

Stream Of History

Arkansas Gazette Magazine Section

Bayou Bartholomew, Draining and Benefiting Six Arkansas Counties and Two Louisiana Parishes, Has Been Useful to Man Since Earliest Times.

9-11-38

By Mary Roane Tomlinson

Six counties of Arkansas and two parishes of Louisiana are watered, drained, benefited and beautified by Bayou Bartholomew. Like all true bayous, Bartholomew has no natural spring for a source but well within the memory of the earlier recorders, it began in one stream and ended in another, as a bayou should. Then came a terrific earthquake convulsion, during which Nature threw up a great dam and permanently closed the bayou's visible connection with its original source, the Arkansas river. Since that upheaval, the beginning of Bayou Bartholomew comes in an under-seepage from the river and is to be found today a clear, faint trickle, some 20 miles west of this earthquake dam in the low rises of sandy ground and gravel beds beyond Sulphur Springs, 10 miles northwest of Pine Bluff.

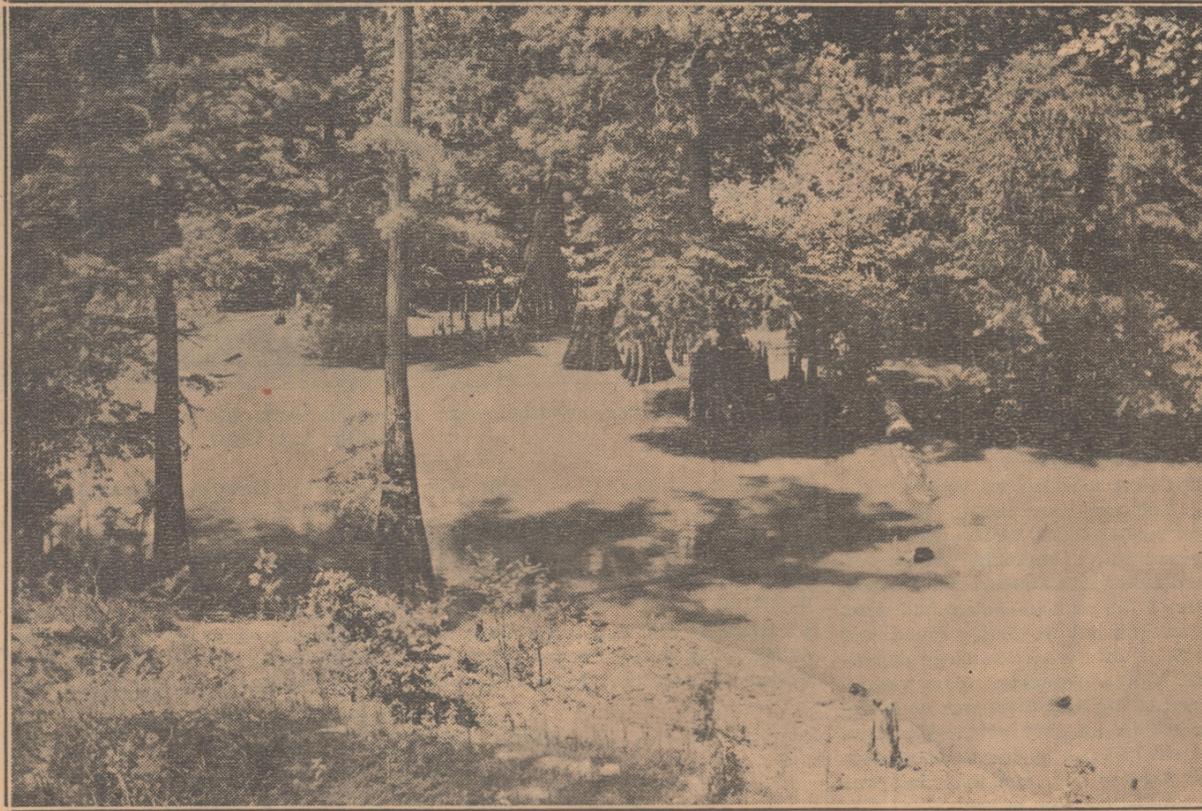
This slender, silver thread of the bayou's beginning gains rapidly in color, volume and depth as it wanders sluggishly back and forth in a somewhat southeasterly course out of Jefferson county. Farther on it lazily diagonals Lincoln county, touches Desha and Chicot counties and flows tortuously through the entire length of Drew and Ashley counties, then out of the state of Arkansas into Morehead parish, Louisiana. It flows through Ouachita parish until it is discharged into the Ouachita river. Although the bayou does give up its separate channel here, it retains its individuality. Rivermen and other observers testify that the reddish green waters of Bayou Bartholomew remain discernible beside the limpid stream of its host, the Ouachita, until both join the powerful churning current of the Mississippi.

It has been conjectured that in some remote period Bayou Bartholomew was an old channel of the Arkansas river, or the trace of the still mightier current of the Mississippi. In places the banks are quite steep, and the whole sluggish stream is amazingly crooked in its meanderings. It never overflows its banks. Along both sides and in the larger bends are found extensive lakes that in some mysterious subterranean manner take care of all the surplus high water, or did so before modern drainage canals and river levees changed the character and contour of the countryside.

On the map of this unique bayou region, six counties and two parishes, the line indicating the circuitous course of Bayou Bartholomew's nearly 300 miles, looks like a message upon the typography of the land inscribed in the mighty hieroglyphics of the Creator. An early definition of the word reads: "B-a-y-o-u, to designate a stream that is smaller than a river but larger than a coulee, is a familiar term in the geography of but four of the United States, and true bayous are found only in these four, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi. The latter is often called 'the Bayou State.'"

Nuttal says "bayou" means a dead stream; the Choctaw Indian language uses the word "bayuk," the French slang expression for "channel" is "bayou."

Of all the streams having this corrupted French word for channel as part of their identifying atlas names, none can truly rival Bayou Bartholomew. Its prehistoric mounds and Indian relics, its tortuous length of almost 300 miles, in its old-time navigability when



A typical scene on Bayou Bartholomew.

steamboats plied two-thirds of that length, the fish, turtles and mussels teeming in its slow depths, the wild game and birds that are found there, the lush beauty of the moss-festooned growth along its banks and watercourse, the vivid color of the blue water hyacinths, yoncapins, fragile spider lilies and true water lilies that spread over its surface a perfumed carpet of flowers—these are all found here. The Arkansas poet, Josie Frazier Cappleman, describes it:

"For that is where the grey moss grows,
The breeze from the scented Southland blows,
Where the wild duck wings
And the mock-bird sings
And the fount of the ages flows.

"Let me go where the gray moss clings,
Where the breeze from the scented Southland blows,
Where the bay trees bloom
Tall magnolias loom
And the great liveoaks are the kings.

"Let me go where the grey moss calls
Luring me on where its soft fringe falls,
Where romance still reigns
As the moon-sheen wanes
And the spell of the forest entralls."

The name "Bartholomew" seems to be indicative of fickleness, both in the trend of the bayou and in the spelling of its name, for no stability is found in either. It is known that Bayou Bartholomew flows in one direction in its channel for part of the year and then, without warning or discernible cause, it may reverse itself and flow in the opposite direction for a variable time. And it is said that one of the earlier men of this name, William Bartholomew, who married Anne Lord, about 1620, wrote his name in many styles and used various spellings thereof—"often adding an extra 'o' with flourishes for emphasis, specially on Sundays." Perhaps that is the reason why this appellation was given to this unique and changeable stream.

Several explanations are offered as to the reason for the application of the name to this stream which is like, yet unlike, the other bayous so frequently referred to by poets and prose writers.

Some of the other familiar and famous bayous are Teche, La Fourche and Atchafalaya of the Evangeline country, Saird, Ambeau, Meto, Caney, Flat, Plum, Waterseka, Brump, Shiloh, Bairth and Salt, of other Arkansas and Louisiana sections. One of the picturesque explanatory reasons of the origin of the name "Bayou Bartholomew" is that it was given by a religious explorer to honor one of the twelve apostles, St. Bartholomew, who, impelled by some spiritual inspiration, became a missionary who wandered ceaselessly afar and in a leisurely fashion healed, taught and converted countless persons in many countries, just as beatific Bayou Bartholomew, a stream without a perceptible spring source, loiters through many townships of several counties in two states, watering, draining and improving each one by the contact.

A deeply entrenched theory is that the bayou was named for one of the historic "10 men" left with De Tonti in 1686 by La Salle to establish a settlement in the newly explored wilderness west of the Mississippi river. This theory is given greater credence because the bayou once was used as a yardstick to measure and designate the location and extent of the famous Spanish Land Grant made by the king of Spain to Baron de Bastrop. This Bastrop grant included "six toises of land on each side of the full length of Bayou Bartholomew" and dates the first recognized use of the name as applied to this particular bayou as 1797.

Some 22 years later a property owner, Ambrose Bartholomew, lived on this bayou, where a settlement was being started on the pine-covered bluff of the Arkansas river in 1819, and this colors the popular and plausible version of "how the bayou received its name." This Frenchman might easily have been living right beside the bayou when the Bastrop grant was made in 1797.

The region through which Bayou

Bartholomew meanders is divided into two distinct types of land and soil, each with its equally attractive advantages, people and industries. The bayou upland or hill country drew settlers seeking a healthful location for their homes as a first consideration. These later developed means of maintenance adapted to the thinner, drier soil of the low, rolling hills reaching far out toward the Saline river. The other type or division was the "bottoms." These lower lying areas along Bayou Bartholomew are fertile, but subject to overflow, not from the bayou but from backwaters of the Mississippi river. The bayou occupies a deep channel bordered by broad flat "bottoms," containing countless slashes, swamps and brakes with low ridges or hummocks scattered throughout the flat, poorly drained stretches.

These Bartholomew Bayou bottoms cover a remarkable scope of country and they are of an alluvial nature that is distinct in character from the soil of the river bottom lands in Ashley and other counties. These are termed the "first bottoms."

Partaking of the features of both the uplands and of the bottoms are the "flatwood uplands." These lie mostly in Drew county east of the rolling upland belt, and consist of a broad flat area bordering the "first bottoms." This flatwood area is from 20 to 50 feet lower than the rolling uplands. They slope with a sharp, sudden drop down 10 to 15 feet to the "first bottoms." All these bottoms constitute an important part in the sections wherein they lie. Both the surface and under-drainage were so deficient that formerly much of the fertile value of the land went to waste, uncultivated and uncommercialized. For a long period the beauty of the Bartholomew Bayou was unmo- lested.

Wild cane grew in rank density in the bayou brakes and swamps, provided abundant food and shelter for the wild creatures of that long past time, and later made excellent pasturage for domestic animals after the coming of the pioneers.

The heavy virgin forests that grew along most of this bayou district were of cypress, oak, gum and nut trees with dogwood, redbud, plum and other smaller flowering and fruit trees in the dense undergrowth. All the lower bayou forests appeared tropical and exotic because of the fan-palmetoes beside the Indian trails and the gray Spanish moss festoons overhead. These heavy forest growths indicated the richness of the soil and presented a seemingly inexhaustible supply of food and building materials for the early homesteaders. Yet their impenetrability and enormous girth were stubborn, if beautiful, obstacles to be overcome with great labor before settlements could be made. Also this forest growth retarded all effort at farming.

But in return they gave rise to the profitable timber and lumber industries which have lasted even to this time. Fortunes were made in those major lumber activities and are indicated in the newer development of the pulp and paper industries.

In the days of the rise and fall of those pre-historic peoples, the River Dwellers and the Mound Builders and in the later periods of the better known Indian tribes, Bayou Bartholomew was a favorite canoe route often used to avoid the swifter and more frequented waterway of the Father of Waters and its tributary, the Smokey river. This avoidance of the main streams prevailed especially in times of hunting expeditions, or when the tribes were on the war path, or while the big rivers were at flood stage or in overflow. As the bayou never overflowed, the whole canoe journey could be made by the Atchafalaya bayou, the Ouachita river, around Bayou Bartholomew, thence through a short strip of the Smokey back into the upper Father of Waters, and on to the Great Lake region without a single portage, which was an enormous advantage when danger threatened.

As the bayou made its tortuous, back-looping, curving way southward the body of its water grew quite deep and the places at which it was possible to ford the stream became exceedingly rare. One of these fords, called Bartholomew ford on the map, was used by early Indians and later settlers, by tribe warriors and white armies. This ford was on the original tract of land bought by Peter Gillam Rives and owned by his Taylor heirs today.

Near this Bartholomew ford is to be found a remarkable array of Indian mounds and an unbelievable number of ancient arrow heads. (Negro field hands plow up these valuable signs of another race each spring.) Of the mounds the longest is as tall as a manor house and fully as large. Quite close to this big mound are three smaller ones. These four stand on an island. The whole group is surrounded by water. They stand where the bayou makes one of its deepest bends and a canal was cut through the resulting neck of land. In the 80's the Smithsonian Institution sent an expedition to Arkansas to excavate Indian mounds. In the ones near the ford on the Taylor plantation on Bayou Bartholomew some remarkable specimens were found. One yielded a complete medicine man's outfit, some red pottery of exquisite workmanship and the remains of many birds. Again about 1915 or 1916, scientists were sent to dig in the Bartholomew Indian mounds. A small mound was opened and a "battle burial" was unearthed. There were disclosed four skeletons lying with their feet together and each head pointing in a different direction, north, south, east and west. At the right hand of each there was a large bowl, a small bowl and a large spoon-like shell. In one bowl was the jawbone of a squirrel. One skull was cracked. It was deduced by those men of science that the Indians had been slain in battle and hastily buried and that they were provided with food to use on their journey to the happy hunting grounds.

Unreckoned years passed; the tales of the explorers caught the enthusiasm of people in other lands across the seas, and homeseekers began to come up Bayou Bartholomew, to hunt, to fish, to trap for furs and barter with the Indians, and to seek out homesites. Eventually their axes forced the forest monarchs to fall, clearings were made and the longed-for homes were established along the quiet waters of the bayou as they already had been built beside more trade-inviting riverways.

Between the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the opening of the Civil war in 1860 there settled in this bayou country many worthwhile permanent residents. These pioneers were mostly from Alabama, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. They "took up" and bought land, settled on the higher banks of the bayou and became the ancestors of many descendants who are today's outstanding citizens of southeast Arkansas and northeast Louisiana.

The plantations of these pioneer families were cleared out of the heavy forests and in size they varied from small farms to tracts of thousands of acres.

One of the largest of these Bartholomew estates was that of the Rives—Taylors plantation of about 11,000 acres—called "Hollywood." These plantation holdings of the Rives-Taylor family extended into Arkansas, Crittenden, Desha, Lincoln and Drew counties. Seventeen bridges were needed to span in convenient places the 12-1-2 miles of Bayou Bartholomew's sluggish curves within the Rives-Taylor property.

At the Bartholomew ford by the old Taylor-Rives log house there is a bridge of huge cypress foot logs—felled so that they lie across the bayou and are anchored to the enormous living cypress trees on the bank with wild grape vine cables. They rise and fall with the water, as its depth varies at different times of the year. The Negroes of the vicinity cross and recross this foot log bridge frequently and their singing makes a harmonious sweet sound which is echoed and carried far on the waters of this queer and fascinating stream.

In his "Arkansas Folk-Lore," Fred W. Allsopp speaks of a religious service that was rendered by the bayou when "the groves were God's first temples" in the Arkansas wilderness, as elsewhere. He says, in part: "On Bayou Bartholomew, in Ashley county, Arkansas, there was a favorite spot for baptizings much used before and after the Civil war * * * the accustomed spot for this religious ceremony was where the bayou made a narrow bend at a point of land covered with sand jutting out into the water, and where the water grew deeper gradually. The location was called 'Sandy Point,' and many were baptized there * * *"

Bayou Bartholomew, or "The Bayou," as it is called by those who really know the stream and its surrounding areas, began its usefulness to man long before recorded history, as shown by the arrow heads, other relics and Indian mounds. It has been an unfailing source of food and drink for man and animals. It has been a reliable means of transportation and communication ever since that distant time. It became the place of desirable sites for comfortable homes, the birthplace of many useful and illustrious citizens, the reviewing stand of troops of soldiers in various uniforms, as they passed to and from the country's wars and battles. The Bayou was the baptismal door to several churches . . . it was the key which unlocked much of the store of natural resources of this swamp and hill country and made the people rich in possessions, in education and in life's pleasures. And at last the burying grounds upon its safe high banks became the resting place for the pioneers

and many of their descendants, those who opened and developed the uplands, the flatwoods and the bottoms of Bayou Bartholomew, that meandering stream once so beautiful and so important a factor in their lives and homes that many sang with the old Negro in the "The Bayou Road," by J. A. Morris—

"De souf road leads to New Awleans
Whah sum folks love to roam,
De norf road lead to Little Rock,
But de bayou road leads home.

"De myrtle an' de jassymine
Sweet as de honey comb,
Dey bloom beside de bayou road,
De road dat leads me home.

"Awl dahkys sing in de cotton lan'
By de road ob sandy loam
De windin' road, de bayou road,
De road dat leads me home.

De bayou road's de road fo' me
De road dat leads me home."
—J. A. Morris.

White River's Long Journey

Head of White River, Celebrated for Its Beautiful Scenery and Power Possibilities, Is Found in a Gentle Spring in the Boston Mountains of Madison County.

Gazette

By Tom Shiras.

10-2-38

Lacking a few of the minor curves, White river, from its source, far up in the Boston mountains of Madison county, to its mouth, where it flows into the Arkansas near the Mississippi in Desha county, is a huge question mark, flowing in every direction of the compass except southwest in its meanderings from the mountains to the Delta.

The question that White river asks the half-million people who live in its watershed is: "What is my source, where do I head?" and this is a debatable question at all points on the lower river, as well as points further up. Some contend that it rises in Oklahoma, others in Kansas, others, Missouri, and still others in Newton county, Arkansas. But very few of them have the right answer.

In discussing the question with a Fayetteville newspaper girl recently, she asked: "Well, where does White river head?" and she was less than 50 miles away from its source. I had just coasted down the grade from the big spring where the river heads, on top of the Boston mountains, and was able to give her the right answer.

White river heads about a quarter of a mile from the little village of Boston, in south Madison county, close to the Franklin and Johnson county lines. If you follow it up from Fayetteville, it becomes smaller and smaller, until above Pettigrew it becomes only a trickle, but it is still White river to the native people of that section, and it remains White river clear up to the spring from which it heads. Most rivers have several forks near the heads and do not take their names until below these forks, but White river holds its name from its very source to its mouth.

One would imagine from the character of the river that the spring from which it heads would be a boiling, gushing spring—a spring like Mammoth spring, or the Cotter spring, or any of the other large springs in the state, but it isn't. It is just an average spring, walled up like a well, and when the writer was there in late August there was flowing just a bare trickle of water. During wet periods, however, it takes on more life and according to Boston folks, sends quite a stream gushing down the mountain. For a few miles as it leaps down toward Pettigrew, it looks as if it drops about 100 feet to the mile, and during long, rainy periods it must be a roaring little river.

Any way you drive to the head of White river, you will follow one of the most beautiful drives you can make in the Ozarks, because no matter which way you come in, you have to drive through the mountains, and the Boston range of the Ozarks is one of the most beautiful in that area. The elevation



The spring from which White river heads. It is about a quarter of a mile from the village of Boston, Madison county, near the Franklin and Johnson county lines.

above sea level is higher, and the mountains are higher. Topping the high points, you meet breath-taking panoramas. The atmosphere is a deep blue in the heads of the deep canyons; the timber looks like green velvet, and,

searching the depths, you can always catch the flash of a silvery mountain stream sparkling against the afternoon sun. Many of the mountain sides are tillable, and there are occasional glimpses of farms on the benches. You

wonder by what intricate trails their owners find egress and ingress.

Driving in over State Highway 23, by the way of Huntsville, you follow War Eagle, a swift, clear mountain stream, for about 20 miles. Coming in

from Fayetteville, you take State Highway 16, and follow White river all the way. Both the White and War Eagle valleys are from a quarter to a half a mile wide, very fertile, and the green growing crops of the valleys make a beautiful landscape against the mountain background.

A short distance from Pettigrew, you cross the boundaries of the Ozark National Forest, and from this point to the head of the river, a distance of about three miles, you thread your way along Highway 16 to the top of the mountain. Each sharp right-angle curve at the head of a hollow represents the eye of a needle that you pass through. You go through a number of these eyes, then suddenly without warning, pop out as though on top of the world, and there is Boston, with its one store and three homes.

Boston is 2,228 feet above sea level and it has that clean appearance that comes with high elevations. The buildings are painted and well taken care of and everything has a snug, comfortable look. On the hottest day you can step in the shade and it is cool, for it is breeze-swept 24 hours a day. In the late fall and early winter when the clouds hang low, it is enveloped at times in cloudy mist. The distant mountain landscapes from this point are wonderful. On clear days one can see almost as far from Boston as it is possible to see in the clear atmosphere of the West. When vision is at its best, Roy Ogden, Boston merchant, says that when visibility is good they can see Magazine mountain, which they estimate is 100 miles away.

More large streams head in a smaller area around Boston than perhaps any similar place in the United States. You can stand in the center of a 100-foot circle and throw stones into the head of White river, Kings river, War Eagle and Big Mulberry without straining your arm, and if you have a high powered rifle along, you can drop a bullet into the head of Buffalo, not very far away.

The top of the ridge, where Mr. Ogden's store sets, is a very narrow "backbone," and water that falls on the left side of the roof of the store flows into White river, and that on the right side into Kings river. The same is true of Tom Hunter's home. The water from the roof of the William Silvis home, on the same ridge, divides between the White river and War Eagle.

Ownership of the heads of these four rivers is divided. Roy Ogden, the merchant, owns 120 acres on the ridge, which takes in the spring from which White river heads, and also the head of War Eagle. Tom Hunter owns the land which takes in the heads of Big Mulberry and Kings river.

The spring from which White river heads is in an open pasture, on the ridge, which widens out just to the left of the Ogden store. Mr. Ogden uses it for stock water and has it fenced with a rail fence. The spring proper, which is about five feet deep and three feet in diameter, is walled up with rock like a dug well. In dry weather it flows a mere trickle of water, but in wet weather and during periods of normal rainfall it supplies plenty of water and flows a good sized spring branch. At this high elevation it would be generally true that water would not be found close to the surface of the ground, but a 28-foot well in front of the store supplies plenty of water.

At one time that section surrounding the head of White river, with Pettigrew as the center, was one of the largest producers of hardwood in the world. J. M. Sparks, who has been living at Pettigrew since 1871, said: "When we homesteaded here in 1871, this country was a veritable wilderness. Deer, wild

turkey and all other game was plentiful, and the rivers were full of fish. The white oak timber in the section was the finest in the world, immense stands with huge straight trees. At that time there were only two stores at which we could trade and they were about 40 miles apart. The territory settled up slowly until 1896, when they constructed the St. Paul branch of the Frisco, then things began to boom. A great many railroads were in construction at that time, and the demand for white oak ties was heavy, and Pettigrew started as a tie market. I have seen strings of loaded tie wagons waiting to unload at the tie yard a mile long.

"The hardwood sawmills came next and millions of feet of the finest white oak lumber and dimension stock in the world was cut and shipped out of here on the St. Paul branch. The stave industry started here in 1899. I made the first contract for staves in this section in that year and for a good many years followed the stave business. The merchantable white oak has been about all cut out, and the production of staves has dropped almost to nothing compared to early days of the industry



This beautiful mountain brook is White river three miles below its source.

Story of a River

Ouachita River in Southwestern Arkansas

Over in the hills of western Arkansas several little streams in days long ago put their mouths together and chanted a word that a listening Indian poet called Ouachita.

The Ouachita is a river of romance, but it also is a river of industry and trade. It serves a happy valley from Mena to Monroe and on to the Red river and the Mississippi, as a practical agent of commerce, but it leaves a trail of beauty for lovers and naturalists and artists to enjoy.

It is doubtful if any other small river in the United States has more influenced human life along its course. This is shown by the adoption of its name, for there are Ouachita mountains, Ouachita avenue in Hot Springs and a mineral water there by the same name. Then we find Ouachita College and Ouachita street in Arkadelphia; Ouachita county, Ouachita hotel in Camden; a town named Ouachita in Dallas county. In Louisiana is Ouachita parish and in Monroe is Ouachita High School and other institutions bearing the same name. Banks, stores, steamboats and manufactured goods have been named with the same appellation.

here."

"How about the young growth?" he was asked.

"Plenty of it, but it will take 50 years for it to mature and by that time all of the folks around my age here will be gone."

White river really starts to grow a few miles below Pettigrew, where Middle Fork runs into it. A few miles farther on West Fork joins it. Then Long creek, Bull creek, Swan creek, War Eagle, Kings river, Beaver, James, Little Northfork, Crooked creek, Buffalo, Northfork, Sylamore and a hundred other smaller creeks on down to Black river, in Jackson county.

After Black river joins it, the White really becomes a big river—Arkansas's one big river, for it has both its source and its mouth in the state. With the exception of about 100 miles of curves and twists across the state line into and out of Missouri, where it seems to be undecided whether to go back home or not, the whole river is in Arkansas. On a rampage it has done as much as several million dollars worth of damage in 10 days. Controlled, it will produce enough electricity to supply Arkansas and adjoining states.

rolls onward in Louisiana, refreshing Morehouse, Union, Ouachita and Caldwell parishes. In Ouachita parish is the city of Monroe where the stream is wide and deep and clear. Somewhere below Monroe the Ouachita and the Tensas form a partnership and their married name in the old French is River Noire—on the map, plain Black river. The Black flows by Catahoula and Concordia parishes finally to spill the waters of western and southern Arkansas and northeastern Louisiana into the larger Red which in turn soon empties into the Father of Waters.

Statistically, the Ouachita is 605 miles long, basin drains 24,790 square miles, discharge volume at mouth 100,000 cubic feet per second, population of basin 800,000. The mileage of cities is: Jonesville, 57 miles from mouth; Monroe, 183; Camden, 351; Arkadelphia, 417; Hot Springs, 474; Mena, 605.

For the spelling and pronunciation of the name we are indebted to the Indians and the French. The phonetic spelling is W-a-s-h-i-t-a.

The origin of this musical and mystical name is not positively known. The most commonly accepted theory is that "Owa" means hunt and "chito" means big, in the Choctaw or Quapaw tongue, signifying that the Indians regarded the land along this stream as, literally, Good Hunting Ground.

Another version, and one that commands recognition, is the product of thorough research by the late Dr. H. L. Winburn of Arkadelphia, who was convinced that the widespread Caddo Indians gave the name to their favorite river. The Caddo Confederacy reached from northern Louisiana to a point far up into the Ouachita mountains of Arkansas. They were a commercial people and conducted their far-flung commerce in the Mobhilian tongue—that of a tribute for which Mobile was named. Dr. Winburn said arrowheads, lances and even tanning stones have been found in southeastern Seminole territories that were made of novaculite from Caddo mines.

"In the Mobhilian tongue," he said, "'Oua,' pronounced we-ah, meant east or sunrise, and by accommodation came to connote both sunlight and Oriental allusions. 'Cita,' pronounced che-taw, was the diminutive form or term.

"Applying this data to the name of the river, it is more than probable that Oua-cita was given by the Caddos in very early times to the beautiful river that bounded their territory on the north and east for more than 200 miles. In the Mobhilian tongue each syllable was accented alike.

"It is almost certain that some sentiment became fixed in the Caddo mind regarding this river and its name. 'Little Sunrise' (Oua-cita) was used, though rarely, as a term meaning 'moonlight,' the moon being, to them, a smaller and lesser sun. That it also meant 'Little Eastern Boundary of My Home' to these settled and home-loving children of the forest, is indicated by their fierce, patriotic defense of this line. No alien tribe was ever known to be allowed to settle south or west of the Ouachita river between it and the Red river which was the border of Mexico until recent times."

The most startling and romantic of the origins is that expressed by Robert Lee of Little Rock. He was born on the bank of the Ouachita, near Malvern, and claims to be a descendant of an Aztec princess who was a daughter of the priesthood called Oo-osh-ee-ta. At the time of the Cortez conquest of Mexico the Oo-osh-ee-tas were an order of priests, Mr. Lee said, whose duties were to properly arrange the holy vessels of the temple for the rites and ceremonies, also to invest the officiating priests with the proper jewels for the rites and ceremonies. A liberal interpretation would be keeper of the jewels.

"After the destruction of the temples of Montezuma," Mr. Lee continues, "there was nothing left for the priests, Oo-osh-ee-ta, to do, for they performed no labor. They emigrated to the Gulf coast near where San Luis Potosi now stands, later crossed what is now Texas, coming into the Louisiana country to sojourn a while on the Red river. The fame of the healing waters of the hot springs to the north reached the wandering priests and up a tributary of the Red river they came. They liked the healing waters of this spa and there forever made their home. The river took its name from these early comers, Oo-osh-ee-tes, later spelled Ouachite, then Ouachita by the early white discoverers and French successors.

The white man's history of this stream began with the arrival of Hernando DeSoto in 1541. He had heard of a fabled fountain of youth and of gold somewhere in the mountains north of the springs. There was an Indian village called Tanico where, according to DeSoto's historian, was a "lake of very hot and brackish water." In the writings of De la Vegas mention is made of the fright to the Indians caused by a runner who arrived in the village with a story about the approach of strange white men with horses.

But the white men left, and a blessed quiet settled down over the domain of the Caddos behind their "Little Eastern Boundary of My Home." For a period of 130 years there is no historical evidence of the impress of the foot of the white man upon the soil of the region. Here the wild men of the forest, the beasts of the hill and plain, the fowls of the air, and the fish of lakes and rivers, roamed and flew and swam, undisturbed by civilized man.

There was little immigration into the valley of the Ouachita before 1800. When the French tri-color was lowered at New Orleans in 1803, giving place to the Stars and Stripes of the United States, adventurous men—and women—began to pierce the wilderness and settle along the river's banks. In the fall of 1804 President Thomas Jefferson commissioned a scientist named Dunbar to explore the Ouachita. He followed the stream clear to Hot Springs which he found virtually uninhabited, that is, by white men.

People of the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi, and some even from the Northeast and from Kentucky began to settle in northern Louisiana and upward in Arkansas, at Camden, Arkadelphia, Rockport and Hot Springs.

Some came by wagon, others by large dugouts up the stream. It is believed this was about 1800.

"The Father of Steamboating in Southern Arkansas" is a title early settlers at Arkadelphia gave to Jacob Barkman, the pioneer who arrived here in 1806. The late Mrs. Caddo McCabe, his granddaughter, said his first steamboat was named "The Dime." Some of the old pieces of furniture still to be found in Arkadelphia to this day bear labels showing which steamboat they were freighted on out of the Crescent City.

Camden has a longer steamboating history than any other city in Arkansas not on the Mississippi. Some historians say steamboats were running on the Ouachita to Camden as early as 1825. They are still making that port.