

Picturesque Nomenclature PHOTOCRIME

An Explanation of How Some of the Peculiar Names of Arkansas Towns Originated. Several Origins Are Credited to Some Places.

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By Fred W. Allsopp.

As a follow-up of an article on the derivation of Arkansas place names in the Sunday Magazine on June 27, it is interesting to speculate on the folk-origins of the fantastic, unusual and sometimes bizarre, nomenclature of localities in the state.

For example, there is Swampoodle, a boggy section near Little Rock; Goose Hill, in the same city; Nubbin Ridge, which is the site of the Catholic orphanage, and Dark Hollow in North Little Rock; Buttermilk Hill, now quite a business center on the Hot Springs highway. Then there is Fourche Dam, near which are some fine plantations, west of Little Rock.

Magnolia was once called Frog Level for some reason, before a grove of magnolias caused it to be renamed.

Monticello was originally known as Rough and Ready, the nickname of Gen. Zachary Taylor, before it received the name of the Sage of Monticello.

Fifty-Six is the name of a postoffice in Stone county, curiously having taken its name from the number of the school district in the township.

Peconery, at first an Indian village, located near the mouth of Point Remove creek, was one of the first 12 postoffices established in Arkansas. Takatoka was another Indian town in what is now Pope county, but is no more.

Wabbaseka was named for an Indian princess called "Watteseka," and the town is sometimes called that now.

Bald Knob, in White county, is not bald at all, but is a little hill in the midst of the town from which it derived its name. It has a fine oak grove on its summit.

The Devil's Hole was the name given to a cave in Boone county.

Inquiries fail to account for the name of Clabber Creek, in Marion county.

Hog Thief Valley, in Logan county, and Hog Thief Creek in White county, never had any hog thieves, so they say. And the Hog Thief Trail, famous in Pulaski county politics, was a misnomer originating from a joke.

Spoonerville (now Hollywood), near Arkadelphia, was not a place for spooners, but was named for a man too old for that sort of thing.

Elkhorn and Pea Ridge, in Washington county, were Civil war battlegrounds.

Dog Branch was the ugly name given to a stream in Carroll county, and Bug City was the cognomen ungraciously fastened on a settlement in Craighead county.

There was a Pull Right in Faulkner county, and Food Suck (whatever that means), in Perry county.

Potato Hill, in Franklin county, was so called because of the shape of a nearby series of ridges.

Poison Springs, in northwest Arkansas, was the scene of a battle in which Stand Waite's Indian brigade took part in March, 1864.

The mountainous place, unpoetically called Greasy Cove, in Montgomery county, is supposed to have been the retreat of Gen. Albert Pike, when, after the Civil war, he desired to avoid the irks of civilized society or devote himself to study. Greasy Slough, is a similar name for a place on Cache river.

Hominy Hill, the favorite resort of the distinguished Augustus H. Garland, located a few miles southwest of Little Rock, in Saline county, is an odd name of unknown origin. It is not recorded that Senator Garland had a pronounced predilection for hominy.

Paracifta was the name of an old Cosatot river town, now almost forgotten. It was given this French name on account of the white plaster, or cement bluff in the vicinity.

Tip was a trading point and postoffice, five miles west of McCrory. Jeff Davis in his campaigns in eastern Arkansas always made it a point to "tip off" politics here.

A spring near the top in Gaither mountain in Boone county, was christened Tom Thumb, although not a small spring.

The bovine family is well represented in the hills of north Arkansas. There is a Bull mountain and a Bull Shoals, in Marion county, on the White river; a Bull Hollow and a Bull Bottom in Searcy

county; a Calf creek and a Cow creek in Marion county. Then there is Hog Skin creek in Izard county.

There is a Crow mountain in Pope county. In Johnson county are Little Piney, Red Lick, Cabin creek, Minnow creek, Greenbrier creek and Low Gap mountain.

There is a Cooterneck in Dallas county. Sub Rosa is a village in Franklin county, but why they wanted to keep it quiet is not known.

A schoolhouse in Logan county got the nickname of Graball, and a school near Branch was called Bat Roost. Racoon Bend and Caney Fork are in another part of the state.

There is a Hatchie Coon island (Indian for dark water), in the Sunk Land district. A Chickinning Prairie is in Lafayette county; Bob Springs, an old summer resort, in Polk county, and Bucksnot in Dallas county.

Bottle Neck is in Phillips county, as is also Black Foot.

There is a Punkin Bend in Woodruff county.

Possum Trost (Tryst), in Conway county, was once a rendezvous of the opossum, where persimmon trees thrived.

In Conway county is a postoffice which was named Blackville, presumably on account of the color of most of its inhabitants. The name was changed to Blackwell, which might indicate that only the town well was left.

In Washington county they have Hog Eye (celebrated by Charles Morrow Wilson); Lost Boy, Bug Tussel, Frog Level, Chicken Bristle, Sassafrass Pone and Seldom Rest, as spot names, according to Mrs. Lessie Stringfellow Reid.

Marhattianna, in Marion county, was named from the combination of names of Mary, Hattie and Anna Weber.

Paragould, in Green county, was named for Jay Gould and J. W. Paramore, railroad magnates.

Piggott, in Clay county, has no connection with pigs, but was named after one of its promoters.

Oil Trough and Oil Trough bottom (called Oil Trove by Gerstacker), got their name from the bear fat put in an oil trough. In the early days there were many bears in the cane brakes of this vicinity. People killed the animals and stored the bear grease in troughs made from hollowed logs until shipments were made. Hence the name of the place.

Texarkana has a coined name, derived from the three states of Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana.

In a secluded spot in Searcy county there was a postoffice whose proper name was Fallsville, but which was generally known as Loafer's Glory.

An Indian romance was responsible for the name of the picturesque village of Solgohachia, in Conway county.

The name of the oldest Cherokee town in Arkansas was Sequatchie, situated where Spring creek flows into Buffalo river.

Hoxie got its odd name from one of the general managers of a division of the Missouri Pacific railway when it was being built through that section.

The name of Mena is an abbreviation of Wilhelmina, having been named in honor of the queen of the Netherlands.

De Queen is an adaptation of Geogan, the surname of a Hollander who assisted in the building of the railroad to the town.

Marche, meaning "market place," is a Polish settlement in Pulaski county.

Judge Eugene Cypert of Searcy says the village of West Point is on the east side of White county; the town of Sunrise is on the west, Morning Sun shines in the center of the county, instead of at the edge of the horizon; and there is not a single barber at the settlement called Barber's Lake.

There are, or were, both a Cash and Credit in Arkansas. Dr. J. H. McCurdy writes that he has the distinction of having practiced medicine at both places, and that it was not all credit at the one nor all cash at the other. The village of Credit was founded by the Sedgewick Tie Company, which built a railroad from Bono to Algoa.

"Did you know that there was a place called Uno, just below Cash, in Craighead county?" asks Dr. McCurdy.

There is a village called Ink in Polk county, and it is probably the only place in the world where that useful fluid was directly used in naming a town. How it received the name would make a long story.

Smackover is an Arkansas place name, the derivation of which has evinced unusual interest. There are several versions of the origin of the name of the oil town in south Arkansas. According to an accredited story, it was originated from a sumach covert on the present site. Another story is that Smackover creek derived its name from a party of immigrants back in the '80s. After they had safely crossed, one of them said to the other: "Well, I went smack under! and the other said, 'I went smack over the darn thing.'"

A more romantic explanation is to the effect that in the early days a young bridal couple was honeymooning through the woods of that section. When they came to the stream they found the water too high for a safe crossing. The bride was filled with fear, but the young husband dove into the water. The bride covered her face with her hands, as she screamed. After a time of splashing and swimming in the wagon, the waters receded, and the girl said, "Please tell me when we are over."

"All right, dear, we are out of danger now."

She replied, "Are you sure we are smack over?"

"Yes, smack over; and this creek shall be Smackover from this day in memory of my bride."

The oil boom established a town near this creek, and it was given the same peculiar name.

One of the most interesting old places in south Arkansas has the odd name of Champagnolle, an Indian word, meaning "field knoll." It is located on the Ouachita river.

Calico Rock, in Izard county, on White river, got its name from "a lofty, smooth wall of stratified limestone rock, presenting a diversity of color in squares, stripes, spots, or angles, all confusedly mixed and arranged according to the inimitable pencil of nature," as described by one writer. The calico has faded somewhat with the years, and the railroad damaged the cliffs when it cut through that region, but Calico Rock still affords a beautiful sight.

Among the names of landings on White river are Magness, Greenbrier, Wild Haw, Round Bottom, Sylamore, Mouth Bruce, Bull Bottom Shoals, Pot Creek, Bib Beach Shoals, Elbo Shoals. Original landings on the lower Arkansas river were Cut-Off, Booties, Como, Notrebe, Gum Point, Heck-ato, Gaines, Mud Lake, Trotter, Pawpaw, Plum Bayou, Derruisseaux. And on the upper Arkansas, there were Natural Steps, Palarm, Beaver Dam, Poke Point Jenny Lind, Grapevine, Nigger Hill, Hogthief Bend, Skylark, Vache Grasse, Shoofly.

Like the towns, the rivers of Arkansas in their names furnish much food for the etymologist, but that subject remains for another chapter.

Until 1803, when Napoleon sold it to the United States, the great expanse known as Louisiana, had known only French inhabitants. They left many traces which survive in varying degrees. Navigable water was an essential element in the distribution of the French. Waterways more than town sites or mountains, bear French names today. There survive in connection with them at least two general names which are found nowhere else among English-speaking people—bayou and fourche.

"Bayou" has been corrupted in spelling, but not in pronunciation from the French word "bayau" (a "gut" and, by extension, a long narrow passage). This type of stream is defined by du Pratz (an early settler of Louisiana) as "a stream of dead water with little or no observable current." Nearly every strip of bottom land in the state has its sluggish bayou winding through it. In the new Rand-McNally atlas (which is one of the most exhaustive) there are a total of 65 creeks listed for Arkansas. Of these, 35 are called bayous.

"Fourche" is used more rarely than bayou. Literally it means a "fork." In the northern part of the state it is usually rendered in English, whereas elsewhere the French word is used. There are at least a dozen such streams in the state.

In Arkansas there are at least 44 creeks, bayous and similar streams which bear French names; at least nine rivers have names thus derived; and approximately 40 towns and villages have the derivations of their names in the French. These place names are clearly divided into two classes. Some have come down to us in their original form and to some extent in their original pronunciation. An equal number have become corrupted both in spelling and pronunciation, until their derivations are many times doubtful. The list that is to follow is fairly exhaustive, but there will always be differences of opinion in certain cases. There is difficulty in separating those names which belong to the French period from later ones bestowed by English or American cosmopolites. Belle Point (near Fort Smith) was not named by the French, but by an American steamboat captain. Belmont, Belleville and Fayetteville likewise have no connection with the French period. I have included only those names which are of French derivation or influence beyond a reasonable doubt.

Antoine: Named from an early French trader. A small town in Pike county.

Aurelle: This is probably a corruption of "aureole," which means gold-colored.

Barraque: Name of a small town on the Arkansas river near Pine Bluff. M. Barraque is mentioned frequently by Featherstonehaugh, an early traveler in the state. The former lived at this point which now bears his name.

Bayou De Roche (Rock creek). This stream may be named for the de Roche family, early settlers in the state.

Bodcaw: The original land map, according to J. C. Branner, has it spelled Bodcau. "This and the fact that the stream is called 'Badeau' in Louisiana, leads one to believe that 'Bodcaw' comes from a clerical error. One difficulty with this theory is that the lake into which the Bodcaw flows in Louisiana is called the 'Bodcau.'" Stream and township in Lafayette county.

Bodock: Derived or rather corrupted from the French bois d'arc (or Osage orange). Several small streams in the southern part of the state bear this name.

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Fordney makes a surprise visit to Manor House. On his arrival he found his friend too ill to leave his room for the day.

that his friend is not in the room. He raises the window and p

his eye. Directly below the concrete walk.

One of the early French settlers in Arkansas was Antoine Barraque, who was born on April 15, 1773, in the department of Rhin Hautes, France, near the Pyrenees mountains. At an early age he was sent to Paris to be educated. He served in Napoleon's army, fighting in the battles of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Lodi and Moscow, where his only brother was killed. In 1816 he came to the United States and then to Arkansas, where he settled on the Arkansas river south of where the town of Pine Bluff is now located. He married Miss Mary T. Dardenne, the daughter of another early Arkansas family. His plantation on the Arkansas river was known as Barraque, and later formally named New Gascony in honor of Gascony, France. He died October 29, 1858, at the home of a son-in-law, B. F. Smith, at Pine Bluff, at 86.

The late Judge E. W. Boeage of Pine Bluff, in a sketch entitled "Old and New Pine Bluff," written for the Pine Bluff Commercial in 1887, said about Mr. Barraque: "Barraque, the name of the grand old hero, is retained in the renaming of the Pine Bluff streets. [The present main east-and-west street on the northern boundary of Pine Bluff is Barraque street.] How he loved to tell of the passage of the bridge at Lodi, his eloquent enthusiasm inspiring him—acting his part the while, forgetting for the moment that he was in the wilds of Arkansas, and not on the field of battle for his La Belle France. His description of that memorable charge to drive the Austrians from their position—of the terrible carnage, scarce paralleled in ancient or modern war—is scarce equaled by Abbott, relating how

column after column melted before the terrible enfilade of Austrian batteries where round shot and shell were heard crashing through Frenchmen's bones. How Lannes, seizing a standard, rushed upon the bridge, shouting, 'Forward, soldiers!' Words can scarce portray Barraque's enthusiasm at this moment, as he told how, inch by inch, they drove the Austrians back, who retired sullenly, amid the hail of death rained from French carbines, yielding the bridge and the battle. With the drooping fortune of his beloved emperor, he fled to America, landing at Philadelphia, and the same year settled on the Arkansas river, naming his new home New Gascony, after his old home in the fatherland."

Mr. and Mrs. Barraque were the parents of 11 children, and there are many descendants in Arkansas today.

Bouff: This river in Chicot county in the extreme southeastern corner of the state, is shown on early French maps as Riviere Boeuf (Ox river). One of the older state maps has it "Bayou Boeuff."

Caddo: The present form has arrived from the further corruption of a French corruption, Les Caddaux. The original was the name of a powerful tribe of Indians in the southwestern part of the state. La Salle's chaplain, Father Douay, speaks of this tribe as the "Cadodachos." Pike's map of Louisiana has this word both Caddos and Cadaux as a nation of Indians about where Texarkana now stands.

Cadron: Several differences of opinion exist as to the derivation of this word. Some think it to have come from "quadrant." Another idea is that it came from "candrain" meaning "sundial." Stream, old village and township in Faulkner county.

Cash: The name of this stream and village in Green county is undisputedly from the French "cache." (A hideout or hiding place). On one map it appears under the name "faux cache."

Champagnolee: On older maps it is written "Champagnole." An adjective in French, it probably refers to the old province of Champagne in France.

Chicot: (A stump). Name of a county in the southeastern part of the state.

Cossatot: From the French "casse-tete" (tomahawk). Stream in the southwestern part of the state. (Sevier county).

Dardanelle: Nuttall, who traveled in the state early in the Nineteenth century, says this place was commonly called Derdanai. This was corrupted from the French "dort d'un oeil" in all probability, since it was called "sleeping eye" by the Indians. Branner says that in the account of Long's expedition it is usually given as Derdanai, but in one case it is called Derdanai Eye. Another less probable suggestion is that its derivation is "darde un oeil" (be on the lookout, beware) since the rocky promontory which juts into the Arkansas river at this point makes navigation a little dangerous. Town on the Arkansas river in Yell county.

Darysaw: Also Darisaw and Dairy-saw. It is a corruption of "des ruisseaux" (streamlets). There were some early settlers at Pine Bluff named Des Ruisseaux, so it is possible that this township in Grant county was named from this family rather than from any streams.

De Gray: From the French "de gres" (sandstone). This stream cuts its course through a section of country noted for its sandstone. On one map, however, this stream is called Bayou Degraff, which suggests that the above derivation can not be called final.

De Luter: On many maps this bayou in Union county is called Bayou Saluter. Bayou de Luter is supposedly derived from Bayou de Loutre (Otter creek).

Des Arc: See Ozark.

Devoe or Devieu: From the French "de veau." Sometimes it is spelled Devue. Stream flowing into the White river.

Dorcheat: This word has been corrupted to an unusual length. Before attaining its present form this stream

was called Bayou Dache. This was already corrupted from Bayou de Hachis. The Hachis were a tribe of Indians in southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana.

Dota or Doty: From the French "d'eau tiede" (tepid water) perhaps. Doty is a common family name in the state, so it may have gained its name thus.

Ecore Fabre: "Ecore" from "accore" which means bluff or high bank. The Ecore Fabre is a stream running into the Ouachita river above the high bluffs at Camden. It has taken its name, of course, from these bluffs on which Camden now stands. M. Fabre, an early settler, figures elsewhere in the nomenclature of the state: See Fourche Le Fave.

Eleven Points: This is an interesting case of analogy. It is corrupted from "leve pont" (high bridge), for it is spelled thus in early maps of the state. The position of the adjective might be explained by the subsequent influence of corrupted or Anglicized French.

Fourche a Loup: Stream in the southeastern part of the state. Literally translated it means Wolf creek.

Fourche Le Fave: This large stream in Yell and Logan counties was named for a Frenchman, La Fave (sometimes La Fabre) who settled there.

Franceway: Another case of analogy. On many maps it appears Francois creek, as well as Francais, Frais and Francis. It rises in Hot Spring county, flows southeast about 20 miles and enters the Saline river.

Galla or Galley: An old landing on the Arkansas river in Pope county. These names are corrupted from "gallets" meaning pebbles.

Grande Glaise: Glaise (pottery clay) is obtained in large quantities here on the White river in Jackson county. This is the name of an old landing on the river near Marked Tree.

Glazypool or Glazpeau: From the French "glaise a Paul" (Paul's clay pit). On the early state maps it is called Glazy Pole creek.

L'Agles: From the French "y'aigle" (the eagle). This stream is sometimes called Eagle creek. Small stream in Bradley county.

La Grue: The name of this river in eastern Arkansas. "The White cranes inhabit this part of the state in uncountable droves."

La Grange: (the barn or storehouse) is a small town near the Mississippi river on the L'Anguille river.

L'Anguille: (the eel). This river joins the White river just before they enter the Mississippi.

La Peer: This name is probably a corruption of La Pierre (the flint). It is a small town near the Louisiana line in Union county.

La Pile: (the pile or pier). Probably a personal name. It is spelled La Peil on one early map of the state. Stream and town in Union county.

Lufra: This is probably derived, like Low Freight, from "l'eau froide" or "l'eau frais." Name of a postoffice on the Ouachita river.

Low Freight: Here is still another analogous corruption. J. C. Branner says that it is derived from "l'eau froide" (cold water). It is more probable that the derivation is "l'eau frais" (fresh water) because of the peculiar environment of this creek. The whole country around it is practically saturated with salt marsh licks and most of the streams near it are brackish. Low Freight is almost free from any saline properties. It is quite plausible that it is derived from "l'eau frais." It is called Bayou Lafreit on the United States land plats. Stream in Clark county near Arkadelphia.

Magazine: From the French "magasin" (a barn or warehouse). The mountain has a peculiar barn shape which is noticeable even to strangers. It is found in Logan county not far from the Arkansas river.

Marie: Saline Landing: From the French "marais salin" (salt marsh). There are abundant salt licks in the

country surrounding this almost extinct landing in Ashley county.

Massard or Mazarn: This word appears in several forms on the old land plats. It is spelled Massaras and Mazern, but it is supposed to be corrupted from "Mont Cerne" (round mountain). Originally it applied to a small hill near Fort Smith, but at present it is the name of a stream and prairie in Sebastian county.

Maumelle: From the French "mamel" (breast). It is the name of a conical hill in Pulaski county near Little Rock.

Meto or Meter: This bayou was originally named Bayou Mi-Terre (Midland creek). This stream is about half way between the White and Arkansas rivers and is nearly parallel with both. Allsopp says it was Bayou Metaux (mineral creek), but the former is much more probable.

Minot: This is a small village near the Mississippi river. "Minot" is a unit of measure in French, but whatever its connection is uncertain.

Moro: This word from the French "moreau" means jet black. On early maps it is spelled "moreau." Stream and village in Bradley county.

New Gascony: This settlement a few miles below Pine Bluff on the Arkansas river, was named for the old French province of Gascony.

Ouachita: This name is of Indian origin, but is strictly French in spelling. This river is called "riviere des Ouatchitas" on an old German map of 1734. On several old maps it is called Riviere Noire (Black river).

Ozan: From the French "aux Anes" (the burros). Town and stream in Hempstead county. The Prairie d'Anes or Prairie de Ann is near the town.

Ozark: Early travelers write that this is corrupted from "aux Arc," the French abbreviation of "aux Arkansas" (in the Arkansas).

Palarm: This name is quite a puzzle. It may have been corrupted from Place des Larmes (the Larmes' place, since one early settler along the river was named Baptiste Larme, according to Zebulon Pike.

Petit Jean: (Little John). This mountain in Perry county, and the river of the same name in Yell and Perry counties are the object of several legends,

more a product of the imagination than of facts. One tells of young girl who accompanied her lover, an explorer named Cheves, disguised as a cabin boy. It is said that she fell sick near this point and fearing that she would soon die she revealed her identity at last. When she died she was buried on this mountain by her companions who had known her as "Petit Jean."

Point Remove: From the French "remous" (an eddy). This is called Eddy creek in Long's account of his travels. Stream which enters the Arkansas about 30 miles above the Cadron in Conway county.

Poteau: (A post or sentinel). Mountain and stream in Scott county near Fort Smith.

Quapaw: Other variations of this Indian name are Kappa and Cappa. "Quapaw" in the French would be pronounced as a "k," but its pronunciation has now been Anglicized from this spelling.

Racine: French word meaning "root." Name of a village on the Ouachita river near Camden.

Salado: Probably from the French "sel d'eau" (salt water), although this is not good French. On some maps this creep is called Sally Doe. It rises in Cleburne county and flows into the White river six miles southeast of Batesville.

Shinall: A mountain in Pulaski county near Little Rock, named for the French settler Chenault.

Smackover: Another name which has been considerably corrupted by analogy. Dunbar and Hunter, early explorers, speak of it as "chemin couvert" (a covered roadway or water-

way) "which forms a deep ravine in the highlands, here enters the river." "Chemin couvert" probably means that this ravine was overhung by trees. Stream in Union county.

Tchemanahaut: From the French "chemin en haut" (high road) or "chemin a eau" (waterway). Its origin is quite uncertain. Stream in Ashley county running into Louisiana.

Teager Creek: Anglicized from the French name Fourche au Tigree, as which it appears in early maps. Tigree was evidently a proper name.

Terre Rouge: (red land). A stream in the southern part of the state not far from Turnwall creek.

Turnwall: From the French "terre noire" (black land). Analogy has corrupted it to its present form.

Vache Grasse: This rather comic name (fat cow) has been given to a small creek near Fort Smith. No reason for the name can be found; some trivial incident probably was the background for it.

Some mention might be made about the word Arkansas itself. It is not a French word because it was the name of a powerful nation of Indians, variously spelled Akanse, Akamsea, Alkamsea, Akansa, etc., by early scribes. But the silent "s" is a result of French orthography since they always spoke of the region in the plural "les Arkansas." The words Arkansas and Kansas are not historically related and their present similarity in spelling is merely a coincidence.