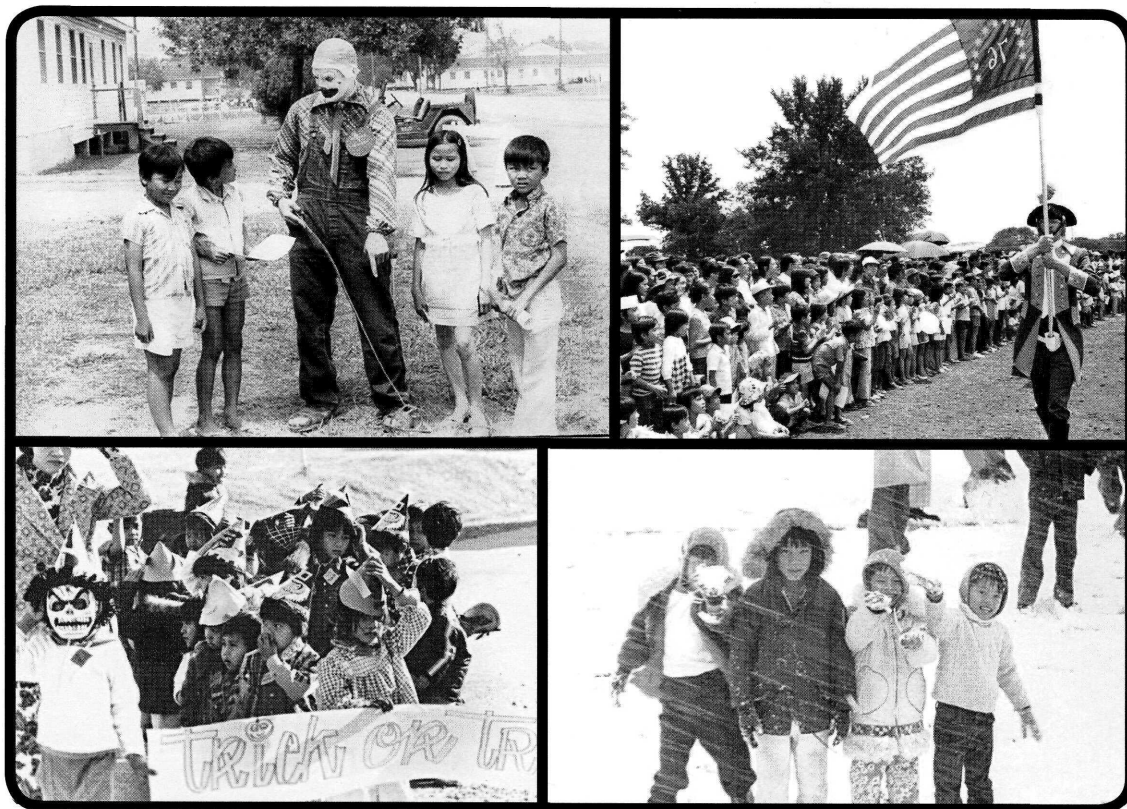


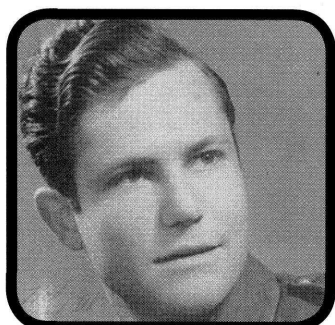


# The JOURNAL

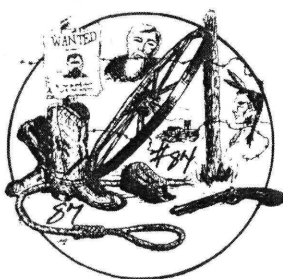


## Escape To America

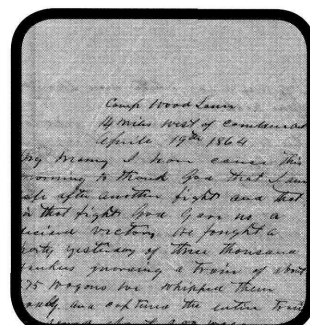
*Evacuees from Indochina arrive in Fort Smith — 1975 to 1979*



**Orville Bittle:**  
*A World War II  
Veteran's Story*



*Hangin' Times  
in Fort Smith*



**A Southern Perspective**  
*Letters on Prairie D'Ane  
and Poison Springs*

**AMELIA WHITAKER MARTIN**  
Journal Editor & Co-Founder 1977-2004

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# The JOURNAL

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**COVER:** (Clockwise from top left) Franko & Foo-Foo with  
children July 4, 1975; Fourth of July 1975 celebration  
at Fort Chaffee; Vietnamese children play in the snow  
Thanksgiving Day 1975; and children trick or treat in 1975.  
Photos courtesy of the Fort Smith Museum of History.

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# News & Opportunities

## *Greetings to Fort Smith and the Fort Smith Historical Society!*

**By David S. Turk, Historian**  
U.S. Marshals Service

When Director John F. Clark selected your city as the future home of the U.S. Marshals Museum this January, he made an insightful, careful and balanced decision based on the many factors of your community — including historical ties. The announcement follows a two-year study conducted among four prospective communities to house our heritage, in the form of the 10-person U.S. Marshals Museum Committee. As the agency's historian and a member of the committee, I will be one of the people working with your community in forming this historical jewel to honor our past. The future looks very bright for both Fort Smith and our agency's exhibit — an exciting partnership with many possibilities. While there will be many twists and turns as bricks and mortar replace blueprints, I know that Fort Smith will make Director Clark and the U.S. Marshals Service proud.

My own experiences started earlier than most. I first visited Fort Smith in May 2004 — as a guest for Descendant's Day at the National Historic Site. I was introduced on a rainy Saturday to one of the most interesting historical events I have witnessed. Never before had so many descendants of our deputies gathered in one place — and with accounts handed down from generations. The badges, weapons and letters were all swept from the attics and presented.

However, what struck me that day was the city of Fort Smith itself. You could see the history in its storefronts, homes and people. There are not many



PHOTO COURTESY OF ENTERTAINMENT FORT SMITH MAGAZINE

*Some of the members of the Marshals Museum Steering Committee, joined by local re-enactors, celebrate the announcement of Fort Smith's selection as the new museum's home city.*

places that can literally live history every day without reproducing it. This city breathes its heritage. People spoke of "Pretty Boy" Floyd as if he just passed by the preceding day; of Bass Reeves as he rode the streets to Judge Isaac C. Parker's courthouse; of Belle Starr and her daughter as local residents; of the harrowing accounts of the Going Snake Massacre, some 50 miles distant, that saw eight of our deputies, departing from Fort Smith, dead in April 1872. To understand Fort Smith, you must see it.

Director Clark said it best in the Times Record: "I know the museum here is going to be a great success because it's not just the city leaders who are behind it — it's the whole community. One of the great impressions I'm leaving with is that this is truly a community-wide project."

Several visits followed. Assistant Director and U.S. Marshals Museum Committee Chairman Michael A. Pearson and I visited in November 2005. We were amazed as we attended a reception at the Clayton House once owned by Judge Parker's prosecutor, and amazed again at the number of deputies buried within the boundaries of Oak Cemetery. Between visits, a delegation of 18 visited our headquarters last summer. When the U.S. Marshals Museum Committee visited last fall, the initial support I felt at Descendant's Day never waned. Instead, it actually increased. We saw a ground-breaking interpretive history program in its natural environment. Two sovereign leaders of Native American nations came together to support the Fort Smith proposal. Business leaders, press and ordinary citizens reached out to us.

During these several visits, the historical moment that truly resonated for me was at the "Bring It Home" Barbeque, attended by an estimated 900 people — all paying money — to see 10 non-celebrities in their town. While the crowd size itself was overwhelming and a band played at our entrance, it was the composition of the crowd that mattered. When the chairman of ceremonies asked about attending descendants and their connection to the U.S. Marshals, many familiar names came up. But one really struck me: "Blue Duck." If my memory serves me, he was one of the outlaws we guarded! You know you're wanted if descendants of the convicted show up.

Congratulations, Fort Smith!

---

### *2007 Frontier Achievement Awards*

Thursday, April 19, 6:30 p.m.

River Front Park Events Building

The 26th annual Frontier Achievement Awards will be presented by the Secondary Social Studies Educators of Fort Smith, recognizing various individuals, businesses or industries that have made an outstanding contribution to the historical development of our city and/or helped to preserve the heritage of Fort Smith. The public is invited.

*Fort Smith Historical Society*  
2007 Annual General Membership Meeting  
Thursday, April 19, 7:30 p.m.  
River Front Park Events Building

The annual general membership meeting will follow the Frontier Achievement Awards Reception, which will begin at 6:30 p.m. Officers and board members will be elected at this time. Please try to attend both functions.

---

### *Don't Forget The New Date!*

Tales of the Crypt  
Sunday, April 29, 3 to 5 p.m.  
**"Historical and Educational Guided Tour"**  
with  
**Portrayals of Historic Figures**  
**Buried at Oak Cemetery**  
Event for all Ages!  
Admission is Free!  
10th annual Tales of the Crypt  
Oak Cemetery  
1401 South Greenwood Avenue  
Call 479/784-1006  
[www.fortsmithparks.com](http://www.fortsmithparks.com)

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### *Fort Smith Heritage Days Festival*

Belle Grove Historic District

The Fort Smith Heritage Foundation (Clayton House) will sponsor the third annual Fort Smith Heritage Days Festival, May 25, 26, 27, 28 in the Belle Grove Historic District.

The festival will feature tours of Belle Grove neighborhood homes, re-enactors, music, games and crafts.

Tickets for the home tours and other events are available through the Clayton House prior to and during the festival.

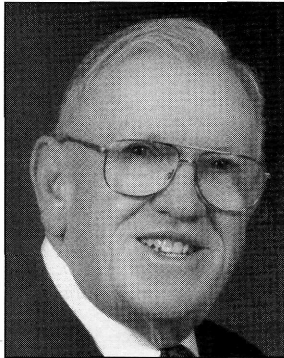
For more information, contact the Clayton House at 783-3000. Look for more information in the May issue of Entertainment Fort Smith magazine.

# In Memoriam

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## *Pryor Cruce*

The Rev. Pryor Cruce died Sunday, Oct. 29, 2006, in Fort Smith. He was 79. Pryor Cruce was born in Morrilton and graduated from Hendrix College in 1949. He entered theological school at Southern Methodist University, and upon completion of the seminary was ordained into the Methodist ministry. In 1953, Pryor married Doris Hodges and received an appointment from the North Arkansas Conference to pastor the church in Swifton, Arkansas. Thereafter, the Rev. Cruce served churches and their congregations throughout the conference until his retirement in 1993 after a 44-year career in the Methodist ministry.



The Rev. Cruce had a strong interest in history and participated as a member of several historical organizations: the Fort Smith Historical Society; the Arkansas Historical Association; the United Methodist Historical Society of Arkansas; the South Sebastian Historical Society; and the United Methodist Historical Society-West District. After his retirement from the full-time pulpit, he helped found and staff the Wesley UMC archives. He was a member of the Wesley United Methodist Church and the Young at Heart Sunday School class.

At the 2004 annual conference of the AHA, the Rev. Cruce presented a paper entitled "The Coming of the Methodist Church to Western Arkansas." He was elected to the Board of Directors of the Fort Smith Historical Society in 2006. With the passing of Pryor Cruce, our Society has lost an inspiring friend, a devoted worker and a man known to all for his faith and kindness.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years Doris Hodges Cruce, one daughter, Pamela Cruce of North Little Rock, four sons, Martin Cruce of Little Rock, Daniel Cruce of Fort Smith, Steven Cruce of Dewey, Okla., and Kenneth Cruce of Ozark, Mo.

## *Doris Ann Stevenson West*

Doris Ann Stevenson West was born to Bryan and Margaret Stevenson on Dec. 10, 1926, in Van Buren. She departed this life on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2007, at the age of 80. She was a homemaker, historian and a member of Pleasant Valley Church of Christ.

Doris had a lifelong love of history and was a past president of the Crawford County Historical Society and editor of its publication, "The Heritage," historical research chairman of the Crawford County Bicentennial Commission, past president of the Fairview Cemetery board, co-author along with her aunt, Susan Swinburn, of the book "History in Headstones" and a board member of the River Valley Museum of Van Buren. Doris was a founding member of the Fort Smith Historical Society.

Doris received the Van Buren Living Legend Award by the GFWC Women's League of Van Buren, the Ruie Ann Smith Park Genealogy Award and was inducted into the Van Buren High School Hall of Honor. Doris played an active role in the preservation of Van Buren and Crawford County history throughout her life. She was an avid doll collector, and her extensive doll collection was originally housed in the Tower Hall Doll Museum and later moved to a doll museum on Main Street in Van Buren.

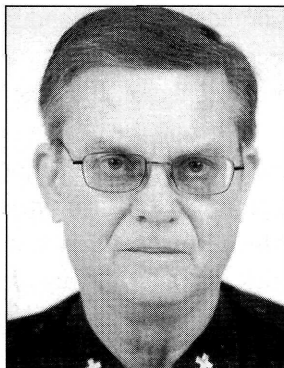
Doris was preceded in death by her parents, Bryan and Margaret Stevenson; and a brother, Percy Stevenson, and his wife, Virginia. She is survived by her loving and devoted husband of 56 years, James "Kentucky" West; and her daughters, Carolyn Boulden and her husband, Bob, Jan Whitt and her husband, David, and by two grandsons, Zen Boulden and his wife, Pam, and Matthew Whitt. She is also survived by a sister, Zoe Tankersley and her husband, John; two brothers, Jim Stevenson and his wife, Colleen, and Robert Stevenson and his wife, Charlene; and by several nieces and nephews.

# In Memoriam

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## *Ben Stephens*

The Rev. Ben R. Stephens died Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2006, at his home in Fort Smith. He was born May 22, 1942, in Fort Smith and was raised in the Cavanaugh community. At 16, he was called to preach and was ordained in 1961. Ben graduated from the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little



Rock in 1964 and from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville with a degree in psychology in 1996. He pastored Rehobeth Missionary Baptist Church in the Craven community in the 1960s and Homestead Heights Baptist Church for two decades before joining the Fort Smith Police Department. He spent the last years of his ministry serving the residents of Willow Brook Retirement Center.

His great-great-grandfather, Samuel Brooken Stephens, was the first sheriff of Sebastian County, and Ben was proud to continue the family tradition. He joined the Fort Smith Police Department as a volunteer chaplain in 1971, was the second police chaplain in Arkansas, and the first in the state to be paid. His main assignment was to give death notifications, a duty he found gratifying. He became a certified reserve officer and a certified law enforcement instructor as well. He formed the Hostage Negotiation Team in 1994.

Ben was active in many community organizations and served on the board of directors for the Zion Foster Home and was a member of the board of the Fort Smith Historical Society. He enjoyed researching his family history, studying the Bible, and visiting the Holy Land, but most of all, he enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren.

He is survived by his daughter, Elizabeth Wilson of Fort Smith; a brother, Mike Stephens of Fort Smith; and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert and Rosalie Stephens; and his son, Paul Stephens.

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## *Recent Memorial Donations*

In Honor of Amelia Martin  
By Carl Corley

In Honor of Doris West  
By Ramona Roberts

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### **Correction**

Louis Marre is an English professor at University of Dayton, in Dayton, Ohio, not the University of Ohio, as stated in our September 2006 issue in the Charles Winter memorial.



# Book Reviews

Robert J. Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town: A Nineteenth Century History of St. Joseph, Missouri*. St. Joseph, Missouri: St. Joseph Museums, Inc., 2006. 225 pages with index, maps and illustrations. Paperback, \$15.00.

Author Bob Willoughby is a professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith. *Robidoux's Town* is his second book, and in it he precisely traces the rise of St. Joseph, Missouri, from its meager beginning as a rough-hewn trading post to a city of note populated by 80,000 citizens. St. Joseph made this remarkable growth within the span of 50 years. So well did Professor Willoughby accomplish his urban study that *Robidoux's Town* provides a model for historical interpretation for the rise and development of other 19th century frontier cities, including Fort Smith.

Willoughby began his narrative by detailing the comings and goings of Joseph Robidoux, a colorful coureur de bois who clambered about Indian villages working part time for the great Missouri River traders Manuel Lisa and Pierre Chouteau. Robidoux, a crusty and argumentative business partner, eventually insinuated himself into a rather lucrative fur trade on the western edge of Missouri territory. Robidoux had a good eye for location and selected a promising bend in the wide and muddy Missouri River on which to build his spread. From his cabin and storehouses, he conducted his business with the Indians.

By 1842, the settlement clustered around the Robidoux trading post had acquired the name St. Joseph (because that was Robidoux's patron saint) and was populous enough to gain incorporated town status. The new town soon won designation as the seat of Buchanan County and court was conducted among bales of pelts in Joe's one-room cabin.

Robidoux platted his 320 acres situated at the core of the town and sold lots. For a while, he had a lot of money, but the old settler died broke in 1868 at about the same time that Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman and Phillip Sheridan visited. The citizenry resented the three men most responsible for the

Confederate defeat and gave the dignitaries a hostile reception that demonstrated the southern sensibilities that still abounded in the borderlands.

Whereas the people of St. Joseph declined to embrace the famed Union generals, they gave Robidoux a prominent place in their history. A photograph in which Robidoux sits in a leather chair holding a walking stick has graced many a city brochure, remindful of how Fort Smith has put the image of John Rogers to good use.

In the decade before the Civil War, St. Joseph appeared to be in the right location at exactly the right time in American history. Willoughby provided his readers with a map of the lower 48 states showing that St. Joseph sits at very near the center of the country. Many people passed along what Willoughby calls "the tentacles," which stretched out creating a vast hinterland through the western prairies, the highways of the day. Such hinterlands, according to Willoughby, are essential to the growth of any city. One of St. Joseph's tentacles was the Missouri River, the travel artery followed by Lewis and Clark and many later pioneers, all the way to the Rockies. Another hinterland magnet was the Oregon Trail that paralleled the Platte River. When the Gold Rush started, a few people sought their fortune by staying in places like St. Joseph (and Fort Smith) and supplied wagons, food, horses and hardware to those daring 49ers who were going. St. Joseph profited from all this mercantilism and began to bill itself as "the best place to start from" for anybody with a western quest. Larger than Kansas City, St. Joe had an advantage of being further up the Missouri River in competing with Independence as the jumping off spot for a western getaway.

Though the river linked St. Joe with St. Louis, businessmen sought a railroad connection as well. Government-issued bonds helped finance the Hannibal-St. Joseph line across the northern third of the state. Willoughby showed that with the coming of the iron rail, the future of St. Joseph could not have looked brighter.

That rosy outlook was enhanced with the selection of St. Joseph as the eastern terminus for the Pony Express.

Willoughby provides readers with a stirring account of this enterprise and St. Joseph's part in it. In its 18 months of existence, the Pony Express and its hard-riding cadre of twenty-something-year-old employees created one of the most storied episodes in the history of the American West.

Despite such glories, however, if the goal of the town fathers was to make St. Joseph the leading city in Missouri or even in western Missouri, disappointment lay ahead. As Willoughby wrote, St. Joseph's "initial promise to win regional hegemony over other cities of the Great Plains region went unfilled." Instead, St. Joseph came to rank number five among Missouri cities.

So what happened to derail the growth and prominence of St. Joseph? Willoughby provides a number of facts to support his assertion that the city's demise welled from an unfortunate Civil War experience — it was "a turning point in the destiny of the city." Sympathy for the Confederate states and a stream of pro-South irregulars who fought guerrilla-style brought destruction to railroad bridges and interrupted steamship service, thereby isolating St. Joseph's citizens and merchants. Even worse, Yankee and federal government investment in St. Joe lagged after the war; they preferred to reward loyal communities with their business and expenditures.

To compound these events, Willoughby said, a "notable lack of vision ... by the economic elite of city retarded St. Joseph's potential." Kansas City's march toward greatness had much to do with the aggressiveness of its leadership.

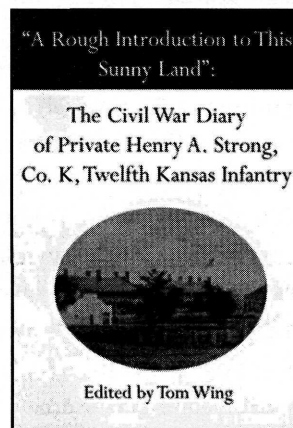
St. Joseph is today a nice river-front city governed without machine politics. It has spacious city parks, a respected school system, clean working-class neighborhoods, graceful church spires, reliable utilities, dependable and honorable fire and police departments, and a strip of restored Gothic mansions. To a Fort Smithian, the description would sound eerily familiar. Although it is not a sister city of St. Joe, Fort Smith shares significant urban characteristics with our frontier look-alike to the north. Fort Smith was a Gold Rush city with its own hinterlands to the west and south. The Civil War profoundly affected the spirit and development of this city, too. Fort Smith was a minor league baseball competitor with St. Joseph. From 1939 to 1953, the two cities were members of the Class C Western Association along with professional baseball teams from other small Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma cities.

In reading Willoughby's thoughtfully prepared book,

which is based on sound scholarship, with footnoted primary and secondary sources, someone might well be inspired to embark on a similarly critical and revealing look at Fort Smith and its development in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Certainly, Fort Smith deserves such a compelling interpretative study.

— Reviewed by Billy D. Higgins

Edited by Tom Wing, "A Rough Introduction to This Sunny Land": *The Civil War Diary of Private Henry A. Strong, Co. K, Twelfth Kansas Infantry*. Little Rock: Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System, 2006. 96 pages with bibliography and photos.



Look at Henry Strong's entire diary and don't blame him if the entries in his diary sometimes chronicle only his company's movements. After all, Strong was writing for himself and possibly his family's later generations. It's unlikely he expected his diary would be edited, published and read in the 21st century.

On Sept. 11, 1864, Strong wrote:

*Our Regt. ordered across the river or all that are able to march. Crossed over this evening and camped near the river bank.*

There are more like that, too, but there also are accounts of small battles and skirmishes, massacres, the hardships endured (lack of food, disease, long marches). If you've read only the official dispatches in the Official Record of the War of the Rebellion, most of which are written by military officers, then the Strong diary will add an interesting human dimension to the accounts there.

Taken in its totality though, the Strong diary provides a rare glimpse into the life of a Union foot soldier in western Arkansas and what it was like fighting on the side of the blue here in the last half of the Civil War. Like the Francis Springer diary and a handful of other firsthand accounts, it is an important contribution to our

understanding of the nature of the conflict in this region.

Wing's editing makes the text of the diary readable. His notes are helpful in identifying the individuals to whom Strong refers while also providing context for understanding the entries. If historical photographs of Fort Smith appeal to you, then you'll likely be hypnotized by some rare images of Union soldiers on Garrison Avenue during the war. Like the diary itself, these photos are rare finds. It's wonderful that Wing's inclusion of them has made them visible to a wide audience.

A native of Stevenson County, Illinois, Strong was a farmer at the time of his enlistment. He doesn't see the world in complicated terms. His diary contains no political musings as to the causes and directions of the war or social insights. Wing's editing keeps Strong's personal voice intact. One of the striking things about that voice is its simplicity and lack of introspection. Strong's words don't communicate doubt or introspection like the reader might expect from a soldier, for example, writing a firsthand account of his experience in Iraq. It is the 19th century voice of a yeoman farmer in an unfamiliar situation and land simply trying to stay alive and get through the war.

Based on a survey of the Official Record, Arkansas was the Confederate state with the most military engagements, but with a few exceptions like the Battle of Pea Ridge and others, they were all skirmishes and small engagements. Small groups of men on both sides fought for their causes and fought for their lives. Strong's diary breathes life and his ground-level point of view into those tiny little battles, many of them more easily forgotten than the big, pitched battles of the war's eastern theatre. In his writing, Strong also describes the suffering of the civilian population in the conflict, the destruction of property, the confusion sewn by the guerilla style of warfare that took place in Arkansas and the participation of American Indians and African Americans.

Driving down Wheeler or Towson avenues in Fort Smith, it's hard to imagine anyone fought on the land those thoroughfares traverse or that on the site of a convenience store African-American Union soldiers may have been given no quarter by their Confederate captors and massacred. Strong's diary makes it easier to picture those events taking place in the same spaces where we live our everyday lives and much harder to forget them.

— Reviewed by Ben Boulden

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# Who Took The Trees? The End Game

## Part II

By Bradley S. Kidder Sr.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN E. ANTHONY

*An unidentified lumberjack pauses in his work cutting down trees with an ax and two-man saw sometime in the early 1900s.*

The nation's mood changed during the 1880s from civilizing savages to a development of stable and protected economic markets in Indian Territory. Well-meaning reformers, who had long argued that Indians could, and should, be assimilated into American society, provided justification for economic expansion into Indian lands. They maintained that the Indians would relinquish their savage heritage if they had the responsibilities of property ownership.

To accomplish the goal, Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 (commonly known as the Dawes Act). The act was intended to encourage Indians through property ownership to aspire for moral good, acquire thrift and become ambitious. In his 1887 annual report, J.D.C. Atkins, Commissioner of Indian Affairs reinforced the guiding principles behind the act: "after a tribal member has accepted his designated allotment, his heart will swell with gratitude to the government for

the blessings and opportunities thereby conferred upon him."

Under the act, tribal reservations were broken up into individual allotments with the non-allotted remainder to be purchased by the government for sale to white men. The money from the sale was to be put in trust for the tribe. The act did not take into account that Indians, by habit and heredity, were hunters rather than cultivators. Few Indians were prepared for a wrenching change from their traditional collective society to individual capitalism. Their interests simply were not compatible with those of the expanding white population.

As a rule, the Indian allottee did not know what to do with his newly acquired land. For the first time in his cultural history, he was subject to state taxes and other obligations. If he did not succumb to the temptation to lease, he generally sold his land as soon as a fee simple patent was issued, squandered



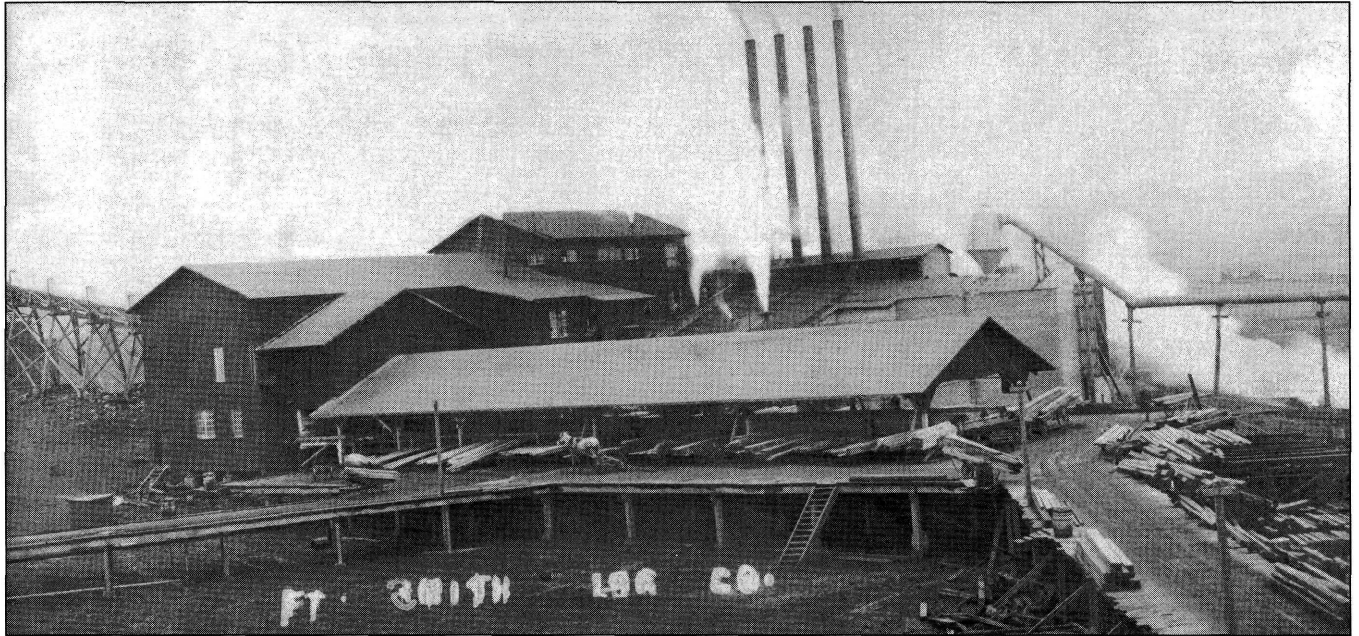


PHOTO COURTESY OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN E. ANTHONY

*The saw mill of the Fort Smith Lumber Co. is shown in the early 20th century.*

the proceeds and became a pauper.

The Dawes Act was not the only legislation that spelled doom for the Five Civilized Tribes. They had, for instance, been given special treatment for supporting the Confederacy. They were compelled in 1866 to accept new treaties, relinquishing the western half of Indian Territory, and some 20 tribes from Kansas and Nebraska were settled in 13 new reservations. Two million acres of this western half was set aside as Oklahoma Territory. The government authorized an organized assault on Indian Territory when it opened 1,900,000 acres in Oklahoma Territory at noon April 22, 1889, and the "Great Oklahoma Land Rush" began. The acreage had been purchased from the Creek and Seminole tribes. Sixty thousand people showed up, substantially more than the 10,000 expected, at the shot of a pistol, to race for one of the 6,000 homestead lots. In many instances, the "boomers" found the "sooners" (those who had jumped the gun), ahead of them. It took years to straighten out the mess of land titles, proving beyond doubt that the great Oklahoma Land Rush was a highly inefficient and wasteful way of settling new lands.

The legislative assault upon the Indians' remaining independence continued with the Major Crimes Act of 1885, which limited the jurisdiction of Indian Tribal Courts. Under the Act, Indians accused of certain crimes could no longer be prosecuted by Indian authorities and

were to be tried instead in federal courts.

The Major Crimes Act was followed by the Curtis Act of 1888, which abolished Indian courts and stipulated that Indian laws were unenforceable in U.S. courts. The Curtis Act passed despite continuing Cherokee protests that it would bring about the disappearance of the Indian Nation, and its passage wrought havoc upon the Indian way of life. The act also compelled the Five Civilized Tribes to grant railroads additional concessions, which brought new hordes of uninvited outsiders into the territory and created instant cities such as Tulsa and Ardmore.

At the same time, Indian timberlands were acquired by speculators whose prevailing attitude was blandly justified by an Indian commissioner years later (1917): "As the Indian tribes were being liquidated anyway, it was only sensible to liquidate their forest holdings as well." The 1886 land commissioner's report expressed the haplessness about forest depredations that were expressed in 1882 and complained of the "immense pressure" that was constantly being exercised to prevent the enforcement of timber law. Forest consciousness was simply not present in Washington in any significant degree; in the 1880s, the Division of Forestry was only a one-man operation within the Department of Agriculture.

Much of the "immense pressure" the commissioner complained of originated inside the federal government

itself during the 1880s and 1890s. Powerful positions on key congressional committees dealing with territories, Indian affairs, and railroads were occupied by politicians from Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana and Kansas who were primarily interested in commercial and industrial expansion in their home districts. They did not heed the advice of Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz (1887-91) to withdraw all federal timberland from public entry and to provide for its protection and management.

Edward A. Bowers, a lawyer in the General Land Office, prepared a measure in 1887 to provide for the reservation and administration of public land "valuable in any degree for timber or their forest growth," a concept that was finally expressed in the Forest Reserve Act of 1891. The act exhibited a dramatic change in the land policy of the United States. It gave the president authority to withdraw forested land from public entry and to establish forest reservations. President Benjamin Harrison, with little opposition, created six forest reserves in 1891 and 1892 under the Forest Reserve Act, the beginnings of the millions of acres in the present

national forest system.

In 1890, U.S. courts were authorized for Muskogee, McAlester and Ardmore. In most of what was once their Nation, the Indians were now aliens. The strength and authority of the Five Civilized Tribes had been diminished to the extent that the 20th century has been spent mainly in efforts by the Indians to maintain their cultural identity, rather than to preserve tribal lands.

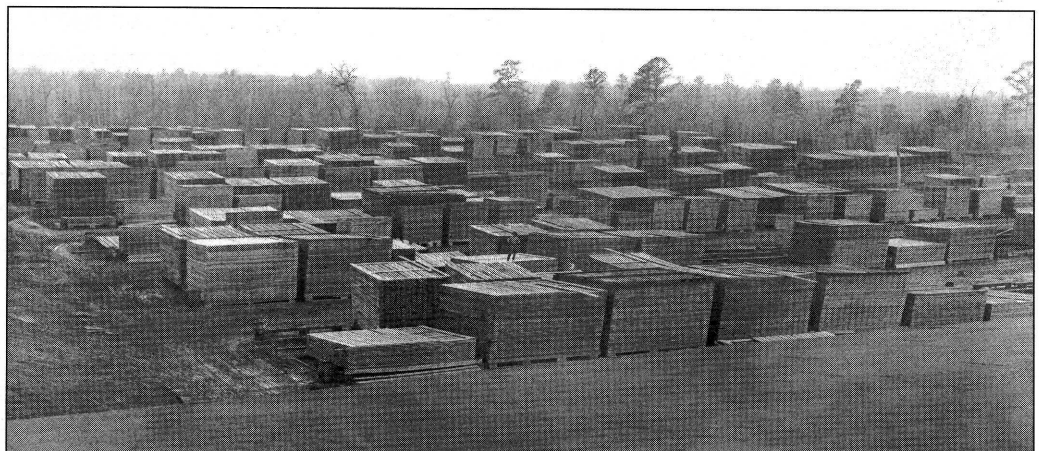
The Bureau of the Census included the former Indian Territory for the first time in the 1890 census and recorded a total territorial population of 178,097, of which only 28 percent (50,055) were Indians. Whites (109,393) and blacks (18,636) combined to make the overwhelming 72 percent remainder. In less than 25 years after the Civil War, the Indians had become a minority in their own lands. In a brief official statement, the director of the census underscored the territory's demise and the end of the frontier:

*Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier beyond the line of settlement, but at present the unsettled*



*The mill pond (left) and the lumber yard (right) of the Fort Smith Lumber Co. are shown in the early 20th century.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN E. ANTHONY



*area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a line beyond which is the frontier. Any discussion of the frontier's extent and its westward movement can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.*

Even though the Western District Court's jurisdiction was greatly reduced, the old problem of limited law-enforcement funds was magnified by a burgeoning population, resulting in a rising crime rate for the court. Concurrently with Garland's 1889 departure from the Justice Department, the initiation of appeals of death penalty convictions from Parker's court opened a flood gate of appeals. Parker's relationship with the Justice Department and the Supreme Court deteriorated rapidly from that point on.

Parker never liked enforcing civil law, and the task became more irksome as wealth, power, and Gilded Age morality became interdependent and mutually beneficial during the last quarter of the 19th century. Parker made it clear that having to provide a judicial overview of rampant greed was not a pleasant experience: "Avarice, which is the curse of the age," he declared, "has so poisoned the people that civil law for the protection of property concerns it more than the criminal law which protects life."

### **Jay Gould's Black Horse**

Charles Cooke was elected mayor of Fort Smith in 1890, seven years after Parker had shut down court for Cookes' wedding. In his first year in office (May 27, 1891), Cooke presided over extensive festivities that marked the grand opening of the Gould Bridge, the largest general highway bridge west of the Mississippi constructed to that date. The achievement could not have materialized if not backed (overtly and covertly) by a "Heads we win, tails you lose" attitude by the governing authorities.

The bridge crossing the Arkansas River at Fort Smith provided new access to markets in Kansas, Colorado, and Texas ports. The bridge also connected Gould's Kansas and Arkansas Valley Railroad (a MoPac trunk line) with his Kansas & Texas, which ran north-south through Indian Territory.

An estimated 25,000 people gathered to witness the bridge's formal dedication. That evening, more than 200 distinguished guests gathered at Fort Smith's Hotel Main for a banquet and speeches. Cooke introduced Gov. James P. Eagle, the Jay Gould party, Fort Smith

Chamber of Commerce members, and other invited guests who shared cigars, brandy and speeches from midnight to 3 a.m.

The festivities were proclaimed "in one way or another" to be "the greatest gathering ever witnessed in this section of the state."

Naming the bridge after Gould was appropriate; it marked his success in achieving control of the railroads in Arkansas and Indian Territory. Arkansans could go anywhere in the nation on "Jay Gould's black horse." The Gould empire consumed much of the coal and tall timber from the Western District Court's jurisdiction by means that were both legal and illegal, but it was never a defendant in the Parker court.

Overwhelmed and underfunded from its inception, the Federal Court for the Western District of Arkansas was never able to stem the timber hemorrhage from its jurisdiction. During the 1880s, federal restrictions were imposed upon Indian courts, creating a gap in law enforcement procedures that (among other deficiencies) allowed an illegal cascade of timber to flow out of Indian Territory, and Parker stated as much: "The territory was set apart for the Indians in 1828. The government at that time promised them protection. That promise has always been ignored." The silent and striking lack of old forest in the former Indian Territory provides a convincing present-day witness to Parker's statement.

Ravenous consumers of timber, acquired legally or otherwise (of which no better example existed than the Gould system), exploited both the poverty and resources of the Western District Court's jurisdiction with little fear of prosecution. This exploitation cannot be totally charged to the overworked and underfinanced Parker court, as federal timber policy was confused and underdeveloped during the 1880s and most of the 1890s. The most effective legislation of Parker's tenure, the Timber Cutting Act (1891), had a serious deficiency in a failure to establish procedures for the sale of timber and the protection and administration of forest reserves. As a result, the act neither stemmed timber theft nor overgrazing on the reserves. Parker basically had to fashion his own timber policy, utilizing decisions established by predecessors at the Western District Court as his primary guidance.

Arkansas' conservative home-grown leadership and the Western District Court's vast jurisdiction fell prey to the wiles of Jay Gould and his ilk, men who attained legislative and fiscal privileges by plying politicians



and decision-makers with campaign funds, fees, bribes, and quick-profit investment opportunities. And they left their mark; by the end of Parker's career in 1896, seven railroad systems within the court's jurisdiction had consumed most of the old forest.

The sound of trains rumbling across the Gould bridge (about 200 yards south of the courthouse) was a regular occurrence during the last year and a half of Parker's tenure. In the tremble of their passage was a constant reminder that the most aggravating and costly problem for the Western District Court was not the violent criminals who made Parker a famous man, but the abundance of unprincipled profit-seekers (both rich and poor) who had invaded the jurisdiction in an all-out effort to profit from or control the last open spaces in the West.

*Editor's Note: Endnote citations were not included because of space limitations. For the cites, please consult copies of Kidder's thesis in the holdings of the University of Arkansas Library at Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith and the Fort Smith Historic Site library. The bibliography for the entire thesis is available for examination at [www.fortsmithhistory.com/biblio](http://www.fortsmithhistory.com/biblio).*

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FORT SMITH MUSEUM OF HISTORY

*Refugees arrive at Fort Smith Regional Airport in May 1975.*

# Escape To America

*Evacuees from Indochina arrive in Fort Smith — 1975 to 1979*

“They just came in by the thousands, night and day; sometimes the planes would land at four in the morning,” recalled my sister Margaret Carter. “I don’t know how long they had been en route, but those people had been through hell getting here, and they were kind of dazed.” On May 2, 1975, a cold, drizzly day, the first planeload of 70 South Vietnamese arrived at the Fort Smith airport in a C-141 transport plane. Six more flights landed soon thereafter, with many more to come. Communists had gained control of South Vietnam and Cambodia, causing massive numbers of citizens to flee their countries.

Early in April, North Vietnamese communists

had advanced to a location near Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital. Worried that there would be no stopping the oncoming enemy forces, the CIA initiated secret evacuation flights for Vietnamese collaborators who would face prison or death if captured by the communists. At the same time, employees at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon began frantically burning confidential documents — so many that the ashes from the incinerators began to fill the swimming pool.

Two weeks earlier, the North Vietnamese army had captured Da Nang in the Central Highlands, creating pandemonium in the city. American planes attempted to evacuate as many citizens and South

Vietnamese army men as possible, but the terrified soldiers, in their rush to get aboard, trampled women and children in their way. As the last American 727 took off, desperate soldiers hung on to the landing gear, then fell off into the sea or were crushed in the undercarriage.

As the North Vietnamese army neared Saigon, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu tearfully resigned, blaming the United States for having withdrawn its forces two years earlier. By April 21, people in Saigon could see flashes of bombs and gunfire and realized that the city would soon fall. General Homer Smith, head of the U.S. defense attaché office at Tan Son Nhut air base, was flying out 500 people a day — primarily Americans and Vietnamese citizens who had worked for the United States. Then the numbers of flights increased, and long lines of evacuees jammed the big air base, waiting to be cleared to board American cargo planes. Each person had his name put on a list and his papers stamped, a process taking all night, and flights were departing continually during daylight hours. By April 25, panic-stricken South Vietnamese army and air force officers were climbing the fences into the American compound, shoving aside civilians and boarding the planes. To maintain order, General Smith called in U.S. Marine guards from the American Embassy.

"I had been trained in the South Vietnamese army," explained 25-year-old Nam Vo, "and I was in the reserves. Sooner or later they would have sent me to fight, like my friends who joined the battle and came home paralyzed or other terrible things." Determined to flee the country, Nam was in a dilemma about how to manage it. "I had no connections, no money. I could not bribe someone."

Nam rode his motorcycle to the air base and found out that there were three sections with a gate into each. Mobs of people jammed the area, waiting to enter, and for two days Nam beseeched different men to let him join their families so that he could get on a list to evacuate. "They'd consult among themselves, but they were afraid that if someone saw that my name was different than theirs, they would get in trouble, and besides they would get no benefit from me. Oh, man."

After two days, Nam said to himself, "I cannot do this. But then I heard someone say that if you could get into the American compound, just stay

there, and they would take you anyway, because the people in there belonged on the American side." Making another effort, Nam succeeded in finding a man to agree to get him on the list with his family, but the typist had closed her office, creating a delay until the next day. Nam managed to find another employee who typed his name on the list, assuring him a chance to go. "But I didn't. I hadn't told my family."

Nam went to the compound gate and asked the guard if he could go out then come back. After getting an affirmative answer, Nam sped to his house, packed one set of clothes into a small bag and told his parents, "I'm going to leave." At that, Nam's mother gave him her gold chain necklace and her wedding ring, but Nam's father said, "'No, no, you can't go.' He thought that everything in Vietnam was going to be okay, but I knew it was going to be bad. I had heard about the communists." Before his departure, Nam wrote down the name of one of his mother's relatives in France so that he could notify her later regarding his safety and whereabouts.

After telling his father that he must go, Nam asked an army officer friend to take him to the airport. At that time, things were extremely tense, as the American officials were expecting the airport to be bombed; they had dug ditches for people to jump into when the attack started. Without a pass of any kind, Nam determined to play a trick. "I found a blank piece of paper and got in line with everybody else. Then I left the line and got into my friend's car, telling him, 'Just drive, and do exactly what I say.'" With the car barely inching along, they came up to a policeman who blew his whistle to stop. "So I stuck my neck out and shouted, 'Golly, man, we have been here all day, and we already have a pass. Why can't we go?'"

Intimidated, the policeman let them advance through the first gate. "I was in the army for a while, and they trained you how to yell at people. You constantly tried to show that you had the power," explained Nam.

At the second gate, Nam's friend gave up and turned back, but Nam told the guard that he was a student and had to see his professor, who lived within the American compound. The trick worked. Nam went through the second gate, but another obstacle presented itself: Getting his name on a new list.



COURTESY OF THE FORT SMITH MUSEUM OF HISTORY

*Then-Gov. David Pryor greets refugees at the airport in Fort Smith in May 1975.*

For two days Nam attempted to join a family group. He had had nothing to eat and was sleeping on the floor. "I couldn't find anyone, and then I started getting weak and dizzy, but I was too ashamed to ask for help." Then he noticed a woman selling sandwiches and offered to assist her, thinking that she would give him food in return. All day Nam sold sandwiches, and that evening the woman went out and bought Nam a meal in payment for his services.

Approaching the gate the next morning into the American sector, Nam pleaded with the guards to let him inside to take a shower, as there was no water for bathing in the second compound. Amazingly, the guard allowed him to enter, and again Nam began his frantic attempt to get on an official list. He spotted the man who had granted him permission a few days earlier and asked again if he could be one of the family. But, this time Nam promised to help take care of the 10 children. At last the man agreed, giving Nam hope for freedom.

When the family's name was called for boarding the plane, Nam picked up one of the children and carried him onto the waiting bus. From the bus, they walked onto a big C-130 cargo plane, guarded by two Marines. (After the chaos at Da Nang, strict procedures were being followed for boarding.)

"I found out that we were going to the Philippines," recounted Nam. After landing, Nam was relieved to find out that he did not have to get his name typed on a second list, because no one would be flown back to Vietnam. After a few hours

his group flew on to Guam, where they were housed in tents for a few days, then on to Honolulu, and at last, to Fort Smith. When Nam debarked from his plane, he was still extremely worried about official documents. "I was thinking, 'What next? What is the next trouble?'"

In the chilly Arkansas mist, Gov. David Pryor welcomed the new arrivals, assuring them (through an interpreter) that Arkansans shared the agony and sorrow that they had experienced and that it was human nature to be fearful when suddenly thrown into new circumstances. "But let me assure you," he went on, "that the people of Arkansas are an open and friendly people. ... We have a very long history and tradition to share what we have with others. ... If for some reason you encounter some who are less friendly, I hope you will understand that, like yourselves, they are people who have also met unknown circumstances and are uncertain how to deal with them." Pryor then spoke with newsmen, telling them that it would probably take 60 to 120 days to process people through the camp.

The groups of new arrivals loaded onto school buses and were driven to nearby Fort Chaffee. "From then on, it was okay," said Nam.

Three days after Nam fled his country, communist forces bombed Ton San Nhut air base, shutting down all plane flights; and the biggest helicopter evacuation in history began. In 19 hours, 81 helicopters shuttled approximately 7,000 desperate people from the roof of the U.S. Embassy to offshore ships, just before Saigon fell on April 30. The war had ended. "On us," said the South Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States, "a night is descending beyond which there is no dawn."

Four resettlement centers had been hastily set up in the United States: Camp Pendleton, California; Eglin Air Force Base, Florida; Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania; and Fort Chaffee in Arkansas. Their purpose was to process the newcomers, teach them a new way of life in the United States, and to help settle them in different parts of the country. Evacuees, numbering 35,000 on April 30, were being flown in from Guam on commercial airlines, and there were 22,000 to 25,000 Vietnamese waiting aboard navy ships off the coast of South Vietnam. Six thousand more were stranded on tugs and barges along the coast. Another 5,000 refugees were waiting in Thailand.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FORT SMITH MUSEUM OF HISTORY

*Refugee mother with two children in barracks in 1975.*

At Fort Chaffee, originally a World War II Army basic training center, Army engineers converted two-story barracks into housing for evacuee families by installing plywood partitions in the center and setting up cots. "The situation was just terrible," remembered Margaret Carter, "in terms of people being crowded together. You'd have a whole family of 10 in a small space. They were crammed in there like cattle." The army quickly organized a 100-bed hospital and one mess hall to feed 2,000 people, but this was just the beginning, as 2,000 would be pouring in each day. Most of the air flights were landing at Fort Smith Municipal Airport, but jumbo jets had to land at Little Rock, then transfer people by bus to Chaffee.

Along with dozens of other volunteers from town, Margaret spent many hours on shift work giving out necessities. "We had stations there that



*Women sorting clothing at Fort Chaffee.*

distributed various things. I was giving the women baby formula, little first aid kits, diapers, Kotex, and jars of Gerber baby food, donated by the Gerber Food Co. in Fort Smith. We worked eight-hour



shifts, night and day.”

Along with the distribution stations, numerous mess halls were opened around the camp — some large, some small, where continual long lines of Vietnamese patiently waited to receive their meals. In preparation for the influx of people, the Army had procured 50,000 pounds of rice, 40,000 pounds of dried milk, 50,000 pounds of frozen meat, and other staples. Chief Warrant Officer Wayne Pierce, in charge of food for up to 20,000 refugees, had been worried about how to prepare rice to suit the newcomers. He had on hand a plentiful supply of an American-grown variety and hoped that the Vietnamese would help teach the cooks how to prepare it. “We don’t have fish sauce, which they like, but may be able to get some,” he declared. At first the newcomers complained about the American rice cooking method, then some of the ladies advised the cooks about their way of doing it, and everyone was happy.

Gene Nelson, a newly married University of Arkansas student, worked that summer in one of the large mess halls. “I cooked 750 pounds of rice for every meal — morning, noon, and night,” he explained. “We used Uncle Ben’s and California Sun brands, and the Vietnamese people helped us cook. They provided as much labor as the hired ones.”

Among the first to arrive at camp, several high officials of the fallen South Vietnamese government received the same treatment as everyone else, and their presence in the crowded barracks quickly became known. Former President of South Vietnam Nguyen Van Thieu had never been popular with his people, although the U.S. government supported him. When his Deputy Prime Minister Than Van Don flew in, along with Chief of Cabinet Le Van Khan; Minister of Finance Phan Do Thanh; Admiral Tran Trahn Dien, Chief of Security to Thieu, and Lt. General Dan Van Kuagn, assistant to Thieu, a potentially explosive scene began to develop. With nothing much to do except wait in long food lines, the masses of refugees began to talk among themselves and to search for those with similar ideological beliefs. Some were outraged that Thieu and his government had readily handed Saigon over to the North Vietnamese, uprooting them from their homes and wreaking havoc with their lives. “These are the people who gave up my country,” blasted

Colonel Duc Dang Van, a 20-year military man. “Thieu was president for eight years, and he left my country before I did. And now his generals are coming here — in this very camp — and getting free food and beds.”

A group of angry refugees asked a newspaper reporter to get them some paint to create signs expressing their feelings, but the reporter refused. They wanted to stage a demonstration the next day at 10 a.m. One of the men told the reporter that he had been a refugee two times, from North Vietnam in 1954 and again in 1975 from South Vietnam. In answer to a question about why Thieu did not order more concentrated defense of the provinces outside Saigon, Colonel Van said, “I don’t know, but if I had a gun, I would shoot him, even if I had to spend the rest of my life in jail.”

Aware of the impending explosion, the Army and the State Department officials confessed that they were extremely worried and felt that they needed to do something at once. To that effect, they set up a “city government” within the Vietnamese community, appointing Nguyen Duc Hoa as mayor. Hoa had been a director of legislative procedures in the prime minister’s office in Saigon and had come forth as a community leader at the refugee camp in Guam. He quickly saw that each of the 200 barracks elected a leader to keep track of his unit’s needs, and Hoa met with them every night. Together they helped their people with education, entertainment, medical treatment, sanitation, dining facilities, and in general assisted the U.S. officials with their jobs. One South Vietnamese Air Force pilot commented that, “This mayor is — what do you call it — a front. This little temporary city government here cannot make a difference in the sadness we feel at no longer having a South Vietnam.”

As activities increased and some found sponsors, the tension eased. To expedite the process of sponsoring, the Army set up an amazing telephone system for making phone calls around the world. “I was over the communications and electronics,” said Bill McMahon. “There was really a communications complex out here; at that time some said it was the biggest in the world, bigger than the Pentagon’s. We had hot lines to Washington, we had Autovon, a military system, and Watts lines, a civilian complex.” Bill explained that they would take one or two telephone lines, feed them into a carrier



FORT SMITH MUSEUM OF HISTORY

*President Gerald Ford visits Fort Chaffee on Aug. 11, 1975.*

## Crowds thin...until Ft. Chaffee

8-11-75

By MARTHA ALCOTT

Crowds were sparse in the 93-degree heat—that is until the President arrived to greet Vietnamese refugees and tour the Ft. Chaffee relocation center.

Then the refugees, civilian employees and army personnel lined both sides of the road as the President and his party drove through the two-mile barracks area to the U.S. Catholic Conference, one of eight voluntary agencies.

Those waiting at one end were able to

tell he was near as applause swept along the route of his motorcade.

The crowd, some waving American flags, shifted constantly to get a closer look or possibly shake hands with Ford.

The President was briefed on the center's operations and introduced to the refugee community council.

Vietnamese watched under the shade of their umbrellas, the only relief available.

During Ford's tour of refugee living quarters, he met with the family of 34-year-old Nguyen Van Nhan, who is being sponsored to the President's hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich.

The family of six is being sponsored through the Church World Service, another voluntary agency, and the Rev. Howard Schipper, who heads the "Freedom Flight Task Force" in Grand Rapids.

President Ford also was presented a Vietnamese watercolor during his brief tour.

The painting, done by Nguyen Van Hieu, depicts a family of chickens, an important bird in the Vietnamese culture, some large, some small and all different colors. The family represented the races of people and the many generations now living in the United States.

that multiplexed them out on different frequencies, creating 48 lines out of one. "We had eight or 10 48-line carriers in addition to our lines going out of here. It was a nightmare, because we kept running out of lines."

"All of these people doing volunteer work getting refugees out of Chaffee—the Catholic Conference, the Baptists, all those church organizations, as well as the INS—needed communications. We were

tied in all over the world; and they went day and night, around the clock." Bill would run home to try to get some sleep, and the phone would ring, and it would be somebody from the State Department or other government agency. "On top of all that," Bill declared, "President Ford came down and needed a whole bunch of communications. We had to do all sorts of things for that, but I don't think he used one of them." Ford made a brief visit to Fort Smith on

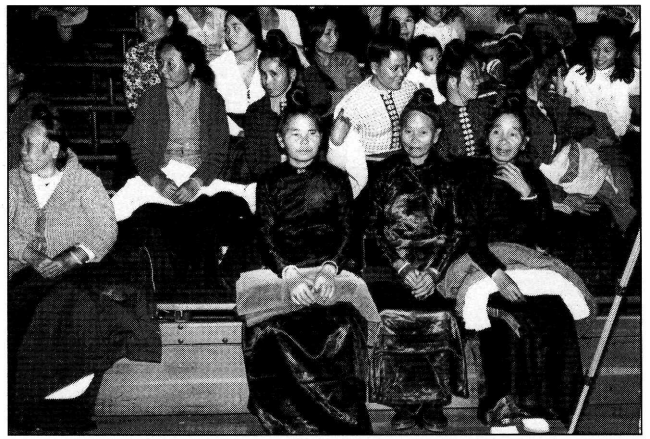
August 10, 1975, to visit the camp and to participate in the opening ceremonies for St. Edward Mercy Medical Center. Regarding the camp, Ford said, "I want to commend the people who have handled it [the refugee program] locally and in the Federal Government, and one can't help but be impressed with the fine people I see in the refugee camps. We hope to complete the program on schedule, and I am confident that America will be better off as a result."

Eight volunteer agencies, including The American Red Cross, Lutheran Immigration and Rescue League, Church World Services, and others, went to work making phone calls throughout the United States and to other countries for sponsorships. It was an overwhelming job, with thousands of evacuees pouring into the camp. By May 16, 24,000 had arrived, most with no money, no clothing except what they wore, and no personal necessities.

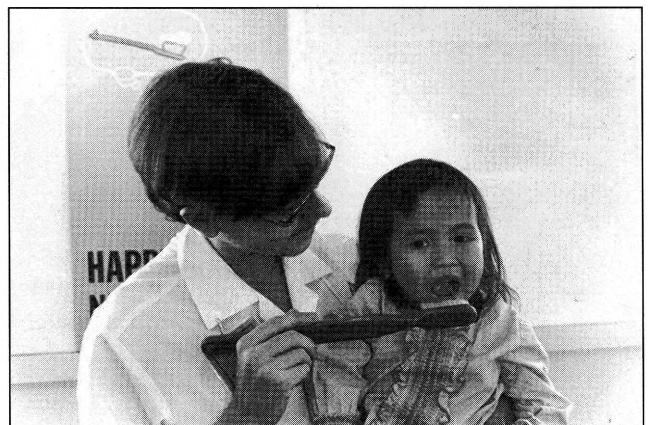
Enormous adjustments faced the Vietnamese population at the camp, including long food lines, crowded conditions, difficult new language, and many other problems. In each barracks the coordinator helped refugees learn about fire prevention, hygiene, and sanitation. One warden reported that people in his unit had been laundering their clothes and spreading them on the ground, unaware that there were lice and chiggers in the grass. To alleviate this trouble, the Army was hastily erecting clotheslines.

The hearts of Fort Smith people went out to the beleaguered travelers. "There was a lot of publicity and excitement about it in the paper," recalled my father, Ralph Speer Jr. "We were all interested and sympathetic to the people, and Melanie [my mother] was particularly interested. We lived in a large house and had an extra bedroom and bath that weren't being used, so we decided to sponsor someone." That someone turned out to be Nam Vo, the young man who had escaped Saigon. Shortly thereafter, the Speers sponsored a second gentleman named Tam Tran, a highly educated former businessman who could speak fluent English.

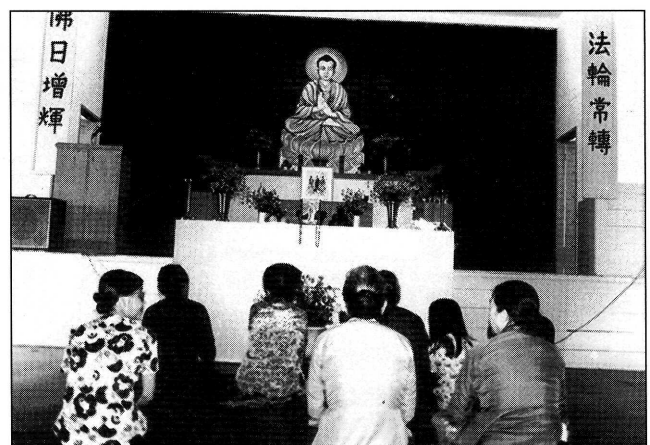
"The first time I met your mother," chuckled Nam Vo, "she picked me up and took me to Kentucky Fried Chicken. I didn't see a fork or knife or anything, so I said, 'There isn't any silverware.' She said, 'No, you eat with your fingers.' I thought, 'Oh, God, how can I eat this — it is so greasy.'"



PHOTOS COURTESY FORT SMITH MUSEUM OF HISTORY  
*Refugees attend a meeting in 1975.*



*A worker shows a girl dental hygiene.*



*Asian refugee women at a Buddhist shrine.*

Next, they went to see the Safeway store, and Nam was dazzled by all the food selections. "Man, this is big!" he exclaimed.

Nam and Tam Tran, after some effort, obtained jobs at Fort Chaffee interpreting for and assisting the Vietnamese. After preparing themselves a simple



rice-based breakfast at home, the two were picked up and driven every morning to the camp, where they worked all day. Some evenings, they had meals with the Speers or cooked their own food. In the beginning, breakfast was the worst problem. "Every morning your father fixed breakfast for me," said Nam, "and I was scared, because the food was strange: He cooked a lot of bacon and eggs and sausage. Golly, each day you would go downstairs, and you could hear it and smell it. We don't eat greasy food, but I ate it because I could not say that I did not like it." When Dad was away on business, Nam started to fix his own food, and the problem vanished. (Note: Years later, Nam confessed that he was hooked on hamburgers.)

On occasion, Tam Tran and Nam Vo prepared elaborate Asian feasts at the Speer home for their friends from the Lutheran Resettlement Agency, and they sometimes included the Speers. Mother allowed them to use her best china and silverware, and Tam set a lavish table. "They must have had half a dozen or so dinner parties, and they were really good dinners," declared Dad. "Then afterward, Tam and Nam stayed up until two or three in the morning washing dishes and cleaning up; and they'd get up early and go back out to the camp."

Everything went smoothly at the Speers' house except for one incident involving the car. Margaret had determined to teach Nam to drive in my parents' blue Volkswagen. "She had courage," explained Nam, "and she would say, 'Go, go, go!'" One day, Nam decided to wash the little vehicle, but he needed to move it a bit, and shifting gears was difficult. "So I stuck the key in, and somehow I put the first gear on it, so the car moved forward, but I could not stop it, so I hit the tree. Bam! I think the windshield was broken. Boy, I was scared after that, because in Vietnam, a car is so valuable." It seems that the damage did not amount to much, and Mother was mad about it, but Dad took it fairly well, reassuring Nam that the insurance would pay for it.

By this time, Margaret had sponsored two Vietnamese women, one of them age 18, the other about 25 or 30. An Thuy, the younger one, had come with her large family, who did not want to split up, but housing was so crowded at the camp that they allowed An to be sponsored. An

spoke no English, but the second woman did, making communications much easier in the Carter household.

"One of the things we could not figure out was the way they cooked rice," Margaret stated. "It was just a disaster when they did it. They would put the rice in a pot with some water, not measuring or anything. Then they turned up the fire as high as it would go and let it boil out of the pot. I mean it just boiled and boiled, and the water would all cook out and the Uncle Ben's would be totally uncooked."

The rice problem was accidentally resolved when a crew from the BBC arrived in town to shoot scenes of the Vietnamese and their sponsors doing various activities. One of the segments took place in the Safeway store, with Margaret and her two girls wandering through the aisles. "They picked up a box of Minute Rice, and I said, 'Oh, no. That's terrible stuff,' but they kept shaking their heads and trying to get me to let them buy it. I wouldn't, because I thought they didn't know what they were doing. When we got home, I asked them what kind of rice they used in Vietnam, and they said, 'Minute Rice.' I said, 'Oh.'"

The BBC director selected the Speers' house to do some filming, as well. "They brought this elaborate photography equipment to our house," declared Ralph Speer, "and they were there all day. There were about six or eight in the crew, all from London." They set up one of the scenes in the kitchen, with Mother in her bathrobe cooking American food and Nam and Tam fixing their rice with fish sauce. Another scene took place in the swimming pool, with Margaret attempting to teach her two girls (in bikinis) how to swim. "They were very attractive young women," said Dad.

Meanwhile, at Chaffee there were teachers from Westark Community College and volunteers conducting driving lessons with mock car mechanisms, conducting English classes, concerts, sporting events, trades training, and more. As thousands of evacuees poured into the camp, others departed for their sponsors' cities. Even a small bank was set up in a trailer near the communications center. In his office, Bill McMahon started to notice that every morning an elderly gentleman carrying a big trunk made his way past the building. The trunk was so heavy that the old man could scarcely carry

it. Every few steps he would put it down, sit on it for a few moments, take a few more steps, then continue out of sight. These morning forays began to attract attention, and some camp employees began to observe his movements. They quickly found out that he was carrying his trunk into the bank and depositing his stash of gold bars. Most Vietnamese had made it out of the country with nothing, but some brought various amounts of gold, U.S. currency, or jewelry, and the bank was able to help them safeguard it. Children wandered around the camp selling worthless Vietnamese bills for 35 cents apiece.

One night at 11, a young Vietnamese man who could speak fairly good English walked into Bill McMahon's office. "He had a real sad look on his face," remembered Bill, "almost on the verge of tears. He said, 'You help me. You help me.'" The young man told Bill that his name was Be Le and that he wanted to find his Vietnamese friend, a flying instructor who had taught him to fly and who was living in Texas. Bill told him to come back the next day and he would try to locate the instructor for sponsorship. However, Bill found out that the air force friend had gone to Cambodia. "That made him sad."

"He kept coming back to visit and was real concerned, because he had arranged to meet his younger brother, Thac, and had not been able to locate him. Be had flown a cargo plane out of Saigon with his two younger brothers, Tu and Viet, and a load of people, but the crowd weighed so much that he could not gain altitude. To avert disaster, he flew low across the ocean and landed at a small island, where everyone was picked up. "Be figured that the Viet Cong had captured his other brother and was depressed," said Bill. "But one day he came running into the office. He was elated, because he had run into his brother here at Chaffee."

Be told the story of his younger brother Thac's escape from Saigon. On April 30, the Viet Cong had taken Saigon, and Thac found himself surrounded by the enemy. There was no way he could get to Be's cargo plane. With VC soldiers behind him, Thac made a desperate dash to the beach carrying a reed tube and started swimming as fast as he could. When he got into deep water, he plunged under and breathed through the tube so that the VC could not see him, and there he remained until he saw a small

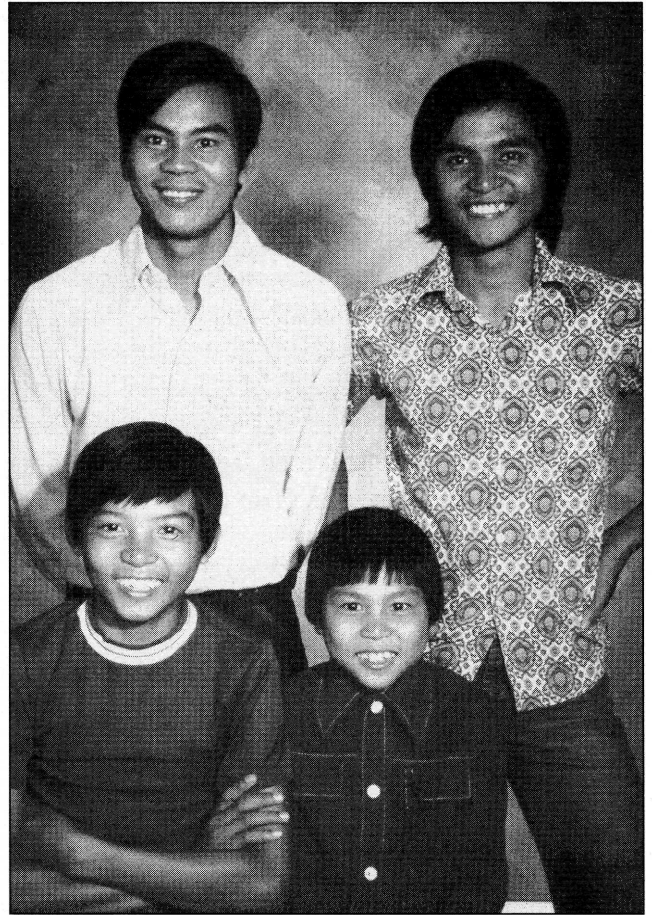


PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL MCMAHON

*Be Le and brothers Thac, Tu, and Viet in December 1975.*

boat full of people coming toward him. When he asked them for help, they told him he could grab the rope that was trailing from the back of the boat, so he hung onto the rope for several hours as they traveled along. At last, a larger boat came into sight, and everyone transferred onto it, thence to a ship that took them to Guam.

Bill said that he "pulled a few strings" and got the four brothers out to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but before leaving, they spent two weeks at the McMahons' house, and the next Christmas the four, plus two friends, spent Christmas week with the McMahons. "We had a ball," recalled Bill.

By December, the resettlement work was winding down, and on the 20th, a 10-minute ceremony was held and a monument erected to mark the closing; everyone was out of Fort Chaffee. The camp had successfully completed its mission, resettling 50,809 evacuees with sponsors all over the United States. Tam Tran had gone to Houston, and Nam Vo eventually ended up there as well. Mr. Tran



COURTESY OF  
BILL MCMAHON

(Left) Mai family  
leaving Chaffee for  
sponsor's home in 1975.

PHOTO COURTESY FORT  
SMITH MUSEUM OF HISTORY  
(Below) Closure ceremony  
on Dec. 20, 1975.

set up the highly successful  
"Asian Restaurant," and Nam  
earned a degree in mechanical  
engineering, graduating from  
the University of Houston  
with honors. He then opened  
his own business and made it  
thrive.

An Thuy, the young  
girl sponsored by Margaret  
Carter, left Fort Smith after  
about six months to live  
with a sponsoring family  
in Minnesota. "It worried  
me to death," declared  
Margaret, "because I knew  
the Vietnamese thought Fort Smith was cold, and  
An did not own a coat, so I bought her some nice  
woolen material so that she could make some  
warm clothes." Four years later Margaret received  
a letter from An telling her that she had graduated  
from college with a nursing degree and would be  
marrying a young Fort Smith man. "I wept when I  
read it, because she said that she would never forget  
or cease to be grateful to us and that she wished we  
could come to her wedding. I wish I had kept that  
letter."

Certain American men were preying on the

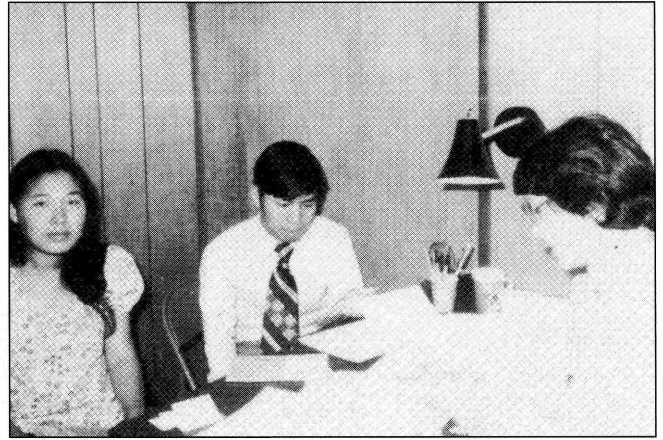


On December 20, 1975 a ten minute ceremony marked the end of the resettlement program at Fort Chaffee. COL George M. Cross (Post Commander) and Mr. Donald MacDonald (Senior Civilian Coordinator) presided. The monument was originally sited just inside the main gate but was relocated next to Bldg 4000 where it stands today.

Second individual with Mr MacDonald is Garnett "Bill" Bell

young Vietnamese women at Chaffee. They would go out to the camp, invite the girls out, and ask them to marry them by promising various things, like getting their families out of Vietnam and taking care of them. "What they were trying to get," said Margaret, "was a kind of slave. They knew the women were hard-working, that they were totally without anybody, and helpless and desperate. The women wanted American status and to get their families out of Vietnam." The older girl who stayed with the Carters had been romanced by one of these characters, and she asked Margaret's advice about marrying him. After a lengthy discussion, Margaret





PHOTOS COURTESY OF NELL BARLING

*(Top left) The HOPE Center. (Top right) Nell Barling and a client at HOPE. (Lower left) Day Care at the HOPE Center. (Lower right) Nam Vo at HOPE Center.*

persuaded her to drop the relationship, even though the girl wanted to believe his promises.

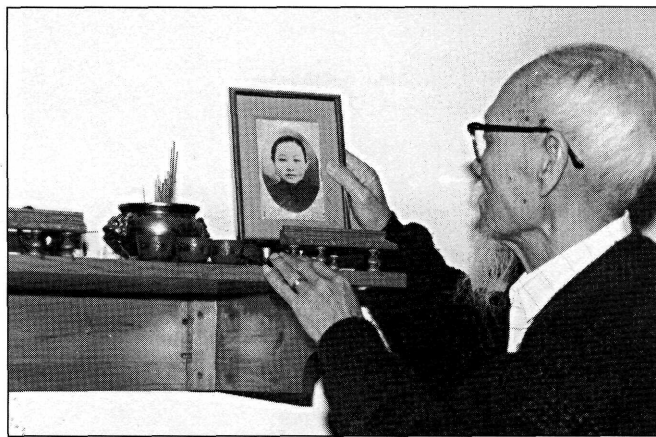
Margaret Carter was one of many Fort Smithians who took a sincere interest in helping the Vietnamese who settled in the area. An outstanding example was Nell Barling, who established in April 1976 (with practically no funds) a community center in a double-wide trailer donated by the North Arkansas Conference United Methodist Church and named it the "Trung Tam Hy-Vong Mallilieu Vietnamese H.O.P.E. Center." Two of the five employees there were Nam Vo (interpreter and general assistant) and Beth Wilson (caseworker), who helped for practically no pay. Beth drove Nam around town with Vietnamese people needing financial, medical, legal, employment, and other assistance. That summer, the center established a small day care program, and that fall, there were courses offered in various subjects, including "How to Live in Fort Smith in Wintertime." Early each

year the Vietnamese people celebrated the lunar new year with dancing and feasting at the little center, and it grew to be a social gathering place for many.

After the takeover by communists of the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments, Laos fell on Dec. 3, 1975, and hundreds of thousands of citizens attempted to flee their country — mainly to neighboring Thailand, a U.S. ally. The exodus was ongoing in Vietnam and Cambodia as well, where people were forced to pay fishermen and other boat owners exorbitant sums to take them to neutral countries; for instance, one had to come up with 10 ounces of gold, or \$8,000 to \$9,000. After making their escape plans, families would gather in a remote house somewhere near the shore of the South China Sea and stay inside for several days and nights. "Sometimes they were set up, like a trap," explained Nam. "When the time was right, they went out two or three at a time and got into small boats that they had paid for. The small boats took them a



*Dong Phan with family (left) and with a photo of his mother in 1993.*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MELANIE WIGGINS

certain distance, and then transferred them to larger boats, and if you didn't swim, you couldn't make it." Parents gave their young children Benadryl or sleeping medicine to keep them from crying or coughing. Nam's brothers escaped in such a manner, but were robbed by pirates, and one of their children nearly died of dehydration.

In Laos, the boat situation was the same. Dong Phan determined to get his family out and saved sufficient funds to pay for a guide and boatman. Unable to tell anyone, he worked out the plans by himself, knowing that one of his daughters, who lived in Fort Smith, could be their sponsor. One of Dong's sons had escaped into neighboring Thailand, where he was waiting in an evacuee camp. "One day we got a letter from my brother," recalled Dong's daughter Hanh, "and it said, 'Why don't you move somewhere else?' That was a code telling us to get out that night. He also said that a friend would come and help us."

"We couldn't bring anything with us, just one change of clothes and a few pictures in a small bag. It looked like we were just going out to dinner." The Phan family, numbering 10, walked to the town market, where they met the "friend," talked for a while, and then the "friend" took them to a taxi he had borrowed and drove them to a thickly wooded area. "We hid in the woods for a while," said Hanh, "and when it was very dark, we started walking, following the guide, until midnight. Then we crossed a railroad track and came to the Mekong River, which wasn't very wide at that point." At the riverbank, a rowboat awaited them, but a

Communist guard was patrolling, so they had to take their time. "If they found out we were running away, they would kill us. It was scary. I was about 9 or 10 years old, and my little brother was only 3, so we were carrying him."

The 10 family members quickly and quietly packed themselves into the boat, and the boatman paddled them across the river, a short journey; then they were safe in Thailand. After reporting to the local police station, they were sent to a refugee camp and forced to wait there for two years before being sponsored out to the United States in 1979. Once in Fort Smith, they started their new life.

Crossing the Mekong River might have seemed a simple trip, but Thai boatmen had a reputation for robbing, kidnapping, raping, and murdering their passengers. "We had about a 50-50 chance to getting across the river alive, and we were terrified," recalled Lienchi Vilayvanh, who lived in Vientiane (capital of Laos) with her husband, Bounmy, and family. "In 1975," she explained, "conditions in Laos became much harder. The Laotian communists began to take the military officers of the former government to re-education camps, no one knew where. Almost every night and weekend, they called us to have a meeting at the temple near our area."

At the meetings, there were "watchdogs," who reported anyone who failed to attend the meetings. Lienchi was employed at the U.S. Embassy, and she and her husband began to fear for their lives. "We didn't want our names in their 'Black Record,' and we were beginning to lose our freedom, so we decided to escape."



(Left) Bounmy and Lienchi Vilayvanh family with Jim Files family at Grand Avenue Baptist Church in December 1976.  
(Right) Lienchi's family in February 2006



PHOTOS COURTESY LIENCHI VILAYVANH

"We have a big family, and we could not escape all at once," said Lienchi. Because her father had also been employed at the embassy, he, with one of his sons, had been able to get to the United States as the communists strengthened their grip on Laos in September 1975. He was living in Fort Smith when his daughter and family decided to make their break.

"When the communists came in, at first I did not think they were mean," Lienchi explained, "but my mother knew they were terrible, and she had to go to re-education classes at a local temple. If they thought you were not believers, they would place a 'comrade' in your home to live, and he would report everything you said, ate, and did." Further, she said, the communists taught the school children to hate Americans by instructing them to pretend to shoot U.S. planes, letting them "kill" a dummy in a chair by hitting it on the head, and by training them to use weapons. "Parents had to whisper to each other in bed at night so that their children wouldn't hear them."

As part of Lienchi's escape plan, she quietly packed up some of her treasured possessions such as her wedding dress and other clothing, antique jewelry, and photographs, and gave them to her Thai friends at the embassy for safekeeping. There were 10 people in the getaway party: Lienchi and her family, a friend and her children, and her brother's friends. She and Bounmy collected \$100

and contacted a boatman to take them across the Mekong on a certain day in December 1975. On that afternoon, with their three young children, ages 1, 3, and 5, the Vilayvanhs and friends traveled about 20 kilometers to the crossing site and met their appointed boatman.

The couple had heard that on occasions when the Mekong was low, small islands could be seen, along with hundreds of corpses of people who had drowned or been murdered trying to escape. They feared the worst and made a plan that, if the boat capsized, Bounmy would try to swim with the baby to safety, but Lienchi and the other two children would not have a chance, since Lienchi could not swim.

As it turned out, the boatman was honest and took his refugees as far across the river as the law allowed; the Thai borderline extended into the river, and when the boat could go no further, the boatman told his passengers to get out and to wade ashore in the knee-deep water. As the group slowly walked toward land, they saw a Thai Coast Guard vessel approaching. The boat stopped, took them aboard and transported them to the Thai shore. Their next stop would be the Nong Khai jail.

On the way to the jail, Lienchi asked the bus driver to stop a moment at her embassy friend's house, and there she was able to let the friend know that her family was on the way to jail. The



friend followed the refugees and was able to bail out the Vilayvanh family, who then proceeded to the immigration authorities. "We showed the U.S. immigration officer our documents that we had both worked for the U.S. government. My father's address in the USA and his documents showed that he was a former employee of the Vietnamese Embassy in Vientiane, Laos," remembered Lienchi. She and her husband expressed their desire to go to Fort Smith and live with Lienchi's father, then filled out the papers for the refugee asylum program.

At that point, Lienchi's family went back to Nong Khai and stayed with friends while they waited for the Immigration and Naturalization Service decision. Three months later, in March 1976, the INS issued a notice that everyone who wanted to go to a different country had to live in the partially constructed Nong Khai refugee camp, about 10 miles outside the city. "At that time," said Lienchi, "the camp had 35 bamboo buildings built off the ground about one yard. Each building was divided into 50 sections without partitions. Each section was about 8 feet by 10 feet, three persons to a section, so my family qualified for two sections, since we were five persons — husband, wife, and three daughters."

During the three-month stay at the camp, Lienchi, who was pregnant, felt awful. "In the sections we cooked, ate, and slept in the same place. At night we were too cold, because we had no mattresses, no pillows, and only two, thin blankets. Most of the time (day and night), I stayed in my section with my children, because if you left, someone would steal your clothes and dishes."

Outside the buildings, the dirt was full of fleas, ticks, and flies that caused rashes and scabies. Medical problems at the camp were taken care of by volunteer agencies such as The International Christian Group and the Fathers and Sisters of the Catholic Church. Each day the refugees received 10 gallons of water, food twice a week, and rice twice a month.

In June 1976, the Vilayvanhs were called for an interview with the INS. At that point, they were cleared to go to America. "A week later, we were transported to Bangkok by bus — a 12-hour ride — stayed there for three days, and on June 13, 1976, we left Bangkok and flew to Honolulu. We stayed there for one day, then went on to Tokyo for



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIENCHI VILAYVANH

*Adult Education staff, from left, Hao Dang, Lienchi, Marcell Kesner, Phat Aphayvong, Sunny Mann, Shirley Perez in February 1986.*

three hours, then from Japan to the United States." On June 17, Lienchi and her family arrived in Fort Smith, where they were joyously greeted by her parents, brothers, and sisters. It had taken them six months to get there.

"We were the first Laotian family in Fort Smith," explained Lienchi, "and we were sponsored by the Grand Avenue Baptist Church. I was about 7½ months pregnant, and I wanted a job, so I went to work in a glove factory as a checker." After Lienchi quit work, two or three Laotian families arrived in town, and, "They came to me and said, 'Help us do this, do that.' I spoke English, and I could translate for them. Each day I went to a different family to help. They picked me up and took me around, with my baby in diapers, and finally the director of the U.S. Catholic Charities started paying me \$20. That went on until November 1978."

Lienchi's reputation had spread, and Dr. Betty Ruth Morris, director of the Adult Education Center at Peabody School, hired her for \$700 a month. Already established on July 1, 1974, and an integral part of the Fort Smith Public Schools, the center became vitally important to the newly arrived Indochinese in town. Betty had accepted the job as director at the urging of Dr. C.B. Garrison, at that time the local school superintendent. When the Vietnamese arrived, she hired a couple from Saigon who had run a school there and other Asians such as



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MELANIE WIGGINS

*(Left) Laotian dancers at New Year's Eve celebration at Fort Smith Museum of History in February 1993.*

Lienchi. "We searched for people who could assist us with the culture. That was the main thing we needed," said Betty.

"As the Vietnamese were being sponsored in 1975, they were directed to the Adult Education Center, because we had English classes in place, a support staff, and we helped people get jobs. So they came to us in droves," Betty remarked.

Betty hired Laotians, Vietnamese, and one Thai. "As I knew of people, I added them to the staff. Lienchi was Vietnamese and her husband was Laotian, so she represented both. I had quite a staff. Our Vietnamese cook was the best you ever saw." Betty said that the cook's mother had been in charge of the culinary staff at the French Embassy in Saigon, and that she made exquisite fried rice for the center every two weeks. "We could smell it all over the building," exclaimed Betty, "and talk about good!"

Vietnamese and Laotian New Year's celebrations were a part of the activities at the center, with decorations and traditional foods brought in by the staff. Lienchi's egg rolls were especially famous, as well as her rice cakes. Betty got acquainted with some of the Laotian customs in a sudden way: "I was sitting there, and suddenly they poured ice water on me. That's part of the celebration: Honoring people with ice water. It was hilarious."

Betty had a hard time getting used to another custom — having older people bow to her when they greeted her.

With many demands on the center, it began to rapidly expand, taking over the entire Peabody School building. "We did anything we could to help these people," continued Betty. "At one time we had 23 different nationalities in our classes, not all Asians. There were many Iraqi and Iranian students at Westark." As well as helping students obtain their GED (high school diploma), the center assisted in job placements, taught English and health care and sent translators around town to help people solve court, legal, medical, tax, housing, and myriad other problems.

After the first year of operation, Betty saw a need for child care, as many of the young mothers had children at home and could not get out to learn English or job skills. To this end, Betty dug up funding for full-time child care at the center. "I set up one room into a nursery," she explained, "and I bought three baby beds. The young people from CETA (Comprehensive Employment & Training Act) worked for us, taking care of those children."

Each year, the Adult Education Center had a graduating ceremony for those who had earned their GED. "We had great support for our program," said Betty, "as evidenced by the

speakers who came to our graduations. Gov. Bill Clinton came three times; Hillary came once; we had U.S. Sen. Dale Bumpers, and Frank Broyles. I was so proud.”

For 19 years, Dr. Betty Morris directed the Adult Education Center and has enjoyed seeing it endure. The center had become known throughout the United States and was attracting Asian people from many different areas, due to Betty Morris’s love and leadership. “It has been a fabulous thing, and I enjoyed every minute of it. We literally transformed people’s lives.”

One of Betty’s staff, Lienchi Vilayvanh, worked with Betty at the center until 2005, when she finally retired. “I have lived in Fort Smith for over 30 years, so I consider that this is my second hometown. I like it. Fort Smith is quiet, the people are helpful and friendly, the weather is not too cold and not too hot, and the cost of living is good.” Lienchi visited her relatives living in big cities through the years but thought the life there was too frantic and expensive. “Everything is money, money, money.” She went on to explain that there were now in Fort Smith two Laotian Buddhist temples, one Vietnamese Buddhist temple, two Vietnamese Baptist Churches, and one Laotian Baptist Church, the latter owned by the Laotian community. “In the temples they have monks and provide services every day; Buddhists are supposed to attend every day. They also give free meals to hungry people daily from 11:30 to 12:30.”

Her fondness for Fort Smith is shared by many of the Indochinese people who have chosen the Arkansas city as their home. “There are thousands of Vietnamese in Fort Smith,” explained Marilyn McMahon, “and especially here in Barling. There are grocery stores with Vietnamese foods, restaurants, and a fresh produce market.” (The 2002 U.S. Census lists 3,682 Asians living in Fort Smith.)

Marilyn described some of the interesting experiences that she and Bill had with their four

Vietnamese friends: “When the boys first came to see us, they had these ‘Ramen’ noodles, which we had never seen before. Be said that they had carried these in their pockets when they escaped; the noodles were lightweight, and they could eat them dry or add some hot water from a faucet.” Be taught Marilyn how to cook many dishes and how to stir-fry. “Their food is wonderful — they introduced us to cilantro and many other things — and they changed our way of eating. Their influence has been very good on our culture.”

In February 1993, the Old Fort Museum (now the Fort Smith Museum of History), in celebration of the Asian New Year, staged an evening of ceremonial dances at the museum. Accompanied by drums, gongs, and cymbals, the brightly costumed dragon dancers swirled around the room, animating the long, fierce, colorful, four-legged monster. Following the dragon came young Laotian women and girls wearing gold embroidered traditional costumes of red and violet silk, who gracefully performed their ancient dances. Fort Smithians in attendance loved the show. They had never seen such a thing.

Benefits to the town have been untold: The Asian people brought with them rich cultural traditions, reverence for educators, spiritual leaders, and family; exceptionally high academic standards; good manners; and a rigorous work ethic. Laotians and Vietnamese, especially, have established successful businesses and have gone into medical, legal, and other professions. Their children comprise about one-half the local honor students. “These Asian people have made a mark on the city,” commented Carole Barger.

Lienchi Vilayvanh, Dong Phan, Nam Vo, and the rest of the 50,809 Indochinese who visited or settled in the Fort Smith area, broadened the view of local people and gave them a priceless insight into other cultures, other worlds.

— *Melanie Speer Wiggins*



## A WORLD WAR II VETERAN'S STORY:

# Orville Bittle

I was born between Barling and Jenny Lind, Arkansas, on Fort Chaffee on a farm settled by my great-grandfather, Emanuel Bittle, a German immigrant. Story is he could have all the bottom land he wanted in Fort Smith, but he chose to go out there around the Barling/Fort Chaffee area to be an upland farmer. I was born in the same house my daddy was born in, on Aug. 29, 1921, to George and Gladys Bittle.

After I got out of school in the 1930s, I joined the CCC, that's the Civilian Conservation Corps, and went to Oregon to work. I drove a bulldozer for a while, and then went to work in the laundry. We had a lot of fun, with dances, roller rinks, and a basketball team. We were right there on the Snake River across from Idaho so we could go into Boise. Later, I was transferred to Lock, Arkansas, and drove a small Caterpillar, working on building a lake north of Mulberry. I stayed in the CCC for six months, worked for the county for a while. I came to Fort Smith and went to work for the Solid Steel Scissors

Company as a shop foreman, at the plant just off Midland Boulevard, on Kelley Highway.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, my cousin and several of my buddies tried to get me to go join the Navy with them, but I needed to give the company notice and tie up some loose ends. They joined the Navy expecting me to join them later. In May 1942, I began to look around at what I wanted to do and was drawn to the Army Air Corps. I went to Garrison Avenue one day just walkin' along

when I met a soldier, and I told him I was interested in the Army Air Corps. He said, "Well, let me talk to you, let me take you to a station, and I'll take you where you can enlist." He turned out to be the Army recruiting sergeant stationed here in Fort Smith, and he talked me into going in the Army.

The first thing I knew I was on my way. They gave me a train ticket to

Little Rock; this was around June 29, 1942. On the trip there, a lieutenant colonel in the Army sat down beside me and told me, "Son, I am going to give you some advice. There's three ways to do things in the Army. One is to do it the right way. The other is to do it the wrong way. The other is to do it the Army way, and when you do it the Army way, you will get along real well." I tried to take that advice and remember it.

From Camp Robinson, Arkansas, I was sent to Camp Bowie, Texas, where we trained for several weeks. I had made sergeant by then, and they wanted me to stay and help train troops, but I

told that colonel that I wanted to be a combat soldier. I was sent to Fort Bragg, N.C., and joined the 9th Infantry Division and the 39th Combat Team, which was the infantry attachment that supported the 105 Howitzer artillery. I was assigned to Battery A of the 26th Field Artillery, and my journey began there.

We were sent to Fort Dix, N.J., for a little while, and had a chance to visit New York; we had a good time before we embarked on our journey across the ocean. We got to see Macy's, a show, and a canteen and USO.



*Orville Bittle, 1943.*

We set sail from New York City on the USS Samuel Chase and finally wound up in Belfast, Ireland, where we stayed in Quonset huts at a base there. When we got our ship loaded for combat, we set sail to go to Scotland and pull an invasion on the Scottish Blackwatch Airport. We had to climb a cliff, and when we got to the top, we were in a marsh in water waist deep. We waded in the marsh until we got on dry land near the airport, and we then successfully invaded the airport.

We were now ready for the combat ahead of us, and left there to join a convoy that took us past the Azores and the Strait of Gibraltar. This was in late 1942. We had heard rumors of where we might be going, like south of France. But after we got inside the Mediterranean Sea, they told us some were going to land in Morocco, some in Oran, and some in Algiers. Our destination was Algiers, and we would invade Algeria and take the Maison Blanche Airport. On the way there, a submarine got after us and knocked out one of the ships, the one that was on the way to Algiers. They knocked the rudders off of it, and it was adrift. Our destroyer dropped enough tin cans in there to get the submarine and stopped all the action.

The invasion was nothing like the one we pulled in Scotland. It was a flat beach and an easy invasion, a good flat terrain where we could move fast. We went into the Maison Blanche Airport, captured and secured it without firing a shot, then set up a prevent defense and waited for orders. They told us not to eat anything there in Africa, but when we got into a tangerine grove, with ripe tangerines, we began to have a holiday eating tangerines. Some men ate too many and were sick.

Within a few days they sent us up to Algiers where there was still some resistance with those big guns, keeping our ships from coming into the harbor. The Vichy French wouldn't give up, so we went there and put a 105 or two in there, and they gave up right away, surrendering. That was the end of our combat for quite a few months.

We went outside Algiers to a farm and billeted in a barn. We found an old car in that barn that was a steam engine automobile with a big tank on the back where you put water; then build a wood fire under it, and it would build up steam and run the car. We got it out and fixed it up and had a good time. Mr. Bisbald, the owner of the farm and barn, gave us permission to use it, so we could run into a little village, having a

good time while we waited on orders.

We were occupation troops, defending against any invasion of the enemy. Men and supplies were coming into Africa for further advances against Rommel and his army of Germans and Italians, which was further east of us. When that was finished, we moved up into our first action, Kasserine Pass, in February 1943.

We went into the Kasserine Pass and began to move against the Germans there, doing fairly well against some of the lighter tanks, artillery and ground troops. Then Rommel's Tiger tanks came in and began to move us out. We lost one battery of guns to the Germans, and we moved back to the mouth of Kasserine Pass and set up our last defense; we would do or die right there. We began to shoot point blank with our 105 Howitzers, at those tanks with our artillery, firing so fast and furious the recoil oil in our guns boiled. It was so hot you couldn't touch the barrel. That 105 shoots one shell at a time. You put the projectile in, cut your charges, and put the casing in and close the breech; when you get your elevation and deflections set, you fire. You get that from an observer. I did some observation with my lieutenant, directing fire.

We pulled back, sent part of our wounded back and dug in. I still don't know whether we stopped them or they just ran out of gas and couldn't come on. We knocked out a bunch of them. We were so beat up, though, they pulled us out of the line and sent us back for rest, and sent in a replacement division.

After we pulled out of Kasserine, we were really battered and we had to get guns, trucks; we had to rebuild. We moved down to El Guettar in the Sahara Desert, the El Guettar Valley, where we began another campaign against the Germans. We had to fire at will, which was to fire as many rounds as you can as fast as you can. We were shooting about five miles into combat troops and tanks. After we won that battle, we moved on to another place in El Guettar. Patton was with us, and was up there to watch that battle. He was a very strict man, not too pleasant. We didn't have enough water to drink, but we got orders to shave, to wear a tie.

We had to go about 30 miles to get water. A Tennessee boy and I had gone back with the truck to an oasis to get water. We'd loaded GI cans to fill with water to bring a truckload back so we'd have a few days of water. When we got back and had unloaded the water, I was headed for my tent. Here came some

airplanes, the Germans, coming out of the sun right into us and dropping personnel bombs. I walked by a jeep and saw this BAR, an automatic weapon, lying on that jeep. I grabbed it, locked and loaded it, and tried to aim at an airplane that was going past. I had my sights on the tail gunner. His eyes were that big around when he saw me down on the ground. I was expecting him to turn his machine gun on me, but he didn't. Just about that time my lights went out. That's the last thing I remember. When I came to in the hospital three days later, they told me a personnel bomb had been dropped near me and I had some

shrapnel in my back, arms and legs. I had been unconscious from the concussion. I wound up in the general hospital back in Oran where I stayed until I recovered from my wounds. I went back to the front with a bunch of other guys in a boxcar of a train. It took us about a week, but I finally got back to my unit, and they were surprised to see me.

We wound up in Sedjenane Valley, which was close to the sea coast of Tunisia and the city of Bizerte. We were sent back 200 miles into the desert to an oasis where it was fairly comfortable, with shade trees and water, so we stayed there a month or two recuperating. We didn't know we were going to invade Sicily; we always thought we were going home, but it never happened. We got ready for the invasion of Sicily. I was with the 39th Infantry Battalion, part of the

9th Division, supporting the 60th. We pulled for the invasion of Sicily aboard landing barges

We invaded Sicily going in on the south side of the island. Montgomery and the British had come up from Africa and had landed on the southeast side of the island; we took the middle of the island. There were other American troops on the southwest side including the Darby Rangers. The terrain was flat, but a boggy type of soil, which made for a lot of problems for our machinery and trucks. We got out of it and at the same time we had quite a confused

situation with the 82nd Airborne, a parachute division, which jumped in on us. Instead of jumping where they were supposed to, behind the lines, they jumped into us, and created a problem. We got straightened out, and went on east. We hit no real opposition until we reached the mountains past Mount Etna, the volcano. We passed it on the north and then into the mountains to the village of Troina, which sat in a valley. The Big Red One and 39th combat team of the 9th Division were to take that town to open the way for General Patton and his tanks to get into the Messina Plain and to the boot of Italy.

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*I had seen Patton at El Guettar and once at Sedjenane, and next I saw him for the third and last time. When we had secured Troina, here came Patton. He yelled at us, "Get out of the way. Let some fighting men through." He was a good general; he made men do more than they could do. He wanted to beat Montgomery, so went straight along the northern coast of Sicily to Messina, rolled in and captured Messina.*

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We had to take that town several times before we could hold it; we couldn't clear the mountain terrain of Germans. We had a terrible time there for a while. I was asked to go with a couple of wire section guys in a jeep to repair a landline that had been broken by artillery fire. We hid the jeep from view of the Germans on the left side of the road. We went down in a ravine through a culvert on the road to get over to where the landline was and get it spliced. While we were there, the Germans began shelling us with 88s, so I jumped into the culvert. One of the boys went down in a ditch, the other boy came behind me, but he got hit and fell in on me. We got his bleeding stopped, got him on the jeep and back to an aide station. They tell me he lived. After that episode, the Captain told me that I deserved a Bronze Star.

I had seen Patton at El Guettar and once at Sedjenane, and next I saw him for the third and last time. When we had secured Troina, here came Patton. He yelled at us, "Get out of the way. Let some fighting men through." He was a good general; he made men do more than they could do. He wanted to beat Montgomery, so went straight along the northern coast of Sicily to Messina, rolled in and captured Messina. Then we went back to Palermo. Patton had slapped a soldier who was shell shocked, and got in trouble and had to leave to go back to the United States because of his action.



Before he returned to the United States, he was to tell us farewell as he had been our commander, and he was supposed to apologize. But as he talked, the soldiers began to shake their rifles and you couldn't hear the speech. Finally, he gave it up and left.

We went outside Palermo, the capital of Sicily, to an area to set up camp. We stayed there awhile as occupation troops. We left Palermo for England on a ship called the Hawaiian Shipper. It was a banana ship, and it was round-bottomed, and rolled all the way to England. We had to share bunks, eight hours on and eight hours off. Five hours on, and the guy I was bunking with got sick in the harbor. After that I took my stuff and went up on deck and found a place to sleep.

We thought they were going to send us home, but we landed in Southampton and went to Andover, England, where we began to prepare for the invasion of Normandy. This was a pretty nice camp; it had buildings that were not really Quonsets, but more wooden buildings, and a little more livable. We had a good time in England. Woods and I took a vacation, went into Southampton, stayed in a bed and breakfast and had a great time. We ate a lot of fish and chips and went to some USO dances, saw lots of history.

We had to get our equipment ready for an amphibious invasion. We had huge LSTs for that invasion. That was the biggest armada of ships, guns, men and material that was ever assembled at that time. We invaded Normandy, and a lot of men at Omaha Beach were killed. It was terrible, terrible, terrible. We hit the beach on the second wave, and kept going until we got as far as a staging area. To go on up and secure it, we had to get up that bluff. We finally moved around the bluff that was holding up the movement of troops off the coast, and silenced those German guns up there. We got behind them so we could turn our artillery on them. They were in bunkers but they ran, then we secured the beach.

We got orders to move across the Cherbourg Peninsula, and cut off anything in Cherbourg, German troops or anything that was in there. General Eddy told us that we wouldn't look back; we were to keep going forward, not think about our rear or our flanks, because the 82nd Airborne and others would keep our supply lines open.

On one occasion, in the hedgerow country of Normandy, there was quite an experience of fighting. The hedgerows were built up with a lot of dirt and



*Orville and Bette Bittle*

trees that sort of made a fence or wall, and each field was fixed for farming or cattle, the hedgerows surrounding them all. They finally put dozer blades on the fronts of our tanks so they could cut their way through those hedgerows. At one place, the infantry was held up on the road with our artillery, and we had to get off the road quickly and set up to use mortar fire to stop the advances of the Germans. They were coming like a World War I attack. They would just line up and come across the hedgerow when their commander would blow his whistle. They would come with fixed bayonets, and we would just mow 'em down. After the third volley of them coming across, we had our artillery and our mortar going and we just blew them all to pieces. We, the Americans, were slaughtered at Omaha Beach, but the Germans were slaughtered in the hedgerow country. I never saw anything any worse than those two things. It was good to see the enemy piled up, paying the price after what our men paid on the beaches of Normandy.

We went on and cut that peninsula and secured the beach on the other side of the peninsula, then we turned toward Cherbourg. We went in and secured that town. The people we captured we gave to the free French, and we don't know what they did with

them. But, in that instance we knew that Japan was in with the Germans helping them as we had captured some Japanese at Cherbourg.

We began to move into the east and northeast of France to our next big battle at Saint Lo. We bombarded Saint Lo with the heaviest armada of airplanes and bombs that you have ever seen. The smoke was so bad; it shifted and blew over us until we almost suffocated. We had to take our canteens and wet our towels and put them over our faces just so we could breathe. Then, when that blew over, we had to fight our way in, because the Germans had been given time to get ready. Some were in bomb craters waiting on us, and we had to take it.

Then we turned toward Paris, and we thought we were going to get to go into Paris. We were moving pretty good, and the Germans were really running. But, when we got to Paris, they sent us on around the west side of it and across the river. They had parade troops, and when the parade troops came by us going into Paris, they were all cleaned up and had clean clothes. We realized we weren't parade troops. We were combat troops, and we looked at ourselves and realized we weren't fit to go in there. We went on toward Belgium and had a few scrimmages on the way. I saw the Flanders Field where lots of soldiers of WW1 are buried.

We went on toward Brussels, Belgium, got there and went around Brussels, then turned almost due east and went toward Germany. We entered Germany at a place called Aachen. We captured that town and crossed the Roer River. We had to cross it twice before we got into the Hurtgen Forest. I'll never forget how that forest was torn up from trees being blown apart. We had just broken out of the Hurtgen Forest into the clear heading for Cologne, Germany, when I got hit. There was a round that came in on me; I heard it come and trying to get down into a foxhole. I was not able to get in before I got hit in the right shoulder area. It went through my right shoulder and down through my body because I was bent over. It hit three ribs, broke them, then ricocheted from my ribs down into my right lung where it lay on my diaphragm. It tore up the lower lobe of the right lung. I had other wounds, but that was the worst one. I began to cough up blood, and I knew I had been hit pretty good, and then they got me out of there. It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and I told them, "Well, men, this is late, and I believe I will be

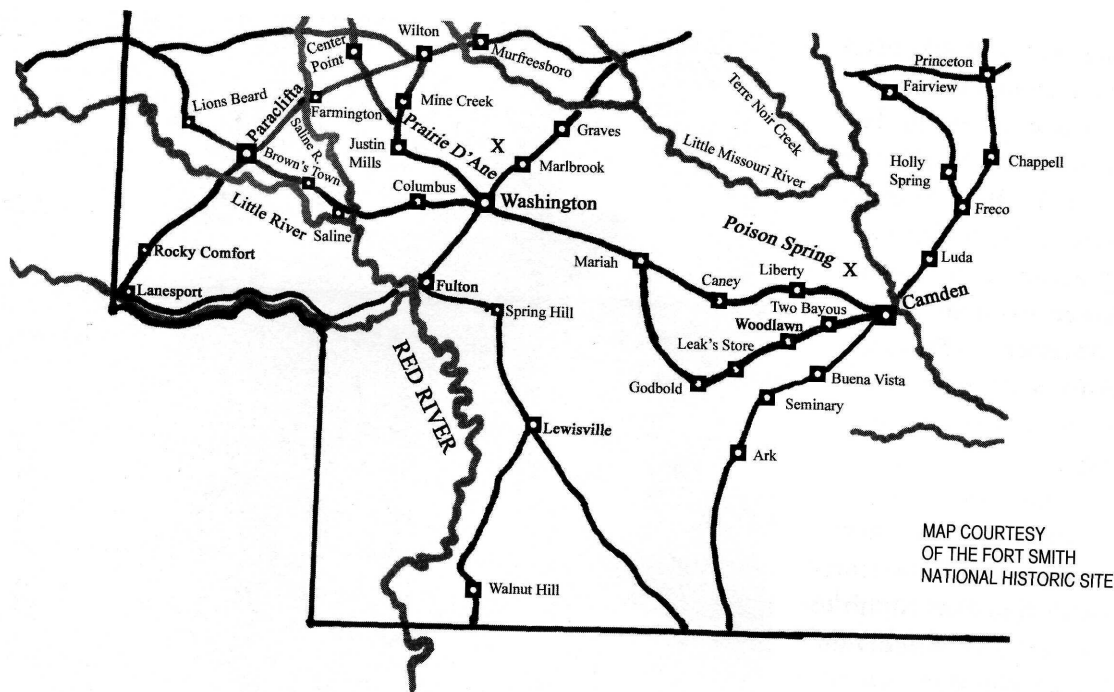
sleeping between white sheets tonight." They said, "Sure you will, Bittle. And good luck to you." They took me out and through a chain of hospitals to a general hospital in Paris. They had told me I would be operated on there, but about the second night I was there, the Germans had counter-attacked and the Battle of the Bulge started. They put me on a plane with others and flew us to England where I was operated on. After some rehabilitation and getting strength back, I was put on a hospital ship and headed home to the United States. About three days out from New York, I was sitting on the deck and heard the radio playing music, and they stopped for a Pet Milk commercial. That commercial made me realize that I was an animal, that I had lost all concept of real life. That was indelible in my mind that it brought me back to reality. And I think that helped me to overcome the torment that I was going to go through.

Arriving in New York I was sent to a Fort Dix hospital, then assigned to Kennedy General hospital in Memphis, Tenn. After a few months there I was able to get a 30-day leave and went home to visit my family. I returned to Kennedy General, then was sent to Brook General hospital in San Antonio, Texas, and was told I would be recuperating and would be discharged with an honorable medical discharge. But as time went on, the war was coming to an end, and an administrative colonel there in the hospital told me, "We can't get you out of here for a couple more months maybe with the rehab we are planning on doing, but if you want to go home today you can with points. You have enough points to get out of the service." I said, "Well, brother, I want to get out," so he processed me.

I arrived at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, on July 3, 1945. On July 4, 1945, I was discharged from the U.S. Army at about 11 o'clock in the morning. My Uncle Charles, my mother's brother, picked me up. We went on a picnic up at Natural Dam, and I really enjoyed it. It was like livin' at home again. That's the way it started, one wonderful and prosperous life here in the United States of America.

*This account of the World War II experiences of Orville Bittle is excerpted from an interview conducted on May 12, 2006, by Joe Wasson, Libby Orendorff and Carole Barger, and from an article written by Mr. Bittle.*

— Carole Barger



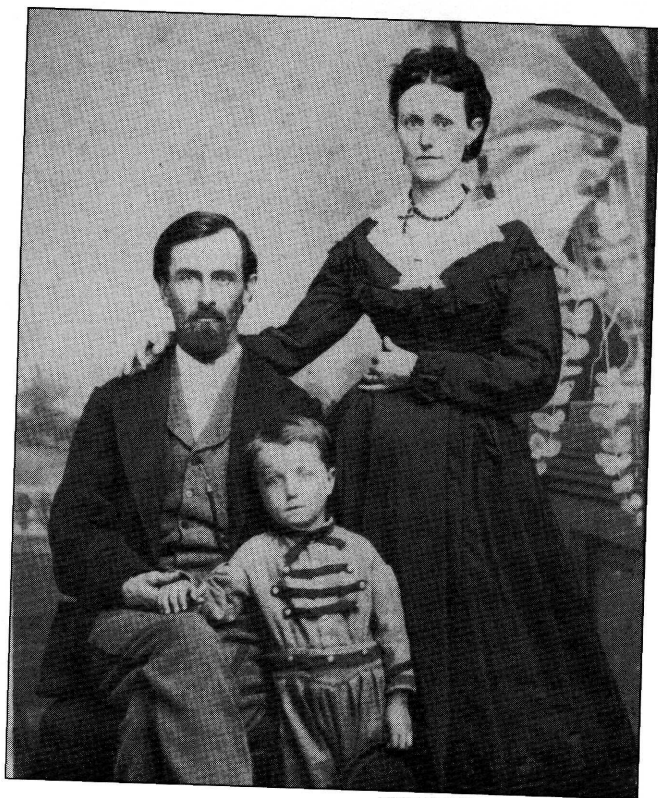
*Prairie D'Ane and Poison Spring  
from a Southern Perspective*

**By Joseph Frankovic, Jeremy Lynch,  
Julie Northrip, and Sam Trisler**

Fort Smith National Historic Site

*We dedicate this article to the “likely boy about 15 years-old” who never saw the emancipation of his people.*

While General Grant was planning his way into Richmond, Va., and General Sherman contemplated a move against Atlanta, Ga., the Union military launched its Red River Expedition in order to end the war west of the Mississippi. Union strategists had hoped to conquer Shreveport, La., the Confederate headquarters in the west, thus opening the door to the conquest of Texas. The expedition was to be fought on two fronts. Major General Nathaniel Banks was to lead the Army of the Gulf from New Orleans up the Red River while Major General Frederic Steele, reinforced by the Army of the Frontier from Fort Smith, would attack from the north.



*Lieutenant William Murphy Cravens is shown with his wife, Mary E. Rutherford Cravens, and his son in 1870.*



Confederate forces would offer fierce resistance and drive the invaders back, leaving the Union mission unaccomplished.

Lieutenant William Murphy Cravens served as an assistant adjutant general under Colonel Tandy Walker, Confederate States of America, during the Red River Expedition. Cravens was a member of the Choctaw Brigade, whose ranks included both whites and Indians. He wrote the following two letters to his wife, Mary E. Rutherford Cravens, who fled Fort Smith to seek refuge behind Confederate lines in Texas. These letters belong to Fado Cravens II, a Fort Smith resident and great-grandson of the letter writer.

The first letter of 17 April 1864 describes the Battle of Prairie D'Ane, a four-day "running fight" preceding the Union occupation of Camden. The other of 19 April he scribbled in haste while the man who would carry it to Lanesport, Arkansas waited.

In that letter, he assures Mary of his safety after the ambush at Poison Spring, also known as Moscow.

The earlier letter provides insight into Steele's advance on Camden. Cravens explains that Major General Price, C.S.A., had encamped about seven miles east of Washington, while General Steele was three to five miles east of Confederate lines. About the time when Walker's Brigade (part of General Maxey's command) joined Price, Cravens wrote that the Yankees began moving toward Camden. As they marched along the Washington Road, Brigadier Generals Marmaduke, Maxey, and Fagan (who later served as a U.S. marshal at Fort Smith) coordinated an attack on the front and rear of their enemies' column.

Camp Wood Linn  
14 miles west of Camden Ark  
April 19<sup>th</sup> 1864  
My Mary I have cause this morning to thank God that I am safe after another fight and that in that fight God gave us a decided victory. We fought a party yesterday of three thousand Yankees guarding a train of about 275 wagons we whipped them badly, and captured the entire train we saved about 200 wagons with six mule teams harnessed up and loaded with corn and bacon which they had stolen in this country. We fought one African Regt. and I got me a likely boy about 18 years old. I gave him to a Choctaw man to keep when the fight was over he told me the

FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A historical subject that Cravens illuminates is that of Indians serving in the Union Army. Cravens identifies the man who wounded Brigadier General Gano at Prairie D'Ane as a Potawatomi. Brigadier General Cabell's report of Union casualties confirms that Indians were fighting alongside northern troops in the Red River Expedition.

During the Prairie D'Ane engagement, Cravens learned of Banks' defeat at Mansfield, Louisiana, and immediately understood the strategic

Joy was dead, white man shoot  
 him dead.  
 The man who will take  
 this to Lanesport is waiting and  
 I only write to tell you of our  
 victory and that I am safe  
 and that in the thickest of the  
 fight I did not forget to love  
 my sweet suffering angel  
 I do love my sweet Pet. God  
 bless you. Good bye  
 your Illman

FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

comprising 198 wagons and  
 1,170 men who had departed  
 Camden and traveled west on  
 the Washington road. Cravens  
 wrote on 19 April that the  
 Federals appropriated corn  
 and bacon from local farms  
 (lines 16-17). As the heavily  
 laden caravan lumbered back  
 to Camden, 3,600 Confederate  
 cavalry attacked.

According to Williams, the  
 1st Kansas Colored suffered the  
 highest number of casualties.  
 Running low on ammunition  
 and without troop support from  
 Camden, the Union soldiers  
 retreated. Witnesses told  
 the colonel that many black  
 wounded "were murdered on  
 the spot." Lieutenant Leland,  
 a quartermaster serving in  
 Steele's division, was quoted in  
 the Fort Smith New Era saying  
 that some of the First Kansas  
 Colored officers surrendered  
 their pistols, and rebels used  
 the weapons to blow "their  
 brains out." Private Henry  
 Strong, who was at Camden and  
 heard the gunfire, noted similar  
 treatment of the "darkies" and  
 their white officers in his diary.  
 Williams, Strong, and the New  
 Era were all allied with the  
 Union cause, and, therefore,  
 their testimonies might be  
 tainted by bias. Cravens,  
 however, was a Confederate,  
 and his letters confirm that

significance of the victory. Because so many  
 prisoners, weapons, and goods had been taken,  
 Cravens concluded correctly that the Red River  
 Expedition had been checked. He now expected  
 a united counter offensive to force Steele out of  
 Camden and back to Little Rock.

The second letter recounts a battle outside of  
 Camden. Cravens' remarks echo the barbarity of  
 the no-quarter policy in Arkansas. Colonel James  
 M. Williams commanded a Union foraging party

black soldiers were killed while prisoners. In his  
 letter of 19 April, Cravens spoke of getting for  
 himself "a likely boy about 15 years-old" (lines  
 18-23). Shortly thereafter, a Choctaw Indian told  
 Cravens that a white man had shot the promising  
 youth.

In a third letter of 21 April (lines 35-56),  
 Cravens revealed more about Poison Spring and  
 its aftermath.



*One of our captains was over the Battle field [sic] yesterday and told me that he counted still lying there 62 dead negros [sic] when he stopped counting, but found various others that he did not count. There are reported to be some three hundred negros [sic] killed, and also the Col of a negro regt was killed. We turned over 62 prisoners yesterday morning to Genl Price, among them a negro Capt and three negros [sic]. The Captain who was a white man and the three negros [sic] are said to have disappeared from among the prisoners. They have gone to join their companions lying at Poison Springs [sic].*

Cravens stated clearly that the four men were prisoners, part of a larger group of 62, and were handed over to General Price. While under the General's custodianship, these four prisoners "disappeared." Joining "their companions lying at Poison Springs" was Cravens' euphemistic way of saying that the white captain and his black enlisted men were captured, disarmed and later discreetly executed. Coming from a Confederate officer, his eyewitness account gives northern memories of the events at Poison Spring more validity. His letters shine new light on the no-quarter policy from a southern perspective.

### About The Critical Apparatus

The following two letters of April 1864 are transcribed and edited versions of the autographs. The original formatting has been retained as much as possible. For example, each line of transcription corresponds to a specific line in the autographs.

A column of line numbers in the right margin allows the reader to move between autograph and transcription, transcription and critical apparatus, or critical apparatus and autograph. In a few places, editing disrupted the linear correspondence between transcription and autograph. Where this occurs, the editor recorded the line number of the autograph in the critical apparatus and added square brackets.

A typical unit of the critical apparatus begins

with a line number in boldface, which is followed by a lemma (i.e., an excerpt from the edited transcription), whose right side is enclosed by a single square bracket. Some units begin with line numbers which are prefixed by "E" or "M." The former indicates that the lines were written on the envelope, whereas the latter indicates that they were written in the margin. (The content of Cravens' marginalia is essentially that of an afterthought or postscript.) To the right of the single bracket is the corresponding, unedited reading as it appears in the autograph. By comparing a lemma with the "raw" text, one can identify any or all changes which the editor made. The critical apparatus was designed to facilitate such comparison.

Square brackets enclosing letters indicate doubt or correction. Some letters the editor could not identify, whereas others were corrected by the original letter writer. For example, with regard to doubt, the editor could not read the final two letters of the doctor's name (17 APR, line 8), and, therefore, "Crowdar" is recorded as "Crowd[--]" in the critical apparatus. Cravens neither capitalized nor punctuated in a coherent way. One cannot always distinguish between commas and periods, as well as upper and lower case letters. Readers with a particular interest in capitalization and punctuation should consult the originals and rely on their own judgment. When writing words like "bless", "harnessed", and "pressed," the letter writer used an old form of ess. To represent the old orthography, the editor adopted the Germanic ess-zett character (ß).

The reader should keep in mind that Cravens wrote under extreme hardship: he was participating "24/7" in a vicious, guerrilla-like type of fight. While suffering from fatigue, sleep deprivation, and pinkeye, he probably penned these letters on a makeshift desktop resting on his lap. Such ailments and physical conditions adversely affected his penmanship, grammar, and lucidity, which in turn broadened the editor's responsibilities. The editor will have succeeded, if Cravens' distinct narrative voice remains audible and the edited texts faithfully reflect their exemplars, while facilitating the peculiar habits of historians and pries who delight in eyeing the private correspondence of others.



**WILLIAM M. CRAVENS TO MARY E. RUTHERFORD  
REGARDING PRAIRIE D'ANE & MANSFIELD  
17 APRIL 1864**

1st Folio (Recto)  
Lines 1-26

Camp Woodlawn, 14 miles west of Camden, Arks      01  
April 17th 1864

My own wife,  
The first hour of rest from marching since  
    I wrote you last at Rocky Comfort is given to my Mammy      05  
    to let her hear that her Illum is still alive and well,  
    with the exception of a sore eye. My left eye has since  
    yesterday morning grown quite sore, but Dr. Crowdar  
is applying nitrate of silver to it and says that it will  
    be well in a few days. We left our wagon train      10  
    at Rocky Comfort and moved on rapidly, leaving  
there the day on which (or maybe the next morning after) I  
wrote to you. We marched every day and  
part of every night until we got to Washington,  
passing through Brown's Town and Columbus, at which      15  
the latter I heard after I had passed that Cousin  
Ellen would be stopping. Frank Parke saw her  
there — she was well. We stopped at Washington  
one night, and the next morning we moved about  
seven miles east of Washington, to where Genl Price      20  
was camped. The night we camped at Washing-  
ton, the Yankees camped in front of Genl Price and  
were, I suppose, some ten or twelve miles east  
of Washington. About daylight of the morning on which we  
left Washington to join Genl Price, the Yankees commen-      25  
ced a retreat, or rather a movement, towards Camden

1 Camp Woodlawn, 14 miles west of Camden, Arks] Wood Laun 14 miles west of Cambden Arks || 2  
April] Aprile || 3 wife,] wife || 5 Rocky Comfort] Rcky comfort || Mammy] mamy || 6 well,] well || 7  
My] my || 8 Crowdar] Crowd[--] || 9 that] + || 10 We] we || 11 rapidly,] rapidly || 12 the day on which  
(or maybe the next morning after)] the day I think or the next morning after || 13 We] we || 14 Washington,]  
washington || 15 Brown's Town and Columbus,] Browns town & columbus || 16 the latter] last place || that]  
+ || Cousin] cousin || 16-17 Cousin Ellen] \* Fadjo Cravens II identifies her as Ellen Field DuVal, the first  
wife of Benjamin Taylor DuVal. || 17 Ellen would be] El[I]en was || Frank Parke] \* Captain Frank Parke was  
married to Sarah Jane Ish, a confederate spy operating in Fort Smith during the Union occupation. Both were  
laid to rest in Oak Cemetery. | Parke] Pa[r]ke || 18 there--she] there she || We] we || Washington] washing  
ton || 19 and] + || 20 Washington,] washington || 21 The] the || Washing-] washing= || 22 ton,] ton ||  
and] & || 23 were, I suppose,] were I suppose || 24 Washington] washington || daylight] day light || on  
which] + || 25 Washington] washington || Genl Price,] Genl Price || commen-] commen || 26 a retreat, or  
rather a movement,] a retreat or rather a movement || Camden] camden

on the Washington and Camden road. We moved after 27  
 them, Genl Marmaduke with the Brigades of Shelby and  
 Green having gone round to the Yankees' front to annoy  
 them there, while Fagan's and Maxey's Divisions 30  
 were to harass them in the rear. We followed  
 the Yankee rear, their front being towards Camden  
 and their rear towards Washington. About three  
 or four o'clock Fagan's Division, or rather Dockery's  
 Brigade of it, attacked them and fought a kind 35  
 of skirmish, a running fight for an hour or two.  
 Maxey's Division was not in the fight, but we were  
 under the range of the federal Battery for some time. The  
 Choctaws did not take it very well. One man in this  
 Brigade and one horse were killed, one or two killed and 40  
 wounded in Gano's Brigade, and two or three in Dockery's.  
 This skirmish took place on the eastern edge of Prairie D'  
 Ane. The fighting ceased, and we fell back about two  
 miles and camped, while the Yankees moved on, with  
 Marmaduke fighting and annoying them in front. On the 45  
 next day after the fight at Prairie D'Ane, Genl  
 Gano took one hundred picked men and made  
 a dash on the Yankees, killing and capturing  
 twenty-four. He, the Genl, was wounded in the arm by  
 a Potawatomi Indian, not dangerously, but 50  
 severely. (Genl Gano is a member of your church  
 and never took a drink of whiskey or swore  
 an oath in his life. He is a Kentuckian, and  
 a man I like as well as any I have found in this 54

27 We] we || 28 them,] them || Genl] Gen || and] & || 29 the Yankees'] their || 30 there,] in the front  
 || Fagan's and Maxey's Divisions] [30-31] Fagans Division and Maxeys, || 31 harass] harrass || We] we ||  
 32 rear,] rear || their] thei[r] || 34 o'clock] oclock || Fagan's] Fagans || 34-35 Division, or rather Dockery's  
 Brigade of it,] Division or rather Dockerys Brigade of it || 36 skirmish, a running] skirmish running || two.]  
 two || 37 Maxey's] Maxeys || fight,] fight. || 38 under the range] not in under the range || federal] fed[e]ral  
 || for] + || time. The] time and the || 39 Choctaws] choctaws || well. One] well, one || 40 were] was ||  
 killed,] killed || and] [41] & || 41 Gano's Brigade,] Gan[o]s Brigade. || Dockery's.] Dockerys || 42 This  
 skirmish took] this Skirmish to || on the eastern edge] in the east edge || 42-43 Prairie D'Ane] prai[r]ie De  
 Anne || 43 ceased,] ceased || 44 camped, while] camped || moved on, with] mooved on. Marma- || 45  
 Marmaduke] duke || On] on || 46 Prairie D'Ane,] [P]rairie De Anne || 47 one hundred] a hundred || 48  
 Yankees,] Yankees || 49 twenty-four. He ,the Genl,] twenty four. he the Genl || the arm by] the Arm. by ||  
 50 Potawatomi Indian, not dangerously, but] Potawotomie Indian. not dangerously but || 51-55 (Genl Gano .  
 . . army.)] Genl Gano . . . army. || 51 church] \* Here the word denotes a specific Christian denomination (i.e.,  
 Disciples of Christ / Church of Christ). || 53 He] he || Kentuckian,] Kentuckian || 54 found in] found up in

2nd Folio (Recto)  
Lines 55-82

army.) But we continued to move on, and so 55  
did the Yankees in the direction of Camden,  
they on the northern Washington and Camden road,  
and we on the southern. Day before yesterday  
evening, the Yankees pressed Marmaduke out of  
the way and entered Camden. Yesterday 60  
evening we reached this camp, having  
marched every day and part of many nights  
since I left Doaksville, so that I am  
not sorry that this beautiful Sabbath morning,  
we are not moving from camp and that 65  
I have an opportunity to write to my darling  
angel some of the love which is swelling my  
heart for her. From the newspapers, you  
have heard no doubt before this of the fight  
at Mansfield, La where we were so victorious. 70  
Maj Snead, Genl Price's Adjutant Genl, read  
me a letter from Genl Smith to Genl Price, in  
which Genl Smith said that they captured 2800 prisoners,  
24 pieces of artillery, 35 caissons, 200 wagons,  
and any amount of small arms. Genl Smith 75  
claims it to be a complete victory and  
that the advance to La is by it for a long time  
delayed, if not broken up, and that he will  
now be able to give Genl Price any assistance  
he may now need. I imagine that the stay 80  
of the Yankees at Camden will neither be long  
nor pleasant, for we have some ten thousand 82

Marginalia  
Lines M 1-3

I had such a sweet dream about you and our little M 1  
one the other night that I have felt right happy ever since. M 2  
I will write as often as I can my own sweet Pet — Illum M 3

51-55 (Genl Gano . . . army.) Genl Gano . . . army. || 55 on,] on || 56 Camden,] Camden || 57 Washington  
and Camden road,] washington & camden road || 58 Day] day || 59 evening,] evening || the Yankees pressed] they  
prebed || 60 Yesterday] and yesterday || 61 camp,] camp || 62-63 every day and part of many nights since I left  
Doaksville] every day since I left Doaks ville and part of many nights || 64 Sabbath morning,] sabbath morn[ing]  
|| 65 camp] Camp || 67 angel] Angel || 68-69 From the newspapers, you have heard no doubt before this] You  
have heard through the papers no doubt before this || 70 Mansfield,] Man[s]field || where] in which || victorious.]  
victorious || 71 Maj Snead] \* His first name and middle initial are Thomas L. || Maj Snead, Genl Price's Adjutant  
Genl,] Maj Snead Genl Prices Adjutant Genl || 72 Genl Smith] Gen Smith || Price,] Price || 73 Genl Smith said  
that] he says || prisoners,] prsones || 74 of] + || artillery,] Artillery || caissons,] Caisons || wagons,] waggons ||  
75 amount] amt || 76 victory] vict[or]y || 78 delayed,] delayed || up, and] up. and || 80 need. I imagine] need,  
so I imagine || that] + || 81 neither] not || 82 nor] or || pleasant,] pleasant || M 2 since.] since || M 2-3 our little  
one] \* The reference is to Margaret Rutherford Cravens, born on January 20, 1863. "Maggie" died twenty-five days  
later on Valentine's Day and was laid to rest in Oak Cemetery. || M 3 Pet -- Illum] Pet Illum



2nd Folio (Verso)

Lines 83-115

cavalry and no infantry. If Genl Price had been 83  
 allowed to keep the infantry he had, the Yankees could  
 not have left the Ark River. I suppose that the infantry 85  
 will soon be here, and then this army, if it  
 remains here, will receive such a punish-  
 ment as that one did in Louisiana.  
 So far, as the result of this summer's campaign  
 is concerned, I feel quite confident. 90  
 I know of no other news that you will  
 be interested in hearing. I have seen many  
 of my old friends, Lias DuVal among  
 them. He is well, but has not heard  
 from his wife in a long time. 95  
 Just after I had finished my last letter to  
 you, I received your kind, sweet letter of  
 April 2nd. It came to me in about eight  
 days and is the only one I have read  
 in anything like the proper time. God 100  
 bless you, my suffering one. If we had not been  
 marching towards the Yankees, I would  
 immediately have asked for a leave  
 of absence to go to you. God only knows  
 how I want to be with you, my Dear One, and 105  
 how my heart suffers for you. We marched all  
 the night before last. Yesterday morning, we  
 stopped to get something for our horses, and Frank  
 Parke, Capt Krumbhaar, and I went to a nearby  
 house to get breakfast. I found there a lady who 110  
 in size and shape looked a little like my own  
 dear, absent one. I could scarcely  
 keep from throwing my arms around her! She  
 was nice and genteel, too, and gave your Illum his breakfast.  
 Good-bye my Mammy Angel, my own wife — your Illum 115

83 cavalry,] Cavalry. || If] if || 84 allowed] allo[w]ed || had,] had || Yankees] yankees || 85 Ark River] ark  
 river || that] + || 86 here,] here || army,] army || 87 here,] here || punish-] punish || 88 Louisiana] Louisana  
 || 89 far,] far || summer's] summers || 90 concerned,] concerned || 91 news] news now || 93 friends,] friends  
 || Lias DuVal] \* Fadjo Cravens II identifies him as Elias Rector Duval, a local physician and Cousin Ellen's  
 brother-in-law. He was laid to rest in Oak Cemetery. || among] a[m]ong || 94 them. He] them he || well, but]  
 well || 96 my] [m]y || 97 you,] you || received] recei[ve]d || kind,] kind || 98 April] Aprile || 2nd. It] 2nd  
 it || eight] Eight || 100 anything] any thing || 101 bless] bleß || you,] you || one. If] one if || 102 Yankees,]  
 yankees || 103 immediately] have immediately || leave] leav[-] || 105 you,] you || 106 We] we || all] [a]ll ||  
 107 last. Yesterday morning, we] last and yesterday morning || 108 something] some thng || horses, and Frank]  
 horses & Frank || 109 Parke, Capt Krumbhaar, and I] Parke & I & Capt Krumbhaar || Capt Krumbhaar] \* W.  
 Butler Krumbhaar served as a battery commander in the 17th Texas Field Battery. || nearby] + || 110 house] [109-  
 110] house there || who] th[at] || 111-114 size and shape . . . his breakfast] \* Married on April 8, 1862, "Illum"  
 apparently was still uninitiated to all facets of the institution. || 111 and] & || 112 dear,] dear || one. I] one and  
 I || 113 her! She] her she || 114 and] & || genteel, too,] genteel too || breakfast.] breakfast || 115 Good-bye . .  
 . Illum] \* Running from bottom to top, the line was written in the right margin. || Good-bye] good bye || Mammy  
 Angel,] mamy angel || own wife — your Illum] ow[n] wife yo[ur] Illum

**WILLIAM M. CRAVENS TO MARY E. RUTHERFORD  
REGARDING POISON SPRING  
19 APRIL 1864**

Single Folio (Recto)

Lines 1-21

Camp Woodlawn	01
14 miles west of Camden, Ark	
April 19th 1864	
My Mammy, I have cause this	
morning to thank God that I am	05
safe after another fight and that	
he gave us a decided victory	
in that fight. We fought a	
party yesterday of three thousand	
Yankees guarding a train of about	10
275 wagons. We whipped them	
badly and captured the entire train.	
We saved about 200 wagons with	
six mule teams harnessed up	
and loaded with corn and bacon,	15
which they had stolen in the	
country. We fought one African	
Regiment, and I got me a likely boy	
about 15 years-old. I gave him	
to a Choctaw man to keep when	20
the fight was over. He told me that the	

1 Woodlawn] Wood laun || 2 Camden, Ark] Cambden Ark || 3 April] Aprile || 4 Mammy,] Mamy ||  
 7-8 he gave us a decided victory in that fight] in that fight God gave us a decided victory || 8 We] we || 10  
 Yankees] yankees || 11 wagons. We] wagons we || 12 badly] ba[dly]. || train.] train || 13 We] we || 14  
 harnessed] harneßed || 15 bacon,] bacon || 17 We] we || African] african || 18 Regiment,] Regt. || 19  
 years-old] years-old || 20 Choctaw] cho[c]taw || 20-21 when the fight was over] \* Lack of punctuation and  
 capitalization makes it difficult to determine whether this temporal phrase has an enclitic relationship to what  
 precedes or a proclitic one to what follows. || 21 over. He] over he || that] +

Single Folio (Verso)

Lines 22-33

boy was dead: "White man shoot him up."	22
The man who will take this to Lanesport is waiting.	25
I only write to tell you of our victory, that I am safe, and in the thickest of the fight, I did not forget to love my sweet, suffering angel.	30
I do love my sweet Pet. God bless you! Good-bye, your Illum	33

Envelope

Lines E 1-5

From WM Cravens	E 1
Asst adjutant, Genl Walker's Brig	E 2
 Mrs. Mary E. Cravens	E 3
Waxahachie	E 4
Texas	E 5

22-23 dead: "White man shoot him up."] dead, white man Shoot him he up || 25 waiting.] waiting and ||  
27 victory, that] victory and that || 27-28 safe, and] safe and that || 29 fight,] fight || 30 sweet,] Sweet ||  
angel.] angel || 31 sweet] Swe[e]t || 32 bless you!] bleß you || Good-bye] good bye || E 1 From WM] from  
W[--]M || E 2 adjutant,] adjt || Walker's] Walkers || E 3 Mrs. Mary E.] Mrs Mary E



# 'Frontier Families of the Western District of Arkansas'

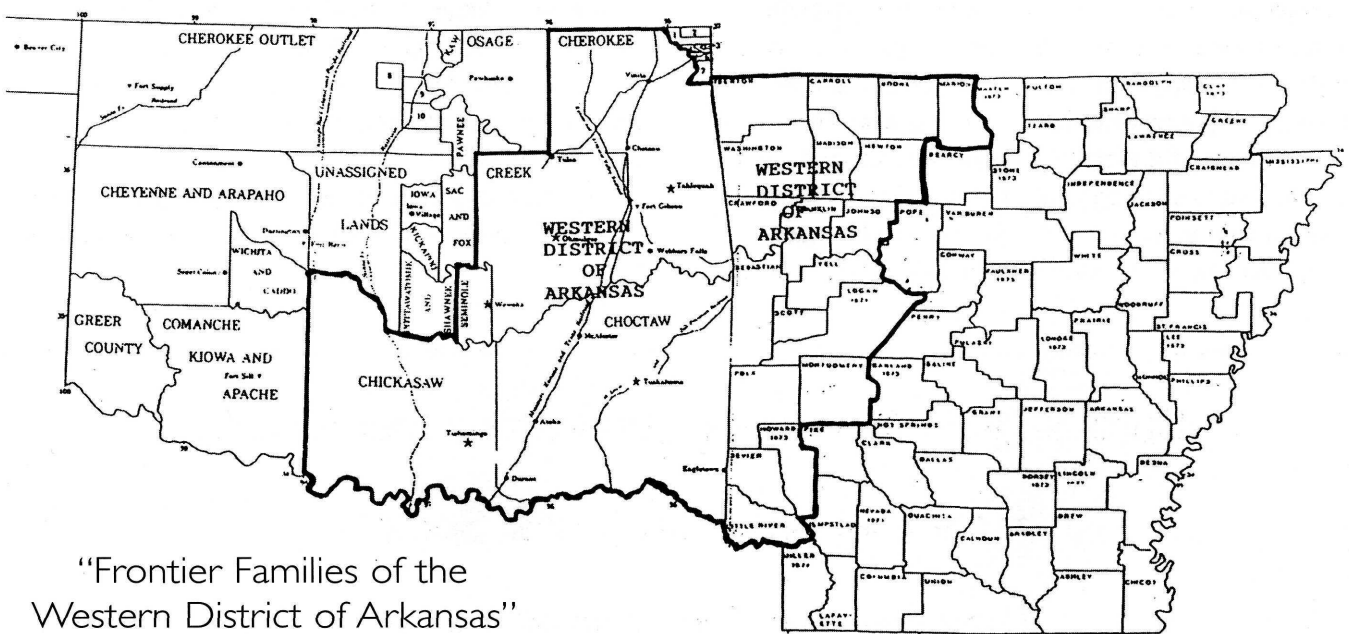
By Sherrell Stallings Buchanan

Frontier Researchers Genealogical Society of Sebastian County in 1998 established a separate entity, a project known as "Frontier Families of the Western District of Arkansas." During that time, the Fort Smith National Historic Site was finishing its renovation from the damage sustained during the 1996 tornado, which swept through Fort Smith leaving much destruction to the downtown area and the site. Having made arrangements with the National Historic Site, the Frontier Researchers group agreed to archive all collected material and data from this project in the historic site research center. This project was designed to preserve and make available for research the family history of people who came into the area of Arkansas and Oklahoma designated as the Western District of Arkansas between March 3, 1851, and Feb. 29, 1897. Most of this time was during Judge Isaac C. Parker's tenure.

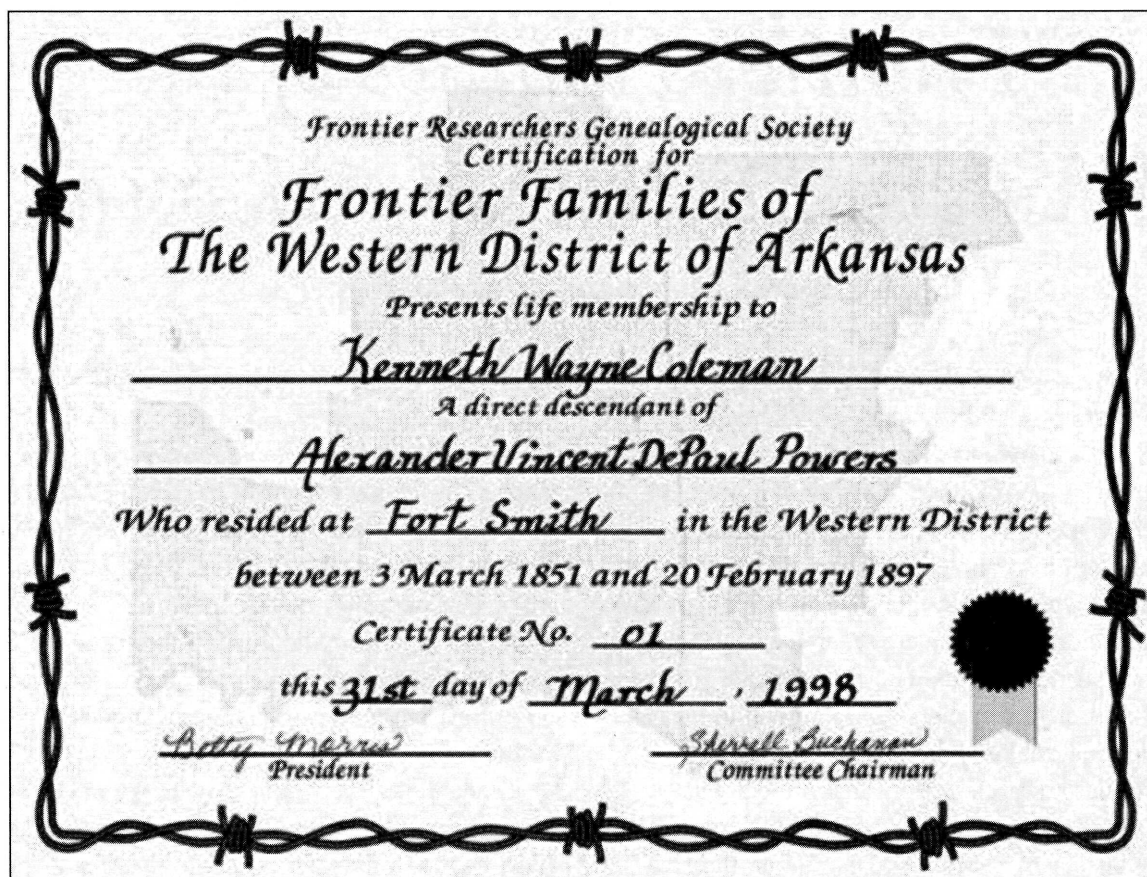
In order for an individual to obtain membership

in this project, he or she must prove lineage back to a particular individual ancestor who settled in the Western District of Arkansas between the stated dates. The Western District of Arkansas at that time consisted of 13 counties in Arkansas and about half the territory of Oklahoma, as outlined on the map. This ancestor may be male or female, and the applicant must provide documented proof of lineage back to the immigrant for each generation between. The applicant does not have to be a current resident of the area.

Since the onset of this project, we have had several fascinating families submitted. Among them have been families who came to the area as part of Trail of Tears. Some were descended from U.S. marshals who served under Judge Parker; others were local merchants and businessmen who started the economic trade here in Fort Smith and surrounding towns. Others were farmers, railroad men and even



"Frontier Families of the Western District of Arkansas" map



Images courtesy of Frontier Researchers

soldiers who served during the time Fort Smith was a fort. We have such a rich heritage and it is being preserved through this project for future generations. The collection includes copies of journals, diaries, photographs and old letters. There are biographical and historical records, Bible records, census records, military records, court records, American Indian records and obituaries, just to name a few. The preservation of this material is invaluable, and we would like to encourage all who are eligible to request an application and submit his or her data. Applicants receive beautiful 8-inch-by-11-inch signed

certificates showing their names and the proud names of their ancestors, which they will want to frame and display.

To request an application, please send a note along with a No. 10 size stamped self-addressed envelope to: Frontier Researchers Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 2123, Fort Smith, AR 72902-2123 and we will get your application and instructions in the mail to you immediately.

We want everyone to have an opportunity to be a part of this project. It is a part of our heritage and our future.

Surprise your favorite persons with a membership  
in the Fort Smith Historical Society.  
They will love *The Journal* and you.



# Hangin' Times in Fort Smith



By Jerry Akins

## The executions of Seaborn Kalijah and Silas Hampton

*"The execution of Silas Hampton and Seabron [sic] Green (Kalijah) took place in the federal court yard last Friday at 2:33 p.m. There were no special incidents connected with the affair. They were taken from the jail at 2 o'clock and led to the gallows surrounded by guards, and took their places on the death trap without showing the least sign of trepidation. Seabron Green was attended in his last moments by Rev. Lawrence Smythe, and Silas Hampton by Rev. Mr. Massey. On the scaffold there were short religious exercises, after which the condemned men took their places on the trap. Green had nothing to say after this, Hampton said that he had made peace with his God and was ready to go. The trap was then sprung, and the wretched victims of justice dropped to eternity."*

That terse paragraph from the Fort Smith Weekly Elevator, Oct. 14, 1887, is the shortest description of an execution found up to this point. (The newspaper consistently refers to Seabron Green, once noting that he is also known as Calija. Court records, however, consistently call him Seaborn Kalijah, alias Seaborn Green.)

### Silas Hampton

Silas Hampton, a young Chickasaw about 18 years old, might, if living today, be a candidate for the Dumbest Criminal list. He was convicted in July 1886 of the murder of Abner N. Lloyd, a man of about 60 years.

Lloyd was one of a group of men contracted to haul hay for the new railroad being built in Tishomingo County, Indian Territory.

He had camped for the night near Tishomingo when Hampton murdered him for about \$7 and a

pocket knife.

The murder happened about a half mile from the home of Joseph Wolf. Wolf testified that about 8 p.m. on Dec. 9, 1886, he was sitting by his fire when he heard a gunshot from the direction that the body was later found. Shortly thereafter, Hampton appeared at Wolf's house to return a pony that he had borrowed earlier. He turned the pony loose and threw down a saddle with a scabbard attached to it containing a Winchester. He sat with Wolf for a short time then left, saying that he was going to a nearby store to buy some things. Wolf's brother-in-law, Frank Greenwood, brought the gun into the house, where they examined it and found it to contain one cartridge. Charles McSwain, apparently the store owner, testified that Hampton came to the store about 9 p.m. and bought a pipe, tobacco and some other items paying about \$3.50 in silver coin. When asked where he got the money,



Hampton said he got it from J.R. Hearn. When asked how he earned it, he said picking cotton. Hearn would later testify that he had paid Hampton only 30 cents and Hampton denied saying that he got the money from Hearn. Hampton then claimed to have gotten the money from Squire Wolf, again for picking cotton. But in Squire Wolf's deposition, he states, "I never gave the Deft. (defendant) a cent of money in my life. Deft. never worked a lick for me in his life."

E.B. Marshall, a guard for Heck Thomas, testified in his deposition that while in camp alone with Hampton that Hampton "commenced crying and went and got holt of an ax in camp." Marshal took the ax away and asked why he was crying. Hampton replied that they said that he had killed a man then he proceeded to tell about the event. He said that he had gone to the store to get some things but lacked the money. On his way home, he had seen Lloyd, stopped a while, then went home, got his rifle and came back. He had sneaked up on the man and shot him through the hind wheel of the wagon. He had gotten \$7 and a pocket knife. He had then gone to the store and purchased a hat, shirt, a pair of drawers and gloves. The storekeeper said that Hampton had spent about \$3.50. Marshall also testified that he had overheard Hampton telling Albert Rogers, another prisoner, that he had gotten \$7 and a knife. When Hampton was arrested, he had on him \$3.30 and a pocket knife.

Four of the five witnesses who deposed (E.B. Marshall was not at the crime scene) stated that there had been footprints at the crime scene made by boots that had a half sole on one boot and a patch on the sole of other boot. Hampton's boots fit this description. Also the affiants described handprints in the soft dirt of gopher diggings that indicated the killer had crawled on hands and knees to the point where he did his deed. That was consistent with the story Hampton had told to E.B. Marshall of sneaking up and shooting Lloyd in the back.

On Dec. 11, 1886, Hampton was arrested by his uncle, Sheriff McGee, at the home of Joseph Wolf where his trek had started. When he was searched and the money and knife taken from him he had told the sheriff to just shoot him there and get it over with. At the time of his arrest, Joseph Wolf's wife came out of the house and gave Hampton a

quarter that he had given her for a chicken, saying that if that is how he got the money she didn't want it.

On July 9, 1887, the jury was not long in returning a verdict of guilty for Silas Hampton, although he claimed not to have committed the crime or to have any knowledge of it.

### **Seaborn Kalijah**

Seaborn Kalijah, alias Seaborn Green, 18, and a Creek Indian, killed Mark Kuykendall, Henry Smith and William Kelley, posse and guards for Deputy Marshal Phillips, on Jan. 17, 1887, while Phillips was away from camp.

On Feb. 19, 1887, Kalijah made application through an interpreter before Commissioner Stephen Wheeler for seven witnesses. He stated in that application, "That he expects to prove by said witness Mrs. Jersey that the deceased were killed at or near her house and under justifiable circumstances. That the deceased provoked, maltreated and abused this affiant and inflicted upon his person such wrongs and injuries as to endanger his life and cause this defendant to believe his life in imminent peril and so believing he killed the deceased in self defense. In this that defendant was arrested and released by deceased and afterwards rearrested by them and in so doing the deceased ran over him with their horses and trampled him under foot without reasonable cause or excuse, that they drew their guns and pistols upon him as though they would kill and murder defendant, so that he had reasonable cause to apprehend his life to be in imminent peril." The statement goes on to say that the other witnesses will prove that "this defendant is a peaceable, law-abiding and quiet citizen." Apparently the witnesses and the evidence didn't bear out his story. The description of the crime scene more closely resembles an ambush than killing in self-defense.

Kalijah had been, as he said, arrested, released and rearrested for introducing alcohol into Indian Territory. At the time of the murders, he was the only prisoner of Marshal Phillips' posse. On Jan. 17, Phillips had gone to Eufaula on business, leaving his prisoner in the charge of his guards. Next day, he returned to find Smith and Kuykendall dead by the fire where they had

slept, their heads nearly severed by an ax. A short distance away lay Kelley's body in a pool of blood. He had been shot and mutilated with the ax. Kuykendall and Smith's bodies were roasted from the waist down by faggots from the campfire that had been piled on them. Phillips buried the bodies near the camp and soon after again arrested Kalijah. Kalijah told Phillips that during the night some men had come into the camp then killed the men and that he had escaped into the woods.

On Friday, Feb. 11 Phillips brought in Doctor Walker, uncle of Kalijah, and Josh Alrovia Ethlo Harjo (later called Ohoola), a relative. They, too, were charged with the murders of the guards. Some guns had been missing from the camp and one of the pistols was found under Doctor Walker's house. On Feb. 18, the three suspects were arraigned and Kalijah entered a guilty plea while the other two pleaded not guilty. The court refused to recognize the guilty plea and trial was set for the May 1887 term of court. It was thought that Kalijah's plea was made to shield the other two defendants. The reporter for the Elevator felt that the evidence, while circumstantial, was stronger against Walker than against Kalijah.

Kalijah stated before the commissioner, as seen in his petition for witnesses, that he alone did the killing. His only excuse being that they had abused him and he feared for his life. Kalijah, Walker and Harjo (Ohoola) were tried jointly, but Walker and Harjo were acquitted and only Kalijah convicted on July 13, 1887.

"Doctor" may have been Walker's name rather than a physician's title. The Elevator described all of the defendants as, "full blood Creek Indians of the most ignorant class." And, "Seabron was a mere boy, not more than 18 years of age, ignorant and half civilized."

On their death warrants, the usual list of charges for services appeared. Hampton's unmarked grave at the city cemetery cost \$3 as usual. But the price of Kalijah's grave at the Catholic Cemetery was \$8, an increase of \$2 since Pat McCarty's burial in April of the same year.

### Sources

Fort Smith Weekly Elevator  
National Archives

## Memorial and Commemorative Gifts Important to the Historical Society

When making a gift to honor or remember someone important to you, please remember the Fort Smith Historical Society. Gifts may be made in memory of a loved one, or in honor of a birthday, graduation, anniversary or other event.

If you particularly enjoyed a feature in *The Journal*, show your appreciation for a subject you found interesting by making a contribution in honor of the writer.

Memorial gifts are a beautiful and lasting way to honor those who are dear to us. All memorials and commemorative gifts are acknowledged with a letter to both the donor and the family of the person honored.

A contribution to the Fort Smith Historical Society supports the publication of *The Journal*, which is placed in libraries and schools, and becomes an important part of the historical record of this area.

Gifts are tax deductible and may be made in any amount.

Send your contributions to:

### Fort Smith Historical Society

ATTN: Treasurer  
PO Box 3676  
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3676

Please send only checks or money orders. Indicate whether you will need a written receipt. The Fort Smith Historical Society cannot accept credit card payments.

# 1907 Newspapers

## FORT SMITH ELEVATOR

January-June 1907

(Abstracted from microfilm in the Fort  
Smith Public Library)

By Dorothy Doville

(Editor's Note: Most spelling, punctuation  
and grammar appear as printed  
in Fort Smith Elevator. Some very minor  
editors were done for clarity.)

Jan. 4, 1907

Judge Sam Edmondson is wrestling with a case of  
erysipelas.

\*\*\*

Prickly Ash Bitters cures the kidneys, regulates  
the liver and purifies the bowels. A valuable system  
tonic.

\*\*\*

The awning in front of the Illinois Building was  
removed Monday, and its removal adds greatly to the  
appearance of its locality.

\*\*\*

The editor of the Hartford Developer, who is a  
justice of the peace as well as a pen pusher, warns  
blind tigers that they may expect no mercy if they get  
into his court.

\*\*\*

The jury in the case of Della McBride against P.  
Berman last Friday, returned a verdict in favor of the  
defendant. The suit was for damages occasioned by

the death of Mrs. McBride's husband, who fell down  
an area way and broke his neck.

\*\*\*

Jan. 11, 1907

Work began on the Haskell-Reeves inter-urban  
line last Friday.

\*\*\*

The Towson avenue car lines now run as far out as  
Sulphur Springs.

\*\*\*

An infant son of Mr. & Mrs. J.L. Williams died  
at the home of its parents in this city Thursday,  
January 3.

\*\*\*

Mr. Harrison Price and Miss Annie Ferguson  
were married last Sunday evening at the First Baptist  
church, colored, by Rev. Jones.

\*\*\*

The school board of this city last week elected  
Tom C. Davis to fill the position of President, made  
vacant by the retirement of Judge John H. Rogers.  
This is a wise selection.

\*\*\*

Girlhood and Scott's Emulsion are linked together.  
The girl who takes Scott's Emulsion has plenty of  
rich, red blood; she is plump, active and energetic.  
The reason is that at a period when a girl's digestion  
is weak, Scott's Emulsion provides her with  
powerful nourishment in easily digested form. It is a



food that builds and keeps up a girl's strength.

\*\*\*

Arthur France, 21 years of age, was run over by a train and killed at Fayetteville last Sunday evening.

\*\*\*

At a meeting of Ben T. DuVal Camp, U.C.V., Sunday, the members decided to attend the General Lee exercises at the High School tomorrow night in a body.

\*\*\*

The Waldron Reporter says that Frank Swinford, who was badly slashed in an encounter about Christmas time, has so far recovered as to be able to go around again.

\*\*\*

Charles Strickland, charged with stealing hides from the Fort Smith Produce Company, was bound over for the grand jury by Justice Hiner, before whom he was examined.

\*\*\*

### **The American Boy**

A profusely illustrated monthly for boys. Without question the most entertaining and practical magazine in the world for Young Americans. Covers in colors. 36 pages size of Ladies Home Journal. Serial and short stories by Stratemeyer, Tomlinson, Trowbridge, Munroe, Shute and others, the best writers for boys in the world. Departments relating to all Boy Hobbies, edited by experts. It preaches the religion of "DO" and not that of "DON'T". In doing more for the Uplift and Encouragement of Boys than any other agency. Approved by parents and educators. Boys, (250,000 of them) everywhere enthusiastic for it. The subscription price of The American Boy is \$1.00 per year. The American Boy (1 year) \$1.25, Elevator \$1.00 Total \$ 2.00, both for \$1.00. Weldon, Williams & Lick, Fort Smith, Ark.

\*\*\*

Messrs. L.L. Gately and J.W. Duty of Uniontown, Ark. Paid the Elevator office a visit Wednesday. They say that matters are rather quiet in their section at present, the people generally prosperous and happy.

\*\*\*

Miss Effie Whorton died Monday at the residence of her parents at Barling, aged 19 years. Her funeral services were held Tuesday afternoon.

\*\*\*

And still they come. Harry E. Kelley last week struck a gas well on the Uptmoor place that yields 1,000,000 cubic feet of gas per day.

\*\*\*

### **Feb. 1, 1907**

A.B. Sexton of this city and Lula Elam of Ozark were married Sunday at the home of the bride in latter city.

\*\*\*

H. Kuper, Jr., has given notice that he will be in the field for re-election to the office of mayor, and the lists may now be permanently filled, with very little probability of new entries. Mr. Kuper has made two successful races and his friends feel confident that he will keep up his old gait.

\*\*\*

### **Feb. 8, 1907**

W.A. Smith was acquitted after a trial in the circuit court at Booneville last week, on a charge of killing Oscar Lloyd.

\*\*\*

Judge Hon passed through the city Monday on his way to Charleston, where he will preside at court in the absence of Judge Evans, who will hold court in Waldron.

\*\*\*

W.L. Curry, an attorney of Sallisaw, I.T., is confined to his bed with smallpox. The case is in a light form, and the precautions taken by the local authorities will prevent the spread of the disease.

\*\*\*

The Hartford Developer says that Dave Blaylock, who accidentally shot himself while taking a gun from his buggy, died from the effects of his wound.

\*\*\*

Don't forget that a little money now and then is relished by the preacher man.

\*\*\*

### Feb. 15, 1907

B.C. Covey has bought the Eshelman place on North Eighteenth street.

\*\*\*

The Herald says the young men of Huntington are preparing to fit up a suit of rooms for a social and reading society.

\*\*\*

Jake Nichols and Barney King were the victims of a runaway accident Thursday of last week. While driving on Lexington avenue their horse ran away and dashed their buggy against the curbing of the pavement, throwing its occupants to the ground. Both were so severely shaken up that they had to be taken to St. Edward's Infirmary.

\*\*\*

Last Monday afternoon, Mrs. Magnolia Briembecker, who lives east of the city was knocked down by a runaway team of the Pony Express Company and severely injured. She was visiting her mother in the city, and was crossing the street to answer a telephone call, was knocked down by the team.

\*\*\*

### Feb. 22, 1907

Mrs. Cardwell of Atlanta, Ga. Is in the city with her children, visiting her parents, Alderman & Mrs. George Moss.

\*\*\*

William Patterson, janitor of the Hallowell building, died Tuesday morning after a brief illness.

\*\*\*

Paul DeLarvin has purchased the stock of the Sengel Hardware Company and will remove it to Blocker, I.T.

\*\*\*

A recontre between Judge Frank Freer and Capt. C.C. Cook Tuesday evening on Garrison avenue resulted in the former being knocked down. Bystanders interfered before serious damage resulted.

\*\*\*

In the federal court last Saturday A. Alexander pled guilty to having sold liquor without license and was sentenced to pay a fine of \$100 and serve thirty days in jail.

\*\*\*

### March 1, 1907

No, Alonzo, we have no pirates and buccaneers nowadays; trust promoters and frenzied financiers have supplanted them.

\*\*\*

Last Monday the Arkansas and Territorial Oil and Gas Company brought in another big gasser on the Uptmoor place.

\*\*\*

### March 8, 1907

Northbound Rock Island passenger train No. 12 ran into an open switch at Enid. Fireman Davis of Chickasha was killed and several passengers were injured, none fatally.

\*\*\*

Tom Cornstubble, charged with selling whiskey in violation of the laws of Uncle Sam, was brought to the city last week by Deputy Marshal Holt.

\*\*\*

The natural gas fever has struck Greenwood, a drill is to be sunk on F.P. Holland's land near Home Addition, says the Democrat.

\*\*\*

Will Johnson, who was arrested upon suspicion of being implicated in the theft of the mail pouch at Cotter has been released, there being no evidence that he had anything to do with the job.

\*\*\*

A petition was circulated in this city this week, among citizens who own property in the Greenwood district, protesting against Representative Heartsill's action in exempting the Greenwood district from the operations of the Arnold Good Road bill. It was numerously signed.

\*\*\*

### March 15, 1907

Owing to heavy rains in the country about its headquarters, the Arkansas river is at good boating stage.

\*\*\*

Sunday night S. Sist's store on North Sixth street was burglarized and robbed of a lot of canned goods.

\*\*\*

Owing to ill health Rev. S.A. Brumfield has resigned the pastorate of the Lexington Avenue Baptist Church.

\*\*\*

O. Echols' store on Garrison avenue was visited Sunday night by somebody who got away with a lot of cheap jewelry.

\*\*\*

Tom Renfro, indicted for assault upon Bertha Huber was admitted to bail Monday, his bail being fixed at \$6,000. James Kelly and Dave Cheney are the bondsmen.

\*\*\*

### March 22, 1907

Mrs. Burton of Greenwood was taken to Belle Point Hospital Saturday to undergo treatment for a fractured limb.

\*\*\*

Maple Leaf Camp, Woodmen of the World, is preparing to send a drill team to the great meeting of that order to be held at Jamestown, Va.

\*\*\*

W. G. Thurber of Chant, I.T. was fatally injured one day last week by a horse falling upon him and injuring him internally. He lived but a few hours after accident.

\*\*\*

W.F. May & Company are rushing the Carnegie Library building at a good rate, and tomorrow afternoon at half past 3 o'clock the corner stone will be laid with appropriate ceremonies.

\*\*\*



**March 29, 1907**

W.F. May has secured the contract to erect a fine residence for Mr. C. Carnall at Spiro.

\*\*\*

L.B. Barry, former sheriff, has been seriously ill during the week, but is now convalescing.

\*\*\*

A barn on the Karnoop place north of the city burned Thursday night of last week. It was a fine structure, and its destruction caused a heavy loss.

\*\*\*

Amos Rogers, the 8-year old Negro kid who has created consternation of late by his burglaries, is likely to make more trouble, having escaped from Detective Carr last Saturday.

\*\*\*

**April 5, 1907**

Hon. W.A. Black took a flying trip to the city Saturday, going back Monday. He says the legislature is busy and getting busier.

\*\*\*

In the case of the infant whose body was found in the river last week the jury returned a verdict of death from unknown causes.

\*\*\*

The track of the Catholic avenue car line has been extended one mile beyond the former limit, and now ends at what is known as Hawthorne Place, one of the most desirable sites about the city.

\*\*\*

S.W. Lord, foreman of the Eagle Box Factory, was knocked down one night last week, as he was returning home from his work, and robbed

of \$4.75 and a silver watch. His assailant was a white man.

\*\*\*

W.E. Shrigley has been appointed field deputy of the United States Marshal's office for the territory consisting of Johnson county, the southern half of Newton and Madison counties, the least half of Franklin and the south half of Logan. Mr. Shrigley is chairman of the Central Committee of the Republican party of Johnson county.

\*\*\*

**April 12, 1907**

Capt. Bryant Barry is recovering from a severe spell of sickness.

\*\*\*

Emma R. McIntyre has been appointed postmistress of Ratcliff, Logan county, to succeed C.S. Dickens who resigned.

\*\*\*

Last Friday afternoon Jacob Meyer, while working on a house in the eastern part of the city, had the misfortune to get a leg broken by the fall of a large stone.

\*\*\*

**April 19, 1907**

Preliminary work for the erection of the new Baptist parsonage has begun. The building will cost \$3,000.

\*\*\*

Henry Webb, one of Ozark's best citizens, died at Ozark Friday after several years of serious stomach trouble. Mr. Webb was 68 years old and was born at Ozark. His wife survives him.

\*\*\*

J.T. Russell, a worker in one of the mines at Chant, I.T., was brought to Fort Smith Tuesday night and placed in St. Edward's Infirmary for treatment. He is suffering from a broken leg and is said to be in a very bad condition.

\*\*\*

Frank Brannon, employed in the plant of the Casket Company, was badly injured Tuesday. A board he was holding against an edging machine flew off and struck him in the side, cutting a large gash. He was taken to St. Edward's Infirmary for treatment.

\*\*\*

### April 26, 1907

Beginning May 1, the chief of police will put the curfew ordinance into effect.

\*\*\*

Mayor Bourland has appointed Frank Jarnigan, a member of the police force in place of C.F. James, who resigned to go into the meat business.

\*\*\*

The Arkansas Real Estate Company was the name of a new company organized in Fort Smith last week. R.T. Rowe, is president of the company and John Errickson and J.T. Parks managers..

\*\*\*

### May 3, 1907

Several new automobiles arrived in the city during the week, and such vehicles are no longer an uncommon sight.

\*\*\*

E.O. Wagoner has completed arrangements to establish an experimental farm near Waldron, using the boys from the cities for help.

\*\*\*

John Summers, a Frisco employee, was painfully injured last week by a fall down the stairs at the depot. He was taken to Belle Point Hospital for treatment.

\*\*\*

### May 10, 1907

At Ozan, Ark., two Negroes were killed by falling houses.

\*\*\*

The store of G.P. Burton, postmaster at Barber, was struck by lightning and burned recently.

\*\*\*

Telegrams were received in this city Saturday announcing the death in Harrodsburg, Ky., of Mr. Frederick Curry. Mr. Curry was the husband of Miss May McClure, whom he married in this city.

\*\*\*

Charles T. Peak, the night watchman who was badly burned by an explosion of natural gas at the Fort Smith wagon works sometime ago, has brought suit against the Mansfield Gas Company, laying his damages at \$1,999. He claims that his mishap resulted by reason of the company neglecting to connect its pipes properly.

\*\*\*

### May 17, 1907

Lou Winters was lodged in the federal jail last week by Deputy Shrigley of Clarksville. He is charged with boot-legging.

\*\*\*

While jumping with a vaulting pole, Charles Lowery, a student at Peabody School, fell and broke his shoulder. The dislocation was reduced with great difficulty.

\*\*\*

H.P. Farrington has disposed of his interest in the Alexander Sons-Farrington Lumber Company to J.L. Boyles of Iowa; who will remove to Fort Smith and at once identify himself with the firm's business. Mr. Farrington is as yet undetermined as to his course.

\*\*\*

Mr. Charles L. Sheppard and Miss Rachel McMinn were married Sunday afternoon by Rev. M.N. Waldrip, this ceremony being conducted at Mr. Waldrip's residence.

\*\*\*

### May 24, 1907

Burglars visited John Cutter's store one night last week and touched it for several articles

\*\*\*

At the school election in Van Buren last Saturday Capt. W.H.H. Shibley and Charles Ayers were chosen directors, and a seven-mill tax was adopted by a large majority.

\*\*\*

Officers of the Muskogee court this week lodged twenty-five prisoners in the federal jail at this place. Most of the offenders suffered for fooling with whiskey in one way or another.

\*\*\*

### May 31, 1907

Mail messenger service will be discontinued from Barber, Logan county, after May 3.

\*\*\*

Last Saturday Professor Neale of the Fort Smith Commercial College returned from a trip to Batesville, Ark.

\*\*\*

Charles Selig, 12 years old, was severely injured Sunday by a fall from a trapeze at his home on South Nineteenth street.

\*\*\*

From the Democrat we learn that James E. Rosenbaum who has been conducting a mill and gin at Greenwood, has sold his property to a W.A. Copeland of Lavaca, will remove to Porum, I.T.

\*\*\*

### June 7, 1907

The first load of new potatoes went out of Fort Smith last Saturday, being shipped to St. Louis.

\*\*\*

The home of R.T. Simpson, 316 North C street was burglarized Thursday of last week, and about \$50 and a watch taken.

\*\*\*

Mrs. George T. Williams left Saturday for LaGrange, Mo., in response to a telegram informing her that her sister was seriously ill.

\*\*\*

Rev. F.F. Gibson and Judge S.T. Rowe will deliver addresses at the memorial services to be held by the Odd Fellows on the 9th of June.

\*\*\*

The walls of the Carnegie Library building begin to loom up, the good weather of the past few days giving contractor May an opportunity to get in good work.

\*\*\*

### June 14, 1907

Miss Quita Carter, a popular young lady of Ozark,



died June 5 after a brief illness.

\*\*\*

Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Birnie and Mrs. Pryor and son are visiting Mrs. Whitlow in Muskogee.

\*\*\*

Bids for his paving and sewer bonds will be opened next Tuesday at the office of the board of improvement in this city.

\*\*\*

Mr. Fayette Ward of Hartford, Confederate soldier and Californian in the days when the boys went across the plains to hunt for gold, spent Wednesday in the city. Mr. Ward's visits to Fort Smith are rare. He only comes in now and then, just to see how things are getting along and to shake hands with his old friends.

\*\*\*

### May 21, 1907

The Waldron Telephone Company has completed the line to Hon and now has it in operation.

\*\*\*

Ed Jarnigen has resigned his position on the police force to enter rail road business. Mr. Hill, who resigned from the force some time ago, was appointed to take his place.

\*\*\*

Last week Deputy Marshal Sutterfield arrived at

the marshal's office with a man named Pierce, who is charged with intimidating C.K. Fox, a home steader. In default of bail Pierce was lodged in jail

\*\*\*

Mrs. Nathan F. Hale, who was recently shot at Durant, I.T. by her husband, who afterward killed himself, is a sister of County Clerk John E. Tatum. Mrs. Hale was badly hurt but bids fair to recover.

\*\*\*

### June 28, 1907

W.F. May & Company are rushing the walls of the Carnegie building at a rapid pace.

\*\*\*

Maurice D. Bedwell, the promising young son of E.D. Bedwell, has become permanent secretary of the Arkansas Valley Coal Company of this city, for which he has been traveling.

\*\*\*

W.H. Dunblaizier has been appointed deputy coroner. He will hold inquests in Fort Smith and in such other portions of the county as the coroner is not able to reach when called upon.

\*\*\*

Are you dull and stupid? Do you miss the snap, vim and energy that was once yours? You need a few doses of that great system regulator, Prickly Ash Bitters. For reviving strength and energy, increasing the capacity of the body for work, it is a remedy of the highest order.

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- 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

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