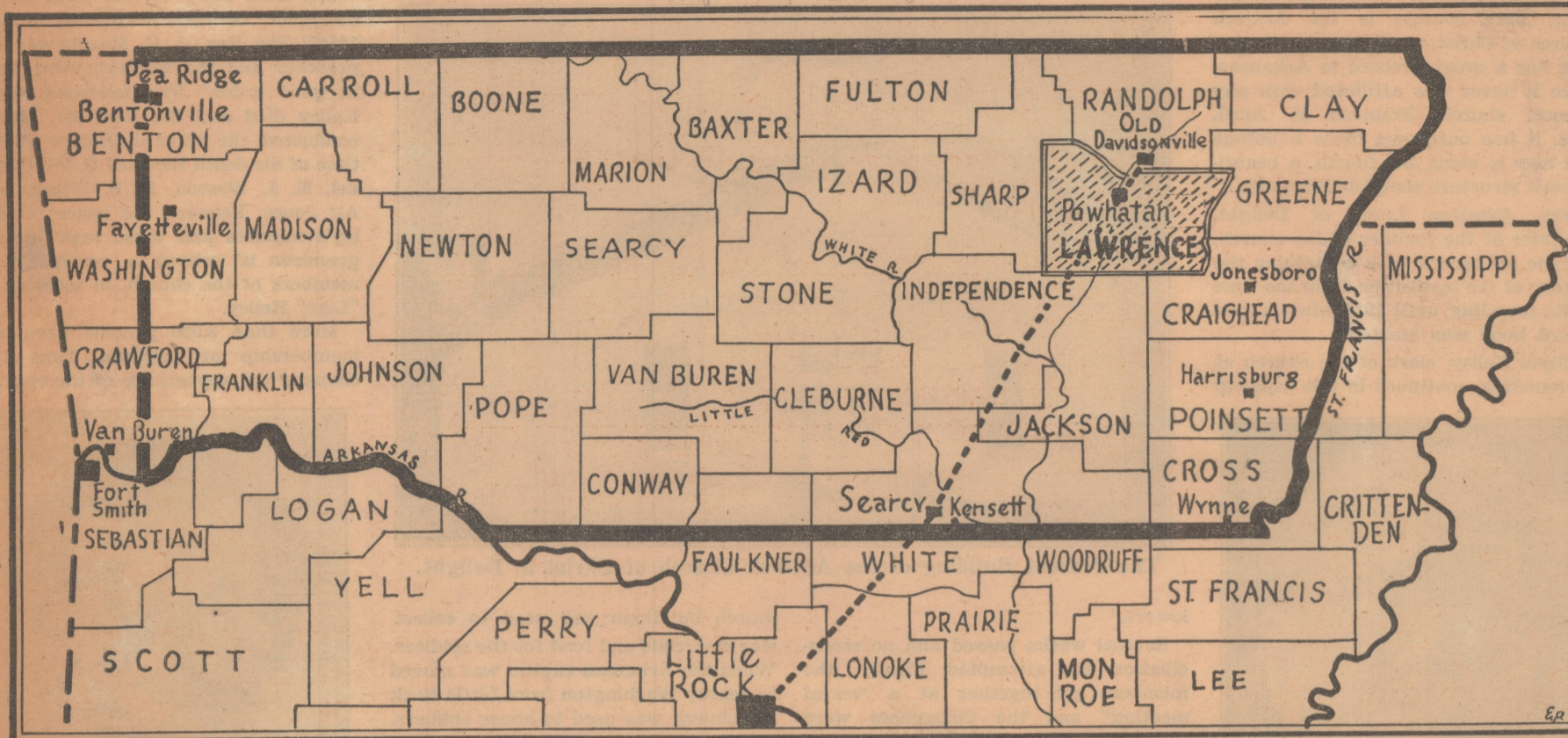


The Original Lawrence County

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 small shaded area in the upper right is the present Lawrence county. Dotted diagonal line shows route of race run on horseback for appointment as second sheriff of county.

Gazette 4-3-38

Lawrence county was taken from New Madrid county, Missouri Territory, by the Missouri legislature, which met January 15, 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.

C. L. Freeman'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 Piggott. 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 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, there intersecting the township line separating Townships 6 and 7, 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 90 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 from which to gather taxes, James Campbell, Lawrence county's first sheriff, made bond of \$150. The bond is still in the vault at the courthouse at Powhatan.

The writer served four years as treasurer of Lawrence county (1898 to 1902) and from November, 1904, to De-

cember, 1907, as chief deputy circuit clerk and recorder under the late J. N. Childers. If Mr. Campbell was successful in collecting the full amount assessed, he was burdened with the responsibility of the then enormous sum of \$75 in cash. There was not a bank, vault, or safe closer than St. Louis. Nor was there any other place in which to deposit the cash more secure than a buckskin sack. But the duties and, of course, the emoluments 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 1825, J. M. Kuykendall and another party ran a race on horseback from Old Davidsonville, then the county seat, to Little Rock, about 159 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 1836.

The first court held in Lawrence county was in the house of Solomon Hewett in 1815. The house is in Randolph county, about a half mile north of Spring river, and about two miles above the bridge across Spring river at the mouth of Eleven Points river. The ground on which the house is located is one of the most beautiful sites on Spring river; many large walnut and locust trees stand, or stood in 1900, near the house and, everything about the premises shows, or showed in 1900, great age. There is a fine spring near the house. The house is a single room two-story log building. The court convened on the lower floor and the Grand Jury met in the room above. People gathered here and camped about this house and spring and under the shade of these fine trees, from Van Buren, Fort Smith, Red river and North Fork of White river from the west and southwest, and from Crowley's Ridge on the east, to serve as officers and jurors of and witnesses before the court. The first case on the docket to come before the court was a "hog trial." I do not remember whether it was a civil suit or criminal case. The first deed on record (1815) conveys 120 acres in Township 15 north and Range 8 west on Lafayette creek in the southwest corner of what is now IZARD county, about two

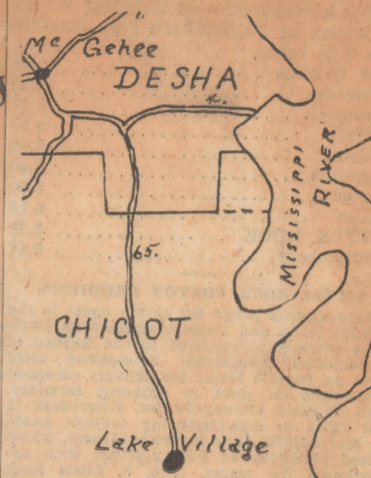
miles from where the creek flows into White river. The village of Anderson is located on the land. The deed conveys a mill site, some cattle (giving their ages, ear marks and color) and concludes "and all my hog claim both marked and unmarked."

The pioneers first settled the valleys of the county along the small rivers flowing from the northwest to the southeast into Black river. They were known and designated by the territorial government at St. Louis as "settlements," and officials were appointed for the "Settlement of Spring River Valley," "Settlement 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 neighbored with one another, and continued the custom up until the time Arkansas became a state. They invited one another to their various workings—house-raising, crib-raising, log-rollings, rail-maulings, and of course the quilting for the women folks, and the dances for all at night. My father said it took a man a day to ride over to the neighboring valley "settlement," a day to invite the neighbors to the working, and a day to return home. Then, at the appointed time, it took the invited workers a day to ride to the valley "settlement" of the working, and a day for the working and, after the dance at night, a day to return home (if they were able to travel home the next day). Corn shucking and cotton pickings were confined mostly to the local "settlement" and were usually at night. Cotton pickings were held at night. Not such as can be remembered by any of us now living, but cotton pickings of the early territorial days in Arkansas were something different. To prepare for a cotton picking of that day, the owner picked the cotton from the field or patch and invited the neighbors in at night to help pick the cottonseed from the lint. Cotton at that time was raised principally for home use.

From the time of the coming of the steamboats until the building of the railroads, the pioneer hunters could take their kill to the river, hail a steamboat, and the captain would land his boat anywhere along the river to buy

the pioneer's wild turkeys, deer, bear meat and other game. The story is told that soon after the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Memphis railroad, now the Frisco, was built through Lawrence county up Spring river valley, one of the pioneers went to the railroad track between Black Rock and Imboden, and flagged a passenger train. The conductor stopped the train, alighted and inquired the meaning of the signal. 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.

Area Affected



—Gazette Staff Photo.
Representative J. L. Erwin of McGehee, Desha county, in H. B. No. 80 now pending before the 1939 House, proposes to annex to Desha about six square miles of Chicot county, to equalize things as the result of a slice of Desha being added to Chicot during the administration of the late Harvey Parnell. He proposes to extend the Desha-Chicot boundary on the south straight across at the southeast corner of Desha, as shown in the dotted line.

1-15-39 Gazette

Desha Seeks To Add Part Of Chicot

The historic county of Desha is expected to take to the floor of the House this week, probably, a matter that has been waiting too long to be attended — the question of taking back from Chicot county what is Desha's, about six sections of land.

Bill for the measure, H. B. No. 80, presented by J. L. Edwin of McGehee, who was known as "Bull" Erwin at the University of Arkansas, where his six feet odd inches towered above lines of opposing football teams on fall Saturday afternoons, asks simply that: "The boundary line between the counties of Chicot and Desha be and is hereby changed" so that all of Township 13 South, Range One West, be detached from Chicot county and attached and added to Desha.

As representative Erwin explained the matter to reporters, the bill would just permit Desha to regain its stature, part of which was lost in the administration of the late Harvey Parnell. During those trying times, Representative Erwin said, the county of Chicot sliced a strip off the south edge of Desha county.

Mr. Erwin proposes to take it back, by tacking a piece of land jutting up into Desha county into the county to the north. The accompanying drawing shows where the operation would be performed.

DISMEMBERMENT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY SOUGHT

1-20-39
Gazette

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 Blakely mountain dam will be located, Garland and Polk county representatives introduced a bill yesterday to abolish Montgomery county.

Representatives J. R. Campbell and Ernest Maner of Garland and Roy L. Riales of Polk county proposed that Montgomery county's be equally partitioned between their counties, with Garland assuming Montgomery county's debt.

Representative J. Fred Jones of Montgomery waxed indignant when the bill was read on the House floor and declared "they'll 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. Pilkinton of Hope started the "war" Wednesday with bills in both houses proposing to add to Montgomery county the site of the proposed Blakely Mountain 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 Pilkinton said the object was to add to the tax sources to Montgomery county.

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

Montgomery Counts Heavily On Proposed Lake.

When a Gazette reporter visited Mount Ida last fall he learned that Montgomery county officials and citizens 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 nearly half the county's area included in the Ozark National Forest, it was revealed that the county has only about \$12,000 a year available to carry on its county government. Last 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 \$100 a month and other county officers' pay is proportionally small.

Bill Would Declare County 'Abolished.'

There is no doubt about the intention of the bill introduced by Representatives Campbell, Maner and Riales. It is set out boldly in the first section:

"Montgomery county as a political entity is hereby abolished."

An emergency clause, attached to the bill, reads:

"Inasmuch as the county of Montgomery 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 being necessary for the public peace, health and safety, the same shall be in effect immediately upon its passage."

Garland Proposes To Assume \$125,419 Debt.

Montgomery county's \$125,419.20 bond obligations have given county officials plenty of headaches since the original bonds were issued in 1926. A proposed refunding plan now is tied up in the courts.

However, the reporter who visited Montgomery county last summer, will vouch for the fact that its citizens will be aroused when they learn of 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.

Hot Springs, Jan. 19.—Citizens of Garland county will resist the effort to take from this county four townships and place them in Montgomery county, as provided in identical bills introduced by Representative Fred Jones of Mount Ida and Senator James H. Pilkinton of Hope, it was said by County Judge Elze T. Housley.

Replying to the charges that Garland county took Buckville, Cedar Glades, Bear and Crystal townships from Montgomery county in 1917, Judge Housley said the people of those four townships were heartily in favor of coming into Garland county, and still want to remain in this county.

"Garland county has spent some \$30,000 on roads and other improvements in the four townships during the past 20 years," the judge said. "It is not our fault that Montgomery county has gotten itself into so serious a financial plight, and there is no reason why we should lose the valuable improvements we have made in those townships."

"The dam site never has been in Montgomery county. It is in Hale and Ouachita townships, 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 recommendation last night a bill by Representative Jones of Montgomery county which would give Montgomery county two townships now in Garland county. They are Cedar Glade and Crystal and contain a considerable portion of the shore line of the big lake that would be formed by the proposed Blakely Mountain Dam to be built across Ouachita river in Garland county.

The bill was opposed by a delegation from Garland county, composed of County Judge E. T. Housley, County Assessor Ray Gilenwater and County Treasurer Henry Murphy. They protested that more than 85 per cent of the persons living in the two townships want to remain in Garland county.

Representative Jones' bill would repeal Act 120 of 1917, which gave Garland county four townships from Montgomery county. They were Cedar Glades, Crystal, Buckville and Bear. Mr. Jones said Montgomery county was asking restoration of the two because they belong rightfully in Montgomery county. They will become valuable as resort 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 townships since they were acquired by his county in 1917. He said that residents

of the section want to remain in Garland county because of the unsatisfactory financial condition of Montgomery

county and because of accessibility to Hot Springs as a trading center and county seat.

Montgomery- Garland Gazette Parley Fails

2-19-39

Special to the Gazette.

Hot Springs, Feb. 18.—Representatives of Garland and Montgomery counties failed to reach an agreement tonight regarding controversial legislation that would take certain sections from Garland county and annex them to Montgomery county. The disputed territory was annexed by Garland county 22 years ago.

Farmers living in the territory affected also were present. They said that petitions had been circulated among residents in those sections, favoring and opposing the legislation, and that some signed both petitions.

President S. A. Kemp of the Chamber of Commerce, who presided, asked the visitors for a few days to present the subject to the Board of Governors, promising a decision soon.

County Judge Is Firm.
County Judge Elza Housley of Hot Springs produced a map showing the territory desired by Montgomery county. He said that the original bill included 78 sections amounting to 49,420 acres. On a five-mill assessment, Montgomery county would realize only \$33,700, the judge pointed out, "and it will cost you more than \$200 to transfer the records. This question is not worth talking about!"

Montgomery county speakers, however, said that bond and road taxes would be added, and that, even though the revenue were small, every little bit would aid Montgomery in solving its financial problem.

"The trouble with Montgomery county," said Judge Housley, "is that half of the county's 500,000 thousand acres is in the Ouachita 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 suggestion was seconded by Mack Wilson, county collector, who said: "Then your troubles would be our troubles."

Judge Witt for Peace.
Circuit Judge Earl Witt, born and reared in Montgomery county, reviewed the history of the fight between Womble and Mount Ida several years ago to change the county seat from the latter town to Womble. He said the annexation measure was a result of that contest. Judge Witt urged that claims of the people of Montgomery county be recognized and asked that the territory that county desired be given to Montgomery county.

Montgomery Delegation.
The Montgomery county delegation included Representative Fred Jones, who recently introduced a substitute bill and withdrew his original one; County Judge Harvey Shaw, County Clerk Amos Horn, Arthur Standridge, former county judge; L. L. Beavers, president of the Montgomery County bank; Attorneys Jerry Witt and C. H. Herndon, J. L. Pinkerton, president of the Black Springs Lumber Company; W. G. Whittington, mayor of Mount Ida, and Tony Vaught, Caddo Gap.

Only One County With Two Sites

1-26-40

Contrary to general belief, only one of Arkansas's 75 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 site at Fort Smith and another at Greenwood.

Eleven other counties now are listed as having two county sites.

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

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

Two-District Counties.
Following is a list of the two-district counties and the two cities or towns in each where court sessions are held:
Arkansas county — DeWitt and Stuttgart.
Carroll — Berryville and Eureka Springs.
Clay — Piggott and Corning.

Craighead — Jonesboro and Lake City.
Franklin—Ozark and Charleston.
Lawrence—Powhatan and Walnut Ridge.
Logan—Paris and Booneville.
Mississippi county — Osceola and Blytheville.
Prairie — Des Arc and DeValls Bluff.
Sebastian — Greenwood and Fort Smith.
Sharp—Evening Shade and Hardy.
Yell—Danville and Dardanelle.

Voting Qualifications.
Attorney General Holt advised Carl T. Walker of Wilton, Little River county, that a person must have a poll tax paid in 1939 on a regular or delinquent 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 receipt given to him, but, he may designate another person to buy a poll tax receipt for him, providing the agent thus designated is reimbursed.

Nevada County Examiner Basil H. Mann of Prescott was advised that county examiners have authority to renew county teaching licenses and that such a license can be converted into a state license, if the holder is qualified.

In another unofficial opinion, Mr. Holt held that when two or more school districts consolidate, the county judge appoints directors to serve

the new district until the next general election. He said school boards have no authority to fix the qualifications of either white or Negro voters.