The Original Lawrence County

Thirty-two Counties Are Now in the Area Once Embraced in Lawrence County. Many Early Buildings Are Well Preserved Today.

By Joseph G. Taylor

The heavy border embraces the original Lawrence county. The dotted diagonal lines show route of race on map.

Lawrence County was taken from New Madrid county, Missouri Territory, by the Missouri legislature, which met at St. Louis, Mar. 31, 1815, in St. Louis, then the seat of government. The part of New Madrid county not included in Lawrence county on the east, is now the counties in Missouri just east of Clay and Greene counties in Arkansas, and all of Mississippi and Crittenden, and the eastern parts of Craighead, Crittenden and Cross counties, in Arkansas. On the west the part not included is now the western parts of Benton, Washington and Crawford counties.

O. L. Green's history of Lawrence county, published in 1900, says the original eastern boundary of the county was the St. Francis river, east of Wynne, Jonesboro, Paragould and Pigott. The northern boundary was a little north and almost the entire length of the line which now separates Arkansas from Missouri. The western boundary was in the range line that separates Ranges 30 and 31, and crosses the state line near Pea Ridge, and, running south, passes a little west of Bentonville and Fayetteville and a little east of Van Buren, crossing the Arkansas river about 10 miles east of Fort Smith, then down the river to the neighborhood of Dardanelle, where intersecting the township line separating Townships 4 and 5, which was the northern boundary of Arkansas county, then following the township line east with slight variation, crossing White river at the mouth of Little Red river, to the St. Francis river, place of beginning.

The average length of the county from east to west was 250 miles, and the average width from north to south was 80 miles. Thirty-two counties are now in the same area.

The sheriff and collector of the first county was required to give bond in double the amount of revenue to be collected. Having the vast territory described, which to gather taxes, James Campbell, Lawrence county's first sheriff, made bond of $150. The bond is still at the vault at the courthouse at Powhatan.

The writer served four years as treasurer of Lawrence county (1898-1902), and from November, 1904, to December, 1907, as chief deputy circuit clerk and recorder under the late J. N. Taylor. James Campbell was successful in collecting the full amount assessed, he was bordered with the responsibility of the then enormous sum of $75 in cash. There was not a bank, save, or safe place in St. Louis. Nor was there any other place in which to deposit the cash more secure than a bucket in sack. But the danger and, of course, the encumbrances of the office must have grown rapidly during the next 10 years, for when John Hardin, who, in 1819, succeeded James Campbell, died in office in 1826, J. M. Kuykendall and another party ran a race on horseback from Old Davidsonville, then the county seat, to Little Rock, about 125 miles, to get the appointment to the office. Kuykendall, having the faster horse, arrived at the capital first and got the appointment. He held the office until 1830.

The first court held in Lawrence county was in the house of Solomon Howell in 1815. The house is in Randolph county, about a half mile north of the spring river, and about two miles above the bridge across Spring river at the mouth of Eleven Points river. There are several houses in which the court is held, one of the most beautiful sits on a hill overlooking the river. Many large walnut and pecan trees stand, or stood in 1806, near the house and, everything about the place, the promotion shows, or showed in 1806, were usually at night. My father said it took a man a day to ride to the neighboring valley "settlement" and were usually at night. The court was held in the room above. People gathered there and camped about the house and under the shade of these trees, from Van Buren, Fort Smith, Red river and North Fork of White river from the west and south west, and from Crowlay's Ridge on the east, to serve as officers and jurors of the court. The first case on the docket to come before the court was a "hug trial." I do not remember whether it was a civil suit or criminal case. The first case on record (1815) convey 120 acres in Township 15 north and Range 5 west on Lafferty creek in the southeast corner of county, which is what is now Izard county, about two miles from where the creek flows into White river. The village of Anderson was located on the land. The deed conveys a mill site, some cattle (giving their names, of course) and concludes "and all my hog claim both marked and unmarked."

The pioneers first settled the valleys of the county along the small rivers flowing from the northwest to the southeast, Black river. They were known and designated by the territorial government at St. Louis as "settlements," and officials were appointed for the "Bridgetown of Spring River Valley," "Bridgetown of Strawberry River Valley," the "lower" or "upper" White River Valley, etc. Although these "valley settlements" were from 20 to 30 miles apart, the pioneers traveled together with one another, and continued the custom until the time Arkansas became a state. They invited one another to their various workings—house-rainings, crib-rainings, log-rollings, rail-makings, and across the quilting for the women folks, and the dances for all at night. My father said it took a man a day to ride to the neighboring valley "settlement" and were usually at night. The court was held in the room above. People gathered there and camped about the house and under the shade of these trees, from Van Buren, Fort Smith, Red river and North Fork of White river from the west and south west, and from Crowlay's Ridge on the east, to serve as officers and jurors of the court. The first case on the docket to come before the court was a "hug trial." I do not remember whether it was a civil suit or criminal case. The first case on record (1815) convey 120 acres in Township 15 north and Range 5 west on Lafferty creek in the southeast corner of county, which is what is now Izard county, about two miles from where the creek flows into White river. The village of Anderson was located on the land. The deed conveys a mill site, some cattle (giving their names, of course) and concludes "and all my hog claim both marked and unmarked."

The pioneer asked him if he wanted to buy a pair of deer hams. The conductor was somewhat vexed. But not many conductors of the present would disdain the opportunity to purchase a pair of deer hams should it present itself.
Bill Provides For Its Partition.

A legislature-inspired political civil war began brewing between citizens of Montgomery and Garland counties yesterday.

Apparently in retaliation for an attempt of Montgomery county to annex three Garland county townships upon which the Blakley dam will be located, Garland and Polk county representatives introduced a bill yesterday to abolish Montgomery county.

Representatives J. R. Campbell and Frank Martin of Garland and Ray E. Hightower of Polk county proposed that Montgomery county be equitably partitioned between the counties, with Garland assuming Montgomery county debt.

Representative J. Fred Jones of Mont- gomery was indignant when the bill was read on the House floor and declared they’d hear more about this later. He succeeded in having the bill referred to the House Committee on State Lands, of which he is chairman.

Each County Seeks Part Of Other’s Territory.

Representative Jones and Senator James H. Flinkman of Houston started the “war” Wednesday with bills in both houses proposing to add to Montgomery county the site of the proposed Blakley dam, a new water power project of the Arkansas Power and Light Company with the United States government co-operating. Also the proposed annexation would give Montgomery county the greater part of the shore line of the huge lake that will be formed by the dam.

Senator Flinkman said the object was to add to the tax assessed to Montgomery county.

Representative Jones contended the three Garland townships were rightfully Montgomery’s, having been taken away by a 1917 act.


When a Gazette reporter visited Mont- gomery last fall he learned that Montgomery county officials and citi- zens were counting on the proposed lake as a large source of added revenue. They were anticipating that it would become a popular recreational center.

Financial troubles of Montgomery county were brought into the limelight by a recent federal court action. With about half the county’s area included in the Quanah National Forest, it was revealed that the county had only about $12,000 a year available to carry on its governmental operations. Summer charges were made that law enforcement in the county almost had broken down because of the financial situation. It was said that the sheriff receives only about $10 a month and other officers pass them along to local businesses.

Bill Would Declare County “Abandoned.”

There is no doubt about the intention of the bill introduced by Representatives Campbell, Martin and Hightower. It is set forth boldly in the first section.

“Montgomery county as a political entity is hereby abolished.”

An emergency clause, attached to the bill, read:

“Tis notable, the county of Mont- gomery has a heavy indebtedness which it is unable to pay and since the abolition of Montgomery county as a political entity will solve their financial difficulties, an emergency is hereby declared to exist and this act is necessary for the public interest, health, safety, the same shall be in effect immediately upon its passage.”

Garland Proposes To Assume $125,419 Debt.

Montgomery county’s $125,419 bond obligations have given county officials plenty of headaches since the original bonds were issued in 1929. A proposed refunding plan now is tied up in the courts.

However, the report that visitors Montgomery county last summer, would rash for the fact that its citizens will be aroused when they learn about the abolition bill.

Their county pride is as deep as that of citizens of Texas or California.

Annexation Plan Unfair Says Garland County Judge.

Special to the Gazette.

Huntsville, Jan. 19.—Citizens of Garland county will resist the effort to subtract from them four townships and place them in Montgomery county, as provided in identical bills introduced by Representatives Fred Jones of Mont- gomery. Somehow, it was said by County Judge E. E. H. Housley.

Upholding the charges that Garland county lost, Beatrice, Cedar Glade and Crystal townships from Mont- gomery county in 1917, Judge Housley said: “The townships were deeply injured in favor of coming under the jurisdiction of the county.”

Garland county would have some 84,000 on roads and other improvements in the four townships concerned 20 years from now,” Judge Housley said. It is not true that Montgomery county has made little blemish itself into a blemish financial plant, and there is no assurance that you should lose the valuable improvements we have made in those townships.

The dam site never has been in Montgomery county, he added. It is in Mont- gomery and Onanochita counties, and always has been a part of Garland county.

Montgomery’s Annexation Plea Heard.

Gazette Jan. 27-39

The House Counties and County Lines Committee returned without recommenda- tion last night a bill by Representatives Jones and Montgomery counties to annex two townships and one township to the south in an area of about 100 acres.

The bill would have made Mont- gomery lose about 10 acres of land but would have given it a new lake frontage.

Under the act, three townships would be formed and would be called Mont- gomery.

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Montgomery—Garland

Parley Fails

Special to the Gazette.

Huntsville, Feb. 18.—Representatives of Garland and Montgomery counties failed to reach an agreement tonight regarding annexation legislation that would take certain sections from Garland county and annex them to Montgomery county. The disputed territory was annexed by Garland county 20 years ago.

Garland citizens residing in the territory affected also were present. They said that revenues have been deposited among residents in these sections, favoring and opposing the legislation, and that some signed both petitions.

President B. A. King of the Chamber of Commerce, who presided, asked the bills to return to the House for further action. Judge Housley answered that the subject has been referred to the Board of Commissioners, pending a decision.

County Judge In Favor

County Judge Housley of Gar- land. Special to the Gazette.

Montgomery county and the bill, which provides a map showing the proposed townships, was introduced by Representative Jones. He said that the original bill included 16 sections consisting of 440 acres. On a five-silin assessment, Montgomery county would receive about $25.50 and the judge pointed out, and will continue to receive about $25.50, and the judge pointed out, and will continue to receive about $25.50, and the judge pointed out, and will continue to receive about $25.50.

“Parley were held,” Judge Housley said.

The trouble with Montgomery coun- ty,” said Judge Housley,” is that half of the county has 500,000 thousand acres in the Onanochita National Forest reserve, and that is tax-free. Garland county is not in favor of returning any part of its territory to Montgomery county.

Judge Housley invited Montgomery county to come into Garland. The sup- port was accepted by Misses, Wilson, county collector, who said: “Your troubles would be our troubles.”

Judge Will for Peace

Circuit Judge Earl Will, born and reared in Montgomery county, reviewed the history of the right between Wom- ble and Mont- gomery several years ago to change the county seat from the latter town to Wemble. He said the an- nexation measure was a result of that contest.

Judge Will urged that claims of the people of Montgomery county be respected and that the territory that county desired be given to Mont- gomery county.

The bill was opposed by a delegation from Garland county, composed of County Judge H. E. T. Housley, County Attorney and County Treasurer Henry Murphy. They pro- tested that more than 85 per cent of the people of the townships concerned want to remain in Garland county.

Representative Jones’ bill would re- peal Act 190 of 1917, which gave Gar- land county four townships from Mont- gomery county. They were Cedar Glade, Crystal, Burkle and Bear.

Mr. Jones said Montgomery county was asking reinstallation of the two because they belong rightfully in Montgomery county. They will become valuable as short or lake shore property following construction of the dam, he said.

Judge Housley said that Garland county had spent approximately $30,000 on road construction in the two town- ships since they were acquired by his county in 1917. He said land residents of the section want to remain in Gar- land county because of the unsatisfactory financial condition of Montgomery county. The dam is being built as a trading center and county seat.

Only One County With Two Sites

1-26-20

Contrary to popular belief, only one of Arkansas’ 13 counties—Sebastian has two county sites. Attorney General Jack Holt said yesterday.

Under the state constitution of 1874, Sebastian is permitted to have a county seat at Fort Smith and another at Greenwood.

Every other county now is stated to have two county seats.

Explaining this, Mr. Holt said several of the larger counties had been authorized by legislation to have two districts and to hold court in one city in addition to the county site.

"Commonly, folks speak of these counties as having two county sites, but, as a matter of accurate information this is not true," he asserted.

Two-County Counties

Following is a list of these two-district counties and the two sites or towns in each where court sessions are held:

Arkansas county—DeWitt and Norriag.

Carroll—Berryville and Eureka Springs.

Cleburne—El Dorado and Brinkley.

Craighead—Juno and Lake City.

Franklin—Oak and Clarkson.

Lawrence—Pawhus and Walnut Ridge.

Logan—Paris and Booneville.

Mississippi county—Oxley and Richburg.

Pike—Des Arc and DeValls Bluff.

Sebastian—Greenwood and Fort Smith.

Sharp—Twin Lakes and Hardy.

Yell—Davieville and Danville.

Voting Qualifications

Attorney General Holt advised Carl R. Walker of Wilton, Little River county, that a person must have a poll tax paid in 1928 on a regular or unimproved assessment to vote in school elections or any other elections this year and that an assessment must have been made before a poll tax receipt can be valid. He said a person may not vote legally on a poll tax未经 given to him, but he may designate another person to buy a poll tax receipt for him providing the agent thus designated is registered.