

PHILLIPS COUNTY  
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Volume 5

JUNE, 1967

Number 3

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VOLUME 5

NUMBER 3

JUNE, 1967

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The Phillips County Historical Society

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The Phillips County Historical Society supplies the Quarterly to its members. Membership is open to anyone interested in Phillips County history. Annual membership dues are \$3.50 for a regular membership and \$5.00 for a sustaining membership. Single copies of the Quarterly are \$1.00. Quarterlies are mailed to members.

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Dues are payable to Miss Bessie McRee, Membership Chairman, P. O. Box 629, Helena, Arkansas 72342.

Meetings are held in September, January, and May, on the fourth Sunday in the month, at 3:00 P.M., at the Phillips County Museum.

JUST A MEMORY

by

Helen Clopton Mosby

Many of Helena's familiar landmarks have passed into history with the coming of industry, urban renewal, federal housing and modern living. In general it has been called progress.

But we senior citizens who still have a great feeling for the past have suffered twinges of the heart as these buildings have been torn down, hauled off or crumbled into dust taking with them some of the tradition which a few of us want to cling to.

We like to talk about such things as the "town clock" as if it might pop up on the roof of Safeway, remembering a few of those days when something would be wrong and it would go on striking continually for hour after hour. And we tell people how our children went to "Aunt Lily's" kindergarten and played inside her wrought-iron fence where shoppers now park their cars to buy groceries at Kroger. We've even been guilty of a mad dash down Cherry Street to the ferry landing when all of a sudden we realize there is a bridge farther down the road.

Memories can be interesting and fun, and soon another of Helena's old homes will become a memory to add to our pleasant back-thinking. The house may best be called just "702 Perry Street" for in its more than 100 years a number of families have loved it as home. Inside the walls babies have been born, weddings held, and funerals conducted to say nothing of the gay parties - dances, teas, receptions that were given - and visitors from near and far have enjoyed its hospitality.

It might be interesting to account for the owners of this old place and what they did with it. The lots (#418 and #419) were a part of the original dedication forming and platting the town of Helena back in the year 1821. Three years later in 1824 during the presidency of James Monroe, William Russell received a patent for the property from the United States Government. Shortly after that Russell deeded part of his interest in this land to Sylvanus Phillips. So the records establish the fact that the lots were first owned by William Russell and Sylvanus Phillips. From the records we also know that it was located just two blocks from the original home of Sylvanus. During the next twenty odd years the property changed hands several times.

Then before the outbreak of the Civil War, Mr. Charles Royal Coolidge and his wife, Elizabeth, bought the place, and, since he had nine children, he built a beautiful big southern residence on the site. There is a picture of it in the Phillips County Library



dated 1888 showing it as a fine piece of Italian architecture.

The walls both inside and outside were of old red brick and to this day every wall in the house is 12 inches of solid brick. Across the front there was a long porch with a wrought-iron railing bordering it and a big bay window at one end. Magnolia trees and tall hedges in the front yard afforded abundant shade. The stepping stone from the street was a huge marble slab on which was carved the name **Coolidge**. At this spot friends, when they came to call, tied their horses and carriages to an iron horse's head with a ring in his mouth called a hitching post. The kitchen, as was customary in those days, was at the back. It was connected to the rest of the house but not actually built in with it. In the back yard Mr. Coolidge put up one of the finest stables in the county. It was a two story structure of red brick with a weather vane on top. Here the horses and carriages were kept to serve the needs of his large family.

The house stayed in the Coolidge family for a long period. Mr. C. R. Coolidge's children finally inherited it. They were -----

Charles R. Coolidge Jr. who married 1. Fannie Leslie Moore  
2. Julia Govan Davidson

William A. Coolidge, married Nina Polk  
Eva Coolidge Lyford (Mrs. Ben Lyford)  
Andrew P. Coolidge, married Frances Barlow  
Dr. Walter L. Coolidge (made his home in Louisville)  
Mary T. Coolidge Wene (Mrs. Sam Wene)  
Henry E. Coolidge, married Mamie Clopton  
J. Ellis Coolidge, married Julia Tate  
Lizzie Coolidge Tate (Mrs. Marshall Tate)

In 1917 "702 Perry Street" was sold to James W. Clopton and his wife, Marie. Now in 1917 antiques did not have the charm they do now. No one thought too much about accumulating old things, but rather wanted something new. So the old house got a complete overhauling and face lifting.

The magnolias and hedges were removed. The marble stepping stone was turned over to conceal the name of Coolidge. Then off went the front porch and bay window. In its place a modern red tile terrace porch was built. From the rear the kitchen was torn down and of course automobiles had replaced horses so there was no need for a stable. Instead a porte-cochere (now called a carport) was added to the back entrance. In fact nothing much was left but the walls and the attic. Mrs. Clopton recalls that the original attic stairway which was made of solid cherry wood was changed. A new attic stairway in another place was put in and sealed. They completely forgot that there was an enormous pool table in the attic which the Coolidges had used all those years. So the pool table was forced to stay in the attic because the stair-

way, had been closed on the sides. It is still there in spite of many attempts to take it apart and down through a window. A modern kitchen with tile floor and walls and tile bathrooms were among the other changes.

White stucco was put all over the outside of the bricks which one by one were chipped to make the stucco hold. It was made of actual white sand shipped from middle Tennessee.

But one of the most fascinating things about the remodelled home as far as the young people were concerned was the back door buzzer. The Clopton children and their teen-age friends rang the back door bell many unnecessary times just to make Mrs. Clopton push the buzzer from upstairs and that unlocked the back door.

There is one thing on these lots which no owner has ever changed. That is the front sidewalk done in diamond shaped blocks of red, white and blue. Several generations of children have hopped, skipped and jumped from one color to the next as they went to and from church, school or the Saturday afternoon movie.

In 1943 another branch of the Clopton family became the owners of "702 Perry" - the Cadwallader L. Polk Jr's with their three children. They enjoyed it until 1951 when the R. S. Bro-noughs bought the place only to sell it a few years later to Dr. John Barrow, the present owner.

Dr. Barrow has recently sold it to the Pure Oil Company and soon this ancient homestead will become a filling station. Again we senior citizens will have more food for thought as we pass the spot with twinges of the heart and much thinking back.

### GRAND BALL AT PALMERS

From the *Helena Weekly World*,  
February 2, 1898

Turner, Arkansas, January 28, 1898

#### Editor World:

On Thursday evening, January 27, 1898, in the Simmons Academy, at Palmers, a large number of young people were gathered for a grand ball. Many came out on the evening train, while many others came by private conveyances, all with smiling faces and joyful countenances, indicative of the social event that night. By 8 o'clock the Academy was well nigh filled, and when the band struck up the music, numbers engaged in the dance, which was continued until 12 o'clock, when all repaired to the handsome and hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. Job Dean, where, assisted by their accomplished daughter, Miss Mamie, a most sumptuous supper was served in elegant style, consisting of all the latest delicacies of the season. One and all heartily enjoyed it, and many were the fine compliments paid the givers. Many of the young people expressed their thanks to Mrs. Miles Simmons for her kind hospitality in throwing open the doors of her magnificent house, which was artistically arranged for the occasion, Mrs. Simmons being all smiles and attention to the pleasure of her many friends.

Among the many beautiful young ladies present were Misses Mamie Welsh and Laura Connelly, of Poplar Grove; Misses Eva and Mittie Carlock and Mattie Dalzell, of Marvell; Miss Mary Spain, of Coffee Creek; Misses Ella Boone, Eva Womack, Irene Follis of Cypert; Misses Ethel Pointer and Jean Lightfoot, of Turner; Misses Pearl Turney, Katie Gannon, Janie Gray and Claudia Peterson, of Blackton; and Misses Mamie Dean and Lil Miles, of Palmer. Among the older people who graced the assemblage with their presence, were Hon. G. W. Yancey, of Trenton; Charles Meyers, of Helena; Dr. and Mrs. Hall, Dr. Case and W. R. Brown, of Turner; Mr. and Mrs. Job Dean, and Mr. Richard Miles, successful farmer and prominently spoken of candidate for the Legislature, of Palmer. Among the visitors from a distance was Mr. Jeter Johnston, of Salem, Va. The dance was continued until the approaching dawn of day warned the merry-makers that the time for their departure was at hand. With many thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Simmons, Mr. and Mrs. Dean, and Mr. Richard Miles, they took their departure for their respective homes, hoping that before long another ball would be given at Palmers.

Birdhunter.

The elite of Palmer society enjoyed the Ball given at that town last Thursday night. The affair was largely attended by people from the surrounding neighborhood, all of whom enjoyed

the evening to the greatest extent. There were thirty dances down on the dance programme, which was carried out in its entirety, the occasion being brought to a close at a very late hour, in the "Home Sweet Home" waltz. Mr. Kelly Cazort deserves to be complimented for his excellence in looking after his duties as floor manager. The programmes used on this delightful occasion were neat and pretty and the product of the *World Job Dept*.

*Helena Weekly World*, February 2, 1898.

The North Helenians are still working on the breaks in their levee. Mr. D. D. Bennett, who has been superintending the work, said to a reporter that he was of the opinion that the North Helena levee could stand forty-eight feet of water, and as Col. Miles does not look for more than forty-three feet, it can be said that that portion of the city will escape the flood for the time being.

*Helena Weekly World*, February 2, 1898

Sacred Heart Academy, Roll of Honor for January; Bettie Higgins, Mamie Stout, Jena Crenshaw, Melissa Spain, Bessie Brady, Nomie Welsh, Aline Berton, Annie Truemper, Vallie Berton, Rosa Ruane, Irene Berton, Hattie Rabb, Eddie Clark, Zelda Keesee, Ruby Sedgwick, Richard Cunningham, Mary Cunningham, Bertha Farmer, Mary Maloney, Edward Maloney, Lillie Horton.



EXCERPTS FROM THE DAILY DIARY (1933-1936)

OF L. R. PARMELEE,  
HELENA CITY ENGINEER

by

Mrs. L. R. Parmelee

Mr. Parmelee was appointed by the State Administrator of the nation-wide relief program as Administrator and Project Engineer for Phillips County in November, 1933. He was told how much money was available for the county and that it would be necessary for him to prepare and submit projects for work such as road building, street paving, drainage ditches, etc., within ten days. This he did, and, upon approval of them he began selecting men to manage and supervise the various types of projects. I say "select"--it is estimated that seventy-five per cent of the men in Phillips County were unemployed because of the worse depression ever experienced by our nation, and every able-bodied man was eager and ready to work.

Under Mr. Parmelee's supervision many streets in Helena. West Helena, and Marvell were blacktopped. The Cities were required to furnish part of the materials. Almost every county road was graveled; every school house in the county was repaired and painted; an airport was built, the Recreation Park was created and built; together with the swimming pool and bathhouse, which are still being used.

The women were not neglected either. Projects were set up for sewing rooms, nurses aides at the Hospital, office helpers, canning centers, and numerous other positions.

All of this work required a large organization which was divided into several parts: the Employment Division where everyone was certified for work, with Mr. J. W. Dennison in charge; the Finance Division, with Mr. E. S. Dudley in charge; the Commissary with Mr. Jimmy Clopton as manager, and a large Case-work Department which had several supervisors during its existence, among whom were Mrs. A. C. Sanders and Mrs. Margaret Hays.

The first relief program was called the Civil Works Administration (CWA); this was merged with a newer program called the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA); then came the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). Each of these programs was designed to meet certain immediate needs of the unemployed of Phillips County. Mr. Parmelee served as Supervisor of this relief work until February 2,

1936, when he resigned because of the press of personal business.

January 11, 1935 - Mr. E. N. Beisel and E. F. Byerly conferred with me relative to plans to construct an airport and obtain lease on available land for it.  
Conference with Geo. Lyford and Jimmy Clopton.

January 21, - Rainfall in past 48 hrs. almost 10 inches as reported by Capt. Jas. A. Burnett, U. S. weather bureau.

January 29 - Co. Com. meeting on Rural Rehabilitation met.  
Those present were: Mrs. Hays, T. E. Wooten, A. A. Nelson, Nig Enlow, & Foster Fitzhugh.

February 1 - Completely destroyed by fire at 9:30 P. M. were the business houses of Wooten-Epes, Mayer Bros., Bealer Shoe Shop, McCarty Jewelry.

February 4 - Co. Judge Aubrey Burke conferring about road projects.

February 18 - Conference of Rural Supervisors, Foster Fitzhugh, Nig Enlow, with J. G. Knight.

March 23 - Went to Mellwood to inspect flood-water damage.

March 29 - To Mellwood with Mr. Fitzhugh to observe highwater situation . . . water near Elaine.

April 1 - Plans being made to care for 200 families, refugees from flooded areas.

April 3 - Tenant-farmer program organized and survey made by Miss Helen Meek and Miss Katherine Heslep.

April 5 - Conference with state workers about obtaining medical care for flood refugees.

April 6 - Meeting to discuss health measures for highwater refugees with Dr. Bruce, Co. Health Officer presiding.

April 11 - Terrific sand storms of West reached Helena today. The intense dust cut visibility to only a few blocks.

April 12 - Plans being made for lighting system at Swimming Pool.

April 19 - Inspecting work at Recreation Park.  
Airport Project nearing completion.

April 22 - Mrs. Carrie Mae Craig assumed her duties as a Rural Home Supervisor.

April 24 - Mrs. Fred Williams employed as a Rural Home Supervisor.

April 25 - Mr. Tap Hornor, Mayor, Miss Selma Weiner, Red Cross Supervisor, Mr. Wilson, Division representative of Red Cross, and Mrs. Margaret Hays, Rural Supervisor in conference relative to care of flood-water refugees.

April 26 - Fair and warm. First ball game at new Recreation Park. Helena re-entered professional baseball. They won their first game today from Clarksdale.

April 30 - Flood situation still serious. Care of refugees big problem.

May 3 - George Lyford, Dist. Supervisor, here to confer with us about flood conditions.

May 4 - Mrs. Kay Garner of Marvell added to staff of Rural Home Supervisors.

May 19 - Luther Wilkes, District Personnel Officer, here for conference.

May 26 - Meeting of West Helena Planning Board at 2 P. M. Present were: Mayor J. F. Herd, Dr. E. F. Kalb, Alfred Raff, E. W. Perigo, George Cromwell, and Fred Lee. Proposed projects were discussed. New WPA Program to begin July 1st.

May 29 - 32 work projects were sent by messenger to Little Rock, submitted by County Supervisor of the Works Progress Administration.

May 30 - Work on Swimming Pool inspected today . . . progressing satisfactorily.

June 6 - Accompanied City, County Planning Boards to Little Rock to discuss projects for new Works Program.

June 13 - Meeting to discuss acute situation caused by recurring flood in lower part of county when approximately 400 families were thrown on relief. J. J. White, Co. Agt., all AAA officers, Judge Aubrey Burke, and George Lyford in meeting.

June 18 - Meeting at Chamber of Commerce to discuss situation relative to caring for sharecroppers who will be unemployed because of the third rise of flood waters in southern part of county.

June 21 - Red Cross officials arrive to direct emergency aid to flood victims.

June 25 - To Little Rock with County Planning Board.

July 2 - Mr. Bush Binley of Little Rock here. Had meeting with Red Cross officials.

July 4 - Big barbeque at new Recreation Park sponsored by Helena Business Men. Estimated 15,000 attended.

July 10 - Checking Airport and Swimming Pool projects with Ed Hoffard.

July 13 - To Mellwood -- checking flood relief work there.

July 18 - Conference with State Health Officers of ERA, Dr. Bruce, Co. Health Officer, and others relative health and sanitary

situation in flood area in southern part of county.

July 25 - Mayor Jimmy Herd and Mr. John Sheffield in conference about new WPA projects to be started.

July 31 - E. S. Dudley, Dist. Disbursing Officer, here.

August 1 - Cad Polk, Capt. Hargraves, and I to Little Rock in interest of new projects covering school buildings.

August 13 - Dist. Engineer, Rex Mhoon, in meeting here with Judge Aubrey Burke and Cad Polk about school projects.

August 28 - Mrs. Mary Duke Bradford, Mr. J. W. Dennison, and I at meeting in Pine Bluff.

Sept. 3 - Albright Horn and Morris Keesee to Pine Bluff on business.

Sept. 12 - Work started on Creek Alley project.

Sept. 18 - Appointed Asst. Dist. Engineer of WPA, effective Oct. 1st.

October 1 - Assumed duties as Asst. Dist. Engineer on WPA in charge of work in Monroe, Lee, & Phillips Counties.

October 3 - To Clarendon to check on projects.

October 5 - In Lee County checking projects.

October 15 - Homer Dyess, Dist. Supervisor Playgrounds projects, here. Mrs. Sophia Haden appointed Supervisor of Helena and West Helena School playgrounds.

October 16 - To Clarendon with Morris Keesee to check on projects then on to Brinkley.

October 21 - Went to Columbus, Ohio to attend the National Convention of Professional Engineers.

October 28 - Sewing Project set up.

October 29 - Two new projects started -- blacktopping West Helena streets and Helena sewer work.

Nov. 18 - Mr. Eikenbaum from Mr. Limerick's office here to discuss Lakeview Colony.

Dec. 5 - To Mellwood with Morris Keesee preparatory to setting up road projects to provide employment for 350 flood-relief clients.

Dec. 10 - Met with Garden Club about landscaping Recreation Park.

Dec. 13 - Our Commissary Building on Arkansas St. burned -- contents partially destroyed or badly damaged. Jimmy Clopton is in charge of Commissary. Firetruck battled blaze 6 hrs.

Dec. 19 - District Labor Manager here to transfer 150 WPA relief clients to Lee County to work on the Land Utilization Park Project.



- Dec. 27 - Conference with Mason Oldham and Stanley Newman about supplement to Park Project.  
Ed Hoffard and Fred Leifer reporting on road projects.
- Dec. 31 - Cloudy, cold, snowing. State Engineer for Re-settlement Administration here about drainage of Johnson's Canal.

#### HELENA BANKS

From the Rand-McNally Bankers' Directory, July, 1914

First National Bank: Capital, \$200,000. Deposits, \$1,155,840.  
President, S. S. Faulkner: Vice-President, Aaron Meyers:  
Cashier, C. C. Agee: Assistant Cashier, R. Gordon, Jr.

Guaranty Loan & Trust Company: Capital, \$50,000. Deposits, \$24,430. President, E. S. Ready: Vice-President, A. N. Tanner: Treasurer, E. R. Crum: Secretary, H. P. Anderson.

Interstate Banking & Trust Company: Capital, \$200,000. Deposits, \$751,090. President, B. Seelig: Vice-President, S. C. Moore: Cashier, C. S. Fitzpatrick: Assistant Cashier, J. W. Alston.

Peoples Savings Bank & Trust Company: Capital, \$75,000. Deposits, \$532,560. President, John I. Moore: Vice-President, S. A. Wooten: Vice-President, M. E. West: Cashier, Gilbert Yaeger.

Security Bank & Trust Company: Capital, \$100,000. Deposits, \$604,720. President, S. C. Moore: Vice-President, J. L. Solomon: Cashier, Louis Solomon: Assistant Cashier, Percy Butterick.

Helena Clearing House Association: President, E. C. Hornor: Vice-President, B. Seelig: Treasurer, S. S. Faulkner: Secretary, Gilbert Yaeger.

#### STORY IN PART

by

Judge M. L. Stephenson

A bright sun ushered in the morning of an October Sabbath of the year 1891, when by appointment Samuel McKenzie or "Uncle Sam" as he is better known, met me before a cozy open fire to tell the story of his life. Uncle Sam, to use his own expression, is living "on borrowed time"; the inevitable hour stands not far off in his journey, and if he has earned the right to a frail memorial and "the passing tribute of a sigh," it is high time these simple annals were written.

His is a story from the epoch of African slavery in America. I give the narrative in his own language except as to dialect, and even of this the old man is singularly free. I find some explanations necessary to a full understanding of the story; these I give at the close, so as to leave the story itself entire and unencumbered.

I was born in Richmond County, North Carolina, March 15, 1820, on old Kenneth McKenzie's plantation. I was raised on his plantation which was five miles northeast of Rockingham; I remained on this plantation until I was twenty-five years old; my father name Ned and my mother name was Julia; I had four sisters, Ann, Dinah, Rose, Julia, and one brother named, Dan.

In 1843 a division of the Kenneth McKenzie estate was made, he having died, when my father, mother, Rose, Julia, and Dan and myself fell to the children of a daughter of Kenneth McKenzie, a Mrs. Morris, and Jim McKenzie was the guardian of these children. Jim McKenzie had to share Ann and Dinah. Jim had settled in Arkansas before the death of his father, and at the division of the estate he went to North Carolina and brought to Arkansas his own share of the property as well as that belonging to the Morris children. Thus my family, although divided between Jim McKenzie and his sister's children, were not separated. We were all brought to Helena, Arkansas in 1845.

On the coming of age of the Morris children, when their property was to be delivered to them and partition made among them, the values could not be equalized without a sale in order to a division; Jim McKenzie bought me, Fleetwood Hanks, my mother and father, Henry Yerby bought Rose, old man Coble bought Dan and a Mr. Howerton bought Julia.

I was raised as a farm hand in North Carolina, doing all kind of farm work, usually done in these times; I could do farm blacksmithing and shoemaking, raise cotton, made rails, chopped wood

and plow; I was a great woodchopper. When I was first brought to Arkansas I worked at days work, being hired out by Jim McKenzie for four shillings a day. After working this way until I became acquainted with the town, I told McKenzie that if fifty cents a day was what he wanted for me I thought I could give that for myself. I did so and was so prompt in paying him that he did not bother anymore about me. I hired my time thus from 1848 to 1857. When we first came to Arkansas there were but a few colored people in this part of the state, and I found all of the work I could do at good wages, and during the time I was working and paying for time I hired the time of other slaves and had them working for me; I also bought and hired teams and chopped and drew wood to town for sale, did draying for the merchants, sometimes made a crop; in fact did any and all kinds of work where I could make something over the wages I had to pay McKenzie for myself; in this way I had accumulated considerable money.

In 1852 my father and mother became dissatisfied with their home at Hanks and he told my mother that if she could find somebody who would give him what he paid for herself and my father, five hundred dollars, he would sell them; she told me this, and I went to a white carpenter by the name of Bunten and told him I wanted him to go down to Hanks and make the trade for me, and if he would do so, I would pay him twenty-five dollars for his trouble; he readily consented, saying the money was sufficient inducement, but as I afterwards learned, he intended to take the bill of sale in his own name, which was, perhaps, a greater one; at all events, he made the trade and Hanks was to come in the next day to get the money and make out the bill of sale.

During all the time I had been hiring my time, I kept my money with H. P. Coolidge, a merchant of Helena, in whom I had confidence and for whom I worked a great deal and always found him straight and honest with me; he gave me a little book and when I paid him money or got any from him, he always put it down on my book.

After Bunten had gone to Hanks to make the trade for my father and mother, I went to Coolidge and told him what I had done and told him if the trade was made, I wanted him to look after the paper and pay the money, and when the papers were made to me, so that the bill of sale for my father and mother was made to me, so that when circuit court met I could have free papers made out for them. Bunten made the trade and everything was as I had requested. Hanks knew nothing about my buying my father and mother until the papers came to be drawn, but he made no objections and told me to come down and move Mother's things away. My father at the time was in the woods--that is he had run away and was "Lying Out," as was frequently the case in those days when ser-

vants became dissatisfied. Hanks said, "You will have to get your father out of the woods, but I suppose that will not be hard for you to do." I professed ignorance of his whereabouts, and asked Hanks, if he saw him to tell him about the sale and to come in, although I confess now that I saw him every night, and pretty well knew where I could find him. I rented a house and moved my mother to town and we all lived together. As soon as I saw my father after the sale, I told him not to come right on into town, but to keep back for awhile. I kept him in the woods where I was chopping and hauling wood, until things got settled like in town; he then came in; this was in 1852.

About this time Jim McKenzie died and his son D. B. McKenzie came into possession of his property as sole heir. Prices had advanced so, or I had got so prosperous that he thought I could give him more for my time, and he made me pay him twenty dollars a month for my time thereafter. In 1854 my wife, whom I married in 1849, and by her I had two children, died; she was the slave of a man by the name of Scanlan, house servant, and her name was Lavinia. Scanlan moved to Oldtown, twenty miles below Helena, about 1852, and carried my wife down there. She only lived two years after that. She left two girl children age three and five years. After my wife was taken to Oldtown I went to see her every Saturday night and came back Sunday night; I could not spare the time to go oftener. After she died Scanlan told me if I would give him seven hundred dollars for the children, I might have them; I bought them and brought them home and my mother raised them.

About this time my master, D. B. McKenzie, knowing that I had accumulated considerable money, and needing some to clear his own affairs, proposed that if I would let him have it, he would keep a correct account of it and pay me interest; I agreed to this and he took charge of what was in Coolidge hands, and it ran along in this way until 1857, at which time there being a balance in his hands of eighteen hundred dollars, he made a proposal to me, through Col. Moore for whom he was then clerking, that if I would give him the eighteen hundred dollars he would give me my freedom; I gladly agreed to this and we closed the deal and I was free.

Before buying my freedom I had bought a lot and a small house in the edge of town where we lived very comfortable. I had neglected to get free papers for my children, as they were small and had no special need of them, but in 1858 when Mr. McKenzie applied to the court for my own and theirs he could not for some reason get them in this state, so he sent up to Cincinnati and had them made out there. I stayed here until the fall of 1859. In that year orders came that I must either choose a master for myself and children and my mother also choose one (my father having died) by the first of January following, or leave the state or be



hired out as slaves.

I sold what property I had and went with my mother and children to Cincinnati, Ohio. I sold my house and lot for two hundred fifty dollars of the price. I had to take a note which Mr. McKenzie promised to collect for me when it fell due. I went out to John Coolidge's, near Cincinnati and spent some time there. He was a brother of the man who kept my money for me in Helena, and had in so many ways befriended me. When I first got there the wages were low I thought I could not make a living; but when I got acquainted I found plenty of work; when I first went to work there I got fifty cents a day, but when the war commenced wages went up and after that were good. I remember one year I worked twenty-three days in wheat harvest. I remained and worked there six years, from 1859 to 1865. At the close of the war I moved back to Helena with my mother and two children. My mother, both my children since died. One of my daughters died before marriage; the other left four living children. I have accumulated property enough since my return to support my old age should I become no longer able to work, and hope to leave something for my grandchildren.

When the money due me from the sale of my lot was collected by Mr. McKenzie, he wrote me to Cincinnati, asking how he should send it to me. There was at the time so much excitement and uncertainty about anything getting through from the South, on account of the threatened breaking out of the war, that I had a letter written to him to keep the money until I called for it, hoping some time to get it. I did not hear anything from Mr. McKenzie until I returned here after the war. He paid me all the money with interest for the time he had it. I can neither read nor write.

This was his story, and when at its close he arose and stood for a moment before taking his leave, lost in reverie, and as if striving to take up and reknit the broken links, in the chain of memory, I felt myself in a majestic presence, and instinctively bowed in reverence before the neglected old hero.

We have not, perhaps, drawn far enough away from the great contest over the slavery question to render the story of McKenzie entirely free from partisan feelings in its perusal; but I trust to the candor and magnanimity of the reader for as generous a spirit in its consideration as fills the breast of the subject of this paper. For his former owners and other slaveholders among whom his lot was cast, he has nothing but the kindest recollection, and when recently his last "Master" paid the debt of nature, no more sincere mourner followed him to the grave.

It will be remembered that Samuel McKenzie was born but twenty-eight years after the invention by Whitney of his famous

cotton gin; and his early youth passed before this engine of industry may be said to have completed the revolution of the world's industries. Just what effect this machine had on the destinies of our servile population in general, and upon McKenzie in particular, it may be interesting to note. That social gathering in Georgia at the home of Mrs. Greene, relict of the general of Revolutionary fame, in 1792, where was discussed the languishing condition of the agricultural interests of the southern states, was productive of momentous results. Young Whitney was present, fresh from Yale, in search of employment as a tutor. He heard it asserted by the planters present that, although the South was the natural home of the cotton plant, and that through it she might attain a foremost place in the commerce of the world, no method had yet been devised by which more than a pound of lint daily per hand, could be freed from the seed. It was an opportunity offered to a man of genius but once in a lifetime; Whitney seized it and gave us the "Gin" and revolutionized the world commerce.

## GIFT OF THE WINDS

by

Betty Rohrscheib

Nature, being a phenomenon in herself, has many ways of making phenomena, mysteries and interest for the inhabitants of the earth. She has a special purpose also in the things that she makes. She has made a thing of mystery to people here in the Alluvial Plain, which is of interest to natives as well as visitors. This interesting mystery is the "gift of the winds to Arkansas" or what is commonly known as "Crowley's Ridge."

Crowley's Ridge is the only prominent topographic feature in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain. It runs from southern Missouri down to the Mississippi River at Helena, Arkansas, a distance of some 200 miles, with a width varying from one-half mile to 12 miles. It attains an elevation of from 150 feet to 500 feet at its highest point. It is broken in about three places and usually rises above the level of the country on either side of it over a hundred feet. Its yellow wind-deposited loess topsoil contrasting with the black alluvial earth of the delta through which it strikes makes the Ridge a notable landmark.

The Ridge was named after Benjamin Crowley, a veteran of the war of 1812, who was rewarded for his services by an Arkansas land grant. When he arrived in the state with his family and slaves, he found that his grant was all swampy and jungle-covered, and in 1820 he moved his family to the Ridge.

Crowley's Ridge served the pioneers as a landmark, trail and goal. A settlement which grew up in the early 1840's as a trail ferry crossing is Chalk Bluff, Missouri, where the St. Francis River breaks through the Ridge. Travelers blazing the first trail from Missouri into Arkansas followed the ridge and their followers were certain of a dry trail as far as Helena, since it was the only prominence in the wilderness of swamps and backwater.

There are several theories as to how the base of Crowley's Ridge was formed, but the true origin has not been definitely determined. Most of the theories are similar, except for one, which the writer feels is worthy of noting. This is the theory that an earlier and stronger earthquake, similar to the New Madrid earthquake, caused a stronger warping of the same nature and might have produced a similar uplift along Crowley's Ridge axis. This would determine the direction of drainage and the position of the resulting erosion remnant. If this could be proven as a fact, the beginning of the Mississippi Valley at this point could ultimately

develop into a synclinatorium of great geologic importance.

The similar theories are that thousands of years ago the region was higher than Crowley's Ridge today, but level. This flat region was covered by the predecessor of the Gulf of Mexico, which covered all of Louisiana, most of Texas and Mississippi, western Tennessee and much of southern and eastern Arkansas.

Hundreds of streams, including the Mississippi and Arkansas, composed this great sea of water, which deposited vast quantities of mud over the bottom. When the water receded the remains of the old deposits of sands and clay containing fossil remains of the marine animals that lived during Tertiary times were found here and there over the ancient sea bottom.

When the last advance of the ice came during the Wisconsin ice, it covered a large area and carved the present base form of Crowley's Ridge. The Mississippi flowed west of the ridge in a broad valley and joined the Ohio, which had the present Mississippi River channel, below Helena, then it shifted closer to the ridge and followed the present channel of the St. Francis. Eventually it cut further north and east and joined the Ohio at Cairo, Illinois, and flowed down its present channel; thus, the shifts in the channel of the Mississippi left an uneroded strip.

The alluvial soil--soil formed by the settling of mud and fine sand contained in streams during flood seasons through the ages--that lies on each side of the ridge is not as old as the soil that forms the Ridge. The land area to the west of the ridge was a desert after the Gulf of Mexico receded to its present area. The winds blew clouds of alluvial dust from the desert over the base of the ridge, which was much larger than at present, and as each layer of dust was laid upon the strip, rain showers settled it, and it would remain a part of the Ridge. Thus, over a period of thousands of years, it can be seen that vast quantities of this dust or loess--yellowish brown loam believed to be chiefly deposited by the wind--built Crowley's Ridge, "the gift of the winds to Arkansas."

Crowley's Ridge is wedge-shaped and lies northeast and southwest through Stoddard and Dunklin counties in Missouri and generally north and south through Clay, Greene, Poinsett, Craighead, Cross, St. Francis, Lee and Phillips counties in Arkansas. Its northern end begins near Bell City, Missouri, and its southern end terminates at Helena, Arkansas, the southern point of the wedge. In Missouri near Bell City the Ridge is about 20 miles wide and gradually becomes narrower until it reaches an abrupt point at Helena, Arkansas.



The Ridge is broken in three places; the northernmost division being by the Castor River near Brownwood, Missouri, the middle division at the Arkansas and Missouri line, made by the St. Francis River and the southern division near Marianna, Arkansas, made by the L'Anguille River.

The eastern side of the ridge is mostly bluffs and the outline generally is regular, while the western side is very very irregular with many indentations and has a gradual westward slope. These indentations are in the form of deep gullies and ravines caused by erosion through the years.

The entire Ridge is underlaid first with loess and then with sand varying in fineness towards the southern end and this sand is overlaid by Tertiary shale and clay. The northern portion of the ridge appears to be older because of the patches of gravel and pebbles in the loess believed to have been deposited by the southern flow of water. Not a single glaciated pebble has ever been found on the Ridge. The gravel beds within the ridge are considered unusual because the gravels are cemented together with iron sesquioxide, which produces a red coloring. In some sections, especially near the base of the ridge and at the mouth of streams coming from the ridge, there are masses of this conglomerated material weighing six to seven tons.

The southern end of the ridge is especially subject to landslides. The loess, which was laid upon the ridge like a blanket of silt, is from 50 to 80 feet in thickness, is unconsolidated and sloughs off easily, mostly during heavy rains. One peculiar characteristic of loess is that lime deposits cement the soil grains together and this cementation is easily broken, sometimes by traffic, and then removed by wind or water action. Even the kudzu vine which covers the ridge in springtime cannot stop the sloughing off that gives the banks the appearance of fresh cut fudge. Very few pebbles or gravels are found in this alluvial soil, and "only two ridges of the sort are to be found in the entire world - Crowley's Ridge and one in the Himalayas."

Near Marianna the Ridge is completely removed for some seven to nine miles. Here the L'Anguille River cuts through and the region has the appearance of marsh lands. In St. Francis county an estimated 7,000,000 cubic yard bed of oyster shells is embedded in a mass of blue clay, another indication of submerison during the Tertiary age. Some shell-bearing loess lies along the slopes of the ridge in Phillips County. This is evident by the phenomenon of fissuring or cracking of the deep slopes. The highest points of the ridge in Dunklin County, Missouri, are heavily covered with pebbles and sand. The Ridge itself and the

spurs and hills around it are hills of circumdenudation. The highest point of the entire ridge is located in Greene County, Arkansas.

Fossilized animals and plants are found in abundance along the Ridge. Near Wittsburg and Piggott petrified tree trunks are so numerous they are used as tombstones and one 12-foot silicified conifer stump has a weight of several tons, and is located on the courthouse lawn at Piggott. A collection of petrifications known as the Harlan Geological Collection is also located in Piggott. Many mastodon bones, now in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D. C., have been found near Helena, and it is believed that many skeletons still remain in the area.

An archaeological mystery taken from the gravel beds in the ridge in Craighead county is "King Crowley." It was so named because it was the largest of some 60 specimens found. This hard stone king-like head weighs 40 pounds and its features are characteristically mongoloid. Its head dress, sitting on a smooth face, is pitted. Its eyes are made of gold. Upon its neck is carved a copper heart. This mysterious collection of heads is on exhibit in the Arkansas Museum of Natural History and Antiquity in Little Rock, Arkansas, and is believed to be the only one of its kind in the United States. The age of specimens has been estimated as from a few hundred to twenty-five thousand years. "I do not know - it is a mystery..." is the comment of most archaeologists that have examined the specimens.

Situated near Paragould on Crowley's Ridge is the new Christian junior college, the Crowley's Ridge Junior College. This college was opened in 1964 by the Churches of Christ and offers an accelerated educational plan for students who must work their way through college.

Located on the homestead of Benjamin Crowley in Greene county is the 265 acre Crowley's Ridge State Park, which contains swimming and boating lakes and offers a large amphitheater as well as miles of trails to visitors. The park contains the Crowley cemetery, so named to memorialize its first settler.

The fertility and character of the soil on top of the ridge varies as a result of erosion. Most of the Ridge is heavily wooded, except where it has been cleared for farming. Almost any kind of fruit can be grown on the Ridge, as is evident by the vast orchards located thereon. Very little, if any, grain or cotton is grown on the Ridge. The wooded life of the ridge is very unusual. Trees and flowers that are characteristic of the forest of the north grow beside plants of the deep south. No where else in Arkansas grows the tulip tree, which is usually found in the Appalachians. Other



trees commonly found on the ridge are hardwood pines, ashes, basswoods, beeches, black cherries, cucumbers, elms, gums, hickories, maples, oaks, sassafrasses and black walnuts. Some of these are rarely found in other parts of the state. A confusion of eye-catching beauty is created by the ferns and flowers that grow in the shade of the forests. It has been said "The entire Ridge must have been a natural park before it was cleared for planting crops."

Very little material is available on the wildlife of the Ridge. There was some mention of several flocks of turkeys being on the southern portion of the Ridge, and these are said to be survivors of the original population.

Many lakes are located on the Ridge and among them are the 525 acre Bear Creek Lake near Marianna, Arkansas, the 500 acre Storm Creek Lake near West Helena, Arkansas, and the large Lake Blanch in Stoddard County, Missouri.

Crowley's Ridge is one of the great wonderous mysteries of nature in the world, though it is of little interest to its natives. How did the stone figures, fossils, oysters, trees and other objects become embedded in the mysteriously formed ridge that grows deep south ferns and flowers in the shade of trees that are generally found in the Appalachians? How nature gave to Arkansas the gift of the winds is a theory on which scientists are still pursuing.

#### PLANS MADE TO RID HELENA OF THE MOSQUITO

From the *Helena World*, January 21, 1923

Plans are now under way to rid Helena of malaria and the mosquito during the coming summer.

Mayor Gilbert Yaeger said yesterday that he was now in communication with the Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service with the view of making a survey of Helena at an early date.

Mr. Yaeger is also securing some valuable information from Victor G. Heiser, malaria expert, a former resident of Helena, but now with the Rockefeller Foundation, who is famous in this work.

Mr. Heiser was in Helena several days ago and at that time went into a conference with Mr. Yaeger.

Mr. Heiser was a resident of Helena some 30 years ago, and was one of those prominent in malaria work in the Canal Zone. He has traveled around the world three times in the last three years in this work.

#### INDIAN SLAVERY IN LOUISIANA 1770-1800

by

T. M. Mills

(Note: the following paper is made up of extracts from a M. A. thesis written by Mr. Mills.)

Reports made by missionaries among the Indians contain some of the most interesting accounts of slavery. In the columns of early newspapers there were advertisements which allude to the practice of enslaving the red man in days gone by. A knowledge of the habits and customs of the people of that time leads one to believe that a good bit of the Indian slavery that existed in the early days, never reached the records of any reporter. Louisiana is selected for this study because the territory included under that title contained my own state, Arkansas, and a good many events recorded here involve people who have left landmarks and relatives here. A sort of climax to the international rivalry that was brewing over the territory for at least two hundred years, came in the period from 1770 to 1800.

Exploration and colonization in the New World brought many European customs and institutions. Among these was the institution of slavery. For nearly four centuries slavery was an important factor in the history of America. During that time it exerted a tremendous influence on the social, economic, and political life of her people. Indian slavery was the real beginning of human bondage in the New World, a fact that most historians overlooked. It took one hundred years of Indian servitude to convince the Spaniards that negroes would make better slaves.

By introducing negroes in 1543, red vassals began to find relief, but it took another two hundred and fifty years to complete the substitution in Spanish, French, and English colonies. Wars were waged for the purpose of obtaining slaves and during the last half of the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth centuries, traders from South Carolina went as far west as the Mississippi River to buy slaves from French traders to sell in New England colonies or to miners and farmers in Cuba. With the first French settlement of Louisiana in 1704 went bondage for the natives, bondage that was destined to last for another century.

The French settlers in Louisiana brought European customs with them, and it is to be expected that their attitudes toward uncivilized natives of North America would be much the same as that held by their ancestors, who had conquered the barbarians during the "hey-day" of Greece and Rome. Subjecting savages to the needs of civilized men seems to have been common prac-



tice when it could be employed. A report from Fort Louis de Louisiana, the first colony in Louisiana, in 1704, gives the idea that the Old World custom was off to a good start in the New.

Spain came into possession of Louisiana (1762) with a history of mild persecution for the savages not duplicated by any other power in the New World. Her strength having been dissipated by European wars, Spain was finding great difficulty in maintaining colonies she already possessed, and when Louisiana was dumped into her arms by the Treaty of Paris, only hope caused the Spanish Crown to anticipate better things for the future. But when England and France began pushing into that province, she gathered strength and made an effort to defend her holdings. A cordon of posts was extended to the north and east of the Rio Grande River, even into the Illinois country, by Spanish missionaries and soldiers as a means of controlling the Indian tribes in that region, and to establish a buffer state against foreign aggression. To supplement the inadequate number of soldiers in the various posts, it was necessary for the missionary to lead his band of Christian Indians to assist in the conquest of new territory. Step by step, fortifications were projected along the Texas boundary and the Mississippi River, and tribe by tribe the Comanche, Apache, Cherokee, Choctaw, Sioux, and Caddo savages were won to the side of the Spanish.

Instructions to traders and expeditions that left the Spanish post at New Orleans for Upper Louisiana pertained to the welfare of the savages as a means of promoting better conditions for the white settlers. In 1770 came a proclamation freeing all Indian slaves, with the vague promise of remuneration for owners who would register their vassals at the Cabildo, giving name, age, and the price paid for the savage.

In spite of all the efforts of Spanish authorities to free Indian slaves and to discourage the practice of slavery, red men continued to serve French, Spanish, English, and American masters in Louisiana. No direct approbation of such action is found in the laws examined, but during the remainder of the Spanish rule occasional decrees were issued for their control, which shows that the system was being tolerated. Although in most cases these regulations were given for negro slaves, savages were frequently listed among the records of the time and were treated much the same as black slaves.

Officials at the various posts in Louisiana had been instructed by all the governors, from the very first settlement, to encourage friendly Indians to settle in and near the villages in order that they might be used as serfs. Annual gifts of beads, weapons, cloth, etc., were promised by the Governor, and in most cases delivered, as a reward for their services. Under these conditions the application of the term "slave" might be questioned, but the

abuse of such conditions by men who had long been used to enslaving the Indians, is readily observed.

At Natchitoches, De Mezieres (commander of that post from 1769 to 1779) found the Osages, Comanches, Pawnees, and white men from Arkansas intermittently at war with each other and dealing in commerce, consisting of cattle, hides, tobacco, knives, glass beads, and slaves. He complained to his superior officer against the white traders who encouraged Comanches and Osages to bring in their captive Pawnees, their hides, and stolen cattle, to trade for goods from foreign factories. On May 20, 1770, he wrote to Unzaga concerning these conditions, stating that the Arkansas settlers incited the Osage to attack the other tribes for the purpose of taking women "whom they (the Arkansas traders) would buy to satisfy their brutal appetites." He further declared that children taken in such raids were taught to steal horses and cattle from neighboring villages. At the time of his writing this letter a man named Francisco Beaudouin, "one of the hunters and magnates of Arkansas," had arrived with his goods and a captive Indian woman. In addition to his problem of intrigues between the Arkansas traders, Osages and Comanches, against the Pawnees, De Mezieres was forced to tame the Apaches who had been a "thorn in the side" to Spanish frontiers for many years.

The lawless band of traders and colonists living on the Arkansas, and who were condemned by De Mezieres, seem to have given trouble to post officials, missionaries, and neighboring settlements for several years. In 1770, De Mezieres sent an Apache Indian named San Yago to the Conde de O'Reilly at New Orleans to report on the Arkansas settlement from whence he had recently escaped. It was De Mezieres' idea that San Yago be questioned about his imprisonment and educated in the better ways of the white man; after which he should be sent back to his people in a mood to help with the Apache conversion. San Yago's account of the Arkansas Frenchmen was in accord with a report made by Fray Miguel Santa Maria y Silva to the Viceroy, July 21, 1774. The missionary accused a carpenter of that place of having five women captives all of whom were used for traffic of the flesh. His efforts to secure their release were unsuccessful and the only consolation he received was in securing the liberty of an old man about eighty years of age, who had been kept there several years. Limited resources prevented officials from controlling all such problems that came to their attention even though they were disposed to interfere with them.

Two ideas regarding the enslavement of the aborigines were uppermost in the minds of the white settlers; one was the exploitation of native labor, and the other was to civilize and Christianize their heathen race. It was a matter of the individual interest of the white man as to which opinion he held more sacred. The failure of both plans is expressed by a writer in 1889. He wrote:



The fondness for controversy on the part of agents, teachers, missionaries, and all who undertake the management of Indians have thus far cooperated most effectually against success. Probably no radical change is to be expected in either red or white; probably a foreign civilization cannot be ingrafted on aboriginal stock; apparently the Indians, non-progressive savages, ever the victims of injustice, must dwindle in numbers and finally disappear; or at best, the germs of civilization be planted in a few individuals surviving the tribal annihilation.

All who employed slaves were men of their times and gave little thought to the subject as a moral issue. Slavery was not an objective on the part of any government, and few colonists in Louisiana promoted the system extensively. That the institution did exist over a wide territory and for a long period of time is evident from the facts presented here. It did not cease by executive decree nor by savage rebellion, but rather by: (1) an increase of the population of negroes, who proved to be better servants; (2) the fact that Indians could be hired cheaply; (3) the interest of the missionary in the welfare of the red man.

Behind and along with the French missionary came the French trader, or *coureur de bois*, whose persuasive methods gained the confidence and the services of many red men. The natives were engaged to bring in their own produce, slaves, cattle, and hides for which they received tobacco, knives, axes, glass beads, and liquor. The hides were shipped to the mother country and the cattle and slaves sold to the settlers.

De Mezieres denounced the French traders who made frequent trips up the Arkansas River (1769-1779) to buy slaves, cattle, and hides from the Comanche and Osage tribes. But Arkansas settlers continued to furnish markets for captive Indians well into the nineteenth century. In 1822 they bought a number of Osage prisoners from the Choctaws who had gone on the warpath against their age-old enemies. In the trial of a case in the Supreme Court of Missouri held at St. Louis, in 1825, it was pointed out that a system of traffic had long prevailed among the Indians and whites throughout the Illinois country.

The price of a slave varied as in times past, according to the age and abilities of the savage, and according to the nature of the parties making the bargain. Citizens of the Illinois country in 1770 paid from eight hundred to one thousand livres for a good slave. A livre was worth about twenty cents in our money, making their investment equal to approximately one hundred and sixty to two hundred dollars in each slave. Sibley's report that servants were bought in New Orleans ten years earlier for forty and fifty dollars each, may indicate that they were either becoming more valuable or more scarce.

The majority of settlers in Upper Louisiana during the period under discussion, were traders who moved up and down the Missouri, the Arkansas, the Red, and other rivers that were favorable to their business. Indian vassals claimed by a trader, rowed his boats to the point of operation. Under the direction of their master the slaves unloaded and set up the camp, and during the stop the Indians performed most of the daily tasks that were necessary to camp life. It was the custom for a trader to locate near enough to Indian villages that the natives might bring him their furs and hides to trade for the trinkets he had bought at the post. When a full cargo was obtained, the trader had the boats loaded and the company set out for the post and civilization. When they arrived at the village the white man would give instructions to his savage attendants about unloading the boats, and join his friends in a rollicking reunion, improved with several draughts of whiskey. A wise trader shared this pleasure with his servants and thereby retained their loyalty and their services. Kaskaskia, Cahokia, St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve, Arkansas Post, and Natchitoches must have been the scenes of a number of such events as described above.

The white men found great differences in the languages of the Louisiana tribes and for that reason were handicapped in their contacts with those people. But the red man met the problem by developing a sign language carried on by means of the hands and fingers, making signs about the face and mouth. French traders were able to acquire a fair degree of skill in the sign language, an accomplishment that aided them no little in their contacts with the west plains tribes.

At the time this story begins (1770) many colonists of Louisiana had become fixed in their abodes and found it convenient to employ natives, who were located on the outskirts of their village, in the business of supplying their homes with meat from wild game. Not only was their catch to be used as food, but a number of Frenchmen made it a profession to obtain hides in this way in order to sell them at the posts. The latter system developed into a sort of exploitation rather than slavery, but it illustrates another use the whites had for the American Indian.

The climatic reputation of Arkansas as a "bad lands" was not helped by the class of people who lived there because they seemed to have absorbed a good portion of the qualities of their environment. From trips up the Arkansas River they returned with Indian women and children whom they had bought; the women to serve them as concubines, and the children they taught to steal horses from neighboring tribes and white settlers.

When his day was done the Indian retired to his small shack outside the house, rolled up in his blanket in a makeshift bed or



bunk, and dreamed of that free life on the plains, a tantalizing call of the wild that came to him persistently. In the morning his dreams were interrupted by his master's call to the usual tasks. Not difficult labors, to be sure, but drudgery to the Indian when it deprived him of his freedom, the birth right of his ancestors. The very nature of the savage, whose home was the great outdoors, made the confining duties in white homes detestable.

Serfdom and slavery are rather arbitrary terms that may explain one phase of relationship, between white and red men as they met in the New World. Slavery was a thriving institution among the Indians when the white men came and continued during three centuries of exploration, exploitation, and colonization of the North American continent. Indeed the whites readily adapted such practices to Caucasian needs, and history proclaims their success with and the results of that experiment.

The disposition of the healthy Indian was not ordered for work involving steady attention, a fact that whites were to learn only after many lessons of a sanguinary nature. Conquering chiefs had learned long before the white men that the spirit of the brave must be broken, his ambition curbed, and sometimes the spark of life almost extinguished before even an indifferent slave could be made. Therefore the bonds of slavery fell more often on the women and children of the tribes. Some tribes were more effectively raided for slaves than others -- thus the strength of a tribe and the disposition of its members determined to a great extent who were slaves. For instance, a mild character of the Pawnee Indian made him a desirable servant; while the Iroquois, Osages, Comanche, and Apache tribes were so fierce that enslavement of their members was a much less frequent occurrence. Warriors from the latter tribes struck terror in the hearts of their enemies who made slaves of their people, but the relatively impotent Pawnees accepted more complacently the fate of their unfortunate brothers. The fertile Mississippi Valley was found by the Indians to be a desirable country long before the countries of Europe began the contest for its riches. Early explorers found the Natchez, Choctaw, Shawnee, and Illinois tribes fighting to protect their homes and their farms on the east bank of the Mississippi, against invasions from other tribes; they found the Caddos, Quapaw, Osages, Pawnees, and Sioux tribes equally interested in their possessions along the west bank of that river. These attractive farm-lands brought early white settlers and incidentally the need of laborers -- a need that could be satisfied for the time being only with native workers.

To the south and the west, along the Black, White, Current and Arkansas Rivers lived scattered bands of the Osage, Kansas, Pawnee, Wichita, and Quapaw tribes. Some of these tribes were more sedentary than others and before white men came had deve-

loped methods in agriculture and forms of civilization in advance of neighboring tribes. They were more ready and willing to absorb the white man's civilization than the wandering tribes of the plains.

#### ADVERTISEMENTS FROM THE CONSTITUTIONAL JOURNAL AND SOUTHERN SHIELD OF HELENA

March 8, 1836. Fulton Coffee-House, opposite steamboat landing.

May 21, 1841. Arkansas Hotel.

July, 1846. American House.

January 9, 1847. Splendid bar of W. R. James, offering Liquors, Cigars, Oysters, Oranges.

December, 1849. Planters Hotel on Main Street, opposite Court-house. Goswick & Wood, owners.

March 9, 1850. Elizabeth Bostwick offers for sale all contents of Helena House. Helena House can be rented by applying to Mrs. E. Horner.

April 6, 1850. Helena ladies to hold supper at American House to raise money for benevolent purposes.

November 30, 1850. Commercial Hotel, Front Street, run by J. M. Fadly, late of the Planters House.

January 25, 1851. Planters House, formerly under the management of T. W. Goswick, now run by Dr. R. H. Bordley.

March 8, 1851. Commercial Hotel. kept by J. M. Fadly & S. Guthrie.

April, 1851. A. C. Robertson, formerly proprietor of the Arkansas Hotel, has returned to Helena after three years to take over the Commercial Hotel from Fadly & Humphries.

June 18, 1853. Robertson's Commercial Hotel, Front Row, next to Myrtle, Moore & Co., in view of river and nearest hotel to wharfboat.

June 23, 1855. Ice cream saloon opened by Madison M. Witt in Mr. Barr's new house on Market Street near the upper bridge. Ladies' Saloon under Mrs. Witt and Gentlemen's Saloon under Mr. Witt.

August 25, 1855. Commercial Hotel under management of J. C. McGraw.

June 27, 1857. Th s. G. Rogan Ice Cream Saloon.

August 28, 1858. Wm. Dacus has taken over Wharf-boat Hotel, also called River Hotel. Very convenient for people who come in at night or want to leave on steamboat, as boat lands right beside Hotel.

October 2, 1858. American House, J. Skinner, Prop., corner Main and Elm Sts. Board & lodging per day, \$1.75: per week, \$7: per month, \$18.

January 28, 1860. Billiard room and resturant run by N. B. Ruble & Co. on corner of Rightor and State Sts., formerly run by John Nevers. Fresh oysters received every day, brought from New Orleans packed in ice.

July 30, 1870. Nevill House, corner Porter and Cherry, Jos. W. Nevill.

August 20, 1870. Shelby House.

August 20, 1870. Saloon and restaurant, Porter St., J. W. Reynolds, Prop.

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#### GRAVELING OF STREETS WILL OCCUPY ATTENTION OF CITY STREET DEPARTMENT

From the **Helena World**, January 21, 1923

During the next several days the city street department will begin the work of graveling certain blocks of the city streets, which are in a bad state of repair, and which cannot be put in the best condition by the use of dirt. This statement was given by Mayor Gilbert Yaeger yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Yaeger said that a gravel pit on the Big Spring Road would be used for this purpose.

During the past two weeks the department has been busy placing cinders on Pecan Street from Perry north to Walker levee. Two blocks of this has already been completed.

Mr. Yaeger said yesterday that a big effort would be made to have the dirt streets ready for oiling in the spring.

#### GERMAN - AMERICAN WAR 1917

Roster of Motor Truck Company No. 2 - Arkansas Ammunition Train - 39th Division U. S. National Guard.

Mustered into the Federal Service, August 5, 1917, at Helena, Arkansas

#### COMPANY OFFICERS

Morse K. Upshaw, Jr., 1st Lieut. F. A. Comdg.  
David L. Meyers, Regimental Supply Sergeant Clerk  
Robert H. Mott, Regimental Supply Sergeant Truck Master  
Richard A. Cunningham, Sergeant Assistant Truck Master  
Sergeants, Assistant Truck Masters -  
Henry J. Otis  
Charlie H. Gist  
Charlie L. Rogan, Sergeant Agent  
Jerry D. Presley, Sergeant Mechanic  
Leo J. Jenkins, Mess Sergeant  
Joe J. Pursley, Corporal Agent  
Emmette B. Rhyne, Cook  
Oscar L. Strickland, Cook

#### PRIVATEs 1ST CLASS

Dave Bass	Dan Roach
Gus A. Beatty	George R. Sanders
Frank M. Bershears	Oscar Simon
Louis J. Brachendorf	Bert E. Spires
Luther H. Brigham	Joe E. Stanford
Carl W. Byrd	Leonard A. Swantz
Briscoe Carter	Reuben E. Toney
Edward C. Cech	Oscar P. Trice
Frank B. Fleming	Patrick F. Wood
Walter E. Forbes	James B. Worley
Percy S. Hopps	Otis E. Young

#### PRIVATEs

Otey P. Hunt	Coxey W. Blanchard
John H. Kirby	Ralph W. Bonner
Lawrence M. Lambert	Alexander S. Campbell
William H. Masters	Wallace E. Emrich
Walter S. McCracken	Jim W. Johnson
Charlie E. McDuffie	Clyde R. McKinney
Key P. Mott	John C. Pace
Eugene N. Porter	William E. Rumsey
Odle B. Porter	Arthur W. Turrentine
James H. Powers	
Will Ragsdale	
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United States August 5, 1917



## HELENA ON THE MISSISSIPPI

By  
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Ten miles below the mouth of the St. Francis River the Mississippi swings within four hundred yards of the south end of Crowley's Ridge. From the eastern base of the ridge in this vicinity once flowed numerous springs.<sup>1</sup> The proximity of river, high ground, drinking water, good land for crops, and canebrakes for cattle account for the presence of the first Anglo-American settlers on the site of Helena. Among them was Sylvanus Phillips, emigrant from North Carolina, who as early as 1797 occupied a tract of land a mile below the mouth of the St. Francis,<sup>2</sup> and who with William Russell and Nicholas Rightor in 1820 laid out the town of Helena. Phillips' name was given to the county and his daughter's name to the town. He and his neighbors were at first cattlemen, traders, and land speculators rather than farmers.<sup>3</sup> The Indians were seldom a threat to life but were a nuisance because of their theft of cattle and hogs.<sup>4</sup>

When Sylvanus Phillips moved to the site of Helena in 1815, other settlers were already there. William Patterson had come in 1800, William Strong in 1811, and William Bassett had been raising cattle on Big Prairie some six miles north of Helena's site since 1808.<sup>5</sup> Among the other very early residents of the vicinity were William B. R. Hornor, Nicholas Rightor, D. S. Smith, George Ferebee, George Porter, William Enos, Lewis Brangier, John J. Bowie, and Fleetwood Hanks.

Helena was made the county seat of Phillips in 1830 and was incorporated in 1833.<sup>6</sup> Under the act of incorpora-

<sup>1</sup>David Dale Owen, *Second Report of a Geological Reconnaissance of the Middle and Southern Counties of Arkansas* (Philadelphia, 1860), 412.

<sup>2</sup>The original land survey of the area, 1815-1816, shows the Phillips' tract of 640 acres roughly rectangular in shape in township 1 south, range 5 east. Only about one-fourth of the tract now lies west of the Mississippi.

<sup>3</sup>Clarence Edwin Carter (ed.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States, XV: The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1815-1821, Continued* (Washington, 1951), 87-88.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*; Papers of Andrew Jackson (microfilm), Second Series VI, 1830-1836.

<sup>5</sup>[Lutescue] Cuming, *Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country*, in Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland, 1904), IV, 297.

<sup>6</sup>Arkansas Territory Acts, 1833 (Little Rock, 1834), 74-79.

tion the town was to have an alderman, a council of four, and such other officers as deemed necessary. The council was given the power to tax but was limited by the proviso that no property holder be taxed more than fifty dollars a year.<sup>7</sup> A typical ordinance was the one of 1836 prohibiting the riding, driving, or leading of horsebrutes or cattle upon the levee, though the levee might be used as a footpath. Speed was limited by town ordinance to a trot or pace. Guns and pistols were not to be fired in the corporation except for cause.<sup>8</sup> An ordinance of May 1, 1837, designated the river front of the town as reaching "from the southeast corner of York street to the Elm tree, opposite the store of Bowie and Hornor." This front was for the exclusive use of steamboats in loading and unloading provided that no steamboat lie at the landing more than three days at a time. The space above the steamboat landing was reserved for keelboats and flatboats, but they must not tie up above "the large cottonwood tree." Or, if they preferred, the keels and flats might use the space "from the Elm tree as far down as the corporation extends." But no craft carrying livestock might land in front of the corporation "below the point of willows at Porter's canal."<sup>9</sup> Rafts, lumber, and wood were to be landed "between the lower cotton wood and the Point of Willows." A stockboat captain refusing to leave when ordered was liable to a thirty-dollar fine. Signboards were erected to designate each of the three docking areas. The officer charged with enforcement of the complicated rules for docking was called the wharf master. His pay consisted of twenty-five percent of all wharfage charges and fines.

The river was never an unmixed blessing. "We have almost as big a river in our rear as in our front," wrote a Helena editor in 1836, "and ferryboats for the accommodation of passengers in the neighborhood are very much in requisition. One foot rise in the river now and we should require a lead and line to find the town. That rise came

<sup>7</sup>*Laws of Arkansas Territory* (Little Rock, 1835), 291.

<sup>8</sup>Helena *Constitutional Journal*, March 15, 1836. A later ordinance prohibited "exploding firecrackers or other fireworks, or gunpowder, or throwing fire or turpentine balls." Price Tappan (compiler), *Charter and Digest of Ordinances of the City of Helena, Ark.* (Helena, 1860), 25.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, May 11, 1837.



within six inches of the top of the little levee.<sup>10</sup> Adequate protection from the river was far in the future.<sup>11</sup> Entire townships of Phillips County were subject to almost annual overflow. Assistant marshals of the 1850 census explained the prevalence of cholera, congestive chills, and scarlet fever by contamination of wells from overflow or by use of drinking water directly from the Mississippi, the L'Anguille, the St. Francis, and other streams.<sup>12</sup> Water used in Helena in 1850 was reported as three kinds, "Mississippi, cistern, and well." Leading causes of death in the town that year were scarlet fever and cholera.<sup>13</sup> Summer months saw an exodus of Helena residents to higher ground to escape disease, and business stood still.<sup>14</sup> The "ridge" acquired a special meaning and a connotation of prestige in Helena;<sup>15</sup> it was a refuge from high water and disease.

Helena, like Natchez, Vicksburg, and Memphis, arose in the steamboat age, an era which, according to Bernard Devoto, perfectly expressed America. Even the debris through which the age passed, Devoto wrote, "was vital and eloquent—the dens at Helena and Natchez and all the water-side slums; the shanty boats with their drifting loafers; the boats of medicine shows, daguerreotypes, minstrel troupes, doctors, thugs, prophets, saloon keepers, whoremasters . . . . It was a cosmos."<sup>16</sup> The bad repute of the river towns, based both in fact and fiction, was due in part to travelers' writings and in part to oral communications of the boatmen and passengers who journeyed up and down the Mississippi Valley. The dens and slums were of course on the town river fronts, where they could not be missed by observers.

Helena's notoriety reached Featherstonhaugh while

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, May 12, 1836.

<sup>11</sup>The levee of 1899, made of "buckshot" dirt, was by far the best up to that time. Earlier levees apparently were made from the loess from the ridge (Helena *World*, October 25, 1899).

<sup>12</sup>U. S. Census, 1850, Schedule 3, Phillips County, Arkansas. The many deaths ascribed simply to "fever" were probably due to typhoid. Microbes were of course unknown in 1850.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, November 24, 1836.

<sup>15</sup>The "Ridge City Club" was flourishing in 1899 (Helena *World*, January 18, 1899), and the Jefferson School in 1911 called its yearbook "The Ridge." A Helena engineer, Mr. James H. Condit, explained to the writer that the ridge loess is really a very special kind of dirt with qualities not possessed by other soils. I am also indebted to Mr. Condit for detailed information about the erratic behavior of the Mississippi in the Helena area during the last 140 years.

<sup>16</sup>Bernard Devoto, *Mark Twain's America* (Cambridge, 1951), 106.

that famous traveler was still in Tennessee, the town being described to him as a sink of crime and infamy. In eastern Arkansas Featherstonhaugh's host mentioned to him "a place on the Mississippi called *Helena* . . . where all sorts of 'negur runners, counterfeiters, horsestealers, murderers, and sich like' took shelter 'again the law'."<sup>17</sup> Featherstonhaugh was extremely biased, anxious to prove his thesis that democracy and degradation are practically synonymous, but Helena's own newspapers contain abundant evidence that the town was wild and wooly. Shooting scrapes, organized robberies, murders, and in general all the violence usually found in frontier towns of America plagued Helena.<sup>18</sup> In addition the town was infested with transient river gamblers and sharpers, and the hinterland of bayous and canebrakes and all but impenetrable swamps afforded slave-stealers and counterfeiters almost perfect protection.

In the summer of 1835 Helena citizens formed an anti-gambling society "to rid themselves of the black legs." Peter Edwards was elected president, James Fleming vice-president, and Henderson D. Jones secretary.<sup>19</sup> A city ordinance, March 24, 1836, prohibited gambling in the town,<sup>20</sup> and a few days later forty-eight citizens signed a notice in the *Constitutional Journal* designed to scare gamblers out of Helena.<sup>21</sup>

We tell you in emphatic language that your stay among us must be short; you are driven from amongst all organized societies, as a moral nuisance, and we do not intend that you shall take refuge in our town. We have seen you draw our young men into more than satanic practices. These things will no longer be borne with, and as much as we are disposed to be pacific, yet we tell you that we have the power and the nerve to protect ourselves. We tell you to beware!

<sup>17</sup>[George] W. Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion Through the Slave States* (London, 1844), II, 9.

<sup>18</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, March 16 and November 16, 1837; Washington (Arkansas) *Telegraph*, November 13, 1844, quoting Helena newspaper.

<sup>19</sup>*Little Rock Times*, August 29, 1835.

<sup>20</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, April 21, 1836.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, May 12, 1836. The signers of the notice were T. B. Hanly, J. C. P. Tolleson, William B. R. Hornor, M. M. Wherry, John R. Sanford, David Philips, William T. Yeomans, James Calvert, N. M. Flournoy, R. W. Johnson, R. H. Yeats, D. Thompson, E. P. Scantland, John Sanford, C. C. Corley, Fleetwood Hanks, Jesse J. Shell, M[iller] Hanks, C. W. Adams, John T. Jones, William Dobson, Peter G. Rives, John R. Ford, B. F. Craig, George Porter, W. K. Sebastian, J. D. White, William E. Butts, Miller Erwin, Austin R. Roper, Silas Drury, William D. Ferguson, John D. Floyd, John A. Craig, John Preston, W. H. Applegate, George Redman, Benj. Odle, John T. Cabeen.



Before the year was out the same citizens meeting at the home of Darby Penticost organized a steering committee, alderman William B. R. Hornor presiding. A mass meeting was called by the steering committee, and a vigilance committee, composed of George W. Ferebee, Miller Erwin, Nicholas Rightor, Thomas B. Hanly, Davis Thompson, Thomas Lacy, James H. McKenzie, William Sebastian, William McPherson, S. C. Mooney, S. R. Sumter, William B. R. Hornor, and Silas Drury, was formally organized. The immediate occasion for the committee's formation was the murder of William Latimer, but the organization concerned itself with law enforcement in general.

Little headway was made toward legal control of liquor until several years later. Temperance societies formed in the 1840's reached full development in the following decade, complete with parades, banners, regalia, and badges. The leaders in the Helena temperance movement were F. Sutton, M. W. Alexander, and Patrick R. Cleburne.<sup>22</sup>

Schools in Helena began almost as early as the town itself, though they were private institutions and enrolled few students. John S. Horner opened a school in 1836.<sup>23</sup> W. Roy began one the next year, and in 1840 A. G. Underwood began his school "for the instruction of Boys and Girls in the different branches of English education—Geography, Arithmetic, History, and such other branches of Education as he thinks himself capable of teaching."<sup>24</sup> In 1847 the "Male and Female High School" began ten miles northwest of Helena in Richland township under Orin Carpenter. Some of his pupils were drawn from Helena. Mr. Carpenter emphasized his system of strict discipline and mental training "happily calculated not only to form correct habits, but fit the mind for the active duties of life." The cost of these considerable educational benefits was \$46 per term of twenty-one weeks if one enrolled for both the common and higher branches, and board and washing for the term was included in the cost.<sup>25</sup> An academy for boys was

<sup>22</sup>Helena *Southern Shield*, April 21, 1849, and July 30 and November 12, 1853. Liquor sale was licensed by county courts. The Phillips County Court was limited by legislative act to granting of license to sell in not less than quart quantity (Arkansas Acts, Little Rock, 1855), 148-149.

<sup>23</sup>Constitutional Journal, April 21, 1836.

<sup>24</sup>Southern Shield, March 28, 1840.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., April 21, 1849. Trustees were Elisha Burke, Joshua H. Hicks, and W. F. Moore.

opened at Helena in 1850 by B. F. Hitchcock.<sup>26</sup> A school for girls emphasizing music, drawing, and mezzatint was being conducted in 1849 by Miss E. Black, "an instructress in every way qualified to conduct the education of any and all young ladies that may be committed to her care."<sup>27</sup>

In 1850 six schools were reported in Phillips County, four for girls and two for boys. These six institutions had together seven teachers and ninety-five pupils. None of the income of the schools was derived either from taxation or public funds.<sup>28</sup> C. C. Bliss advertised the opening of his "Classical Institute" at Helena on October 26, 1853. In addition to common branches Bliss proposed to teach Latin and Greek.<sup>29</sup> The first school to be referred to as a high school in Helena was opened in 1851. T. C. Anderson was principal of the school in 1856. This school, like all the others of the period, was a private institution and was for boys only. Its aim was preparation "either for advanced classes in College, or business."<sup>30</sup> Not until 1860 does one find in the extant records mention of public support for education, but the last decade before the war saw Helena making notable progress in education. In 1860 all the schools in Phillips County received a part of their support from public funds though all were still dependent primarily on private income.<sup>31</sup>

Apparently no public libraries existed in Helena before the Civil War, but fourteen private ones were enumerated in 1850 and three in 1860.<sup>32</sup> Certain other evidences of cultural life exist. Public lectures at the courthouse were known, and the "Helena Atheneum" attempted the promotion of "scientific, literary and useful knowledge."<sup>33</sup>

The first Methodist church was organized in Helena

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., January 5, 1850.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., April 21, 1849. Trustees were J. H. McKenzie, W. H. Ringo, and John S. Hornor.

<sup>28</sup>U. S. Census, 1850. Schedule 6. Phillips County, Arkansas.

<sup>29</sup>Southern Shield, November 12, 1853.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., October 25, 1856.

<sup>31</sup>U. S. Census, 1860. Schedule 6. Phillips County, Arkansas.

<sup>32</sup>The decrease in number of libraries was due to the combining of law libraries incident to partnerships. Total volumes listed in 1850 for the county was 1830; the number in 1860 was 5,000. Apparently there was no public library in Helena until 1890. "Helena Public Library, 1888-1948" (Mimeographed, Helena, 1948).

<sup>33</sup>Southern Shield, May 11, 1850, and October 25, 1856. as president of the Atheneum was Jesse A. Jackson; J. M. Hanks was secretary and W. B. Gaw treasurer.



in 1823. Episcopalians organized in 1839 and the Presbyterians ten years later.<sup>34</sup> The multiplication of churches in the county was remarkable in the 1850's, the number increasing from four to twenty-eight, consisting of ten Methodist, eight Baptist, seven Presbyterian, two Christian, and a Roman Catholic Church.<sup>35</sup> Religious tolerance in Helena seemed to be the rule until the advent of the Know Nothing party. An exception was the treatment of a Mormon "priest," who in 1852, was charged with preaching a polygamous doctrine to an audience composed chiefly of women "of the ignorant and medium classes." The Mormon was threatened with a coat of tar and feathers prepared by the ladies and applied by the gentlemen of Helena, if not out of town within a reasonable time. The threat plus a rough manhandling by Patrick R. Cleburne, a clerk at Nash's Drug Store, ended Mormon missionary efforts of the priest in Helena.<sup>36</sup>

Ante-bellum Helena newspapers were strictly political organs, characterized by venomous editorials and scant news coverage. The editors collected their copy from whatever exchanges were at hand, from visitors at the office, and from passengers on steamboats. The *Helena Herald* was the first newspaper in the town. It was flourishing in December, 1833.<sup>37</sup> No record for the *Herald* is found later than the next year. The *Constitutional Journal* began in March, 1836.<sup>38</sup> Edited by W. T. Yeomans the *Journal* supported the statehood movement and Andrew Jackson—with important reservations. Editorially it advocated a union of feeling between the North and South on the basis of economic interdependence in the Mississippi Valley region. The first issue of the *Journal* carried the Constitution of 1836 in full. Andrew J. Greer became editor in April, 1837.<sup>39</sup> The *Helena Spy's* first issue was dated March 10, 1838, D. Lafayette Gray being its first editor. Gray was followed in

<sup>34</sup>George Barnes, "The Churches of Helena," in *Helena World*, March 11, 1923; *ibid.*, February 1, 1899.

<sup>35</sup>U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860, Schedule 6, Phillips County.

<sup>36</sup>Charles Edward Nash, *Biographical Sketches of Gen. Pat Cleburne and Gen. T. C. Hindman* (Little Rock, 1898), 15-17.

<sup>37</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, December 25, 1833, quoted the *Herald's* sketch of the life of Eli J. Lewis.

<sup>38</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, March 8, 1836. This issue is number one, volume one.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, April 20, 1837. Change in ownership was made at the same time, J. M. Martin becoming proprietor.

the position by J. C. Turbeville and William P. Davenport.<sup>40</sup> In 1839 the *Helena State Democrat* replaced the *Spy*. William E. Butts, "a scholar and a democrat," formerly of Little Rock, edited the *State Democrat*.<sup>41</sup> W. L. and Q. K. Underwood established the *Southern Shield* in February, 1840,<sup>42</sup> with the purpose of campaigning for the Whig nominee for president, William Henry Harrison. In 1851 the *Helena Bulletin*, a monthly, and the *Helena True Issue* were being published. The *True Issue* with two editors, one Democratic and the other Whig, attempted to follow a neutral political course. The *Bulletin* was still alive in 1852 with Thomas J. McElroy editor.<sup>43</sup> The editor of the *Shield* expressed the opinion, when the prospectus of still another newspaper, the *Star Spangled Banner*, appeared that the newspaper business in Helena was being run in the ground. The *Helena Star* flourished in 1854.<sup>44</sup> The combined circulation of the three newspapers at Helena was only 1,000 in 1850.<sup>45</sup> In 1860 the town still had three newspapers, though not the same ones it had ten years before, and the combined circulation of the three was 1,800.<sup>46</sup>

Early Helena swarmed with lawyers, as with editors. An extraordinary number of lawyers could make a living there, as in other frontier towns, because of the great amount of land litigation, of routine work in connection with land titles, and because lawyers were well-fitted for land speculation. Among the attorneys advertising in the local paper in 1836 were J. C. P. Tolleson, Thomas B. Hanly, William M. McPherson, Edwin T. Clark, and William E. Butts.<sup>47</sup> Practicing in Helena in 1840, in addition to some of those previously mentioned, were E. G. Gaither, Charles Adams, N. M. Foster, W. H. and A. H. Ringo, and J. Freeman

<sup>40</sup>*Helena Spy*, March 10, 1838. An editorial explains that the *Spy* is merely a new name for the *Constitutional Journal*; however, both editorship and ownership changed at the time.

<sup>41</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, July 31, 1839.

<sup>42</sup>*Southern Shield*, March 28, 1840. This issue is volume one, number eight. The *Arkansas Gazette*, February 19, 1840, reported the beginning of the *Southern Shield*.

<sup>43</sup>William Biven was editor till June, 1852.

<sup>44</sup>*Southern Shield*, March 18, 1854. The *States-Right Democrat* also began in 1854.

<sup>45</sup>U. S. Census, 1850, Schedule 6, Phillips County.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 1860. The three newspapers of 1860 were the *Shield*, the *Helena Weekly Bulletin*, which had previously been a monthly, and the *Helena Weekly Notebook*. The *Notebook* began in 1858.

<sup>47</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, March 10 and March 24, 1836.



Smith.<sup>48</sup> In the next decade the names of John Preston, William K. Sebastian, James R. Parrish, J. B. Jackson, James C. Tappan, Thomas C. Hindman, Patrick R. Cleburne, John J. Hornor, Royal F. Sutton, and many others were added to the roster of the local bar.<sup>49</sup>

Doctors B. F. Odle and Jenner offered their professional services to Helena in 1836, while at the same time Dr. J. M. D. Rogers though living twelve miles from the town, practiced in Helena.<sup>50</sup> William H. Threlkeld, "physician, surgeon, and accoucheur," practiced medicine "in all its various branches" and sold drugs, dyestuffs, perfumes, and oil. Dr. P. G. Kennet claimed only that he was a practitioner of medicine and surgery.<sup>51</sup> Dr. Joseph S. Deputy's office was in the Arkansas Hotel; a Dr. Everett was quartered in James H. McKenzie's old storehouse.<sup>52</sup> In those days nearly all doctors practiced dentistry incidental to general practice, but Russian-born Lewis Augsperrth listed dentistry as his occupation. Dr. S. Benham advertised boldly as "an old hand in the practice of Medicine on the Reformed System and his motto is *Cure Without Poison*."<sup>53</sup> Various druggists prescribed and sold choice medicines. Lott and Smith's store advertised their "Cholera Preventive—a choice article of Pure Old Brandy, selected expressly for Medical Use."<sup>54</sup> Dr. Charles Edward Nash combined his drug store business with practice of medicine and surgery, a not inconsiderable part of which consisted in extracting bullets from his patients.

Incidentally Dr. Nash left us the best account of a yellow fever epidemic in Helena in 1855. At that time, when Helena had about 1,500 people, a newsboy, William Burnett, boarded a steamboat from New Orleans to sell his papers. Nash believed that the boy carried the disease to the town and also that the burial of the victims of yellow fever, who had died on the steamboat, had something to do with the spread of the terrible epidemic. There was no

<sup>48</sup>*Southern Shield*, March 28, 1840, and January 9, 1847.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, January 5, 1850, and January 21, 1854.

<sup>50</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, June 30 and July 7, 1836, and May 11, 1837.

<sup>51</sup>*Southern Shield*, March 28, 1840.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, May 21, 1841, and January 9, 1837.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, January 5, 1850.

board of health, no quarantine. Most of those who could fled to the ridge leaving only a few to care for the sick and bury the dead. Three young men volunteered their services in working under the supervision of the three available doctors. The three young men were a Mr. Rice, the Methodist preacher, Thomas C. Hindman, and Patrick R. Cleburne. The preacher and the two future generals of the Confederacy never wavered nor seemed to tire although, as it appeared to Dr. Nash, God Almighty was leading the charge against them.<sup>55</sup>

Farming was by all odds the most important occupation in Phillips County. It was also the most important occupation of the residents of Helena. Farming, business, commerce, industry, and even the professions were unspecialized. Lawyers might be, and very likely were, planters also. Planters might be, and often were, merchants also. Whatever a man's major interest he was almost certain to have planting ambitions. The agrarian ideal dominated all aspects of life. Nearly all property was held either in the form of real estate or in slaves, and most of the real estate, even of residents of Helena, was in farm land. It is quite evident from tax and census records that property was not only concentrated in land and slaves but was, at least in St. Francis township, in which Helena is located, also concentrated in the hands of a relatively few men. Fifty-seven per cent of the real estate in the township was owned in 1860 by twenty-five persons, and thirty-seven per cent of it was owned by seven persons.<sup>56</sup> The non-commercial nature of the economy of Phillips County is indicated by the fact that the total value of all commercially-manufactured goods was only \$50,350, and the total money loaned out by residents of the county was only \$36,841.<sup>57</sup> The most important business institution in Helena before the Civil War, the Helena Branch of the Real Estate Bank of Arkansas, was strictly subordinated to planting interests.

The Real Estate Bank was established expressly for the benefit of agricultural interests, although it was backed by the state with long-term bonds. "This institution," wrote

<sup>55</sup>Nash, *Biographical Sketches of Gen. Pat. Cleburne and Gen. T. C. Hindman*, 52-56. The three doctors were Nash, H. M. Grant, and Thomas Jacks.

<sup>56</sup>U. S. Census, 1860. Schedule 1. Phillips County.

<sup>57</sup>U. S. Census, 1860. Schedule 5. Phillips County. Phillips County Tax List, 1860 (Arkansas History Commission Library).



John C. P. Tolleson, Phillips County representative in the legislature, "is based upon such principles, that it cannot but advance the agricultural interests in this section of the state. None but the planters and farmers of the country or those who have land in cultivation can become stockholders in this bank."<sup>58</sup> The planters at Helena, as elsewhere in the cotton-growing part of the state, put up their lands as collateral and borrowed money on twenty-year terms if stockholders, ten years if non-stockholders.<sup>59</sup> When books were opened for stock subscription at the Helena bank, just as the Panic of 1837 began, \$1,176,900 was subscribed in forty days. "This," said the *Constitutional Journal*, "augurs well for the future prosperity of Helena and the surrounding country."<sup>60</sup> Thirty planters in Phillips County were awarded 2,573 shares of stock at \$100 par value.<sup>61</sup> The Helena Real Estate Bank, like most of the land banks of the period, had wonderful facilities for lending money but none for collecting.<sup>62</sup>

For about six months in 1839 the Helena bank operated as a specie-paying institution, lending notes manufactured on the spot and then exchanging gold for them. When the gold was gone, the bank did not close up; instead it went into business in a bigger way, speculating in land, cotton, lumber, and slaves.<sup>63</sup> Foreclosure on small debtors and favoritism toward large ones, so it was charged, led to a serious debtors' rebellion in May, 1841, in which twenty armed men prevented Circuit Judge Isaac Baker from holding court.<sup>64</sup>

If business and commerce were subordinate to planting, it does not follow that cotton was the way to rapid accumulation of wealth. Cotton culture, business, and even the professions, were often springboards to land specula-

<sup>58</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, November 24, 1836.

<sup>59</sup>*Charter of the Real Estate Bank of the State of Arkansas* (Little Rock, 1936), 1.

<sup>60</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, April 27, 1837.

<sup>61</sup>*Report of the Accountants, Appointed to Investigate the Affairs of the Real Estate Bank of Arkansas* (Little Rock, 1856), 150-178.

<sup>62</sup>The bank printed its notes from plates manufactured in New York. The notes were signed by Henry L. Biscoe as president and Charles W. Adams as cashier.

<sup>63</sup>Letters of the Helena Real Estate Bank, 1839-1846 (Arkansas History Commission Library).

<sup>64</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, May 26, June 16 and 23, 1841.

tion, which together with increment in land values was the usual basis of opulence. Despite some popular notions to the contrary the aristocracy at Helena, as nearly everywhere in the South, was a native one. Most of the well-to-do, as of 1860, had like Henry L. Biscoe crossed the Mississippi with small means.<sup>65</sup> Biscoe's property in 1860 was valued at \$80,000. Few of those at the top of the economic ladder at the beginning of the war had any connection with the old tidewater aristocracy, though several of them were born in Virginia.<sup>66</sup> Both the wealth and social quality of the Helena gentry were products of the frontier, and its antecedents are to be found in the papers of the land offices, tax lists, and agricultural census reports. When the country around Helena was uninhabited and two stores constituted the town, "lots and land were selling for a mere song," wrote a reminiscing editor, "and none, save a sagacious few, appreciated the advantage of the situation, or the importance it would one day assume."<sup>67</sup>

Although a web of land interests constituted the essential economy of Helena and vicinity, business enterprise did exist without direct connection with the land. From the time George Porter erected the first steam sawmill in 1826,<sup>68</sup> until long after the war the production of lumber was important. Cypress from the bottoms and oak and hickory from the ridge fed not only the mills but also the steamboats that tied up at the Helena wharf. Saw-and-grist mills, tanning, blacksmithing, shoemaking, baking and harness manufacturing made up the entire list of industries in the county. The total value of the products of industry was, in 1850, only \$36,150, an amount not equal to the value of several individual farms in St. Francis township.<sup>69</sup> This picture of industry, drawn from census data, ought to be modified to include the small craft-merchants in Helena who turned out and sold a variety of goods—bricks, mattresses, guns, clothing, tools, and tin products.

<sup>65</sup>*Little Rock Arkansas Advocate*, December 28, 1831.

<sup>66</sup>The older Hornors, Biscoes, Hankses, and Cowlev were Virginians; most of the well-to-do had the same origins as the other class, that is, they were born in Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Louisiana.

<sup>67</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, April 6, 1837. The editorial from which this extract was taken spoke of Helena as "a London or Paris in embryo."

<sup>68</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, August 8, 1826.

<sup>69</sup>U. S. Census, 1850. Schedules 4 and 5.



The place of labor in this economy can be roughly indicated by relating wages to commodity prices. In 1850 a farmhand's daily pay above his board, would buy about three pounds of meat, or a peck of corn, or a gallon of molasses. A carpenter earned about five times as much, a shoemaker twice as much, and a sawmill hand about the same as the farm laborer. But wages sharply increased in the next ten years, while at the same time commodity prices fell. The farmhand's daily wage doubled, and the carpenter's wage increased from \$1.75 to \$2.25.<sup>70</sup>

Transportation difficulties for Helena are older than the incorporation of the town. Dependent on the Mississippi, the White, and the Arkansas for transport, either low or high water might stop mail and goods in transit. A commission of Helena citizens, as early as 1837, probed the bayous east of the river for possible outlet in that direction. The mud rings twenty feet above the ground in Big Cypress swamp were not encouraging.<sup>71</sup> Spasms of turnpike and railroad fever gripped the community from time to time from 1838 until the war. An amazing succession of companies, commissions, charters, and railroad meetings stand in the records.<sup>72</sup> From a project to build a turnpike from Helena to the Memphis-Little Rock road ambition grew to include a route from Helena to the Pacific. But accomplishments for the time being did not get beyond plans, flurries of speech-making, and whereases of resolutions. Even when railroad stock was offered on credit, exempt from taxation, and two per cent down payment within thirty days, not enough money could be raised.<sup>73</sup> The wealth of the community was in land and slaves, not in liquid form. Furthermore the nature of an industrial enterprise, as gigantic as a railroad spanning the delta, called for an effort and an organization quite beyond the scope of community-level agrarian thinking. It turned out then that the river and delta that made Helena also hemmed her in and checked her growth.

From the laying out of the town to the Civil War

<sup>70</sup>U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860, Schedule 5.

<sup>71</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, March 16, 1837.

<sup>72</sup>*Arkansas Acts* (Little Rock, 1839), 44-51; *Arkansas Gazette*, February 27, 1839, and December 12, 1851; *Arkansas Acts* (Little Rock, 1855), 204-211.

<sup>73</sup>*Arkansas Acts*, 1855, pp. 204-211.

was only a generation. The social pattern, nevertheless was in 1861 well on its way toward conformity with the familiar one of the Old South. The "sagacious few" of the 1830's, their numbers somewhat enlarged by later comers of perhaps equal sagacity, were growing into a local gentry of wealth and manners. The good life to them, although they believed it was best based on chattel slavery, included leisure—expressed perhaps in a carriage drive to Big Springs or sailing on the river, indulgence in sports,<sup>74</sup> hospitality,<sup>75</sup> a code of conduct to be upheld at pistol point, and a remarkable sense of family solidarity. These ideas, usually summed up as the "gentleman ideal," are still debated as to origin, quality,<sup>76</sup> and scope but their tenacity is unquestioned.

Helena is today, even more than most southern towns, conscious of its history. Folk memory joined fragments of the old tradition with the heady drama of the Civil War and the Lost Cause, so that the first thirty years of the community's past seem to overbalance the last hundred. It is not merely that Helena has a history; history *happened to* Helena. The four wars since 1865 have not produced a hero to rival Pat Cleburne. Seven Generals of the Confederacy, from old Phillips County, are ensconced in the museum of the Public Library.<sup>77</sup> Not only the steamboat whistle, still to be heard beyond the levee, but folkways also echo another and less hurried age. People take time out to talk about practically anything under the sun. The Phillips County Chamber of Commerce advertises the city as a "town of old families where hospitality is a tradition."<sup>78</sup> The Civil War, far from destroying the essential characteristics of a society, increased the tenacity of its convictions. The ideology of the New South with its Yankee gospel of the industrial millenium captured no more than the outer ramparts of Helena on the Mississippi.

<sup>74</sup>*Constitutional Journal*, September 29, 1836; *Southern Shield*, August 28, 1858.

<sup>75</sup>*Little Rock Gazette and Democrat*, March 25, 1853.

<sup>76</sup>W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1950).

<sup>77</sup>The Generals are Patrick R. Cleburne, Thomas C. Hindman, James C. Tappan, Lucius E. Polk, Daniel C. Govan, Charles W. Adams, and Arch S. Dobbins. In 1899 the Helena Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy changed its name to the Seven Generals Chapter (*Helena World*, January 11, 1899).

<sup>78</sup>Folder, "Historical Helena Arkansas," issued by the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce, 1948.

## HELENA ON THE MISSISSIPPI

by

Ted R. Worley

(This article was first printed in the **Arkansas Historical Quarterly** in the Spring, 1954, issue, and Mr. Worley recently gave his permission for it to appear in the **Phillips County Historical Quarterly**. Mr. Worley, of Conway, is a former editor of the **Arkansas Historical Quarterly**.)



This is a picture of Colonel Biscoe Hindman, made when he was seventeen years of age, and a cadet at West Point Military Academy. It was sent to the Helena Public Library by the secretary of Mrs. Hindman, Mrs. Ray H. Paine, after the former's death in 1961. It was also at this time that the sum of \$250,000 was released to the City of Helena from Colonel Hindman's estate, to erect a suitable memorial to his father, the late General Thomas Carmichael Hindman.



**IN MEMORIAM:** Two of our charter members died this past winter and spring, Mr. Ozero C. Brewer and Mrs. C. A. Conditt.

The Society held no meeting in March, because of the coincidence of the meeting day with Easter Sunday.

In April, Mr. T. M. Mills of Elaine spoke on Indians in Arkansas.

The May program was a showing of Father Mancino's film of his work in Mexico, and new officers for the next year were installed.

Membership dues of \$3.50 for a regular membership or \$5.00 for a sustaining membership are payable at this time for the year, 1967 - 1968.