

1950

GRAIGHEAD COUNTY.

All of Eastern Arkansas, extending from Chalk Bluff, Mo. to Helena, was originally called Lawrence County, and was an immense cane brake, roamed over by Indians and wild animals, ^{having only} ~~with~~ a few scattered white families. The abundant vegetation and the protection afforded by the rank growth of timber and cane, allowed large droves of cattle to be kept on the range in good condition, even during the winter months.

The seasons must have been much severer then than now, as we are told the early settlers often crossed the St. Francis river on the ice with wagons and teams.

Among the first white settlers of whom we have any authentic history were James Campbell and his wife, who came from Kentucky in 1812. Mrs. Campbell was a sister of Col. Wilson, once speaker of the House of Representatives.

In 1821, under the influence of Bishop Asbury, Isaac Brookfield, a Methodist minister, of Newark, N. J., came as a missionary to the Indians, and scattered whites. He rode horseback from St. Louis, and settled about twenty miles from the present site of Jonesboro, near what is now Harrisburg, in Poinsett County. He was a friend of John Wesley, a thoroughly educated man, and possessed that power and magnetism of speech and character so necessary to a successful preacher. In 1823 he was married to Nancy Campbell, a daughter of James Campbell.

Under the hardships of frontier life, his health failed, and he gave up travelling over the circuit, then known as the Hot Springs Circuit, and about 1825 opened a store on his farm. His merchandise was brought from New York City, requiring six months to reach its destination, and his groceries came principally from New Orleans, by boat down the Mississippi, then by raft on the St. Francis, and hauled from there in wagons.

Here in the wilderness all the industries of civilization were carried on, spinning and weaving, and other domestic arts in the home, while on the farm, merchandising, blacksmithin, shoe-making, a tannery, and even book-binding was done ^{One of the} ~~is~~ Bibles ^{is} ~~still being in~~ existence, bound in leather, and containing the family records. ^{Rev Brookfield} He was afterwards appointed the first Judge of the District, and served from 1833 to 1835. He died in 1844.

About 1830, large numbers of settlers began coming from other states, among them being William Stephen Shores in 1830, Albert Perice in 1831, W. Q. Lane from Tennessee in 1832, Daniel and Margaret O'Guinn in 1836, J. G. Christian from Mississippi in 1837; A. F. Taylor came with his mother from Tennessee in 1838, Noble Self from Alabama in 1840. Jesse Thorn came from Kentucky in 1844, and was the first school teacher in the county. He lived in the East Bottoms where he cleared and cultivated a large farm, making a crop and then teaching a subscription school the remainder of the year. W. W. Nisbitt came in

1852. He was a farmer and mechanic, and built the first frame house erected in Jonesboro.

J. D. Phillips came from Georgia in 1861, and operated the first saw mill, thus introducing one of the county's leading industries.

Dr. Stephen Shelton was one of the early physicians. He lived near Big Bay, and was a man of much note, patients coming to him from hundreds of miles for medical and surgical treatment.

In 1840, Hardiman Puryear came to the southern part of the county, and his son, William, opened a store. When Jonesboro was founded, he moved his store there, having the first store in the town, where he continued in business ^{for} many years.

A. M. Davis was also one of the pioneer merchants of Jonesboro.

Other early settlers were a Mr. Martin, Rufus Snoddy, Yancey Broadaway, Joshua Grinder, James Stotts, Asa Fickett, Eli Quarles, and a little later, S. A. Warner, Dr. J. B. Hillis, T. D. Culberhouse, James Anderson, A. S. Nash and Dr. J. R. Claunch.

These early settlers took advantage of the fact that large tracts of land could be taken up at a nominal cost, and as the county developed, their holdings secured for them comfortable fortunes, and provided a valuable heritage for their children.

Craighead County was organized by an Act of the Legislature of the State, and approved February 19th, 1859. Thos. B. Craighead, then

representing Mississippi and Crittenden counties in the Senate, was opposed to the bill creating a new county, while William A. Jones, representing St. Francis and Poinsett counties, was its principal supporter. The bill was called up for passage while the former was absent from his seat, and, upon returning, he found that it had been passed, and his own name inserted in the space left blank for the name of the county.

Craighead County comprises an area of 710 square miles, its length east and west is 42 miles, the width at different points is 12, 18 and 21 miles.

Crowley's Ridge, from its continuation in Greene County, crosses the west central portion extending in a southerly direction.

The St. Francis River flows along the Eastern portion, and along its bed are large tracts of land that were sunk in the earthquake of 1811-12, and known as the "Sunk Lands". All that portion east of Crowley's Ridge is drained by the St. Francis river. Cache River flows through the western part, and there are many springs and smaller streams. Along these two rivers are rich and fertile lands that are being rapidly drained and put in cultivation, and Craighead is keeping pace with its sister counties in its marvelous growth and development.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the people were almost unanimously in favor of the Confederacy, and several companies were

formed, commanded by Captains J. B. Hillis, J.M. Pollard, M. A. Adair and J. G. Wood. The only engagement that took place in the county was at Jonesboro, in which about thirty were killed, principally Federals. The county suffered very little from invasion during the war.

The first officers of the county were Judge, Isham Fuller, Clerk, L. H. Sutfin, Sheriff, W. T. Armstrong, Treasurer, Thomas Nelson, Coroner, R. H. McCoy, Surveyor, J. N. Burke, Assessor, W. T. E. Armstrong, Representative, J. Stoddard.

In 1883 the Legislature divided the county into two judicial districts, the western known as the Jonesboro District, and the eastern as the Lake City District.

The early legal bar of Jonesboro was composed of J. C. Brookfield, W. H. Cate, T. P. McGovern, J. C. Hawthorne, J. A. Meek, S. A. Warner, Jr., N. J. Thompson, Will A. May, W. W. Nisbitt, L. J. Ware, W. A. Maywood, E. W. Hillis, E. M. Roleson, H. J. Smith, E. F. Brown.

The first piano was brought into the county by Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Elder, who moved here from Nashville, Tenn., and Mrs. Elder became the first music teacher. She is still living, bright and active, at the age of eighty-two, and enjoys playing and singing for her friends.

The first bank in Northeast Arkansas was organized at Jonesboro, in 1883, by the late Judge Wm. H. Cate, ^{and} ~~and~~ he became its first president. The capital stock was \$10,000. It now has a capital of over one million dollars. There are nine banks in the county at the present time.

About two years after the county's organization, the site of Jonesboro was selected for the county seat, and named for Mr. Jones, who had been so influential in organizing the county. A two-story frame courthouse was erected on the square, but was burned Feb. 14th, 1869. A store building was then used as a courthouse until 1876, when it also was burned. A building was then erected on the same ground, and used for two years, when it, with eight other buildings, were destroyed by fire. In these fires, all the early public records of the county were destroyed. The present courthouse, a brick structure, was completed in 1886, by the contractor, W. C. Clark of Little Rock, at a cost of \$16,500.

The first school building erected in Jonesboro was built by six or eight leading citizens, and known as the Jonesboro Academy, with Prof. Daniels teacher. It was supported by private subscriptions, and the board of trustees was James Carson, Wm. Puryear, T. D. Culberhouse and S. A. Warner. When the building was completed, the trustees paid for it in gold coin.

Mrs. Emma Davis Frierson afterwards established a high school, and taught for several years until the public school was opened in 1888, with Prof J. W. Wood, principal, and Miss Jennie Redman, assistant. Prof. D. L. Thompson took charge in 1889 and established the system of graded schools.

Jonesboro now has five ward schools, ~~a~~ a high school, with an enrollment of two thousand one hundred and sixty pupils, and employs forty three teachers. The high school is accredited to the state University, ~~and is credited~~ with twenty nine and a half units.

There are also a Catholic Convent, a kindergarten and two negro schools. The First District Agricultural School is located just outside the city limits with an enrollment of five hundred. The main building is a large three story brick, ~~and~~ ^{also} there are two large brick dormitories, ~~one~~ of the largest barns in the south, besides faculty houses and other improvements. The farm consists of four hundred and sixty two acres, and is well stocked with pure bred cattle, horses, sheep and other stock.

The first Baptist church in this county was the old Macedonia church ~~that~~ is still in existence. Rev. E. P. Minton, one of the pioneer ministers has records of this church extending as far back as 1854. The first Baptist church in Jonesboro was erected under the supervision of Rev. Noah Cate. About the year 1866 a lot

was donated by T. K. Lester of Lawrence County to the Mt. Zion Association, and the Rev. Cate erected on it a two-story frame building, but about the time of its completion, his health failed, and he never had the pleasure of preaching in the house he had labored so hard to secure. His funeral was the first held in the church.

While it belonged to the Baptists, all denominations were *permitted* worshipped there.

Jonesboro now has three Methodist, three Baptist, one Episcopalian, Catholic, Christian, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist, and Christian Science churches, a Jewish Synagogue, and several negro churches.

In 1880 the first railroad was built through the county, a branch of the Iron Mountain. The first train was brought into Jonesboro on Sunday afternoon, August 3rd, 1883, on the Cotton Belt, with Howard Eighme engineer. There are now within the county the St. Louis and San Francisco, the St. Louis, Southwestern, St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern, the Jonesboro, Lake City and Eastern, and the Bonnerville Southern lines.

The first newspaper was the "Times," founded by Rev. J. D. C. Cobb, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister, which has since been merged into the Tribune. There are two daily papers, the Tribune and

Sun. There is also the Riley Printing Company, which does a large jobbing business.

There is under construction a city auditorium with a seating capacity of three thousand, which will make Jonesboro the best convention city in the state. The Ozark Trails Highway Convention will be entertained here in May.

An organization of the National Farm Loan Association has *recently* been perfected, ~~and~~ ^{which} will mean much for the progress of the agricultural interests of the county.

A public library and rest room is conducted under the auspices of the Civic League, an organization of able and efficient women, with Mrs. H. M. Cooley president.

There are also twelve women's clubs that are doing much musical, literary and philanthropical work.

Jonesboro, in 1917, has a population of twelve thousand. It has municipal water and light plants, the water being very fine, from deep artesian wells; an ice factory, three wholesale groceries, roller mill, ice cream factory, two cotton gins, a cotton seed oil mill, many factories, wood working and manufacturing plants, a strawberry growers' association, poultry association, hospital, medicine factory, Young Men's Christian Association, two machine shops and a

steam laundry.

The country around is admirably adapted to dairying, poultry, truck farming, and the growing of all kinds of berries, fruits, melons, vegetables, hay, rice, and in fact everything grown in the Temperate Zone.

Other towns in the county are: Nettleton, Bay, Lake City, Monette, Black Oak, Bono and Brookland.