region IV of the National Recreation and Park Association have also recognized Tales of the Crypt among outstanding arts and humanities programs and educational programs of historical significance.

The script performed by each actor has been researched for historical accuracy but also includes entertaining touches of humor or pathos. Each year a varied group of people are represented that have included women and men, children and adults, the prominent and infamous and even criminals.

The oldest grave in Oak Cemetery is dated 1842, the year of the Fort Smith's incorporation. The founder of Fort Smith, an Arkansas governor, 15 mayors and 122 Confederate soldiers are interred there.

There are more than 100 graves related to the federal district court for the Western District of Arkansas. Historians have identified U.S. Marshals, deputies and court officials, some of whom died in the line of duty.

At least 29 outlaws convicted of murder and hanged by the verdict of Judge Isaac C. Parker



## CAST OF THE 2005 TALES OF THE CRYPT

O.D. Weldon (Founder of Weldon, Williams & Lick)

Colonel Oscar L. Miles (Leading attorney)

William Simpson (Roving Spirit)

Leander Dixon (Outlaw, died in jail)

Congressman Ben Cravens (Fort Smith statesman)

Alphonso Patterson (Grandfather of Judge Les Evitts)

Ella Carnall (Fort Smith educator)

Rutherford Ross, Sr. (Early aviator, community leader)

William Blair (President of American National Bank)

Capt. Edmund McKenna (Confederate Army)

William Joseph Echols I (Founder of Merchant's Bank)

Hanna B. Sparks (Sparks Hospital)

*Mary Beth Koprovic, Producer – Director. Koprovic has had extensive community experience in volunteering and theatrical productions with the Fort Smith Little Theatre, Tales of Crypt, the Red Stocking Review and, the Mayor's Honors for the Visual and Performing Arts.*



are buried there as well, but Parker's grave is at the U.S. National Cemetery. Several more convicted criminals who died before their executions are buried at Oak Cemetery.

Due to the work of many genealogists and historians and with the consent of descendants, a great deal of historical information about the cemetery has been collected and documented. The Sexton's House, where pictures, artifacts and documents are displayed, serves as a museum that is open during Tales of the Crypt.

Oak Cemetery is recognized as a National Historic Landmark. The 30-acre facility is under the perpetual care of the City of Fort Smith's Parks and Recreation Department.

Two volunteer organizations contribute to its preservation and value to historians. The Oak Cemetery Commission is an appointed panel of citizens to plan, steer and implement improvements.

Friends of Oak Cemetery is a volunteer group who assist cemetery visitors, provide museum tours and update records in the Sexton's House, and present Tales of the Crypt.

In 2004, two of the deceased who were portrayed in the tour are the subjects of articles in this issue of the *Journal*. John Ayers, a resident of the Ayers house described on page 42 and James Stanhope Meek, a subject of the article on page 22, were featured.

#### **How to take the tour:**

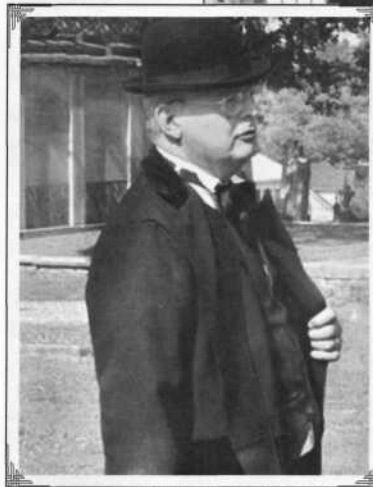
The tour planners recommend that visitors wear comfortable walking shoes and sun protection. Water and shade is available and the walking pace is gentle. As you enter the cemetery, guides will wait for small groups to gather before leading them through the tour.

Oak Cemetery is at 1401 South Greenwood. Parking is available at Hunts Park and Ballman School. Shuttle buses will run to and from the parking areas.

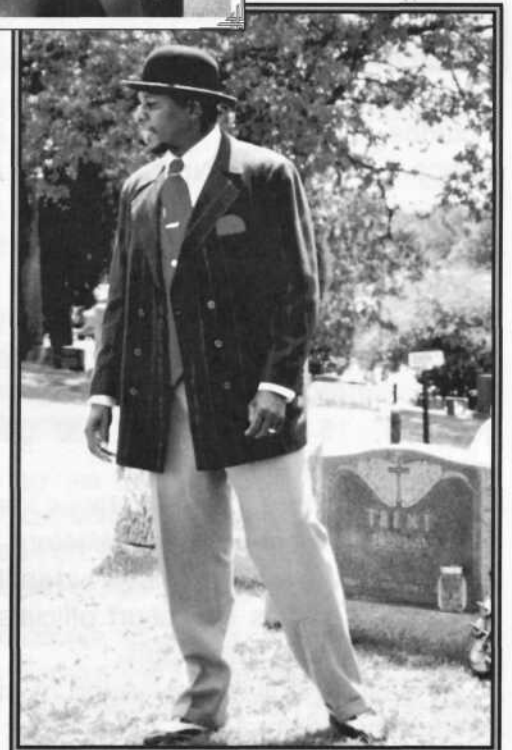
Admission is free. Tour hours are 3 to 5:30 p.m. It is not necessary to arrive at 3 p.m.



Faces of the past:  
previous characters  
from Tales of the Crypt  
tours from past years.



Photographs  
courtesy of the  
Friends of  
Oak Cemetery.





# Sebastian County Internet Research Resources

By Janice Bufford Eddleman



A computer and the Internet are becoming increasingly useful tools in both historical and genealogical research and there are a number of sites with information specific to research in Sebastian County.

The ones listed in this article are active, as of Jan. 1, 2005, and I consider them to be helpful in Sebastian County research. Some of the sites are more general and can be useful in researching other areas. Others listed currently have limited information, but their databases are growing.

## Sebastian County

### —Cyndi's List

<http://www.cyndislist.com/ar-local.htm#s>

One of the first places to look for Sebastian County information should be Cyndi's List. This site is exactly what it says it is — a list with links to other sites. To reach Sebastian County, simply scroll down the list of counties and click on Sebastian. Cyndi does a good job of updating and checking out the list.

### —Bobo and Jackson families; Greenwood Coal Miners Monument

Information about the Bobo and Jackson families and photos of the Coal Miner's Memorial at Greenwood can be found at the web address: <http://www.arkansasfamilies.net/afcosebastian.html>.

There is information about the Bobo and Jackson families and photos of the Coal Miner's Memorial at Greenwood. This is a relatively new site where people submit their family information and/or photos. Although the current information is very limited, it is worth a check because you never know what someone may have recently submitted.

### —Family history site

Another family history web site can be found at <http://www.couchgenweb.com/arkansas/sebastian>. Here, too, the current information is very limited, but you could help to build these databases by submitting your own Sebastian County family information and you never know, someone might see your contribution and contact you with new information or even "new" relatives.

## Historic Federal Court Records

The Defendant Jacket Files for the U.S. District Court, Western Division of Arkansas, Fort Smith can be found at

<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/fortsmith/>

This is a commercial site which charges a fee for the reproduction of records.

There is a limited index and a search engine for over 50,000 criminal court records going back to the time of Judge Isaac Parker.

### —National Archives

These files can also be searched at

[http://www.archives.gov/research\\_room/arc/topics/court\\_records.html#smith](http://www.archives.gov/research_room/arc/topics/court_records.html#smith),

which is the National Archives, Fort Worth, Texas site. There are detailed instructions on the URL for searching the site and you should be sure to follow them to find indictments, bills of information, arrest warrants, writs of subpoenas, verdicts, judgments, appeals, sentences, etc.

Remember that not only the names of criminals will appear in these files, but also those of witnesses, arresting officers, lawyers and jurors.

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*Illustration of Sebastian County Courthouse, 1904*

### **Official Sebastian County Website**

The official Sebastian County website, which lists the names and addresses and e-mail addresses of the all the current county officials and the various county offices, is at

<http://www.sebastiancountyonline.com/>.

While no direct research is listed on this Web site, it does give you the information necessary to obtain such things as copies of marriage licenses. Speaking of marriage licenses, the County Clerk's offices in both Greenwood and Fort Smith have a marriage index on their computers which allows them to locate these records quickly. Unfortunately, these are not online.

### **Rootsweb links**

Rootsweb also has data bases with Sebastian County information. To view these files, go to:

<http://resources.rootsweb.com/USA/AR/>

[Sebastian/?0\\_xid+003921872580lid=00392187250xt=39218725](http://resources.rootsweb.com/USA/AR/Sebastian/?0_xid+003921872580lid=00392187250xt=39218725).

Click on the state index, then Arkansas and, finally, Sebastian County.

There are some Goodspeed's biographies, twelve cemetery inventories, Federal land records and some marriages and obituaries at another Rootsweb site:

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/ar/sebastian/sebastia.html>.

### **Cemetery Research sources**

#### **–Cemetery Locations**

If you are looking for cemeteries and their location, the United States Geonetic Survey list can be found at

[http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnis/webquery.gni.sprod?f\\_names=&variant=N&f\\_state=Arkansas&f\\_only=Sebastian](http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnis/webquery.gni.sprod?f_names=&variant=N&f_state=Arkansas&f_only=Sebastian).

This list gives the longitude and latitude of all the known cemeteries in Sebastian County. You can also obtain printable maps to the cemetery by clicking on the individual cemetery.

#### **–Cemetery Inventories**

The web address

<http://www.Internet/US/AR/sebastian.htm>

contains inventories of some cemeteries, a search engine and a list of other links to Sebastian County data.

#### **–Oak Cemetery, Fort Smith**

The Fort Smith Parks Department has

inventoried the Oak Cemetery burials and this information can be found at

[http://www.fsark.com/Parks/parks/oak\\_cemetery/index.html](http://www.fsark.com/Parks/parks/oak_cemetery/index.html).

A queries link, as well as other links and county information, is provided at

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~arsebast/>.

### **Fort Smith Public Library**

#### **Genealogy Department**

One of the better URLs is the Fort Smith Public Library's Genealogy Department at

<http://www.fspl.lib.ar.us/genmain.html>.

Here there are searchable genealogical indices, including some Fort Smith cemeteries, the Fort Smith births and deaths 1881 to 1865 and Sebastian County marriages from 1863 to January of 2004. If you are in the Fort Smith area or are planning a visit to the Genealogy Department, you might also want to look at their online card catalog. The library has access to some commercial genealogical sites. These are also available from your home if you have a library card.

### **University of Arkansas-Fort Smith**

#### **Boreham Library**

The Boreham Library at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith also has a good web site at

<http://www.uafortsmith.edu/Library/Index>.

They also have an online catalog and some indices. In fact, they are currently working on an index to all of the issues of this publication, *The Journal*.

### **Local Newspaper**

For current events such as births, marriages and deaths, the Southwest Times Record, the local newspaper, can be accessed at

[http://www.swtimes.com/current local news](http://www.swtimes.com/current%20local%20news).

### **Fort Smith National Historic Site**

The Fort Smith National Historic Site, which includes the original Fort Smith, the second fort and Judge Parker's court, can be found at

<http://www.nps.gov/fosm/>.

### **Greenwood**

Some local Greenwood history and information may be found at

[http://greenwood.dina.org/local history](http://greenwood.dina.org/local%20history).

### **Land Office Records**

Although it is not specific to Sebastian County, everyone should know of the US Government Land office records. This site allows you to search either by name or by legal land description for the original owners, both homestead and cash entry, of many states. It also allows you to download and print the original land certificate. This web site is at

<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>.

### **Civil War websites**

There are two particularly good websites for searching for Civil War participants, both Union and Confederate. One is a government site, The Soldiers and Sailors System at

<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/index.html>.

It has a search engine and gives basic information about a military person. Be sure to go to the Researchers' Tool Box for information about ordering materials and about using the web site.

The Couch Genweb site at

<http://couchgenweb.com/civilwar>

This site is Arkansas specific and has a surname search engine. It is an excellent site.

### **General website sources**

Other general sites at which you should look include:

<http://www.nara.gov>

General web site of the National Archives

<http://www.rootsweb.com>

and <http://www.usgenweb.org>,

The general URLs of Rootsweb

### **Mormon Family Library site**

<http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Home/Welcome/>

I cannot help but remind you that while most information on the Internet is good, the original is always better and humans do make mistakes. Therefore, it is a good idea to cross check any information that you receive. Also, all of the sites listed in this article are free ones.

Sebastian County is making strides to put information on the web, but other counties are doing better (i.e., White County, Arkansas has a wonderful site that includes the inventories of all the cemeteries in the county). I would encourage you to submit information you may have to some of the web sites and help these databases to grow. In the meantime, happy researching.

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# Zachary Taylor and Fort Smith

by Billy D. Higgins

Zachary Taylor, commander of the Western Military District, lived in Fort Smith, Arkansas just prior to the war with Mexico (1846-48). His victorious campaign in northern Mexico caused the Whig party to nominate Taylor as their presidential candidate in 1848. A little over four years after his tour of duty in Fort Smith, Taylor had been elected to the highest office in the nation. As the first president to reside in Arkansas and to inspect army fortifications this far west, Taylor had unique occasion to observe the frontier, its people, and its potential. This nationalist experience, perhaps, was behind his determination to admit California as a free state.

Familiar with Fort Smith since 1823, Taylor lobbied for the army to withdraw its garrison from the military post here. His opinion that Fort Smith represented wasted effort and money was no doubt strengthened by his personal rivalry with General Mathew Arbuckle, who preferred Fort Smith to other posts in this command. The two men grew to dislike each other intensely and Taylor kept old scores.

Though little is known about what Taylor thought of the civilian settlement side of Fort Smith, he did bring his wife and daughter with him to accompany him in officer quarters near the present day intersection of Lexington and Rogers Avenues. He confided to a correspondent that his family adjusted to the location better than he did.

Taylor at times exhibited jealousy toward preferential treatment of fellow officers in his private letters. He insisted that some War Department "favorites" had been given commands that allowed their staying close to their properties. He fought to be moved back to Fort Jesup or Baton Rouge to be near his Mississippi and Louisiana plantations to supervise operations and place his "affairs in order." He thought that he would need income from his

plantations once his military career had ended. With a wife, three surviving daughters, one son, and several grandchildren, no doubt his concerns were well justified. His priorities about his stationing probably were another strike against Fort Smith in his view.

After his 1850 death in the White House and the funeral in Washington, D. C., Taylor was finally put to rest in Jefferson County, Kentucky at a site now incorporated within the city of Louisville. His biographer, Holman Hamilton, believed that of all Taylor's homes, the one of his childhood was most dear to the fallen general. His wife Peggy thought so, too.

Taylor lived in Washington and served as President of the United States for 486 days, almost exactly the same amount of time that he spent in Fort Smith. There is no evidence that he liked one any better than the other.

Billy D. Higgins is an associate professor of history at University of Arkansas at Fort Smith and the author of *A Stranger and a*

*Sojourner: Peter Caulder, Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum Arkansas*. (University of Arkansas Press, 2004.)

Higgins added: "Regardless of the disparaging comments that Taylor made about the inefficiency and unhealthiness of the military post at Fort Smith, it seems altogether fitting that our fair city find a way to memorialize its historical association with the fascinating twelfth president. A movement led by Circuit Judge Jim Spears would have a bronze statue commissioned, one and half times life size, with Taylor astride Old Whitey, one leg slung over the saddle horn in a customary posture of the general, wearing his Mexican War cap and uniform, to stand at his one time quarters at the head of Garrison Avenue. I concur with Judge Spear's proposal about this form of recognition of the 'Hero of Buena Vista.'"





# Zachary Taylor Chronology –

with emphasis on his days in Fort Smith, Arkansas

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- 1784 November 24, born at Montebello Plantation, Va., with his father already in Kentucky.
- 1785 Family joined father at the farm near Louisville, Ky.
- 1808 May 3, Zachary Taylor commissioned a lieutenant in the United States Army.
- 1809 Arrived in New Orleans; joined staff of Brigadier General James Wilkinson.
- 1810 June 21, Taylor married Margaret Mackall South (Peggy) in Louisville.
- 1811 April 9, birth of Ann Mackall Taylor.
- 1812 Placed in command of Fort Harrison at Vincennes, Indiana Territory where he remained for much of the War of 1812.
- 1813 Taylor acquired two slaves.
- 1814 Daughter Sarah Knox born.
- 1815 June 9, Taylor resigned from the Army.
- 1816 May 17, Army reinstated Taylor with rank of major; stationed at Green Bay.
- 1819 Taylor promoted to lieutenant colonel and birth of fourth daughter, Margaret Smith Taylor.
- 1821 In command of Fort Selden on the Red River, near Natchitoches, La.
- 1822 February, Major William Bradford<sup>1</sup> ordered to report to Colonel Taylor at Fort Selden after the 7th Infantry absorbed Bradfords company of the Rifle Regiment.  
March, Taylor moved his headquarters to Fort Jesup, La.  
July, traveled to Fort Smith for temporary duty. His long quarrel with Mathew Arbuckle<sup>2</sup> began as they took opposite sides in the rupture among the army officers that had developed at this post.  
**Taylor bivouacked for weeks in Fort Smith until his return to Fort Jesup.**
- 1823 Taylor acquired his first Louisiana plantation along with 22 slaves as his workforce.
- 1824 Birth of Mary Elizabeth Taylor
- 1826 Jan 27, son Richard born.<sup>3</sup>
- 1828 Commandant, Fort Snelling, Minnesota Territory.
- 1829 Commandant, Fort Crawford, Wisconsin Territory.
- 1832 Campaigned in Black Hawk War on the upper Mississippi.
- 1835 June 17, Taylor's daughter Sarah Knox married Jefferson Davis in Louisville after Davis resigned from his company of Dragoons that had been stationed at Fort Smith. Taylor continued as commander of Fort Crawford.  
Sept 15, Sarah Knox Taylor Davis, still a newlywed, died from malaria on a Mississippi plantation. Jefferson Davis, her young husband, was devastated and remorseful that he had married her over her father's objections.<sup>4</sup>
- 1837 Taylor sent to Florida and placed in command of the campaign to subdue the warring Seminoles. Dec 25, Battle of Lake Okeechobee. Taylor promoted to brigadier general.
- 1840 Taylor re-assigned to Baton Rouge. Exhausted by his labors against the guerilla tactics of the Seminole, Taylor welcomed reassignment which brought him nearer his plantations.
- 1841 June 2, departed Baton Rouge for Fort Gibson by steam boat up the Arkansas River. He was accompanied by wife and daughter. Moved his headquarters from Fort Gibson to Cantonment Belknap near Fort Smith. Reconnaissance duties took Taylor away from Fort Smith in the autumn. Upon his return he took sixty days leave.  
**Taylor on duty in Fort Smith for about 45 days in 1841.**
- 1842 January, returned to Fort Smith only to leave soon afterward to establish Fort Scott in Kansas Territory. May, Taylor departed Fort Gibson to inspect the southwest and Fort Towson (May 28) and Fort Jesup (June 17).  
July, **Taylor returned to Fort Smith. He was in Fort Smith for about 181 days in 1842.**  
Bought Cypress Grove plantation in Jefferson Co. Mississippi and its 81 slaves for \$95,000.
- 1843 January 12, on leave to New Orleans.

February 13, returned to his command at Fort Smith.

June, Taylor rode to Tahlequah for the Second Grand Council with eighteen tribes.

July, received word that he would switch commands which would take him closer to his plantations.

**Taylor split time between Fort Gibson, Fort Scott, Fort Towson, and Fort Smith in**

**1843. Taylor seemed to be in Fort Smith for about 140 days in 1843.**

1844 January 7 to February 6, Taylor on leave to New Orleans.

May 23, Taylor, being appointed to the Corps of Observation in Texas, transferred his command at Fort Smith to Mathew Arbuckle.

June 6, Taylor rode south on his favorite mount, Whitey. Peggy Taylor, who had joined her husband in Fort Smith, returned (probably by boat) to Baton Rouge. **Taylor apparently stayed in Fort Smith for about 120 days in 1844. Last time that Taylor saw Fort Smith.**

#### **1841-1844- Summary**

Taylor was in Fort Smith for approximately 486 days over this three year period and never seemed happy about it. He complained that the cost to the army of constructing and maintaining Fort Smith was excessive. He thought the location to be unhealthy and noted it was isolated by low water on the Arkansas most of the year and bad roads year round. He sought to move the command from Fort Smith or be re-assigned himself to Louisiana. He longed for his plantation at Cypress Grove, Miss. that he had acquired in 1841 and inferred that the army denied him time to tend to his personal affairs, a privilege he charged was conferred on John E. Wool and other contemporary officers.

1845 Aug. 15, Taylor and his new command, now called the Army of Occupation, reached Corpus Christi en route to the Nueces River. Promotion to Major General.

1846 May 8, Taylor commanded U. S. army units at Battle of Palo Alto near the Rio Grande, beginning the armed hostilities that induced Congress to declare war on Mexico.

Sept 23, Monterrey fell to Taylor. Taylor's name recognition by the American public and potential as presidential timber begins with Palo Alto.

1847 Feb 22-23, Battle of Buena Vista. Taylor is its hero. Former Arkansas governor Archibald Yell killed in action during the battle.<sup>4</sup>

Nov 25, A weary Taylor gladly transferred his command of Northern Mexico to John E. Wool. A warm reception greeted Taylor in New Orleans.

1848 June 8, The hero general is nominated as the Whig candidate for president at the party's Philadelphia convention.

November, elected President of the United States on Whig ticket. Electoral vote, 163 for Taylor, Whig; 127 for Cass, Democrat. Arkansas' three electoral votes went to Cass.

Henry Clay was Taylor's chief contender in the Whig Party for the nomination. If Taylor voted for himself, and that is a question unanswered by historians, it would have been the first time that he had voted in a presidential election.

1849 March 5, Taylor sworn in by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney. His presidency is immediately swamped by controversy over California's admission to the Union as a free state.<sup>5</sup> Millard Fillmore of New York, a northern Whig, was Vice-President.

1850 May 31, Army General Order No. 19 deactivated and closed Fort Smith. The Fort Smith Herald (Sept. 6, 1850) reported that Zachary Taylor directed the War Department to take this action.<sup>6</sup>

July 9, Taylor died at the age of 65 after a short illness<sup>7</sup> that began on July 4.

July 13, day of the funeral in which Old Whitey stepped proudly with reversed stirrups behind the caisson bearing Taylor's casket to the Congressional Burying Ground.

Nov 1, Taylor re-interred in Louisville.

1991 Taylor disinterred for medical examination.

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#### **Sources for Taylor's comments on Fort Smith:**

ZT to AG, June 4, 1844 in (M711/17); ZT to Hitchcock, July 28 and Nov. 3, 1841 in Zachary Taylor (LC), ser 2, r 1;

ZT to Jones, July 13, July 28, October 15, 1841 in AGLR 1841, T-218, 302 (M567/239, 259); Alexander to Jesup, Oct 14, 1841; August 31, 1842, National Archives, War Department, Quartermaster General, Letters Received File.

Fort Smith Herald, June 29, 1850; Sept 6, 1850.

Zachary Taylor's successful command in the Mexican War made him a presidential candidate. The Battle of Buena Vista is depicted in a Currier & Ives print. (right)

(Opposite page) An engraving of Taylor made by Alexander Hay Ritchie, circa 1848.

*Images from  
the Library of Congress*



**"A LITTLE MORE GRAPE CAPT BRASS"**  
GENERAL TAYLOR AT THE BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA, FEB. 23<sup>RD</sup> 1847.

<sup>1</sup> Bradford was a brevet major, a battlefield rank that he gained during the War of 1812 for meritorious service on the battlefield. Bradford's Kentucky militia unit was attached to General William Henry Harrison's army for the Battle of Fort Meigs, Ohio. Bradford was wounded in that battle, but recovered sufficiently to command the cannon during General Andrew Jackson's attack on the British-supported Creek Indians at Horseshoe Bend in 1814. Jackson commended Bradford for his skillful and decisive use of artillery in this landmark battle. Thus within a one year span, Bradford served with valor and recognition under two future presidents of the United States.

<sup>2</sup> On the 7th Infantry's long voyage from Florida to Fort Smith, Arbuckle was accused by subordinate officers of consorting. So strong was the feeling that altercations arose between Arbuckle's defenders and his accusers. Regimental surgeon, Thomas Lawson, Arbuckle's foe, and Lt. Richard Wash, Arbuckle's backer, engaged in fisticuffs which led to Wash's courts martial. Taylor allied himself with the anti-Arbuckle faction, and a long and bitter rivalry between the two most conspicuous officers of the 7th Infantry developed. Taylor's dislike of Fort Smith and his decision while President to disband it was no doubt shaped in major part by his knowledge that Arbuckle preferred Fort Smith.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Taylor, the only son of Zachary Taylor, gained the rank of general in the Confederate Army,

and showed skill and determination in leading his meager forces against Federal troops in the Trans-Mississippi theater. His resistance was often successful and his was one of the last commands to surrender in 1865.

<sup>4</sup> While Taylor apparently never officially recognized Archibald Yell's contribution to his victory, he did remark to Jefferson Davis, who commanded the Mississippi Rifles at Buena Vista, that "his daughter was a better judge of a man than he [Taylor] was." Davis was thus forgiven by the crusty Taylor for eloping with his daughter.

<sup>5</sup> Though a plantation owner himself, Taylor strongly favored California's admission as a free state. Southerners just as strongly opposed California because it upset the carefully constructed balance in the Senate between free and slave states. Taylor obviously was first and foremost a nationalist.

<sup>6</sup> Arbuckle pitched in his influence to counter the order. After Taylor's death, the order was reversed and Fort Smith remained open.

<sup>7</sup> Some historians had suspected that Taylor's sudden death, reported at the time to be due to consuming cold cherries on a hot day, might have been brought on by arsenic poisoning, a deliberate murder of the President of the United States. The chief suspects? Slavocracy conspirators angry with Taylor about California.



# Historic First Christian Church Restored

By Brenda Andrews

On the evening of Nov. 6, 2003, the lights were aglow at the historic First Christian Church at the corner of North 7th and C streets. Inside the quaint Victorian building, citizens, preservationists, and city staff joined Mayor Ray Baker to celebrate two important events: the Belle Grove Historic District's 30th anniversary on the National Register of Historic Places and the restoration of the 117-year-old church building. Rededicated as the Darby Community Center, in honor of World War II hero General William O. Darby, the once-dilapidated church was given new life as a community center and has regained its rightful place as a treasured sacred site.

Built in 1886, the First Christian Church is a significant landmark of the Belle Grove Historic District and is considered the oldest surviving church structure in Fort Smith. The church was built under the leadership of the Rev. James Spindler<sup>1</sup> and designed by the Kansas City architectural firm of Neir, Hogg & Byram in the Gothic Ecclesiastic style.<sup>2</sup> A quintessential style of Victorian-era churches, the small, wood-frame building is defined by lancet, stained-glass windows, a steeply pitched roof, dual spires, and decorative fishscale shingles. Although the building is modest by most standards, it is an excellent and rare example of a small-frame church.

At the turn of the 20th century, Fort Smith's population was booming with newcomers in search of jobs with the area's expanding logging, railroad and mining industries.<sup>3</sup> In 1904, The Fort Smith News Record boasted that the city had more than doubled its population from 11,587 in 1900 to 24,570 in 1904.<sup>4</sup> This dramatic surge in population led to a greater demand for many community services, including those by churches. First Christian Church, as well as other denominations, embraced this responsibility by extending a warm welcome to the city's new citizens.

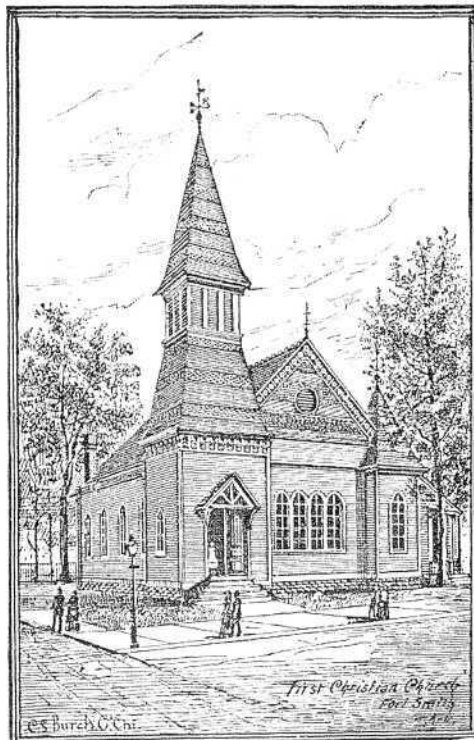
In 1897, The Fort Smith City Directory displayed the following message from area churches: "Strangers cordially invited."<sup>5</sup>

Seventeen years after the First Christian Church was built, its congregation had grown from a mere 50 members to over 300 by 1903. In addition to the city's growing population, frequent revivals held by several charismatic evangelists led to the growth of the church. The revivals attracted such large audiences that they had to be held at the Grand Opera House on Garrison Avenue. As membership continued to grow, church officials began making plans to build a larger church to accommodate its congregation. The final service was held in the small church during the spring of 1905. On June 11, the congregation held its first service in the new church at the corner of North 13th and A streets.<sup>6</sup>

For approximately the next 90 years, the small church provided a place of worship for several denominations. After the First Christian Church congregation moved to its new building, First Church of Christ, Scientist occupied the building until 1939. From 1940 to 1953, Central Church of the Nazarene worshiped in the small church, and from 1954 to 1978, St. George Greek Orthodox Church held church services in the building. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the

church was used by several small congregations.<sup>7</sup> However, by the mid 1990's, neglect and age had taken their toll on the building. In 1998, the roof collapsed, causing residents to fear that the historic church would have to be demolished.

Efforts to save the building began when officials with the William O. Darby Memorial Foundation purchased the building from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church. Because of its historic significance, city officials declared the structure in a state of emergency. Soon after purchasing the church, the Darby Foundation applied for and

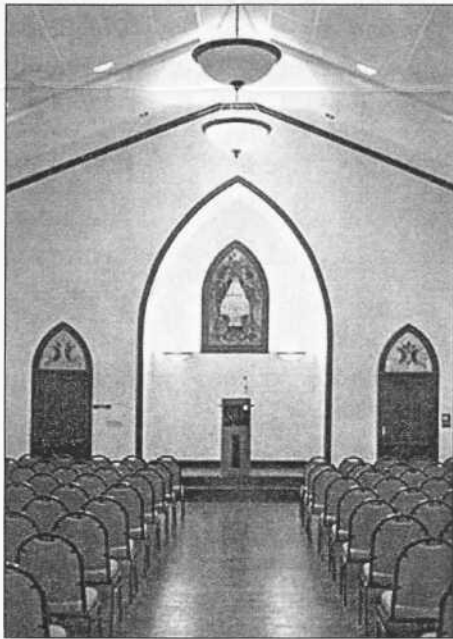






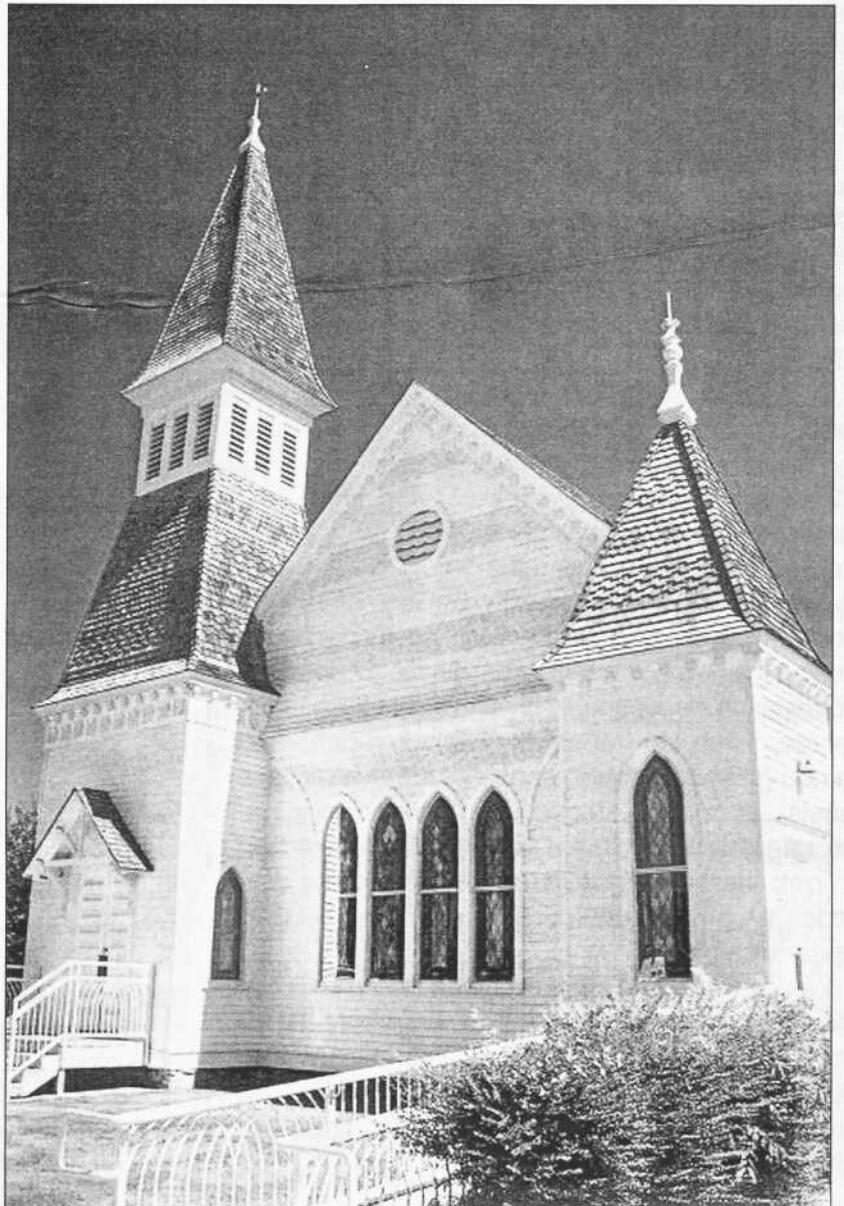
By 1998, the church's "broken back" made residents fear it would almost certainly be razed. A combination of individual efforts, preservation funds and City support saved the building.

The interior (below) was restored simply to accommodate a myriad of public uses. It is frequently booked for weddings.



(Opposite page) First Christian Church as depicted in the *Handbook of Fort Smith*, 1887.

(Right) The restoration of the exterior's fishscale shingles was a labor-intensive process.



received approximately \$154,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds from the City of Fort Smith to restore the building. The funds were used to stabilize the building and foundation, reconstruct the north and south walls, replace the roof, and remove asbestos siding that had been installed many years ago.

Although the church had been stabilized, and thankfully spared from the bulldozer, it was far from restored. Unable to secure additional funds to complete the restoration, on Dec. 21, 2000, the Darby Foundation conveyed the property to the City of Fort Smith. As the new property owner, city officials were faced with the challenge of finding funds to continue the restoration project. Serendipity intervened a few days later when the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program in Little Rock announced the availability of grant funds for preservation activities. Scrambling to meet the Jan. 15 deadline, staff with the planning and finance departments submitted an application requesting \$193,000.

On Feb. 16, 2001, Gov. Mike Huckabee announced that the city had been awarded \$120,000. Two months later, working with local architectural firm Architecture Plus, Inc., the city entered into a contract with John P. Marinoni Construction, Inc. of Springdale to continue restoration on the building's exterior. A contract was also signed with Classical Glass of St. George, Utah, to repair the diamond-patterned stained-glass windows and make several new panels to match those that were missing. Unfortunately, the grant funds could not be stretched to finish the project, but substantial progress was made toward restoring the church's original appearance.

Work to complete the restoration halted until city officials secured Community Development Block Grant funds to complete the project. On April 2, 2003, the city entered into a contract with Southern Building Services, Inc., of Fort Smith to finish the exterior and renovate the interior.

Although historic photographs of the interior were not available, the contractor and Carl Cummings, project architect with Architecture Plus, transformed the cathedral interior into an inviting space with mahogany-colored wood trim and floor covering and warm yellow walls. As an added enhancement to the interior, three arched, stained-glass windows were installed that were originally in the First Christian Church at North 13th and North A streets. Finally, after five years and approximately \$460,000, the restoration project was complete.

Since the church has been restored and adapted for reuse as a community center, it has become a popular and unique location for meetings, receptions, family gatherings, and weddings.

Although the project presented numerous challenges, not the least of which was funding the restoration, saving a significant piece of the community's history is priceless. Now instead of a sad, dilapidated structure, residents and visitors are greeted with a beautiful reminder of the Belle Grove Historic District's and Fort Smith's rich, historical past.

**Brenda Andrews** is a planner with the City of Fort Smith and provides technical assistance to the Fort Smith



Historic District Commission.

#### Endnotes:

1. *A Brief History of the First Christian Church, 1854-1928*, First Christian Church, Fort Smith.
2. Taylor, Sandra Taylor, Architectural Resource Survey of the Belle Grove Historic District. City of Fort Smith, 2000.
3. Wayne, Jeannie M., *Arkansas: A Narrative History* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 246.
4. "Economy Roars for City in 1904," Times Record, 28 Nov. 2004.
5. Fort Smith City Directory, 1897 Edition, Church Directory.
6. *A Brief History of the First Christian Church, 1854-1928*, First Christian Church, Fort Smith.
7. Fort Smith City Directory, Editions 1911-1994.

# *Samuel Putnam and Mary Whitman Putnam*

## *Antebellum Arkansas Pioneers*

by Mary Luan Hearn Moore

My grandfathers, David Whitman Dalton and Jesse Andrew Hearn, died during the influenza epidemic in 1919. My parents were children when their fathers died. From the time I can recall, I missed what everyone seemingly had: a grandfather.

My mother, Mary Ellen Elizabeth Dalton Hearn, was born long after her grandfathers died. She understood my longing. When she talked about her family, I listened. Mother told us family stories about her grandfather, Dr. James L. Chappell, who died September 27, 1894, near the Rye Hill community. He was an early member of the Medical Association in Sebastian County. She spoke in more hushed tones about her grandfather, David C. Dalton. He served in the Confederate Army from Mississippi. He deserted that Army just before the War of the Wilderness.

David and his father, John B. Dalton, an attorney and Baptist minister, moved to western Arkansas from DeSoto County, Mississippi after the war ended in 1865. David met Susan Elizabeth Mickle in Sebastian County, Arkansas. They married on March 3, 1868, in Franklin County and lived near John Dalton, a bookseller, in Cauksville. David was waylaid and killed by bushwhackers in 1873, during the dissension that continued in western Arkansas after the official war years ended. Susan, his widow, was left with four children under five years old: David Whitman, James H., Sarah Ellen (Crabb), and Martha Virginia (Hand).

Family lore tells two similar stories regarding David's death. One version says he was a scout for wagon trains going west. He was riding his beautiful roan horse into Fort Smith to meet a train when he was waylaid by bushwhackers. The body was never found. The other story tells of him riding his beautiful roan horse toward Charleston one night, going house to house—warning people that bushwhackers were coming their way, when he was ambushed. Which version is correct we do not know. We do know he disappeared that evening.

Mother spoke often of her paternal ancestors.

"Your great, great grandmother, Dolly G. Putnam, was born here (Fort Smith) in 1827. Her daughter, Susan Elizabeth Dalton (nee Mickle), lived near her



***Dolly G. Putnam Mickle, the writer's great-great grandmother, was born in 1827. Dolly's parents were the first Putnam ancestors in Arkansas.***

aunt, Susan Putnam Richardson, after David died. The family lost all their wealth during the Civil War. They stored all they possessed on the second story of their house, when they fled to Texas. Yankees burned the house and everything in it, except what they stole." These words inspired me to begin genealogy research in 1968. This story evolved from my research regarding the Putnam-Whitman family.<sup>1</sup>

### **Samuel Putnam comes to Arkansas**

Samuel Putnam was born, June 19, 1781, in Middlesex, Sudbury, near Stow, Massachusetts,<sup>2</sup> a descendant of the Colonial Putnam family from Salem, Massachusetts. He served in the War of 1812 as a private in Van Buren's Company of the Twenty-ninth Infantry from Washington Co., New York. He was the nephew of Gen. Israel Putnam, who became famous for his service during the Revolutionary War. Samuel died in 1848 in Fort Smith, Crawford County, Arkansas, one year after the death of his wife, Mary.



Simon (Samuel) Putnam (sic) died near Fort Smith, Feb. 1, 1848, age about 60 – one of the first settlers of this state.<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Putnam and Mary Whitman married on Aug. 15, 1806, in Sudsberry, Middlesex County, Massachusetts.<sup>4</sup> She was the daughter of Jemima Porter and Thomas Whitman, a second lieutenant in the War of Revolution. Samuel and Mary probably lived near Bennington, Vermont for a time before following his parents, Nathan Putnam and Dorothy Whitney to Lexington, Kentucky. Nathan Putnam died during a cholera epidemic at Lexington in 1838. So many people died during the epidemic; deaths were listed in the newspaper according to the street they lived on at the time.

Family oral history says Samuel and Mary Whitman were in Missouri during the New Madrid Earthquake. Children born into the family between 1808 and 1820 listed their birthplaces on census records as Massachusetts, Kentucky, and Missouri. (I believe they were in the Missouri Territory on land that later encompassed western Arkansas.) Samuel Putnam appears on Crawford County, Arkansas, tax lists for 1830 through 1839. He and his son-in-law, John M. Spaulding, served as Crawford County magistrates in 1827, 1834, and 1835. Nathan Putnam wrote a letter,<sup>5</sup> in 1835, regarding his son, Samuel:

"Samuel has been a rover, but is now settled, I expect for life, in what they call Arkansas. Frequent movings have kept him from accumulating property, but for the last few years, from what information I have had, is doing well. He has a worthy companion and a large family; eight daughters and four sons; last child was a son, who lived but a month; the first they had lost; two children are married well."

One of Samuel's brothers, Joseph Putnam, a card manufacturer, settled in Lexington, Kentucky near his parents. He was enumerated there on the 1850 United States Census. One sister lived in Missouri, and another lived in Vermont.

President James Monroe awarded Land Warrant number 24363 in favor of Samuel Putnam on Nov. 13, 1821. The warrant was for his service as a private in Van Buren's Company of the 29th Regiment of Infantry. He was awarded one quarter section of land (160 acres) in the Arkansas Territory.<sup>6</sup> One record shows he held slaves in 1830.<sup>7</sup>

### Mary Whitman Putnam writes to her mother

Long before 1826, Samuel and Mary Whitman Putnam were in Crawford County, Arkansas (later Sebastian). Mary wrote a letter that year to her mother, Jemima Porter Whitman, and sister in Massachusetts.<sup>8</sup>

*January 1, 1826,*

*Dear Mother and Sister:*

*It being the first day of the year, I take the opportunity to write a few lines after waiting upwards of two years in hopes to receive some more from you, but have not had any only by way of Joseph Putnam. He wrote us and gave us what information he could of you. I should have written before, but my thoughts have been principally taken up about my future welfare. My inquiry has generally been what should I do to be saved? And I hope it has been the inquiry of you all. I hope that we shall all meet upon the banks of sweet deliverance to join in one perpetual strain of praise to our Redeemer. Though I am situated in the wilderness, you might suppose it was a lonesome situation. We have moved about 10 miles from the river on account of our health. Our nearest neighbor is about four miles distance and the woods are inhabited by bears, buffalo, wolves, panthers, wild cats and various kinds of wild beasts, and the largest kind of venomous snakes. They killed a great many very long rattle snakes last summer about the house.*

*They have killed a bear within 100 rods of the house. Yet I feel no dread. I am perfectly satisfied and contented.*

*We are all in perfect health. We have nine children, six daughters and three sons. Our youngest was born March 7, 1825. We call his name Nathan Thomas. Angeline (eight years old) is up at the missionaries upward of 100 miles from here, at school.*

*My dear Mother - I desire to see you once more, but it is uncertain whether we ever meet on this earth again but I hope we shall meet in a better world never to be parted any more.*

*May the Lord bless you all abundantly with his grace. Trust in the Lord for he is good, all his ways are pleasantness and his paths are peace.*

*I remain your affectionate*

*Sister and Child*

*Mary Putnam*

*Mr. Putnam and the children send their best love to you all. Please write soon for I want to hear from you very much. Direct your letters to Arkansas Territory, Crawford County and they will come directly here.*



One year later, on Jan. 27, 1827, Mary Whitman Putnam gave birth to twins, Lucy and Dorothy "Dolly" Gates Putnam, the great-great grandmother Mother talked about so much. Dolly was a brunette and her twin sister, Lucy, was blonde. The family Bible<sup>9</sup> records the birth of each child:

Caroline Putnam, born Feb. 27, 1808, (m. John Oliphant).

Samuel born May 22, 1809, died January 27, 1831.

Mary born Jan. 17, 1811, died December 31, 1835, (m. [1] Vincent, [2] Shields)<sup>10</sup>

Jane born Oct. 1, 1813, (m. [1] Thayer, [2] Barrington, [3] Adams

Elizabeth born Dec. 16, 1815, (m. [1] Carbon Howell, [2] Allen McDonald)

Jemima Angeline born Jan. 7, 1818, died March 18, 1837, (m. John M. Spaulding)<sup>11</sup>

John W. born Aug. 16, 1820

Susan born Nov. 26, 1822, (m. Edmund Maurice Richardson)

Nathan T. (Thomas) born March 7, 1825, (m. Mrs. Emily Meeks)

Dolly (Dorothy Gates) Putnam married George Washington Mickle, a Virginian from Prince Edward County in 1844. The location of the marriage record has not been found.<sup>12</sup> He lived in Stewart and Montgomery Counties in Tennessee before coming to this area of Arkansas about 1840 with his brothers, William, Peter and Harmon Mickle. They were the parents of Mary, James Sidney, Susan Elizabeth, George Whitefield, Sarah and Martha H.

Dolly born Jan. 27, 1827, (m. William Hudspeth)  
Joseph E. born Jan. 27, 1830, died February 24, 1831.

### **Dorothy Gates Putnam Mickle**

Dolly (Dorothy Gates) Putnam married George Washington Mickle, a Virginian from Prince Edward County in 1844. The location of the marriage record has not been found.<sup>12</sup> He lived in Stewart and Montgomery Counties in Tennessee before coming to this area of Arkansas about 1840 with his brothers, William, Peter and Harmon Mickle. They were the parents of Mary, James Sidney, Susan Elizabeth, George Whitefield, Sarah and Martha H.

Dolly G. died in McCurtain, Choctaw Nation (Oklahoma) on June 7, 1907. She is buried in Parks Cemetery in Charleston, Arkansas, near her sister, Susan Richardson. Her obituary follows:<sup>13</sup>

#### *Death of an Aged Lady*

*Mrs. Dollie G. Mickel, [sic] probably the oldest native of Sebastian County, died Saturday, June 7, at the residence of her daughter Susan, Mrs. George Minmier, in McCurtain, Choctaw Nation. Her remains were brought to this city and taken to the residence of Mrs. A. T. Richards, her daughter, on North B Street, where funeral services were held*



**Dolly G. Putnam Mickle (seated), her daughter Susan Elizabeth Mickle Dalton Minmier (left) and Maggie Minmier, daughter off Susan and George Minmier.**

*Monday morning, and Monday evening were taken to Charleston, where they were interred.*

*Mrs. Mickel was 81 years of age. She was born in 1827 on the old Putman (sic) farm about three or four miles northeast of Fort Smith, where she lived until she married George A. Mickel in 1844. Her husband has been dead many years. John Putman, who occupied the homestead farm until some time during the war between the states, and who is well remembered by all of the older residents of Fort Smith, was her brother. Miss Lula Burt, an attache of the News Record office is her granddaughter.*

Her daughter, Susan Elizabeth Mickle, married David C. Dalton and after his death, a widower, George Minmier. My parents, Boyd Hearn and Mary E. E. Dalton, are buried beside her mother and father, David Whitman Dalton and Viola Roxi Ann Chappell, and her grandmother, Susan Elizabeth Mickle Dalton Minmier in Steephill Cemetery.



David Whitman Dalton (center), Mary Virginia Dalton Howard (left) and Maggie Minmier (right), c.1914

### **Arkansas Gazette Remembers Arkansas Pioneers**

The *Arkansas Gazette* published histories of early Arkansas pioneers to commemorate the Centennial of Arkansas statehood in 1936. The *Gazette* featured the family of Samuel and Mary Putnam in the *Gazette Magazine*. Excerpts from that article follow:

*...In the bend of the Arkansas river near Fort Smith where Mr. Putnam lived, there were a number of veterans of the War of 1812 who lived close enough to be called neighbors in those days, although they would be considered as living some distance today. Among them were William DuVal, the Indian Agent; Col. Samuel Morton Rutherford; Maj. Elias Rector, who accompanied Colonel Rutherford to Florida and by his tact helped him bring the Seminole Indians to the Indian Territory after the government had failed in the attempt; and John Rogers the founder of Fort Smith.*

*As Mr. Putnam prospered, he extended his possessions. The government records show that he made a cash entry on April 16, 1836 for the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter and the*

*southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of section 35, Township 9 north, range 9 west of the Fifth principal meridian containing 80 acres; and on the same day he made another entry for the northeast quarter of section 2, township 8 north, range 23 west, containing 160 acres. Patents for these tracts were recorded on August 20, 1838 at Fayetteville, where the Land Office was then located. Much of this land is now (1936) owned by Harry E. Kelley. It embraces the site of the old Electric Park at Fort Smith. (Samuel is listed on Crawford County, Arkansas tax records for the years 1830-1839).*

*Mr. Putnam cleared much of his land and built a large double house of logs in what is now, (1936), the Sub Rosa addition of Fort Smith. The house, in later years known as the Smith home, was destroyed by fire a few years ago (1936).*

*The Putnam plantation of 300 acres was a social and hunting rendezvous for many civil and military notables in the early days of western Arkansas. Many of the outstanding names listed in the early history of that part of the state were identified with this place. A schoolhouse was erected for the children of the community. It was a small building, made of logs, on the location of what is now the Henry Fort property on the Mussett Road. The seats were made of split logs, with pegs driven into the convex side for legs. It was known as the Nowland 15 Springs school, being named for a spring nearby. It was a subscription school, and Putnam sent to Massachusetts for the young woman teacher. The Van Buren road from the ferry on the Arkansas River came in Sixth street and turned to pass the school. In the 1860s, the log school was replaced by a frame building, which stood until the Trusty school on Sixth street was built. Four generations of the Putnam family began their schooling here.*

*Mr. Putnam was a Presbyterian and an active church member. Since there was no church nearby services were frequently held in their home. "Uncle" Ben Pierson, a widely known pioneer minister, preached at the Putnam home many times.*

*There was a race track not far away, where many races were run for the amusement of the old settlers. Mr. Putnam kept blooded horses on his farm. Buffalo calves, which were great fighters, were placed in his stockyard to protect the domestic animals from the wild beasts. Panthers and wolves were annoying; deer were plentiful, too.*



The eight daughters of Samuel and Mary Putnam left many descendants in Sebastian County, Arkansas. Two of their sons had male children. John Whitman Putnam had a son, John, who was born in 1858. Nathan Thomas Putnam had one son, William T.

The study of the Putnam and Whitman families of Massachusetts, Kentucky and Arkansas proved Mother was justifiably proud of her accomplished, cultured and famous family members. Mother, my daughter, granddaughter, and I were honored with the name Mary after Mary Whitman Putnam, who was raised a lady in Massachusetts, and who proved her mettle in the wilds of antebellum Arkansas.

**Mary Luan Hearn Moore**, a native of Greenwood, Ark., and her husband Rodgers, retired in Memphis, Tenn. and returned to Arkansas. She is a life member of the Fort Smith Historical Society and past president of the South Sebastian County Historical Society and editor of *The Key*, its annual publication.

## Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Spelling: Putnam or Putman is commonly used for the identical family. Mickel is commonly spelled Mickle, Mickle. In Virginia, the name was also spelled McKyl.

<sup>2</sup> *Goodspeed, Northwestern Arkansas*, page 1365, states Samuel came from Vermont.

<sup>3</sup> *Fort Smith Herald*, Fort Smith, Arkansas, February 2, 1848.

<sup>4</sup> Sudsbury, Middlesex County, Mass. Marriage Record.

<sup>5</sup> *The Putnam Leaflets*, page 11-12, Volume, IV, by Eben Putnam, January, 1908, Tennessee State Library, Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee. Also Putnam Leaflet, 1908 Cs 71, page 99, Kentucky Putnams: "Samuel has been a rover, but is now settled. Frequent movings has kept him from accumulating property, but is now in Ark."

<sup>6</sup> SE Quarter Section 24, Township 4, North to Range 12 West in the tract for Military Bounties in the Territory of Arkansas. US Land Patent, Number 24363, Vol. 2970, page 500.

<sup>7</sup> 1830 US Census, Crawford Co., AR., Upper Twp., Samuel Putnam, 0110101-2112201.

<sup>8</sup> *Arkansas Pioneer and Allied Families* by Mrs. Larry P. Clark, 1976, Public Library, Russellville, Arkansas.



L-R: Dr. George Howard, Viola Chappell, holding baby Virgie Howard Reynolds. (Boys) John Emery Dalton, Bill Dalton, Maggie Minmier, Mary Virginia Dalton Howard, (child) Mary Dalton Hearn and David Whitman Dalton.

<sup>9</sup> Bible record in possession of Virginia McPhail, Van Buren, Arkansas, 1970.

<sup>10</sup> 1830 US Census, Crawford Co., AR., Upper Twp, John Shields, 001001-001

<sup>11</sup> 1830 US Census, Crawford Co., AR., Upper Twp., John M. Spaulding, 100001-00001.

<sup>12</sup> Tombstone of Dolly G. Putnam Mickle states, "wife of George W. Mickle", Parks Cemetery, Charleston, Arkansas.

<sup>13</sup> *Fort Smith Elevator*, June 14, 1907, page 5, col. 4, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

<sup>14</sup> *Arkansas Gazette Magazine*, April 12, 1936, Volume X11, No 7, pages 3 and 13.

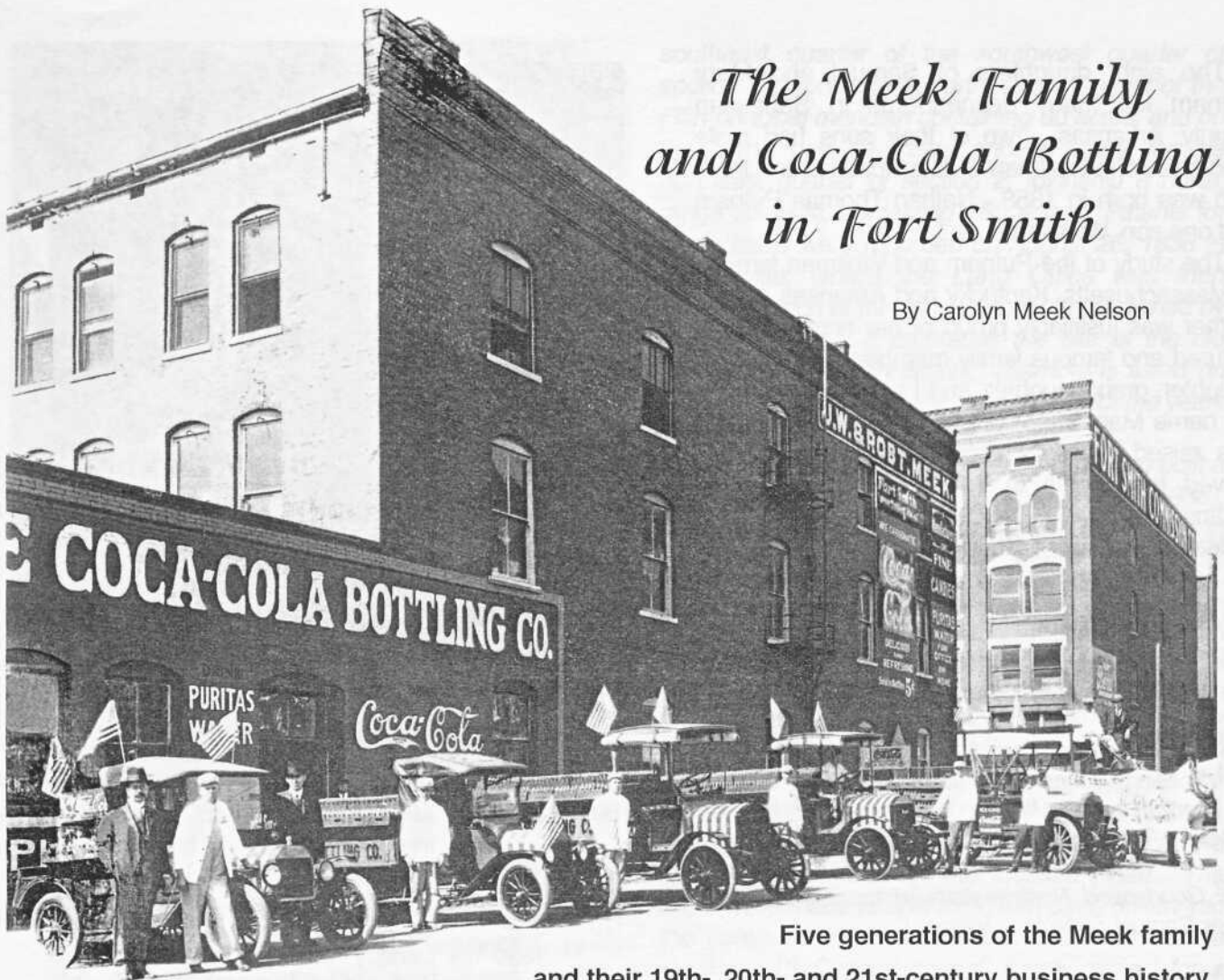
<sup>15</sup> Harriett Nowland was a next neighbor to the children of Samuel and Mary Whitman Putnam, 1850 US Census, Crawford Co., AR, Upper Township. Most of their married children were next neighbors on this census record. They may have been living on their parents land after Mary and Samuel died in 1847 and 1848.

<sup>16</sup> Many of these stories are credited to Samuel and Mary Putnam's granddaughter, Mrs. D. L. Winters, and Mrs. W. E. Sublett, and Curtis Winters of Wichita, Kansas in 1936.



# The Meek Family and Coca-Cola Bottling in Fort Smith

By Carolyn Meek Nelson



**Five generations of the Meek family  
and their 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century business history,  
including the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Fort Smith.**

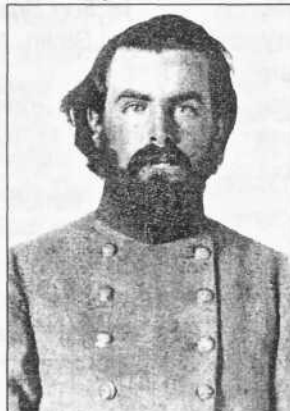
James Stanhope Meek, the progenitor of the Meek family in Fort Smith and the great-grandfather of this writer, was born in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, on June 13, 1837, one of the sons of Rev. William Spraggins and Nancy Cole Meek. The family left Tuscaloosa County, Alabama and moved to Union County, Arkansas, sometime around October 1845, settling in the Three Creeks area, where they established significant farming operations.

On December 24, 1857, James Stanhope married Miss Mary Jane Moore, a daughter of another Three Creeks family. This marriage produced three sons: William S., John A., and my grandfather James Wise (J.W.) Meek, born on

August 2, 1861, which was after his father had enrolled in the Confederate Army.

James Stanhope enrolled in the 3rd Arkansas Infantry Regiment, which was raised at Three Creeks, on June 19, 1861, and served under Captain James W. Reedy. Several brothers, cousins and brothers-in-law also served in this regiment, and several Meek relatives were casualties of the war. (*They'll Do To Tie To*, a book by Capt. Calvin L. Collier, is a very good account of the service of the 3rd Arkansas Regiment.)

James Stanhope's name appears on the Muster-in Roll of Captain Reedy's Company of Arkansas Infantry, dated July 5, 1861 at Lynchburg, Virginia, on which he was listed as a 24-year old First Sergeant.



**James Stanhope Meek  
1837-1896**

He received a 43-day furlough on Feb. 1, 1863, and traveled home to his wife and three young sons. Little did he know that this would be the last time that he would see his wife and his oldest son, William Spraggins Meek.

On Aug. 10, 1864, Lt. Meek wrote in a letter to Gen. S. Cooper, AIG Richmond, Va.:

"Sir,

*In consequence of a bad calamity which has recently befallen my family which demands my attention at least occasionally and there being three (3) Commissioned Officers in my Company two (2) of which are present for duty, and only Sixteen (16) men present for duty, I therefore tender my resignation to take effect immediately, with the privilege of joining another command nearer my home.*

*Very Respy. Your Obt Servt*

*J.S. Meek*

*2 Lieut Co. G. 3d Ark"*

(The bad calamity to which he referred was the death of his wife Mary Jane on July 8, 1864, the death of his son William S., on July 13, 1864 and the death of his wife's grandmother, Lydia Tubb Moore on July 9, 1864, in Three Creeks, Arkansas. They were victims of "the fever" that spread over the Three Creeks community, killing many people.)

The lieutenant's resignation was disapproved by the Confederate secretary of war on Aug. 25, 1864. I have often wondered why he didn't tell the general what the "bad calamity" was. One can only imagine the grief and heartache he must have felt over the death of his wife and son, and the worry he had for the two surviving motherless sons at home.

James Stanhope Meek was on a "List of casualties in 3rd Arkansas Regiment — May 6, 1864" from the Wilderness battle near Charles City Road, Virginia, where he was severely wounded in the face. He also appears on a Register of Medical

Director's Office, Richmond, Virginia under the heading of "Officers recommended for leaves of absence," as injured on May 6, 1864 in the right side of face and neck and granted 30-day furlough.

On Jan. 11, 1865, he again tendered his resignation, but it is not included in copies of Lt. Meek's service records that were secured from the Arkansas History Commission.

After the Civil War, he moved to Louisiana and stayed a relatively short time there. He married Heather Taylor O'Hara about 1865. She died on June 13, 1873, in Homer, Louisiana. From this marriage, four children were born, Robert Stanhope Meek, who was born in Ruston, Lincoln Parish, Louisiana, on July 4, 1868, and three daughters, Fannie, Pansy, and Della James.

Sometime before 1880, James Stanhope had moved to Cleburne, Texas. It is probably there that he met and married his third wife, Mrs. Pattie Leigh Bledsoe, a widow with three children. From this marriage came three more children: Susan A., Julian, and Gresham King Meek.

Once again James Stanhope Meek moved his family — this time to Fort Smith. James W. was 18 and Robert was about 12 years old. The family is listed in the 1880 federal census of Fort Smith, along with four other Meek children and the three Bledsoe children. Patti Leigh Bledsoe Meek died in 1928 at the age of 83 years. Gresham K. Meek served as manager of the Fort Smith plant and was named to the Board of Directors in December 1922, serving until his resignation in December of 1928.

James Stanhope Meek came from a family of doctors, ministers, farmers and businessmen. His grandfather

John Alexander Meek was a minister, medical doctor, and a land owner. His father, William Spraggins Meek, also was a minister and farmer. Both of these men were very prominent and instrumental in establishing Baptist work in south Arkansas and north Louisiana.

**THE ECONOMY  
GROCERY STORE**

**TEN REASONS  
Why You Should Trade at this  
HOUSE!**

I. It is located at the very gateway of the city, convenient to both city and country.  
II. You can get what you want in the Grocery line.  
III. Because you can do better either in price or quality.  
IV. A good quality is a specialty.  
V. When you pay for a good article, you get it every time.  
VI. When you buy a pound sixteen ounces is at all times given.  
VII. The proprietor makes every statement about groceries good.  
VIII. When you buy goods from this house and get home you are happy in the use of them.  
IX. Because Economy being its name, Economy its motto and Economy in expenses, indeed this charming virtue, entering into every branch of the business guarantees to you the very lowest prices possible.  
X. Last but not least, the proprietor, J. S. Meek and his Son, (best known as Jimmie) are experienced grocery men, and can be relied on.  
Superior advantages makes us headquarters in Flour, both at wholesale and retail. Our White Frost Flour is the best in the market for the money. Come to see us with your produce, we are always on the market, near the Old Red Mill on the Avenue. Look for THE ECONOMY GROCERY sign and sell your produce and buy your groceries there. Thus live long and be happy. Cash paid for cotton.

**J. S. MEEK.**

**An early advertisement of a  
J.S. Meek grocery business**

John Alexander Meek was one of the founders of the First Baptist Church in El Dorado, Arkansas, and his portrait is currently displayed in the foyer of that church. A few years later, Rev. William Spraggins Meek became the pastor of that same church.

James Stanhope Meek and his heirs chose the life of businessmen and most of them have been or are still active in the Baptist church. The 1890 City Directory of Fort Smith lists him as the proprietor of Meek's Cotton Yard.

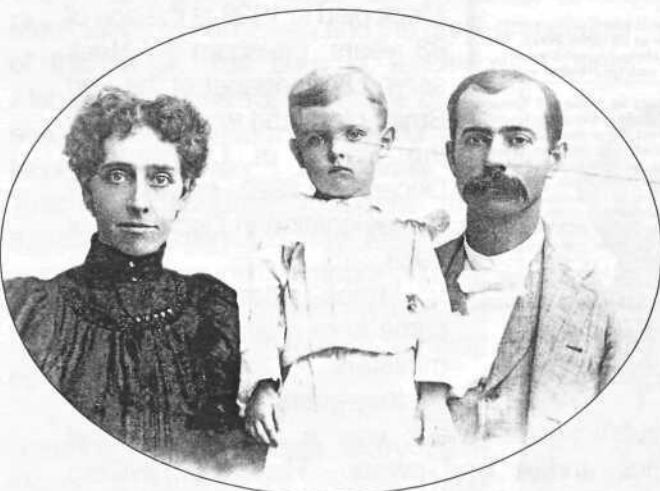
James Stanhope Meek died Dec. 12, 1896, at the age of 59 years, and is buried in Oak Cemetery, Fort Smith. His official death certificate lists Sulphur Springs, Arkansas, as the place of death; however, Sulphur Springs was then an unincorporated community located south of Dodson Avenue and east of Fort Towson Avenue that later became part of Fort Smith.

### **J.W. and Robert S. Meek: Half-Brothers Fort Smith Coca-Cola Bottling Founders**

#### **James Wise Meek**

James Wise (J. W.) Meek was born August 2, 1861, in Arizona, Louisiana. His mother was Mary Jane Moore, the first wife of James Stanhope Meek. She died July 8, 1864 at the age of 25 years, being one of several Meeks who died during an epidemic that swept through Union County, Arkansas.

J. W. Meek came to Fort Smith with his father's family from Cleburne, Texas when he was 18 [which would be about 1879]. He worked in the grocery

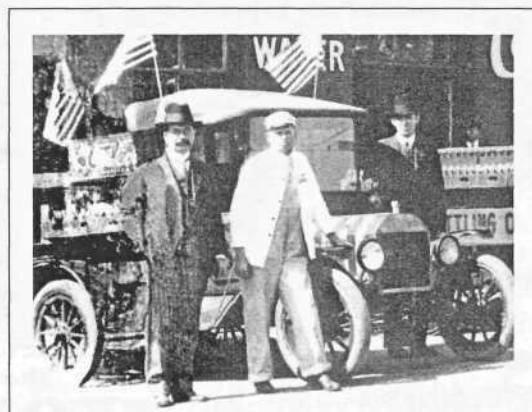


**James Wise (J.W.) Meek (right) and his wife Gertrude Brown Meek and their only son, James Dabb (J.D.) Meek.**

store of Paul DeLorvin on Towson Avenue and later on Garrison Avenue until he purchased the store. A short time later, his brother, Robert Stanhope (Robert S.) Meek, became his partner and the brothers started a wholesale and jobbing candy company at Sixth and A streets about 1892, later starting the manufacture of candy. (The J. W. & Rob't. Meek Candy Company was dissolved and ceased operation in 1927.)

On Dec. 10, 1890, J. W. was married to Miss Gertrude Brown of Fort Smith, the daughter of a well-known contractor and builder. She died in January 1901, at the age of 35 years. James Dabbs Meek (Jim D.) was their only child.

J. W. was a member of the First Baptist Church of Fort Smith and was a member of the board of deacons for more than forty years. He was also active in the Elks Club for many years.



**J.W. and Robert Stanhope Meek flanking a Coca-Cola truck and driver (Circa 1917).**

#### **Robert Stanhope Meek, Sr.**

Robert Stanhope Meek was born July 4, 1868, in Ruston, Louisiana. His mother was the second wife of James Stanhope Meek, Heather Taylor O'Hara, who died June 13, 1873, at the early age of 23 years, following the birth of their fourth child, Della James Meek. (Della James Meek married Patrick Andrew Carr, who is honored as a Fort Smith police officer killed in the line of duty. Andy Carr was a subject of the Oak Cemetery's "Tales of the Crypt" in 2004.)

Robert S. Meek married Louise Allen Milton and they had three children: Preston Allen Meek, Robert S. Meek, Jr. and Anne Louise Meek. He died Oct. 18, 1949, at age 81 years, and, along with most other close Meek relatives, is buried in Oak Cemetery in Fort Smith.



## Meek Generations in Business

1. **James Stanhope Meek** b. 1837 d.1896

1. m. Mary Jane Moore (1857) d. 1864

2. William S., d.1864

2. John A.,

2. **James Wise (J.W.) Meek** b. 1861  
(grandfather of writer)

m. Gertrude Brown 1890; d. 1901

3. James Dabbs Meek (**Jim D.**) b.1892 d. 1975

4. **Roger S. Meek** (retired)

5. **Roger S. Meek, Jr.**

4. Carolyn Meek Nelson (*author*)

1. Married Heather Taylor O'Hara (1865) d. 1873

2. Fannie, Pansy and Della James

2. **Robert Stanhope Meek, Sr.** b. 1868 d.1949

m. Louise Allen Milton 1903

3. **Preston** Allen Meek d. 1962

3. **Robert S. Meek, Jr.** d. 1977

4. **Robert S. Meek, III**

3. Anne Louise Meek

1. Married Pattie Leigh Bledsoe (died in 1928)

2. Susan A.

2. Julian

2. **Gresham King Meek**

(Manager and Board Member, resigned 1928)

Coca-Cola Bottling Co.  
founders

Coca-Cola Bottling Co.  
2005



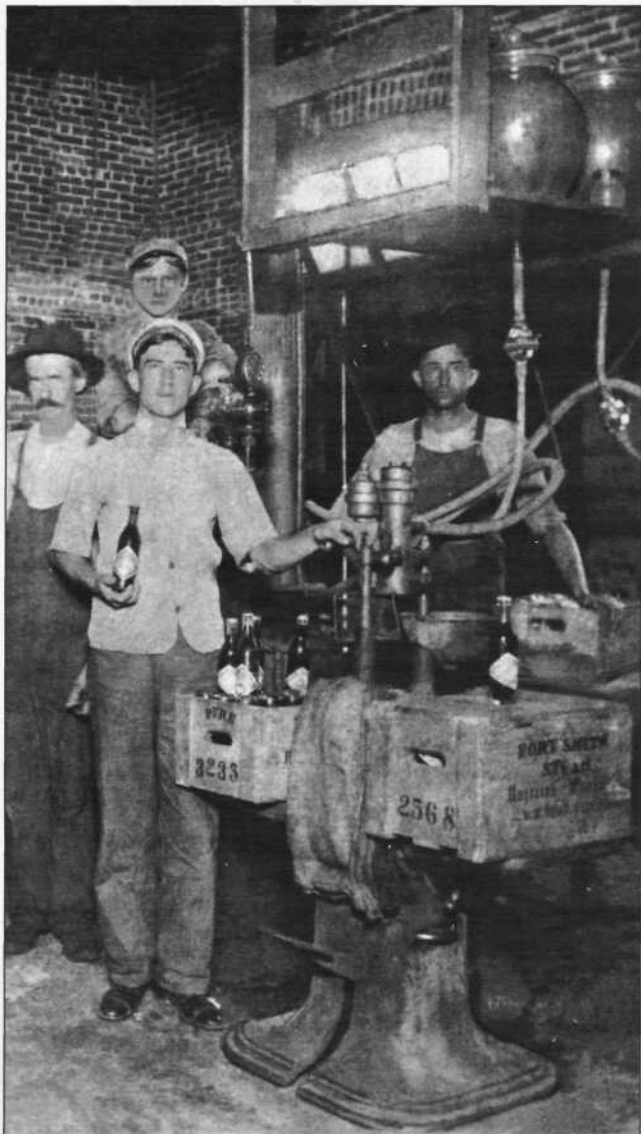
The building above is the location of "J.W. and Robt. Meek, Confectioners." "1899" is date on the sign at top. The Meek Candy Company ceased operation in 1927.

J.W. (far left) and Robert S. Meek (center, in doorway) with workers, presumed to be standing at the confectioners building shown above at South 2nd St and Rogers Ave.

All photos, courtesy of the Meek Family



## Fort Smith Coca-Cola Bottling Company



In 1895, the brothers expanded their business with the purchase of the D. J. Young Bottling Co. from J. D. Elliott. This business also included the Fort Smith Bottling and Candy Company as Mr. Elliott had previously acquired The Fort Smith Steam Bottling works from D. J. Young.

A three-story building was constructed in 1899 at South Second Street and Rogers Avenue to be the home of J.W. and Robt. Meek Manufacturing Confectioners and the Fort Smith Steam Bottling Works. The building was constructed over portions of the officer's quarters and the garrison parade on what had been a part of the military reserve of the original Fort Smith. It was directly across from Judge Parker's courtroom, which had only been closed for a few years.

In 1903, J. W. and Robert Meek acquired the right to bottle Coca-Cola as a sub-bottler from M. W. Fleming of Little Rock. Records from the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta show that a total of 190 gallons of Coca-Cola syrup was shipped to Fort Smith in 1903. The territory was described as a radius of fifty miles from Fort Smith.

In 1907, they purchased the exclusive right to bottle Coca-Cola from Mr. M. W. Fleming for \$1,500. The territory included all of western Arkansas from Scott County to the Missouri border and to Boone County on the east. It also included Sequoyah, Leflore, parts of Adair, Cherokee, Haskell and other counties in Oklahoma.

In 1911, sub-bottler contracts were made with J. L. Ramsey, Paris, Ark.; Rogers Bottling Works, Rogers, Ark.; and Poteau Bottling Works, Poteau, Okla.. These contracts gave sub-bottling rights to those contractors in their respective towns. Harrison Bottling Works, Harrison, Ark., was later granted a sub-bottler contract.

In 1913, four solicitors were placed in the field. Their purpose was to take orders for the products and look after empties (bottles and cases) and to advertise.

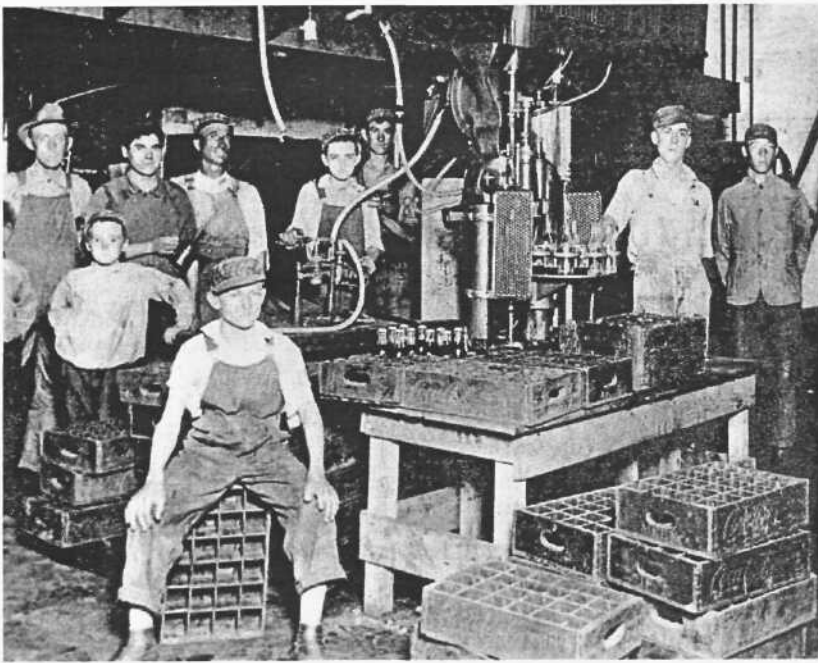
It is interesting to note that in 1915, Mr. James C. Wing, Inspector, The Coca-Cola Company, noted that the Fort Smith Steam Bottling Works had the following equipment:

- 1 Junior soda automatic filler- manufactured by Crown Cork and Seal Co.
- 1 Foot power machine
- 1 20th Century Simplex Soaker (bottle washer) developed and sold by Geo. J. Meyer
- 1 Universal rinser

He also noted that the plant had four traveling salesmen and that advertising should be placed by salesmen to obtain best results.

The first trucks were purchased about 1915. Before that time, all Fort Smith deliveries were by horsedrawn vehicles, with deliveries to towns outside Fort Smith being made by rail. Rail shipments were made in barrels of 18-dozen bottles and cases of three- and six-dozen bottles.

Mr. Fletcher Bell, the father of former Van Buren mayor Gene Bell, was at one time a truck driver for Coca-Cola. He recalled that when his truck was to go up a fairly steep hill, he had to go in reverse gear because the truck did not have a fuel pump and gasoline would not flow to the engine if the truck was inclined going forward.



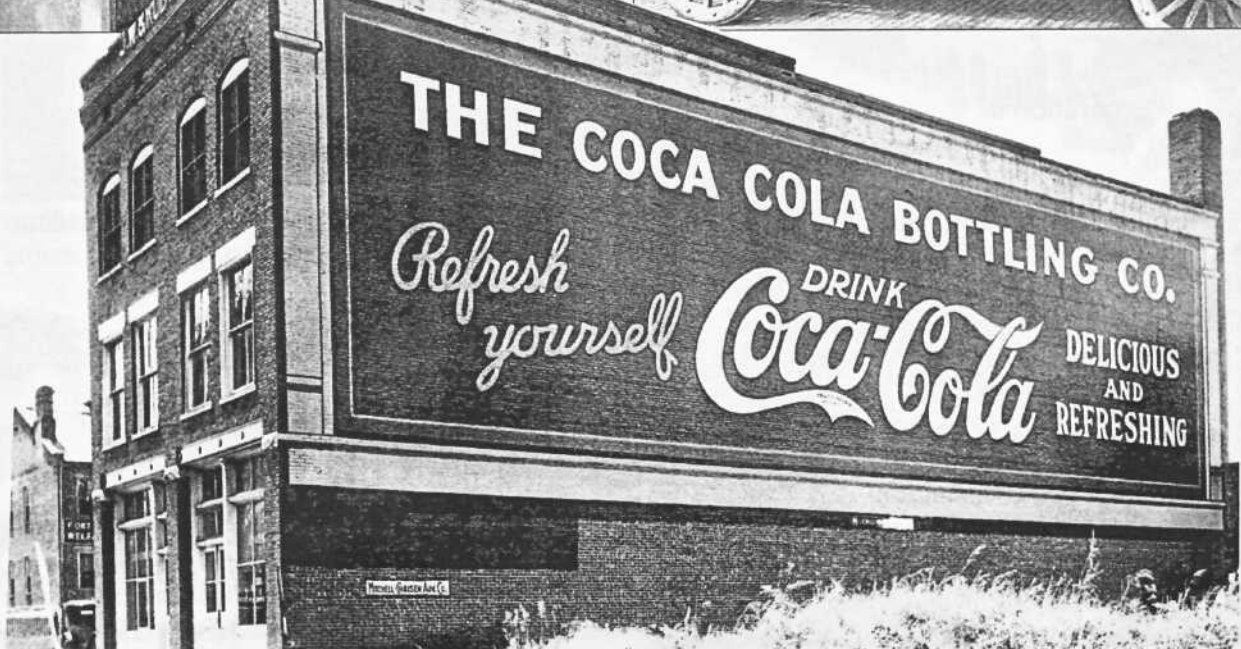
### The Real Thing:

Early steam bottling works of the Fort Smith Coca-Cola company (opposite page and left), undated.

J.W. Meek at his desk (lower left.)

A candy and cola truck with a Coca-Cola umbrella (below), is undated, but the wooden wheels indicate the pre-World War I era.

The Coca-Cola sign painted on the Meek building, (bottom) was at the time the largest sign in Arkansas, according to the Meeks.





On March 4, 1916 "The Coca-Cola Bottling Company" was incorporated with Robert Meek as president, and J. W. Meek as vice-president.

Additional expansion occurred on Jan. 22, 1917, when the Muskogee, Oklahoma Coca-Cola territory was purchased. The equipment inventory from that purchase included three foot-power crown machines, two horses, two 2-horse delivery wagons and one top buggy.

In April 1917 a Pure Food Show was held in Fort Smith and Coca-Cola constructed an exhibit booth. The booth consisted of walls constructed of stacks of Coca-Cola bottles, bedecked with streamers and banners advertising Coca-Cola. It was reported that more than five thousand people were served free Coca-Cola during their visit to the booth.

#### **The First Cousins: Jim D. Meek, Preston A. Meek, and Robert S. Meek, Jr.**

For many years, Jim D. Meek, son of J.W. Meek and Preston A. Meek, the son of Robert S. Meek, Sr., were the managing partners representing the families of the two founding brothers. Upon the death of Preston Meek in January, 1962, his brother, Robert Stanhope Meek, Jr., became a managing partner.

#### **The Second Cousins: Roger S. and Robert S.**

Upon the death of Jim D. Meek in 1975, his son, Roger S. Meek, became the managing partner representing the J. W. Meek family. Robert S. Meek, Jr. died in April 1977, and his son, Robert S. Meek, III then became a managing partner. Roger S. Meek retired in 1990, and his son Roger, became a managing partner.

#### **The Fourth Generation of Meek bottlers**

Today, Roger Meek Jr., a grandson of Jim D. Meek, and Robert Meek, III, a grandson of Robert S. Meek, Sr., are the managing partners, representing the fourth generation of Meek family ownership of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Fort Smith, and the company itself is one of approximately fifty privately-owned Coca-Cola bottlers still in existence. In 2003, the company issued a special bottle to commemorate its 100th anniversary as a Coca-Cola bottler.

Much of the early history of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Fort Smith has been carefully preserved by Fred Kirkpatrick, who has more than sixty years' service with the local company. Without

his dedication and conservation efforts, much of the history would have been lost over time. He has supervised the establishment at the Fort Smith plant of an exceptionally extensive Coca-Cola museum that contains many significant and scarce items and memorabilia. This museum is proudly made available for public inspection in appreciation of the enviable position that Coca-Cola holds in the refreshment of Fort Smith and surrounding areas.

It is also appropriate to note that a special commemorative Coca-Cola bottle was produced in limited quantity to recognize Mr. Kirkpatrick's sixty years of service from 1938-1998. This item is being written some six years later, and although Mr. Kirkpatrick is officially retired and "keeps his own time," he is still active in preserving the history of the company and on certain days he can be contacted at the office he still maintains at the plant.

**Carolyn Meek Nelson** is the daughter of Jim D. Meek. She lives in Fort Smith.

#### **Coca-Cola Trivia:**

In 1886, the year Coca-Cola was created, its originator, John S. Pemberton, spent \$46 for advertising and sold 25 gallons of syrup.

The Fort Smith plant also bottled Ward's Orange Crush in 1919; Green River carbonated drink in 1920; Delaware Punch in 1922; and Grape-Ola in 1928.

In 1936, the Fort Smith plant sold 1,922 6-bottle cartons of Coca-Cola.

Diet Coke distribution began in May 1983.

"New" Coke was first distributed in April, 1985, followed by Cherry Coke in July and Classic Coke in August.

**Gold commemorative bottle presented to Preston A. Meek on the 50th anniversary of Fort Smith Coca-Cola Bottling Co., 1949.**





Robert S. Meek Sr. in 1948 on his 80th birthday, with a Coca-Cola cake.



A sales meeting Jan. 20, 1937, with sales quotas on the board. (McCann Photography)

Center: Preston Meek

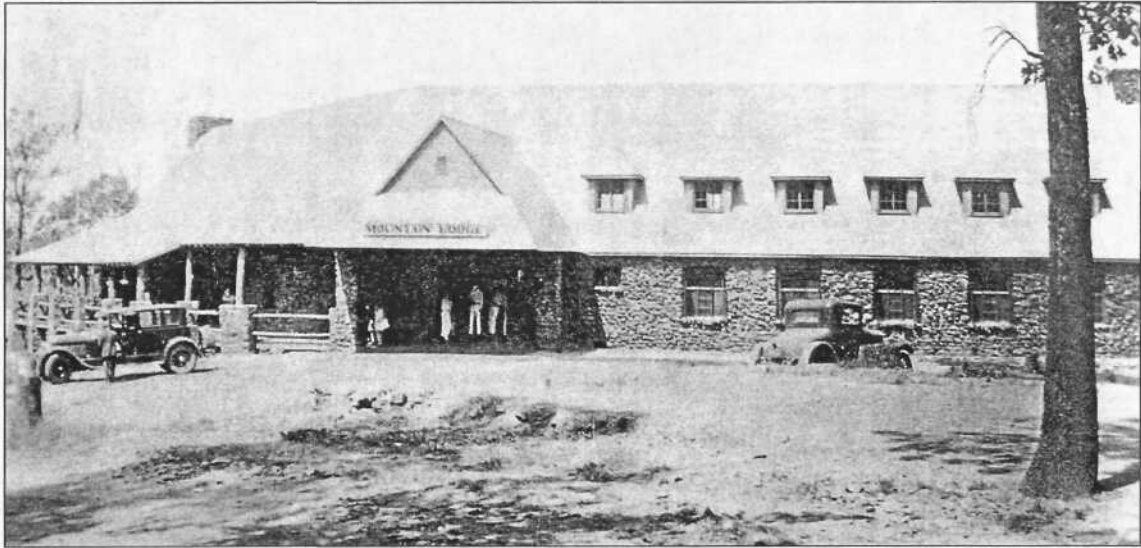
Below: A Coca-Cola Christmas promotion offering free ornaments in Coke cartons.



Coca-Cola truck and driver, 1952. "Ice Cold Coke - 5 cents."

# *Winslow Park: A Rustic Retreat*

*by Melanie Speer Wiggins*



"It was Fort Smith's Palm Beach," quipped Kay Cravens, whose mother frequented the mountaintop enclave. "It was a mecca for so many people — a place to get away. They went there because it was cooler."

Even in mid-July the temperature dropped to the 40s and 50s at night, and vacationers lit roaring fires in their fireplaces to keep warm. Ida McFaddin (Mrs. W. P. H.) of Beaumont wrote to her husband on July 4, 1917: "You just have to see it here to appreciate the beauty and the coolness. We almost freeze each night and until noon the next day..." In another missive she remarked that her two sons were sleeping under double blankets. Betsy Speer Taylor recalled that as children, she and I hurriedly dressed in the mornings in front of the fire in the living room of our grandparents' cottage, "Ever-Green."

Located at the end of the row of summer homes, "Ever-Green," built by Kitty and Charlie Holt in the early 1930s, was the center of family activities for the Holts, my parents (Melanie and Ralph Speer, Jr.) and my sister Betsy and me. We remember the house as having spacious front

and side porches, a large living room, three side bedrooms, two small bathrooms, and a sleeping porch on the upper level. Down the back stairs were a large dining room, small kitchen, and maid's quarters. Beyond "Ever-Green" sat a looming, black water tower and a dirt road that wound through the woods and ended at the tennis court and golf course.

Mrs. McFaddin described the area succinctly:

"The whole place is only about two or three blocks long and we walk along the boardwalk. The houses are along each side. We are on the very top ridge of the mountain just wide enough for the houses and the back of the cottages are on the slope of the mountain and so much that most have their kitchens and dining rooms under the cottage." She went on to say that the view on both sides of the mountain down to the valley below was "beautiful."

Folks from Van Buren, Fort Smith, Oklahoma City, and several Texas towns arrived each summer in the early years by train and later by auto.

When the resort was organized in 1909 by Tom Harris of Winslow and



The author, Melanie Speer Wiggins and her grandmother, Betty Black Speer at Winslow in 1937.

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The second Mountain Lodge at Winslow Park (above) was constructed of stone and had wide verandas offering a beautiful view.



Chicago, Harris purchased 404 acres of land (the entire mountaintop) and started selling lots. With a rambling, wood frame lodge on one end of the ridge and golf and tennis areas at the other, his project seemed promising.

"Mountain Lodge ends successful season," announced the Winslow American on 10 September 1909. "This new enterprise is of great value to Winslow as a summer resort. The Chicago men who are financing this project are meeting with success in the sale of building lots, having sold and contracted twenty."

However, the project ran out of money and failed, but those who already had purchased property and built cottages went into action by buying the mountaintop and forming the "Winslow Park Club." They continued to operate the resort as a club until it was built out with thirty-nine summer homes. Much fun was had by all vacationers for about thirty-two years, until the beginning of World War II.

A letterhead for the club, dated June 3, 1920, listed the directors as W. A. Childress (Houston); George B. Dealey (Dallas); W. J. Echols (Fort Smith); H. L. Fitzhugh (Fort Smith); M. K. Graham (Graham, Texas); George W. Jalonick (Dallas); J. C. Robinson (Dallas); Henry C. Read (Fort Smith); and R. J. Speer (Fort Smith). Officers were Henry C. Read, president; R. J. Speer, secretary; and W. J. Echols, treasurer. The name W. O. Clark appeared in the center of the letterhead as manager.

"The Ozarks were the closest mountains to the flatlands that the Texans could get away to in the summer," wrote Ralph Speer, Jr. "Many families from Fort Smith and Van Buren, as well as people from many points in Texas, owned or rented living facilities on the several mountaintops in the Winslow area." Speer listed the families he remembered in the 1920s as the Dealeys, Mosses, Bueles, Jalonicks, and Greens, all of Dallas. From Houston came the Tom Guthries, Cochrans, Garretts, Lykes, Garrows and Childresses. The Malcolm Grahams, Ed Grahams, and Bruce Streets hailed from Graham, Texas (northeast of Mineral Wells), and

Waco visitors were the Sturgises. The Mastins and Smiths lived in Fort Worth. From Beaumont came the McFaddins; and from Galveston the John Douglas and Charles Holt families.

In 1882, the Frisco Railroad laid a track through the narrow valley, with a tunnel at the crest of the Ozarks at an elevation 2,000 feet – the highest railroad site between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains – and the town was born. Previously, there was a stagecoach stop at "Summit," the top of the divide at the north end of the tunnel, and the little settlement became known as Summit. After depots were built along the line, they were named for railway officials; and Winslow bore the name of Frisco's president.

Incorporated in 1905, Winslow village quickly grew and prospered as a "health resort." A number of businesses existed, including Dunlap Drug Store, Cooksey Saw Mill, A. N. Cole General Store, Dugan Blacksmith Shop, and a couple of other establishments. It is thought that Dunlap Drug Store was the first business built against the bluff, probably in the late 1880s: it housed the office and pharmacy of Dr. Albert Dunlap. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church came into being in 1887 with the leadership

of Dr. Dunlap and his wife. Then in 1905, the Early Day Methodist Church came along, and in 1908 the Christian Church was established.

With an easy 40-mile train trip from Fort Smith to Winslow, many Fort Smithians and Van Buren people began to frequent the mountain hamlet, and many built cottages in the surrounding hills. The first

colony appeared above the tunnel and was called "Van Buren Row"; the houses had names like "Bide-A-Wee," "El Nido," and "Justamere Cottage." Ralph Speer's home at Winslow Park bore the label "Shack Speer;" the Leigh Kelley house was dubbed "Nunni Chukka," and the Ross house had a sign announcing "The Martin Box." Another notable title was "Linger Longer."

During the period around 1908, more businesses appeared in Winslow, including a confectionery, a hardware and furniture store, grocery and general stores, a cleaning and pressing shop, shoe repair,



**The Ross family cabin, called "The Martin Box."**

lumber company, barber shop, meat market, bakery, millinery, ice house, and ice delivery service. Most important of all, the Bank of Winslow had two teller windows, and the Winslow Telephone Company (on the second floor of the bank building) boasted a switchboard operated by Misses Maude Guinn and Beulah Land.

At the same time, summer cottages at Winslow Park Club on the east mountain were being built along the road extending down the ridge from the lodge to the water tower. A board walkway allowed residents to stroll from their dwellings to the lodge for dinner; however the walkway became brick as it neared the lodge.

"I remember that the walkway was made of wood," reminisced Betty Morgan. "I'd lose my little childhood jewelry down between the slats. You didn't see very many walkways of that nature."

As children, Betsy and I spent many an hour meandering up and down the walk, stopping to visit various friends: one of our favorites was Mrs. Moss, who made stick men for us out of toothpicks and acorns. Other ladies graciously invited us in for cookies and milk, which we eagerly accepted.

Everybody loved Winslow, and from the very first, the mountain area offered small hotels and inns. In 1904, shortly after the railroad was finished, entrepreneurs from West Fork built a three-story

hostelry and named it the Mountain Hotel. It was the only one that stayed open year-round, but in 1923 it burned to the ground. Others were the Summit Hotel on top of the mountain and The South

View Inn near the Summit.

At the top of the treacherous road to Winslow Park stood the first lodge, a rambling one-story frame building with many porches that overlooked the valley north of the village. Guests could stay in the numerous rooms and enjoy the excellent food and cold, fresh, mountain air. Those who knew it said that it had much more atmosphere than the stone lodge, constructed in 1926 after the old building went up in flames.

Hackneys with two-horse teams waited at the depot to transport arrivals to their respective hotels or cottages. Six trains a day chuffed in and out, delivering hoards of guests with their trunks, bags, and paraphernalia. Oliver Whitsett, Oda Miller, Will Langston, and Ben Hysell, all hack drivers, gathered the guests, loaded them

up and clip-clopped down the various dirt roads.

"Hysell, a native with a great gift of gab and a walrus mustache, drove the hack that ferried guests up to Winslow Park," explained Ralph Speer, Jr.

As time went on and the Great Depression hit the United States, Winslow as a resort declined, and the train service dwindled to two trains a day: one in the morning, and the other in the evening. Before the night train pulled into the station at 8, a crowd of locals and summer guests gathered in anticipation of the event. Author Douglas C. Jones in his novel *Weedy Rough*, set in Winslow, describes the scene:

*For a while, they could hear the train pulling the long grade on the south side ... Then there was no sound of it, only the ground trembling as the locomotive entered the far end of the tunnel. The people grew quiet, waiting, and then with a bedlam of sound, drivers screaming, bell and whistle sending their warning, the train burst from the tunnel in a gunshot eruption of smoke, rounded the curve along the cut . . . and came into view, brakes shrieking. It roared past the platform, almost sucking the expectant people under the wheels, the kids squealing and holding their hands over their ears.*

Betsy and I were among the children covering our ears and cringing near the platform. Grandpa



**At the Frisco train station  
Eleanor Moore of Galveston  
pushes (back) Melanie Speer  
Wiggins (front) and (Betsy)  
Betty Speer Taylor.**



Ben Hysell and his hack could be hired for the steep and twisting ride from the station to the cabins at the top of the mountain. The team of horses had to rest frequently.

Holt would frequently drive the family down to the village to enjoy the thrilling entry of the train. He taught us to place pennies on the track before the big locomotive roared in, then with great excitement, we collected the smashed coins. Grandpa punched holes in them, and we made penny necklaces, strung on string. On other occasions we placed crossed straight pins on the tracks, and they became tiny "scissors." Apparently, children from the earliest days of the railroad had been doing the pin and penny trick: it was one of Winslow's traditions. Sometimes, if there was a waiting period of any length, the elders would pile the children into baggage carts and wheel them up and down near the tracks.

Everyone who stayed in the Winslow mountains and most of the town's inhabitants gathered each evening at the station. "The drug store, the three or four ice cream parlors or confectioneries all did a rushing business immediately after the train left the station," noted historians. My father said, "We had an ice cream cone at Bob's Confectionery," and Ruddy Ross recalled that "The main entertainment was going down and watching the train come through. That was the big deal of the day. We had lollipops, ice cream, and popsicles from the drug store."

I still remember crunching on rootbeer-flavored Reeds lollipops with twisted string safety handles as we walked around the village.

To get from the station to Winslow Park, travelers, with their heavy luggage, had to endure a wagon ride that zig-zagged up the steep, narrow, rocky road, with blind curves every few yards. About halfway up the mountain, when the panting horses needed a rest, driver Hysell stopped his team and backed them up until the wheels went into the deep wagon ruts.

"These were called 'Thank-you ma'ams,'" explained Kay Cravens. "The wheel would stop against the ridge: it was very hard going up that long, steep road."

When automobiles came on the scene, the blind curves became a worse hazard, and the few people who owned cars frequently honked before they proceeded around the narrow bends. "There was a story about Mrs. Mastin, who made her chauffeur honk at every hairpin curve," said Randall Viguet. "She always did that, and so everybody knew who was coming up the hill, because it was a honk, and a little while, honk, and then honk."

Mother's friend, Eleanor Douglas, spent many summers with her grandmother, Mrs. Mastin.

"Mrs. Mastin was the only one who brought a chauffeur up there," recalled Ralph Speer, Jr. "She had a Cadillac and a driver, which was unusual for that time and that place."

"She brought a cook, too, and I remember that she set a pretty fine table up there," said Betty Morgan. "She had us to lunch one day, and I was so impressed because she had a butler waiting on the table. He would put dishes on, take dishes off, and so on."

Mrs. Mastin was also Tommy Mastin's grandmother. "We called her 'Sweet Mama,'" recalled Ruddy Ross. Mrs. Mastin's son Tom and his wife Mary (Ruddy's mother's twin sister) came every summer with their son Tommy. On one occasion Tom Mastin drove his wife, son, and mother up to Winslow and almost got killed getting up the mountain. "He was driving one of those Airflow DeSotos. They looked like an up-side-down bathtub. The spring rains had kind of washed the road out," explained Ross. Mastin had stopped the car to let someone pass, the road caved out from under him, and the car rolled three times down the mountain. "As I remember, they didn't get hurt." Perhaps it was then that Mrs. Mastin hired her chauffeur.

"I went up to Winslow all my life," recalled Betty Speer Morgan. "Mother had a condition where she didn't sweat, and she'd get very hot. In those days, there wasn't any air conditioning. So in 1911, Daddy bought a cottage up there on the mountain because it was cool." Her parents, Ralph Speer and Betty Black Speer, set trunks out on the front porch of their Fort Smith home and filled them with clothing and bedding for the family, so that they could stay comfortably on the mountain for a couple of months. "My first memories were that we went on the train."

In the early days, there were six daily passenger trains and an extra train in the summer months that was called the Dinkey, running between Fort Smith and Fayetteville for people commuting to the northern resorts.

"Shack Speer" originally was a small cottage, and in later years, the Speers remodeled and enlarged it, adding a wide front porch. They dug a water well in the back yard, which provided fairly decent drinking water, but I always thought it tasted dreadful. When I visited my grandparents at "Shack



Speer," they had a three-person swing on the front porch, and Betsy and I spent many hours flying back and forth in it. One day we had my little cousin Keith Jackson between us; and as we soared up nearly to the ceiling, the chains suddenly broke, and the swing with all of us in it sailed forth and crashed to the floor. By a miracle, none of us was hurt.

W. J. Echols had built a cottage near the Speers, and he named it "Bill Mont." One of the Echols daughters, Elizabeth Cravens, remembered that the bath water always had tadpoles in it and that "it was something you had to get used to."

Mrs. Elizabeth Cravens said that there was a grocery store in Winslow where the children would go to buy marshmallows for roasting. "One day they couldn't find any marshmallows, and the store owner told them that he wasn't carrying them anymore," said Kay Cravens. "When they asked why, he said, 'Because I can't keep them on the shelf.' Big entrepreneur!"

Mrs. Cravens' aunt, Katherine Sandels, would take her nieces and nephews — Bill, Mont, Bay, and Elizabeth — to Winslow in the summers after the children's mother died. At that time they were ages three, five, seven, and nine, and they loved to dress up—the girls as Indians and the boys as baseball players.

"Tah [Mrs. Sandels] would get irritated because in the early mornings Mr. Speer would make loud clanging and banging noises drawing water from his well, and the racket would wake up her charges," explained Kay. "Mother and the others did a lot of walking: they would walk down the road going to Fayetteville to the sweet grass woman's house. She made sweet grass baskets, which were very popular."

In 1917, Mrs. W. P. H. (Perry) McFaddin signed a lease on a cabin named "Camp Tejas." (Later, she rented "Nunni Chukka.")

Ida glowed with enthusiasm about "Camp Tejas" in a letter to her husband, who was tending their vast cattle ranch in Texas: "Across the front and one side [of the house] the railing is of logs with the bark on it. Across the front is the living room with a big rock fire place, and from the living room opens two bedrooms, one into a big bath with stationary stand tub and toilette." She went on to say that there was a "pretty large porch on which we eat," and ample space for their clothing and dishes and refrigerator. There was another bedroom and a large sleeping porch, and other bedrooms on the second floor.

"We have every convenience but electricity, plenty of lamps, though."

Mrs. McFaddin explained in her letter that the red raspberries and huckleberries were "so beautiful." Eggs cost twenty-five cents a dozen and chickens forty cents apiece. As for the train, she instructed her husband to "for goodness sake, take the Frisco out of Houston when you come. This other way is fierce and that stay in Fort Smith of 7 hours (in Hades) is something terrible." She commented that it was crowded on the Frisco local, and that "the handles of the seats were hot and my glasses felt as if they had been on the stove."

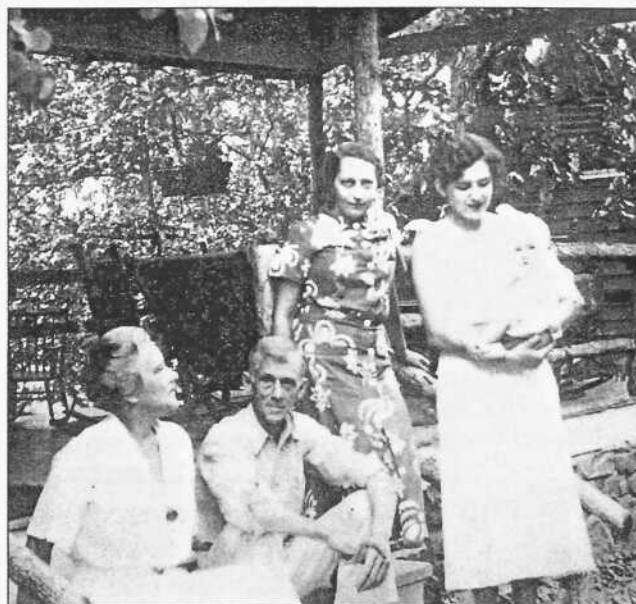
On the Fourth of July, only a few vacationers had arrived at the mountaintop resort, but cottages were being opened each day. Mrs. McFaddin's two sons, Perry ("Peb") and Caldwell spent most of their time playing golf and tennis, then enjoyed evenings at the lodge dining and socializing with the girls.

On July 7, 1917, Ida noted that she had been diagnosed with malaria and treated by a local physician, Dr. Dunlap. In the same letter she mentioned that "Just because I'm ill and can't see anyone, I've had five callers in the past hour. The people are very genial and nice, and I especially like my new neighbor Mrs. Speer." After quinine treatments, Ida revived and continued her friendship with my grandmother. The two loved to play bridge and did so several times a week.

"Mrs. McFaddin seldom missed a game," commented my father, Ralph Speer, Jr. "I remember that she was a rather large woman who wore a pince-nez and an imposing array of jewelry. It seems that between bridge games Ida, like many of the women, spent much of her time making jellies and jams from local berries and apples. She graciously gave her recipe for Jumbalaya to her friend Betty Speer, who had never heard of it and wrote it in her recipe book as "Jumble Isle."

In August, when the United States had been involved in World War I for four months, a group of ladies gathered at the lodge for a fund-raiser. "We are going to have a Red Cross party this afternoon . . . everyone pays 25 cents & it goes to Red Cross here. I am knitting socks for soldiers instead of sewing shirts," Ida reported. Her next remark was, "We are having the usual time living easy, and almost back to nature." It seemed that no one really wanted to think about war.

Throughout the summer of 1917, Mrs. McFaddin kept hinting to her husband that they should



The simple pleasures of summer at "Shack Speer" lasted from the turn of the century until World War II. Ralph Speer, Jr. summured there as a child, then courted and married his bride, Melanie Holt, at Winslow Lodge in a summer wedding.



Clockwise from lower left: Ralph Speer, Jr. and his sister Mary at Winslow, where they began spending summers around 1911.

Top left, interior of "Shack Speer," the family cabin.

Upper left, Circa 1935 (L to R) Kitty & Charlie Holt, Betty Speer Morgan, Melanie Holt Speer and baby Melanie.

Above, Melanie Speer Wiggins and her mother's friend Eleanor Douglas at Devil's Den, near Winslow, 1937.

purchase a Winslow cottage. "Several here are for sale and are very attractive and very reasonable 1800 to 2000." No positive response ever came from Mr. McFaddin, even though his wife mentioned that the prominent Dallas newspaperman George B. Dealey, publisher of the Dallas Morning News, owned a cabin across the street and that "quite a few Dallas and Fort Worth people also have cottages here." Actually, Mr. Dealey owned two cottages to house his large tribe of five children and their offspring.

By July 22, Mrs. McFaddin and Mrs. Speer were fast friends and played bridge regularly. One night Ida, as she was departing from my grandmother's house, suffered a mishap. "I was playing cards over at Mrs. Speer's & fell from her steps to the groun [sic]. I stepped of [sic] the first one & the step did not begin to the post so fell & knocked the breath out, they grabbed me up & fanned me, I skinned my leg terribly & feel a little sore all over to-day, 'twas a wonder it did not kill me."

My father, Ralph Speer, Jr., born in 1905, first vacationed at "Shack Speer" at age six, with his parents. "I spent all my summers there for many, many years, practically all of them." He recalled that the lodge had a big dining room that could seat about two hundred, and "they always had good cooks. People would go up there, and most everyone who lived in the cottages would take their meals at the lodge." In describing the colony's water system, Speer said that it was "pretty primitive." There was a gasoline pump in the valley below in Slicker Creek that pumped unpurified, unfiltered water to the big tank at the top of the hill. This was the water for bathing and washing, with tadpoles and other creatures in it. Mrs. McFaddin noted that "this hill has sewerage, which means lots to those, especially, with children."

"At the golf course," continued Ralph Speer, Jr., "there was a lovely, year-round spring, and we had a man who would take five-gallon water bottles and fill them every day, put them on his wagon, and sell them to people."

An avid golfer, Ralph spent much of his time at the nine-hole course. "My first experience with golf was as a caddy. The grass was cut with an old-fashioned field mower and never got cut less than five or six inches high. It was almost impossible to keep track of your ball . . . so that the caddies stayed out a hundred and fifty yards and watched the balls down." When the caddy spotted the ball, he put next

to it a small piece of cardboard to mark the place. "I would do that, and I got paid fifty cents a day for a round."

"The golf course was sort of primitive," Speer went on, "but it had nine holes and enough cleared land to be able to keep the grass mowed. They collected all the rocks and piled them up in great bunkers; they were placed as a hazard in the course. The rock piles were six or eight feet high, and in long rows, and if you weren't careful, you could lose a ball awful easy in them." Throwing his ball out meant that the player had to take a stroke off his game.

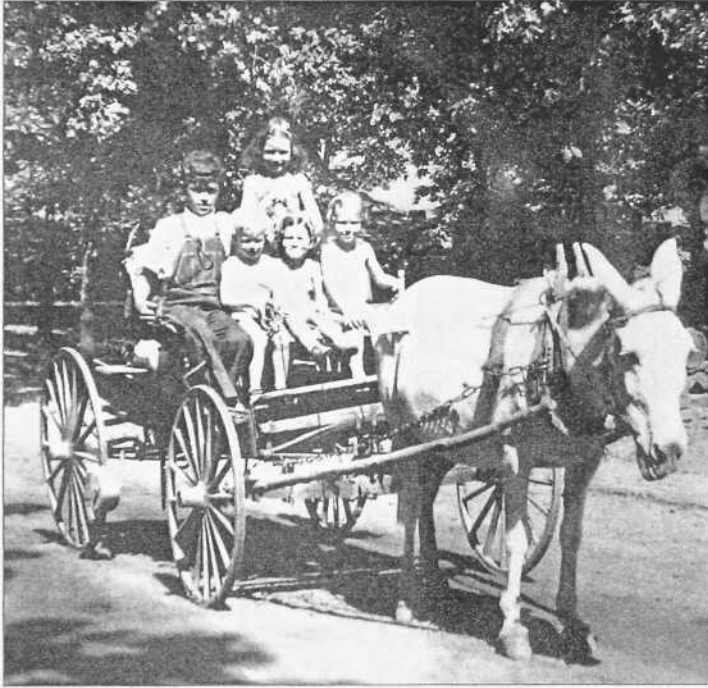
Speer mentioned that people also enjoyed horseback riding on rented steeds, swimming in the hole at Slicker Creek, and fly fishing for bream and perch in the north fork of the White River. They sometimes took the train southward, got off at Mountainburg, then walked to Hog Bayou, fished for six or seven hours, and caught a later train back. "We got a little bit of fishing that way."

"From Winslow south to Fort Smith, the roads were almost nonexistent—almost pig trails. The first time I drove from Fort Smith to Winslow, my father and I took five-and-a-half hours to make it, and part of the road was right down in the creek bed, where you'd run the car over rocks."

No one seemed to care that getting to Winslow presented a challenge. The trip was always worth it. Most folks from Texas and other states came by train, and a few brought cars. In the 1930s, my grandparents, Kitty and Charlie Holt, drove from Galveston in their big automobile, loaded with clothing, supplies for the summer, and their dog, "Big Shot." On special occasions they would take us down to Lake Fort Smith, where we swam in the large, dirty, public pool or went fishing with Dad in nearby creeks. Once in a while we chugged over the bumpy dirt road to Devil's Den State Park for swimming and picnics or went to nearby Slicker pond for a quick dip. Children were allowed to roam freely, and Betsy and I were never accompanied during the day; however, we were not supposed to wander off the main road to the lodge. Our most daring activity was spitting grape seeds off Granny Holt's side porch.

Other youngsters like Ruddy Ross were more adventurous. One day he, his sister Sue, and their cousin Tommy Mastin, climbed to the top of the water tower using a narrow ladder on the side. "We got ready to come down, and Tommy climbed down,





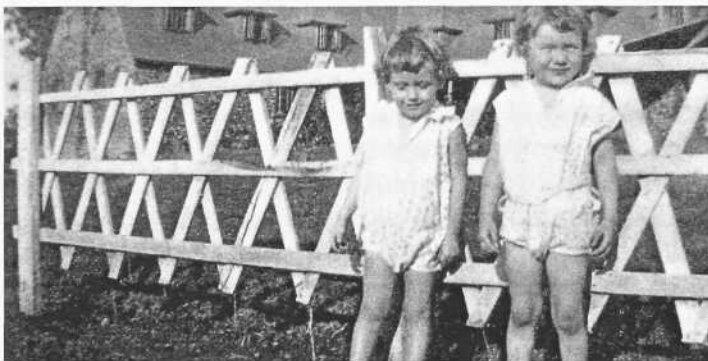
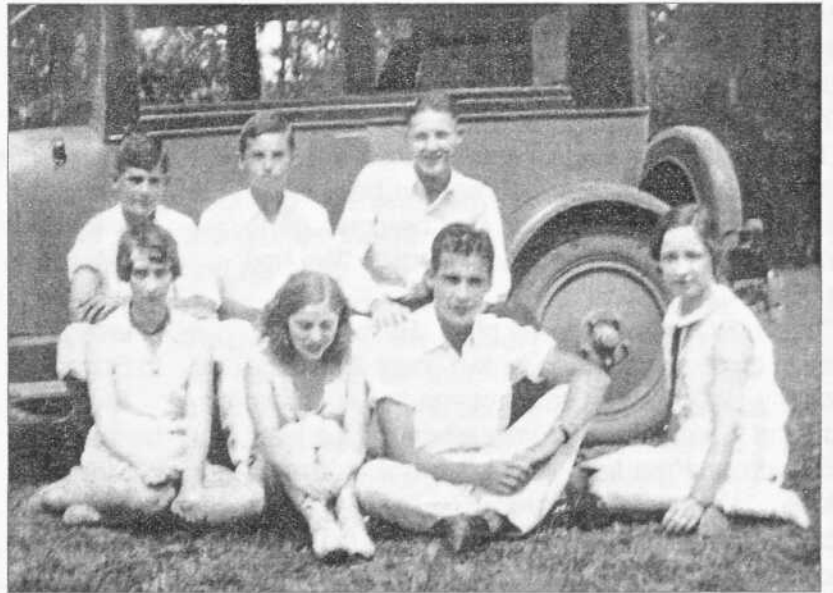
Pony Cart with children shown in main road of Winslow Park.



A tribe of Winslow Park girls as "Indians" in 1909.



Bill Echols held up by the Indian girls, 1909.



Ruddy and Sue Ross at the lodge.

For the children Winslow was a place to play and imagine. For young teens, a place to swim, hike, fish, play tennis and court. A group of 7 teens at Winslow, above.

Each night the dinner bell rang to gather families at the Mountain Lodge. Even though the bath water "had tadpoles," the living was gracious and genteel at Winslow Park.

and I climbed down, but Sue got to the edge and panicked. She wouldn't come over the side, so we went back up and tried to get her down, but we couldn't push her — it was too far." To solve the problem the two boys enlisted the aid of a neighbor they called "Carrot Top," and he climbed up the ladder, grabbed Sue around the waist, lifted her like a sack of flour, and got her to hold on to the steps as he helped her to the ground.

On another occasion the trio followed the narrow trail near the lodge that wound down the mountain and ended at the city reservoir. "It was a wonderful trail," explained Ross, "it was canopied over with all sorts of small trees, and it was like walking in a tunnel. You'd go down that mountain single-file, and at the bottom was the reservoir: it was concrete with tilted sides and an open top. We went down there and swam, and we were later told that that was the city water and we didn't have any business swimming in that damned thing. Besides, we were peeing in it. We didn't tell anybody about that."

Ruddy recalled that his father, Rutherford J. Ross, flew to Winslow in his private plane, a 1931 Curtis Wright Pusher. "He'd buzz the house after work, and we'd run out there [golf course] and pick him up. He'd let us tie down the plane on the golf course." Mr. Ross's flight took about twenty minutes from Fort Smith, and the family would drive him back to his plane early in the morning so that he could go to work. "He commuted," remarked Ruddy. "We had lots of fun up there."

"You know about the power plant," Ross went on. "It came on every afternoon for two hours and made electricity. We had to use kerosene in the lamps, and I had to clean them. Every afternoon the plant started up and ran from about two o'clock to four o'clock. Why that time of day? I guess that's because it was when people needed the least electricity." Mrs. Ross would make her five children take naps in the afternoons, and "Mama had a great big old Emerson fan. That fan would come on, and she'd say, 'It's nap time,' and we'd nap on the floor for about an hour."

Ruddy remembered the crank telephone in the house; two long rings and one short ring indicated the Rosses. At that time no one had a private phone line: there were multiple "party lines," and anyone could pick up the receiver and listen in on other people's conversations. If they talked too long, a strange voice might say, "Hey, it's time to let someone else use the phone." The operators in

town were notorious for freely eavesdropping, too.

"I remember that my daddy bought a kerosene refrigerator. . . . It had about a two-gallon thing on the side where you'd put the fuel. Everybody from miles around came to see that thing." At that time everyone else owned simple "ice boxes," where the ice delivery man placed square chunks of ice of the size indicated by a sign on the box that the owner set at 25, 50, 75, or 100. Blocks weighing several hundred pounds came in on straw-lined Frisco cars, were loaded into an ice house, cut up, then delivered to local customers."

In about 1931, the Ross family began their trips to Winslow. Ruddy recalled that about that time the highway department was working on U.S. 71. "They were grading it and paving it, and guys with mules and slips [big scoops with two wooden handles] were moving dirt around, blasting rocks. About a year later, the soil must have been unstable, because they came back and drilled holes in the concrete and put hoses in there and poked them full of mud. I thought they didn't know what they were doing."

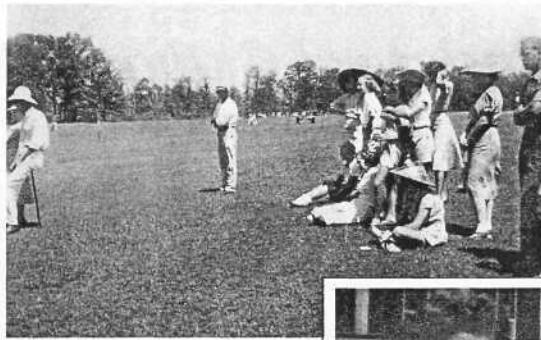
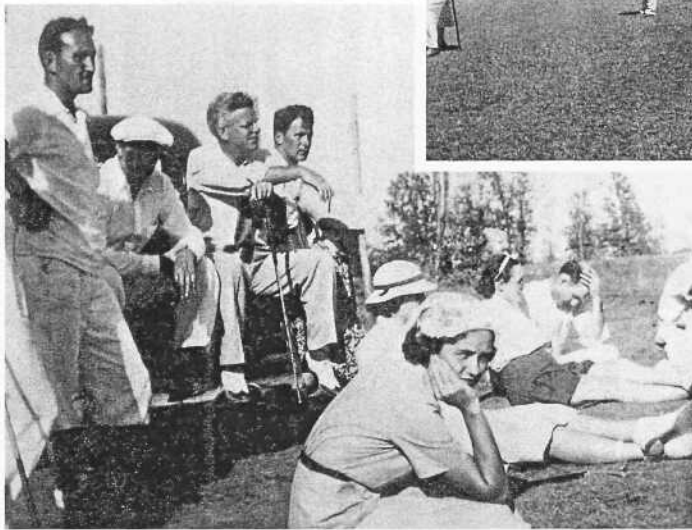
With a family of seven to provide for all summer, Mrs. Ross asked her husband to help her with transportation so Mr. Ross duly acquired a big truck with sideboards, loaded it to the brink with supplies and clothing, and drove it up the mountain. Ruddy said that his mother had "three or four hats that she couldn't pack, so she'd put them all on her head—one on top of the other. She would wear a hat to church [St. Stephens Episcopal] or when she went to Sunday dinner at the lodge."

Dining at Mountain Lodge meant being on one's best behavior and was a special treat for us children. At a certain time each evening we heard the distant clanging of the lodge bell warning everyone to start walking from their cottages; then a second bell sounded telling diners to get into the dining room and be seated. Mother had taught us manners from Munro Leaf's 1934 book, *Manners Can be Fun*, but one thing was missing from the rules. The first time the waitresses set in front of us small bowls of warm water with lemon slices, we thought it was time to make lemonade and immediately did so, to Mother's great chagrin.

Mother (Melanie Holt) had originally visited Winslow as a guest of the Douglas family, who were Galveston neighbors of the Holts, and as a fourteen-year-old she spent several summers with her friend Eleanor Douglas at the Mastin house. At that time



At a Winslow Park golf tournament (center). Melanie Holt Speer in foreground (below.) 1934



Enjoying the nearby Lake Fort Smith swimming pool (from left) Gordon Kelley, Babe Foltz, Lucille Dills and Melanie Holt Speer, 1937.



her parents had not built "Ever-Green," but the Speers had owned "Shack Speer" for years. Dad noticed teenaged Melanie on her first visit and commented: "She was just kind of a big, buxom, young woman, and I was several years older, so she was too young for me to look at. She was just a kid."

After several summers, he remarked, "When she got to be eighteen, all of a sudden, by God, she had turned into a beauty. I was smitten real bad. She liked me, so we got engaged that summer." In 1933 the two were making plans to wed, and at first the Holt family thought they would have the nuptials in Galveston, but that was too far away for Fort Smithians to conveniently travel; so Betty Speer Morgan said, "Why not have it in Winslow?"

Speers and Holts agreed, and it was decided that the ceremony would take place at the lodge on Aug. 23, 1933. Winslow Park inhabitants thought the idea marvelous and got busy organizing the whole thing. Betty Morgan, the groom's sister, recalled that "everybody helped decorate. They'd go out into the woods and gather pretty flowers and leaves and things for the hall. It looked real pretty." Local artisans crafted candle holders made from hickory branches with holes bored in them for the tapers. Betty Speer (Morgan) and Eleanor Douglas (Moore), the bridesmaids, wore "apple green chiffon over satin," and the maid of honor, Betty Holt (the bride's sister) was "clad in lemon yellow chiffon in the same style as the bridesmaids." The bride

looked lovely in her "Empress Josephine" style white chiffon dress and carried a bouquet of white roses and lilies of the valley. Best men were Michael Sicard and Bill Dills, and Edward Merriman served as best man.

During the ceremony, there were two guests sitting under the grand piano: Ruddy Ross, age six, and his sister Sue, four. "That's the first wedding I ever saw," chuckled Ross. "We had great seats, and the place was jammed full of people. The ladies had on hats, and all that stuff. I remember that somebody played the coronet." Indeed, one of the musicians who performed was the talented Mrs. Butler, who provided two memorable solos. After the ceremony, the crowd offered endless toasts to the lucky couple, and "They all got cockeyed," commented Betty Morgan.

Ralph Speer, Jr., in a written summary of Winslow Park, said that "With the coming of gasoline rationing, the doom of Mountain Lodge and the Winslow Park Club was sealed. Unprotected vacant summer homes were robbed of all the plumbing and light fixtures by vandals. The older families dispersed, and the younger generation was not interested in trying to revive the old place. Winslow as a summer resort is now only a memory to a few elderly survivors."

*Melanie Wiggins Spear, a native of Fort Smith enjoyed consulting with her father, the late Ralph Speer Jr., for his memories of Fort Smith history.*



# *A Short Backward Glance at Winslow*

By Jo Ann Kyle



Downtown Winslow, Arkansas, circa 1934 with dirt streets. The sign on the store at left has a sign reading "The Right-O-Way." Trucks are parked on the street, but note the mule coming into the picture at the far right. *Photo courtesy Melanie Speer Wiggins.*

Winslow was incorporated in February 1905. At the time it was reported to be the highest incorporated city between the Appalachian Mountains and the Rocky Mountains. Winslow was named after Edward F. Winslow, an executive of the "Frisco" railroad, when the railroad laid track through the area in 1882. Prior to that time it was called Summit Home.

Over the next 40 years Winslow became a summertime Mecca for the families of not only Fort Smith and the River Valley but also places as far away as Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and more. Many visitors established homes in a summer colony known as Winslow Park.

The descendants of these early summer visitors still come to Winslow looking for the little city that held so many fond memories for their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents.

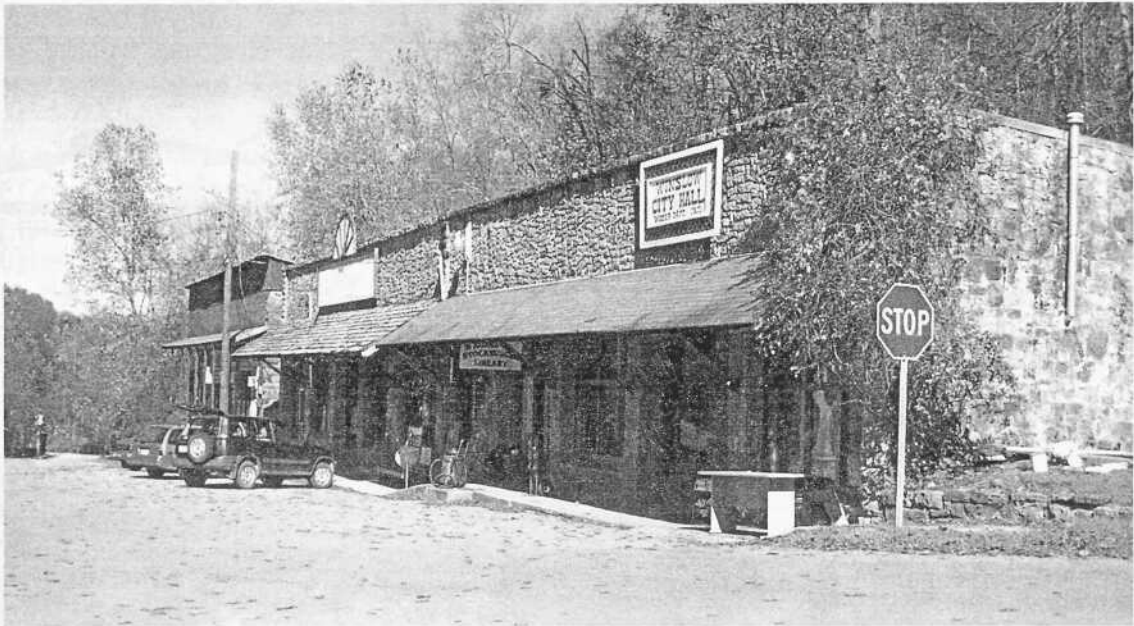
Stories of summer fun at Winslow are still being passed down to third and fourth generations of these families. It is truly amazing that such a small place lives in the memory of so many people.

## **Winslow Resident of Note: Pearl Starr**

One of the more famous or perhaps infamous residents of both Fort Smith and Winslow was Pearl Starr. She is well known for her "house" on First Street in Fort Smith's "Row," but not everyone knows she owned a second home on Bunyard Road in Winslow. Some say it was a retreat for her to get away from the pressures of her business. Others say it was a safe haven for her teenage daughters to keep them away from her own life style in Fort Smith. Still others maintain it was an outlaw hide-away for some of her more notorious friends. The location was set off the road and a posted look-out could see if anyone was approaching from three directions. On the east side of the property a trail led down an embankment that afforded a quick get-away for any of her purported nefarious visitors.

There are several stories told about her arrest in 1911, by Sheriff Dan Murphy, for receiving stolen merchandise, and the subsequent trial in Fayetteville.

Very few people have heard the story told to Robert G. Winn by the youngest daughter of Dr. C.



Downtown Winslow, Arkansas, circa 2005. It is no longer the stopping place for six trains a day bringing resort customers, but the surrounding Boston Mountains are just as beautiful as they were in Winslow's heyday as a summer retreat. *Photo courtesy Jo Ann Kyle.*

E. Jones, and later published in his book, *Who Killed Belle Starr and Other Tragedies, Murders, and Mysteries*. The story, entitled "Midnight Surgery at Gunpoint," relates an incident that occurred when the little girl was about eight years old. Dr. Jones was accustomed to being called out in the middle of the night for medical emergencies but this night was very different. The visitors were Pearl Starr and several rough-looking men wielding guns. One of the men was seriously injured with a bullet in his shoulder. It was made very clear that Dr. Jones was not to go to his office for anesthetic or other supplies, but was to perform the surgery at his residence using only whiskey the outlaws had brought with them to deaden the pain. After the bullet was removed and the wound stitched the visitors departed, leaving behind the wounded man who was too weak to travel, but not before warning Dr. Jones of dire consequences if this episode was ever disclosed. Unbeknown to the visitors, but not to the doctor, the entire procedure had been witnessed through a crack in the bedroom door by a pair of big brown eyes belonging to the doctor's

daughter. When he was sure everyone was gone, Dr. Jones sat down with his daughter and convinced her the threats made by the visitors were very real and serious and they must not tell anyone what happened that night. That little girl kept the secret she shared with her father long into adulthood and revealed it to Robert Winn many years after the threat of harm to her family had passed.

#### **Winslow Plans Centennial Celebration**

Winslow will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its incorporation on September 16, 17, & 18, 2005 with a reunion for all who attended school in the Winslow area. There will be exhibits of memorabilia, booths, crafts, vendors, a Centennial book, other souvenirs, a raffle for a quilt depicting scenes of old time Winslow, skits performed by the students from the school, and many other activities.

The celebration will end with WinFest, a musical performance held annually, at the Winslow Ball Park on Sunday, Sept. 18th.

Consider this an open invitation to the festivities. Plan to join the fun.

# *A History of the W. N. Ayers House*

By Larry Cantwell



William Norton Ayers was born in Warren, Ohio, on Feb. 14, 1825. He moved to Cleveland shortly after his 20th birthday and while there learned the tinner's trade. He later opened a tin shop that included an inventory of stoves and hardware in the small community of Waupun, Wisconsin.

On March 19, 1851, shortly after his twenty-sixth birthday, he married Sarah Ann Sanborn in the nearby community of Chester. Together, they established a home in Waupun. As his business continued to grow and prosper, he purchased several pieces of property in the area and became one of the community's leading businessmen.

The couple's first child, a son they named Samuel, was stillborn. The death on Jan. 9, 1854, was a bitter disappointment. William and Sarah, perhaps to get a fresh start, liquidated their holdings in Wisconsin and made plans to move west.

In Missouri, the Ayres bought a team of oxen, purchased provisions and joined up with a wagon train in Omaha. The emigrants followed a trail that followed the valley of the Platte River to Fort Laramie, Wyo., and then to South Pass, a gap of about 20 miles near the head of the Sweet Water River, a tributary of the North Fork of the Platte.

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***The W.N. Ayers House today (above) as restored by Scott Graham and Velvet Medlock-Graham.***



There, the wagons divided into two separate camps. One group took a southern route toward the gold fields of California by way of Salt Lake City, the team that included Mr. and Mrs. Ayers headed northwest for Washington Territory.

After at least five difficult months, William Ayers and his wife, Sarah, arrived in Washington state and established a homestead, a small piece of property on a hill overlooking the settlement of Olympia. Once again, he opened a tin shop and sold basic hardware goods. Three sons were born while the family lived in Olympia; John (Jan. 21, 1856) was followed by Walter (Dec. 26, 1857) and Howard (May 21, 1861).

During the summer of 1861, Ayers was restless and the family moved once again. For about a year they lived in San Jose, Calif., near Sarah's brother, John L. Sanborn. Later, the family struck out for Ohio. After a brief stay in Bristol, Ohio, they pulled up stakes and went west again, this time to Lawrence, Kansas.

The wartime economy was poor and political conditions in Kansas less than ideal. After a brief time in Jacksonville, Ill., the family eventually settled near Des Moines, Iowa. Two daughters were born during this transitional period, Ida in Jacksonville (Sept. 17, 1863), and Carrie in Des Moines (Nov. 14, 1865).

In Des Moines, Ayers found a job as a clerk in hardware store. While on a business trip with the store's owner, Ayers visited Fort Smith for the first time.

He was attracted to the business climate of northwest Arkansas and yet again moved his family. The Ayers arrived in Sebastian County during the summer of 1866. With a partner, he opened a general merchandise store but eventually the two men had a serious disagreement, divided the stock and went their separate ways.

Ayers saw an opportunity in banking but it soured when one of the officers fled with most of the institution's funds. The thief was found but committed suicide in a St. Louis hotel room before he could be brought to justice. Ayers spent six years settling the bank problems which had been triggered by the embezzlement.

With a small inheritance, Ayers opened a retail hardware store at 111 Garrison Avenue in 1876. With profits from his business, he invested in the Ketcham Iron Company and a chair manufacturing plant.

Following the birth of a son, William Norton Ayers, Jr. on Dec. 21, 1871, Ayers began searching for a home site in Fort Smith. He found six lots on the east side of 12th Street between I and H Streets. He broke ground for his new home in 1888. It was more than just a house, however, it was a statement.

The elaborate two-and-one-half story mansion was built in the Queen Anne style with Eastlake-inspired lineaments. It featured distinctive patterns of decorative detailing such as incised verge boards, wood shingle siding and robust porch spindles. The unusual roofline was embellished with a variety of dormers, porches, corbelled chimneys, and roof crestings. The exterior was an intricate mix of patterned shingles, projecting bays, porches and beaded boards.

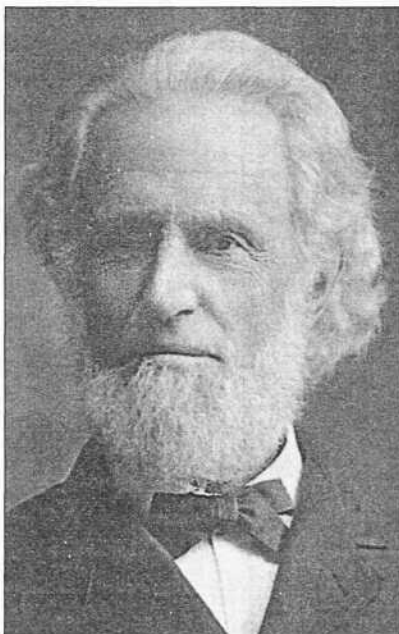
There was an abundance of rosettes on its tin roof, exterior finial scrolls, triangular eyebrow dormers, sunburst patterns and at least eight stained glass windows.

The new house was completed during the spring of 1889, and it was so intriguing and fanciful, the structure quickly became one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city.

Mrs. Ayers died of pneumonia on April 8, 1900. Mr. Ayers continued to live in the house until his death which occurred the morning of Sept. 2, 1914.



**Sarah Ann Sanborn Ayers**



**William Norton Ayers**

Following a funeral in the front parlor of the family home, he was buried at Oak Cemetery beside his wife in the family plot. The last surviving members of the immediate family to occupy the house were a son and daughter, Walter, who died April 3, 1949, and Ida, who died the following year, June 12, 1950.

The house was inherited by Ida L. Hoover, a niece of Ida and the daughter of Carrie Ayers Hoover, in 1950. The property passed out of the Ayers family when it was sold in 1954.

During the 1950s, the house was broken up into apartments and later the cypress exterior covered with a yellow siding.

In 1990, owners Mike Gerland and Tim McCue announced plans to make the landmark home into a restaurant. The yard was bulldozed for a circle drive, the siding removed from the exterior and at least one interior wall demolished to increase the size of the front parlor. As costs began to soar, the two men abandoned their project.

The house sat empty and conditions including a leaking roof, broken windows soon caused the house to slip into even further decay. As the house became uninhabitable, it was declared a hazard by the fire department and preservationists feared that it was only a matter of time before the old landmark would be condemned and destroyed.

One afternoon in 1997, Scott Graham saw the house while driving down 12th Street. He did a double-take and circled the block for a closer look. He was so captivated, he immediately returned to Van Buren to tell his wife about the house.



**After a short-lived renovation attempt in the 1990s, the Ayers house (above and bottom) was abandoned and its decline was so grave that it was declared a fire hazard.**

She was less than enthusiastic, however. The couple had a new daughter and had just completed the renovation of their house in Van Buren. The last thing she wanted was a new project of that scope and size. Scott was determined and for weeks he pestered his wife to at least look it with him.

Finally, Velvet Medlock-Graham reluctantly relented. Despite her initial misgivings, Velvet and Scott Graham purchased the house for \$45,000 and moved into a small garage apartment at the rear of the property. Renovations began that same summer.

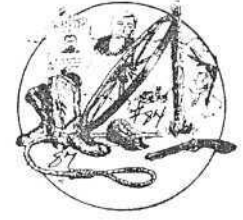
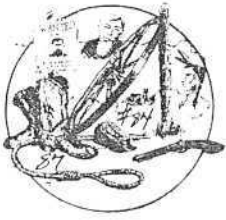
After almost seven years, the house is close to completion. It remains one of the most historically important structures in the city and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It has been featured on several of the historic home tours in Fort Smith. The Graham's daughter, Addison, now six, recently summed up the family's feelings about the Ayers mansion when she looked at her mother and sighed,

"Let's never leave this house, Mama, not ever."

**Larry Cantwell**, a syndicated columnist for King Features and a member of the Belle Grove Historic Commission, has also renovated a historic Fort Smith home, the Blair-Amis House at North 7th and G Streets.



# Hangin' Times in Fort Smith



By Jerry Akins  
(Part IX)

## A New Gallows for New Customers

The execution of Joseph Jackson and James Wasson

The men who mounted the twelve steps to the gallows on April 23, 1886 walked up and onto a completely new platform and gibbet. By April of 1886 the old gallows, last used nine months before, had become dilapidated and was replaced allowing Joseph Jackson and James Wasson to be the first of 44 unfortunates to take those twelve steps on a new structure. On Friday, April 23, 1886, the day of their execution, this paragraph appeared in *The Elevator*.

"The new gallows is put up in a more neat and substantial manner than the old one was. The platform is 16 x 20 feet, supported by solid oak columns 12 x 12 inches square, the cross beam is of solid oak 9 x 11, 16 feet in the clear and resting on two upright columns of solid oak sixteen feet high and about 12 x 12 inches square. The beam is braced on top by heavy timbers, the ends of which rest on the upright columns. The trap door is sixteen feet long and three feet wide. The drop is six feet."

Note that the length of the trap is sixteen feet. Allowing two feet for each person no more than eight people could be accommodated, not twelve or any of the other numbers that have been attributed to it.

Now that *The Elevator* has clarified the rumor of the capacity and capability of the gallows there is another myth that should be dealt with. During the period between the execution of Parchmeal and Arcine and that of Wasson and Jackson there were many others tried in the U. S. District Court for murder and a long list of other crimes. Among them Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves, murder; Belle Star (again), horse stealing and Blue Duck, murder.

Blue Duck has been made into some kind of dime novel badman and "sweetheart" of Belle Star by people who write fiction in the name of history. Blue Duck, from all appearances, was such a minor character that he never rated even one exclusive paragraph in the paper. He is only mentioned along with the other prisoners with whom he was brought in; his accomplice; the people convicted in the same week and those sentenced at the same time.

In the paragraph listing him among the prisoners brought in by Deputy Marshal Andrews, there are four sentences describing his crime and capture. He happened to have been tried in the same period that Belle Star was indicted for several counts of horse stealing and their famous photo was probably taken at that time. The picture was probably taken at the same studio where the well known picture of Belle was taken, armed, mounted on a horse and guarded by Deputy Marshal Tyner Hughes. Belle and Blue Duck may or may not have been acquainted. At that time Belle was married to Sam Star and lived at Younger's Bend in the Eufala area. Blue Duck lived in and his crime was committed in the Flint district, just west of Siloam Springs Arkansas. The story that Belle hired expensive lawyers to obtain a pardon for Blue Duck has no credence. He was defended by Thomas Marcum of Marcum, Rutherford and McDonough, the same lawyers who were public defenders for many of the defendants who appeared before the U. S. District Court. It is true that he was sentenced to hang, commuted to life at Southern Illinois Penitentiary at Menard Illinois and was eventually pardoned. However, his pardon was

Logo design used by permission of Fort Smith Social Studies Educators.



March 22, 1895, six years after Belle Star was murdered and about six weeks before he died on May 7, 1895. The man was dying of consumption (tuberculosis) and may have simply been sent home to die. At that time there was no parole system so the only way to be released from prison was to serve out the sentence or be pardoned. And that long paragraph is probably more than the total of print that Mr. Bluford Duck ever got in the Fort Smith papers, such a minor player was he.

### **Joseph Jackson**

Joe Jackson's case is relatively simple. According to newspaper reports written from testimony in the court and the U. S. District Attorney's description of the crime, Jackson had abused his wife for a long period of time and finally murdered her. He was indicted July 8, 1885, trial begun Sept. 7, 1885, verdict of guilty rendered Sept. 14, 1885 and sentenced on January 30, 1886 to hang on April 23, 1886.

In an almost illegible letter dated March 29, 1886, Jackson's attorney pleaded to President Grover Cleveland for a pardon. Citing the character of the witnesses who testified for the court he stated, "I am assured that malice actuated most of them and that the man is innocent of the charge. Jackson prays a pardon."

U. S. District Attorney Monte H. Sandels replied to the defense attorney's plea in a letter to the U. S. Attorney General dated April 13, 1886 with these words:

"Sir,

"Referring to the application of the negro Joseph Jackson, for pardon. I have to say that he was a murderer long before he committed the crime of which he is now convicted. That neighbors and employer had often interfered to prevent his murdering his wife. That she finally moved up from Red River to within sixteen miles of this place and was employed as a cook by Mr. J. F. Tibbetts of Oak Lodge, I. T. That Jackson came up to that place, went into Tibbetts kitchen and shot her to death while she was washing dishes. That he robbed her of what little she had and went off and told various neighbors that his wife was very sick and asked them to go down and nurse her. He left.

The character of witnesses appearing against him was far better than the average. The testimony was indisputable and his guilt is palpable. My opinion upon the facts is that he has no claim to execution clemency either in the present case or in others upon which he has not yet been tried.

Respectfully

M. H. Sandels

Dist. Atty."

The District Attorney's letter pretty well sums up the events of the case. Jackson had shot his wife with a shotgun and afterward had brought another woman to do some housework on the pretense that his wife was ill. On their arrival they found the body of the murdered wife and Jackson "feigned great surprise and immediately gave the alarm." However, his past brutal actions caused him to be arrested and the truth became known. The Fort Smith Elevator speculated that, "he wanted her out of the way so he could take unto himself another dusky damsel of the vicinity with whom he had become smitten."

### **James Wasson**

"Jim Wasson, who was brought here from Texas quite sick a couple of weeks ago, is now all right and is better pleased with his quarters in the U. S. jail than he was with the Texas prison." (*Elevator* 12-19-1884)

James Wasson's story was the kind of stuff that inspired the writers of western novels; a bad man doing bad deeds and a reputation that deterred anyone from wanting to attempt his capture.

In November of 1881, near Harney in the Chickasaw Nation, Wasson and Johnny McLaughlin appeared at the house of a Mrs. Brooks "a widow lady of some wealth" and asked to see Henry Martin who was living there. Martin was not present having gone to a store a short distance away. When informed of this Wasson and McLaughlin, who were both armed with pistols and were "under the influence of whiskey" mounted and rode off in the direction of the store. A few minutes later several gunshots in rapid succession were heard, and shortly after Martin's horse came up minus Martin. Some men at the home went in

the direction of the shots and about 200 yards away found Martin's body "perforated with several bullets."

Even though Wasson and McLaughlin were the prime suspects they were not arrested "notwithstanding a deputy marshal was at the time camped near the scene". The two culprits left the territory and went to the Panhandle country of Texas for a while. After about eighteen months Wasson came back into the territory "but as he was known to be a dangerous and desperate man and one whose ill will no man cared to engender, he was not molested and rode around the country at will, merely keeping a little shady when a deputy marshal was known to be in the locality, and none of them cared to attempt his arrest under ordinary circumstances." (*Elevator* 4-30-1886)

It appears that Wasson assumed the lifestyle of ordinary inhabitants of the territory for on July 28, 1884 he joined a posse of men, headed by Almerine Watkins, in pursuit of two men and some stolen horses. After the stock was recovered the posse celebrated the event with whiskey and during that time Wasson and Watkins got into an argument which ended by Watkins being shot by Wasson.

Watkins' widow, reportedly a very wealthy woman, immediately offered a \$5000 reward for her husband's killer dead or alive. But although the promise of reward put a number of men on his trail Wasson successfully eluded them and eventually the chase was abandoned. Mrs. Watkins then posted a standing reward of \$1000 deposited in a bank in Dennison, Texas for Wasson dead or alive. On September 28, 1884 he was arrested near Muskogee by Indian Policeman Simps Bennett and was taken to Texas where he was incarcerated at Dallas and for a time was too sick to travel. When he had recovered sufficiently Wasson was brought by Deputy U. S. Marshal J. A. McKee, of Dallas, to Fort Smith arriving on December 2, 1884.

Wasson was indicted on two counts of murder and was tried and convicted on the first, the murder of Henry Martin. That conviction made it unnecessary, at the time, to try him on the murder of Watkins. The papers reported that Mrs. Watkins was present at every term of the court after Wasson was indicted and employed counsel to assist the district attorney

in prosecuting the case. It was said that Mrs. Watkins spent over \$7000 in bringing Wasson to justice. Wasson protested his guilt in both cases claiming self-defense in the case of Watkins and blaming McLaughlin in the killing of Martin. He blamed his conviction on prejudiced witnesses persuaded by the widow's wealth. His attorneys immediately petitioned for a new trial and that failing sought clemency almost until the hour of his death.

### **Commutation for Six, Execution for Two**

There had been eight men sentenced to hang on Good Friday, April 23, 1886 but in the early part of that week all but two had received word from President Grover Cleveland that their sentences were commuted to life in prison. Wasson and Jackson continued to have hope of reprieve, Wasson until the last moments, but none was forthcoming.

Until the evening of the day before the execution Jim Wasson had been confident of a commutation or 'respite'. On receipt of the telegram announcing that the president would not interfere he "was greatly unnerved and could not talk about it without crying". He felt it was very unfair that he should die when all but Jackson had been allowed to live. He denied his guilt citing prejudice and perjury on the part of his enemies, of whom there should have been plenty if the stories of his reputation were true. He never denied killing Almerine Watkins but claimed it was for self-preservation and not of malice.

Thursday night, the eve of his execution, he was awake most of the night and "until a late hour paced the floor of his prison bewailing his fate." On Friday morning he still clung to some hope. Congressman Rogers had been telegraphed requesting him to intervene in Wasson's behalf. So confident was Wasson in some reprieve or clemency that when called on by a minister he declined his services saying that he thought that he could do him no good. The hanging was postponed until two o'clock awaiting an answer from Congressman Rogers. In the meantime Wasson lay on his bunk with his hat over his face.

"Jackson was morose and out of humor, having little to say to anyone." He too refused the offer of a spiritual advisor saying that if

anyone could get him out of his predicament it would be all right, otherwise no one could do him any good.

When two o'clock came and no telegram had arrived Marshal Carroll, several deputies and jailor Pryor entered the jail and presented each condemned man new clothing including underwear, socks, shoes, shirts, neckties and collars and suits. "They proceeded at once to dress, and assisted by their fellow prisoners were soon ready to be lead forth to death." (*Elevator* 4-30-1886) Wasson's bidding of farewell to the other prisoners reportedly left nearly every man in the jail weeping bitterly. Johnny McLaughlin, Wasson's alleged accomplice, was the last to say his farewell with a long embrace. After Jackson had dressed and made his preparations he approached Marshal Carroll and asked if there was any hope for him. When told that there was not he went to his bunk and attempted to cut his throat with a piece of an old saw that had been sharpened. He caused considerable bleeding but otherwise inflicted little damage.

Farewells accomplished, the prisoners were taken to the box or anteroom between the jail and the exit. There they were read the death warrants, then a light pair of handcuffs was placed on each man and with a deputy on each side they were lead forth to the gallows. *The Elevator* reported that, "All day there had been crowds of people flocked around the jail endeavoring to get a peep at the condemned men." And now they passed "through a line of several hundred spectators drawn up on either side of the walk leading from the jail."

After arriving on the gallows, Wasson, in what was believed to be a delaying tactic, asked for a minister and one came forward and conducted appropriate services. Both Wasson and Jackson talked freely during the preparations but neither said anything significant about their crimes. Wasson, to the last, denied anything to do with the murder of Martin. He said that McLaughlin, who was yet to be tried for and acquitted of the same crime, would "come clear." Wasson, although he stood up bravely, wept while he was being pinioned and placed on the trap.

"At 3:40 the drop fell and the job was complete, the necks of both men being broken. They remained motionless, and died without

struggling a particle. In less than twenty minutes they were pronounced dead, and were cut down and placed in their coffins. An autopsy was held on Wasson and his brain being removed it was found to weigh fifty-one ounces." (*Elevator* 4-30-1886)

#### **Sources:**

National Archives

*Fort Smith Elevator*

*Oklahombres*, Vol VII, #1, 1996

Hangin' Times in Fort Smith is a multi-part series by Jerry Akins about the condemned who met with the sentence of execution by hanging at Fort Smith. Previous articles in the series have covered court proceedings and executions from just prior to 1875, when Judge Isaac C. Parker's term began, through the years of 1876, 1878, 1882, 1883, and 1884, including an account of the notable trials, convictions, commutations of sentence and executions.



# 1905 Newspapers

## **FORT SMITH ELEVATOR**

**Jan. 6, 1905 – June 30, 1905**

*(Abstracted from microfilm in the  
Fort Smith Public Library  
by Dorothy Doville)*

*(Editor: Spelling, punctuation and grammar appear  
as printed in Fort Smith Elevator)*

**JAN. 6, 1905**

### HOUSEHOLD

Although we have already talked a little about rendering lard, I would like to suggest that the easiest way to manage a small quantity is to wash it carefully, place it in a pan and dry it out in the oven. When this is done, it is far less apt to scorch than when cooked on top of stove.

Mrs. L. asks how to prevent colored calicos and gingham from fading when laundered. Soak them for a short time in a gallon of rain water in which five cent worth of sugar of lead has been dissolved.

\*\*\*\*\*

Inspector Blown Up – A terrific explosion occurred in the San Bois Coal Company Mine #2 at McCurtain, I.T., on the morning of December 29. Robert Maguire, inspector, was the only man in the mine at the time. The whole county near the mine was lighted by the flames, which shot out of the shaft. It is supposed that Maguire in making his rounds went into a gas pocket with a lighted lamp. The fan-house was carried away so that the rescue party had difficulty in entering the mine. After making a hurried examination of the mine the party came to the top and reported that Maguire has probably been blown to atoms. The mine employs about fifty men, who would have been working in a short time.

\*\*\*\*\*

All the records and property of the Choctaw-Chickasaw citizenship court have been ordered turned over to the Dawes Commission. The records and property are now in Tisimingo but will be shipped to Muskogee at once. The will make about a car load.

**JAN. 13, 1905**

Tuesday's Arkansas Democrat says: Senator John H. Holland, of Sebastian county, who was member of the last house, will offer as his first measure in the senate a bill which he has prepared for a revision of the mining laws of the state, with especial reference to the coal mining business. "My bill," said he, "has been approved by a convention of the miners and others interested in the industry, and I can see no reason why it should fail to meet the approval of the general assembly. At present it is necessary that there shall be at least twenty men at work in the mine, underground, before it can be put under the supervision of the mine inspector. We propose to reduce that to ten. This would probably bring thirty more mines under the inspector. We will also require the state to furnish the inspector with blanks and other supplies as furnished the other state officers, and raise his salary from \$1,500 to \$2,000 a year, or else pay his traveling expenses. We will also require the mine owners to furnish ambulances and hospital supplies and treatment for the immediate treatment of miners who may be injured in the service, and to adopt added precautions against accidents by gas and otherwise.

\*\*\*\*\*

From the Waldron Wasp we learn that apples grown by W.F. Lynch, of Girard, Scott county, won a gold medal at the St. Louis fair.

\*\*\*\*\*

Preston May, 4 years old, died Friday morning at the home of his parents in this city, from croup. His remains were buried Saturday.

\*\*\*\*\*

Governor McCurtain spent several days in the city during the week, undergoing treatment of erysipelas, but he's, we are happy to say, about recovered.

\*\*\*\*\*

Walter Ray, a cook at the Leflore hotel got drunk one night last week and wandered down to the Frisco yards, when he was so badly smashed by a car that he died shortly afterward.

**JAN. 27, 1905**

Grand Opera House, Fort Smith, Ark. Wednesday, Feb. 1. You'll make a fuss over this Girl, who for originality in Stage deportment stands absolutely alone. Eva Tanguay and her big musical extravaganza company, in that Ringing, Swinging, Dancing, Singing Hit, THE SAMBO GIRL and a big chorus of Stunning Girls and more Girls. Special scenes and costume environment. BUT HARKEN! Don't fail to hear Miss Tanguay's Famous songs: They are of that fascination sort will be whistled on the streets of Fort Smith all winter. Prices - 25 cents to \$1.50. Seats on sale at Caldwell's Drug Store Monday morning, January 30th.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas Mittiner and Miss Anna Berger were married in this city Sunday evening by Rev. E.T. Edmonds, of the Christian Church.

**FEB. 3, 1905**

Among the graduates at Annapolis last Monday was Will Eberle, son of Dr. and Mrs. J.G. Eberle, of this city.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Breedlove telephone line was sold Monday at auction to the Pioneer telephone Company of Oklahoma City for \$15,000.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry Glenn, a Frisco brakeman, had his leg amputated at Belle Point Hospital last week as a result of an accident at Jensen.

**FEB. 10, 1905**

#### HOUSEHOLD

I would like to suggest to the out of town housewife that she could increase her pin money very rapidly at present by devoting a little time to the food which she gives her hens. A warm breakfast for the fowls with plenty of green bone and good clean drinking water is certain to bring good results. I find plenty of cooked wheat mixed with other food a great egg producer.

\*\*\*\*\*

Star route mail service has been established from Harkey to Chickalah in Yell County, six miles and back three times a week.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tom Green, a Miller county Negro, was lodged in the federal jail Saturday, by Deputy Holman on a charge of selling liquor without the required government license.

\*\*\*\*\*

Last week the Fort Smith Wagon Company filed notice of increase in its capital stock from \$200,000 to \$300,000. The officers and directors are C.E. Speer, president; W.J. Echols, G.T. Sparks, C.N. Geren, G.W. Cleveland, J.F. Reed and W. H. Johnson, directors.

**FEB. 17, 1905**

Col. Thomas Bales is confined to his home with a serious attack of la grippe.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sheriff Barry's book will be open for the payment of taxes at his office in the court house until the 10th of April.

\*\*\*\*\*

The government last week issued a patent to Gustav Herrman, of this city, for a sandpapering machine. A patent was also issued to James T. Minyard, of Alma, for a crackling press.

**MARCH 3, 1905**

A compliment is not a compliment when it is paid by a man who wants to borrow money from you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Owing to a lack of material upon which to work, the handle factory has been closed temporarily.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Fort Smith Biscuit Company sold 1,000 cases of crackers this week to a firm in Shreveport, La.

Deputy Marshal Holman reported at the federal jail last week with Arthur and John Jones, arrested in Lafayette County for boot-legging whiskey.

### **MARCH 10, 1905**

The Mansfield Gas Company has struck another gas well on Mazzard Prairie.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert Hawkins and Miss Adelaide Morris were married in this city March 1 by Rev. F.F. Gibson of the First Baptist Church.

### **MARCH 17, 1905**

Political candidates are like watches---it depends a good deal on their works whether they run well or not.

\*\*\*\*\*

Rev. E.T. Edmonds has been dangerously ill with appendicitis during the past week but is recovering.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hon. T.B. Pryor, Greenwood's prospective candidate for prosecuting attorney, spent Wednesday in the city.

### **MARCH 24, 1905**

The Street Car Company received another fine vestibule car last week.

\*\*\*\*\*

Last week Lewis Weinstein bought from T.C. Davis one and a half lots in block 2, Convent Place for \$20.00.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jack Williams of Huntington has been endeavoring to establish a gymnasium in Fort Smith, but what success attended his efforts we have not been able to learn. This is an enterprise which should be encouraged, for too little attention is being paid to physical culture.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **MARCH 31, 1905**

The extensions contemplated by the electric street railway company will be held in abeyance until it is ascertained whether the 3-cent fare bill now pending in the legislature becomes a law or not. The passage of the bill would give the local company an exceedingly black eye.

### **APRIL 7, 1905**

Will Copeland has plowed up two human skeletons within the last few days on the farm of W.H. Robins, near Bell, while preparing land for a crop, and the discoveries have occasioned considerable discussion and speculation in the community. No one in the section is able to account for the presence of the skeletons where they were found, as no cemetery nor private burial ground was ever located there and it is possible that the skeletons are mute witnesses of tragedies, the particulars of which will never be known. Nashville News

\*\*\*\*\*

Floyd Beckel, son of Charles Beckel, was severely injured last week by falling upon a butcher knife, which ran into his thigh.

\*\*\*\*\*

Delanie Elliott, who lives on mile north of Arnala, I.T. says he has three diamond rattlesnakes, five feet six inches and six feet six inches in length. They must be delightful pets.

### **APRIL 14, 1905**

Percy Echols, son of Mr. O. Echols, of this city, has received notice of his appointment as a candidate for Annapolis by Senator Berry.

### **APRIL 28, 1905**

Alderman Kennedy held the mayor's office down while Mayor Harper was at the Texarkana good lads convention.

\*\*\*\*\*

James and Frank Vann were drowned last week in Grand River, four miles east of Choteau, I.T., while trying to cross the stream in a boat.



The Lee's Creek Coal, Oil and Gas company started its drilling machinery Saturday afternoon on what is known as the syndicate fruit farm three mile west of Van Buren and lying in the cove formed by a junction of Lees creek and the Arkansas river. The company owns the plant and will sink a number of wells on their 1/2-acre holdings before quitting.

#### **MAY 5, 1905**

We will sell wagons to good citizens this spring and summer on installments. Call and get terms and prices. The Ingle Wagon Mfg. Co., Fort Smith, Ark.

\*\*\*\*\*

People able to furnish references as to standing and property may adopt a beautiful baby girl over a month old by applying by letter to the Childrens Home, Fort Smith, Ark.

#### **MAY 12, 1905**

The bodies of six of the fourteen entombed miners who met death in Degnan and McConnel mine No. 19, April 30, at Wilburton, I.T., were taken out of the mine Tuesday. It is possible to see six of the other bodies, but owing to black damp they cannot be reached at present. The bodies recovered are those of O. Golden, Benjamin Smith, O. Marino, William Palmer, Knox Lynch, and John Edwards.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fort Smith was the recipient Tuesday of a visit from Baron Emondo Mayo des Planches, ambassador from Italy to the United States. Baron des Planches is making a tour of the southwest, looking into the condition of his countrymen. Upon his arrival in the city the baron was met at the depot by a large delegation of our Italian citizens, and after a drive through the city, which occupied about two hours, a reception was held at the hotel Main, where many of our people called and paid their respects to the distinguished visitor.

#### **MAY 17, 1905**

T.J. Sheets, of the Fort Smith Produce Company, informed the Elevator man that his company want to purchase all the spring chickens and hens that are for sale in this territory. They have a poultry car on the track all

time, and are selling the poultry in New York and Boston. It is the intension of this company to become the largest receivers and shippers of poultry and eggs in the South.

#### **MAY 26, 1905**

The Tahlequah Arrow of last week says Columbus Smith, a Negro, was drowned in a creek near Garvin Monday while trying to cross on a mule. Smith was carrying a sack of meal, and in order to keep it dry tied it around his neck. The mule lost its footing and Smith could not relieve himself of the heavy weight. He was found fifty yards from the ford.

#### **JUNE 2, 1905**

Dr. William Neal has removed from Lavaca to Fort Smith where he will locate and practice his profession.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ed Moody brought a car-load of potatoes to Fort Smith on May 25th---the first of the season--and being offered but 55 cents per bushel, shipped them to St. Louis.

#### **JUNE 9, 1905**

The new Christian church will be opened next Sunday. Three services will be held. Dr. H.O. Breeden of Des Moines, Ia., will preach the dedication sermon. The building will cost, with furnishings, close to \$30,000.

#### **JUNE 23, 1905**

Few preachers of America have a more powerful and up-lifting theme than William Jennings Bryan presents in his great lecture sermon, the "Prince of Peace," which he will deliver Sunday, June 25, at the Electric Park. Thousands will land upon his words and go away better men and more patriotic citizens.

#### **JUNE 30, 1905**

Cheap Excursion Rates:

Kansas City and return- \$14.75 limit Oct. 31  
St. Louis and return- \$20.80 limit October 31  
St. Louis and return- \$18.50 limit 60 days

City ticket office, 510 Garrison Avenue, or the Iron Mountain depot foot of Garrison Avenue.

# Index

- NOTES: # - some sort of graphic is used, other than a portrait.  
 \* - a portrait of the person(s) named is on page indicated.  
 (- - -) - for such as title, marital status, degree, etc.  
 " - - -" - for nickname or special emphasis.  
 (-) - dash between page numbers indicates the name of the person, place, etc. is carried throughout the story.  
 (gp) - group picture  
 (pc) - postcard

1111 Garrison Avenue, 43  
 1905 Newspapers, 49  
 2005 Arkansas Historical Association  
     Conference, 2  
 2005 Tales of the Crypt, 5#  
 20th Century Simplex Soaker, 26  
 24th Annual Frontier Achievement Awards, 2  
 3rd Arkansas Regiment, 22

## -A-

A Little More Grape Capt. Bragg, 13#  
 A Short Backward Glance at Winslow, 40  
 A Stranger and a Sojourner, Peter Caulder,  
*Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum*  
     Arkansas, 4, 10  
 Akins Jerry, 45, 48  
 A.N. Cole General Store, 31  
 Andrews, Brenda, 14  
 Andrew, Deputy Marshal, 45  
 Airflow DeSoto, 33  
 Allen, Christine, 2  
 Annapolis, 50  
 Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, 14  
 Arbuckle, Mathew General, 10, 11, 13  
 Architecture Plus, Inc., 16  
 Arcine, 45  
 Arkansas Historical Association, 5  
 Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 16  
 Arkansas River, 20  
 Army of Occupation, 12  
 Arnala, I.T., 51  
 Ayers

    Carrie (Hoover), 43, 44  
     Howard, 43  
     Ida, 43, 44  
     John, 6, 43  
     Walter, 43, 44  
     Samuel, 42  
     Sarah Ann Sanborn, 42, 43\*  
     William Norton, 42, 43  
     William Norton, Jr., 43

## -B-

Baker, Ray Mayor, 14  
 Bales, Thomas Col., 50  
 Bank of Winslow, 32

Barksdale, Eloise, 2  
 Battle of Buena Vista, 12, 13  
 Battle of Lake Okeechobee, 11  
 Battle of Palo Alto, 12  
 Barry, Sheriff, 50  
 Beckel, Charles, 51  
 Beckel, Floyd, 51  
 Bell, Fletcher, 26  
 Belle Grove Historic Commission, 44  
 Belle Grove Historic District, 14  
 Belle Point Hospital, 50  
 Bell, Gene Mayor, 26  
 Bennett, Simps, 47  
 Berger, Anna, 50  
 Bide-A-Wee cottage, 31  
 Bill Mont cottage, 34  
 Black Hawk War, 11  
 Blair, William, 5  
 Blair-Arnis House, 44  
 Blue Duck, 45  
 Bobo Family, 7  
 Bob's Confectionery, 33  
 Boulden, Ben, 3  
 Bradford, William Major, 11, 13  
 Breeden, H.O. Dr., 52  
 Breedlove telephone line, 50  
 Bryan, William Jennings, 52  
 Bunyard Road, 40  
 Burt, Lula, 19  
 Burton, Violet, 2

## -C-

Caldwell's Drug Store, 50  
 Camp Tejas cottage, 34  
 Cantonment Belknap, 11  
 Cantwell, Larry, 42  
 Camall, Ella, 5  
 Carr, Patrick Andrew, 24  
 Carroll, Marshal, 48  
 Cauksville, Arkansas, 17  
 Caulder, Peter, 4  
 Cemetery Research Sources, 8  
 Central Church of the Nazarene, 14  
 Chappell, James L. Dr., 17  
 Chickasaw Nation, 46  
 Childrens Home, 52  
 Childress, W.A., 31

Christian Church, 31  
 Choteau, I.T., 51  
 City of Fort Smith Parks & Recreation  
     Department, 6  
 Civil War Websites, 8  
 Clark, Larry P. Mrs., 21  
 Clark, W.O., 31  
 Classical Glass of St. George, Utah, 16  
 Clay, Henry, 12  
 Cleveland, G.W., 50  
 Cleveland, Grover President, 46, 47  
 Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Fort Smith, 22\*, 27\*,  
     28  
 Coca-Cola Company of Atlanta, Ga., 26  
 Collier, Calvin L. Capt., 22  
 Community Development Block Grant, 16  
 Congressional Burying Ground, 12  
 Convent Place, 51  
 Cooksey Saw Mill, 31  
 Cooper, S. AIG, 23  
 Copeland, Will, 51  
 Corps of Observation (Texas), 12  
 Cravens, Ben Congressman, 5  
     Elizabeth, 34  
     Fadjo, Jr., 2  
     Kay, 30, 33, 34  
 Crown Cork and Seal Co., 26  
 Cummings, Carl, 16  
 Curtis Wright Pusher, 38  
 Cyndi's List, 7  
 Cypress Grove Plantation, 11

## -D-

D.J. Young Bottling Co., 26  
 Dalton  
     Bill, 21\*  
     David C., 17, 19  
     David Whitman, 17, 20\*, 21\*  
     James H., 17  
     John, 17  
     John B., 17  
     John Emery, 21\*  
     Martha Virginia (Hand), 17  
     Mary E. E. (Hearn), 19, 21\*  
     Mary Virginia (Howard), 20\*, 21\*  
     Sarah Ellen (Crabb), 17  
     Susan Elizabeth Mickle, 17, 19

Viola Roxi Ann Chappell, 19, 21\*  
 Darby, William O. General, 14  
 Darby Community Center, 14  
 Davis, Jefferson, 11, 13  
 Dawes Commission, 49  
 Dealey, George B., 31, 36  
 Defendant Jacket Files-U.S. District Court,  
     Western Division of Arkansas, Fort Smith, 7  
 Degnan and McConnel mine, 52  
 DeGray Lake State Park Lodge, 2  
 Delaware Punch drink, 28  
 DeLorvin, Paul, 24  
 des Planches, Baron Emondo Mayo, 52  
 Devil's Den State Park, 36  
 Dills, Bill, 39  
 Dills, Lucille (Mrs. Bob), 39\*  
 Dinkey, (Train) 33  
 Dixon, Leander, 5  
 Douglas, John, 31  
 Dorothy Mullen Arts & Humanities Award, 5  
 Doville, Dorothy, 49  
 Duck, Bluford, 46  
 Dugan Blacksmith Shop, 31  
 Dunlap, Albert, Dr., 31, 34  
 Dunlap Drug Store, 31  
 DuVal, William, 20

-E-

Fillmore, Millard, 12  
 First Baptist Church of El Dorado, Ark., 24  
 First Baptist Church of Fort Smith, 24, 51  
 Fort Smith Biscuit Company, 50  
 First Christian Church 1887, 14\*, 15\*  
 First Church of Christ, Scientist, 14  
 Fitzhugh, H.L., 31  
 Fleming, M.W., 26  
 Foltz, Babe, 39\*  
 Fort Crawford, 11  
 Fort Henry, 20  
 Fort Gibson, 11  
 Fort Harrison, 11  
 Fort Jesup, 11  
 Fort Meigs, Ohio, 13  
 Fort Scott, 11  
 Fort Selden, 11  
 Fort Smith Bottling and Candy Company, 26  
*Fort Smith Elevator*, 46, 49  
 Fort Smith Historical Society, 2  
*Fort Smith Herald*, 12  
 Fort Smith Historic District Commission, 16  
 Fort Smith Historical Society Web Site, 3  
 Fort Smith Produce Company, 52  
 Fort Smith National Historic Site Online, 8  
*Fort Smith News Record*, 14  
 Fort Smith Public Library Genealogy Dept., 8  
 Fort Smith Social Studies Educators, 45  
 Fort Smith Steam Bottling Works, 26\*, 27\*

Fort Smith Wagon Company, 50  
 Fort Snelling, 11  
 Fort Towson, 11  
 Friends of Oak Cemetery, 6  
 Frisco Railroad, 31, 40

-G-

Geren, C.N., 50  
 Gerland, Mike, 44  
 Gibson, F.F., Rev. 51  
 Glenn, Harry, 50  
 Golden, O., 52  
 Gothic Ecclesiastic style, 14  
 Graham, Addison, 44  
     Ed, 31  
     M.K., 31  
     Malcolm, 31  
     Scott, 42, 44  
 Grand Opera House, 14, 50  
 Grape-Ola, 28  
 Green, Tom, 50  
 Green River drink, 28  
 Greenwood Coal Miners Monument, 7  
 Greenwood, Arkansas Online, 8  
 Guinn, Maude, 32  
 Guthrie, Tom, 31

-H-

Hamilton, Holman, 10  
*Hangin' Times in Fort Smith Part IX*, 45-48  
 Harper, Mayor, 51  
 Harris, Tom, 30  
 Harrison Bottling Works, 26  
 Hawkins, Robert, 51  
 Hearn  
     Boyd, 19  
     Jesse Andrew, 17  
     Mary Ellen Elizabeth Dalton, 17  
 Herrman, Gustav, 50  
 Hicks, Edwin P., 2  
 Higgins, Billy D., 4\*, 10  
*Historic First Christian Church Restored*, 14  
*History of the W.N. Ayers House*, 42\*  
 Hog Bayou, 36  
 Holland, John H. Senator, 49  
 Holman, Deputy Marshal, 50, 51  
 Holt  
     Betty, 39  
     Charlie, 30, 31, 35\*, 36  
     Kitty, 30, 35\*, 36  
 Hoover, Ida L., 44  
 Hotel Main, 52  
 Howard, George Dr., 21\*  
     Virgie (Reynolds), 21\*  
 Howell, Carbon, 19  
 Huckabee, Mike Gov., 16

Hudspeth, William, 19  
 Hughes, Tyner Deputy Marshal, 45  
 Hysell, Ben, 32\*

-I-

Ingle Wagon Mfg. Co. 52  
 Iron Mountain depot, 52

-J-

Jackson, Andrew General, 13  
 Jackson Family, 7  
 Jackson, Joseph, 45, 48  
 Jackson, Keith, 34  
 Jailor Pryor, 48  
 Jalonick, George W., 31  
 John P. Marinoni Constuction, Inc., 16  
 Johnson, W.H., 50  
 Jones  
     Arthur, 51  
     C.E. Dr., 41  
     Douglas C., 32  
     John, 51  
*Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society*, 2  
 Joyce, Taylor A., 2  
 Justamere Cottage, 31  
 J.W. & Rob't. Meek Candy Company, 24  
 J.W. and Robt. Meek Manufacturing  
     Confectioners, 25\*, 26

-K-

Kelley  
     Gordon, 39\*  
     Harry E., 20  
     Leigh, 31  
 Kennedy, Alderman, 51  
 Ketcham Iron Company, 43  
 King Features, 44  
 Kirkpatrick, Fred, 28  
 Koprovic, Mary Beth, 5  
 Krone, Gladys, 2  
 Kyle, Jo Ann, 40, 41

-L-

Land, Beulah, 32  
 Land Office Records Online, 8  
 Langston, Will, 32  
 Lawson, Thomas, 13  
 Leaf, Munro, 38  
 Lee's Creek Coal, Oil and Gas Company, 52  
 Linger Longer cottage, 31  
 Lynch, Knox, 52  
 Lynch, W.F., 49



**-M-**

Maguire, Robert, 49  
*Manners Can be Fun*, 38  
 Mansfield Gas Company, 51  
 Marcum, Thomas, 45  
 Marcum, Rutherford and McDonough, 45  
 Marino, O., 52  
 Martin, Amelia, 2  
 Martin Box cottage, 31\*  
 Martin, Henry, 46  
 Mastin, Mary, 33  
 Mastin, Tommy, 33, 36  
 May, Preston, 49  
 Mazzard Prairie, 51  
 McCue, Tim, 44  
 McCurtain, Governor, 49  
 McCurtain, I.T., 49  
 McDonald, Allen, 19  
 McFaddin, Caldwell, 34  
 McFaddin, Ida (Mrs. W.P.H.), 30, 34  
 McFaddin, Perry "Peb," 34  
 McKee, J.A., Deputy U.S. Marshal, 46  
 McKenna, Edmond, Capt., 5  
 McLaughlin, Johnny, 46-48  
 McPhail, Virginia, 21  
 Medlock-Graham, Velvet, 42, 44  
 Meek  
   Anne Louise (Johnston), 24, 25  
   Carolyn (Nelson), 25, 28  
   Della James (Carr), 23, 24, 25  
   Fannie, 23, 25  
   Gertrude Brown, 24\*, 25  
   Gresham King, 23, 25  
   Heather Taylor O'Hara, 23, 24, 25  
   James Dabb (Jim D.), 24\*, 25, 28, 29\*  
   James Stanhope (J.S.), 6, 22\*, 23, 25  
   James Wise (J.W.), 22, 24\*, 25\*, 26, 27\*, 28  
   John A., 22, 25  
   John Alexander, 23, 24  
   Julian, 23, 25  
   Louise Allen Milton, 24, 25  
   Mary Jane Moore, 22, 23, 24  
   Nancy Cole, 22  
   Pansy, 23, 25  
   Pattie Leigh Bledsoe, 23, 25  
   Preston Allen, 24, 25, 28, 29\*  
   Robert S. III, 25, 28  
   Robert S., Jr., 24, 25, 28  
   Robert Stanhope, 23, 24\*, 25\*, 26, 28, 29\*  
   Roger S. Sr., 25, 28  
   Rogers S. Jr., 25, 28  
   Susan A., 23, 25  
   William Spraggins, 22, 23, 25  
   Rev., 22  
   Meek's Cotton Yard, 24

Merriman, Edward, 39  
 Meyer, Geo. J., 26  
 Mickle  
   George Washington, 19  
   George Whitefield, 19  
   Harmon, 19  
   James Sidney, 19  
   Martha H., 19  
   Mary, 19  
   Peter, 19  
   Sarah, 19  
   Susan Elizabeth (Dalton), (Minmier), 19\*  
   William, 19  
*Midnight Surgery at Gunpoint*, 41  
 Miles, Oscar L. Colonel, 5  
 Miller, Oda, 32  
 Minmier  
   George, 19  
   Maggie, 19\*, 20\*, 21\*  
 Minyard, James T., 50  
 Mississippi Rifles, 13  
 Missouri Territory, 18  
 Mittiner, Thomas, 50  
 Monroe, James President, 18  
 Montebello Plantation, Virginia, 11  
 Moody, Ed, 52  
 Moore  
   Eleanor Douglas, 32\*, 33, 35\*, 38, 3  
   Mary Luan Hearn, 17, 21  
   Lydia Tubb, 23  
   Rodgers, 21  
 Morgan, Betty Speer, 32, 33, 35\*, 39  
 Mormon Family Library Site, 8  
 Morris, Adelaide, 51  
 Mountain Hotel, 32  
 Mountain Lodge at Winslow Park, Ark., 30\*, 31, 38, 39  
 Mountainburg, Arkansas, 36  
 Moustiller, Marcus, 19  
 Murphy, Dan Sheriff, 40

**-N-**

National Archives, 7  
 National Archives Online, 8  
 National Recreation and Park Association, 5  
 National Register of Historic Places, 14, 44  
 Neal, Dr., 52  
 Neir, Hogg & Byram, 14  
 Nelson, Carolyn Meek, 22  
 New Madrid Earthquake, 18  
 Nowland, Harriett, 21  
 Nowland Springs School, 20  
 Nunni Chukka cottage, 31, 34

**-O-**

Oak Cemetery, 5, 24, 44

Oak Cemetery Commission, 6  
 Oak Cemetery Database, 8  
 Oak Lodge, I.T., 46  
 Oklahoma Historical Society, 5  
 Old Whitey, 10, 12  
 Ozarks, 31

**-P-**

Palmer, William, 52  
 Parchmeal, 45  
 Parker, Isaac Judge, 5, 7, 48  
 Patterson, Alphonso, 5  
 Pemberton, John S., 28  
 Pierson, Ben, 20  
 Pioneer Telephone Company, 50  
 Pollan, Carolyn, 2  
 Poteau Bottling Works, 26  
 Prince of Peace, 52  
 Pryor, T.B., 51  
 Pure Food Show, 28  
 Putnam  
   Caroline (Oliphant), 19  
   Dolly Gates (Mickle), 17\*, 19\*  
   Dorothy Whitney, 18  
   Elizabeth (Howell), (McDonald), 19  
   Emily Meeks, 19  
   Israel Gen., 17  
   Jane (Thayer), (Barrington), (Adams), 19  
   Jemima Angeline (Spaulding), 19  
   John, 21  
   John Whitman, 19, 21  
   Joseph E., 18, 19  
   Lucy (Hudspeth), 19  
   Mary (Vincent), (Shields), 19  
   Mary Whitman, 17-21  
   Nathan Thomas, 18, 19  
   Samuel, 17-21  
   Susan (Richardson), 19  
   William T., 21  
 Putnam-Whitman Family, 17

**-Q-**

Queen Anne style, 43

**-R-**

Ramsey, J.L., 26  
 Ray, Walter, 49  
 Read, Henry C., 31  
 Rector, Elias Maj., 20  
 Reed, J.F., 50  
 Reedy, James W. Captain, 22  
 Reeves, Bass Deputy Marshal, 45  
 Richards, A.T. Mrs., 19

Richardson, Edmund Maurice, 19  
 Susan Putnam, 17  
 Ritchie, Alexander Hay, 13  
 Right-O-Way store, 40\*  
 Robins. W.H, 51  
 Robinson, J.C., 31  
 Rogers Bottling Works, 26  
 Rogers, Congressman, 46  
 Rogers, John, 20  
 Rootswab links, 8  
 Ross  
     Ruddy, 33, 36, 37\*, 38, 39  
     Rutherford J., 38  
     Rutherford, Sr., 5  
     Sue (Cross), 37\*, 39  
 Rutherford. Samuel Morton, Col., 20  
 Rye Hill, Arkansas, 17

-S-

Sambo Girl, 50  
*Samuel Putnam and Mary Whitman*  
     *Putnam, Antebellum Arkansas Pioneers*, 17  
 San Bois Coal Company, 49  
 Sanborn, John L., 43  
 Sandels, Katherine "Tah," 34  
 Sandels, Monte H., U.S. District Attorney, 46  
 Sebastian County Courthouse, 7#  
 Sebastian County Family Information, 7  
     Internet Research Resources, 7  
 Sebastian County Official Website, 8  
 Second Grand Council (Native American), 12  
 Secondary Social Studies Educators of  
     Fort Smith, 2  
 Sexton's House, 6  
 Shack Speer cottage, 31, 33, 35\*, 36, 39  
 Sheets, T.J., 52  
 Sicard, Michael, 39  
 Simpson, William, 5  
 Slicker Creek, 36  
 Smith, Benjamin, 52  
     Columbus, 52  
 Southern Building Services, Inc., 16  
 Southern Illinois Penitentiary, 45  
 South Sebastian County Historical Society, 21  
 South View Inn, 32  
 Southwest Times Record Online, 8  
 Sparks  
     G.T., 50  
     Hanna B., 5  
 Spaulding, John M., 18, 19  
 Spears, Jim, Circuit Judge, 10  
 Speer  
     Betty Black, 30\*, 33, 34  
     C.E., 50  
     Mary, 35\*  
     Melanie Holt, 30, 35\*, 38, 39\*

Speer  
     Ralph, Jr., 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35\*, 36, 39  
     R.J., 31  
 Spindler, James Rev., 14  
 St. George Greek Orthodox Church, 14  
 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 31, 38  
 Starr, Belle, 45, 46  
     Pearl, 40, 41  
 Steephill Cemetery, 19  
 Street, Bruce, 31  
 Sublett. W.E. Mrs., 21  
 Sub Rosa Addition, 20  
 Sulphur Springs, Arkansas, 24  
 Summit Home, Arkansas, 40  
 Summit Hotel, 32  
 Summit, Arkansas, 31

-T-

*Tahlequah Arrow*, 52  
 Tales of the Crypt, 24  
 Taney, Roger B. Chief Justice, 12  
 Tanguay, Eva, 50  
 Taylor, Ann Mackall, 11  
 Taylor, Betsy Speer, 30, 32\*  
     Margaret Smith, 11  
     Margaret (Peggy) Mackall South, 10,  
     11, 12  
     Mary Elizabeth, 11  
     Peggy, 10  
     Richard, 11, 13  
     Sarah Knox, 11  
 Taylor, Zachary President 10-13  
 Thank-you ma'ams, 33  
 The Economy Grocery Store, 23#  
*The Elevator*, 45, 48  
*The Key*, 21  
*The Meek Family and Coca-Cola Bottling in*  
     *Fort Smith*, 22  
*They'll Do To Tie To*, 22  
 Three Creeks, Arkansas, 22, 23  
 Tibbetts, J.F., 46  
 Trusty School, 20

-U-

University of Arkansas-Fort Smith Boreham  
     Library Index, 8  
 University of Arkansas Press, 4  
 U.S. District Court, 45

-V-

Van Buren Road, 20  
 Van Buren Row, 31  
 Vann, Frank, 51  
     James, 51

Viguet, Randall, 33, 36  
 Vincennes, Indiana, 11

-W-

*Waldron Wasp*, 49  
 Ward's Orange Crush, 28  
 War of the Wilderness, 17  
 Wash, Richard Lt., 13  
 Wasson, James (Jim), 45-48  
 Watkins, Almerine, 46, 47  
 Weedy Rough, 32  
 Weinstein, Lewis, 51  
 Weldon, O.D., 5  
 West, Doris, 2  
 West Fork, Arkansas, 32  
 Whitman, Jemima Porter, 18  
     Thomas, 18  
 Whitsett, Oliver, 32  
*Who Killed Belle Starr and Other Tragedies,*  
     *Murders, and Mysteries*, 41  
 Wiggins, Melanie Speer, 30\*, 32\*, 35\*, 39, 40  
 Wilkinson, James Brigadier General, 11  
 William O. Darby Memorial Foundation, 14, 16  
 Williams, Jack, 51  
 Winn, Robert G., 40, 41  
 Wing, James C., 26  
 Wing, Tom, 4  
 Winslow, Edward F., 40  
*Winslow American*, 31  
 Winslow Centennial Celebration, 41  
 Winslow Park Club, 31, 32, 39  
*Winslow Park: A Rustic Retreat*, 30  
 Winslow Telephone Company, 32  
 Winslow, Arkansas, 40\*, 41\*  
 Winters, Curtis, 21  
     D.L. Mrs., 21  
 Wool, John E., 12  
 Wray, Thelma, 2

-Y-

Yell, Archibald Governor, 12, 13

-Z-

*Zachary Taylor and Fort Smith*, 10  
*Zachary Taylor Chronology*, 11