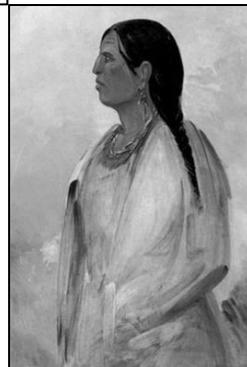


A MANY-STORIED PLACE

Historic Resource Study Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas

Theodore Catton
Principal Investigator



Midwest Region
National Park Service
Omaha, Nebraska

2017

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2017

Recommended:



Superintendent, Arkansas Post National Memorial
Acting
August 11, 2017
Date

Concurred:



Associate Regional Director, Cultural Resources, Midwest Region
8/14/2017
Date

Approved:



Regional Director, Midwest Region
8/20/2017
Date

Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.

Proverbs 22:28

Words spoken by Regional Director Elbert Cox

Arkansas Post National Memorial dedication

June 23, 1964

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Introduction

Arkansas Post is a small place with a large history. It began in 1686 as a trading house situated next to the Quapaw village of Osotouy. Occupied by six men, four of whom soon left, this humble enterprise marked the beginning of colonial settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley. Begun anew in 1721-22 as both a military fort and a plantation of colonists, Arkansas Post became one of the linchpins of French dominion over the interior of North America through the next four decades of European colonization. After France ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1762, the fort and its associated settlement went on to serve for another four decades as an outpost on Spain's frontier with Anglo America. In 1804, a U.S. flag was raised over the fort, and in 1819, Congress made the village of Arkansas Post the first capital of Arkansas Territory. As a river port in the early years of steamboat travel, Arkansas Post was on the Trail of Tears for Southeast Indian tribes who were forced to leave their homelands in the 1830s. In the second year of the American Civil War, Confederate forces turned the place into a stronghold to oppose a Federal advance up the Arkansas River. On January 10 and 11, 1863, a battle was fought there. Though the fort was destroyed in the battle and the old settlement nearly faded away afterwards, the place's storied past was not forgotten. The site of the first territorial capital became a state park in 1929.

Congress authorized Arkansas Post National Memorial in 1960, and the National Park Service (NPS) acquired the land base and established the unit in the National Park System four years later. The original area took in the old townsite of Arkansas's territorial period together with a line of Confederate entrenchments built in 1862-1863. Almost no historic structures remained (archeological resources excepted). The historical significance of the site rested in its power of place, not in its historic resources, hence its designation as a national *memorial* rather than a national monument or national historic site.

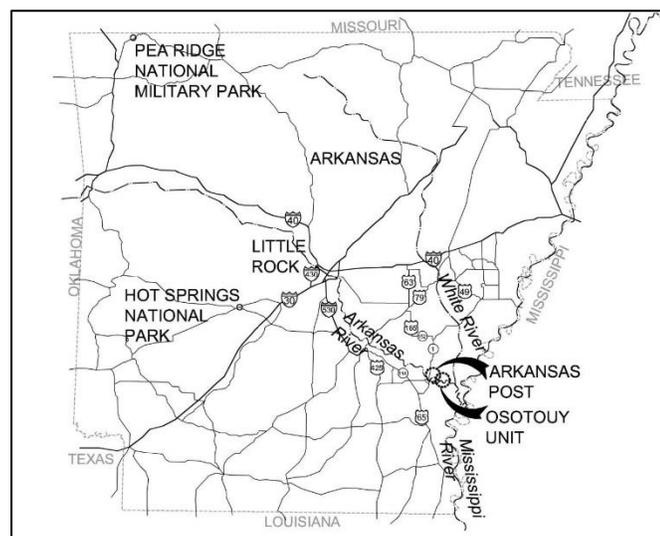
Development of the unit had barely gotten started when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed Lock and Dam No. 2 on the Arkansas River just two miles below Arkansas Post. The navigation pool behind the dam inundated lands in and around the national memorial and drastically changed the landscape. Of the national memorial's 740 acres, just 305 acres remained as dry land. Bayous bordering the national memorial on the east and west were transformed from wetlands into broad, shallow bodies of water. The probable locations of the French and Spanish posts, as well as the site of the Confederates' Fort Hindman, were submerged in the arm of the navigation pool known as Post Bend. All that remained was the high ground once occupied by the historic settlement. Whereas the fort and settlement once occupied a bend in the river, now the land has taken the form of a peninsula jutting into the navigation pool. There is so much expanse of water all around the

place that a first-time visitor is hard-pressed to distinguish the Arkansas River channel from the rest of the navigation pool. Between the disorienting drowned landscape and the near absence of historic resources, Arkansas Post National Memorial presents a unique challenge for site-based interpretation of a historic site.

Interpretation is not made easier by the fact that the place has so much history – nearly 200 years of history from the founding of Arkansas Post to the Civil War, plus a century and a half of history since. Over time, one aspect of the story or another has piqued more interest. When the state park was established, state and local supporters wanted in the first place to memorialize the site of Arkansas’s first territorial capital. As the NPS became interested in the site in the 1950s, the part of the Arkansas Post story that gave the place national significance was its early founding and nearly continuous occupation through the colonial era. After the national memorial was established, NPS historians argued that the Civil War battle deserved greater attention. In recent decades, American Indian history and perspectives have received more emphasis.

In 1998, Congress authorized expansion of Arkansas Post National Memorial to include a second area, located six miles downstream from the existing area, which archeologists and historians had long suspected to be the site of the original French trading post and Quapaw village of Osotouy. Archeological investigations had long focused on the precontact Menard Mounds or Menard-Hodges site. When the investigations moved to an adjoining area called Wallace Bottom, the elusive archeological remains of Osotouy were likely discovered at last. Now Arkansas Post National Memorial consists of two units, the 389-acre Memorial Unit and the 360-acre Osotouy Unit, which features the precontact Menard Mound site, with the early contact period Wallace Bottom site being located just outside the unit on land owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

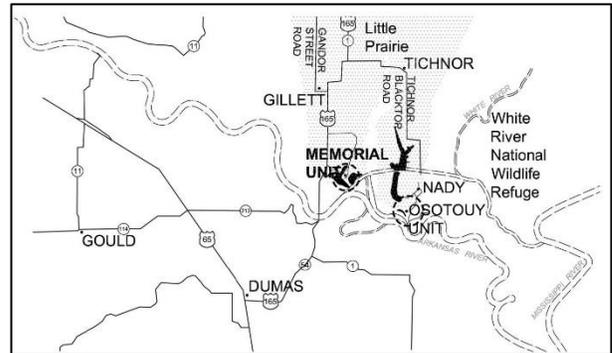
The NPS initiated the present study, a Historic Resource Study for Arkansas Post National Memorial, to assist the NPS with identifying, evaluating, and managing historic resources found within the park. Typically, a Historic Resource Study identifies historic resources such as buildings, cemeteries, roads, and other elements of what are collectively called the *built environment*, and then it seeks to integrate the story of the built environment with the political, social, and economic history of the area.



Location Map 1. Arkansas Post National Memorial is in southeast Arkansas on the lower Arkansas River.

Because very few historical resources exist within this park, the present study is primarily concerned with the *place*. The national memorial's most important historic resource is the place, the geographic expression that was known through three centuries as Arkansas Post. What this study sets out to do is connect the story of Arkansas Post to the wider currents of history of which it was a part.

To the modern-day visitor, Arkansas Post National Memorial is truly a place of power, despite the watery moat that lies around it. Navigable water was always central to Arkansas Post's existence, and here the visitor comes into close contact with hallowed ground at the edge of one of the nation's great rivers. One advantage that the dam has given the site is that the place now lies at the end of a minor road in a relatively quiet and well-wooded corner of the Arkansas Delta. The



Location Map 2. The Memorial Unit and the Osotouy Unit are off the highways.

The broad river and the dense cypress forest along the river edge provide a buffer against the sights and sounds of nearby modern development. The park protects a variety of native plants and trees and provides a sanctuary for wildlife. The NPS made the right decision when it chose to preserve the parklike setting that was created by the makers of the state park in what is now the center of the Memorial Unit. It is a pleasing open space where the modern-day visitor can slip easily into a contemplative mood. And among the things to ponder is the wondrous variety of human experience in this many-storied place.

Geography and the River

All histories of Arkansas Post begin with the river. National Park Service historian Roger E. Coleman put it best: “The story of Arkansas Post is the story of the river that flowed past it.”¹ From precontact times through the colonial era and on into the nineteenth century, the river served as a major artery for transportation and trade. It connected peoples, carried products of the fur trade to market, and later bore steamboats laden with cotton. In *Colonial Arkansas*, historian Morris S. Arnold writes, “When Frenchman came to Arkansas to stay, they quite naturally settled along the many navigable rivers that provided the only real transportation routes available.... The Arkansas River, the most significant of the region’s rivers and home of the Quapaw Indians, was quite naturally the first one that Europeans chose to occupy.”² Navigable waterways were key to European imperial ambitions throughout the interior of North America, including the area that became Arkansas. Historian Kathleen DuVal, ’s *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* presents the story of Arkansas Post on a very broad canvas: the Arkansas Valley stretching from the western plains to the Mississippi River. She opens her narrative with a short geography lesson:

The Arkansas River begins in the West, high up in the Rocky Mountains. For hundreds of miles, it crosses dry plains and prairies, now the states of Kansas and north-central Oklahoma. In the central Arkansas Valley, the channel narrows to cut between the blue-green Boston Range of the Ozark Mountains and the rolling green Ouachita Mountains, now eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas. Finally, in the marshy lower Arkansas Valley, smaller creeks and ox-bow lakes merge with the main stream, as it winds along the lowlands to the Mississippi. The White River flows sharply southeast to meet the Arkansas’s mouth. Other deltas lie to the north and south, all part of the lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley....³

While the river facilitated human passage over the landscape, the riverine environment posed challenges. People who lived by the river had to contend with a superfluity of water around their homes. The low-lying, flood-prone lands bordering the

¹ Roger E. Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story: Arkansas Post National Monument*, Southwest Cultural Resources Center Professional Paper No. 12 (Santa Fe, N. Mex.: National Park Service, 1987), 1.

² Morris S. Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804: A Social and Cultural History* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991), 8-9.

³ Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 13.

Arkansas River presented a difficult environment for human occupation. A high-water table and periodic inundation of a very broad floodplain made human habitations impossible or at best uncertain. American Indians, choosing to live as close to the river as they might dare, relocated their villages frequently to contend with changing conditions. When Europeans arrived, they, too, built their installations as near to navigable waters as they could manage. Arkansas Post had to be abandoned and relocated six times over the course of a little more than two hundred years, usually in response to flooding or the threat of flooding. As the French and then the Spanish sometimes rebuilt the fort on or near its previous location, the geographical landmark known as Arkansas Post became associated with a total of three places along the lower Arkansas River. The present national memorial includes two of those three places.

Arkansas Post National Memorial's seldom visited Osotouy Unit features the Menard-Hodges site, while the nearby Wallace Bottom site is currently believed to be the site where the Quapaw village of Osotouy once stood, and where the first Arkansas Post, a trading house, was built in 1686. Arkansas Post National Memorial's primary area and visitor attraction, the Memorial Unit, is located approximately six river miles above the Osotouy Unit on the site where Arkansas Post was moved in 1751. The French named the latter site "Ecores Rouges" (Red Bluffs). They identified the place as the first streambank encountered when going upriver that was not periodically inundated by flood waters. Except for the years 1756-1779, when the fort occupied still a third spot farther downstream, Arkansas Post remained at Ecores Rouge through the rest of the colonial era, and the settlement lived on at that place through the nineteenth century.⁴

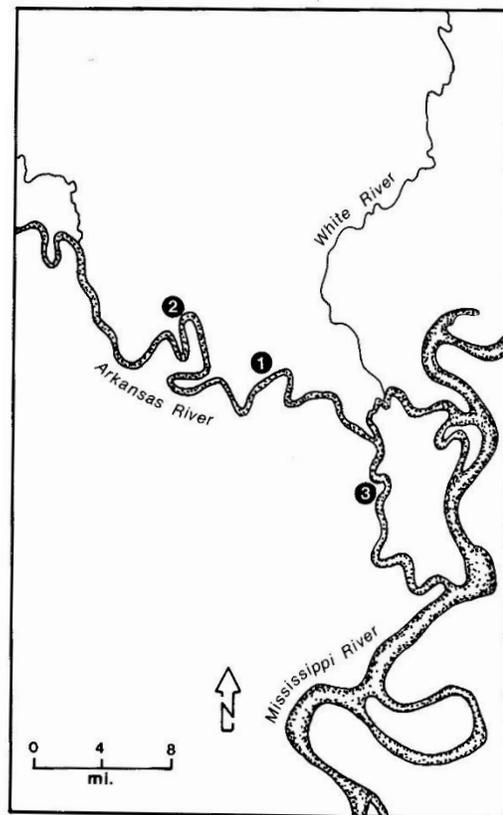


Figure 1. The fort and community moved six times between three locations. Location No. 1 is the site of the Osotouy Unit. Location No. 2 is the site of the Memorial Unit. Location No. 3 is where Arkansas Post was situated from 1756 to 1779. (Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*.)

⁴ Scholarly investigation of the locations of Arkansas Post have built upon one another for many years. The first historian to tackle the problem in a comprehensive way was Stanley Faye, who published two articles, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Dominion," and "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: Spanish Dominion," in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* in volumes 26, no. 3 (July 1943): 633-721, and 27, no. 3 (July 1944): 629-716, respectively. Since Faye did his research and writing during World War II, he did not have access to French and Spanish archives. The National Park Service has sponsored numerous other scholarly investigations from the late 1950s onward. The effort began with dual historical and archeological reports by historian Ray H. Mattison in 1956 and archeologist Preston Holder in 1957. Morris S. Arnold, an independent historian, brought greater

While the inhabitants of Arkansas Post were always concerned about the river overtopping its banks and forcing them out of their homes – especially each summer when the river normally crested – they were troubled, too, over the long term, by the river’s constant changes of course. The Arkansas River is a meandering stream; its turbid waters erode the riverbank in one place and deposit silt to form sandbars in another, causing the river channel to migrate back and forth across the floodplain. The erosional and depositional forces of the river were not life threatening compared with flood events, but they were significant nonetheless. Over many years, they could undermine a village site or sever its connection to the river. Today, the Osotouy Unit occupies the edge of an oxbow lake, a former bend of the Arkansas River that is no longer connected to the flowing river. Likewise, the present-day memorial site is a bit disconnected from the present-day Arkansas River channel. During the nineteenth century, the river cut away at the natural embankment known as Ecores Rouges, causing more and more of the townsite to sluff into the river. As the river channel then migrated eastward again and cut a new channel during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, a shallow backwater called Post Bend formed where the old channel had been. Post Bend is a quiet bayou, or oxbow lake in the making.⁵

The memorial site’s geographical setting is further complicated by the fact that in the 1960s the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built a series of locks and dams on the Arkansas River and made a canal between the lower Arkansas and White rivers. The entrance to the Arkansas Post Canal is visible from the Arkansas River overlook at the southern tip of the Memorial Unit. The nearest dam structure, the Wilbur D. Mills Dam and Lock No. 2 (completed in 1967), though not visible from the memorial, raised the typical water level around the Memorial Unit by several feet, drowning the shallow bayous and turning the area into much more of a peninsula than it was in the historical period.⁶

This chapter describes the geography and environmental history in and around the two units of Arkansas Post National Memorial and the surrounding region. It gives a sketch of environmental change over time. It addresses the central concern of environmental history – how environment has shaped culture and how culture has shaped environment – at both the

precision and clarity to the subject in his essay, “The Relocation of Arkansas Post to *Ecores Rouges* in 1779,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 42 (1983): 317-31. Coleman’s *The Arkansas Post Story* (1982) depicted the migration of the post using a series of maps and date ranges. In 1998, a field investigation sponsored by the Arkansas Archaeological Survey discovered what is now thought to be the site of the original post at Wallace Bottom, a floodplain field on the edge of the Osotouy Unit. As described in John H. House, “Wallace Bottom: A Colonial-era Archaeological Site in the Menard Locality, Eastern Arkansas,” *Southeastern Archeology* 21 (2002): 257-68, the discovery constituted an important refinement of earlier speculations about the precise location of the first post.

⁵ National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division, *Arkansas Post National Memorial, Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/GRD/NRS – 2013/731 (Fort Collins, Colo.: National Park Service, 2013), 23.

⁶ National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division, *Arkansas Post National Memorial, Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 13-14.

regional and local level. The chapter begins with a summary of the geologic history of the region, with emphasis on key terms and concepts that help explain why the Arkansas River is such a dynamic and challenging environment for humans to occupy.

An Alluvial Landscape

The Arkansas River begins in the Rocky Mountains and flows in a generally southeastward direction from central Colorado through the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas to the Mississippi River. Stretching for nearly 1500 miles, it is the sixth longest river in the United States and the third largest tributary of the Mississippi (though it is considerably smaller than the two biggest tributaries, the Missouri and Ohio rivers). The Arkansas flows into the Mississippi about 20 airline miles southeast of Arkansas Post. Where the two rivers join, the volume of water flowing to the Gulf of Mexico amounts to half the water draining off the whole North American continent.⁷

The White, Black, and St. Francis rivers are three other tributaries that flow into the Central Mississippi Valley in eastern Arkansas. The White River begins in the Ozark Plateau in northwest Arkansas and flows southeastward, roughly paralleling and even comingling with the Arkansas River where the two streams meander and jointly form a maze of bayous as they approach the Mississippi. The Black and St. Francis rivers both commence in the Ozark Highlands in southeastern Missouri and flow southward, the Black flowing into the White and the St. Francis flowing directly into the Mississippi. A low rise known as Crowley's Ridge separates the Black and the St. Francis. Most of eastern Arkansas is a flat plain, an area of rich alluvial soils deposited during the Pleistocene Epoch when these various rivers were in flood as they drained off continental glaciers lying to the north. In some locations, the alluvium is up to 100 feet deep. The whole region is known as the Arkansas Delta.

During the ice ages of the Pleistocene, continental glaciers capped the northern latitudes of North America as far south as Illinois. For most of the ice ages the ice mass extended at least as far south as the northern reaches of the Mississippi River basin. During periods of warming, the amount of glacial meltwater flowing down the Mississippi Valley could reach five times its present volume. The swollen rivers carried heavy sediment loads of glacial outwash and often flowed as braided streams. In flood stage, the rivers made deposits of coarse gravel down the middle of stream courses and formed terraced beds of fine gravel and silt to either side. The deposits of lighter material were redistributed as windblown silt, or loess. These drifting dunes tended to come to rest where there was already some minor relief, such as at the base of Crowley's Ridge. The river systems were a dynamic force. They dominated the landscape in the interglacial periods even more than they do now. During the

⁷ Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its Peoples from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

last period of glacial advance and retreat, the Mississippi River migrated eastward. In the Cairo Lowland of southern Illinois, it punched into the Ohio River channel and “captured” that river, assuming its present course down the Central Mississippi Valley. The Black River on the west side of Crowley’s Ridge now occupies its abandoned channel.⁸

The last ice age waned about 12,000 to 14,000 years ago. As the continental glaciers disappeared and the midcontinent’s runoff declined to around its present volume, the rivers changed from braided streams into the meandering rivers observable today. As Thomas Foti eloquently describes in *The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, a river’s tendency to meander is essentially a function of energy transfer. “Meandering is a way for rivers to rid themselves of excess energy as their slopes get gentler closer to the sea,” Foti explains. “In essence, the water at any given point is being pushed by faster-moving water above *into* slower-moving water below. Where’s the water to go except sideways? How, then, does the river spend that excess energy? In caving and carving the bank on the outside of bends, and depositing new land on the ‘point bar’ on the insides of bends.”⁹ The Mississippi, Arkansas, and other rivers that flow through the Arkansas Delta are constantly moving vast amounts of silt and clay from one bank to the other and back again, at play in a huge sandbox of their own making.

The wide swath of land that is taken up by each of these meandering rivers is called the “meander zone.” The meander zone is characterized by a number of common features. First, there are the numerous oxbow lakes formed by the river’s ceaseless carving. As a river’s meanders become more and more exaggerated and horseshoe-shaped, the neck of the meander will grow narrower and narrower until the river punches through, forming a shortcut and turning the outer loop of the meander into slack water and then into an oxbow lake as it fills with silt.

Oxbow lakes and bayous were important to Indigenous peoples because they were biologically rich, often containing productive fisheries. The ecological zone contains many edible plants including knotweed, water millet, cattail, and floating leaf vegetation such as yellow water lily. The clayey soils found around backwater sloughs were a valuable resource for making pottery.¹⁰

Natural levees are another common feature of the meander zone. During flood stage, a river deposits sediment on its banks. The banks grow higher, holding the river in its channel

⁸ National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division, *Arkansas Post National Memorial, Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 21-22; Thomas Foti, “The River’s Gifts and Curses,” in *The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, edited by Jeannie Whayne and Willard B. Gatewood (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 32-34; Dan F. Morse and Phyllis A. Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 1-9.

⁹ Foti, “The River’s Gifts and Curses,” 31.

¹⁰ John House, “Powell Canal: Baytown Period Adaptation on Bayou Macon, Southeast Arkansas,” in *The Mississippian Emergence*, edited by Bruce D. Smith (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 11, 17-18, 21; Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 227.

even as the bed of the river accumulates sediment and grows higher as well, slowly rising above the surrounding floodplain. Eventually the river breaks the levee and spreads out across the land, finding a different channel and starting the process anew. Natural levees are often the only high ground in a water-logged landscape; on the lower Mississippi River, they can be hundreds or even thousands of feet wide. Mississippian peoples cultivated the tops of levees with maize. In French Louisiana, natural levees were the first places to attract plantations.¹¹

The meander zone has distinctive forest types. Soils tend to be rich and deep, and plant communities vary depending on how often the ground lies submerged. The river's normal high waterline separates vegetation into two main types, forming a visible boundary line between so-called "first bottoms" and "second bottoms." First bottoms are those places where the river rises every year during the season of high water. Second bottoms are places where the river rises only in extraordinary flood events. The difference is significant, since seasonal flooding is not only more frequent but generally of longer duration than during extraordinary flood events. In first bottoms, vegetation is limited to trees and plants that can survive with their roots submerged for extended periods, such as cypress and cattails. In second bottoms, ground cover is denser and trees such as water oak can grow there.¹²

The climate of the Arkansas Delta is humid subtropical. Warm air masses rise over the Gulf of Mexico and push north over the whole east-central United States, bringing hot, humid weather in summer and moderating the otherwise cold, continental temperatures in winter. The state of Arkansas generally receives around 40 to 60 inches of precipitation annually. In the Arkansas Delta, Jonesboro receives an average of 46.18 inches, while El Dorado receives 54.11 inches. Jonesboro has a mean January temperature of 35.6 degrees and a mean July temperature of 81.6 degrees Fahrenheit, while El Dorado's mean temperatures in January and July are 43.6 and 82 degrees, respectively.¹³

Pollen records have been compiled to create a picture of climate change over the past 11,000 years, the period known as the Holocene. At the beginning of the Holocene, the climate was probably cool and moist. The climate supported the growth of conifer forests of spruce, fir and larch. As the climate gradually warmed, the conifer forest was succeeded by a mixed conifer and deciduous forest dominated by oak. Around 5,000 to 9,000 years ago, the climate became considerably drier and somewhat cooler again, a time known as the Hypsithermal period. Forest cover declined in this period and grasses increased. Starting around 5,000 years ago, wetter conditions prevailed once more and forest cover increased.

¹¹ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 4; Foti, "The River's Gifts and Curses," 36.

¹² Foti, "The River's Gifts and Curses," 36.

¹³ *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* at www.encyclopedia.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4579 <July 22, 2016>.

Two hundred years ago, or before European settlement, about 95 percent of the land area in Arkansas was covered by forest, compared with 56 percent today.¹⁴

Geographers divide the Arkansas Delta region into a few smaller physiographic provinces. Arkansas Post National Memorial sits on the boundary between the Arkansas River Lowland and the Grand Prairie Ridge. The Arkansas River Lowland consists of alluvial bottomland laid down by the Arkansas River. It contains numerous oxbow lakes and bayous and is bisected by the river's present meander zone. The Grand Prairie Ridge is an alluvial terrace formed some 5,000 years ago by the Mississippi River. Slightly elevated above the surrounding plain, it forms the divide between the Arkansas and White River drainages. A southward extension of Grand Prairie, known as Little Prairie, borders the Osotouy Unit. Top soils on the Grand Prairie Ridge are underlain by clay, so drainage is poor, which discourages forest growth. For that reason, the area was characterized by tallgrass prairie until it was converted to farmland in the late nineteenth century. In its natural state, the Grand Prairie afforded good habitat for migratory waterfowl.¹⁵

The Arkansas Delta region once contained several species of mammals that are no longer found there, including bison, elk, cougar, and red wolf. Bears were common in Arkansas before they were hunted extensively in the fur trade era. They were hunted mainly for their fat, which was rendered into oil and transported to New Orleans and the commercial market. Market hunting eliminated black bears from the landscape across much of Arkansas in the latter nineteenth century. A population hung on in the lower White River area. Elk were present in the bayous along the St. Francis River in the early nineteenth century but were later hunted out. White-tailed deer were practically hunted out as well. Their numbers statewide dipped to around 200 in the 1920s. However, game conservation led to a rebound in the deer population and they now number an estimated one million statewide. Deer are commonly observed at Arkansas Post National Memorial. Red wolves were once common throughout Arkansas and were exterminated around the end of the nineteenth century. Two small mammals commonly observed in Arkansas Post National Memorial today, armadillos and nutrias, are both late arrivals. Armadillos extended their range into the southern United States in the mid nineteenth century. Nutrias, or river rats, were introduced in the United States from Latin America in the twentieth century. Alligators, native to Arkansas at one

¹⁴ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 8-9; National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division, *Arkansas Post National Memorial, Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 22-23; John A. Sealander, *A Guide to Arkansas Mammals* (Conway, Ark.: River Road Press, 1979), 9.

¹⁵ Martha Ann Rolingson, "The Toltec Mounds Site: A Ceremonial Center in the Arkansas River Lowland," in *The Mississippian Emergence*, edited by Bruce D. Smith (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 27; John H. Walker, "Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas," Report prepared for Southeast Archeological Center, Division of Archeology, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1971, typescript, Arkansas Post National Memorial (hereafter ARPO), 1.

time, were reintroduced in the state in the 1980s. They were observed in the Memorial Unit in Alligator Slough years ago but there have not been sightings in that area recently.¹⁶

The Mississippians and the Environment

In late precontact times, the Mississippi Valley saw the emergence of a complex culture of towns and temples and hereditary chiefdoms that archeologists have named “Mississippian.” Mississippian culture centered in the area around St. Louis, Missouri, and extended down the Mississippi Valley to the Arkansas Delta. Offshoots of the Mississippian culture appeared elsewhere in the Southeast: in west-central Alabama, east Tennessee, and parts of Georgia and west Florida.¹⁷ Mississippians adopted a sedentary way of life based on agriculture.¹⁸ The shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture precipitated a growth of population and the development of permanent settlements connected by regular trade. The relationship between settled communities, agriculture production, and established trade networks was accompanied by a cultural evolution toward more pronounced divisions of labor and social hierarchies. The Mississippians built huge earthen mounds to bury their dead and to elevate the building structures associated with their political and religious elites. The causes and characteristics of this “Mississippian emergence” have long been the subject of inquiry dating back to the nineteenth-century quest to discover the origins of the “Mound Builders.”¹⁹ The region that gave rise to the Mississippian culture is in some respects the cradle of American archeology and is still a place of spirited archeological inquiry. John H. House, archeologist with the Arkansas Archaeological Survey in Pine Bluff, has written that the area holds one of the richest archeological records in the world for studying the “pristine evolution of complex societies.”²⁰

The Mississippian population was spread between towns, villages, and farmsteads. Towns generally had on the order of 300 to 500 inhabitants each. Large towns had over 1,000 people. A few unusual ones had perhaps 2,000 to 5,000 residents, with the largest, Cahokia,

¹⁶ Sealander, *A Guide to Arkansas Mammals*, 16; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report Parts I and II*, report prepared for National Park Service (Omaha: National Park Service, 2005), 21; Erik Ditzler review comments, April 2017.

¹⁷ Bruce D. Smith, “Introduction,” in *The Mississippian Emergence*, edited by Bruce D. Smith (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 1-8.

¹⁸ A sedentary people is defined as a group in which members, or at least some of the population, live in one place all year.

¹⁹ Marvin D. Jeter, ed., *Edward Palmer’s Arkansas Mounds* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1990), 7-37.

²⁰ John H. House, “Evolution of Complex Societies in East-Central Arkansas: An Overview of Environments and Regional Data Bases,” in *Arkansas Archaeology in Review*, edited by Neal L. Trubowitz and Marvin D. Jeter, Research Series No. 15 (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archaeological Survey, 1982), 37. See also Jon L. Gibson and Philip J. Carr, “Big Mounds, Big Rings, Big Power,” in *Signs of Power: The Rise of Cultural Complexity in the Southeast* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 1-3.

numbering well over 10,000 people by some estimates. Settlements of all sizes were connected by trade and culture, and the towns became centers of ceremonial life and political power. The size and strength of the power centers varied, with some taking the form of chiefdoms. In a chiefdom, political power was concentrated in a hereditary chieftainship and the ruler exercised dominion over the outlying population. The chief and his family constituted a social elite, who bore responsibility to provide for the general wellbeing and security of the general populace.²¹

The Mississippians revolutionized ceramics by tempering their clay with particles of crushed, burnt shell. The chemical properties of the shell, when fired with the clay, added strength to the finished object. Shell-tempering resulted in an effervescence of pottery forms and uses, as vessels acquired more durability and greater versatility in cooking. For example, shell-tempered cooking jars could distribute heat more evenly.²²

The Mississippians innovated new forms of architecture to suit their town living and their more elaborate political organization. Central plazas were a common feature in towns. Often, they had two or more hill-shaped mounds surrounding them. Mississippians also piled the earth to form broad platforms on which they placed leaders' buildings, council houses, and ancestors' shrines. The raised areas were used as ceremonial sites and civic centers. Dwellings within each town were a mix of houses and apartment buildings. Bigger towns were walled for defense. Wooden palisades might be constructed to a height of twelve to fourteen feet, with bastions built at regular intervals and walkways attached to the inner wall.²³

Trade extended over large distances. Major trade items included specialized tools made of particular types of stone, such as hoe blades made of Mill Creek chert or ceremonial pipes made of catlinite, and precious raw materials and resources such as copper and salt. Experts differ over the extent to which Mississippians traded food as a commodity. Certainly, food surpluses in one settlement could be carried to another in time of drought, flood, or other natural disaster, but the situation may not have been common. It is known from early European accounts that Late Mississippian societies had citizens who specialized in trading. These people traveled over great distances and spoke numerous languages.²⁴

²¹ James B. Griffin, "Comments on the Late Prehistoric Societies in the Southeast," in *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, edited by David H. Dye and Cheryl Anne Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 7-9; John H. Blitz, "Mississippian Chiefdoms and the Fission-Fusion Process," *American Antiquity* 64, no. 4 (1999), 577-92.

²² Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 208-10.

²³ Griffin, "Comments on the Late Prehistoric Societies in the Southeast," 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

The Mississippians built their towns near the Mississippi River and its major tributaries. Archeologists believe that the Mississippian emergence led to, and was sustained by, a general movement of population from the Mississippi Valley lowlands into the relatively restricted areas flanking the Mississippi River and its tributaries that we call the meander zone. The attraction of the meander zone for these early peoples was that its deep, rich, alluvial soils could grow maize year after year, because annual flooding brought a crucial recharge of soil nutrients that kept the ground fertile. In ecological terms, the meander zone was an “energy subsidized ecosystem.” The cultivated corn crop extracted energy out of the system, and river-borne nutrient-rich sediments continually replenished it. Once the human population repositioned itself to exploit that energy-rich environment, the conditions were right for the population to expand.²⁵



Figure 2. Menard Mounds site. Forest vegetation obscures the mound in this view from the plaza in October 2015. (Photo by the author.)

Archeologists have observed that the advent of a sedentary, agriculture-based society, with its concomitant growth of population and rise of cultural complexity, did not necessarily translate into a higher quality of life for everyone. The archeological record offers evidence that precontact farming peoples toiled harder than hunters and gatherers and did not live as long, or at least did not have as good nourishment. The evidence of reduced nutrition comes from skeletal remains, and suggests that a diet heavy in corn and low in animal protein led to iron deficiency and other nutritional stress in the population. The change in diet made people more vulnerable to disease, dental decay, and broken bones, as well as famine when the crop failed. The change to town living fostered the spread of communicable diseases as populations became more concentrated, drinking water became a shared resource, and human waste disposal became more problematic. Evidence from the middle Mississippi Valley suggests that average human life expectancy dropped to nineteen years of age, or well below what it had been for Mississippians’ hunting and gathering ancestors.²⁶

²⁵ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 283; House, “Evolution of Complex Societies in East Central Arkansas,” 38.

²⁶ George J. Armelagos and M. Cassandra Hill, “An Evaluation of the Biocultural Consequences of the Mississippian Transformation,” in *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, edited by David H. Dye and Cheryl Anne Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 16-37; Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 24-26.

Moreover, as the transition to agriculture led to permanent settlements and social inequality, people who lived in the villages and hamlets at the farther edges of the chiefdom faced levies on their labor and food production. The hardships stemming from social inequality generally fell heaviest on the population living outside of the principal towns. People may have suffered consequences from an increase in warfare as chiefdoms fought one another to secure territory or capture people to enslave for labor. Archeologists have inferred that the population shift to larger settlements located within the meander zone may have been driven in part by the threat of warfare and the urge to find greater security in numbers. Many village sites in the Mississippi Valley lowlands show evidence of having been abandoned suddenly or burned intentionally. Possibly the abandonment of those sites directly preceded a movement of the population into the larger, fortified towns.²⁷

The Mississippian culture of maize agriculture, centralized population centers, and political chiefdoms arose in the central Mississippi Valley around the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, and spread southward down the Mississippi Valley to the Arkansas Delta, as well as southeastward into parts of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. The Mississippian culture took longer to infiltrate the Lower Mississippi Valley, where the combination of mild winters and abundant fish and game resources made the advantages of corn production and overwintering of food surpluses less important. Along the Mississippi in what is now Louisiana and southern Mississippi, native peoples adopted some of the characteristics of the Mississippian culture, such as mound building and chiefdoms, but resisted the move toward larger towns and dependence on maize. Their culture is known as Plaquemine. Comparing the Mississippians and Plaquemines, whose cultures co-existed for three hundred years or so before the arrival of Europeans, environmental historian Christopher Morris writes, “Mississippians were farmers, perhaps the most advanced corn cultivators east of the Great Plains. Plaquemines lived by other means, principally by hunting, fishing, and gathering from the abundant wetlands of the lower valley.”²⁸

Over the last two hundred years or so before the arrival of Europeans, the Mississippian chiefdoms experienced growing instability and turmoil. Many chiefdoms disappeared; others rose and fell. Cahokia, the greatest of the towns, was practically deserted by around A.D. 1300 or 1350. So many other Mississippian towns and settlements were abandoned in the following century that archeologists have named a big area east of Cahokia – roughly the eastern half of Kentucky and Tennessee – the Vacant Quarter. A paucity of late

²⁷ Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 26; Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 283.

²⁸ Marvin D. Jeter, “Ripe for Colonial Exploitation: Ancient Traditions of Violence and Enmity as Preludes to the Indian Slave Trade,” in *Native American Adoption, Captivity, and Slavery in Changing Contexts*, edited by Max Carocci and Stephanie Pratt (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 33; Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 14-15.

precontact archeological sites suggests that the area remained sparsely inhabited until eastern American Indian tribes moved in during the seventeenth century.²⁹

The decline of the Mississippian culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is obscured by what came after: European invasion of North America and the devastation wrought by European diseases. When the De Soto expedition marched back and forth across the Arkansas Delta in 1541-42, it encountered many “new warring chiefdoms” that had formed in the void left by the passing of Cahokia. The De Soto expedition attacked the chiefdoms’ walled towns, burned their crops, and exploited political jealousies to turn one chiefdom against another. With even deadlier effect, the Spaniards sowed European germs into the native population. Those chiefdoms soon collapsed from the shocks inflicted by the De Soto expedition and epidemics that followed in the expedition’s wake. And yet, we now know that the final destruction of the Mississippian culture in the protohistoric period occurred long after the culture began to fall apart for other reasons. Scholars disagree about the initial, pre-European causes of decline.³⁰

Most explanations for the decline of the Mississippian culture point to environmental factors. Some hold that the Mississippians’ dependence on growing maize led to a concentration of population in such limited areas that the culture was thrown out of balance with the ecology and was not sustainable. Morris contends that the Mississippians found themselves in a vicious cycle of trying to feed their growing population with corn. The more corn they produced, the more each town’s population increased, and the more each town grew, the more ground it had to bring under cultivation. The longer it went on, the further the Mississippians went into ecological debt, for the corn depleted the soil faster than the annual flooding could replenish it. Finally, Morris supposes, the soil was exhausted and famine ensued. The chiefdoms that De Soto encountered only managed to sustain themselves by supplementing their corn production with fishing and hunting.³¹

It has been suggested that crops failed around Cahokia because the inhabitants cut down all the surrounding forest, which caused a rise in the water table, making the land less fertile. However, the theory that forest clearing ultimately crippled agricultural production is not as satisfactory for explaining depopulation of areas beyond the main center at Cahokia. In the area now described as the Vacant Quarter, the Mississippians were more dispersed and the smaller communities cleared the forest for making cornfields only a little at a time. As

²⁹ Jeter, “Ripe for Colonial Exploitation,” 27; George Milner, “Population Decline and Culture Change in the American Midcontinent: Bridging the Prehistoric and Historic Divide,” in *Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America*, edited by Catherine M. Cameron, Paul Kelton, and Alan C. Swedlund (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 53-54; Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 41, 130.

³⁰ Jeter, “Ripe for Colonial Exploitation,” 27.

³¹ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 13-16.

forest clearing moved around over time, it is doubtful that it would have had a decisive effect on the water table.³²

The Mississippians' decline has also been attributed to a change in climate. During the Medieval Warm Period, Mississippian societies expanded northward as far as Wisconsin. When the climate cooled again, corn crops became more precarious especially in the north. The theory is that crop failures sometimes drove desperate communities to raid other groups for food. So, when the climate deteriorated, warfare became increasingly prevalent throughout the Mississippian culture. Warfare, in turn, disrupted the Mississippians' ability to grow enough food to feed themselves, or to maintain peaceful distribution of food surpluses. Groups living at the northern limits of maize agriculture may have resorted to warfare first, and as warfare acted to undermine food production in neighboring chiefdoms, there may have been a gradual ripple effect southward.³³

At least one scholar is skeptical that environmental factors were responsible for the collapse of chiefdoms. Alan Galloway asserts that the disappearance of Cahokia and so many other Mississippian towns in the fourteenth century is simply a mystery that still awaits satisfactory explanation. "There is no archaeological evidence of severe climatic or environmental change or of epidemic disease or an increase in warfare," he writes. Galloway makes the point to support his contention that the Mississippian culture never really died out; rather, the culture merely reverted to tribalism. Chiefdoms fell apart and the former inhabitants of those abandoned towns and villages reorganized themselves into tribes, but the Mississippians' cultural outlook persisted through the transformation. Galloway distinguishes between the "outward forms" of Mississippian culture – the political organization of chiefdoms – and its "inner substance." Southern Indians in the seventeenth century had essentially the same cultural outlook as their Mississippian forebears did in late precontact times.³⁴

European Colonists and the Environment

European colonists scanned the environment in the New World for natural resources that could be extracted, commodified, and shipped back to Europe for profit. The administrators of French Louisiana looked for lucrative products that would repay France the

³² Gayle J. Fritz, "Native Farming Systems and Ecosystems in the Mississippi River Valley," in *Imperfect Balance: Landscape Transformations in the Precolumbian Americas*, edited by David L. Lentz (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 225-50.

³³ Milner, "Population Decline and Culture Change in the American Midcontinent," 57-59.

³⁴ Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 27-30. For an extended analysis on a comparable topic, see Shepard Krech III's chapter on the Hohokam, precontact irrigators and corn growers in the desert Southwest, and different theories about their disappearance, in *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 45-72.

cost of establishing and supporting the colony. In 1699, the French fur trader and explorer Pierre-Charles Le Sueur obtained a royal commission to journey up the Mississippi River with the aim of locating a copper mine. His quest was based on a sample of bluish clay he had obtained from American Indians on the upper Mississippi some years earlier, which he had taken back to France and given to an assayer to test and evaluate. Le Sueur located the source of the blue earth on the Minnesota River, but it did not lead to copper ore. Although the copper mine was a bust, Le Sueur returned from his journey with valuable furs instead.³⁵ Meanwhile, colonial administrators looked for other opportunities for extracting wealth from the land. One particularly naïve proposal was to domesticate the bison in Louisiana and exploit the animal's great shaggy mane for wool for France's textile industry.³⁶

As hopes for finding mineral riches in Louisiana faded, the French focused next on products of the forest. Valuable animal products included furs, skins, meat, and tallow. As in Quebec and the Great Lakes region, the French in Louisiana relied on American Indians to perform much of the actual hunting, skinning, and tanning, and they obtained the items from them by trade. Consequently, the French established trading posts in places where they could conduct trade with the American Indian tribes most effectively. Henri de Tonty established Arkansas Post among the Quapaw so as to form a trade alliance with that prominent and friendly tribe of the central Mississippi Valley.³⁷

The French treated animal products as a superabundant resource. From an eighteenth-century perspective, the resource seemed practically inexhaustible. If an area became hunted or trapped out, then it was only necessary to push the fur trade a little deeper into the continent to find a fresh supply of game. So, the French approached the fur trade without regard for taking conservation measures. They had no notion, for example, of allowing an animal population in a given area a chance to recover through natural increase.³⁸ And yet, over the course of the eighteenth century the fur trade did have huge, lasting impacts on wildlife populations across the region. The first animal to face extermination in what is now Arkansas was the bison.

³⁵ N. M. Surrey, *Commerce of Louisiana during the French Regime, 1699-1763* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 314; Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mne Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2012), 48-57.

³⁶ Christopher Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, edited by Bradley G. Bond (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 22.

³⁷ Morris S. Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 15.

³⁸ To refer to conservation measures in connection with the fur trade in eighteenth century Louisiana is not as anachronistic as it might seem. The Hudson's Bay Company began to adopt conservation measures in Canada as early as the 1820s. See Arthur J. Ray, "Some Conservation Schemes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1850: An Examination of the Problems of Resource Management in the Fur Trade," *Journal of Historical Geography* 1 (1975), 49-68.

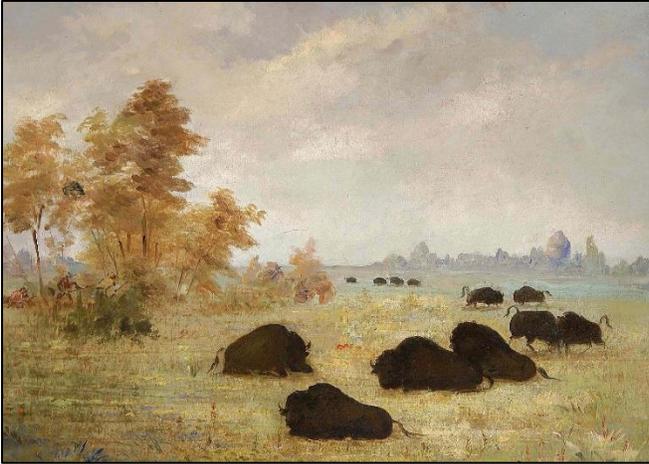


Figure 3. *Stalking Buffalo, Arkansas*, by George Catlin, 1846-1848. (Smithsonian American Art Museum.)

Bison were abundant in parts of Arkansas and Louisiana at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They grazed in the river bottoms and on the extensive lowlands. Eighteenth-century French observers had no idea that the animal, so plentiful on the Great Plains and across the northern prairies, had only extended its range into Arkansas and Louisiana about two hundred years earlier. What caused the bison to spread into the Southeast so late in precontact times? One modern

theory holds that the range of the bison shifted eastward to the Illinois country and the Ohio Valley during a prolonged period of drought on the Great Plains from A.D. 500 to 1300, and then expanded southward from the Illinois country some time thereafter, possibly coincident with the Little Ice Age. Another modern theory suggests that bison moved fairly rapidly into Arkansas and Louisiana after the Mississippians abandoned their cornfields. Canebrakes rapidly overtook the fallow cornfields, and bison moved in to graze on the cane. In addition, American Indians may have regularly burned the canebrakes to maintain them and encourage the growth of bison herds. Still another theory is that the expansion of the bison's range followed from the sudden depopulation of American Indians after European contact. In precontact times, bison did not range into the Southeast because the herds could not run the gauntlet of hunters with bow and arrow who were so numerous in the Mississippi Valley. But when the cordon of Mississippian towns and settlements dispersed and the extensive cornfields turned to cane the situation changed. Then the combination of reduced hunting pressure and increased forage made it possible for the bison to expand into the Southeast.³⁹

The Spaniard Hernando De Soto's expedition reported bison in Arkansas in 1542. The French missionary Jean F. Buisson Saint-Cosme, on a journey in 1698, observed many herds of bison (which he called oxen) along the banks of the Mississippi River near the Arkansas. By the eighteenth century, bison were found in large numbers in the Arkansas River Valley. Hunted by the Quapaw as well as by the French, the slaughtered bison were processed into hides, meat, and tallow, and those products were traded at Arkansas Post, and shipped from there downriver to points near and far. Salted bison meat went to feed the soldiers in the garrisons throughout Louisiana, while bison tongue became a delicacy among the ruling class and was consumed as far away as Madrid, Spain. Tallow, or the rendered fat,

³⁹ Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature," 23-25; Steven G. Platt and Christopher G. Brantley, "Canebrakes: An Ecological and Historical Perspective," *Castanea* 62 (March 1997), 8-13; E. O. Rostlund, "The Geographic Range of the Historic Bison in the Southeast," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 50 (1960), 407.

went to light lamps, make candles, grease hubs, and caulk ships, among other uses. One Arkansas Post trader, François Ménard, contracted with the Spanish government to supply ten thousand pounds of bison tallow for the Havana shipyards and armories.⁴⁰

When Arkansas Post was founded, bison herds roamed over the canebrakes and open woodlands along the Arkansas, Red, Saline, and St. Francis rivers. They were found on the Grand Prairie directly north of Arkansas Post. Under pressure of market hunting, the bison's numbers declined fairly rapidly. In contrast with the beaver trade in the north, French hunters took many of the animals themselves rather than obtaining them by trade. Traveling upriver from New Orleans in small parties of perhaps two or four men and making an expedition of around two months, they slaughtered bison by the hundreds and took only the choicest parts of the animal – the tongue and the shoulder hump, rich in fat – so as to maximize the value of their cargo that they carried in small pirogues back to New Orleans. Later, as a market in bison hides developed, the French hunters found the means to transport hundreds of hides on the river as well. As Christopher Morris describes, “Carcasses of 1,500 pounds or more, stripped of their hides and maybe a few pounds of flesh to satisfy a hunter's need for fresh meat, rotted in the hot sun along the banks of the Mississippi River above the Arkansas, and in the fields of the Illinois Country.”⁴¹

Bison disappeared from the upland prairies and forests of lower Louisiana by the early eighteenth century. The trade in salted bison meat began to wane by the mid-eighteenth century, in part because the growth of cattle herds took away some of the demand. By the early nineteenth century, bison in the Southeast were confined mostly to southern and eastern Arkansas. The last large herd of bison in Arkansas was slaughtered for market in the Saline River bottoms in 1808. A few lone bison were reported in the Bayou De View and Cache River bottoms as late as 1837.⁴²

The destruction of the bison was devastating for Indigenous peoples. No other animal was as central to plains and prairie tribes' food supply and material culture as was the bison. Besides hunting bison for meat consumption, American Indians had a material use for virtually every part of the animal. Bison hides were used to make moccasins, leggings, dresses, tipi covers, bags, vessels, and shields. Robes (bison hides with the hair left on) were turned into bedding, winter clothes, gloves, ceremonial regalia, and hunting disguises. The hair of the bison went into making rope, yarn, thread, stuffing, and bow strings. Large

⁴⁰ J. F. Buisson Saint-Cosme, “Letter to the Bishop of Quebec, 1699,” in *Early Voyages up and down the Mississippi by Cavalier, St. Cosme, Le Sueur, Gravier, and Guignas*, edited by John Gilmary Shea, (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1861), 354-55; Surrey, *Commerce of Louisiana*, 261; Morris S. Arnold, “Indians and Immigrants in the Arkansas Colonial Era,” in *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, by Jeannie M. Whayne, Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris S. Arnold (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 54.

⁴¹ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 34-35; Morris, “How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature,” 32-33.

⁴² Sealander, *A Guide to Arkansas Mammals*, 15-16.

intestines became containers; various bones were worked into hand tools; teeth were made into ornaments; horns were ground into medicine or hollowed out to form cups and containers; brains were used to tan hides; fat was used in paint; dung was burned as fuel.⁴³

Before American Indians acquired horses and hunted bison from horseback, they devised other ways to kill bison such as driving them into a surround or running them off a cliff. Those forms of bison hunts involved a communal effort, and they were a featured part of many tribes' seasonal rounds. Tribes such as the Quapaw and Osage went on long hunting trips to the central and southern plains to hunt bison where the animal was most prolific. The seasonal rounds of the Osage embraced farming at permanent village locations in certain



Figure 4. *Buffalo Hunt under the Wolf-skin Mask*, by George Catlin, 1832-1833. (Smithsonian American Art Museum.)

times of the year and long hunting trips in other times of the year. Their seasonal movements extended from the rolling prairies in present-day Missouri to the dry plains of present-day Kansas and Oklahoma. With the introduction of the horse, the Osage put more emphasis on hunting bison and went farther west, but they continued to divide their year between hunting and farming. After the Osage acquired horses, a favorite bison hunting ground was the Buffalo Valley in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma, far from their winter villages on the Osage River.⁴⁴

American Indians honored the bison with ceremonial offerings and dances. In the dance of the wild animal hunt, dancers dressed in skins, wore animal masks, brandished hunting weapons, and made shouts and charges in a ritual that lasted all night.⁴⁵ When Quapaw hunters killed a bison, they ceremoniously dressed the animal before butchering it. They adorned the head with swan and goose feathers, which were dyed red, and put tobacco in its nostrils and between the clefts in its hooves. Then they cut out the tongue and put another pinch of tobacco in its place. Then as the animal was skinned and butchered, the first few strips of meat were hung over a stick suspended on two wooden forks as an offering.⁴⁶ Among the Osage, a buffalo bull clan and a thunder clan appeared in the eighteenth century

⁴³ Krech, *The Ecological Indian*, 128.

⁴⁴ Krech, *The Ecological Indian*, 128-31; Willard H. Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 7, 20-21; Orel Busby, "Buffalo Valley: An Osage Hunting Ground," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 40, no. 1 (1962): 22-35.

⁴⁵ Samuel Dorris Dickinson, "Quapaw Indian Dances," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 32, no. 3 (Fall 1984), 46.

⁴⁶ Henri Joutel, *Joutel's Journal of La Salle's Last Voyage 1684-7*, edited by Henry Reed Stiles (Albany, N.Y.: Joseph McDonough, 1906), 185.

alongside the tribe's existing twenty-four other clans, presumably reflecting the increasing regard for the animal as it became more and more of an economic mainstay.⁴⁷

Both horses and cattle were new to the American Indians' world. De Soto brought horses into the region in 1541-42, but it seems unlikely that any horses survived that expedition to form a wild herd. Probably horses were reintroduced into the region from Spanish sources in Mexico via trading and raiding between southern plains tribes. The Caddo obtained horses from the Spanish and from other tribes nearer to Mexico, and the Choctaw and Chickasaw acquired horses by raiding the Caddo. There is evidence that when Southeast Indians encountered Europeans on horseback in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries they were not surprised at what they saw, which suggests that reports of the animal's existence and its domestication and use as a mount preceded those individuals' first sightings of the exotic species.⁴⁸

The French brought cattle to Louisiana at the beginning of the eighteenth century. By the 1720s, they had a herd established at Pointe Coupée. In 1739, some cattle were driven north to Arkansas Post to supply troops in the war against the Chickasaw. A document in 1743 states that there were "twelve horned animals" at the post, and that they were sheltered in three buildings. A census taken there in 1749 recorded 60 cows, 29 oxen, and 29 pigs. By the end of the eighteenth century, cattle were branded and put out to range on the Grand Prairie.⁴⁹

Some American Indian tribes in the region began raising cattle in the first half of the eighteenth century. The Natchez raided the cattle herd at Pointe Coupée in the 1720s. The Choctaw were known to have their own cattle in the 1730s, and were raising their own stock by the middle of the century.⁵⁰

As American Indian tribes propagated horses, and as European colonists wiped out the bison herds and introduced cattle, the change in large fauna produced ecological consequences. Morris argues that when bison numbers plummeted, many forest openings would have closed up where bison were no longer grazing. The loss of forest openings would have constituted a significant loss of deer habitat, as deer like to browse on saplings and shrubs at the edge of the forest, and would have reduced the deer population. Morris speculates that American Indians, feeling the pinch of too few deer, were forced to raid cattle herds as a substitute for deer meat. "Hunting and war-making joined in the minds of Indian cattle-killers, who attacked herds in part to continue their tradition of big-game hunting and

⁴⁷ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 41.

⁴⁸ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 83; David W. Morgan, "The Earliest Historic Chickasaw Horse Raids into Caddoan Territory," *Southern Studies*, 8, nos. 3 and 4 (Summer/Fall 1997), 93-109.

⁴⁹ Morris S. Arnold consultation, February 22, 2016.

⁵⁰ James Taylor Carson, "Native Americans, The Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830," *Agricultural History* 71, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 1-18.

in part to make French pay for eradicating the buffalo,” he writes. “For Indians, cattle must have become a symbol of French power over the land and animals, and so over the people of Louisiana.”⁵¹

The French intentionally altered the environment in the lower Mississippi Valley to prepare the ground for agriculture. When Pierre Le Moyne d’Iberville, first governor of Louisiana, arrived in 1699, he was disappointed to find the land along the Mississippi River in the Mississippi Delta region too wet to grow crops. After attempting to form a settlement near the mouth of the river, Iberville’s successor, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, abandoned the place and moved the colony’s headquarters eastward along the Gulf Coast to Mobile Bay. Meanwhile, the colonists made a start at developing plantations a little farther up the Mississippi River. They discovered the natural levees, cleared them of trees, and planted corn and beans in the relatively well-drained soil on those slight elevations. Three settlements sprang up at Natchitoches, Natchez, and Mobile. In each location the land was dry enough to develop European-style agriculture.⁵²

In 1718, the French employed convict labor to clear land for the town of New Orleans. As construction of the town went forward, the colony experimented with various crops that were grown in the West Indies: rice, indigo, tobacco, sugar, and cotton. A plantation owner named Joseph Villars Dubreuil demonstrated what could be accomplished by building artificial levees and digging canals to drain the land and keep it dry. Using slave labor, he built a system of works and drained over 400 acres of land for his indigo plantation. His efforts became a model for others, and by 1732, levees and canals lined the Mississippi River for about fifty miles.⁵³

Colonists found most success in growing rice, because rice could withstand moist soil. By the 1730s, rice agriculture formed the mainstay of the colonial economy. Indigo was grown in the wetlands of the Mississippi Delta region, tobacco was grown above New Orleans on higher ground away from the floodplain, and cotton was grown on higher ground from Pointe Coupée northward to the Yazoo River. Within the vast area of wetlands lying to either side of the Mississippi, rice was the crop of choice. In his environmental history of the lower Mississippi Valley, Morris writes, “The transformation of cypress swamps, savannahs, natural levees, and canebrakes into rice fields and an ever-expanding network of levees and ditches turned Iberville’s impenetrable countryside into a fertile and productive colony.”⁵⁴

The transformation of swampland into farmland in the colonial era should not be exaggerated. The central and lower Mississippi Valley’s alluvial landscape remained quite

⁵¹ Morris, “How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature,” 33-34.

⁵² Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 45-47.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 57-59.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 67-68.

resistant to European colonization to the very end of the eighteenth century. As archeologist Charles Hudson observes, “The same lands that were so bountiful for the protohistoric native horticulturalists – the flood plain of the Mississippi River – were seen by European colonists as sandy and subject to flooding and therefore undesirable.” Hudson explains:

The crucial difference in the two agricultural systems was that the native farmers only wished to raise enough food for subsistence, and the small but immensely fertile levee ridges scattered throughout the region were sufficient. Additionally, the Indians were willing to put up with the river swelling out of its banks, creating the small and large floods that periodically covered their houses and towns. The Europeans, in contrast, practiced plantation agriculture in vast open fields for a world economy, and they had too much invested in buildings and infrastructure to tolerate flooding.⁵⁵

Arkansas Post lay well north of the colonists’ system of levees and canals. The post was too deep in the wilderness and too lightly populated to make that kind of extensive engineering effort worthwhile or feasible. Even when the French moved the post closer to the mouth of the Arkansas, to a location in today’s Desha County about ten river-miles above the Mississippi, it appears that almost no effort was made to drain the adjacent lands or build levees to protect the installation from flooding. The post remained at that lower location from 1756 until 1779. According to the last post commandant, Captain Balthazar de Villiers, the place did not flood often when it was first occupied, but starting in 1777 it was underwater for long periods year after year. In March 1779, the flooding became so bad the commandant had to request permission to abandon the place. The fort and community simply disintegrated in the boundless rising waters. The stockade collapsed in several places, the well caved in, the livestock all drowned or died of exposure, and at the end of the ordeal not one building stood on dry ground. Finally admitting defeat, de Villiers moved the garrison back to Arkansas Post’s prior location at Ecores Rouges, the site of today’s national memorial. The site of the abandoned post has never been confirmed, but archeologists believe it was probably obliterated over time by the river’s incessant meandering, and may now lie submerged under an oxbow lake.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Charles Hudson, “Introduction,” in *Cultural Encounters in the Early South: Indians and Europeans in Arkansas*, compiled by Jeannie Whayne (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), xiv.

⁵⁶ Morris S. Arnold, “The Relocation of Arkansas Post to *Ecores Rouges* in 1779,” 320, 323-24. A remnant of earthworks thought to be associated with this fort were reported on and depicted in an illustration in the Mound Survey conducted by the Bureau of Ethnology in the 1890s. The raised foundation was locally known as the “Turner Place,” and the caption of the illustration referred to the former installation as “French Fort Desha.” See J W. Powell, “Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1890 – ’91,” in U.S. House, *Miscellaneous Documents No. 82*, 53rd Cong., 2d sess., 1894, pp. 237-38, 241. See also Burney B. McClurkan, “Fort Desha, the Location of Arkansas Post ca. 1735-1750,” in Stanley South, *The Conference on Historic Sites Archeology Papers* 6, Part 2, Sessions 1 and 2 (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1971), 32-39.

Environmental change in the colonial era could appear either profound or negligible depending on one's geographical point of reference and cultural perspective. For the Indigenous people, the pockets of European settlement and the changes in the fauna were world-shaking transformations. For the colonists, on the other hand, the conversion of swampland into rice plantations in the lower Mississippi Valley was a mere scratching on the edge of a continental wilderness. Europe's imprint on North America was yet preliminary compared to what lay ahead.

The American Frontier and the Environment

During the American Revolution, thousands of American settlers crossed over the Appalachian Mountains and settled in Kentucky and Tennessee. By 1800, some seven percent of the United States population lived west of the Appalachian Mountains. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, American settlers began to push across the Mississippi River into the newly acquired territory. The growth of settlement was faster in what would become Missouri than farther south in what would become Arkansas. Settlers occupied the rich bottomlands along the Mississippi, Arkansas, and White River valleys, but they faced an obstacle in the Quapaw tribe's reluctance to cede lands on the lower Arkansas River. After the War of 1812, the pace of settlement quickened. The U.S. General Land Office initiated land surveys in Arkansas in 1815. Fort Smith was established far up the Arkansas in 1817. The Quapaw, impoverished by Euro-Americans' encroachment on their hunting grounds and the depletion of their wildlife resources, were compelled to cede most of their territory the following year. The immigrant population in Arkansas reached about 14,000 in 1820 and about 30,000 in 1830. In the span of a few decades, the Euro-American farmers' numbers grew to overwhelm both the American Indian tribes and the resident population of French farmers and traders. Historians have termed this influx of settlers the great migration of southern plain folk.⁵⁷

The southern yeoman farmer introduced new land use practices that further transformed the environment. Southern plain folk exploited the environment by a combination of herding and farming, with methods peculiarly adapted for occupying the land in widely dispersed, self-sufficient farmsteads. The method of farming was to clear a patch of forest, grow corn and vegetables for a few years until the soil fertility declined, and then clear another patch and start the process over again while the former patch rested, reverting to forest. Often the southern farmer grew a small amount of cotton alongside the corn crop,

⁵⁷ Cardinal L. Goodwin, "Early Exploration and Settlement of Missouri and Arkansas," *Missouri Historical Review* 14 (April-July 1920): 400-01; Grant Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers: The Story of the American Southwest before 1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 159-74; S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 15.

usually just enough to make clothes and linens for the people on the farmstead. The method of herding was to allow cows and hogs to range in the forest, where cows foraged in the forest openings and hogs grubbed for roots and mast on the forest floor. Rather than fencing livestock in, they were fenced out of the corn patch. Historian John Solomon Otto has argued that the defining characteristic of the great migration was the people's adaptation to the environment of the southern pine woods, which extended from the piedmont of Virginia and the Carolinas westward across the southern Appalachians and the Gulf Plain as far as east Texas. Cultural historian Grady McWhiney has traced the origins of southern plain folk herding practices to northern Britain and Ireland. He finds that Scotch Irish and northern British immigrants adapted their traditional Celtic practices to establish a distinctive herding and farming way of life in the piedmont and mountain areas of the mid-Atlantic colonies. The southern woodland culture then spread southwestward along the lines that Otto describes.⁵⁸

The Americans who settled in and around Arkansas Post in the first three decades of the nineteenth century mostly came from Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia. They located their farms in the bottomlands along the Arkansas River where the soil was richest, and pastured their livestock on the nearby Grand Prairie. Few people settled on the Grand Prairie, as the area made a natural common for grazing horses and cows. Branded by their owners and given free range, the settlers' cattle and horses herded on the Grand Prairie and increased rapidly. As the farming and herding economy took hold, hunting and trading became marginalized. Most of the French inhabitants of Arkansas Post took up farming themselves. Traders gave up trading with American Indians for pelts and turned to trading with Euro-American farmers for the small quantities of corn, cotton, and beef that they produced for the market in addition to what they required for their subsistence. The fur trade moved west as bear and beaver populations in Arkansas became hunted out.⁵⁹

Immigration into Arkansas quickened in the 1830s. The population more than tripled during the decade, reaching a total of about 98,000 in 1840. With its growing population, Arkansas was granted statehood in 1836. Because of its location on the Arkansas River and the commerce that traveled up and down the river, the little community at Arkansas Post thrived through the territorial period and into the early years of statehood although it did not grow much. Most settlers passed through the area in favor of finding less flood-prone lands farther up the valley. The population located close by Arkansas Post topped out at around 200 people. The small yet stable population gradually transformed the frontier settlement into a rustic "Creole village" (as perceived by Washington Irving in 1832) and an urbanized

⁵⁸ John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *The Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (May 1985), 183-200; Grady McWhiney, *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988).

⁵⁹ William H. Halliburton, *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County Arkansas from 1541 to 1875* (Gillett: Arkansas Post National Memorial, 1978), 123-24; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 81.

townsite with block streets and a few brick structures among its mostly wooden buildings. A mercantile store, a branch of the state bank, and a public tavern formed the village center, while the village's namesake army post stood at the edge of the settlement and was no longer in use by the government.⁶⁰

Even at the time of statehood, most of Arkansas remained a wilderness. Roads were sparse and barely passable for a wagon. The state's main road – a military road known as the Southwest Trail that led from St. Genevieve, Missouri, to Texas, cutting across the state in a northeast to southwest direction and passing through the upper White River Valley many miles from Arkansas Post – was described by a traveler in 1834 as exceedingly rough going. The road was filled with stumps, fallen trees, rocks, and mud holes. Few rivers and streams had bridges across them, for as soon as bridges were built they were washed away in spring floods. River and stream crossings had to be made by ferry, such as at the town of Little Rock, or by fording them, which was often perilous. Given the primitive condition of wagon roads, navigable rivers continued to serve as primary routes for transportation and commerce, even though the rivers presented their own set of perils. The obstacles to stream navigation included shifting sandbars and shallow water, which caused riverboats to run aground with annoying regularity, and the many deadly snags – toppled trees lying half buried in the riverbed – that could rip apart a steamboat where the river's current swept through the snag's thrusting, unyielding branches.⁶¹

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, there were two main types of riverboats on the Arkansas River: keelboats and flatboats. Keelboats were propelled by oar and sail, or towed by a line from the riverbank, while flatboats were mainly used for drifting downstream with the current. In 1820, steamboats made their first appearance. The very first steamboat on the Arkansas, the *Comet*, landed at Arkansas Post on March 31, after running aground once on its 60-mile journey upriver. As steamboat captains became more familiar with the river's channels and navigation improved, the large crafts provided a big boost to river commerce. The U.S. Congress aided the river commerce by providing authority and funds for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve the navigability of rivers. The River and Harbor Act of 1832 included an appropriation for maintaining the channel of the

⁶⁰ Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860*, 17; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 81; Patrick E. Martin, *An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright's Trading House and William Montgomery's Tavern*, Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 11 (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1977), 11.

⁶¹ Walter Moffatt, "Transportation in Arkansas, 1819-1840," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15, no 3 (Autumn 1956), 188-89; Willard B. Gatewood, "The Arkansas Delta: The Deepest of the Deep South," in *The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, edited by Jeannie Whayne and Willard B. Gatewood (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 5.

Arkansas for its first 465 miles. That led to a multi-year effort to remove several thousand snags from the riverbed, mainly on the lower 250 miles of river up to Little Rock.⁶²

The decade of the 1830s saw the emergence of cotton farming in Arkansas. The bottomlands along the Mississippi and lower Arkansas rivers contained rich, black soil that was found to be very good for growing cotton. To prepare the ground for cultivation, the land had to be cleared of cypress trees, ditched and dried out, and protected by levees from flooding when the river reached flood stage. All of that effort to clear the land required capital investment and slave labor. Wealthy planters living in older parts of the South migrated to the Arkansas frontier with their enslaved persons to take advantage of the free land and fertile soil that the Arkansas Delta presented. With a gang of slaves and a small, startup cotton crop, a planter could increase the size of his operation year by year. The planter made his slave gang work in the fields through the growing season, and construct ditches and levees in the winter, thereby steadily adding to the size of his plantation. As the plantation grew, the planter bought out any farmers whose small holdings stood in his way. Over time, vast amounts of wetlands were converted into cotton fields.⁶³

The South's flourishing cotton economy drove population growth and land development in Arkansas through the 1840s and 50s. The center of Southern cotton production moved westward from the Atlantic seaboard to the fertile regions of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, with the Arkansas Delta lying at the leading edge of the South's Cotton Kingdom when the Civil War came. Production of cotton in Arkansas increased from 6 million pounds in 1840 to 26 million pounds in 1850. While the state's cotton crop remained small compared to that of neighboring Mississippi, the rate of expansion was impressive. During the 1840s, the slave population in Arkansas grew by 136 percent – the fastest growth rate of any state. The slave population in Arkansas rose from 19,935 in 1840 to 111,115 in 1860, when enslaved people accounted for about one fourth of the total population of the state. A large fraction of the slaves lived on plantations in the Arkansas Delta region. Nearly half of all enslaved people in Arkansas were part of slaveholdings of twenty or more slaves, and by the time of the Civil War most enslaved people were held by small planter class.⁶⁴

As environmental historian Christopher Morris emphasizes in his work *The Big Muddy*, planters in the Mississippi Valley took big risks with the environment while they

⁶² United States Army Corps of Engineers, *The Arkansas: Renaissance of a River* (Little Rock, Ark.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 1-4.

⁶³ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 114-17.

⁶⁴ Dwight Pitcaithley, *Let the River Be: A History of the Ozark's Buffalo River* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987), 26-27; Clyde W. Cathey, "Slavery in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 3 (Spring 1944), 66-68; Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 1-2; Robert B. Walz, "Arkansas Slaveholders and Slaveholdings in 1850," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12 (Spring 1953), 47.

made big profits with slave labor. They grew their plantations by converting wetlands to farmlands – that is, by drying out mud, or separating water from land – and with each additional acre that they brought under cultivation, their determination to constrict the river between levees became more problematic. Arkansas Post experienced severe flooding in 1844. For a period of three months during the spring and summer, both the Arkansas and White rivers overtopped their banks and spread out over the floodplain. Longtime residents said it was the longest period of flooding in memory. Hundreds of cattle and hogs were lost. Many farm houses were destroyed and many farms were abandoned. Upwards of twenty cotton plantations were inundated.⁶⁵

Congress debated whether the federal government had a role in improving flood control works along the central and lower Mississippi valley for the protection of cotton planters' enormous investments there. Congress made a first gesture toward flood control with the Swamp Acts of 1849 and 1850. Those laws provided for conveyance of remaining public-domain swamplands to the states to be sold to private interests, with proceeds to be spent by the states on ditches and levees. However, their declared purpose was to accomplish more reclamation, not to improve existing levees for flood control. After levees failed above New Orleans in 1858, leading to severe flooding in the Mississippi Delta, Congress once more debated who should take responsibility for the levee system. The question remained unresolved when the Civil War came. After the war, the levees were in ruins, plantations lay underwater, and the Southern states were helpless to do anything about it. Northerners were disinclined to spend federal moneys on rebuilding a levee system in Southern states when so much else needed reconstruction. Through the 1870s, however, a congressionally appointed body, the Mississippi River Commission, slowly brought attention to the problem of controlling the unruly river. With the River and Harbor Act of 1881, Congress appropriated \$50 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build levees along the lower Mississippi. The law's ostensible purpose was to improve navigation and commerce on the river, but the levees were aimed at flood control, too. With the Flood Control Act of 1917, Congress appropriated another \$45 million, with the states to provide matching funds. By acknowledging this time that the law's purpose was to achieve flood control, Congress upped the ante.⁶⁶

All the diking around cotton plantations notwithstanding, a vast area of the Mississippi Valley remained in a natural state at the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the Arkansas Delta was still covered by cypress forest. The cypress forest acted like a huge sponge for the valley, as the ground and lush vegetation soaked up excess water whenever the Mississippi overtopped its banks. The forested wetlands did more to reduce flood risk downriver than anything humans could accomplish by building levees. Moreover, the cypress

⁶⁵ Halliburton, *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County, Arkansas*, 115.

⁶⁶ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 140-43, 158-64.

forest and bayous harbored a rich biodiversity. But in the nineteenth-century way of reckoning land values, the cypress swamp was mostly seen for what it obstructed: agricultural use, economic growth, and social progress.

The Industrial Revolution in the Arkansas Delta

The 1880s and 1890s were a time of energetic railroad construction in the South, including Arkansas. Railroads linked farm communities and towns with distant markets in the Midwest and Northeast. The improved transportation links not only eased the flow of goods, it also lubricated the flow of much needed northern capital into the South's economy. The railroad boom spurred the development of a southern textile industry and revitalized the cotton plantation economy. Cotton plantations were reorganized along corporate lines, using agricultural science and employing sharecroppers in place of slave labor. In the Arkansas Delta, railroads ushered in the lumbering industry. New mill towns and lumber towns sprang up overnight around the new industries.⁶⁷

The first railroad built across the Arkansas Delta was the St. Louis-Southwestern Railway, or Cotton Belt Route, which was completed from St. Louis to Texarkana, Texas, in 1883. It ran on a diagonal across the state of Arkansas, skirting the edge of the Arkansas Delta where the line passed through the upper White River Valley. Acquired by the railroad financier Jay Gould and absorbed into his southwestern railroad empire, this railroad line was itself composed of various short lines and branch lines. One such short line was the Stuttgart and Arkansas River Railroad Company, incorporated in 1888 for the purpose of building a railroad from the town of Stuttgart, in Arkansas County, to or near the village of Arkansas Post. Construction of this short line was completed in 1892 and it operated for just a few months with one locomotive and two passenger cars before being sold into receivership. The receiver operated it in 1893-94 and again in 1895-1901 before selling it to the St. Louis-Southwestern Railway on January 3, 1901. When this short line was built, it ended shy of Arkansas Post at the town of Gillett (which was named for the president of the short line, F. M. Gillett). To obtain a railroad connection in this era spelled life or death for many small communities, and when the line terminated at Gillett it doomed the village of Arkansas Post, whose population had already withered since the Civil War era. With railroad lines now crisscrossing the state, riverboat traffic on the Arkansas River diminished. The death knell for Arkansas Post came in 1903 when the river changed course, leaving the village marooned

⁶⁷ Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.

on the edge of Post Bend. Unconnected to the rest of the world by rail or waterway, Arkansas Post became a virtual ghost town.⁶⁸

As the historic community on the Arkansas River wilted, other small communities in the Arkansas Delta blossomed. The growth of towns largely came about as a result of new transportation systems and new industries coming in. Agricultural historian John Solomon Otto observes that as soon as railroads were in the area, market towns sprang up at about five to ten mile intervals to meet the requirements of surrounding farms. The small towns usually had a few shops, a sawmill, and a platform alongside the tracks for receiving cotton bales. Changes in the financing and marketing of cotton crops also influenced town growth. The crop lien system shifted wealth from small landowners to town merchants. Cotton gins proliferated.⁶⁹

Timber companies moved into the central and lower Mississippi Valley in the 1890s and began logging the cypress forest. Timber operations started on the Mississippi side in the Yazoo River basin, and concentrated in the Arkansas Delta around the time of World War I. The timber companies built factories and even whole towns and recruited a new population of workers. The wage jobs to be found in the timber factories and sawmills attracted poor Euro-Americans who were leaving their hardscrabble farms in the Ozarks, as well as displaced African American workers who mostly came from neighboring southern states. Though the work force in the rising mill towns comprised both Euro-Americans and African Americans, the communities and even some shop floors were racially segregated.⁷⁰

The timber companies did not come to stay; they cleared the forest and then moved on to other places in the country. The timber barons' cut-and-run policy did not offend the people of the Arkansas Delta, for they expected that the removal of the forest would lead to further economic development after the timber industry was gone. Land developers, planters, and even small farmers actively cooperated with the timbermen to convert the cypress forest into agricultural lands. In the St. Francis River Valley, for example, the state of Arkansas ceded state-owned swamplands to the St. Francis Levee Board, which sold much of it to large timber companies for a low price, using the money to ditch and drain the lands to prepare them for cotton farming once the timber was removed. In some parts of the Arkansas

⁶⁸ John Solomon Otto, *The Final Frontiers, 1880-1930: Settling the Southern Bottomlands* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 28; Jacob E. Anderson, "80 Years of Transportation Progress: A History of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway," no date, Pamphlet 1957, Arkansas Historical Commission; Ted R. Worley, "Arkansas Post as a Historical Site," *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (October 1966), 14-16; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 139. Although the original village site was completely deserted, at least two of Arkansas Post's early residents lived on into old age in the crossroads settlement just north of the site (and just north of the present park boundary). According to Quinn Evans/Architects, the population in the crossroads settlement hovered at around 100 until the late 1930s and declined over the next twenty years (p. 176).

⁶⁹ Otto, *The Final Frontiers*, 22; Gatewood, "The Arkansas Delta," 20.

⁷⁰ Otto, *The Final Frontiers*, 30-31; Woodruff, *American Congo*, 14-16.

Delta, homesteaders moved into the cutover lands and attempted to establish farmsteads, but their hold on the land was tenuous, especially where planters sought to drive them out.⁷¹

On the Grand Prairie, farmers found they could grow rice. The same subsoil conditions that discouraged tree growth and allowed native grasses to dominate on the raised terrace also allowed farmers to flood their fields with standing water through the growing season. Over most of the Grand Prairie, farmers pumped water out of the ground from about eighty feet down. A substratum of clay just below the surface held the water in the fields.

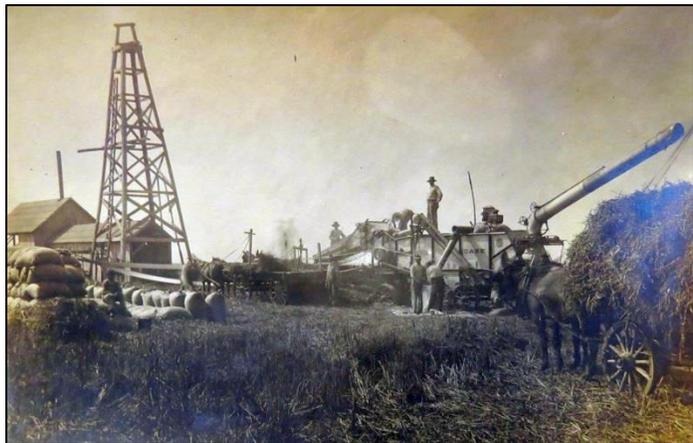


Figure 5. Threshing rice on Grand Prairie near DeWitt, Ark. The well was used to irrigate the rice through the summer. Photo by Dayton Bowers. (Grand Prairie Historical Society.)

So, the natural grassland that had been used as a common for grazing cattle through most of the nineteenth century yielded to rice farms in the twentieth century.⁷²

The rice industry in Arkansas started in 1901-02 with two experiments in Lonoke County, one sponsored by the state agricultural experiment station in Lonoke, and the other conducted by a farmer who was a native of Missouri and had spent some time on a rice farm in Louisiana. The results were encouraging, and by 1906 several farmers were growing rice in Lonoke and Prairie counties and on four farms near Stuttgart in the northwest corner of Arkansas County. By 1908, rice was being grown on the Grand Prairie. In 1909, rice crops in the three counties covered 28,000 acres, and by World War I the total area in rice cultivation rose to 150,000 acres. Rice mills were established in Stuttgart and DeWitt. The rice industry brought new farmers into the area and raised land values.⁷³

Between the world wars, the cotton economy in the Arkansas Delta declined. The boll weevil, a beetle which feeds on cotton buds, entered the United States from Mexico in the 1890s and spread to the South's cotton belt in the 1920s. Combined with drought, the boll weevil ravaged cotton crops in the 1930s. Other challenges to the cotton economy came from mechanization, agricultural diversification, and labor shortages as farm workers migrated to northern cities in search of higher paying jobs. Cotton plantations suffered losses in flood

⁷¹ Otto, *The Final Frontier*, 30-31; Gatewood, "The Arkansas Delta," 21; Woodruff, *American Congo*, 14.

⁷² Foti, "The River's Gifts and Curses," 46; J. M. Spicer, *The Beginnings of the Rice Industry in Arkansas* (Arkansas Co., Ark.: Arkansas Rice Promotion Association and Rice Council, 1964), 23.

⁷³ Spicer, *The Beginnings of the Rice Industry*, 7-11, 15, 26.

events, too, particularly the great flood of 1927. Many cotton farmers turned to growing rice instead.⁷⁴

The industrial revolution brought the most sweeping changes to Arkansas Delta's natural environment and human geography of any previous time in history. At the same time, the age-old carving action of the Arkansas River continued to do its work. Year by year, the river nibbled away at the old townsite. One by one, deserted homes must have pitched down the riverbank, broken up in the current, and drifted away. A longtime resident of the village, Madeline Forreste, told a visitor from the *Arkansas Gazette* in 1900 that most of the town had "gone in the river." She was technically correct because two platted additions to Arkansas Post in the early nineteenth century, called the Town of Rome and the Town of Arkansas, had mostly washed away during her life time. Fortunately for posterity, the old townsite, the original village sometimes known as "Post of Arkansas," was largely left intact. After 1903, when the river changed course and Post Bend became a quiet slough, the old river embankment more or less stabilized.⁷⁵

Environment and Landscape in the Post-Industrial Age

In the fall of 1926, Fletcher Chenault, a newspaperman with the *Arkansas Gazette*, motored down to Arkansas Post from his home in Little Rock to see what was left of the town that had once served as the first capital of Arkansas Territory. All that remained, Chenault discovered, was a brick-lined well and scattered chunks of brick lying under a briar patch. Chenault's newspaper story, headlined "Arkansas Post is Neglected Shrine," informed the *Gazette's* readers that the historic site would soon "disappear unless the ruins are marked." Apparently, a few of Chenault's readers took heed. In 1929, Ballard Deane, a state assemblyman from Arkansas County, introduced a bill in the Arkansas General Assembly to create an Arkansas Post State Park Commission. The bill was passed and signed into law by Governor Harvey Parnell on February 27, 1929. It established a twelve-member, all-volunteer commission for accepting land and other donations leading to the preservation and beautification of the historic site. The law declared that the purpose of the park would be to preserve the "historic spot for future generations, thereby promoting health and pleasure,

⁷⁴ Gatewood, "The Arkansas Delta," 22.

⁷⁵ Edwin C. Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store, Historic Structure Report Historical Data* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, 1971), 50-51; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 139. These two sources provide much more detail on environmental change at the site in this era. Bearss and his research assistants compiled data from county courthouse deed books and reconstructed the street plan and locations of buildings for Arkansas Post, Town of Rome, and Town of Arkansas. Quinn Evans/Architects researched the history of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century crossroads community, its key buildings, and changing configuration and condition of county roads. The Cultural Landscape Report contains maps depicting this evolution of the town site and river channel.

providing a recreation place, resort and play ground.” The park would preserve a piece of heritage of the people of Arkansas as well as attract visitors and tourists to the state.⁷⁶

The state park movement in Arkansas, as in other states, was a product of the new automobile age. Herbert Evison, executive secretary of the National Conference on State Parks in the 1920s, said that “the automobile fairly launched the state park movement.” Automobile use in the early twentieth century was a huge stimulus for the tourism industry, and the development of the state parks was a way that state governments could support that burgeoning sector of the economy. From its inception, the state park movement melded that economic incentive with two other motives: to preserve nature (and history), and to develop public recreation. The movement began in New York in the nineteenth century, spread to Pennsylvania and New England in the early twentieth century, and then took hold in states in the Midwest and on the Pacific Coast. Arkansas established its first state park in 1923. Southern states were slow to embrace the state park movement owing to the South’s tradition of limited government as well as southerners’ idealization of the old plantation as opposed to wild nature. The measure to create a state park at Arkansas Post was consistent with that general pattern.⁷⁷

The creation of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916 provided another boost for the state park movement. The fledgling NPS was inundated with requests by members of Congress to consider constituents’ proposals for new national parks. When such proposals had merit, but fell short of national park standards, the NPS director could deftly recommend the area for state park designation instead. Stephen Mather, first director of the NPS, began to cultivate the state park movement as a kind of junior partner to the National Park System. He organized the National Conference on State Parks to bring greater cohesion to the state park movement and protect the National Park System from expanding too quickly and haphazardly. In time, the NPS developed a mentoring relationship with state organizations, particularly in the 1930s through the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).⁷⁸

Arkansas Post State Park was established in the early 1930s on a 20-acre parcel of donated land (later enlarged to 61.65 acres). The state legislature appropriated a modest \$5,000 for park development. P.C. Howson, a landscape architect from Pine Bluff, was contracted to design and oversee the park landscaping. Two developments were especially impactful. A natural depression just north of the original village site, which had become gullied in more recent times, was logged, scraped, dammed, and turned into a small lake of about seven acres. The artificial lake was stocked with game fish, and a statue of justice, which had formerly graced the cupola of the Arkansas County Courthouse in DeWitt, was

⁷⁶ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 54-55.

⁷⁷ Ney C. Landrum, *The State Park Movement in America: A Critical Review* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 27-59, 67-69. Evison quoted on p. xii.

⁷⁸ Landrum, *The State Park Movement in America*, 76-79.

mounted on a pedestal near the northeastern edge of the lake and christened the “Lady of the Lake.” Howson also supervised plantings of a number of evergreens, shrubs, and shade trees to beautify the landscape.⁷⁹ Besides the artificial lake and the ornamental tree plantings, development of the state park eventually included a picnic ground, guest cabins, memorial plaques, and a road around the lake.⁸⁰

In the 1950s, a movement started to get the state park turned into a national park or national memorial. The NPS conducted historical and archeological studies to evaluate the site’s historical integrity and significance. The movement ran into difficulties when it became evident that Tonty’s fort was located somewhere else; European occupation of the site dated back to the mid-eighteenth century but not to the first trading post built in 1686, as some had assumed. Moreover, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had plans for constructing locks and dams on the Arkansas River that would create a pool and flood part of the proposed national memorial. The park movement prevailed in spite of those issues. Congress authorized Arkansas Post National Memorial by an act signed into law on July 6, 1960. The state of Arkansas transferred title of the land to the NPS in 1964, and NPS administration of the site commenced thereafter.⁸¹

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began construction work on a system of locks and dams on the Arkansas River in 1959. Its first project was a hydroelectric dam at Dardanelle, above Little Rock. After that, it proceeded more or less in sequence starting on the lower river and moving upstream. Locks and dams 1 and 2, below Arkansas Post, were started in 1963. Dam No. 2, the Wilbur D. Mills Dam, which raised the water level at Arkansas Post, was completed in 1967. In the meantime, the Corps started work on all of the other locks and dams, with the last one within the state of Arkansas, Lock and Dam 13 at Fort Smith, begun in 1966. From there, the work continued upriver into the state of Oklahoma. The system of locks and dams from the lower Arkansas to Little Rock was officially completed at the end of 1968, and the system all the way up to Tulsa, Oklahoma, was officially completed at the end of 1970.⁸²

The political underpinnings and planning for the river improvements dated back many decades earlier. The Corps of Engineers offered a plan for locks and dams to aid navigation on the Arkansas River as early as 1907. After the great flood of 1927, the Corps put forward more plans with greater emphasis on flood control. The River and Harbor Act of

⁷⁹ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 64-65.

⁸⁰ Gregory Carrera, “Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History (Revised),” August 1988 (typescript), Arkansas Post National Memorial.

⁸¹ E. T. Scoyen to W. F. Norrell, March 1, 1956, and Hillory A. Tolson to Norrell, June 9, 1958, and various newspaper clippings (undated) in Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, Arkansas History Commission (hereafter AHC); “Deed Transfer Brings Post to National Memorial Status,” *Daily Ledger* (Stuttgart, Ark.), June 24, 1964.

⁸² United States Army Corps of Engineers, *The Arkansas: Renaissance of a River*, 14-17.

1946 authorized the project, but the work did not commence right away. The massive appropriations necessary to get construction started did not come until more than a decade later. In the meantime, during the 1950s, the Corps performed some preliminary bank-stabilization work on the river.⁸³

The NPS and the Corps consulted on how to mitigate conflicts between their respective projects on the lower Arkansas River. The Corps plan included routing river navigation through Arkansas Post Canal. The canal would connect the Arkansas River with the White River about ten miles east of the park. Barge traffic would exit the canal into the main channel of the Arkansas River just off the southern tip of the National Memorial, creating a “wave wash” on the point of land. More concerning than that, however, was the Corps’ plan to create a navigation pool behind Dam No. 2. Depending on how one defined the original water level of the river at this location – as it obviously fluctuated a great deal – the navigation pool was going to raise the water level by approximately six feet. The NPS and the Corps considered a plan to build a protective levee around the site, but rejected that alternative based on the negative visual effect that the levee would have and the expense it would entail. Instead, the Corps installed riprap, or stone revetment, on exposed sections of shoreline between the elevations of 160 and 165 feet above sea level to protect against the wake of barge traffic. When the dam was completed, Navigation Pool 2 permanently flooded low-lying areas around Arkansas Post, including Post Bayou and Post Bend. The latter was transformed from a wetland into a watery expanse navigable by shallow-draft boats. As described by the Cultural Landscape Report, “Navigation Pool 2... inundated all areas surrounding the Post below 162 MSL [mean sea level], including the Post Bayou bottomlands.” The 25-foot bluffs, named Ecores Rouges by the French and once the most distinguishing landform in the area, “lost both their original prominence and part of their original form.”⁸⁴



Figure 6. View of Post Bend, November 2015. Dam No. 2 raised the water level about six feet, turning the bayou into a wide body of water and inundating the site of Fort Hindman. (Photo by the author.)

While the locks and dams were impactful, the NPS was under no illusions about the site’s historical integrity prior to those manmade changes to the river. In 1958, NPS historian Ray Mattison prepared a memorandum in which he argued that the site actually fell short of

⁸³ United States Army Corps of Engineers, *The Arkansas: Renaissance of a River*, 12-14.

⁸⁴ National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division, *Arkansas Post National Memorial, Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 13; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 181.

NPS standards for a national historic site. “Integrity,” he reminded his readers, was “an intangible element expressing the extent to which a historic site or structure presents an authentic picture of, and a feeling of association with, the event which took place there.”⁸⁵ On that basis, he wrote, the site failed the test of historical integrity.

About a decade later (by which time Mattison’s negative recommendation had been overruled and the place had become a unit in the National Park System), Arkansas State Archeologist Hester Davis was similarly circumspect about the site’s historical integrity. She pointed out that it would be wrong to assume that the historic site had integrity simply because Congress had designated the area as a national memorial. Commenting to the NPS on a draft of the master plan, she wrote:

It seems more than justifiably romantic to say that “the physical resources of Arkansas Post can leave the visitor with a heightened understanding of the clash of empires...” This understanding will have to be created in the visitor center; it doesn’t seem to me that it will be possible to recreate the historical area in any way that could, for example, indicate the “lonely privation which was the lot of those who held the outposts of the colonial empire.” Half of the land that was there until 1905 is gone; in its place are the backed-up waters of the McClellan-Kerr Navigation Project.⁸⁶

A few years later in 1974, NPS historian Richard West Sellars offered another sanguine assessment of the site’s historical integrity, or lack thereof:

The historical resources at Arkansas Post are complex, varied, and difficult to interpret. They consist of structures which date from three periods of occupation... For purpose of interpretation, the chief difficulties lie in the fact that with the exception of two cisterns and a small row of Confederate rifle pits, the existing historical resources have vanished from sight and lie hidden beneath the surface of the ground... Periodic flooding and the shifting of channels by the Arkansas River have washed away much of the area of historical settlement, and have buried in silt virtually all other remains of historic structures. The area is covered by grass and scattered timber, with heavy undergrowth in the ravines. Prior to Arkansas Post’s

⁸⁵ Ray Mattison, “Statements by Ray Mattison, Historian, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Prepared prior to final report on archeological investigations of Menard Mounds site, which were undertaken to pinpoint location of original Tonti Arkansas Post of 1686,” 1958 (typescript) in Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

⁸⁶ Hester Davis, “Comments on the Master Plan, Arkansas Post National Memorial,” no date (transcript), File ARPO Section 106, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

becoming a state park and later a national memorial, parts of the area were plowed and planted, thus probably further disturbing the historical resources.⁸⁷

In the years since the area became a national memorial, park management has remained cognizant of the many changes to the environment and landscape and what they mean for preservation and interpretation. The most recent appraisal of the site's marginal historical integrity is found in the Cultural Landscape Report completed in 2005:

The site history implies that the site would represent multiple periods of history. In reality, the landscape rarely reflects the layers of its history. This occurrence is largely the result of the abrupt site changes that have occurred on this landscape. While sites at other locations often reflect a gradual landscape evolution of growth and gradual decline, perhaps with one or two dramatic periods or incidences of marked change, the Arkansas Post site has experienced episodic change throughout its history. Some of this change has been as a result of the natural forces of erosion; some has been related to military actions; and other changes have been related to political decisions such as moving the capital of Arkansas away from Arkansas Post to Little Rock. The destruction of much of the above ground physical fabric during the Civil War eradicated most colonial-era landscape resources that would be expected to represent the Post's significant early history. Subsequent rebuilding was followed by another period of decline, followed by two periods of sequential park development, first as a state park, and finally by the NPS. This legacy of almost cyclical physical change has created today's landscape—a landscape that is not a landscape of multiple layers that are visibly apparent. The existing landscape does not represent the Post's French and Spanish heritage in a compelling way, its role as a defensive post, its development as an early Arkansas capital and thriving river port, its involvement in the Civil War, or its rural and agrarian traditions. Its character as a state park, while it established the basis for the APNM's development, has been subsumed by more recent NPS actions. What remains is not a layered cultural landscape reflecting the dynamic and multi-cultural phases discussed in the site history, but instead a collection of fragmented landscape remnants that are not apparent in the tranquil, memorial setting that has been created to impart a park-like feeling.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Richard West Sellars, "Report on the Section 106 Consultation for the Master Plan and Development Concept Plan at Arkansas National Memorial," May 1974 (typescript), File ARPO Section 106, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁸⁸ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 14.

The Site in Antiquity and Quapaw Ethnogenesis

The Quapaw were the resident people of the lower Arkansas Valley when the French appeared in the late seventeenth century. According to the tribe's origin story, their people migrated into the area from the Ohio Valley. The relative antiquity of the migration has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The questions surrounding Quapaw origins have attracted special interest because they lie at the seam between archeology and ethnohistory in a time scholars now term the protohistoric period.

This chapter sets out to provide a synthesis of the scholarly debate around Quapaw origins and to place it in the wider context of scholars' evolving view of the protohistoric period in the Southeast. The wider context is important not only to Quapaw history but also to the history of other American Indian tribes in the region who figure prominently in the story of Arkansas Post as well, such as the Chickasaw, Tunica, and Natchez. Quapaw oral tradition and Quapaw archeology are featured in the latter part of this chapter. Discussion of Quapaw ethnogenesis is preceded by chapter sections on precontact in the Southeast region, the archeological record in the lower Arkansas Valley, and recent scholarship on the protohistoric period.

The Precontact Background

Through precontact times the lower Arkansas Valley was part of a large culture area that archeologists have defined as the "Eastern Woodlands culture area." Archeologists use the term culture area to describe a large geographic province where more localized cultural traditions broadly resembled one another. Within a culture area, patterns of cultural change among neighboring groups of peoples basically paralleled one another, forming a unified "cultural sequence." The Eastern Woodlands culture area takes in much of the eastern North American continent from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and it adjoins the Plains culture area to the west. Within the United States, the line between the Eastern Woodlands and Plains culture areas is rather arbitrarily drawn through the western portions of Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri and the eastern edges of Oklahoma and Texas. The lower Arkansas Valley lies within the Eastern Woodlands culture area near the Plains culture area.¹

¹ National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, "Resources Management Plan, Midwest Archeological Center," September 1998, typescript, Midwest Archeological Center Library, Lincoln, Neb., p. 14.

The Eastern Woodland cultural sequence is well defined in the archeological literature. It is a sequence of four cultural traditions: (1) the Paleoindian, (2) the Archaic, (3) the Woodland, and (4) the Mississippian.

The Paleoindian tradition, also known as the Big-Game Hunting tradition, was a pattern of life that probably arose on the Plains and spread from there to the Eastern Woodlands. It is the oldest, major cultural tradition known in North America and it existed in Arkansas from late in the Pleistocene era, or perhaps around 12,000 years ago, to around 8,000 B.C. The people of this tradition, known as Paleoindians, employed a variety of stone tools for killing and harvesting big game animals, especially mastodon. Evidence of their existence comes from isolated finds in the region, including scores of fluted Clovis-like points found along either flank of Crowley's Ridge in northeast Arkansas. The distinctive Clovis point is lanceolate in shape (meaning it tapers to a point) and fluted at the basal end where the point was inserted into a spear shaft. Named "Clovis" for the site of its discovery in New Mexico, this type of projectile point is diagnostic of an advance in stone tool making that occurred across North America in the late Pleistocene era.²

The Archaic tradition developed in the early Holocene era or around 8,000 B.C. Archeologists define the Archaic Period as the long expanse of time down to about 1,000 B.C. during which hunting and gathering peoples adapted to their local environments and developed increasingly sophisticated forms of subsistence and social organization prior to the adoption of farming and pottery. The economic foundations of Archaic societies were hunting, fishing, shell-fishing, and plant-collecting. Archaic peoples developed a more diverse material culture than their Paleoindian forebears. A significant new weapon was the atlatl, or spear thrower. This device consisted of a shaft about twenty inches in length with a handle on one end for grasping and a spur on the other end designed to hold the dart or spear in place. The hunter hurled the spear while keeping hold of the atlatl. This weapon added to the speed and distance of the missile. Other new tools not known by Paleoindians included the axe for chopping wood and the grinding stone for milling seeds. In their semi-sedentary life, Archaic peoples fashioned other objects useful around camp such as baskets, sandals, and twined fiber bags. The Archaic tradition was the first major culture pattern in which differences emerged between the Eastern Woodland and Plains culture areas. Distinctive forms of technology and ceremonialism developed in the Archaic Period whose influence would carry on through subsequent periods in the cultural sequence.³

² Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 60-69; James A. Scholtz, "A Summary of Prehistory in Northwest Arkansas," *The Arkansas Archeologist: Bulletin of the Arkansas Archeological Society* 10 (1969), 52-53.

³Daniel Wolfman, *Archeological Assessment of the Buffalo National River*, Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Report 18 (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1979), 14-15; National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, "Resources Management Plan, Midwest Archeological Center," September 1998, typescript, Midwest Archeological Center Library, Lincoln, Neb., p. 14.

The Woodland tradition was the next tradition in the cultural sequence. The Woodland tradition was marked by the rise of farming, permanent villages, and inter-village trade networks. Farming was small scale, involving squash and other cultigens. Maize appeared later. Pottery came into use as groups adopted a more sedentary way of life. Woodland pottery included grog- and sand-tempered pottery and ceramic figurines. Woodland architecture included earthworks, such as large burial mounds. While all these features appeared by the middle or end of the Archaic Period, they became more pronounced in the Woodland Period, which archeologists define as starting in about 1,000 B.C. and lasting until about A.D. 700. There were two centers of Woodland culture, one in the Ohio Valley and the other in the Mississippi Valley. The culture spread from these locations outward, gradually replacing or modifying the cultures of the Archaic tradition.⁴

The Mississippian tradition succeeded the Woodland tradition. Although it derived from earlier traditions, it differed from them in its intensification of maize agriculture and its development of larger villages and towns. Pottery styles grew more elaborate and decorative with the adoption of shell tempering, which strengthened the clay and made wares more durable. Shell-tempered cooking jars allowed for new ways of cooking food. Trade networks gained importance with the trading of such new items as basalt, hematite, galena, and gastropods (shell). Mound-building, which began as early as the Archaic Period, became more pronounced in the Mississippian Period. Some mounds were built in the form of platforms, with temples or palace-like buildings then constructed on top of them. Often mounds were built in clusters, with a plaza occupying the space in between them. Social organization grew more complex as political and religious elites formed within the larger settlements and as slavery became more widespread. Population increased, competition for territory arose, and fortified towns developed into centers of power where chiefs ruled over not only the townspeople but also villages and hamlets in the surrounding territory. Settlement patterns changed as populations came to be concentrated along the meander zones of major rivers.⁵

The geographic locale where the Mississippian tradition started is not definitely known. Some archeologists believe it originated in the Cairo Lowland where the Mississippi and Ohio valleys converge. Others argue it developed in the American Bottom, a section of the Mississippi Valley located just below the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Still others have proposed that it emerged synchronously at several locations including the central Mississippi Valley and elsewhere in the Southeast. There is general agreement

⁴ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 137-38; National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, "Resources Management Plan, Midwest Archeological Center," September 1998, typescript, Midwest Archeological Center Library, Lincoln, Neb., p.14.

⁵ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 201-07; National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, "Resources Management Plan, Midwest Archeological Center," September 1998, typescript, Midwest Archeological Center Library, Lincoln, Neb., p. 14.

that the Mississippian tradition constituted a cultural revolution, and that it was spurred by the introduction of maize agriculture, which probably came into the area from the Southwest, not from Mexico as was once thought. The Mississippian Period began about A.D. 700 and continued until after European contact.⁶

Mound sites such as the one preserved in the Osotouy Unit of Arkansas Post National Memorial yield evidence of how aboriginal societies grew more complex in the last millennium before Europeans arrived in North America. The structure and contents of

mounds and the spatial arrangements between multiple mounds within a site offer clues about the mounds' function and significance. Similarities and differences between mound sites are suggestive of political and economic relationships once extending over a broad area. Archeologists agree that mound sites and fortifications constitute evidence of the formation of chiefdoms in the Mississippian period. Further, they recognize two types of chiefdoms: simple chiefdoms organized around a single mound site, and complex or "paramount" chiefdoms that took in multiple mound sites. The latter implies that there was not only a ruling elite in each associated town, but also a hierarchy that placed one hereditary chief above all others. It appears from the archeological record that chiefdoms all over the Southeast cycled between simple and complex forms, as each paramount chiefdom's influence waxed and waned and maybe waxed again. Or, as archeologist John H. Blitz has suggested, Mississippian settlements aggregated and disaggregated as factional leaders sought to resolve the conflicting impulses toward security and autonomy. Blitz has suggested that town populations picked up and moved, occupying one mound site and then another, when simple chiefdoms coalesced into a complex chiefdom or, conversely, when a complex chiefdom devolved into several simple ones. He calls the back and forth a "fission-fusion process."⁷

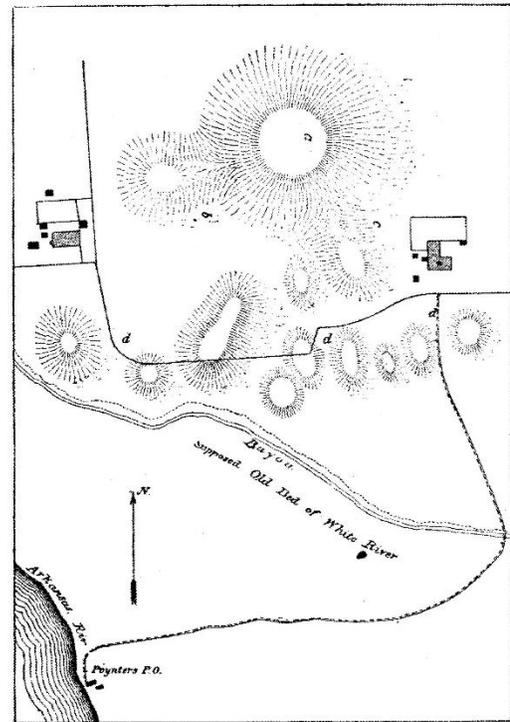


Figure 7. Drawing of Menard Mounds site by H. J. Lewis, assistant to Edward Palmer, 1881. (Jeter, ed, Edward Palmer's *Arkansas Mounds*.)

⁶ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 202; Smith, "Introduction," in *The Mississippian Emergence*, 1-8; and John E. Kelly, "The Emergence of Mississippian Culture in the American Bottom Region," in *The Mississippian Emergence*, edited by Bruce D. Smith (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 113-52; Griffin, "Comments on the Late Prehistoric Societies in the Southeast," 6-7; National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, "Resources Management Plan, Midwest Archeological Center," September 1998, typescript, Midwest Archeological Center Library, Lincoln, Neb., p. 14.

⁷ John E. Clark, "Surrounding the Sacred: Geometry and Design of Early Mound Groups as Meaning and Function," in *Signs of Power: The Rise of Cultural Complexity in the Southeast*, edited by Jon L. Gibson and

Archeologist John H. House, a leading authority on precontact times in east central Arkansas, has written that the many mound sites located in that region are representative of late precontact settlement patterns found throughout the Mississippian heartland. House defines the Mississippian heartland as a subarea of the Eastern Woodland cultural area located in the central Mississippi Valley. It takes in parts of the states of Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas, or the Mississippi Valley from around St. Louis in the north to the lower Arkansas Valley in the south. “The archeological record of these populous late prehistoric and protohistoric societies, and their predecessors in the preceding millennium,” he writes, “should be considered one of the world’s major observational laboratories for the study of the pristine evolution of complex societies.”⁸ This notable statement highlights the significance of the archeological resources found in the Osotouy Unit of Arkansas Post National Memorial. Archeological investigations are still adding to our knowledge about precontact peoples who occupied that place and their connections with peoples and cultures in the Mississippi Valley and elsewhere.

A Brief History of Archeological Investigations at Arkansas Post National Memorial

The proposal to establish Arkansas Post National Memorial spurred the National Park Service to sponsor archeological investigations in the area as early as 1955. However, archeological investigations started well before 1955 in the late nineteenth century. The history of archeological investigations within Arkansas Post National Memorial has been summarized in numerous papers and reports, notably in Kathleen H. Cande’s contracted 2002 report on archeological collections for the Automated National Catalog System (ANCS) and the Midwest Archeological Center’s 2003 report for the Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program (SAIP).⁹ The history is narrated again here for purposes of providing some further background for an examination of the Protohistoric Period on the lower Arkansas River.

The first systematic archeological investigation ever conducted along the lower Arkansas River was that of Edward Palmer in 1881. As a member of the national Mound Survey sponsored by the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, Palmer went to

Philip J. Carr (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 162-213; John H. Blitz, “Mississippian Chiefdoms and the Fission-Fusion Process,” *American Antiquity* 64, no. 4 (1999), 577-92.

⁸ House, “Evolution of Complex Societies in East-Central Arkansas: An Overview of Environments and Regional Data Bases,” 37.

⁹ Kathleen H. Cande, “Summary Report on Arkansas Post National Memorial (3AR47) Archeological and Related Archival Collections and Automated National Catalog System (ANCS) Data Reintegration,” AAS Project 01-04 Final Report, November 2002, report on file at Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville, Arkansas; National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, *Midwest Region Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program Plan*, report prepared by Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, revised June 2003, online at https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/discEvalPdfs/MWR_SAIP_Plan.pdf <September 23, 2016>.

Arkansas to study recognized mound sites. The aim of the whole survey was to resolve the question of whether the ancient mounds found all over the eastern United States had been built by the forebears of American Indians or by some “lost race.” For a hundred years before the Mound Survey, Americans had looked upon the ubiquitous mounds as one of the great curiosities of American antiquity, and various writers had long debated their origins and what they might reveal about precontact peoples. Many nineteenth-century thinkers ascribed to the view that no contemporary American Indian tribes of the eastern United States had the cultural orientation or social organization necessary to build such monumental earthworks. Rather, the sustained effort to construct mounds must have come from a vanished civilization that originated in Europe or Asia. Various theories held that the so-called “Mound Builders” were offshoots of ancient Egyptians, Phoenicians, Canaanites, Hebrews, Hindus, Celts, or some other wayfaring people of the Old World. One of the more influential theories held that the Mound Builders were descended from Vikings who had migrated to Mexico and become Toltecs. Edward Palmer himself ascribed to the Viking-Toltec theory when he embarked on the survey in Arkansas. However, when the Bureau of Ethnology compiled the results of the Mound Survey from all quarters, it led to the definitive conclusion that the mounds were the works of the ancestors of American Indians.¹⁰



Figure 8. Edward Palmer, archeologist with the Mound Survey. (Public domain.)

Palmer landed at the village of Arkansas Post in late November 1881. Although he noted that the village was “as old as Philadelphia,” he was not interested in surveying the Arkansas Post historic site. Rather, he stayed in the village for its convenience to the nearby “Menard Mounds.” The known mound site was owned by the children of the late Frank Menard, and it was located “eight miles South East from Arkansas Post.” There, he found “a mound 40 feet high 965 feet in circumference at base and 300 feet circumference at top, with trees and bushes growing up its tapering sides.” He noted an addition on the east side of this mound measuring 10 feet high, 20 feet across, and 300 feet long, attaching to a smaller, circular mound 15 feet high and 45 feet across. He also found traces of “burnt clay roofing of dwellings” and a “hard floor of burnt clay” in the subsoil. The evidence of former dwellings extended over a 20-acre field surrounding the mounds. He retrieved numerous pieces of pottery and some human skeletal remains, all of which he itemized and loaded into a box for shipment to the Smithsonian. The mound site was already disturbed by artifact hunters when Palmer visited it in 1881. He noted two cuts in the side of the larger mound and an eight-foot-deep hole dug in its top.¹¹

¹⁰ Jeter, ed., *Edward Palmer’s Arkansas Mounds*, 3-7; Thomas S. Garlinghouse, “Revisiting the Mound Builder Controversy,” *History Today* 51, no. 9 (September 2001), 39-40.

¹¹ Jeter, ed., *Edward Palmer’s Arkansas Mounds*, 138-39.



Figure 9. Ceramic from excavation at Menard Mounds in 1881. (W. H. Holmes, *Illustrated Catalogue*.)

Palmer did not attempt to interpret the age or culture of the materials he collected but left that task to Cyrus Thomas, director of the Mound Exploration Division of the Bureau of Ethnology, who compiled data sent to him by Palmer and the rest of his staff of field assistants, who were spread among twenty-two eastern states plus the Dakota Territories. The work of the Mound Survey culminated in Thomas's final report, published in 1894. Congress had charged the survey with answering the question of the mounds' origins. The response was definitive: "The remains of the mound section are due to the ancestors of the Indians of that section," Thomas wrote.¹²

The Mound Survey formed part of the foundation of modern American archeology. The survey was modern in its scientific conception: it had a problem orientation, research design, and field operations. Moreover, it reinforced the movement toward "anthropological historicism" or the study of cultures in historical perspective. The historical approach in the study of American Indian peoples was a direct challenge to the nineteenth-century orthodoxy that all of humanity was on one, universal, evolutionary path to higher civilization, with different human groups – and whole races – occupying various stages of development. The historical approach emphasized field observation, cultural adaptations to environment, and the notion of cultural diffusion or the transmission of culture across geographic space. Notably, anthropological historicism rejected the evolutionary approach to the study of culture, with its affinity to scientific racism. The Mound Survey occurred as the culture-area idea was just beginning to take hold. Thomas's word "section" in the above quotation anticipated the later concept of an Eastern Woodland culture area.¹³

Twenty-seven years elapsed until the next archeological investigation of the Menard site, during which time relic hunters and grave robbers further ravaged the mounds and burial

¹² Ian W. Brown, "Cyrus Thomas and the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology," in Marvin D. Jeter, ed., *Edward Palmer's Arkansas Mounds* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1990), 23-27. Quote on p. 7. William Henry Holmes, a colleague of Edward Palmer in the Bureau of Ethnology, prepared an interim report on the mound surveys entitled *Illustrated Catalogue of a Portion of the Collections made by the Bureau of Ethnology During the Field Season of 1881* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885). The following text on the Menard Mounds site introduced a series of sketches of pottery (p. 477): "Surrounding the mound is a field containing about twenty acres, which appears at one time to have been the site of a great number of dwellings, as, at a depth of from 1 to 2 feet, layers of burned clay are found. This field seems to have been a great cemetery, as the remains of skeletons are found in great numbers. Pottery is found in great abundance. It has, as a rule, been deposited near heads of the dead, but no ornaments or implements have been discovered with the remains. The frequent plowing of the field has destroyed many earthen vessels, the internments having been made quite near the surface. It is a noticeable fact that the pottery from the graves is of a character quite distinct from that of the mound. It is of the class of ware so common in the region."

¹³ Bruce D. Smith, "The Division of Mound Exploration of the Bureau of Ethnology and the Birth of Modern American Archeology," in Marvin D. Jeter, ed., *Edward Palmer's Arkansas Mounds* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1990), 27-37; Richard A. Krause, "A History of Great Plains Prehistory," in W. Raymond Wood, ed., *Archaeology on the Great Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 48-49.

ground. In 1908, Clarence B. Moore, a Harvard-educated and self-funded archeologist and heir to a paper mill fortune, arrived at Menard Landing with his field crew of around a dozen people onboard his private steamboat, *Gopher of Philadelphia*. Moore spent twelve days digging, mapping, and collecting. Though somewhat discouraged by the mess made by amateur collectors who had rummaged the site over the preceding decades, he found 160 burials and 214 clay vessels, including 28 examples of the distinctive “teapot” form that he thought was unique to Arkansas. He made drawings of human skeletal remains in what he called the “bunched form of burial.” Burial goods found with these human remains included brass items, which he interpreted as evidence that the people who occupied the site were eventually in contact with Europeans. He reported receiving fine cooperation for his dig from the landowner J. Menard and the adjacent landowners C. W. Wallace, A. L. Plant, and N. B. Menard.¹⁴ By the time Moore conducted his investigation, American archeology was on its way toward developing cultural sequences as a key to precontact times in North America. However, Moore confined his analysis to providing a taxonomy of ceramics, leaving it for subsequent scholars to interpret when the Menard site was occupied.

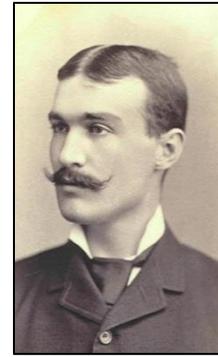


Figure 10.
Archeologist
Clarence Moore.
(Public domain.)

The first attempt to situate the Menard site within a cultural sequence came in 1941, when Philip Phillips, curator of southeastern archeology for the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, carried out the third professional investigation of the site. Phillips made his study with financial support from the NPS on behalf of the Central Mississippi Valley Archaeological Survey. Phillips made two two-meter-deep cuts on the northeast and southwest sides of the two main mounds, in ten-centimeter-deep layers, to obtain a ceramic sequence from refuse deposits. Based on his ceramics analysis, he determined that the site was occupied from late in the Baytown Period to the Late Mississippian Period. Phillips teamed with archeologists James A. Ford and James B. Griffin in writing an archeological survey of the lower Mississippi. In that seminal publication (1951), the three authors gave the name “Baytown” to the cultural period preceding Mississippian in the lower Mississippi Valley region. Corresponding with “Late Woodland” in the eastern United States, Baytown spanned roughly A. D. 300 to 700.¹⁵

¹⁴ C. B. Moore, “Certain Mounds of Arkansas and of Mississippi, Part 1: Mounds and Cemeteries of the Lower Arkansas River,” *Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia Journal* 13 (1908), 486-87; James A. Ford, “Menard Site: The Quapaw Village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River,” *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 48, Part 2 (1961), 143.

¹⁵ Philip Phillips, James A. Ford, and James B. Griffin, “Archaeological Survey in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley 1940-1947,” *Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Papers* No. 25 (1951), 414; Ford, “Menard Site: The Quapaw Village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River,” 137; James B. Griffin and Albert C. Spaulding, “The Central Mississippi Valley Archaeological Survey, Season 1950 – A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of the Illinois Archaeological Society* 1, no. 3 (January 1951), 75.

In 1955, the NPS initiated a program of historical and archeological investigations to determine the locations of the various French, Spanish, and American posts associated with Arkansas Post. The program began with a historical research assignment for Ray H. Mattison, historian in the Midwest Regional Office in Omaha, Nebraska. Mattison reviewed copies of French colonial records from France's National Archives housed in the Library of Congress and Spanish colonial records held in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain, as well as federal records held in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. His research was aimed in part at directing archeological investigations to the correct geographic locations. The following year, the NPS contracted with Preston Holder, assistant professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, to conduct archeological field investigations aimed at locating the former installations. Although Holder's efforts focused on the area now contained in the Arkansas Post Memorial Unit, he did do a small amount of testing at the Menard site in hopes of locating Tonty's 1686 post. His excavations at the Menard site consisted of a line of test pits, each about five feet square, dug along the southwest edge of the site.¹⁶

Two years after Holder began his investigations at Arkansas Post, the NPS transferred the investigation of the Menard site to James A. Ford of the American Museum of Natural History. The NPS hoped to locate the site of Tonty's post or, failing that, to determine if the Menard site was the location of the Quapaw village of Osotouy. Ford dug a series of trenches and test pits and once again developed a stratigraphy for ceramics. He also located twenty-four human burials, just three of which were accompanied by grave goods. He found no evidence of Tonty's post itself, and recovered very few artifacts of European derivation. Nonetheless, Ford concluded that the Menard site was indeed the site of Tonty's post. Ford based his conclusion on the presence of Late Mississippian ceramics or what he termed Wallace complex pottery types, and on historical descriptions of the post and village that were consistent with the lay of the land. He also speculated that some of the human burials might postdate European contact and reflect French missionary influence.¹⁷

After Ford's 1958 study, NPS-sponsored archeological investigations focused exclusively on historical archeology in the Arkansas Post Memorial Unit for nearly forty

¹⁶ National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, *Midwest Region Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program Plan*, report prepared by Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, revised June 2003, online at https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/discEvalPdfs/MWR_SAIPlan_Plan.pdf <September 23, 2016>, p. ARPO-1; Preston Holder, "Archeological Field Research on the Problem of the Locations of Arkansas Post Arkansas 1686-1804," report prepared for National Park Service, Department of the Interior, September 15, 1957, typescript, Arkansas Post National Memorial library, ARPO, pp. 23-25; Ford, "Menard Site: The Quapaw Village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River," 143.

¹⁷ Ford, "Menard Site: The Quapaw Village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River," 144-58.

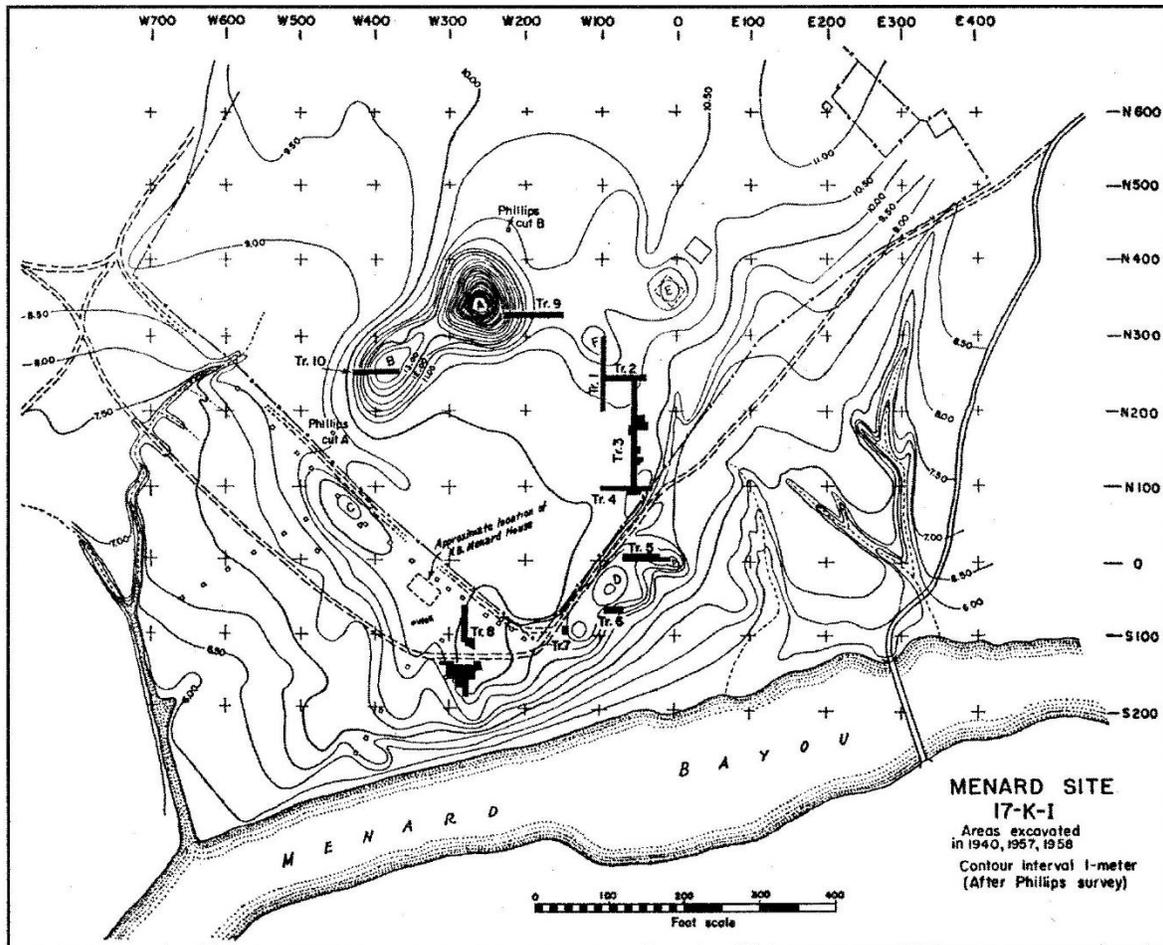


Figure 11. Ford's map. (Ford, "Menard Site: The Quapaw Village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River," 1961.)

years. However, interest in the Menard site remained. The landowners and part-time residents of the property after 1940 were Dr. Thomas L. Hodges and Charlotte Hodges, two patrons of Arkansas archeology. The Menard Mounds location was officially renamed the Menard-Hodges site in 1980 in honor of the Hodges' longtime support. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, and it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1988. Soon thereafter the Hodges arranged for the eventual donation of their property to the NPS as an addition to Arkansas Post National Memorial. In 1991, they conveyed their property to the Arkansas Conservancy, and in 1997 Congress passed legislation authorizing the addition of 360 acres to Arkansas Post National Memorial. The tract, separated from the rest of the park by about six miles, was called the Osotouy Unit. Meanwhile, the owners of the property adjacent to the Osotouy Unit on the south, Linda and Donald Wallace of Tichnor, Arkansas, supported preservation efforts as well. In 1991, they permitted preliminary archeological investigation of a possible location of Tonty's post by Lake Dumond, an oxbow lake and former bend in the Arkansas River. The Lake Dumond site (3AR110) is located just a few hundred yards from the Menard-Hodges site (3AR4). In

1997, Linda and Donald Wallace put a portion of their property into a conservation easement and put another portion into pasture so that artifacts still in the ground would not be destroyed by plowing.¹⁸

In 1997 and 1998, the Arkansas Archaeological Society in collaboration with the Arkansas Archeological Survey conducted its summer training program for amateurs at the Menard-Hodges and Lake Dumond sites. John H. House supervised the investigation at the Menard-Hodges site while Leslie C. “Skip” Stewart-Abernathy, a professor and member of the survey at Arkansas Tech University Russellville, led the team at the nearby Lake Dumond site. One of the important finds at the former site was a substantial portion of a rim of a jar exhibiting horizon styles from two cultural traditions – a “rosetta sherd” – dating to around the 1200s. House wrote of this artifact: “I am delighted by more evidence for the mysterious early Mississippian or Plaquemine period in the history of the Menard-Hodges site; events during this era may eventually play a greater role in our understanding of the site than we anticipate now.”¹⁹

During the second year of this field school, the investigation was expanded to a nearby floodplain field known as Wallace Bottom. There, the crew soon turned up early eighteenth-century European artifacts along with American Indian artifacts over a broad extent of the field. Archeologists had long conjectured that Tonty’s post and the Quapaw village of Osotouy were located on or nearby the Menard Mounds. Now it appeared that the exact location of the post and village might be pinpointed and verified through trace elements in the ground. House wrote of this exciting discovery: “It seemed possible that, after 60 years of searching, the sites of the late 1600s Quapaw village of Osotouy and the early 1700s French Arkansas Post – long sought by archaeologists – had finally been found.” The newfound site was registered as Wallace Bottom No. 2 (3AR179).²⁰

At the Intersection of Archeology and Ethnohistory

To this point in this chapter, the discussion has been on the Eastern Woodland cultural sequence and the history of archeological investigations at the Menard-Hodges site,

¹⁸ John H. House, “Wallace Bottom: A Colonial-Era Archaeological Site in the Menard Locality, Eastern Arkansas,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 21, no. 2 (Winter 2002), 257; National Park Service, *Osotouy Cultural Landscape Arkansas Post National Memorial* (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 2014), pp. 2-43 to 2-55.

¹⁹ John H. House, “The Archeology Accomplished, 6-21 June, 1998, Menard-Hodges and Lake Dumond Sites,” *Field Notes, Newsletter of the Arkansas Archaeological Society* No. 283 (July-August 1998), 12.

²⁰ House, “Wallace Bottom: A Colonial-Era Archaeological Site in the Menard Locality, Eastern Arkansas,” 257; John H. House, “Native American Material Culture from the Wallace Bottom Site, Southeastern Arkansas,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 32, no. 1 (2013), 54; National Park Service, *Osotouy Cultural Landscape Arkansas Post National Memorial*, pp. 3-19 to 3-21.

with both topics aimed at providing background for a discussion of the complicated Protohistoric Period at Arkansas Post National Memorial. This third section of the chapter makes one more necessary detour, this one to provide a brief introduction to the burgeoning field of southeastern protohistory.

Archeologists and historians used to draw a clear dividing line between prehistory (precontact) and history (postcontact). Prehistory was the province of archeology; history was the province of historians. In recent decades, the study of late precontact and early postcontact times has grown more interdisciplinary. Ethnohistorians have called for a more inclusive and critical approach to source materials. Ethnohistorians have highlighted Indigenous perspectives as recorded in writings by early European observers. Ancient societies maintained a rich sense of their own history and cultural identity by practicing rituals, maintaining oral traditions, and creating their own records of their past. American Indians made records of events through iconographic records such as calendars, maps, and artwork. Native peoples often shared their rituals and oral traditions with Europeans who described them in writing. Ethnohistorians have demonstrated the value of this source material in our study of American Indian peoples and their relations with Europeans in the period around first contact. Ethnohistorians emphasize that such sources are problematic, for they are riven with distortions brought about by Europeans' ignorance, prejudice, and unfamiliarity with what they were recording. The ethnohistorians' method is to discern the cultural biases of the people who created the written records, carefully brush those obfuscating factors aside, and exhume the information found beneath. In other words, the ethnohistorians "read between the lines" in the source material to find the Indigenous perspectives – or in some cases bare facts – that Indigenous people long ago supplied through the medium of Europeans' written documentation. And then, further, the ethnohistorians use the information they have drawn from the ethnohistorical record to reinterpret the archeological record.²¹

Ethnohistorians have been especially forceful in arguing for a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of ethnogenesis. Ethnogenesis may be defined as the creation, maintenance, and transformation of ethnic identity. Ethnogenesis usually features the story of one tribe as its ethnic identity evolved through late precontact times into the postcontact period. Many decades ago, in the 1930s, archeologists found that it was possible to trace American Indian tribes' ethnic origins back into precontact times in some cases. The idea was to start with a culture that was well documented in the early contact period and work backwards in time. They called their method the "direct historical approach." The method was to study the cultural complex of a tribe as known from historically-documented

²¹ Michael S. Nassaney and Eric S. Johnson, "The Contributions of Material Objects to Ethnohistory in Native North America," in *Interpretations of Native North American Life: Material Contributions to Ethnohistory*, edited by Michael S. Nassaney and Eric S. Johnson (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 1-13.

archeological sites – the tribe’s ceramic styles, house types, burial practices, and tool technologies – and find a match with an older, precontact cultural complex as known from late-precontact archeological sites. Often the typology analysis was paired with spatial analysis of the tribe’s placement of camps or winter village sites as documented in historical sources, and the tribe’s migration story as recorded in ethnographic sources, to sleuth out what sites the tribe had likely occupied in precontact times.²²

The direct historical approach went out of favor under the influence of processual archeology in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and then it experienced a revival in the context of post-processual archeology around the 1990s. Older examples of the direct historical approach include Waldo Wedel’s tracing of Kansa and Wichita Indians’ precontact cultural evolution in *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology* (1959), and Jack T. Hughes’s *Prehistory of the Caddoan-Speaking Tribes* (1974), in which the author boldly pushed Caddoan origins all the way back into the Archaic Period. A seminal work in reviving the direct historical approach was Patricia Galloway’s *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700*, published in 1995. A still more current example is Robbie Ethridge’s *From Chickaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715*, published in 2010. Characteristically, Wedel’s and Hughes’s older works were attempts to cross the divide from history back to precontact, whereas Galloway’s and Ethridge’s newer works situate their stories squarely in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period when the peoples of Europe and North America had come in contact with one another while very little yet existed in the way of written records. Scholars term this period the Protohistoric Period, meaning simply that a thin, fragmentary documentary record came into existence in North America for the first time, adding to what is known about Indigenous peoples from oral traditions and archeological evidence.²³

Although Ethridge sets out to trace the ethnogenesis of the Chickasaw tribe, her book deals with much more. Ethridge’s work revolves around her key concept of a “Mississippian shatter zone.” Ethridge’s Mississippian shatter zone refers to a large area in eastern North America in which Europeans had either a direct impact on Indigenous peoples or, more often, an indirect impact through the spread of epidemics, the toppling of chiefdoms, and the fomenting of slave raids by one group against another. Essential to her concept of a Mississippian shatter zone is the notion that Mississippian chiefdoms were internally stressed

²² Krause, “A History of Great Plains Prehistory,” 71-74.

²³ Krause, “A History of Great Plains Prehistory,” 74; Patricia K. Galloway, “The Direct Historical Approach and Early Historical Documents: The Ethnohistorian’s View,” in *The Protohistoric Period in the Mid-South: 1500-1700, Proceedings of the 1983 Mid-South Archaeological Conference*, edited by David H. Dye and Ronald C. Brister (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1986), 14-23; Jay Gitlin, review of *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700*, by Patricia K. Galloway, *Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 39, no. 2 (Spring 1998), 229-31; Denise Ileana Bossy, “Review: Shattering Together, Merging Apart: Colonialism, Violence, and the Remaking of the Native South,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (October 2014), 611-31.

when the Europeans arrived, so that the shocks inflicted by European contact reverberated across the land into places remote from those places where Europeans and American Indians were in actual contact.

The Mississippian shatter zone [she writes] was a large region of instability in eastern North America that existed from the late sixteenth century through the early eighteenth century. It was created by the combined conditions of: (1) the inherent structural instability of polities in the Mississippian world and the inability of chiefdoms to withstand the full force of colonialism; (2) the introduction of Old World pathogens and the subsequent serial disease episodes and loss of life; (3) the inauguration of a nascent capitalist economic system by Europeans through a commercial trade in Indian slaves and animal skins; and (4) the intensification and spread of violence and warfare through the Indian slave trade and especially through the emergence of militaristic Native slaving societies who sought a large share of the European trade.²⁴

Europeans introduced an American Indian slave trade in North America with devastating consequences for native peoples. Before a trans-Atlantic African slave trade became established, Europeans enslaved American Indian to work on plantations in the West Indies. Besides capturing their victims by their own hands, Europeans also instigated a slave trade with American Indians that led to slave raids between tribes. Mississippians made captives into slaves before the coming of Europeans, but in earlier times they enslaved people as prestige goods to enhance the standing of slave-owing elites or as recruits to enlarge the population of the group. Europeans (much more the English than the French) turned the Indigenous form of slavery into a market-driven enterprise. As with the fur trade, the slave trade did not involve American Indians in new activities so much as it increased their level of involvement in those activities. Some groups made the capture and selling of slaves a major part of their economy and traveled long distances on slave raiding expeditions. The Iroquois, armed with guns by the Dutch in New York, conducted raids far to the west in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The Westo, originally a group of Erie who had fled the Iroquois, migrated into Virginia and then further south, hunting captives to trade to English colonists of Jamestown at first and then to English traders in Carolina.²⁵

Europeans brought germs to North America for which native peoples lacked immunities. Europeans transmitted illnesses to American Indians that took hold and spread from tribe to tribe in raging “virgin soil epidemics,” killing vast numbers and terrorizing or demoralizing whole populations. Archeologists and historians have long appreciated the devastating effects of disease in the post-contact period, though the numbers killed have been

²⁴ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 4.

²⁵ Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 210; Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 8-9; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 96-98.

debated. Recent scholarship has suggested that the population collapse was more complicated. Violence was also a significant factor, not only in taking lives but also in shattering communities and reducing birthrates. Violence occurred in many forms – warfare, slavery, strife, persecution – all at increased levels under the influence of colonialism. The understanding of the steep decline of American Indian populations is also complicated by the growing recognition that population loss from disease was uneven, sporadic, and spread over several generations. Epidemics appear to have moved over the land in many ways, devastating some populations and not others, or inoculating one group against a recurrence but not a neighboring group.²⁶

Moreover, the new scholarship cautions against making undue assumptions about population collapse. Diseases that flourished in urbanized areas of Europe could not have spread in the same way through widely dispersed villages in the North American setting. What is most striking, the Mississippians appear to have experienced significant population decline in the century or two before Europeans arrived, apparently for reasons unrelated to the introduction of Old World diseases. A large area east of Cahokia appears to have become so depopulated around A.D. 1450 that archeologists have termed the area “the Vacant Quarter.” Depopulation during this period may have resulted from climate factors, crop failures, and an increase in warfare between chiefdoms.²⁷

When Spanish conquistadors first set foot in what is now the southeastern United States in the sixteenth century, they found the native inhabitants organized into numerous chiefdoms, yet the chiefdoms nearly all vanished over the next century and a half. A simple explanation of what happened would suggest that the shocks from European contact – disease, slaving, warfare – so shook the Mississippian world that the chiefdoms toppled and disappeared in short order. Scholars are learning that the collapse of the chiefdoms is a much more complicated story. In the first place, archeology has found that the Mississippian world was unstable for a couple of centuries before the arrival of Europeans, with populations in decline, large geographic areas being abandoned, chiefdoms at war with one another, and peoples combining and breaking up even in the absence of European influence. Cahokia, once the center of Mississippian culture, peaked and went into decline in the 1200s. By the time of the De Soto expedition, there were almost no paramount chiefdoms remaining east of the Mississippi River; the chiefdoms with the greatest populations and most developed military capabilities were found in the Mississippi Valley. Rather than attribute every chiefdoms’ decline to European interference, it is more accurate to think of the chiefdoms

²⁶ Clark Spencer Larsen, “Colonialism and Decline in the American Southeast: The Remarkable Record of La Florida,” in *Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America*, edited by Catherine M. Cameron, Paul Kelton, and Alan C. Swedlund (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 74-98; Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 13-17.

²⁷ Milner, “Population Decline and Culture Change,” 53-56, 59-60.

and mound centers being abandoned in two waves, one prior to European contact and one after.²⁸

Moreover, the causal link between European-introduced epidemics and the collapse of chiefdoms in the sixteenth century is far from clear. In the Mississippi Valley, the large chiefdoms that De Soto encountered in 1541-42 all disappeared soon thereafter. Yet some evidence points to the likelihood that the most devastating epidemics in the interior of North America occurred a century later. Also, not every chiefdom was swept away. Chiefdoms dating from late precontact times persisted through the protohistoric into the historic period in a few places, notably in the lower Mississippi Valley among the Natchez, Tunica, and Taensa groups of American Indians. The complex social organization of these groups, as understood from early eighteenth century French sources, appears to have been a continuation of the precontact and protohistoric Plaquemine culture. As historian Alan Galloway observes, “the survival of the Natchez chiefdom into the early 1730s evinces that chiefdoms could and did exist side by side with European colonies. Chiefdoms also existed in similar form among some of the Natchez’s neighbors, so it cannot be said that the European presence inherently caused the collapse of chiefdoms, either by disease or by the mere presence of a more sophisticated social and political system in the region.”²⁹

De Soto and the Protohistoric Period

Archeology now recognizes a time of transition from precontact to postcontact times that it calls protohistoric. The Protohistoric Period in the Southeast spans approximately A.D. 1500 to 1700. Within that timeframe, archeologists refer to early, middle, and late protohistoric periods. The early period ends in the early 1540s when De Soto’s expedition passed through the area, producing the first written accounts of the American Indian peoples whom they encountered. The long middle portion extends from 1543 to 1673 when a blanket of silence, so far as written records go, once more fell across the whole region. The late period begins with Father Marquette’s expedition down the Mississippi River in 1673, as Marquette produced the next written account of Southeastern Indian peoples after the De Soto expedition. The late protohistoric extends to the end of the seventeenth century when descriptions left by French explorers began building toward a substantial historical record. The biggest challenge of the Protohistoric Period in southeastern archeology is to interpret what happened during the long stretch of time from De Soto’s *entrada* until the arrival of the French. Archeologists have referred to this period as the “Protohistoric Dark Ages.”³⁰

²⁸ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 123; Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 27-28.

²⁹ Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 28; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 116-17.

³⁰ Marvin D. Jeter, “From Prehistory through Protohistory to Ethnohistory in and near the Northern Lower Mississippi Valley,” in *Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, edited by Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 183.

A major problem in reconstructing what happened during the Protohistoric Period is to find a correspondence between towns and chiefdoms identified by the De Soto expedition and ethnic groups and villages named in French sources nearly a century and a half later. This is an instance of applying the direct historical method to two bodies of ethnographic material, one from the late protohistoric and the other from the early protohistoric, to bridge the gap in between. In her book *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, Ethridge convincingly traces the movements and cultural evolution of a people living in a chiefdom called Chicaza by the De Soto expedition, a chiefdom centered on the Tombigbee River in present-day east central Mississippi, to a tribe known as the Chickasaw to the English in the early eighteenth century, a tribe whose homeland centered in northwest Mississippi and west Tennessee. While the Natchezan and Chicazan chiefdoms of De Soto's time can be linked to ethnic groups that were in existence at the end of the Protohistoric Period, many other peoples described in the De Soto expedition sources have no discernable ethnic counterparts 130 to 150 years later.³¹

Part of the difficulty of matching the record of chiefdoms left by the De Soto expedition with the descriptions of ethnic groups in later French and English documents lies in the fact that ethnohistories from the earlier and later periods are so different from each other. The De Soto expedition recorded the names of American Indian peoples in Spanish, generally naming each chiefdom after the name of the chief, and basing their name and description on a onetime encounter with the group. The French names for tribes often derived from a name used by a neighboring tribe, such as "Akamseas" or "Akansas" for the Quapaw, which was the French spelling of what the French heard the Illinois Indians call them. Marquette recorded the name of one of the Quapaw villages as "Kappa." Later, the Americans rendered Kappa as "Quapaw" and gave that name to the tribe. Some scholars link Kappa with the chiefdom of "Pacaha" described by the De Soto expedition, and cite the name similarity as evidence that the Quapaw merged with descendants of the Mississippians in the former province of Pacaha.³²

Scholars of the Protohistoric Period have tried to correlate groups and villages named in ethnohistorical sources with specific archeological sites. Archeologist Marvin D. Jeter has analyzed why the two types of data are difficult to correlate, or in his words, why "archeology and ethnohistory often 'discourse' past each other." He describes the differences between archeological and ethnographic data in terms of three dimensions of space, time, and culture. Space, Jeter says, is archeology's primary dimension: archeologists not only pinpoint the horizontal and vertical locations of artifacts in the ground with scientific precision, they

³¹ Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 14; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 2; Jeter, "From Prehistory through Protohistory to Ethnohistory in and near the Northern Lower Mississippi Valley," 194.

³² Jeter, "Ripe for Colonial Exploitation," 39; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, xix; Michael P. Hoffman, "Identification of Ethnic Groups Contacted by the de Soto Expedition in Arkansas," in *The Expedition of Hernando de Soto West of the Mississippi, 1541-1543: Proceedings of the De Soto Symposia 1988 and 1990*, edited by Gloria A. Young and Michael P. Hoffman (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 139.

also compare artifacts recovered from one site with those of another to understand the arrangement and spread of cultures over geographical space. The space dimension in ethnohistorical sources, on the other hand, tends to be imprecise or absent. For example, the accounts of the De Soto expedition describe crossing the Mississippi River in graphic detail but they do not indicate where the crossing occurred. Scholars have proposed a few possible locations based on careful analysis of internal evidence in the documents. Because of the spatial ambiguity in the documents, towns that the expedition visited and recorded west of the river may have been located anywhere within a swath of some 50 to 150 miles.

In the time dimension, the situation is reversed: ethnohistory is precise, while archeology is vague. A written document generally dates a description of a place or event to within a year of the observation or occurrence. Often the time dimension is even more specific, right down to the day or hour. In contrast, archeologists might attempt to date a protohistoric site to within a decade at best. For late precontact sites, the plus or minus factor is usually greater.

Archeology and ethnohistory differ markedly when it comes to what each one says about culture. Archeology focuses on the material aspects of culture as revealed in pottery, stone tools, and architecture. Jeter points out that the emphasis on material objects puts the focus on the “infrastructural” level of technology and economic production. Ethnohistorical sources tend to be vague or anecdotal in describing material culture. Ethnohistorical sources do contain valuable descriptions of architecture. Ethnohistory can inform about a culture’s religious and ceremonial life, albeit through the filter of European observers’ biases and ignorance about what they were recording. Archeology is limited in what it can discern about political and religious life but it does venture interpretations based on analysis of domestic space, burial associations, and settlement patterns.³³

Scholars have studied the sparse ethnohistorical record of the De Soto expedition to better understand the inconsistencies, ambiguities, and distortions embedded in those sources. Only four accounts of the expedition are known. The four texts were written by Luis Hernández de Biedma, the expedition’s factor; Rodrigo Ranjel, De Soto’s private secretary; one Fidalgo de Elvas, an anonymous and possibly fictitious expedition member; and Garcilaso de la Vega, a soldier-poet and historian. Only one of the surviving texts, that by Biedma, qualifies as a “primary source” in the sense of having been written down as events occurred; it is largely a record of names, dates, and distances covered. The Ranjel and Elvas texts purport to be firsthand accounts by members of the expedition; however, the former appears to have been heavily edited by another writer, while the latter, which is more lyrical and oriented to a Portuguese readership, may have been a concoction based almost entirely

³³ Jeter, “From Prehistory through Protohistory to Ethnohistory in and near the Northern Lower Mississippi Valley,” 178-80.

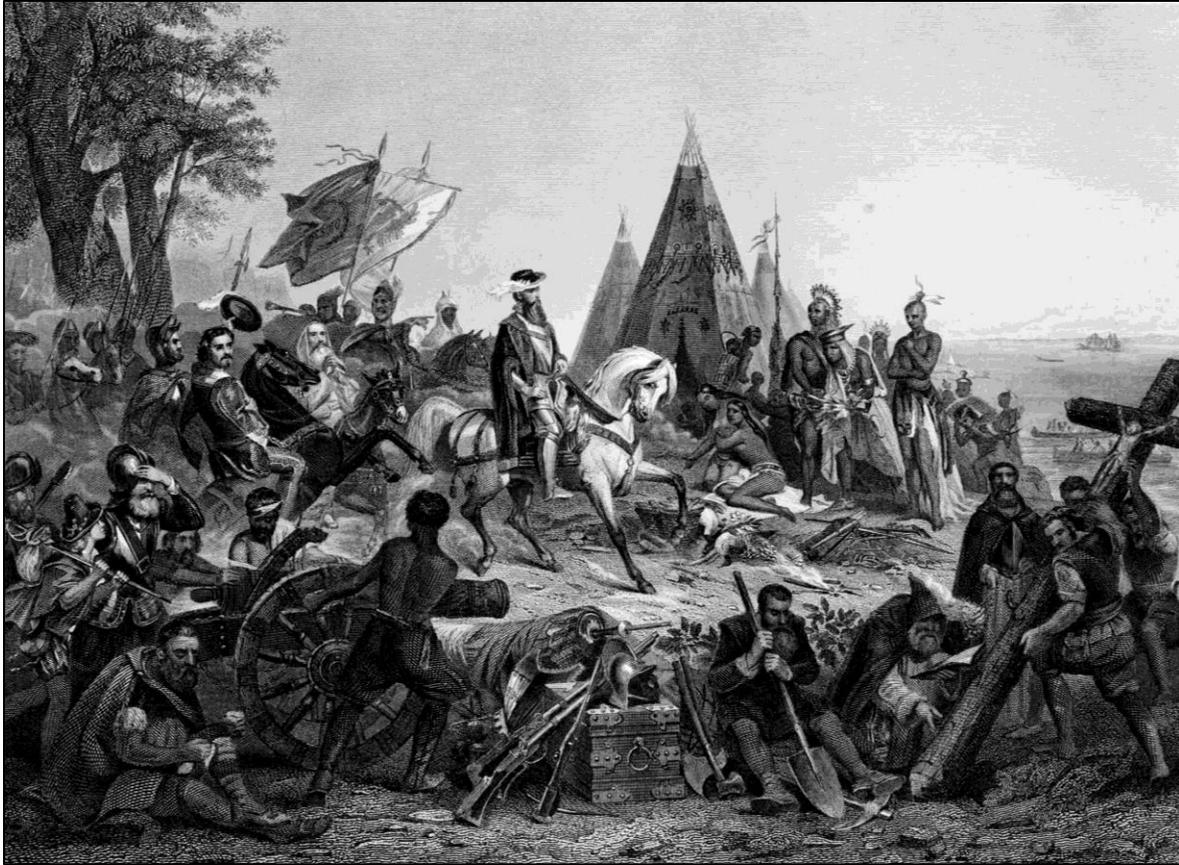


Figure 12. Engraving based on “De Soto’s Discovery of the Mississippi, 1541, by William Henry Powell. *Chronicles of the De Soto expedition offer the earliest written record of Indigenous cultures in the Lower Mississippi region but the information they contain is problematic.* (Public domain.)

on the Ranjel text. The fourth text by Vega is based on interviews with survivors and contains obvious embellishments. Ethnohistorian Patricia K. Galloway, a critic of fellow scholars’ cavalier misuse of the De Soto expedition chronicles, gathered a collection of essays on them in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and “Discovery” in the Southeast* (1997).³⁴ More recently, folklorist George E. Lankford, wrote a provocative essay about the De Soto chronicles’ standing as historical texts. Giving the Ranjel and Elvas texts nearly equal credence alongside the Biedma text, he noted that the “fourness” of the texts is comparable to the four gospels of the New Testament, with three alike and one outlier. His interesting essay further contextualizes the chronicles within the culture of sixteenth-century Spain.³⁵

³⁴ Galloway, “The Direct Historical Approach and Early Historical Documents: The Ethnohistorian’s View,” 14-16; Gregory A. Waselkov, review of *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and “Discovery” in the Southeast*, edited by Patricia Galloway, *Southeastern Archaeology* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1998), 185-86.

³⁵ George E. Lankford, “How Historical Are the De Soto Chronicles?” in *The Search for Mabila: The Decisive Battle between Hernando de Soto and Chief Tascalusa*, edited by Vernon James Knight, Jr. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 31-44.

Scholars have long tried to reconstruct the route of the De Soto expedition through the Southeast in 1539-43. Congress commissioned a group of experts headed by John R. Swanton of the Bureau of American Ethnology to attempt a definitive study, combining analysis of the De Soto texts and archeological evidence. The final report by the commission in 1939 established a strong working hypothesis for the route but it did not settle the matter. Philip Phillips, James A. Ford, and James B. Griffin put forward another hypothesis in 1951. A critical difference between the two interpretations concerned the expedition's route across the state of Mississippi and the point where it crossed the Mississippi River. The point of the river crossing determined how experts interpreted the route of the expedition's subsequent wanderings through the state of Arkansas in 1541-42. Consequently, interpretations came to cluster around two main hypotheses, which experts now refer to as the southern route and the northern route. Charles M. Hudson led a team of researchers in remapping the route in 1984, choosing the northern route. Soon after Hudson and his team published their findings, Congress tasked the NPS with conducting a feasibility study for designating a De Soto National Historic Trail. Although the NPS study team generally found itself in agreement with Hudson and his team, it insisted that the route remained far too uncertain to meet the criteria for national historic trail designation. Hudson's route became the new standard, the most favored hypothesis, but by no means the last word on the subject. Scholars continue to propose variants, while a few still prefer the southern route.³⁶

Whichever route is assumed, then, scholars have a different set of correlates between the description of peoples and places in the De Soto texts and the many archeological sites found in the region. Significantly, the Menard-Hodges site figures in both interpretations. If the De Soto expedition more nearly followed the hypothesized southern route, then the Menard-Hodges site is probably the place the De Soto texts describe as Quiguate. If the expedition more nearly took the northern route, then the site is likely the place the expedition knew as Anilco.³⁷

De Soto in Arkansas

What is known is this. Marching from the east, the De Soto expedition arrived at the Mississippi River at the chiefdom it called Quizquiz. The chiefdom comprised several towns

³⁶ Leslie R. McRill, "A Review of the De Soto Expedition in Territories of our Present Southern States," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 39, no. 1 (1969), 70-79; Charles Hudson, Marvin T. Smith, and Chester B. DePratter, "The Hernando de Soto Expedition: From Mabila to the Mississippi River," in *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, edited by David H. Dye and Cheryl Anne Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 181-207; Hoffman, "Identification of Ethnic Groups Contacted by the de Soto Expedition in Arkansas," 137-40; H. Terry Childs and Charles H. McNutt, "Hernando de Soto's Route from Chicaça through Northeast Arkansas: A Suggestion," *Southeastern Archaeology* 28, no. 2 (Winter 2009), 165-83.

³⁷ Hoffman, "Identification of Ethnic Groups Contacted by the de Soto Expedition in Arkansas," 137-40.

situated near oxbow lakes at the edge of the Mississippi River's meander zone. After a brief stay at Quizquiz, De Soto and his men encamped on the edge of the river and built rafts to ferry the expedition across the great river. (The southern route hypothesis would have this encampment located approximately due east of Arkansas Post National Memorial; the northern route hypothesis puts it just south of present-day Memphis.) While De Soto's men were building the rafts, they were repeatedly challenged by Chief Aquijo, the head of a chiefdom located on the opposite side of the river. Aquijo commanded a fleet of some 200 large canoes, each one carrying up to about 35 men armed with bows and arrows. After the impressive show of force, Aquijo ultimately deferred to his "lord" Pacaha when he allowed the Spaniards to cross the river. It seems that the chiefdom of Aquijo came under the dominion of the paramount chiefdom of Pacaha.³⁸

From the chiefdom of Aquijo, Soto and his men marched northwest to the chiefdom of Casqui, a major rival of the chiefdom of Pacaha, and possibly a paramount chiefdom as well, with dominion over Quiguate. If the northern route is closer to the mark, then Casqui was probably at the Parkin archeological site, located due west of Memphis on the St. Francis River, and Quiguate was among the cluster of Kent Phase archeological sites located on the lower St. Francis River. "At the Parkin archaeological site, one can still view something of the grandeur of these ancient chiefdoms of the central Mississippi Valley," writes Ethridge. "The temple mound at Parkin is twenty-one feet high, facing a plaza in the center of the town. Domestic structures were clustered around the plaza. The St. Francis River protected one side of the town, and a palisade and a deep ditch protected the remainder."³⁹

De Soto marched his men from Casqui east toward the Mississippi, eager to find the principal town of Pacaha. A force of Casqui warriors accompanied the expedition, led De Soto to their enemy, and attacked and ransacked the town. After more fighting and intrigue between the rival chiefdoms, Pacaha apparently convinced De Soto that he was the more powerful of the two chiefs. The principal town of Pacaha was a mound center surrounded by palisades and ditches with extensive cornfields beyond. The place most likely correlates with the Pecan Point archeological site (again, assuming the northern route hypothesis to be more valid). Although archeologists have extensively investigated this site, much of it has been washed away by changes in the Mississippi River.⁴⁰

While engaged with the chiefdoms of Pacaha and Casqui, the De Soto expedition made a foray southward into the chiefdom of Quiguate. Swanton (1939) proposed that Quiguate was the Menard-Hodges site, but that interpretation has lost favor as previously noted. Some later proponents of the southern-route hypothesis have suggested that the

³⁸ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 118-19.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 118.

⁴⁰ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 118; Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 12-13; Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 311-12.

Dupree site in the lower White River drainage in Arkansas County was Quiguate.⁴¹ The chiefdom's principal town was described in three of the four De Soto expedition texts as the largest town encountered anywhere in the Southeast. Yet the sources give few other details about this settlement. Among the De Soto expedition chroniclers, Biedma states that the expedition stayed in the town eight or nine days while attempting to recruit interpreters and guides. Elvas reports that De Soto's men occupied half the town and burned the other half to subdue the natives. The account by Elvas further states that the Spaniards made the cacique, or chief, their prisoner, but he escaped and fled across the river. Vega's account describes Quiguate as "divided into three equal districts, in one of which was the lord's house, situated on a high elevation made by hand. The Spaniards lodged in two of the districts and the Indians were assembled in the third, there being plenty of lodgings for everyone."⁴²

From the evidence left by the De Soto expedition, it is believed that Pacaha and Casqui were the farthest north paramount chiefdoms in the Mississippi Valley still in existence in the Protohistoric Period. The De Soto expedition made a series of probes into the uplands lying to the west or northwest of Casqui, but failed to find any population centers of comparable size. Northwest of the chiefdom of Casqui was the chiefdom of Coligua, probably centered near present-day Batesville, Arkansas. Beyond Coligua lay numerous, smaller, upland chiefdoms apparently composed of Caddoan and Tunican speakers. De Soto's expedition required more corn and other supplies than those smaller, upland chiefdoms could provide, and so it was forced to return to more populous bottomlands to pass the winter of 1541-42. It is probable that the location of De Soto's winter camp was near Little Rock.⁴³

In the spring of 1542, the De Soto expedition marched eastward into the chiefdom of Anilco. This chiefdom suffered one of the cruelest treatments by De Soto and his men of any chiefdom in the Southeast. Most present-day experts on the De Soto expedition believe that Anilco was the Menard-Hodges site, so it is worth quoting at length from Ethridge's description of the place and the events that occurred there.

By all accounts, Anilco [sic] was a populous, rich chiefdom. Elvas thought it the most populous chiefdom they had seen. The entire region around the mico's [chief's] house was thickly populated for a quarter of a mile, and within a league and a half of the principal town, there were several other large towns. The mico of Anilco resisted the Spaniards' invasion by ordering his townspeople to flee the town and hid all their corn in the woods. He refused to meet with Soto and sent instead an imposter to spy on him. Soto stayed at Anilco about two and a half weeks, and while he was there, the mico of Guachoya visited the conquistador to express his friendship. A few

⁴¹ Hoffman, "Identification of Ethnic Groups Contacted by the de Soto Expedition in Arkansas," 138.

⁴² Childs and McNutt, "Hernando de Soto's Route from Chicaça through Northeast Arkansas," 180.

⁴³ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 119.

days later, Soto decided to depart for the friendlier Guachoya in order to gather intelligence and advice on descending the Mississippi River.

While at Guachoya, Soto learned about a powerful chiefdom to the south that was within a three-day journey by canoe. This was Quigualtam – a famously bellicose, well-organized, and large chiefdom. Completely unintimidated, Soto sent an order to the mico of Quigualtam to show his face. The reply was withering. Quigualtam answered that if Soto was indeed the son of the Sun, as he claimed to be, then he should dry up the Mississippi River. Only then would Quigualtam come to pay his respects. Otherwise, he was accustomed to all paying subservience to him, either willingly or by force, and he would not come to Soto. He then ordered Soto to come to him. The answer enraged Soto, and he threatened to invade Quigualtam then and there. This, however, was impossible, since not only was Soto's army diminished to just over 300 men and only a few horses, but Soto himself was also deathly ill. Instead, Soto turned his rage on Anlico. He ordered a surprise attack on Anlico, which his men carried out with exceptional cruelty, killing hundreds of people. Afterward, Guachoya warriors plundered the town.⁴⁴

De Soto was on his death bed at the time of the Spaniards' attack on Anilco. Nearing his end, he appointed his master of camp, Luis de Moscoso, to take over command of the expedition when he was gone. After De Soto died, Moscoso led the expedition overland toward the present state of Texas, but once more the Spaniards found themselves in desperate



Figure 13. *De Soto's burial. Afraid that knowledge of De Soto's death would embolden their enemies, the men sank the body in the Mississippi River under the cover of darkness.* (Public domain.)

need of food and returned to the Mississippi Valley to plunder the corn-producing chiefdoms there. The expedition passed the winter of 1542-43 in the chiefdom of Aminoya, probably a little north of the mouth of the Arkansas River. In the spring, the 300 or so men set out down the Mississippi in seven newly-constructed boats. On their way south, they were harried by warriors of Quigualtam in about 100 canoes. Some of the canoes were described as massive in the Soto texts. Each one was paddled by a crew of sixty men, half on each side of the vessel, with another thirty warriors seated down the center. The impressive fleet of canoes escorted Soto's men to the southern edge of Quigualtam territory and turned around.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 119-20. See also National Park Service, *Osotouy Cultural Landscape, Arkansas Post National Memorial*, Cultural Landscape Report Environmental Assessment (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 2014), 2-9.

⁴⁵ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 121-22.

The people of Quigualtam were possibly the direct ancestors of the Natchez, who maintained a chiefdom when the French came more than a century later. If so, they were one of the few peoples in the Mississippi Valley whose population and political institutions did not collapse in the aftermath of De Soto's visit. Other chiefdoms, including Casqui, Pacaha, Quiguate, Anilco, Guachoya, and Aminoya, soon ceased to exist. Mississippian towns of 400 to 500 houses in De Soto's time were nowhere to be found when the French arrived. Archeologists and ethnohistorians of the Protohistoric Period have speculated that De Soto's men introduced diseases leading to virgin-soil epidemics. Morse and Morse noted that Casqui and Pacaha, the most populous and powerful chiefdoms in the region, were the very chiefdoms where the De Soto expedition lingered the longest, making them most vulnerable to attack by European-borne diseases. "The practice of having everyone in the society live within a fortified village also made these groups far more susceptible to such infections," Morse and Morse wrote. "Many more persons would die in a tightly nucleated settlement than in dispersed farmsteads." Morse and Morse note that the De Soto texts describe great towns in present-day South Carolina that were uninhabited and overgrown with grass yet contained Spanish goods only two years old, suggesting the frightful suddenness with which depopulation could occur.⁴⁶ High infection and mortality rates may be the principal cause of the disappearance of these population centers prior to the arrival of the French.

However, it must be emphasized that the archeological record for northeast Arkansas currently offers no conclusive evidence of an epidemic following the De Soto entrada. Bioarcheological studies of skeletal remains from five Mississippian sites – two near the Parkin site and three in the lower Arkansas Valley – show evidence of a pattern of high mortality and chronic malnutrition as well as possible epidemic disease, but the results are equivocal. Skeletal evidence, moreover, will not reflect an epidemic in which the disease took lives so quickly as to have no impact on individuals' bones. In sum, scholars have not learned and may never learn the details of what happened to the concentrations of people that De Soto encountered.⁴⁷

Quapaw Ethnogenesis on the Lower Arkansas River

The Quapaw are a Dhegiha Siouan-speaking people. Their language is shared with four other Dhegiha Siouan tribes: the Osage, Omaha, Ponca, and Kansa. The Quapaw name for themselves, Ugákhpa, means "those going downstream" or "with the current," or "the downstream people." The tribe has a migration story that tells of the Dhegiha Siouan tribes

⁴⁶ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 314-15.

⁴⁷ Kathleen H. Cande, "Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity," in *Interpretations of Native North American Life*, edited by Michael S. Nassaney and Eric S. Johnson (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 37, 45.

originating from one people in the Ohio Valley.⁴⁸ The tribes migrated westward until they came to the Mississippi River, where they attempted to cross in skin boats. As they were making the crossing the river became shrouded in mist. They tried to keep together by stringing a grapevine between the boats. However, the vine broke and the Quapaw lost sight of the other four tribes in the mist. While the other tribes safely crossed, and proceeded on westward up the Missouri River, the Quapaw drifted downstream, down the Mississippi. The other Dhegiha Siouan tribes have similar traditions about their shared origins in the Ohio Valley and the separation of the tribes at the point of the river crossing.⁴⁹

The Quapaw migration story is supported by archeological and historical evidence. Historian W. David Baird finds traces of the Hopewell culture of the Ohio Valley in the Quapaw religion, clan totems, and ceramics (although the identification of a “Quapaw phase” cultural complex has been considerably modified since Baird wrote his book). Baird further notes that when the French moved into the upper Mississippi Valley in the seventeenth century the Illinois Indians still had a cultural memory of when the Quapaw had resided in the Ohio Valley. The Illinois Indians called the Quapaw “Akansea,” an Algonquian word, a name the French adopted for them. The name “Akansea” still resonated in the Ohio country in the early eighteenth century as it appeared on a Dutch map of 1720 where the name was inscribed alongside the lower Ohio River, and on Englishman Henry Popple’s 1733 map of North America where the Cumberland River was designated as the “Acanseasipi.”⁵⁰

Furthermore, the language association of the five Dhegiha Siouan tribes is compelling evidence that the Quapaw broke off from the other four tribes just as their traditions maintain. The Quapaw language is closely related to the Osage, Omaha, Ponca, and Kansa languages. Three independent glottochronological studies of the relationship between Quapaw and the other Dhegiha Siouan languages each suggest an early separation between Quapaw speakers and the other groups. One study places the separation between A.D. 1289 and 1513, another between A.D. 1070 and 1470, and the third one around A.D. 950. Glottochronology assumes that all languages exhibit a similar pattern of retention and replacement of vocabulary words around a core lexicon, so that the relative ages of languages within a language family can be scientifically measured by the extent the languages have grown apart from each other. Although glottochronology’s premise is controversial, and the dates appear to be too early by several centuries to jibe with other kinds of evidence, these studies’ findings cannot be dismissed altogether.⁵¹

⁴⁸ W. David Baird, *The Quapaw Indians: A History of the Downstream People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 3-4

⁴⁹ Billy Proctor, “Origin of Tribal Name,” at <https://www.quapawtribe.com/index.aspx?nid=401> <October 26, 2016>.

⁵⁰ Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 5.

⁵¹ Michael P. Hoffman, “The Terminal Mississippian Period in the Arkansas River Valley and Quapaw Ethnogenesis,” in *Towns and Temples Along the Mississippi*, edited by David H. Dye and Cheryl Anne Cox (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 211-12; Everett Bandy consultation, January 25, 2016.

So, when did the migration occur? When did the Quapaw come to occupy the lower Arkansas Valley? The Quapaw were present on the lower Arkansas River by 1673, when Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet traveled down the Mississippi River. The Quapaw welcomed the French with a calumet ceremony, initiating a long friendship between the two peoples. The only Quapaw village that Marquette and Jolliet visited was Kappa on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Here they turned around, but not before their hosts informed them of at least three and perhaps four or more other “Akansea” villages, which the Frenchmen duly reported in their notes and put on their maps. After Kappa, the next village to the south was Tonginga, on the east bank of the Mississippi, the next was Tourima, on the lower Arkansas River near the mouth, and the fourth was Osotouy, up the Arkansas. A fifth village, Imaha or Southois, may have been mentioned as well, and Marquette’s map shows several more villages located farther up the Arkansas Valley. Marquette’s reporting constitutes the earliest documentation on tribes in the central Mississippi Valley after the De Soto entrada, and La Salle and other Frenchmen soon added more detail to those reports. The French exploration down the Mississippi marked the end of the so-called “Protohistoric Dark Ages.”⁵² Marquette’s map and account of his journey make it certain that the Quapaw were established in their new homeland by 1673. The question is, how long before 1673 did the Quapaw arrive in the area?

Students of Quapaw ethnogenesis have posed several different scenarios for when the Quapaw arrived. While ethnohistorians emphasize the tribe’s migration story and the tribe’s undeniable linguistic ties to other Dhegiha Siouan tribes, archeologists have tended to emphasize the archeological evidence provided by ceramics. Archeologists have generally favored an earlier arrival time. Tribal historians, for their part, stand by the migration story while they incline toward an earlier arrival than most ethnohistorians think plausible. Quapaw tribal members who opine on this matter tend to believe that their people were in Arkansas well before the arrival of the French and possibly before De Soto. The tensions between the archeological evidence and the ethnographic evidence, and the confounding puzzle of what happened to Pacaha and other Mississippian chiefdoms, has led at least one scholar to term the whole problem of Quapaw ethnogenesis a “paradox.” However, the recent archeological discovery of Osotouy at Wallace Bottom appears to be moving the scholarship on Quapaw ethnogenesis nearer to a consensus.⁵³

⁵² Cande, “Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity,” 38; Kathleen Du Val, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonies in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 67-68; George Sabo III, “The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas, 1673-1803,” in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, edited by Bonnie G. McEwan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 180; Jacques Marquette, “The Mississippi Voyage of Jolliet and Marquette, 1673,” in Louise Phelps Kellogg, editor, *Early Narratives of the Northwest 1634-1699* (1917, reprint: New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1967), 254-56; Risë Supernaw Proctor, “Quapaw Tribal Information Chronological Order,” at www.quapawtribalancestry.com/quapawtribalorder.htm <October 26, 2016>.

⁵³ Cande, “Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity,” 41-46; Hoffman, “The Terminal Mississippian Period in the Arkansas River Valley and Quapaw Ethnogenesis,” 219-20; House, “Wallace

A good deal of the difficulty has arisen from the unfortunate term “Quapaw phase” in the archeological literature. The term has proven to be a misnomer. Invention of the term can be traced back to the academic dispute in the mid-twentieth century over the route of De Soto’s expedition. John H. Swanton argued that the Quapaw and the Mississippian chiefdom of Pacaha were unrelated to each other, because the Quapaw migration story suggested a late arrival of the Quapaw in Arkansas after De Soto’s time. Phillips, Ford, and Griffin, in their effort to refute Swanton, cited their finding that the Menard-Hodges site was the site of Osotouy as evidence that the Quapaws were indeed present in the region in the early protohistoric period. Later, Ford re-affirmed that the Menard-Hodges site was the site of Osotouy, and Phillips coined the term “Quapaw phase” to describe an early protohistoric ceramic complex that was found both at the Menard-Hodges site and at other archeological sites on the Arkansas River. The name of the tribe was invoked even though there was no proof that ethnic Quapaws made the pottery that was diagnostic of “Quapaw phase.” As recently as 1990, the association of Quapaws with so-called “Quapaw phase” ceramics was described as “convincing and widely accepted.” Soon thereafter, archeologists backpedaled from that claim. They dropped the term “Quapaw phase” in favor of “Menard complex,” and they admitted that use of the tribal name to describe the ceramic style had been “premature.”⁵⁴

In 1964, Charles R. McGimsey III, an archeologist at the University of Arkansas, prepared an expert report for the Indian Lands Claim Commission on behalf of the Quapaw lands claim. At the time McGimsey performed his study, Quapaw-phase ceramics had been identified at a dozen archeological sites ranged up the Arkansas Valley as far as Russellville. McGimsey acknowledged that Quapaw phase merely referred to a style of pottery; it was not conclusively associated with the Quapaw tribe. Nevertheless, he used the association of Osotouy with the Menard-Hodges site to argue that the “Quapaw assemblage” found there would suggest that “Quapaw assemblages” found at a dozen sites in Arkansas constituted evidence of an early Quapaw occupation of those other places as well. In effect, McGimsey applied the direct historical approach in reverse: he used archeological data from precontact sites to inform the Indian Land Claims Commission about the territorial reach of an ethnic group of American Indians during the historical period. McGimsey’s work contributed to the idea – increasingly untenable as it would turn out – that the Quapaw arrived in Arkansas in the early protohistoric period, fanning out and leaving a cultural mark at all those sites where Quapaw-phase ceramics were found.⁵⁵

Bottom: A Colonial-Era Archaeological Site in the Menard Locality, Eastern Arkansas,” 265; Du Val, *The Native Ground*, 67-68; Everett Bandy consultation, January 25, 2016.

⁵⁴ Hoffman, “The Terminal Mississippian Period in the Arkansas River Valley and Quapaw Ethnogenesis,” 214-16; House, “Wallace Bottom: A Colonial-Era Archaeological Site in the Menard Locality, Eastern Arkansas,” 265.

⁵⁵ Charles R. McGimsey III, “Quapaw Sites on the Lower Arkansas River,” *The Arkansas Archeologist* 27/28 (1989), 35-48.

In the 1980s, Morse and Morse presented a scenario for Quapaw ethnogenesis that basically agreed with McGimsey's analysis. They posited that the Quapaw villages noted by the French in 1673 were the shreds of the Arkansas chiefdoms that collapsed shortly after De Soto's time. They suggested that the Quapaw moved into the region shortly after De Soto's entrada and asserted control over remnant populations of Mississippians reeling in the aftermath of devastating epidemics. Those survivors amalgamated with the Quapaw. The Mississippians became Quapaw-speakers while the Quapaw's ceramics changed to look more like the Mississippians' ceramics. The problem with this interpretation is that neither the Quapaw language nor the tribe's oral traditions reveal any trace of such an amalgamation having occurred. Moreover, there are a few archeological sites in Arkansas where Quapaw phase appears to have been present before the De Soto entrada.⁵⁶

Other archeologists have contended that Quapaw phase ceramics were similar enough to late precontact manifestations in the region to suggest that by De Soto's time eastern Arkansas had been partially or largely populated by an even earlier migration of Siouan peoples in late precontact times. In this variant, it is assumed that the Quapaw migration story refers to a subsequent migration well after late precontact times, or perhaps it makes a single story out of successive migrations. The late-arriving Quapaw amalgamated with groups who already spoke their language or a similar Siouan language. The theory that the chiefdoms were already peopled by Siouan speakers at the beginning of the Protohistoric Period offers a better fit with the archeological and ethnographic evidence, perhaps; however, its major weakness is that linguists insist that the names of chiefs and towns recorded in the De Soto texts were not Siouan names. Proponents of the theory explain that objection away by supposing that De Soto's interpreters were not Siouan speakers and converted the names into their own language.⁵⁷

Still another scenario suggests that the Quapaw phase or Menard complex is a manifestation of an altogether different cultural group, the ancestors of the historic Tunicians. Archeologist Marvin D. Jeter has asserted that Tunicians were present "possibly for several hundred years before the De Soto entrada" and that they may have "once occupied a truly huge area on both sides of the Mississippi River, northeastern Louisiana, and virtually all of eastern Arkansas, plus a western extension well up the Arkansas Valley."⁵⁸ Archeologist John H. House has suggested that whatever mysterious pestilence it was that depopulated the chiefdoms in the Mississippi Valley in the sixteenth century, the pestilence may have had less impact in the Arkansas Valley owing, perhaps, to the valley's relative remoteness compared to the densely populated Mississippi Valley. If Menard complex people were in

⁵⁶ Hoffman, "The Terminal Mississippian Period in the Arkansas River Valley and Quapaw Ethnogenesis," 221-22.

⁵⁷ Sabo, "The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas, 1673-1803," 185; Cande, "Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity," 43.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Cande, "Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity," 44.

fact ancestral Tunican, then the archeological record suggests that the Tunican chiefdoms in the Arkansas Valley survived relatively intact into the seventeenth century, at which time they fell to the invading Quapaw.⁵⁹

The idea finds some support in the story of Quapaw migration told by old chief Paheka and recorded by Territorial Governor George Izard in 1827. Paheka said that the Quapaw took over the area along the St. Francis River from “Tonnika” (Tunica) Indians. However, Paheka went on to say that his people took over the Lower Arkansas Valley from a different group. “This nation called itself Intouka; the whites at that period gave them the name of Illinois. Then we were left entire masters of this country.”⁶⁰

One more scenario (treated at the end of this chapter because it falls last in time) is the one favored by most ethnohistorians. It suggests that the five Dhegiha Sioux tribes left the Ohio Valley in the mid seventeenth century to escape the slaving wars brought by the Iroquois. The Quapaw split off from the other tribes and went down the Mississippi River to the area around the mouth of the Arkansas River, while a vanguard proceeded up the Arkansas and established themselves at what became the village of Osotouy. Either the Quapaw drove off the Menard complex people who were still occupying the site of the Menard Mounds, or, finding that place abandoned, they took the area from a group of Illinois Indian who were encamped at Grand Prairie – as Paheka related and Governor Izard recorded in 1827. In this scenario, the Quapaw were probably at maximum strength in the mid- to late seventeenth century, numbering around 6,000 to 15,000 persons.⁶¹

The later dating of the migration in this scenario is consistent with the information given by Illinois Indians to the French that the Quapaw or “Akansas” had formerly resided on the Ohio. Moreover, if the migration occurred around the mid-seventeenth century then it would help explain why the Quapaw were anxious to receive the French as allies, for it would indicate that the Quapaw were themselves newcomers in the land and surrounded by potential adversaries.⁶²

A weakness with the late arrival scenario is that it contradicts ethnographic sources on the migration story that appear to place the migration earlier in time. James Owen Dorsey, a missionary and reputable ethnographer of the late nineteenth century and author of “Migrations of Siouan Tribes” (1886), stated that the Quapaw separated from the other

⁵⁹ Cande, “Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity,” 44.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Hoffman, “The Terminal Mississippian Period in the Arkansas River Valley and Quapaw Ethnogenesis,” 208.

⁶¹ Du Val, *The Native Ground*, 67-68; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 129-31; Hoffman, “The Terminal Mississippian Period in the Arkansas River Valley and Quapaw Ethnogenesis,” 208; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 37.

⁶² Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 5; Du Val, *The Native Ground*, 68-69; Sabo, “The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas, 1673-1803,” 179.

Dhegiha Sioux tribes more than 300 years before his time of writing (that is, 300 years before 1886). He asserted further that the Quapaw directly encountered Soto in 1540. As to that statement, however, it is unclear whether Dorsey was reporting what his sources told him or if he was drawing his own inferences from the name coincidence of Quapaw and Pacaha. In Dorsey's time, it was widely believed that De Soto's route extended north to the Ohio Valley. Dorsey referred to the Quapaw's encounter with De Soto as a marker for showing the antiquity of the Quapaw's separation from the other four Dhegiha Sioux tribes; he did not venture to say where the encounter took place. Dorsey also described how one of the other Dhegiha Siouan tribes, the Omaha, completed their westward migration with the Ioway, a Chiwere Siouan-speaking people. The Omaha-Ioway connection is significant because they came to reside at a place called Blood Run on the Big Sioux River on the state line between Iowa and South Dakota, now a major archeological site. Evidence from Blood Run suggests that the Omaha arrived at that site earlier than would be consistent with a mid-seventeenth century exodus from the Ohio Valley. (The relationship of the Omaha and Ioway peoples to ancestral Oneota at Blood Run is not clear; ten carbon dates associated with Blood Run range from as early as 1480.) Another version of the migration story, as recorded by Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche in 1911, also pointed to an earlier time.⁶³

The Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma stands by the migration story, but it resists the theory advanced by ethnographers and historians that the migration was precipitated by Iroquois aggressions and therefore dates only to the seventeenth century. The Quapaw Tribe finds Governor Izard's 1827 letter to be the most credible textual source on the departure of the ancestral Quapaw from the Ohio Valley and their arrival in Arkansas. This source does not date the arrival, but it does offer contextual clues in the form of geographical references and mentions of other tribes, as well as a clear statement that the Quapaw left the Ohio Valley owing to a population increase and pressure on the tribe's natural resource base: "Our motive for leaving the country we occupied was the scarcity of game. We were too numerous at that time."⁶⁴ This is an important detail because it contradicts the theory that the ancestral Quapaw were pushed out of the Ohio Valley by the Iroquois.⁶⁵

Governor Izard's 1827 letter was part of a correspondence that he carried out with William H. Keating of the American Philosophical Society on Arkansas Territory's zoology, botany, and other matters of scientific interest, including "information concerning the aborigines." The letter containing the story given by Paheka was dated January 10, 1827, and

⁶³ Rev. J. Owen Dorsey, "Migrations of Siouan Tribes," *The American Naturalist* 20 (March 1886), 218, 222; Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe* (1911, reprint; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 36; Everett Bandy consultation, January 20, 2016. See also Vern E. Thompson, "A History of the Quapaw," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 1955), 360.

⁶⁴ George Izard to William H. Keating, January 10, 1827, letter transcribed by Everett Bandy and transcription provided to the author.

⁶⁵ John L. Berrey, Chairman, Quapaw Tribal Business Committee to Dr. Franklin-Weekley, National Park Service, April 19, 2017.

began with information on the Quapaw language and vocabulary words for certain animals. A description of the Quapaw was enclosed with the letter, and the account by Paheka was embedded within Izard's narrative description. Izard presented the account by Paheka as a first-person address in quotation marks, stating that he had received it from "Baptiste Imbeau, an aged French Creole, who heard it from Paheka (Dry-head), Grandfather of Heckaton, the present principal Chief."

Tribal historian Everett Bandy obtained a facsimile copy of the original January 10, 1827 letter from the American Philosophical Society and transcribed it. Bandy made a copy of his transcription available for the preparation of this study, and it is reproduced below. Words in brackets are Bandy's.

"When we abandoned our former lands, we set out without knowing whither we were going. Our motive for leaving the country we occupied was the scarcity of game. We were too numerous at that time; we had as many as 1600 warriors. On arriving at the mouth of the Ohio River (Ny Tonka), our chiefs determined on separating the Nation, in order to overcome the means of subsistence with greater facility. Our former name was Mahas. Those who followed the Chief Wajinkasa (black-bird) retained their appellation and now inhabit the country on the upper waters of the Mississippi [could be Missouri]. Our Chief whose name was Pa-heka chose to alter our name, and called us Gappa.

After our separation, our Party followed the course of the Ny-Tonka (Mississippi). The first Red-Skins whom we met with were settled some way below the Ny-Tachoutteh-jinka (the little muddy river, _____the St. Francis); they were called TonNika. We attacked and put them to flight. Some time afterwards we entered this river, which we called Ny-jitteh (Red-River, now the Arkansa). We soon discovered that there were other Red-Skins (Indians) in the country. Parties were sent out to look for them. They were found encamped in the great Prairie (between the Post of Arkansa and the Town of Little Rock). We attacked them; they made a valiant resistance, but we beat them and drove them away. This nation called itself InTo ũka; the Whites of *this/that [hard to read]* period gave them the name of Illinois. Then we were left entire masters of this Country. The Osages alone have made war on us; but we have always beaten and driven them beyond the Canadian River."

With evidence in this letter for support, the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma contends that the ancestral Quapaw separated from the rest of the Dhegiha exodus and settled in present-day Arkansas initially along the St. Francis River. Gradually, the tribe advanced from there to the area around the mouth of the Arkansas River (which is where the French encountered them.)

Further, the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma interprets the evidence from Izard as suggesting that the Quapaw “advance” continued up the Arkansas River in this same gradual fashion.⁶⁶

New Light from Recent Archeological Investigations

Just as the Arkansas Archeological Survey and the Arkansas Archaeological Society were completing their field-school investigations of the Wallace Bottom site in the summer of 1998, Arkansas archeologist George Sabo III prepared a chapter on the historic Quapaw tribe for the compilation, *Indians of the Greater Southeast* (2000). At the time of Sabo’s writing, the archeology at Wallace Bottom was still too preliminary to declare positively that it had revealed the long-sought historic Quapaw site that would yield an archaeological signature for the Quapaw. But Sabo noted the exciting discovery in his essay, saying that further investigation of this promising “candidate site” was eagerly awaited.⁶⁷

As Sabo pointed out, all the different theories about Quapaw ethnogenesis in Arkansas drew upon essentially the same archeological data, the Menard complex (Quapaw phase) site investigations. Most of those archeological investigations had been done prior to the 1970s. Since then, modern researchers had raised many doubts and concerns about that body of evidence. Sabo gave a thumbnail description of the material characteristics of the problematic Menard complex sites:

The ceramic complex is characterized by a predominance of Mississippi Plain, *var. Nady* pottery. The most common decorated ceramics are Wallace Incised, *var. Wallace*. Red dipped (Old Town Red) and painted (Carson Red on Buff, Avenue Polychrome, Nodena Red and White) ceramics are also common. Vessel forms include “helmet” bowls, rim effigy bowls, globular bottles with various neck shapes, “teapots,” and Conway style headpots. Natchezan, Caddoan, and Tunican ceramics are present as minority components of these assemblages. Common stone tools include Nodena points, Madison points, and thumbnail endscrapers. Sites are generally small and compact, some with evidence of fortification and containing platform mounds, plazas, and conical burial mounds. What little evidence there is for subsistence points to a mixed economy based on corn agriculture, hunting, and fishing. Mortuary patterns exhibit considerable variation. Based on his recent work at the Noble Lake Site, House (1997) has defined two chronologically successive

⁶⁶ John L. Berrey, Chairman, Quapaw Tribal Business Committee to Dr. Franklin-Weekley, National Park Service, April 19, 2017.

⁶⁷ Sabo, “The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas, 1673-1803,” 186-87; House, “Native American Material Culture From the Wallace Bottom Site, Southeastern Arkansas,” 65.

phases, which he calls “horizons,” for the Menard complex: an A.D. 1500-1600 Poor Horizon, followed by an A.D. 1600-1700 Douglas horizon.⁶⁸

John H. House and Mary V. Farmer of the Arkansas Archeological Survey conducted further investigations of the Wallace Bottom site from 2001 to 2006. The Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma became an active partner. The tribe obtained a historic preservation grant from the NPS and sponsored additional fieldwork. House and Farmer directed a team of Arkansas Archeological Survey personnel and volunteers and extended the area of investigation using both remote sensing and excavation techniques. The collections from Wallace Bottom came to include 3,758 American Indian pottery sherds and other ceramic items, 22,000 chipped lithic items, 122 whole or fragmentary stone artifacts, 1,470 lithic specimens categorized as raw materials, 585 European ceramic sherds, 166 glass beads, 242 fragments of glass vessels, 123 whole or fragmentary iron nails, 36 whole or fragmentary gunflints, and 13 lead musket balls plus other iron, lead, and cuprous metal artifacts.⁶⁹



Figure 14. “Teapot” form, Menard complex. Holmes, *Illustrated Catalogue*.)

Among the 3,758 American Indian pottery sherds, the predominant type (95.1 percent) consisted of shell-tempering with coarse particles of shell (greater than 2mm in diameter). This contrasted with the very fine shell-tempering characteristic of Menard complex sites, including the artifact assemblage from the nearby Menard-Hodges site. Among 79 classifiable arrow points, 64 were triangular points (common across the Midwest) and 15 were Nodena points (resembling a style associated with Nodena phase or late Mississippian sites found along the Mississippi River in eastern Arkansas). The coarseness of the shell-tempering and the preponderance of triangular arrowheads were interpreted as strongly suggestive of a separate Quapaw culture unrelated to the Menard complex. Another interesting finding was the frequent occurrence of notched-filleted jar rims indicated by the pottery sherds. House thought it was diagnostic of Danner series pottery, which perhaps reflected an Illinois presence or at least influence at the site.

More than a decade after the discovery of the Wallace Bottom site, archeologists started to draw somewhat firmer conclusions about Quapaw origins in Arkansas based on the archeological evidence. The Menard complex, the former Quapaw phase, was largely protohistoric and had virtually no connection to the Quapaw people of the early historic period. The “Native American material culture” assemblage from Wallace Bottom was “a strong contender for the long-sought archaeological signature of the Quapaws.” Since the material culture appeared to be without local antecedents, it pointed to a relatively recent

⁶⁸ Sabo, “The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas, 1673-1803,” 186.

⁶⁹ House, “Native American Material Culture From the Wallace Bottom Site, Southeastern Arkansas,” 55-58; Arkansas Archeological Survey, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2002-2003*, p. 33 at archeology.uark.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Survey-Annual-Report-2003.pdf <October 28, 2016>.

migration to Arkansas from the Ohio Valley. Certain artifacts found within the assemblage, such as catlinite and turquoise items and a ceramic stemless pipe bowl, were suggestive of a “broad sphere of interaction with native peoples from the Great Lakes to the lower reaches of the Mississippi River” around the time when Quapaw occupied the village of Osotouy.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ House, “Native American Material Culture From the Wallace Bottom Site, Southeastern Arkansas,” 63-66.

A French and Spanish Outpost in Colonial America

The colonial era of American history used to be told as prologue to the story of the American Revolution. The mode of telling placed a strong emphasis on the thirteen English colonies that would become the United States of America. French and Spanish colonies in the New World were peripheral to the story. To the extent that they were included, French and Spanish colonies were represented as exotic cultures beyond the pale of English settlement. They mainly figured into the narrative of imperial rivalry between European states for control of trans-Atlantic colonies and trade, a contest that culminated with the French and Indian War, the Treaty of Paris of 1763, and France's cession of her North American possessions to Britain and Spain. In this traditional narrative, American Indian nations had a peripheral part in the story as well. Historians described the colonial era by looking back from the vantage point of American independence, emphasizing how the early colonial experience laid the foundations for empire, and more, how the English colonies uniquely prospered and became the seedbeds for a free society, representative government, and American exceptionalism.¹

Such was the standard approach to colonial history when the National Park Service began to study Arkansas Post more than a half century ago. Ray H. Mattison, Park Service historian, began his detailed historical report on the site with the opening statement, "To interpret properly the story of Arkansas Post during the 17th and 18th centuries it is necessary to understand the struggle between the three major European powers to control the Mississippi Valley. These rivalries continued down into the 19th century when the newly-established United States occupied the region."² With that as his interpretive framework, Mattison proceeded to describe the series of military occupations of Arkansas Post and the fort's place in imperial strategy.

Other historians before Mattison chronicled the history of Arkansas Post in a similar vein. Like Mattison, these historians were chiefly interested in how each fort contributed to the imperial designs of the French and Spanish crowns. Their writings focused on the size and duration of successive French and Spanish garrisons and battles fought to defend the area. Those early historical studies of Arkansas Post included articles by Anna Lewis (1934), Stanley Faye (1943), Mary P. Fletcher (1948), and Norman Caldwell (1949), and a master's

¹ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Viking, 2001), x-xi.

² Ray H. Mattison, "Arkansas Post – Its Human Aspects," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1957), 117.

thesis by Marjorie Oletha Thomas (1942). All of them recalled the struggle for empire, adding one thing or another to the big picture of why France failed in North America while Britain succeeded, paving the way for the rise of the American Republic.³

Today the story of colonial America is told in a more inclusive way with a view to understanding the fates of many peoples, not just the ones who forged the American Revolution. In this retelling, the story of colonization began not at Jamestown in 1607 and Plymouth Rock in 1620, but earlier when American Indians encountered Spanish in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the American Southwest, and met French fishermen in Newfoundland. The narrow focus on the English colonies situated along the Atlantic seaboard has broadened to include the entirety of North America as it underwent a prolonged European invasion. Imperial rivalries between the French, English, and Spanish in America are now treated as part of a larger story of changing relations between American Indians and Europeans. Colonial history as it is now presented also emphasizes the role of the African slave trade in the making of the Atlantic world. Slavery developed as a crucial underpinning of many colonies' economies. In many parts of the Americas, the forced migration of enslaved Africans involved more people than the immigration of European colonists.

Throughout the colonial era, American Indians, Europeans, and Africans all experienced staggering mortality rates from violence, disease, overwork, and unhealthful living conditions. While American Indians suffered horrific epidemics, many Europeans, too, contracted deadly diseases when they migrated from temperate Europe to tropical and subtropical climates in the West Indies and the southern colonies on the North American continent. Africans experienced heavy mortality under the extreme rigors and miserable conditions of slavery. The historian John Murrin asserts that “losers far outnumbered winners” in “a tragedy of such huge proportions that no one’s imagination can easily encompass it all.” The historian Alan Taylor writes: “Between 1492 and 1776, North America lost population, as diseases and wars killed Indians faster than colonists could replace them.”⁴

James Pritchard’s 2004 treatise, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* illustrates some of the themes and approaches of this reconceptualization of colonial history. First, the book’s geographic scope is broad: rather than focusing intensely on New France in present-day Canada, the discussion ranges across the several French colonies in the Caribbean as well as French Louisiana. Second, it emphasizes social and

³ Anna, Lewis, “Fort Charles III, Arkansas Reports for the Year 1783,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (March 1934): 537-49; Faye, “The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Dominion,” 633-721; Faye, “The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: Spanish Dominion,” 629-716; Mary P. Fletcher, “The Post of Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1948): 145-49; Norman W. Caldwell, “Tonty and the Beginnings of the Arkansas Post,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1949): 189-205.

⁴ Taylor, *American Colonies*, xi. Murrin quoted by Taylor.

economic history and the diversity of peoples; only in the latter chapters does the author turn to a chronological narrative of colonial administrations and wars for empire. Third, the author's central argument is that the French colonies were solitary entities rather than part of a system; they struggled with lack of support from France, especially naval support. Pritchard contends that the colonies drove a search for empire rather than it being the other way around. Finally, Pritchard chooses to confine his story to the years 1670 to 1730, finding that those six decades constitute the critical period of French colonization. During those years, sufficient numbers of migrants from Europe and Africa arrived in the colonies to create settlements, forge economies, and shape institutions of government and society. The patterns persisted through subsequent decades.⁵

Recent historical studies of Arkansas Post reflect colonial history's many different lines of inquiry. Historian Morris S. Arnold has written extensively on colonial Arkansas and Arkansas Post, providing a sympathetic, finely-textured view of colonial French settlement from the arrival of the French through the Spanish period to the early American period. In his first book, published in 1985, Arnold drew on his background as a federal judge to analyze French Louisiana's legal traditions. In another book, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804: A Social and Cultural History* (1991), Arnold described the class-based society at Arkansas Post as well as the architecture of the forts and dwellings, and he placed the site in context with the French presence throughout the Mississippi Valley. In another, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804* (2000), Arnold focused on French-Quapaw relations over the duration of the colonial era. In addition, Arnold published numerous articles about everyday life at Arkansas Post, including a biographical sketch of François Ménard, a farmer and trader of the mid-eighteenth century.⁶

Another recent historian of Arkansas Post is Kathleen DuVal. She has given extensive treatment to the Quapaw tribe and the European settlement on the lower Arkansas in her book *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (2006). DuVal examined the ways in which American Indians and colonists mutually constructed rituals and practices to govern their trade and diplomacy. She used the Arkansas Valley to situate her story in a part of North America where American Indian tribes long maintained the upper hand over colonists.⁷

⁵ James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xxi.

⁶ Morris S. Arnold, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race: European Legal Traditions in Arkansas, 1686-1836* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1985); Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804: A Social and Cultural History* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991); Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000); Arnold, "François Ménard, a Colonial *Marchand* and *Habitant*," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 303-26.

⁷ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 12, 28.

Most recently another scholar, Sonia Toudji, delved into the records from Arkansas Post as part of her dissertation research on American Indian, European, and African intermarriage in the Mississippi Valley in the colonial era. She published an essay specific to intermarriage at Arkansas Post in *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*.⁸

Tonty's Trading House, 1686-1700

During the reign of Louis XIV, the French in Canada were divided over how to grow the colony of New France. Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the King's minister of finance, wanted the people to clear and till the land along the St. Lawrence River Valley and form a prosperous agricultural society to match the English colonies of New England. Many French colonists did as the French government envisioned, while a substantial number chose to pursue their fortunes in the fur trade, lured by the promise of quick profits and adventure, and they stuck with it even when the French government found that troublesome.

Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac, the governor of New France, favored the fur trade interests. Under Frontenac's leadership, Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette explored down the Mississippi River in 1673. Over the next decade, Frontenac pursued his expansionist aims with the help of the fur trader and explorer Robert Cavelier de La Salle. In 1682, La Salle explored the Mississippi all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. With dreams of establishing a fur trade empire across the interior of North America, La Salle claimed the vast area of Louisiana in the name of Louis XIV. Though La Salle had the backing of Frontenac, he acted in defiance of Colbert's intent to focus the colony's energies on agriculture rather than westward expansion.⁹

Henri de Tonty was La Salle's faithful lieutenant. Tonty's first journey with La Salle was in 1678-79 when La Salle went into the Illinois country and established Fort Crèvecoeur on the Illinois River. La Salle left Tonty at the new fort to oversee the fur trade with the Illinois Indians. In 1682, Tonty joined La Salle and about 30 men on the famous expedition to the Gulf. On their way down the Mississippi, they passed through the territory of the Quapaws and established friendly relations with them. On their northward return trip, La Salle rewarded Tonty for his service with a *seigniory* or feudal land grant on the Arkansas River and a concession or exclusive right to trade with the Quapaw.



Figure 15. Henri de Tonty.
(Public domain.)

⁸ Sonia Toudji, "The Happiest Consequences": Sexual Unions and Frontier Survival at Arkansas Post," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 45-56.

⁹ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas 1686-1804*, 3-5; W. J. Eccles, *France in America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), 85-89.

Proceeding onward, the party built Fort St. Louis at Starved Rock on the Illinois River, replacing Fort Crèvecoeur. While La Salle went to Quebec to shore up his political support for his fur trade endeavors, and then to France to organize an expedition to the Gulf, Tonty once again remained behind to conduct the fur trade in the Illinois country. Tonty acquired an associate, Francois Daupin La Forest, and the two men worked to advance La Salle's vision of a trading empire centered in the Mississippi Valley.¹⁰

In 1684, La Salle assembled an expedition of several hundred soldiers and four ships and sailed from France with the intent of establishing a new French colony at the mouth of the Mississippi River. He missed the Mississippi River's gigantic, peninsular delta, however, and sailed on westward. Maps of the day omitted the Mississippi Delta from the coastline. Though La Salle had stood at the mouth of the river and measured its latitude two years earlier, he still had no idea of the shape and size of the Mississippi Delta. As the river mouth lay three degrees farther south than the coastline as shown on his navigation charts, he seems to have concluded that the river must angle westward and empty into the gulf where the coastline curves southward in present-day Texas. He had no conception of how the river might extend southward into the gulf on a long peninsula of its own making. Perhaps, too, he overestimated the length of the Mississippi River, confused by its winding channel and languid current. In any case, La Salle's ships made landfall at the west end of the Gulf of Mexico and his expedition became stranded on the plains of Texas. There, after two years of fruitless search for Spanish silver mines or anything else of value, La Salle was murdered by his own men. He met his end in March 1687.¹¹

While La Salle was occupied in Texas, Tonty remained in the Illinois country. Early in 1686, Tonty received news that La Salle was cruising the Gulf Coast again, looking for the mouth of the Mississippi River. On his own initiative, Tonty formed a party of thirty Frenchmen and five American Indians and descended the Mississippi River, hoping to bring his friend reinforcements. Tonty's party reached the gulf in early April and camped at the very place where La Salle had erected the king's arms four years earlier. (Incredibly, they found the flagstaff lying down in the mud, apparently knocked over by floodwaters, and replanted it.) They stayed one week, while Tonty sent search parties along the coast for thirty leagues in either direction. Finding no sign of La Salle, the party regrouped and started back upriver on Easter Monday.¹²

¹⁰ Theodore Calvin Pease and Raymond C. Werner, editors, *The French Foundations 1680-1693*, in *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, Vol. XXIII (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1934), 39; Caldwell, "Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post," 189.

¹¹ Peter H. Wood, "La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer," *American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1984), 303-08. La Salle's ship *La Belle* wrecked in Matagorda Bay, Texas, in 1686. The wreck has been found and excavated.

¹² Henri de Tonty, "Memoir on La Salle's Discoveries, By Tonty, 1678-1690 [1693]," in *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634-1699*, edited by Louise Phelps Kellogg (1917, reprint; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 307-08.

When Tonty and his men came to the Arkansas River, ten Frenchmen requested permission to form a settlement among the Quapaw on the *seigniory* or land grant that La Salle had given to Tonty in 1682. Tonty gave leave to six of the ten men to stay behind and initiate trade. These men expected to build a trading post, acquire furs from the Quapaw, and transport the furs either north to Montreal or south to La Salle's anticipated colony on the Gulf Coast. From either place, the furs would then ship to France.¹³

After Tonty proceeded onward, the men built the post beside the Quapaw village of Osotouy. It is not documented why the post was located at Osotouy rather than at one of the other Quapaw villages located on the Mississippi. As those other villages had previously welcomed the French each time they traveled up or down the river, one of them might have been the more obvious choice. Perhaps Tonty or the men wanted to locate the post at the village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River because from that point, as Tonty would later write, "one begins to see many buffaloes and beavers."¹⁴ Or perhaps Tonty wanted to locate his trading house in the Arkansas Valley because that was the place of his land grant.¹⁵ Or perhaps the Quapaw themselves influenced or dictated the choice of location. As



Figure 16. Tonty's trading house in 1689. (National Park Service.)

historian Kathleen DuVal reminds her readers, "The Quapaws allowed this post because it served their interests."¹⁶

The best firsthand description of the post comes from the journal of Henri Joutel. A soldier in La Salle's expedition, Joutel kept accurate notes that he later turned into a comprehensive journal of the expedition. After La Salle's death, Joutel joined a small party of survivors who traveled overland from central Texas to the Arkansas River, and then via waterways to Quebec and back to France. When they were still in Texas, Joutel and his company were informed that La Salle had made a concession to Tonty to trade with the Quapaw. They were overjoyed when they came upon Tonty's post and their fellow Frenchmen living there. They immediately recognized the post by the "large cross standing

¹³ Tonty, "Memoir," 309; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 12.

¹⁴ Henri de Tonty, "Henri Tonty Letters," edited by John Delanglez, *Mid-America* 21 (1939), 229.

¹⁵ Jean Delanglez, "The Voyages of Tonti in North America 1678-1704," *Mid-America* 26, no. 4 (October 1944), 282.

¹⁶ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 76.

like those erected by missionaries in France” and the “house of the French style” standing beside the Quapaw village.¹⁷

Joutel’s party reached Tonty’s trading house in July 1687, more than a year after it was established. In the meantime, four of the six men originally assigned to the post had gone north. The two remaining were named Couture and Delaunay. Like Joutel, they were both Normans from the town of Rouen. Couture was a carpenter and presumably guided construction of the house. Joutel stated that the house was located “about a half pistol shot from the village on a slightly elevated site.” He wrote that the structure was built of large timbers joined with dovetail notching up to the roof, and that the roof was made of “cedar bark” (white cypress), “which was not bad for roofing.”¹⁸

A month after Joutel’s party visited the post, another party of survivors from the La Salle expedition followed behind. The second party included Father Anastasius Doauy, who wrote in his narrative that the post on the Arkansas River was a “French-looking house.”¹⁹

Tonty visited his trading house for the first time in January 1690. He did not leave much of a description. We only know that he visited all four Quapaw villages, staying four days in Kappa followed by two in Tongigua, then he stopped at Tourima on his way to Osotouy, where he spent three days “where my commercial house is,” and he spent another two days at Tourima before continuing his journey southward. By this time, Tonty had learned of La Salle’s murder, and he was on a mission to locate the rest of La Salle’s lost expedition. A year and a half later, Tonty spent twelve days on the Arkansas River, but again he did not describe the place or record what he did there.²⁰

The historian Norman W. Caldwell published an article in 1949 that still offers more detail on Tonty’s trading house than any other secondary source. Caldwell believed that sometime between Joutel’s visit and Tonty’s first visit in 1690, Tonty “probably built a fort in addition to the ‘house’ seen by Douay and Joutel.” Caldwell stated that Tonty made feudal grants to the six men he left on the Arkansas River, treating them as *habitants* or settlers. Caldwell’s evidence of the grants began with Tonty’s own words in his memoir wherein he wrote that his men “built a house surrounded with stakes.” As an indication that the stakes represented boundary markers, Caldwell cited a seigniorial grant by Tonty to one Jacques Cardinal published in *Illinois Historical Collections*. The grant consisted of a tract of one

¹⁷ Henri Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The Journal of Henri Joutel 1684-1687*, edited by William C. Foster (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1998), 265.

¹⁸ Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 270.

¹⁹ Father Anastasius Douay, “Narrative of La Salle’s Attempt to Ascend the Mississippi in 1687,” in *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley with the Original Narratives of Marquette, Allouez, Membre, Hennepin, and Anastase Douay*, edited by John Gilmary Shea (Clinton Hall, New York: Redfield, 1852), 219-20.

²⁰ Delanglez, “The Voyages of Tonti,” 282-83, 286.

arpen together with rights of trade, hunting and fishing on behalf of the seignior, Tonty. Finding examples of similar grants made around Fort St. Louis by both Tonty and La Salle, Caldwell contended that “a considerable number of land grants were doubtless made by both Tonty and La Salle.” The grants did not last, being revoked by officials in Quebec after both La Salle and Tonty were deceased.²¹

Caldwell reported that Couture, the carpenter, left Tonty’s employment and defected to the English in Carolina possibly in 1690 or 1693. Couture was reported in Savannah Town in 1694, and was said to have received a grant of land in Carolina in 1696. He led a party of English traders to the Arkansas in 1700, where he was turned back by the explorer Pierre-Charles Le Sueur who happened to be passing down the Mississippi with a load of furs and reminded the Englishmen that the Mississippi Valley was claimed by France.²²

Caldwell’s article leaves little doubt that Tonty aspired to develop a thriving trade with the Quapaw in bison hides and beaver pelts. After La Salle’s demise, Tonty carried on his leader’s vision of expanding the fur trade into the lower Mississippi Valley. He made repeated overtures to the French government to open the river to shipping. Once, he proposed to descend the river in a small sailing ship all the way to its mouth to demonstrate the river’s navigability. On another occasion, he proposed to build a barque of fifty tons at his trading house on the Arkansas which would sail from there to France. He drew up a detailed list of what he needed: two pilots with charts and instruments for taking elevations, two ship carpenters and their tools, two coopers, two blacksmiths, ten sailors, two surgeons, and a long list of building materials, tools, arms, and trading goods. His elaborate plans included obtaining an order from the governor to requisition twelve canoes and twenty-four canoemen “to bring the aforementioned things to the Arkansas.”²³

When Tonty’s plans for proving the navigability of the river fell short, he tried another tack: he supported an initiative to found Catholic missions among the native peoples in the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1698, Tonty led a party of three missionaries down the Mississippi River. The three missionaries were fathers St. Cosme, Davion, and Montigny, all from the Quebec Seminary. They belonged to a different Catholic order than the Jesuits, who had long been active in the St. Lawrence Valley and around the Great Lakes. Tonty and the missionaries expected to found a mission among the Quapaw, but they were saddened and disappointed to find the tribe had been decimated by smallpox, their villages on the Mississippi being nearly abandoned. Finding the Quapaw too scattered and beleaguered to be served effectively by a mission, the missionaries selected three other tribes: the Tamaroa

²¹ Caldwell, “Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post,” 190-91, 193-94. The seigniorial grant by Tonty is reproduced and translated in Pease and Werner, *The French Foundations 1680-1693*, 396.

²² Caldwell, “Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post,” 195, 201-02; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 7.

²³ Pease and Werner, *The French Foundations 1680-1693*, 276-82; Caldwell, “Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post,” 194-95.

north of the Arkansas and the Tunica and Taensa south of the Arkansas. The three missions got off to a poor start as Montigny became ill and returned to Canada while the other two priests were unable to learn the tribes' languages. A fourth priest, Father Nicholas Foucault, came to replace Montigny and briefly stationed himself at Osotouy. While traveling with two French soldiers, he and his escort were killed by Coroa Indians. The missions soon closed.²⁴

Tonty's trading house never developed into the thriving concern Tonty hoped it would. The post was abandoned probably in 1699 or 1700. Several factors doomed it to failure. In the first place, the fur trade hit on hard times in the 1690s: the market became glutted and prices fell. As beaver pelts constituted New France's most valuable export, the French government tried to protect prices by reducing production. It tried to curtail production by concentrating the fur trade at a few government-run trading posts located in the St. Lawrence Valley and in the lower Great Lakes region. It canceled traders' licenses and prohibited traders from carrying on the trade in the upper Great Lakes region and the Illinois country. The government's policy was largely unenforceable; the *coureurs de bois* – the “woods runners” or traders who traveled over long distances in the wilderness – flouted the edicts and turned to smuggling. Moreover, the effort to protect prices by adjusting supply and demand was bound to fail because the effect on France's economy was negligible. While Canadian furs were New France's most important export, they were an insignificant blip in France's economy.²⁵ Yet the government's prohibition of the western fur trade did succeed over the long run in putting Tonty and his partner La Forest out of business. Tonty could circumvent the government's prohibition for a while, but without state support the remote trade on the Arkansas could not thrive.

Wars were another critical factor in foiling Tonty's enterprise. The French government tried to rein in the western fur trade because it feared it was a distraction to the business of building up a farming population. New France needed a stable population of farmers not just to feed the colony but also to serve as militia in case of enemy attack. If too many colonists were drawn into the fur trade it could leave the population in the St. Lawrence Valley too small and weak to defend itself. At the same time, the French government recognized that the fur trade was building up the colony's wealth, especially among the merchant class in Montreal, and it did not dare shut it down altogether for fear of causing a massive defection of the *coureurs de bois* to the English colonies. New France already had a problem with defections as the Montreal merchants, who imported manufactures from France and supplied the *coureurs de bois*, were unable to match what the English trading outfits offered in terms of quality and price. Many American Indians professed a preference for trading with the English, who gave them better value for furs. The

²⁴ Caldwell, “Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post,” 196-99; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 140; Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 114; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 86-87.

²⁵ Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 150-62.

King's instructions to the Governor of France in 1687 acknowledged that the English were underselling the French in the American Indian trade and conceded that the French could only maintain their position through aggressive diplomacy with the tribes. In other words, the French had to offer their American Indian trading partners more than a mere commercial exchange; they had to secure each American Indian tribe's allegiance by promising the tribe protection from its enemies as well. But in the interest of economy, the trade must not be pushed farther westward as the *coureurs de bois* desired. The King's instructions to the governor were to allow construction of just one trading fort per year on the western frontier and to build "only light works" for defense against American Indian attack. "Considering that he has nothing to fear from any force which would be capable of carrying on a siege, a single wall pierced for musketry with a moderately deep ditch and a stockade are the only fortifications he ought to construct in the country where he commands," read the instructions.²⁶

The foe that gave the French the most concern at the end of the seventeenth century was the Iroquois. Some fifty years earlier, the five Iroquois nations had allied with one another and moved aggressively against other American Indian tribes located to the west to position themselves as middlemen in the fur trade. When French fur traders carried the trade westward to the Illinois country in the last quarter of the seventeenth century the Iroquois opposed them. The Seneca, the westernmost Iroquois nation, saw the new French forts in the Illinois country as a threat to their hard-won conquests. The Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy had a combined fighting strength of 2,800 warriors, making them the most powerful military force on the continent at that time. New France, with its population of around 10,000 colonists, could not muster half that many men in arms. During the 1680s and 90s, conflict between the French and the Iroquois escalated into a prolonged struggle. French forces invaded New York in an attempt to break up the Iroquois Confederacy. The Iroquois retaliated with the support of their English allies. During the Iroquois War, the Senecas periodically closed the Illinois and Ohio rivers to French commerce.²⁷

The Iroquois War directly undermined Tonty's trade with the Quapaw because it severed the supply line between Montreal and the Arkansas via the upper Great Lakes, the Illinois River, and the Mississippi. In the first six years after Tonty's trading house was established, furs could only be transported out during three winters. Resupply of the trading house with French goods was only possible in two years during that period. As late as 1698, the missionary St. Cosme reported that the Quapaw had not yet replaced their earthenware pots with iron kettles though they had been trading with the French for a dozen years.²⁸

²⁶ Pease and Werner, *The French Foundations 1680-1693*, 98-100.

²⁷ Eccles, *France in America*, 90-98.

²⁸ Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Dominion," 638.

La Salle and Tonty both calculated that trade on the Arkansas would prosper as soon as the lower Mississippi River was opened to navigation and commerce. However, the opening of the river took longer than Tonty anticipated. After La Salle's expedition of 1684-87 failed to locate the river mouth, the French government was loath to mount another costly expedition to the region. When it finally did so, it was too late to save Tonty's enterprise.

In 1698, sixteen years after La Salle claimed Louisiana for France, Louis XIV at last decided to occupy the province to keep it from the English. The King was disturbed by reports that the English were crossing the Appalachians to trade with American Indians in the Mississippi Valley, and other intelligence that the English monarch, William III, planned to seize the mouth of the Mississippi River and found a colony there. Pre-emptively, Louis XIV sent an expedition under the command of Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville to find the river mouth and build a fort. Iberville made landfall at Biloxi Bay and established a garrison of about eighty soldiers there before proceeding onward to explore the coastline around the Mississippi Delta. After locating the elusive river mouth, Iberville returned to France for reinforcements, leaving the garrison behind. The intent for coming years was to establish a colony, make alliances with American Indian tribes, and halt the spread of English influence in the region. France's strategic plan from this point onward was to control the two major rivers on the continent, the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, and keep the English colonies penned up along the Atlantic seaboard.²⁹

Meanwhile, for the short term the French government continued to pursue its policy of retrenchment in the fur trade. There was an edict to abandon and destroy all of the western forts, and when the edict was ignored there was another edict to surrender all licenses for trade in the western sector. Tonty accepted a commission from the governor of New France to meet with the many *coureurs de bois* at their annual rendezvous where they received their resupply from Montreal and convince those men to return to the St. Lawrence Valley. When only twenty out of one hundred and four *coureurs de bois* agreed to comply with the edict, Tonty connived with a large fraction of the rest to throw over their Montreal creditors and take their furs south to Iberville's new colony. According to Tonty's scheme, they would transfer their service to Iberville, who would take the place of the Montreal merchants in relaying the product to France. As the Montreal merchants had long opposed Tonty's efforts to expand the fur trade into Louisiana, jealous that it would cut into their business, Tonty's action in leading this revolt by the *coureurs de bois* against the Montreal merchants was sweet revenge for him. Tonty set out from the north for the Gulf Coast with thirty men and a flotilla of canoes laden with furs. He arrived at Biloxi with five canoes a little ahead of the swarm of rebellious *coureurs de bois*, claiming they had joined him "100 leagues from Fort St. Louis." The French commandant of the fort impounded the furs while he duly reported the "robbery" of the Montreal merchants to the governing authorities in the home country.

²⁹ Eccles, *France in America*, 102, 160.

Eventually the Crown let the *coureurs de bois* get away with their evasions as that was preferable to driving all those men into the arms of the English.³⁰

As Tonty brought this large contingent of *coureurs de bois* to the south, he may have traded for buffalo skins in the course of his journey, or he may have sent a canoe up the Arkansas River to clear out the fur store in his trading house. The evidence is vague and conflicting. In any case, it seems that he abandoned his trading house on the Arkansas around this time. Following his escapade with the *coureurs de bois*, Tonty turned his attention to places farther east along the Gulf Coast. In 1702, he founded a trading post at Pensacola. In 1704, he joined a military expedition against the Alabama tribe, contracted yellow fever, and died at Mobile Bay.³¹

Beginnings of Louisiana and the Law Colony

The second French outpost on the lower Arkansas River was founded in 1721 and was abandoned five years later. This short-lived occupation consisted of both an agricultural settlement, known as Law's Colony, and a military garrison, known as Arkansas Post. The buildings of this Arkansas Post probably occupied the same ground as Tonty's trading house, or a site nearby, while Law's Colony occupied drier ground on an eminence now known as Little Prairie. According to a map drawn by a French soldier, Lt. Jean Benjamin Francois Dumont, in 1722, the village of Osotouy stood on the south side of the Arkansas River, opposite where it had been in Tonty's time. Apparently, the Quapaw moved their village to the other side of the river sometime after 1700.³²

The French reoccupation of the lower Arkansas River in the 1720s grew out of efforts to colonize Louisiana in the early decades of the eighteenth century. In 1700, Iberville left his brother Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville in command of the colony and Bienville led the first attempt to found a settlement near the mouth of the Mississippi River. Bienville called the place Fort de la Boulaye. Bienville's men soon found they were living in a hellhole: a hurricane carried away their first wheat crop, black snakes invaded the fort's vegetable garden and devoured all the produce, and high water inundated the site for four months of the year. After seven years of struggle with the inhospitable environment, Bienville finally

³⁰ Caldwell, "Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post," 204; N. M. Surrey, *Commerce of Louisiana during the French Regime, 1699-1763* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 313-14; Paul du Ru, *Journal of Paul du Ru, Missionary Priest to Louisiana*, edited by Ruth Lapham Butler (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1934), 12.

³¹ Caldwell, "Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post," 204-05; Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 644-45.

³² Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 141-43. Dumont's map is reproduced in Arnold, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race*, 8.

abandoned the place and moved his headquarters to Fort Louis on the Mobile River, declaring that the mouth of the Mississippi was uninhabitable.³³

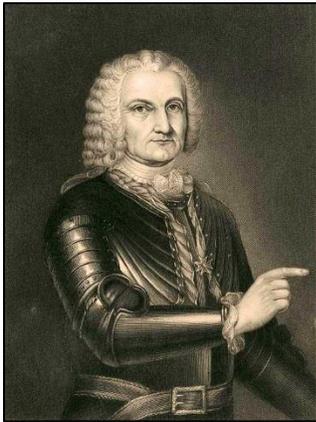


Figure 17. Jean-Baptiste le Moyne de Bienville. (Public domain.)

Bienville depended on ships from France to supply his garrison and keep it from starvation. But France was fighting the War of the Spanish Succession and had few ships available for supplying the new colony. A year after moving his troops to Fort Louis, Bienville had a mere 122 soldiers and sailors, 77 colonists, and 80 enslaved Africans to hold France's position on the Gulf Coast. By 1713, he had just 67 men left in his command. Still, this tiny presence served as a deterrent to English adventurism in the Mississippi Valley and Spanish encroachment along the Gulf Coast out of Florida or Texas, and it helped France preserve its claim to Louisiana when the European states made peace in the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, ending the Spanish War of Succession.³⁴

With the end of the war, the French government tried various schemes for colonizing Louisiana, including sending convicts there under naval auspices, and turning the whole colony over to private enterprise under trade monopoly incentives. The first such private company, belonging to Antoine Crozat, got almost nowhere. The second one, founded by the Scot financier and economic theorist John Law, had more impact. Under its royal charter, Law's company was obligated to recruit large numbers of colonists and make land grants to entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs would pay for the colonists' transportation and subsistence in exchange for their indentured labor in clearing and planting the land. In a few years, each entrepreneur would be set up on a self-sufficient and productive plantation and any colonists who completed their terms of indenture would be free to make their own farms. When Law started his company in 1717, it did not attract investors at first. Then Law acquired interests in the French slave trade and control of French West Indies tobacco production, in addition to a monopoly on the production of beaver pelts out of Louisiana, and the scheme for colonizing Louisiana began to show more promise. As investors came forward, the company arranged for the transport of some 7,000 European colonists and 2,000 enslaved Africans to Louisiana. The company made land grants or "concessions" at numerous locations along the Gulf Coast and along the lower Mississippi River. Law himself took a concession on the lower Arkansas River. It was situated north of the other concessions with a view to its becoming a supply center on the road to the Spanish mines of Mexico.³⁵

³³ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 45-46.

³⁴ Taylor, *American Colonies*, 384; Eccles, *France in America*, 160-61; Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 25.

³⁵ Arnold, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race*, 7-8; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 9; Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 25-26, 138; Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 661-62. Law's company was granted a twenty-five-year trade monopoly and permanent ownership of mines. It was pledged to undertake colonization of Louisiana with 6,000 Europeans and 3,000 enslaved Africans. (Eccles, *France in America*, 164.)

Early in the year 1720, seven ships filled with some 4,000 immigrants anchored in Biloxi Bay. Another 2,000 recruits were coerced aboard ship in France but never reached Louisiana, having perished in the crossing or jumped ship before the vessels left port. Only a few hundred of these people were free men; the rest were indentured servants, soldiers, dependent children, or convicts. The former prison population included a contingent of female inmates from the Hôpital-Général of Paris, a house of correction for women. These women were expected to marry in the new country and produce offspring to help populate the colony. Relatively few of these 4,000 immigrants would long survive the rigors of what lay ahead.³⁶

Few of the entrepreneurs who received concessions from the Western Company went to Louisiana themselves. Most of them sent a manager to oversee the hard labor of clearing the land and developing their plantation. Each manager rounded up the several dozen passengers who were now at their command and set off for their master's land grant. They scattered to locations distributed along the Mississippi, the Ouchita, the Yazoo, and other rivers. Bienville founded the town of New Orleans at this time.³⁷



Figure 18. John Law. (Public domain.)

There are conflicting accounts concerning the manager and labor force of Law's Colony. André-Joseph Pénicaut, a resident of Louisiana since 1700, wrote in his memoir that Law's manager was a man named M. Lias (or Elias) and he had a hundred men at his command. However, historians have questioned the reliability of Pénicaut. Furthermore, historians have often repeated an untrue story that the colonists were German and that they abandoned the colony in 1722 and retreated down the Mississippi to settle what later became the German Coast of Louisiana. The historian Morris S. Arnold has demonstrated that this story is erroneous; the colonists who peopled Law's Colony and the colonists on the German Coast were two separate groups.³⁸

As for the number of colonists and when they arrived, Arnold doubts the version given by Pénicaut and puts more credence in an account by Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe, a soldier sent by Bienville to explore the upper Arkansas River in 1722. La Harpe stated that the first contingent of *engagés* or indentured servants arrived at Law's Colony in

³⁶ Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, editor, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Pénicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 240; Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 26.

³⁷ McWilliams, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 240-48.

³⁸ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 9-12.

August 1721, which would imply they came by a later ship. Also, in La Harpe's account the manager of the Law Colony was a man named Levens.³⁹

About a month later, according to La Harpe, a military force of seventeen French soldiers under the command of Lieutenant La Boulaye was sent by Bienville to the Arkansas. The purpose of La Boulaye's force was to form a garrison among the Quapaw, strengthen the French alliance with that tribe, provide some protection for Law's Colony, and prevent English traders from intruding into the lower sector of the Mississippi River. La Boulaye initially made his camp with the Quapaw village of "Ouyapes" (probably Kappa) near the mouth of the Arkansas River. The threat of flooding at that location soon caused La Boulaye to move his men upriver to Osotouy. Possibly, too, the threat of attack from the Quapaw's enemies, the Chickasaw, weighed in his decision. Indeed, the Quapaw may have moved upriver ahead of the garrison, forcing La Boulaye to relocate. Since losing so many of their people to smallpox in the 1690s, the Quapaw formerly living on the Mississippi River had already moved to the lower Arkansas River for safety of numbers in case of attack. The four villages known to Tonty a generation earlier – Kappa, Tourima, Tonginga, and Osotouy – were gradually consolidating into one village at Osotouy. For all of these reasons, it made sense to station the garrison upriver.⁴⁰

La Harpe received his orders from Bienville on December 10, 1721. He was given command of sixteen soldiers and was told to proceed to La Boulaye's garrison on the Arkansas where he was to remain as long as necessary to raise provisions for his exploration of the upper Arkansas. La Harpe's detachment also provided an escort for two civilians who were being sent to replace the managers of two concessions. One of them was Bertrand Dufresne, Sieur du Demaine, who was sent to replace Levens. When La Harpe reached the Arkansas on February 27, 1722, he found the buildings constructed and then abandoned by La Boulaye and his command. La Boulaye had left just one soldier behind to inform others of where he had gone to station his men. La Harpe's assistant, Jean Benjamin François Dumont, described the newly constructed works at the river mouth. "There is no fort in the place," he wrote. Rather, there were "only four or five palisaded houses, a guard house and a cabin which serves as a storehouse."⁴¹

On the last day of February and the first day of March, during an icy cold snap, La Harpe proceeded with his detachment up the Arkansas River for eight and a half leagues (about thirty miles) to Osotouy. La Harpe called the Quapaw village Zautoouys and he called

³⁹ Arnold, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race*, 8-9. La Harpe's report is extracted in Ralph A. Smith, "Exploration of the Arkansas River by Benard de La Harpe, 1721-1722," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (Winter 1951), 339-63. Levens is mentioned on 344.

⁴⁰ Smith, "Exploration of the Arkansas River," 339-50; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 20; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 29-30; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 82; Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 666.

⁴¹ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 20.

the Arkansas the Zautoouys River. He reported that the Quapaw village was located on the left bank and was composed of 330 persons and 41 huts. La Harpe neglected to describe the buildings erected by La Boulaye. Perhaps none was yet built. La Harpe merely stated that La Boulaye and his garrison were living on the opposite side of the river “on the ground of M. Law’s dwelling, at two hours journey from the village to the west northwest.” The “two hours journey” is difficult to reconcile with other details which suggest that the distance between the post and the colony was much less. Dumont made a sketch map of the village of Osotouy, Arkansas Post, and the Law Colony all in relation to the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers which shows the three habitations as being clustered closer together. La Harpe himself wrote elsewhere in his report, “In the evening [of March 1] at four o’clock, I went with M. de Laboulaye and Mr. Dufresne to the settlement. It is located at a quarter of a league to the north of the river; one crosses a small stream to get there.” That would suggest the settlement was less than a mile away, or just outside the floodplain.⁴²

La Harpe stated that Law’s Colony consisted of about forty-seven men and women including the commandant, a storekeeper, a surgeon, and an apothecary. He said the colonists had built about twenty cabins, which he described as “poorly arranged,” and they had cleared only three arpents (about two and a half acres) of ground. The clearing represented a very small fraction of the 24,000 acres in Law’s concession, yet their limited progress is hardly surprising if indeed the colony had gotten started only the previous August.⁴³

There was a change of direction at Law’s Colony after Bertrand Dufresne, Sieur du Demaine took charge from Jacques Levens, who was managing the site remotely through a subordinate, one M. Menard. Dufresne released twenty of the engagés from service and gave the freed individuals their own land to clear and cultivate, hoping that in this way the colonists would work harder and the colony would have more land cleared and a larger food crop before the next winter.⁴⁴

The next surviving report of Arkansas Post and the Law Colony comes from Diron d’Artaguiette, inspector general of the Western Company, who visited Louisiana’s many concessions and compiled a census during 1722-23. He appeared on the Arkansas River on February 25, 1723, one year after Dufresne took over management, and found there were “only three miserable huts, fourteen Frenchman and six negroes, whom Sr. Dufresne, who is the director here, employs in clearing the land.” He stated further that the colonists had been unable to grow a successful crop of Indian corn. D’Artaguiette described Arkansas Post as

⁴² Smith, “Exploration of the Arkansas River,” 346-49. Dumont’s map is reproduced in Arnold, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race*, 8.

⁴³ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 12; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 30.

⁴⁴ Arnold, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race*, 8-9; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 30.

“no fort at all. The commandant there has only a little hut. There is also a sort of a barn which serves as lodging for the soldiers, who are very badly equipped in every respect.”⁴⁵

The population of the Law Colony divided into two groups, apparently in response to Dufresne’s action in making a portion of them free. By the time of D’Artaquiette’s visit, the group remaining under Dufresne’s command resided at the original location (though it is unclear how the twenty cabins described by La Harpe dwindled to just three one year later.) The other group moved the short distance to the site of the military post, such as it was. D’Artaquiette described the latter as “French habitants, who are all men dismissed from the concession belonging heretofore to Mr. Law.” Women were present in this group as well though they were not included in the inspector’s description. A Jesuit priest who accompanied d’Artaquiette baptized two French children and performed two marriage ceremonies.⁴⁶

By the time of d’Artaquiette’s visit, the Western Company no longer belonged to John Law and the concession was no longer his. Law had gotten into political and financial trouble. As part of his scheme for colonizing Louisiana, the Scottish financier convinced the French government to adopt his monetary theory and issue paper money, backed by the King’s gold, through a central bank of France, which was Law’s own former private bank. Law raised capital for the Western Company by selling shares based on the new paper currency. The scheme led to speculation and the so-called “Mississippi Bubble” followed by a run on the central bank and the collapse of the paper currency. Law abruptly fell out of favor with the government and fled Paris to avoid arrest. Though he lost control of the company in December 1720, the colonist ships still sailed and the concession on the Arkansas River that bore his name still went forward. It would seem that when news of the shakeup in the Western Company finally reached the Law Colony it would have had a demoralizing effect for the colonists, but the details are sketchy. All that is known is that the colony lost population during the rest of the decade and practically faded into oblivion.⁴⁷

The French government withdrew the garrison from Arkansas Post sometime before 1730, perhaps in the year 1726. The Western Company entered a contract with the Jesuit order that essentially tried to revitalize its Louisiana concessions with the help of missionaries. Father Paul du Poisson, a Jesuit priest, tried to reestablish a mission among the Quapaw in 1727. He found no French soldiers present upon his arrival at the village of

⁴⁵ Ray H. Mattison, “Arkansas Post – Its Human Aspects,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1957), 123; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 16.

⁴⁶ Mattison, “Arkansas Post – Its Human Aspects,” 123; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 16. See also Ray H. Mattison, “Arkansas Post Investigations: Selective translations from Paris Archives Nationales, copies of which are located in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.,” no date, (typescript), Arkansas Post National Memorial, p. 01201.

⁴⁷ Faye, “The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination,” 661-65; Arnold, “Indians and Immigrants in the Colonial Era,” 49.

Osotouy. He reported that there were about thirty Frenchmen still making their home in the area. No longer organized for making a plantation, these remaining settlers subsisted by hunting, trapping, trading with the Quapaw, and tending small crops.⁴⁸

From the French and Chickasaw Wars to the Treaty of Paris, 1731-1763

After thirty years of colonization, France's hold on Louisiana was very weak. The French population was almost entirely limited to the Gulf Coast and along the lower Mississippi River from New Orleans to Natchez. North of Natchez, the French had trading posts at Natchitoches and St. Louis des Caddodoches on the Red River. French hunters established semi-permanent camps or nascent settlements in at least two locations on the Arkansas River above Arkansas Post: one known as Petit Rocher (Little Rock) and the other as Cadron. With the withdrawal of French troops from the Arkansas, there was not a single French fort in the Mississippi Valley from Natchez to Illinois. Native tribes controlled the vast interior and only suffered the presence of the few French soldiers and colonists because it suited the tribes' interests for trade and defense.

In 1729, the Natchez Indians decided they did not want a French community in their midst and wiped it out. Nearly 300 colonists perished in the attack. The French settlement of Natchez was the second largest in Louisiana after New Orleans, and its destruction came as a shock to the rest of the French population.⁴⁹ Two years later, the Western Company forfeited its charter and the French government took over administration of Louisiana.

The French organized the defense of Louisiana in a manner different from its defense of Canada. Whereas the population of New France was concentrated in the St. Lawrence Valley and could be called out to form a militia for the defense of the colony, the population of Louisiana was too small and dispersed to form an effective militia. Instead, the French relied on their alliances with American Indian tribes to defend the colony against attack by the English or Spanish and their allied American Indian tribes. The French tried to maintain their alliances by placing a few military posts at strategic locations. The posts were not primarily for military support, but served instead as centers for communication and supply. Post commandants cultivated the American Indian alliances through regular trade relations and observance of diplomatic protocols. They were like "French embassies in a foreign land." Post commandants had to demonstrate an ability to get along well with the American

⁴⁸ Mattison, "Arkansas Post – Its Human Aspects," 123; Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 670-72; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 31; Arnold, "Indians and Immigrants in the Colonial Era," 49.

⁴⁹ Surrey, *Commerce of Louisiana*, 28; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 18, 99; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 94-96.

Indians and to represent French interests to them. Anyone who failed in those tasks was apt to be dismissed from service and recalled to France.⁵⁰

France had few troops in Louisiana. The number of French soldiers stationed throughout the Mississippi Valley may never have exceeded 1,000. There were not enough soldiers in the colony to form brigades or regiments as in the regular army; instead, they were organized into companies of about fifty men. The standard company was commanded by a captain, a lieutenant, and two ensigns, with perhaps a couple of cadets attached to the unit as officers-in-training, while the ranks consisted of two sergeants, three corporals, two drummers, and thirty-nine soldiers. French military posts in Louisiana were small and not strongly fortified. With the habitants or settlers living alongside, they were more like armed hamlets. Historian David Hardcastle has written, “None of the colony’s military posts could protect anything but the ground on which they stood...without the Indians acting as a defensive shield.”⁵¹

In retaliation for the attack on the French settlement of Natchez, the French called on their Quapaw allies to make war on the Natchez, Yazoo, and Koroa Indians. The three-year Natchez War ended with the annihilation of the three tribes; those who were not killed were either captured and enslaved or forced to seek refuge with other tribes. The Quapaw emerged from the war as France’s staunchest ally in the region. To solidify the French-Quapaw alliance, Governor Étienne de Périer ordered First Ensign de Coulange to take a detachment of twelve men into the Quapaw’s territory and re-establish the former Arkansas Post.⁵²

On the edge of Lake Dumond, near the site of the former post, De Coulange and his men erected a barracks, an officers’ house, a magazine, and a jail. The historian Arnold has described the buildings from contemporary documents as follows:

A poteaux en terre barracks forty feet by sixteen feet roofed with bark; a *poteaux en terre* prison ten feet by eight feet roofed with bark; a house (*maison*) *de bois sur solles* thirty-two feet by eighteen feet roofed with bark and divided into three rooms, one of which had a fireplace, with floors and ceilings of cypress; and a powder magazine built of *bois sur solles* that measured eight feet by ten feet. *Bois sur solles* (wood on sills) construction utilized vertical posts, as did *poteaux en terre* construction, but, instead of being placed in the ground, the posts rested on a sill

⁵⁰ David Hardcastle, “The Military Organization of French Colonial Louisiana,” in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History, Volume 1, The French Experience in Louisiana*, edited by Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: Center of Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 350-55; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 91-93.

⁵¹ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 88; Hardcastle, “The Military Organization of French Colonial Louisiana,” 353.

⁵² Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 101.

(*solle*), usually of wood, which served as a kind of foundation. This was a very common building technique in colonial Louisiana from the earliest days.⁵³

De Coulange wrote to the governor in 1733 that his tiny garrison was “menaced from all sides.” The Chickasaw, reinforced by members of the defeated Natchez tribe, threatened to attack from the east, while the Osage, asserting a bigger role in the trans-Mississippi fur trade, pressed on them from the west. Nonetheless, the governor, with an eye to economy, advised De Coulange to keep the fortifications modest. Rather than build a stockade around all four buildings, he instructed De Coulange to enclose only the barracks “with good stakes and provide it with loopholes.”⁵⁴

Conflict between the French and the Chickasaw started to develop soon after the French began their colonization of Louisiana. In the 1690s, even before the first French colonists arrived, the Chickasaw entered into trade relations with English colonists from Carolina. Besides a vigorous trade in deerskins, the Chickasaw provided enemy captives to the English, who sold those captives into slavery for use on the tobacco and rice plantations on the Carolina coast and in the West Indies. As the Chickasaw raided other tribes to obtain captives for the slave trade, it brought them into greater conflict with neighboring tribes such as the Choctaw and the Quapaw. Both the Choctaw and the Quapaw welcomed an alliance with the French to aid them in their struggles with the Chickasaw. At first the French tried to persuade the Chickasaw to turn against the English, and when that failed they armed the Choctaw with guns and encouraged them to make war on the Chickasaw and drive them back. The Choctaw sold Chickasaw captives to the French, who sold them to planters in the French West Indies. Slaving by both sides intensified the conflict, and the Chickasaw and the French became implacable enemies.⁵⁵

Bienville, returning to Louisiana as governor in 1732, determined to wage a war of extermination against the Chickasaw in order to protect France’s alliances with the Choctaw and Quapaw. Arkansas Post figured in Bienville’s plan. As the only French garrison in the Mississippi Valley between New Orleans and Illinois, it anchored France’s position among the Quapaw. The Quapaw soon demonstrated their

⁵³ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 31.

⁵⁴ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 35; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 31.

⁵⁵ Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 35-41. See also Robbie Ethridge, “The Emergence of the Colonial South: Colonial Indian Slaving, the Fall of the Precontact Mississippian World, and the Emergence of a New Social Geography in the American South, 1540-1730,” in *Native American Adoption, Captivity, and Slavery in Changing Contexts*, edited by Max Carocci and Stephanie Pratt (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 47-64.

support of the alliance by attacking and killing some Chickasaw and taking their scalps to New Orleans to show the governor.⁵⁶

Bienville organized a military campaign against the Chickasaw in 1736. He planned to lead an army north from Mobile up the Tombigbee River while another army under the command of Pierre d'Artuguiette would head south from Illinois. The two forces would converge on the Chickasaw in their stronghold near the Chickasaw Bluffs. However, the Chickasaw attacked the latter force before they could combine, and the French were dealt a crushing defeat. A smaller, third French force coming from Arkansas Post with Quapaw allies did not get to the field of battle until it was too late. When Bienville reached the area some two months after the French defeat, his own force was easily repulsed.⁵⁷

Three years later, Bienville once again assembled a multinational force of French and American Indians to destroy the Chickasaw. In preparation for the attack, the French built Fort St. Francis near the mouth of the St. Francis River. The fort was laid out on a larger scale than Arkansas Post but it may not have been fully completed. In any case, it was abandoned as soon as the conflict was over. In this second Chickasaw War, Bienville assembled a force of perhaps 1,200 fighting men, the largest military force that the French ever mustered in Louisiana. But it was difficult to supply such a force, or to locate the enemy, and after months of inaction the native allies began to depart and the campaign fizzled. Though the governor of Louisiana failed again in his objective, the Chickasaw agreed to a truce. Afterwards, Bienville was recalled to France and the Marquis de Vaudreuil was appointed governor in his place.⁵⁸

In 1748, the Quapaw moved their main village from its location directly across the river from Arkansas Post to a new location about six miles upstream. Its new location was a place the French called Ecores Rouges (Red Bluffs). The French knew the place as the first ground encountered when going upriver that was reliably elevated to escape occasional flooding. Severe flooding in that year may have been

⁵⁶ Eccles, *France in America*, 168-69; Surrey, *Commerce of Louisiana*, 28; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 37; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 96-97.

⁵⁷ Eccles, *France in America*, 168; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 37; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 101.

⁵⁸ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 102-04; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 52-57; Samuel Dorris Dickinson, "Lake Mitchegamas and the St. Francis," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 1984), 197-207. On Fort St. Francis, Dickinson reports that Captain Jacques de Constillas and his troops left New Orleans on September 6, 1738 and reached the mouth of the Arkansas River on October 29. They continued to Arkansas Post where they enlisted 24 Quapaw warriors. They then proceeded to the St. Francis where they built a fort one-eighth of a league from the river mouth. It was a square stockade with four bastions. The fort was resupplied from Arkansas Post in January 1739 but after the troops departed in August 1739 the fort was abandoned and allowed to go to ruin. The Ross map of 1775 identified "Old Fort Kappas" on the south side of the river, which was probably the ruin of Fort St. Francis.

the primary reason why the Quapaw elected to move their village. Rising tensions between the Quapaw and the Chickasaw may have been another factor. The Quapaw raided the Chickasaw in 1744, 1746, and 1747. After each raid, they took more enemy scalps to the French governor to demonstrate their friendship and receive the expected presents in return. As the Quapaw anticipated that the Chickasaw would retaliate, they may have moved their village upriver for their own safety. Their departure left the tiny French settlement near Arkansas Post vulnerable to attack, especially as it lay a short distance outside the stockade.⁵⁹

On May 10, 1749, at dawn, about 150 Chickasaw warriors led by chief Payah Matahah attacked the French settlement and quickly overran it. They took six men and eight women and children captive and set fire to the buildings. Then the Chickasaw war party surrounded the fort with its small garrison of a dozen soldiers. When the Chickasaw charged the fort, the French soldiers waited as long as they dared and then fired their cannon loaded with grapeshot. Payah Matahah fell, gravely wounded, and the Chickasaw called off their assault. The garrison and fort survived the attack, though the French settlement was virtually destroyed. Some of the eight women and children captives turned up later on the Carolina coast in Charles Town, and were ransomed. None of the six adult male captives was ever seen again.⁶⁰

The Chickasaw's attack on Arkansas Post scared the French in Louisiana. Reports that the Chickasaw war party had contained numerous Choctaw warriors spurred fears that the French-Choctaw alliance would falter and the Choctaw would turn on other French settlements in Louisiana. Governor Vaudreuil ordered the commandant of Arkansas Post to relocate the fort to Ecores Rouges, both to ensure the safety of his command and to reinforce the French-Quapaw alliance. The commandant, Louis-Xavier-Martin Delinó de Chalmette, followed the governor's order but half his men deserted him, leaving just six soldiers under his command. In 1751, he left his post on his own initiative and traveled to New Orleans to seek assistance. While he was absent, the remaining soldiers took the last of the supplies and went to Spanish Texas.⁶¹

Delinó's concern was not just with the threat of another attack by the Chickasaw; he also wanted to protect his interest in the fur trade. Fort commandants had to supplement their officer's pay by other means, and Arkansas Post was known as one of the most profitable assignments for a post commandant in the colony. By the mid-eighteenth century, Arkansas Post had considerable trade with the Osage, who had established themselves as powerful

⁵⁹ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 104-05; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 99; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 39.

⁶⁰ Arnold, "The Delta's Colonial Heritage," in *The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, edited by Jeannie Whayne and Willard B. Gatewood (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 60.

⁶¹ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 105-07; Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 708.

middlemen between the French and various tribes on the southern plains. For the French, relations with the Osage became as important as relations with the Chickasaw and Choctaw. Moreover, Arkansas Post was well placed for trade with the Spanish. Arkansas Valley offered *coureurs de bois* a direct route to the Spanish Southwest. Two brothers, Pierre and Paul Mallet, pioneered trade with the Spanish settlements of Taos and Santa Fe during the 1730s and 40s. Spanish authorities tried to prohibit trade with the French, but smuggling between the Spanish Southwest and French Louisiana became rampant. Arkansas Post occupied a strategic location in the emerging Spanish trade as well.⁶²

Governor Vaudreuil removed Delinó from his command (or what was left of it after his men deserted) and sent a new commandant, Lt. Paul Augustin le Pelletier de La Houssaye, with a full company of fifty men to garrison the Arkansas and build a fort at the new location. The deployment formed part of a general buildup of French troops in Louisiana to strengthen France's alliances with tribes and check British ambitions in the Mississippi Valley. In 1750, the French king decreed that thirty-seven companies of fifty men each should be kept in Louisiana, and by the end of the year there were 2,000 regular troops in the colony. Although France, Britain, and Spain were currently at peace, the wars in the first half of the eighteenth century pointed to a coming struggle for empire in North America and the West Indies.⁶³

La Houssaye apparently began construction at Ecores Rouges in October 1751, while his successor in command, Captain Charles Marie de Reggio, oversaw its completion. When the fort was completed some four years later, it was enclosed by an eleven-foot-high wall of double stakes. Each of its four walls measured 180 feet in length. Three corner bastions each carried a platform for a cannon. Two of the bastions had a sentry box beneath the gun platform, the third had a jail. Within the stockade were several buildings including a combined officers' quarters and soldier barracks, a combined hospital and storehouse that was also residence for the interpreter and storekeeper, and a combined first officer's house and chapel shared by the fort commandant and priest. Other buildings included a bake house, a magazine, and latrines.⁶⁴

The fort was scarcely completed when Captain de Reggio received orders to relocate the fort again, this time downriver. De Reggio found a location near the river mouth where he thought the earthworks might withstand the frequent floods. The purpose of locating the fort in that challenging environment was to put the fort closer to the Mississippi River and enhance France's position in the Mississippi Valley in the unfolding military struggle with

⁶² DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 103-18; Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975), 316-20.

⁶³ Mattison, "Arkansas Post – Its Human Aspects," 9; Eccles, *France in America*, 177; Taylor, *American Colonies*, 420-28.

⁶⁴ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 43, 144; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 32-36.

Britain. The Seven Years' War began with a skirmish in the upper Ohio Valley in 1754 and soon erupted into the climactic war for empire in North America. Although the Mississippi Valley lay beyond the main theater of operations, which straddled the frontier between New York and Canada, control of the Mississippi was central to France's grand strategy of penning the British colonies along the Atlantic Coast with a system of American Indian alliances stretching from the St. Lawrence Valley through the Great Lakes and Illinois country to Louisiana. The Mississippi River was a vital supply line for maintaining those alliances.⁶⁵

After it was relocated, the fort still went by the name Arkansas Post or more often just Arkansas. NPS historian Roger Coleman referred to it as Post No. 5, the fifth of seven sequential Arkansas Posts. Coleman counted Tonty's trading house as Post No. 1, the first military post occupied by troops in the 1720s as Post No. 2, the post reoccupied in the 1730s as Post No. 3, and the post built at Ecores Rouges in the 1750s as Post No. 4. Coleman's sequence minus the numbering is reproduced on an interpretive panel in the visitor center. The ruin of this "Post No. 5" became known in the nineteenth century as the old French Fort Desha. Today there is no physical trace of this phase of Arkansas Post left, since the river changed course and obliterated the site many decades ago. Despite its eventual disappearance as a physical relic, Post No. 5 is fairly conspicuous in the history of Arkansas Post because it survived the Seven Years' War, passed to Spanish control, and remained occupied until 1779. It lasted a total of twenty-four years, the longest of any phase in Arkansas Post's existence throughout the colonial era.

Early in this period, the civilian storekeeper at the post was a Frenchman named Etienne Maraffret Layssard. His several surviving letters, particularly an eleven-page letter dated February 5, 1758, provide descriptive details about the layout of the village. Perhaps a half dozen houses lined the edge of the river, each one set back from the water about sixty yards, some upstream and others downstream from the fort itself. Layssard's own residence was the first house downstream from the fort. Besides drawing pay for his duties at the fort, Layssard made a living as a merchant and farmer. Layssard mentioned another *habitant* or farmer named Hollindre, whose place was below his, and stated that a priest, Father Carette, lived in a house upstream from the fort. Other inhabitants noted in Layssard's correspondence were Joseph Landrouy, a soldier and farmer who had his own plot of land, another farmer named La Fleur, and the fort's interpreter, François Sarazin. Layssard's elaborate description of the fort and the village would be more valuable today if it applied to any other phase in the history of Arkansas Post than this one, since the site of this Post No. 5 in Desha County was later obliterated by changes in the river. Nevertheless, one learns from

⁶⁵ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 107; Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 17; Hardcastle, "The Military Organization of French Colonial Louisiana," 346.

Layssard that he had five slaves and that he exploited their labor to build a protective levee around his house and garden that was five to six feet wide at the base and twelve to eighteen inches high. Apparently, the rest of Layssard's cultivated fields extended back from the river frontage behind a natural levee. Citing Layssard, historian Faye wrote that "from the bank or bluff of the river the land sloped downward one inch in fifteen feet for a distance of 300 yards or more." When the river flooded in 1758, the high water overtopped the natural levee and completely inundated Layssard's fields.⁶⁶

Although Arkansas Post was located far from battle in the Seven Years' War, it served a military purpose nonetheless. The presence of the French soldiers secured France's alliance with the Quapaw, and emboldened them to maintain pressure on the Chickasaw.⁶⁷ Once, in 1758, Arkansas Post took into custody thirty-two British prisoners of war who were being transported under guard from the Illinois country to New Orleans. Captain de Gamon Chevalier de la Rochette, who replaced Captain de Reggio as fort commandant the previous year, ordered the storekeeper Layssard to collect linen for dressing the prisoners' wounds.⁶⁸

Captain de Reggio built this fort along similar lines to the fort at Ecores Rouges. It had a stockade built to the same dimensions. The buildings were mostly the same in function and design to those at Ecores Rouges. Besides Layssard's description of the place, the most detailed historical record of the fort's buildings comes from a report by Captain Philip Pittman, who visited there in 1765 while making a reconnaissance of forts along the Mississippi River for the British. Historian Morris S. Arnold wrote a description of the fort and buildings from Pittman's report and other contemporary documents in his book, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, and the reader is referred to those pages for details on the fort's architecture. As noted above, the Arkansas River changed course and obliterated this site long after the site was abandoned, so all that remains of it now is the historical record.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 716. Faye's description from Layssard is marred by the fact that Faye misinterpreted the placement of Arkansas Post as located on a bend in the river "now known as Lake Dumond," within the present Osotouy Unit, whereas we now know it was located in Desha County at this time. Faye notes that Layssard's handwriting and creative spelling are difficult to read. Ray H. Mattison's research assistant made summary translations of Layssard's letters as well but they are more cursory than Faye's. See Mattison, "Arkansas Post Investigations."

⁶⁷ The historian Morris S. Arnold has interpreted a painted buffalo hide that is found in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris as the work of a Quapaw artist depicting the Quapaw-French alliance. The artwork depicts three American Indian villages and a group of French houses – a post – with a line running from the villages through the post to a battleground where one tribe attacks another. Morris argues that the three villages are a depiction of Kappa, Tourima, and Osotouy, the post is Arkansas Post, and the facing tribes are Quapaw and Chickasaw. He suggests that the artwork most likely dates from the 1730s but could date from the period when Arkansas Post was situated downriver. See Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 63-76. There are three painted buffalo hides in this set; the other two are known as the Snake Robe and the Buffalo Dancers Robe. According to information given to Quapaw tribal historian Everett Bandy, all three robes were presented to the French by the Quapaw tribe.

⁶⁸ Marjorie Oletha Thomas, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana, 1686-1783," (M.A. thesis, University of California, 1948), 32.

⁶⁹ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 36-39. See also Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 144-45.

Britain finally defeated France and stripped its European rival of virtually all its New World possessions. While Britain took Canada into its North American empire, it allowed Spain, which had joined France against Britain in the last stage of the war, to have most of Louisiana, including New Orleans, in exchange for Spanish Florida. Britain regarded the huge province of Louisiana as hardly worth the cost of administration, whereas Spain hoped that by bringing the vast area under its dominion it might serve as a buffer zone between the expansionist British colonies and the Spanish Southwest. Spain inherited France's system of American Indian alliances, including the alliance with the Quapaw in the Arkansas country, although Spanish officials had little knowledge or appreciation of how the alliances were maintained – a deficiency that their native allies soon grasped.⁷⁰

The Spanish Period First Phase, 1763-1787

Spain held Louisiana from the end of the Seven Years' War until 1800, when France took possession of Louisiana once more and held it briefly before selling it to the United States in 1803. Spanish control of Louisiana was always tenuous. While France gave Louisiana to Spain in 1761 as a reward for the alliance, the Spanish made no move to occupy the territory until two years after the conclusion of the war. Spanish officials replaced French officials but the colonial population and even the military troops in Louisiana remained predominantly French. Despite its vast empire in the Americas, Spain was by this time a second-rate power in Europe; its alliance with France against Britain in 1761 failed to check Britain's ascendancy. After the Treaty of Paris, North America was essentially partitioned between Spain and Britain with the frontier between Spanish and British America running down the Mississippi River. Spanish policy toward Louisiana was to treat the province as a buffer zone to stall the British advance for as long as possible. Spain prevailed on the Quapaw to allow the British to pass up the Mississippi River and occupy the Illinois country.⁷¹

Although Spain had possession of Louisiana from the standpoint of the European states, its control of the province was in some ways only nominal. American Indians still outnumbered European colonists in the region. Powerful tribes such as the Osage effectively controlled the territories they inhabited. The historian DuVal contends that the Arkansas Valley remained “native ground” – more under the influence of American Indian power than European colonial administration – throughout the colonial era. When it came under Spanish

⁷⁰ Taylor, *American Colonies*, 432-33; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 128-34.

⁷¹ Charles Gibson, *Spain in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 188; Gilbert C. Din, “The Immigration Policy of Governor Esteban Miró in Spanish Louisiana,” in *The Spanish Presence in Louisiana, 1763-1803*, edited by Gilbert C. Din, Volume 2 of the Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1996), 317-33; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 107.

dominion, Louisiana had a population of around 11,000 European colonists and enslaved Africans, well below the number of American Indian inhabitants. Moreover, the non-native population was concentrated along the Gulf Coast. In most of the Mississippi Valley the non-native population was still miniscule.⁷²

At the time of Spain's first Louisiana census, Arkansas Post was the smallest of eleven pockets of non-native population. According to Alexandre Chevelier De Clouet, commandant of Arkansas Post in 1768 and 1769, there were eighteen soldiers, eighty-five colonists, and thirty-five enslaved Africans living in and around the fort. The population of the Arkansas settlement hovered at around one hundred people through the next two decades. The tiny community remained practically the only non-American Indian settlement in the Mississippi Valley north of Natchez.⁷³

British traders made a bid to usurp the Spanish alliance with the Quapaw. As British territory now extended to the east side of the Mississippi River, a British agent by the name of Charles Stuart founded a trading post and settlement opposite the mouth of the White River in 1768. The place was called Concordia, and it endured as a thorn in the side of Spanish-Quapaw relations for about seven years. At one time, it boasted as many as eighteen dwellings and perhaps five British families. It drew personnel and supplies from British trading concerns in Natchez, Mobile, and Manchac. The head chief of the Quapaw baited the Spanish commandant at Arkansas Post with his pronouncements of friendship for the British traders, pointing out that the British offered better prices for skins. Once he even stated that he helped the chief trader among the English build his house. However, the Quapaw ultimately refused British overtures to move their village across the river to British territory.⁷⁴



Figure 19. Alexandre Chevelier de Clouet, commandant of Arkansas Post in 1768 and 1769. (Courtesy of Morris S. Arnold.)

Spain faced challenges to its rule from every direction. The British Empire posed the most overt threat to Spain's position in the New World, and Arkansas Post bore the brunt of

⁷² The Indian population for the lower Mississippi Valley in 1761 may have been between 22,000 and 32,500. See Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 35.

⁷³ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 163; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 51; Morris, S. Arnold, "François Ménard, a Colonial Arkansas *Marchand* and *Habitant*," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2015), 305-07; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 20-24.

⁷⁴ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 100-08.

British intrigue aimed at undermining Spanish control in the central Mississippi Valley. Fortunately for the Spanish, most American Indian tribes in the Mississippi Valley favored Spanish over British rule because they perceived the large settler population of the British colonies would pose the greater threat to their hunting grounds over the long term. However, the American Indians were glad to play one European power off against the other, so the Spanish faced a persistent challenge from enemy tribes and canny tribal leaders interested in exploiting Spanish weakness. Former allies of the French such as the Quapaw did not accept their new “great father” easily, and inhabitants of a frontier community such as Arkansas Post felt those tensions keenly.⁷⁵

Then, too, the French population of Louisiana was not wholly content to pass under Spanish rule; the native-born French Creoles in New Orleans revolted and overthrew their new Spanish governor in 1768, whereupon Spain’s King Carlos III sent a military strongman, Alexander O’Reilly, with 3,000 troops to crush the revolt and restore order. The revolt in New Orleans reverberated out to Arkansas Post, where a delegation of Quapaw went to the post commandant to demand who was in charge. Starting with the American Revolution, Spain had to contend as well with a growing population of Anglo American emigrants pouring over the Appalachian Mountains into the Mississippi Valley. Spanish officials at Arkansas Post found themselves on the front line in dealing with a restless tide of humanity that included pioneer families seeking refuge from the conflict, Mississippi River pirates, and emigrant eastern tribes such as the Delaware. The last but not least of Spain’s troubles, Louisiana officials worried about a slave revolt occurring in the colony. Although Arkansas Post was far removed from the rice and tobacco plantations where Louisiana’s slave population was concentrated, the remote community on the Arkansas River was nonetheless affected by Spanish policies that were aimed at preventing a slave revolt from happening where slaves were numerous.⁷⁶

Arkansas Post’s history in the period of Spanish rule has been very well chronicled. Surviving records of the post commandants and other colonial administrators are more voluminous for the Spanish period than they are for the French period. Historians have mined those records for the political and social history of the military post and associated colonial settlement, as well as for ethnographic detail on the Quapaw and other tribes that were in contact with Arkansas Post. A few representative samples of the historical literature will be noted here.

⁷⁵ John Preston Moore, “Anglo-Spanish Rivalry on the Louisiana Frontier, 1763-68,” in *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley 1762-1804*, edited by John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 80-81.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Kinnaird, editor, “Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, Part 2, Post War Decade, 1782-1791,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), xix-xxi; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 77-80; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 69-80.

Kathleen DuVal traces the first decade of Quapaw-Spanish diplomacy in her essay, “The Education of Fernando De Leyba: Quapaws and Spaniards on the Border of Empires.” DuVal interprets Quapaw intentions toward the Spanish under the leadership of Chief Cazenonpoint and his successor Chief Augaska during the years 1771 to 1782. DuVal points out that the Arkansas Valley was not just at the edge of empire, but a borderland between tribal territories as well. The Quapaw sought to defend their hunting grounds against encroachment by the Osage to the north and the Caddo to the south, as well as by the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and others whose own game resources were depleted by westward migrating Euro-Americans. By the 1770s, the Quapaw also dealt with hunting parties of Iroquois, Illinois, Delaware, Miami, Shawnee, Potawatomi, and other eastern American Indians. With so much pressure on their hunting grounds, the Quapaw needed the Spanish alliance to keep them safe and secure in their own territory. Leyba, who was commandant from 1771 to 1774, thought the Spanish could maintain their friendship with the Quapaw with an annual gift, but the Quapaw played off the Spanish and the British to extract more involvement by the Spanish in intertribal affairs.⁷⁷

Historian Morris Arnold began his prolific work on colonial Arkansas with a focus on political and legal structures as described in his first book, *Unequal Laws Unto a Savage Race: European Legal Traditions in Arkansas, 1686-1836* (1985). He then began writing about society, architecture, and everyday life at Arkansas Post in works that included *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804* (1991). More recently, he turned to a close examination of Quapaw and European relations, described in *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804* (2000). His output continues. In 2015, he published a pair of essays about two ordinary men associated with Arkansas Post, the first a merchant and farmer, the second a voyageur and hunter. François Ménard resided at Arkansas Post from about 1768 until his death in 1791 at about forty-five years of age. Ménard was a successful trader and self-made man, probably the wealthiest individual in colonial Arkansas when he died. Arnold shows through his short biography of Ménard that neither farming nor the fur trade amounted to very much at Arkansas Post in this era; rather, Ménard made his living as a merchant dealing with the commerce going in and out of this remote part of the Mississippi Valley, supplying the hunting parties who passed up and down the Arkansas Valley and aiding in the shipment of tallow and hides to New Orleans. The life of Ménard also provides a window on business and social relations between the officers of the post and the merchants and hunters of the adjoining community.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Kathleen DuVal, “The Education of Fernando de Leyba: Quapaws and Spaniards on the Border of Empires,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (March 2001), 1-29.

⁷⁸ Arnold, “François Ménard,” 303-26. Chief exports from the Arkansas country in this decade were salted buffalo meat, bear’s oil, and tallow, with lesser quantities of furs and skins. In 1770, Ménard secured a contract to supply the Spanish arsenal in Havana with 10,000 pounds of tallow. See Arnold, “The Delta’s Colonial Heritage,” 60.

Arnold's second essay features a Métis individual and Arkansas Post resident named Barthélémy *Dit* Charlot. The essay describes Charlot's travels by flatboat on his last voyage before he met an untimely death in 1779, and the material possessions described in the dead man's succession papers. This vignette about a voyageur offers a glimpse of material living conditions of a member of the laboring class as well as an example of legal process in dealing with inheritance.⁷⁹

Like Arnold in his essay about Charlot, historian Mary P. Fletcher long ago wrote an article about Arkansas Post based on a single historical document. The document she focused on is one of outstanding interest to Arkansas Post National Memorial: a description of the fort made by one Captain Philip Pittman, who was tasked to examine all forts on the Mississippi River for the British in 1765. Pittman's description has since been used by other historians, but Fletcher's description (and reproduction) of the Pittman report in her 1948 essay is the most detailed treatment of it.⁸⁰

Another article by Arnold (this one published in 1983), addresses the relocation of Arkansas Post from present-day Desha County back to Ecores Rouges in 1779. As noted previously, the fort that was built in 1756 just a few miles above the mouth of the Arkansas River finally had to be abandoned due to frequent flooding after 24 years of occupation. Captain Balthazar de Villiers, post commandant from 1776 to 1779, oversaw its relocation. Arnold's essay covers this episode in detail, drawing primarily on the correspondence of de Villiers and his superior, Governor Bernardo de Gálvez.⁸¹

Through de Villiers writings, Arnold provides a wealth of data about who was living at Arkansas Post in the 1770s, the basis of the economy, the morale of the people, what the condition of the settlement and fort buildings was like, and how the fort and community came to be relocated. One learns, for example, that "there were only seven *habitant* families containing in all fifty whites at the *Poste des Akancas*, and four of these families were headed

⁷⁹ Morris S. Arnold, "Barthélémy *Dit* Charlot, a Colonial Arkansas *Métis* and *Voyageur*," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 1-17.

⁸⁰ Mary P. Fletcher, "The Post of Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1948), 145-49. Later historians who have also drawn on Pittman's description include Stanley Faye, Ray H. Mattison, Roger Coleman, and Morris S. Arnold. The original document is also reproduced in Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi with a Geographical Description of that River* (1770; reproduced with an introduction by R. Rea, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1973). Fletcher quotes Pittman: "The fort is situated three leagues up the river Arkansas, and is built with stockades in a quadrangular form. The sides of the exterior polygon are about 180 feet, and one 3-pounder is mounted in the flanks and faces of each bastion. The buildings within the fort are: a barracks with three rooms for soldiers, commanding officers house, a powder magazine, a magazine for provisions, and an apartment for the commissary, all of which are in ruinous condition. The fort stands about 200 yards from the waterside, and is garrisoned by a captain, a lieutenant, and French soldiers, including sergeants and corporals. There are eight houses within the fort, occupied by as many families, who have cleared the land about 900 yards in depth; but on account of the sandiness of the soil, and the lowness of the situation, which makes it subject to be overflowed, they do not raise their necessary provisions."

⁸¹ Arnold, "The Relocation of Arkansas Post to *Ecores Rouges* in 1779," 317-31.

by merchants who were in the business of equipping hunters. The *habitants* owned a total of eleven slaves and their village contained only eleven houses.” De Villiers reported to Gálvez that the residents were demoralized in their waterlogged environment: “all the said *habitants* are desperate and on the verge of dying.” De Villiers disparaged the manners and morals of those who were associated with the hide and tallow trade. “The families of the hunters are for the most part lazy people of bad breeding,” he is quoted. He wanted to make Arkansas Post a “respectable post” by attracting “farmers without the embarrassment of the hunters’ families.”⁸²

Arnold also provides a glimpse, through de Villiers writings, of the first Anglo Americans to settle in Arkansas. “On February 2, 1778, thirteen Anglo American refugee families petitioned the commandant to be allowed to settle at Arkansas Post,” Arnold writes. “The captain granted them asylum until the governor decided what to do. Many of them took up residence, and on March 2, 1778, de Villiers sent a census of the Anglo American ‘families and hunters who have taken refuge in this Post of the Arkansas’ since February 20, 1778. The census lists eight families totaling fifty persons and eleven bachelors who were hunters.” To this population, two more barge-loads was added later in the year. De Villiers allowed them to hunt in order to provide for their families despite the friction it created with American Indians. Arnold suggests the refugee problem contributed to the decision to relocate the fort. “All these new arrivals probably tripled the white population of Arkansas Post and must have placed a great strain on a community already much in distress,” the historian notes.⁸³

Arnold’s account follows the fate of these American refugees after de Villiers relocated the fort to Ecores Rouges in 1779. At the new location, about ten acres were soon brought under cultivation. Nine American agricultural families arrived from Illinois and another contingent came from the Carolinas. Although the French speakers and the English speakers lived apart in separate enclaves, the Spanish commandant encouraged the newcomers by assigning them their own plots of land to cultivate. However, in 1782, several American settlers plus two German soldiers who were among the Spanish detachment assigned to the post were accused of plotting with the British, and four of the accused were eventually executed in New Orleans. Feeling not altogether welcome, most of the Americans were gone by the following year, and none remained when a census was taken in 1791.⁸⁴

⁸² Arnold, “The Relocation of Arkansas Post to *Ecores Rouges* in 1779,” 318-19.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 321-23.

⁸⁴ Arnold, “The Relocation of Arkansas Post to *Ecores Rouges* in 1779,” 326-29. See also Delavillebeuvre to Miró, April 25, 1780, in Lawrence Kinnaird, editor, “Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, Part 1, The Revolutionary Period, 1765-1781,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), 376.

The fort and community that once again took shape at Ecores Rouges after 1779 is well described in documents of the period. De Villiers made a map of the new settlement, which contains much valuable information as well. Historian Roger Coleman identifies the fort as Post No. 6 with dates 1779 to 1792. The Spanish christened it Fort Carlos III. Hurriedly built, it was an inferior structure to the previous one and soon suffered damages

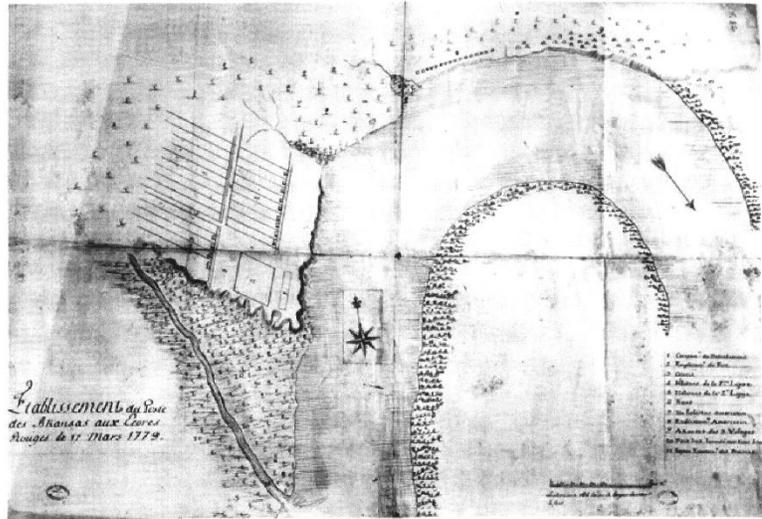


Figure 20. De Villiers's 1779 map of Arkansas Post depicting the bend in the river, the fort, agricultural fields, and the dwellings of the habitants. (Courtesy of Morris S. Arnold.)

from the river's cutting away of the embankment. Residents petitioned for the fort to be rebuilt, and eventually got what they wanted. The last fort constructed during the colonial era was completed farther from the embankment and was named Fort San Esteban. Coleman calls this last one Post No. 7 with dates 1792 to 1812.⁸⁵

A good, clear, succinct description of the two succeeding posts at Ecores Rouges is found in Arnold's *Colonial Arkansas*, commencing with the first one, Fort San Carlos III:

De Villiers's 1779 map of this post shows thirty dwellings spread over a distance of about three hundred yards along a horseshoe bend of the river. Only seventeen of these dwellings – de Villiers calls them houses (*maisons*) – were built by French *habitants*; the other thirteen belonged to Americans fleeing the American Revolution, and de Villiers calls them huts (*cabans*). Since the whole settlement was constructed in a little more than three weeks, it could not have included anything very grand. On his map, de Villiers projected a fort in the shape of a rhombus, about 240 feet on a side; but no fort was in fact built at this new Post until 1781, when the *habitants*, greatly fearing an attack by the Chickasaws on account of Spain's alliance with the Americans during the revolution, built one of their own, which de Villiers dubbed Fort Carlos III. The Chickasaws did in fact attack this fort in 1783 and it withstood the onslaught, but in 1788 it had fallen into the river, making necessary yet another makeshift effort by the *habitants*. In 1796, Victor Collot, the French spy, observed this evidently amateurish effort and sneered, "Two ill-constructed huts, situated on the left, surrounded with great palisades, without ditch or parapet, and containing four six-pounders, bear the name of fort."

⁸⁵ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 145-46.

When the Americans took over the Spanish fort of San Esteban on the Arkansas in 1804, however, the inventory revealed that a new military establishment had been built. There was a stockade containing four buildings: A commandant's house thirty-six feet by sixteen feet, "with two galleries, two closets at the ends of that on the back," divided into two rooms with a "double clay chimney"; barracks fifty feet by twenty feet, likewise with a "double clay chimney"; a storehouse "supported on props" forty-five feet by twenty feet; and a kitchen (*i.e.* bakehouse) twenty feet by twelve feet. All of these buildings were roofed with shingles. The commandant's house was said to be in very bad condition and the storehouse in poor condition. The design of the commandant's house, evidently built in the 1790s, nevertheless indicates that a kind of architectural maturity had overtaken the remote military post of *Los Arcos*. The enclosure of part of a back gallery, remarked on in the inventory, is a feature of eighteenth-century Louisiana architecture noticed by Professor Edwards as early as 1750, and a floor plan from about 1770 virtually matches the commandant's house. We learn, moreover, from a plan of this fort made in 1807, that all the buildings contained in it had hip roofs. This is the only real proof of what we would have had anyway to guess, for hip roofs were a regular feature of Louisiana houses from the very beginning of serious architectural effort there. They were derived from Quebec and ultimately from Normandy.⁸⁶

Other historical writings about this period abound. They are too numerous to be included beyond citing them in the bibliography. Much official correspondence of the Spanish colonial regime has been published in English translation. Two examples of published primary sources are given here to illustrate the growing complexity of the mixing of peoples and the richness of original source material. The following letter from de Villiers to Gálvez tells about an enslaved woman, probably European, who was ransomed from her American Indian owner by a voyageur of Arkansas Post:

Arkansas. 27 February, 1780

Sir: One Andres La Bombard, a voyageur, had freed from captivity among the Panis the woman who is presenting this petition to you. She admits that she promised to marry this man if he would take her out of slavery, but she has been so ill-treated by him, and she has noted so many bad qualities in him, that she would rather go back to her former servitude than to suffer the pain of marrying a man with who she could not live. She is none the less grateful to him for the service which he has rendered her, and she is in despair because she is not in a position to repay him what she has

⁸⁶ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas*, 39-41.

cost him, a matter of 100 piasters. I am obliged to state that this La Bombard is a scapegrace and that she would be very unhappy with him.⁸⁷

The second example comes from the published letters of one John Fitzpatrick, a merchant who was based in Manchac in southern Louisiana. His letter to Thomas O’Keefe of New Orleans tells of the confiscation of a boat load of skins by the Arkansas Post commandant. (When such actions occurred, Anglo Americans characterized them as illegal seizures of goods while Spanish officials insisted they were to prevent smuggling.) Fitzpatrick’s letter:

Manchac, October 17, 1776

The Bearer, Mr. Hooppock; is a very worthy young Man, and to whom I have advanced at sundry times to a large Amt., he has some affairs to present to the Governor, relative to an affair that has happened him a few days ago; at the Arkamanas; where he called in to get some provisions for sick people he had in his Boat; he was permitted to call in by the Commander Monsr. Viller, and then seized on him, and took 11 hundred Deer skins 280 lb. Beaver with a Number of Otters; and then let him goe with his Boat. he will acquaint you fully himself; therefore if you can advice him how to goe to work in a proper manner to Recover his Skins, shall be forever Obliged to you, I rely much on your good Office in this affair, and be you assur’d I shall look on it the same as done myself and shall never be forgot by...⁸⁸

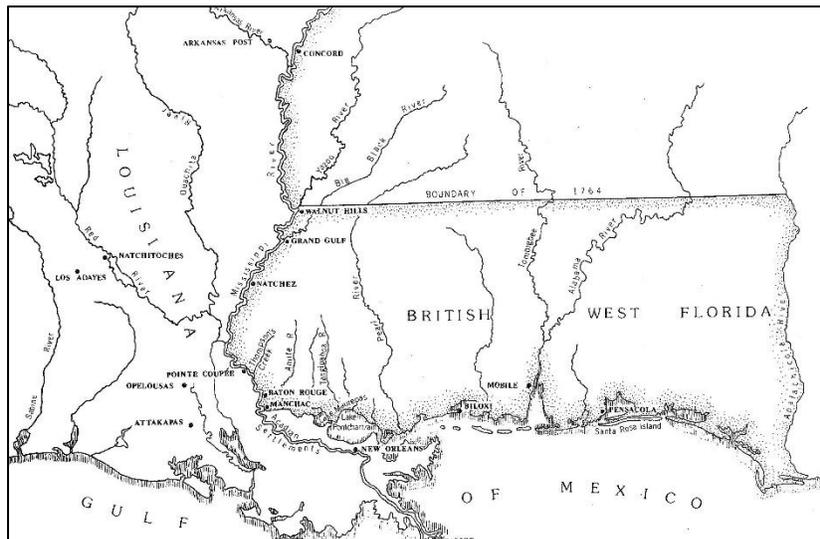


Figure 21. Map of Louisiana and British West Florida, 1763-1783. (Dalrymple, ed., *The Merchant of Manchac*.)

⁸⁷ Kinnaird, editor, “Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, Part 1, The Revolutionary Period, 1765-1781,” 373-74.

⁸⁸ Margaret Fisher Dalrymple, editor, *The Merchant of Manchac: The Letterbooks of John Fitzpatrick, 1768-1790* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 212.

During the American Revolution, Spain supported the American cause against its erstwhile enemy, Britain. Fighting occurred between Spanish troops located on the lower Mississippi River and British troops and their American Indian allies, most of whom were Chickasaw. While the Spanish mostly succeeded in taking control of the east side of the Mississippi, a few British soldiers and partisans escaped capture and remained in the area to harass Spanish navigation on the river. Their leader was a former army captain, James Colbert. A longtime resident among the Chickasaw, Colbert had three Chickasaw wives with whom he had many children. By the time of the American Revolution, several of his sons were grown men and the senior Colbert was a person of influence among the sizeable Chickasaw-British mixed-blood community. Colbert promised to lead an attack on Arkansas Post. As the war drew to a close, he finally carried out his threat.⁸⁹

In mid-April of 1783, an armed force of Chickasaw, Natchez, and British proceeded up the Arkansas River in a flotilla composed of two pirogues, a galley of forty oars, and another bateau of some kind. The flotilla passed by a Quapaw village unchecked with the ruse that the men only wished to pay a friendly visit to the Spanish post. Early in the morning of April 17, Colbert launched his raid with an attack on the settlement lying outside the fort's stockade. Immediately the attackers captured the fort's second in command, Lieutenant Luis de Villars, together with his wife Dona Maria Luisa and other village residents. Most of the inhabitants escaped. The Spanish garrison within the fort was awakened by the sound of gunfire. The soldiers manned the walls of the fort in time to repel an attack; then they sortied in an attempt to rescue the prisoners, but were forced to retreat back into the fort. Colbert's raiders took cover in a nearby ravine, and the two sides exchanged gunfire for several hours. At last Colbert sent across some men under a white flag to demand the fort's surrender. The Spanish refused to surrender, and then they surprised their adversaries with another sortie: ten soldiers and four Quapaw warriors raised a blood-curdling yell and charged the enemy line. Colbert's raiders, tricked by the war-whoops into thinking that the whole Quapaw village had come to the fort's rescue, fled to their boats and retreated downriver.⁹⁰

Colbert's raid left one attacker and two defenders dead and one on each side wounded. Eight people were taken prisoner by the raiders, four of whom were released when

⁸⁹ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas*, 111; David Sesser, "Colbert Raid," in *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1163> <December 29, 2016>; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 65. For more on the background and character of Colbert, see John Caughey, "The Natchez Rebellion of 1781 and Its Aftermath," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 16 (Jan-Oct 1933), 57-83, and a contemporary description of him in "Declaration of Labbadie," July 5, 1782 in Kinnaird, editor, "Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, Part 2, Post War Decade, 1782-1791," 31. See also the exhaustive report by Edwin C. Bearss, *The Colbert Raid, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas*, Special History Report (Denver: Denver Service Center, 1974).

⁹⁰ Sesser, "Colbert Raid," 1; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 66; Anna Lewis, "An Attack upon the Arkansas Post, 1783," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (September 1943), 263-64. The article by Lewis reproduces a report on the raid written by the post commandant for the governor.



Figure 22. Colbert 's raid on Fort Carlos III. The scene is one of four illustrations commissioned by the Daughters of the American Revolution for Arkansas Post National Memorial. (National Park Service.)

the Quapaw detained the flotilla on its way homeward. The attack on Arkansas Post was one of only two military engagements in the American Revolution fought west of the Mississippi River and the only one fought on Arkansas soil. Ironically, it occurred after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the war, though Colbert insisted later that he acted under British orders.⁹¹

The Spanish Period Second Phase, 1787-1804

After the United States won independence, Spain had to grapple with a double threat from the new American republic. In the first place, the U.S. government claimed a large chunk of territory on the U.S. frontier with Spain: specifically, the northern two thirds of present-day Mississippi and Alabama. The disputed territory finally went to the U.S. under a negotiated settlement in 1795. In the second place, Americans who resided west of the Appalachians wanted free navigation of the Mississippi River all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. The Spanish charged a high tariff on American goods shipped through New Orleans for export. As the restless American populace pushed west into Kentucky, Tennessee, and Spanish Louisiana, the rising population in those frontier areas demanded relief from the tariff or some other accommodation by Spain to provide westerners with an outlet to the sea.

With tensions between Spain and the new American republic running high, Arkansas Post played a role in maintaining Spain's hold on the Mississippi River. In February 1788, Governor Esteban Miró dispatched a sergeant and twelve additional soldiers to reinforce the

⁹¹ Sesser, "Colbert Raid," 1; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas*, 112.

tiny garrison and prepare for an attack that was rumored to be coming from Tennessee. Captain Josef Vallière, the post commandant, held half his force at Arkansas Post and positioned the other half at a forward location on an island in the Mississippi River for the duration of the alert.⁹²

Governor Miró tried to pacify the Kentuckians and Tennesseans by easing Spanish control of the Mississippi waterway. Miró's successor, Governor Francisco Luis Hector, Barón de Carondelet, tightened restrictions once more. Additional Spanish posts were established along the river, and American boats were ordered to stop at the posts, declare what cargo they carried, and pay the required tariff. American river pilots tried to evade the Spanish authorities.⁹³

Spain had to get more colonists to go to Louisiana to make the colony defensible. Spain's early efforts to increase Louisiana's population focused on recruiting colonists from Spain and other Catholic states in Europe. After the American Revolution, Spain recognized that transporting immigrants across the Atlantic and supporting them in the New World until they could grow their own food was too costly and slow. Instead it turned to welcoming Protestant, Anglo American immigrants from the United States. The latter arrived under their own power and came better equipped to survive by subsistence farming. The hope was that these Anglo American settlers would be Hispanicized and converted to Catholicism in due course. Once assimilated, they would defend Spanish Louisiana against all invaders including the United States. For Spain's new immigration policy to succeed, the immigrant population must not become so large as to overwhelm the colonists already on hand, and war with the United States must be avoided while the immigrants were absorbed and turned into loyal subjects.⁹⁴

The conditions were ripe for intrigue. James Wilkinson, a former officer in the Continental Army and a prominent Kentuckian, was frustrated over U.S. slowness to grant Kentucky statehood and bring it into the union together with the original thirteen states. In 1787, he traveled to New Orleans to plot with Spanish officials about the possibility that Kentuckians might break from the United States and align with Spain.⁹⁵

When Kentucky did gain statehood five years later, Wilkinson's intrigues continued. In 1794, he warned his Spanish contacts that if Spain still refused to grant Kentuckians the free navigation of the Mississippi, then Kentucky "will join cause with neighboring states and fall on Louisiana with more than 500 men in order to 'carry out its purpose,' or, it will

⁹² Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 72.

⁹³ Dallas T. Herndon, *Annals of Arkansas* (Little Rock: Historical Record Association, 1947), 43.

⁹⁴ Din, "The Immigration Policy of Governor Esteban Miró in Spanish Louisiana," 317-18.

⁹⁵ Mattison, "Arkansas Post – Its Human Aspects," 20.

separate from the United States and place itself under the control of England ‘forming a power more terrible to Spain than that of the United States.’”⁹⁶

Wilkinson’s pronouncements were considered at the highest levels of government in Spain. The *Suprema Junta de Estado* (Supreme Council of State) was a body that guided the administration of Spain’s colonial empire. The governor of Louisiana, Carondelet, reported his conversations with Wilkinson to the council. The problem he put before the council was that if Spain were simply to yield to the Kentuckians’ demands it would raise an even worse specter for Spain’s colonial empire. To allow Kentucky free navigation of the Mississippi would “cause an immense emigration from there into Louisiana” – more than could possibly be assimilated. Once the Americans had a purchase west of the Mississippi River, they would “spread like a torrent” into the Interior Provinces of New Spain and “threaten even the Kingdom of Mexico.” Finding that prospect even more forbidding than an armed attack by Kentuckians, Carondelet advised the council to take a middle course: reduce the heavy duty on American goods shipped through New Orleans but do not eliminate it altogether; carefully encourage Wilkinson’s conspiracy to affect a break with the United States but do not let his intrigues undermine Spanish-U.S. diplomatic relations.⁹⁷

It is interesting to read in the minutes of the council how the Arkansas country was advertised and perceived in Madrid. The prairies in the Arkansas Valley were “more fertile than the plains of the Rhine or Moselle.” The climate and soil were suitable for raising wheat and other grains, and for growing “all kinds of fruit trees of the old and new continents.” Yet even as the council sang these praises for its distant colony, it admitted that the whole extent of Spanish territory from the Arkansas to the Illinois would certainly fall to the Americans if the Americans should take up arms and attack, for the Spanish had “not even a cabin nor anything more than the very small post of Arkansas” to defend it. Arkansas Post and the handful of other forts holding the Mississippi River were located too far from New Orleans to be adequately reinforced.⁹⁸

In November 1794, the council considered another colonization scheme for Louisiana. With the wars and political turmoil of the French Revolution displacing thousands of people across Europe, Spain once again considered recruiting Europeans to colonize Louisiana. The new plan was to attract 10,000 colonists. They would come from many parts of Europe, and each ethnic group would be sent to its own separate locality in Louisiana. Many of the colonists would come from Protestant sections of northern Europe, and Spain would promise them freedom of religion in their new home. Spain would also provide the

⁹⁶ Abraham P. Nasatir and Ernest R. Liljegren, editors, “Materials Relating to the History of the Mississippi Valley from the Minutes of the Spanish Supreme Councils of State, 1787-1797,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January 1938), 45.

⁹⁷ Nasatir and Liljegren, editors, “Materials Relating to the History of the Mississippi Valley,” 45.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45, 57-58.

necessary ships. The council finally rejected this scheme as too costly. Yet it is worth bearing in mind that developments in Arkansas at the end of the eighteenth century were influenced not only by the rise of the United States but also by the upheaval in Europe. Spain was soon drawn into war with revolutionary France, and in 1801 it was forced to return Louisiana to France under the Treaty of San Ildefonso.⁹⁹

The Spanish also employed land grants to stimulate colonization. Spanish authorities made generous land grants to select individuals with the understanding that they would cultivate the land, employ farm laborers, and thereby contribute to the growth of the territory. As the land grants usually preceded public land survey, boundaries and titles to the land grants frequently ended up in litigation years later in the American period. By far the largest of Spanish land grants in Arkansas was presented by Governor Carondelet to a group of Americans in the summer of 1797. The head of the group was one Elisha Winter, formerly of Kentucky, who won the governor's favor after he established a rope manufactory in New Orleans in 1794. Winter received an enormous grant of 1,000,000 arpents (845,000 acres, an area bigger than Arkansas County) "to the end of forming a settlement at Post of Arkansas for the cultivation of flax, wheat, and hemp." In the same instrument, Winter's two sons, William and Gabriel, each received 250,000 arpents, while seven others by the names of Samuel Price, Richard Price, William Huble, John Price, William Russell, Joseph Stillwell, and Walter Karre each received a long lot of 600 arpents. Apparently, they all settled in the area, but for how long is not clear. Besides growing crops, they introduced sheep in the area. Gabriel Winter and others eventually brought their claim to the U.S. government. The former commandant of Arkansas Post provided testimony that he had assisted the Winters in marking the corners of their giant tracts by placing large stones and notching trees, but the board of land commissioners found irregularities with how the claimants had met the terms of the grant and deemed it null and void.¹⁰⁰

During the portentous 1790s, the little settlement at Arkansas Post grew and began to evolve into the hybrid French and American community that it would become in the early nineteenth century. Governor Miró listed many of the residents' names in his instructions to Captain Vallière in 1786. Most of the names listed were French, a few were Spanish, and a few were English. Not everyone present in the community was listed. Miró noted that Arkansas Post's polyglot population included Spaniards of Spain, French of Canada and France, Americans recently of Natchez and Vincennes, and Germans of the German Coast

⁹⁹ Nasatir and Liljegren, editors, "Materials Relating to the History of the Mississippi Valley," 57-62; Gilbert C. Din, "Spain's Immigration Policy in Louisiana and the American Penetration, 1792-1803," in *The Spanish Presence in Louisiana, 1763-1803*, edited by Gilbert C. Din, Volume 2 of The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1996), 340-41.

¹⁰⁰ "Claim of Gabriel Winter and others," *American State Papers: Public Lands* 3, pp. 256-58; Adam Miller, "Spanish Land Grants," in *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6977> <December 31, 2016>.

(near New Orleans). From a population of around 160 in the year 1791, the settlement grew to a population of 393 recorded in the census of 1798. There were thirty-seven black and mixed race enslaved people counted in the 1791 census, and there were fifty-six black and mixed race enslaved people present in all of Arkansas in 1798. The number of farmers in the settlement rose from sixteen to thirty over the same period. The number of farmers and the size of their slave holdings were regarded by officials as a better indication of the settlement's trend lines than its overall population, since the considerable number of resident hunters came and went, treating the place more like a hunting camp than a permanent village.¹⁰¹

As much as Spanish officials wanted Arkansas Post to develop a farm-based economy, it was the continuous movement of hides and tallow and hunting supplies through the place that truly formed the economic pulse of the community. Buffalo hides and bear's oil were among the most significant products being shipped from Arkansas Post to New Orleans at the end of the eighteenth century. The hunters found the bison in dwindling numbers in the prairies, canebrakes, and open woods along the major rivers in the Arkansas Delta, or the hunters went on longer expeditions to the plains where the bison could still be found in great herds. The hunters mostly went out in groups for defense against American Indian war parties, and they could be absent for extended periods. Some left families behind in the village. Historian Arnold remarks that the hunters of Arkansas Post were debtors to the merchant class, who described them harshly as deadbeats, professional drunks, frauds, swindlers, and worse. Nevertheless, they composed the bulk of Arkansas Post's population, and as a group they made Arkansas Post the enduring community it was.¹⁰²

Just one description of the village's physical appearance during this decade is known. It comes from the pen of Pedro Rousseau, commander of a squadron of Spanish galleys, who put in at Arkansas Post and recorded the visit in his logbook on February 3, 1793. "Above the fort there are about thirty houses, with galleries around, covered with shingles, which form two streets." The *galleries* or porches lining all sides of the dwelling, were a common feature of French house architecture in this period. When Rousseau wrote that they were "covered with shingles" he referred to the roofs over the house and porches. Rousseau also noted that down the river there were "a dozen quite pretty houses [on lots] of four by four arpents, where there are very beautiful fields of wheat on the highland."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Faye, "Arkansas Post of Louisiana: Spanish Domination," 689; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 69; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 65.

¹⁰² Sealander, *Guide to Arkansas Mammals*, 15; Arnold, *The Arkansas Post of Louisiana*, 41-42; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 170.

¹⁰³ "Log of His Majesty's Galiot, *La Fleche*," in Lawrence Kinnaird, editor, "Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, Part 3, Problems of Frontier Defense, 1792-1794," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), 117; Martin, *An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright's Trading House and William Montgomery's Tavern*, 11;

From 1794 to 1802, the garrison at Arkansas Post was under the command of Captain Carlos de Vilemont. The son of a Spanish cavalry officer and a French heiress of New Orleans, de Vilemont began his military career as a young cadet, received part of his training in Spain, and obtained an officer's commission in 1780 at about age eighteen. He served in the Spanish garrison at Pensacola and then at Natchez, before receiving the coveted appointment to Arkansas Post in 1794. De Vilemont served at Arkansas Post longer than any other officer, married a local woman in 1800, and raised his children there, remaining in the community after he retired from the military.¹⁰⁴



Figure 23. Carlos de Vilemont, in charge at Arkansas Post, 1794-1802. (Courtesy of Morris S. Arnold.)

In 1795, de Vilemont obtained a land grant of 8,640 acres located at Point Chicot (opposite present-day Greenville, Mississippi) for raising cattle and establishing a plantation. His letter of request to Governor Carondelet:

May 10, 1795

Don Carlos de Vilemont, captain in the regiment of infantry of Louisiana, civil and military commandant of the post of Arkansas and its districts, with due respect states to your lordship that wishing to establish a plantation and a stock farm, in order to supply the consumption of this post, in which the scarcity of horned cattle is so great that, during many months of the year meat cannot be procured, although it is an indispensable article of life, he supplicates your lordship to be pleased to grant him a tract of two leagues in front by one league in depth, to be comprised within parallel lines, in the place called Chicot island, at the distance of twenty-five leagues below the mouth of the Arkansas river; the cypress swamp of Chicot island is to serve as upper limit; a favor of which he expects to receive of your lordship's benevolence.¹⁰⁵

As post commandant, de Vilemont maintained copies of all his correspondence to the governor in a letterpress book. The letterpress book was eventually produced by the heirs of de Vilemont in their petition to the U.S. government for confirmation of the de Vilemont land grant. Although the petition was denied, the letters were published as part of Document

HalliBurton, *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County Arkansas*, 105; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ Faye, "Arkansas Post of Louisiana: Spanish Domination," 713; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 73.

¹⁰⁵ Don Carlos de Villemont to Governor Carondelet, May 10, 1795, *American State Papers: Public Lands* 8, pp. 547-48.

No. 89 of the 24th Congress, 2d session. Excerpts from two of the letters illustrate the dilapidated state of the fort and its armaments at the end of the Spanish period:

Letter No. 36. April 2, 1796. So many nations of Indians meet in this post, every moment they commit excesses and thefts, without any fear, on account of the weakness So many nations of Indians meet in this post, every moment they commit excesses and thefts, without any fear, on account of the weakness of the garrison, and because but few men remain in it during hunting time – for they are all hunters. The artillery is in a ruinous condition; of the three cannons, two are mounted, and those are full of holes and irregularities, and the touch-hole is so large that the charge comes through it; for they are very old and entirely eaten up by rust. Of the seven swivels, only one can be fired without danger. The fort is in a defenseless state, for the palisades are so rotten that the least wind throws them to the ground....

No. 42. June 10, 1796. A strong wind having blown down a number of palisades of this fort, and others being near falling, I have ordered those that had fallen down to be replaced by 100 new ones.¹⁰⁶

In the summer of 1802, Captain Francisco Caso y Luengo was appointed commandant of Fort San Esteban following the retirement of de Vilemont. By then, the secret retrocession of Louisiana from Spain to France had been made known, but no formal transfer had yet taken place. Over the next year and a half, momentous diplomatic talks developed between the U.S. administration of President Thomas Jefferson and the French Republic under Napoleon Bonaparte, culminating in the epic Louisiana Purchase. It fell to Captain Luengo to convey the fort and all its property to a U.S. artillery officer, Lieutenant James B. Many, on March 23, 1804.

According to international protocol, an appraisal of the buildings was completed prior to the formal transfer of the fort and both officers signed a document relating the findings of the appraisers. The document provides a description of the fort at the close of the colonial period:

One stockade with two doors, bouquettes and esplanader; two works, four loopholes, each in normal condition.

One house for commandant 36 feet long, 16 feet wide, with two galleries, two closets at each of that of the back apartment. One double clay chimney covered with shingles, the whole in bad condition.

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Ross, "A 'Lend-lease' Request from Spanish Arkansas," *Arkansas Gazette*, February 10, 1960.

One barrack 50 feet long by 10 feet wide, covered with shingles, flanked on top with a double clay chimney and at the end a division which is used as a prison.

A store house supported on props 45 feet long by 20 feet broad, covered with shingles with a division for the war supplies. It is in poor condition throughout.

A kitchen for the commandant 20 feet long by 12 feet broad covered with shingles in a normal state.

An earthen oven near the fort in normal condition.

Three sentry boxes in poor condition.

One flag in good condition. The locks, keys, hinges, latches, respectively, for each building in normal order.

Since these are the only buildings and effects belonging to His Catholic Majesty of which I make delivery to the above-mentioned Don Santiago B. Many, this inventory I sign with him in Fort Estavan de Arkansas, March 23, 1804.

Francisco Y. Luengo

James B. Many¹⁰⁷

The somewhat decrepit condition of the fort belied the fact that the military installation no longer mattered to the occupying power so much as mere possession of the settlement around it, with its spreading population of around 400. Even at the beginning of the American period, Arkansas Post remained a stronghold of Euro-American influence in the region. In numbers of people, the settlement had achieved a rough parity with the Quapaw nation. How the Quapaw and other American Indians responded to European colonization is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁰⁷ Fletcher, "The Post of Arkansas," 148-49.

Osotouy and the Changing Native World

American Indians were long overlooked by historians writing about southern colonial history. Historians who were interested in the American Indian experience tended to focus on colonists' interactions with Algonkian-speaking groups in Puritan New England where ethnographic source material was more abundant. For English-speaking American scholars, moreover, interpreting the American Indian experience in colonial Louisiana was handicapped by the challenge of teasing historical insights from French and Spanish sources. More importantly, perhaps, historical interest in relations between American Indians and Euro-Americans in the South was overshadowed by the compelling historical interest in slavery and black-white relations in the South. What attention American Indians did receive in southern history tended to focus on the decisive Jacksonian period, the Removal policy, and the Trail of Tears. The fact that many southern tribes primarily reside in Oklahoma today, far from their ancestral homelands in the South, was another factor leading to American Indians' longstanding marginalization in the telling of southern colonial history.¹

Historians began to address American Indian history in the South more fulsomely in the 1970s. The new scholarly inquiry largely began with histories centered on individual American Indian tribes. Arrell M. Gibson's *The Chickasaws* (1971) and W. David Baird's *The Quapaw Indians: A History of the Downstream People* (1982) are two prime examples of tribal histories pertinent to the history of Arkansas Post. Meanwhile, critical studies of race relations in colonial America, such as Gary Nash's *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (1974) and Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975), pointed to the importance of European-Indian relations on colonial development broadly. Also, demographic studies of the withering effects of European contact on American Indian populations began to add essential context for all American Indian studies whether they focused on a tribe or a region. Works such as Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, published in 1972, and Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (1983), led to many more studies in this line of inquiry.

The new American Indian history ultimately resulted in some new conceptual underpinnings for colonial history. One new concept is captured in the phrase "new worlds." Historian Colin Calloway used this phrase in the title of his book, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (1998). The conception of "new

¹ Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 1.

worlds” revolves around understanding European colonization as a process that uprooted natives as well as colonists. North America was not only an exotic New World to Europeans; it also became transformed into an unfamiliar new world, figuratively speaking, for its Indigenous peoples. The transformation of the Native Americans’ world occurred on several planes at once. American Indian tribes had to adjust their external affairs to take account of European power and influence. They had to absorb new technologies into their material culture. They had to adapt their subsistence lifeways to accommodate profound changes to their environment (sometimes in their own homeland, other times when they were pushed into new territories). They had to deal with the physical and psychological trauma of epidemics and demographic collapse. The advent of Europeans in North America was as disorienting for native peoples as it was for the newcomers, albeit in markedly separate ways.

Another important new concept is expressed in the term “middle ground.” This conceptual insight came about through studies of cross-cultural phenomena such as patterns of family formation in American Indian-European/Euro-American marriages, protocols of exchange in the fur trade, and the creation of new ethnicities by groups such as the Métis in Canada and the Acadians in Louisiana. Historian Richard White developed the concept of a “middle ground” and gave it a name in his prize-winning 1991 book, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. White’s seminal thesis was that American Indians and Europeans formed a practical and durable system of relations that was based largely on recognizing bonds of kinship made through ceremony. Europeans perceived the kinship ties as symbolic or “fictive,” whereas American Indians saw the kinship ties as made and real. Importantly, the form of making relatives was traditional in American Indian cultures and not something American Indians adapted to accommodate the presence of Europeans. Yet in the context of European contact, building and maintaining the system of relations often involved “creative misunderstandings” between American Indians and Europeans to bridge their cultural differences. White’s “middle ground” existed in a specific time and place, as indicated in the book’s subtitle, but it also featured a rough parity of power and influence between American Indians and Europeans. When the latter came to dominate the former, the middle ground was destroyed. As such, White’s concept of a “middle ground” has been applied by other historians to various geographic areas and periods of time where Europeans and American Indians co-existed and made mutual accommodations. Historian Morris S. Arnold has argued that a “middle ground” existed in and around Arkansas Post in the colonial era. In *The Rumble of a Distant Drum: The Quapaws and Old World Newcomers, 1673-1804*, published in 2000, Arnold examines French-Quapaw and Spanish-Quapaw relations as unique expressions of the middle ground.

Since the appearance of *The Middle Ground*, some historians have pushed White’s thesis further, arguing that American Indians maintained the upper hand in the interior of North America until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Historian Michael Witgen, intent on demonstrating that Algonkian peoples maintained greater control over the Great

Lakes region than was previously acknowledged, re-interpreted American Indian-French relations in his book *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early America* (2011). Kathleen DuVal made a similar case for the preeminence of native power in the Arkansas River Valley in her 2006 study, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*.

The Quapaw and the French

The first documented encounter between the Quapaw and the French occurred in the summer of 1673 when inhabitants of the village of Kappa on the Mississippi River sighted the French explorers Marquette and Jolliet approaching in their canoe. The Quapaws sent two canoes to meet them. One Quapaw man stood upright as the canoes approached, holding aloft the calumet and singing to the French as a sign of peaceful intentions. “He joined us, singing very agreeably, and gave us tobacco to smoke,” Marquette wrote. “After that, he offered us sagamité [porridge] and bread made of Indian corn, of which we ate a little. He then preceded us, after making us a sign to follow him slowly.” The Quapaw led the Europeans to a ceremonial gathering place under a scaffolding where they seated their guests on a carpeting of fine rush mats. The elders sat nearest to their guests, behind them sat the warriors, and behind them gathered the rest of the people. The Quapaw communicated with the French through a pair of interpreters, one of their own and one in the French party, both of whom spoke Illinois.²

There are details in Marquette’s account that suggest the Quapaw were informed that the French explorers were coming and that the Quapaw prepared for their arrival. For one thing, Marquette wrote that the Quapaw canoes set out to greet them when they were still half a league (more than a mile) distant – too far away to be distinguished as Europeans. For another, Marquette thought the ceremonial site in the village where they were welcomed by the elders had been prepared for them. When Marquette and Jolliet departed from the last native village before Kappa, Michigamea, at a place eight or ten leagues north of Kappa, ten people of that village set out ahead of them and perhaps they went ahead to inform the Quapaw. In any case, the Quapaw were already well informed about the Europeans. They told Marquette and Jolliet that they had acquired hatchets, knives and beads of European origin through trade with the American Indian nations to the east. They explained further that there were other American Indian nations, enemies of the Quapaw, armed with guns, who prevented them from going to trade with the Europeans directly. For these reasons, the Quapaw were glad to encounter the French and wanted to form an alliance.³

² Marquette, “The Mississippi Voyage of Joliet and Marquette, 1673,” 254.

³ Marquette, “The Mississippi Voyage of Joliet and Marquette, 1673,” 254-55; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 1; Cande, “Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity,” 37-38. Another glimpse of the Quapaws’

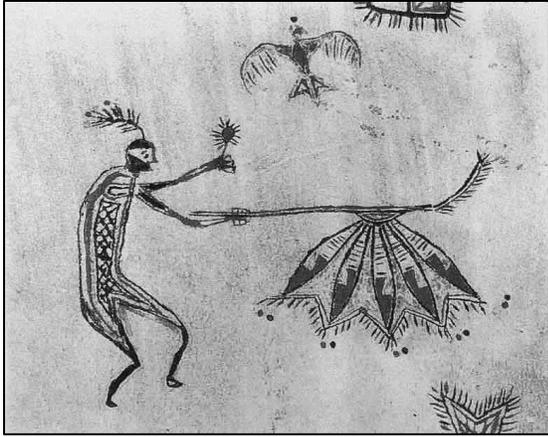


Figure 24. Calumet dancer. Detail from a painted buffalo robe shows a man in a sacred kinship ceremony holding a pipe stem. (Detail from *Robes of Splendor*.)

The Quapaw initiated their alliance with the French through this first encounter with Marquette and Jolliet. By sharing food and smoking tobacco with their guests, they created ceremonial kinship bonds, which in the Quapaw's view established reciprocal obligations of cooperation and support analogous to traditional kinship bonds within the tribe. As archeologist George Sabo III observes, the Quapaw's reception of Marquette and Jolliet denoted first steps "taken along the path leading to an intercultural framework or 'middle ground' of shared meanings and ways of

acting that enabled American Indians and Europeans to work together in pursuit of common goals." The French explorers, already acquainted with the calumet ceremony, carried their own calumet or peace pipe, knowing that it held power in the native world to smooth relations between strangers. For the Quapaw, smoking the pipe was a ritual act based on their belief that the enveloping, rising smoke facilitated communication with the Great Spirit whose sanction legitimized the ceremonial kinship bonds.⁴

Christian symbols, too, were shared between the Quapaw and French. When La Salle visited Kappa in 1682, his party erected a large cross on an earthen mound. Father Membre used sign language to inform the Quapaw about the Christian God and his saving powers. When La Salle and his men visited Kappa again on their way north, they found that the Quapaw had surrounded the cross with a circle of stakes. Apparently, the Quapaw viewed the cross as a gift that symbolized their French alliance. Similarly, the French erected a large cross at Tonty's trading house, which the people of Osotouy seem to have treated with respect.⁵

In 1698, Tonty returned to the village of Kappa with a priest, Father J. F. Buisson St. Cosme, at which time the French planted another cross. The village was in a new location since La Salle's time, and the French stayed there for two and a half days. St. Cosme reminded the Quapaw that the cross was "a sign of our union." Soon thereafter, the Quapaw

extensive trade network is given by Joutel in 1687. At Osotouy, the French were presented with a deerskin sack of various gifts including "some porcelain necklaces made from shells they obtain from tribes said to be near New England." (Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 272.)

⁴ Sabo, "The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas," 178-79.

⁵ Cande, "Ritual and Material Culture as Keys to Cultural Continuity," 39; National Park Service, *Osotouy Cultural Landscape, Arkansas Post National Memorial*, Cultural Landscape Report Environmental Assessment (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 2014), 2-35. The archeologist Edward Palmer recovered a metallic cross six inches in length from a cut in the top of one of the mounds at the Menard site. Although certainly of European origin, there was no way to know how it came to be buried in the top of the mound.

planted crosses along the banks of the Mississippi to denote their hunting territory as well as to proclaim their newly formed alliance with the French.⁶

In 1701, Father Jacques Gravier reported planting a cross on top of a hill in the village of Kappa. After getting it planted, the French sang the *Vexilla Regis*, a Gregorian chant, and concluded the ceremony by giving the village a three-gun salute. The Quapaw responded by making their own procession up the hill: the chief of the village together with the chief of the village of Tourima in the lead, followed by twenty or thirty warriors carrying bows and arrows, other weapons of their own making, plus two or three recently acquired guns. It is noteworthy that the French priest invoked a display of firearms and that the Quapaw responded with a martial display of their own, showing that the alliance encompassed both religion and war.⁷

At the time of their early encounters with the French, the Quapaw may have numbered around 6,000 people. La Salle reported their population as somewhere between 6,000 and 15,000. Father Membré placed the population between 15,000 and 20,000. Scholars are somewhat doubtful of the higher estimates. Tonty stated that the number of warriors in 1682 was 1,500. Native American tribes often reported their strength in terms of numbers of warriors. As demographers usually multiply an enumeration of warriors by three or four to arrive at an estimate for a population inclusive of women, children, and male elders, that would put Tonty's estimate at between 4,500 and 6,000 people.⁸

The tribe was distributed among four villages. Kappa was on the west bank of the Mississippi River above the mouth of the White River. Tongigua was fourteen miles downstream on the east bank. Tourima was another seven miles downstream on the west bank when La Salle visited there in 1682; later it moved to a new location on the lower Arkansas River. Osotouy was farther up the Arkansas River at the site now designated as the Osotouy Unit of Arkansas Post National Memorial.⁹

Residents of the villages lived in bark-covered longhouses. Each structure sheltered several families. Father Gravier reported that the village of Kappa had forty such longhouses in 1701. The villages were arranged around a central open plaza where ceremonies and public events were held. It seems that the Quapaw often chose village sites associated with mounds built by the Mississippians. Osotouy was situated nearby the Menard Mound, and

⁶ Saint-Cosme, "The Voyage of St. Cosme, 1698-1699," 360; Joseph Patrick Key, "The Calumet and the Cross: Religious Encounters in the Lower Mississippi Valley," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 160.

⁷ Jacques Gravier, "Journal of the Voyage of Father Gravier," in *Early Voyages up and down the Mississippi, by Cavalier, St. Cosme, Le Sueur, Gravier, and Guignas*, edited by John Gilmary Shea (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1861), 126.

⁸ Sabo, "The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas," 180; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 37; Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 36, 48.

⁹ Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 23; Sabo, "The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas," 180.

the village of Kappa at the time of Father Gravier's visit featured a hill "very steep, and forty feet high," which could only have been an artificial earthen mound. Gravier remarked that the village was located half a league or about one mile from the edge of the river. The description suggests that the mound, rather than the river edge, dictated the selection of the village site.¹⁰

The Quapaw divided themselves into two moieties called the Earth People and the Sky People. Within each moiety there were numerous clans and subclans, each one known by the name of an animal, such as the turtle clan, or a feature of the heavens, such as the sun or thunder clan. One clan in each moiety took responsibility for keeping a sacred pipe; when the two pipes were used in ceremonies a person from the opposite moiety was selected to fill and light each pipe. People had to marry outside their moiety. A person's clan and moiety was determined through patrilineal descent.¹¹

The villages formed separate political units, each one headed by a hereditary chief and council of elders. The chiefs generally made decisions for the group based on the participation and consensus of members of the group. The chiefs' authority was limited, resting on respect afforded the chief and the mutual obligations borne by everyone who belonged to the community. Occasionally, the chiefs of the villages conferred on matters affecting the whole tribe. At times during the eighteenth century, the Quapaw recognized a "great chief," but it seems this individual had no greater authority than any other chief. Sabo suggests that the title of great chief was honorary, and perhaps a vestige of an earlier, more hierarchical form of political organization. DuVal argues that the office of "great chief" may have been newly emergent rather than vestigial, a response to the pressures of European colonization.¹²

Besides the well-documented contact with the French in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, the Quapaw had a minor amount of direct contact with English traders penetrating westward from the Carolinas in the late 1690s. After the founding of French Louisiana in 1699, there were vectors for European-borne diseases coming at the Quapaw from three directions: north, east, and south. Devastating diseases struck the Quapaw population as early as the 1680s, and hit them again and again through the eighteenth century. Deadliest of all was a smallpox epidemic in the mid to late 1690s that killed well over half the people. When Tonty brought three missionaries down the Mississippi in the winter of 1698-99, he found the Quapaw reduced to a fraction of their former numbers. Father St. Cosme reported that in the village of Kappa "not a hundred men were left. All the children had died, and a great many women." The Quapaw informed the French that the

¹⁰ Gravier, "Journal of the Voyage of Father Gravier," 126.

¹¹ Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 12-13; Sabo, "The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas," 180-81.

¹² Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 13; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 70, 90; Sabo, "The Quapaw Indians of Arkansas," 180.

sickness had finally left their village only the previous month. “In the village are now nothing but graves,” St. Cosme wrote, “in which they were buried two together.”¹³

Because the Mississippi River became well-traveled by Europeans in the eighteenth century, and because travelers spread germs, native populations up and down the Mississippi Valley were particularly hard hit. The Quapaw well knew the dangers of contracting illnesses from travelers. After another smallpox outbreak in 1721, the Quapaw were visited by Father Pierre de Charlevoix. The priest found the village of Osotouy “in the greatest tribulation” because a Frenchman had recently come into their midst, fallen ill with smallpox, and transmitted the disease to the whole village. By the time of Charlevoix’s visit, hundreds had died. “The burying place looked like a forest of poles and posts newly set up,” Charlevoix wrote.¹⁴

The Quapaw suffered further epidemics in 1748, 1751, 1777, and 1781, and probably others as well. Following the 1748 outbreak, it was said that the Quapaw were “greatly reduced due to illness among all on that river.” After the 1751 epidemic, it was reported that the number of Quapaw warriors had been reduced by one-third, and stood at around 150 men. If the French sources are to be believed, then the number of Quapaw warriors fell from 1,500 to 300 men during the first wave of epidemics before 1700, and then dropped again to 150 at mid-century, which was perhaps the nadir for their declining population. By the end of the eighteenth century the Quapaw were slowly gaining in numbers. With each epidemic, survivors acquired an immunity and were more likely to survive the next outbreak. The mention in 1699 of higher mortality among children than adults suggests that many adults at that time had survived an earlier outbreak. As historian David Usner writes to illustrate why it took generations for native populations to bottom out under the impact of Old World infectious diseases: “a Choctaw woman who managed to survive her infection in the epidemic of 1731 would have lived through that of 1742, but she most probably would have lost her newborn child to the disease.”¹⁵

Population loss made the Quapaw vulnerable to attack from their enemies. After the devastating smallpox epidemic in the late 1690s, the Quapaw feared attack from their longtime foes, the Chickasaw. In this critical period, the Chickasaw were armed with guns, which they had acquired from the English, while the Quapaw still fought with bows and arrows. The Chickasaw exploited the Quapaw’s weakness by pushing into their hunting territory, raiding the Quapaw villages, and seizing captives. The Chickasaw were very aggressive in taking captives owing to their growing involvement with the English of

¹³ Saint-Cosme, “The Voyage of St. Cosme,” 359.

¹⁴ Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 48; Owen Lyon, “The Trail of the Quapaw,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1950), 206.

¹⁵ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 44, 151; Faye, “The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination,” 709; Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 37.

Carolina. The Chickasaw sold their captives to English slave traders, who sold them to plantation owners, who worked them to death in their rice plantations on the Carolina coast and Barbados.¹⁶

To escape being killed or enslaved, many Quapaw fled from their villages and melted into the surrounding territory. In 1699, Father François de Montigny described the tribe as “scattered” and the old village sites as mostly abandoned. He and the other two missionaries who went south that year to establish missions among the Quapaw altered their plans when they found the tribe dispersed and depleted in numbers. Instead of setting up missions among the Quapaw, the priests settled among the Tunica, Taensa, and Natchez tribes who were in the lower Mississippi Valley. One of the priests, Father Antoine Davion, briefly went on a mission to the Chickasaw before going on south.¹⁷

The Quapaw valued the French alliance partly for the protection it afforded them from threatening tribes. In 1700, the Quapaw pressured the French to send them a missionary. In response to urgings by the three priests that they concentrate their population in one place so that a missionary might serve them all, the Quapaw re-established the village of Kappa and offered to build a house for a priest. The reconstituted village was sometimes called New Kappa, and it appears to have combined the remnant populations of Kappa, Tongigua, and Tourima, although Tourima later came back into separate existence. It was built at a new location downriver from its former site, farther from the Chickasaw. In 1701, the Quapaw received their own missionary there, Father Nicholas Foucault. However, they were soon disappointed with this priest, for he was infirm and feeble, and had to retire after just one year. While Father Foucault was making his way to Mobile with two French soldiers, Koroa Indians ambushed the party and murdered the priest and his escort. Afterwards, Quapaw joined the French in a swift war of revenge against the small Koroa tribe, marking the first time that Quapaw warriors served the French as allies in war.¹⁸

The Quapaw fought with the French against the Natchez tribe after the Natchez attacked and wiped out the French trading post and settlement of Natchez in 1729. For the French, the war against the Natchez was not just a retaliatory action but a war aimed at destroying the Natchez chiefdom. Other tribes besides the Quapaw joined in the fighting, including the Chickasaw. Although the chiefdom was wiped out, many Natchez refugees fled to other areas or merged with other tribes where they continued to fight and threaten the French colonial regime. Usner states that the Natchez War “marked a significant breakdown on an Indian colonial borderland” comparable to the Pequot War in New England and the

¹⁶ Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 296, 299.

¹⁷ François de Montigny, “François de Montigny, S. J., to the Comte de Pontchartrain, 1699,” in *Colonial Captivities, Marches and Journeys*, edited by Isabel M. Calder (1935; reprint, Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1967), 204-05; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 27; Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 112-15.

¹⁸ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 91; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 28; Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 150; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 15.

Pueblo War in New Mexico. In the war's turbulent aftermath, the French re-occupied Arkansas Post to protect navigation on the Mississippi and check English influence among France's restless allies in the late war, especially the Chickasaw. Soon thereafter, the French sought to enlist the Quapaw in a war against the Chickasaw.¹⁹

The Quapaw proved to be firm allies of the French. While the French made lengthy preparations for an assault on the Chickasaw's stronghold at Chickasaw Bluffs far up the Mississippi River, the Quapaw mustered a force of 150 warriors with which to secure the long approach up the valley. The Quapaw had to clear the area of Natchez Indian guerilla fighters – survivors of the Natchez War who had found asylum in Chickasaw territory and now sided with the Chickasaw against the French. When the French finally launched their military campaign, the Quapaw contributed a large contingent of warriors. But the military campaign fizzled. As the conflict wore on, the Quapaw lost patience with their French allies' ponderous approach to making war. In the following decade, the Quapaw fought the Chickasaw on their own terms, intercepting Chickasaw war parties or hunting parties and inflicting a few casualties in small engagements. Whenever the Quapaw managed to kill a few Chickasaw, they took their victims' scalps to the governor in New Orleans as a token of their friendship and a reminder that the French owed them presents.²⁰

At the end of the Seven Years' War, the Quapaw made peace with the Chickasaw and entered a military and trade alliance with their erstwhile enemy that endured through the American Revolutionary War period. Both the Quapaw and the Chickasaw resisted efforts by the British and Spanish to have them resume hostilities and fight a proxy war when the two European powers were once again in conflict with each other.²¹

The Quapaw faced mounting pressure from other tribes, however, as the eighteenth century wore on. Historian DuVal argues that the Quapaw still exercised control over much of the Arkansas Valley throughout the colonial era, but that is questionable. While the French colonial regime in Louisiana rested on alliances with American Indian nations for its military hold on the area, it was also responsible for imposing a new system of economic relations – what historian Usner has termed the “frontier exchange economy.” The frontier exchange economy inexorably altered Indigenous modes of subsistence and eroded American Indian nations' independence. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the Arkansas country attracted American Indians of many nations who were involved in the fur trade. During the 1770s, Iroquois, Illinois, Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, Potawatomi, and Pawnee all appeared in hunting parties along the Arkansas River. The Quapaw could not hold their hunting grounds against such an onslaught. Even as they saw their game resources being depleted by

¹⁹ Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 31; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 24.

²⁰ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 24-26; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 96-97.

²¹ Wendy St. Jean, “The Chickasaw-Quapaw Alliance in the Revolutionary War,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (Autumn 2009), 274-77.

so many interlopers, the Quapaw could not prevent a partial takeover of their hunting territory in the upper Arkansas Valley by two increasingly powerful western tribes, the Osage to the north and the Caddo to the south.²²

The Frontier Exchange Economy

The calumet ceremony is understood by historians as having been the ritualistic social underpinning of American Indian-European relations across much of the interior of North America in the colonial era. American Indians and Europeans used the calumet as well as the cross to convey respect and understanding of the others' culture and belief system. Spiritual beliefs and ideas about kinship were used to forge economic, political, and military ties between nations – the so-called middle ground. Without disregarding the middle ground's ritualistic framework, historian Daniel H. Usner, Jr. focuses on the economic connection. He introduces his concept of a “frontier exchange economy” as follows:



Figure 25. Beaver pelts were the most prized commodity in an enduring trade between American Indians and Europeans. (Public domain.)

Over the eighteenth century, American Indian villagers across the Lower Mississippi Valley forged a network of social and economic relations with European settlers and African slaves along the Gulf Coast and lower banks of the Mississippi that I call a frontier exchange economy. The term *frontier exchange* is meant to capture the form and content of economic interactions among these groups, with a view to replacing the notion of frontier as an interracial boundary with that of a cross-cultural network. For this conceptualization of an interethnic web of economic relations, I am indebted to a variety of works in anthropology, political science, and history that emphasize the prosaic features of livelihood in ordinary people's struggles for survival. Small-scale, face-to-face marketing in North American colonial regions must be taken as seriously as the more impersonal forces of transatlantic commerce if we are to understand how peoples of different cultures related to and influenced one another in daily life.²³

The establishment of Tonty's trading house initiated the frontier exchange economy in the lower Arkansas Valley. Tonty expected to trade with the Quapaw for furs since that was the main article of trade between French and American Indians in the north. However,

²² DuVal, “The Education of Fernando de Leyba,” 5.

²³ Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 57.

the Quapaw were not avid hunters of beavers or other small fur-bearing animals, so a different trade commodity emerged instead: bison hides. After the founding of Louisiana, the Quapaw became prolific hunters of bison along the Mississippi River and probably contributed to the animal's swift demise in the lower Mississippi Valley at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Quapaw also hunted bison on the Grand Prairie and in the St. Francis and White River areas as well as westward up the Arkansas Valley. Men and women shared in the production of bison hides, the men performing the hunt and the women preparing the hides.²⁴

Salted bison meat quickly became a valuable trade article as well, for the French needed to feed their soldiers and even their colonists until they could produce their own food. Long before the French arrived, the Quapaw traded salt with other tribes and used it for a food preservative. The Quapaw produced salted bison meat and sold it to the French at Arkansas Post, who sent it by boat to other posts and settlements in the colony. In 1723, Diron Benard d'Artaguette passed a convoy of seven boats on the Mississippi River carrying salted meat to New Orleans. In 1740, during a campaign against the Chickasaw, the French officer at Fort St. Francis reported that a "boat from Arkansas arrived and brought...eight thousand pounds of *salaison*," or salted meat. This latter quantity of meat would have filled thirty kegs or more and required a mid-size vessel to transport it. Production and distribution of such large quantities required a pooling of Quapaw labor and French facilities for getting the product to market. It exemplifies the "small-scale, face-to-face marketing" referred to by Usner, where different peoples not only met for trade but truly mingled their daily lives.²⁵

Besides the hide and meat of the bison, another product that came from the animal was tallow, or rendered fat, which was used in making candles, soap, and caulking. In the eighteenth century, Arkansas Post became a center of bison tallow production, with large quantities shipped to New Orleans annually. Jean-Bernard Bossu, a French traveler of the mid-eighteenth century, reported that Quapaw women "melt the suet in copper kettles to make tallow cakes which they sell or trade to the French or English for European merchandise."²⁶ Bossu is not known for his accurate description of native peoples, but this homely detail seems authentic. From it, we may have a unique "shop-floor" image of the cross-cultural work place that formed around the harvesting of bison at Osotouy and Arkansas Post. The Quapaw village and the French fort were co-located not only for purposes of trade and defense, but also for purposes of bringing together labor in the new frontier exchange economy.

²⁴ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 30-35.

²⁵ Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature," 32; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 35.

²⁶ National Park Service, *Master Plan, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas* (Denver: Denver Service Center, 1975), 40; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 35.

When Iberville founded the French colony of Louisiana, he thought that bison products might form the colony's leading export. At first, Iberville was advised that the bison might become domesticated and raised like cattle. When that proved to be impractical, the colonial administration pushed market hunting of bison instead and began importing cattle to Louisiana with a view to raising herds and increasing the colony's meat supply. By the 1720s, the French developed substantial cattle herds around Pointe Coupée (near today's Baton Rouge).²⁷

Cattle may have come into southern tribes' possession by way of the French in the early eighteenth century or through trade with the Spanish in New Mexico somewhat earlier. It is well documented that the Natchez raided French cattle in the 1720s. Most southern tribes responded to cattle as another prey species to be hunted, or as property to be stolen and traded. The Choctaw were perhaps the first southern tribe to treat cattle as domestic livestock by raising their own herds. Choctaw had a word for cattle as early as 1701 when they were visited by Father Gravier. Choctaw place names suggest that the Choctaw incorporated cattle herding into their subsistence economy by the 1730s. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Choctaw not only raised their own cattle herds, they traded their surplus beef and cowhides to the French for guns and other items of European manufacture. In the 1770s, the Choctaw moved some of their villages into new areas along the Yazoo and Tombigbee rivers to take advantage of better pastureland. With their larger populations and considerable farms, the Choctaw settlements were known as towns. The Choctaw's new hunting grounds extended to the east bank of the Mississippi River, and Choctaw traded at Arkansas Post. By 1800, they sold copious amounts of cowhides and tallow (as well as big surpluses of corn) to make up for a decline in the deerskin trade.²⁸

The deerskin trade was huge in the frontier exchange economy across most of the South from Carolina to Louisiana, yet it always remained secondary to the trade in bison and bear products in the locality of Arkansas Post. The English of Carolina sought deerskins and beaver pelts when they infiltrated the Chickasaw's hunting grounds and briefly connected with the Quapaw late in the seventeenth century. The Chickasaw became heavily involved in the deerskin trade with the English, but the Quapaw showed much less interest in it. Many deer were taken in the region surrounding Arkansas Post. In the two decades encompassing the American Revolutionary War, many hundreds of eastern American Indians as well as French and Americans moved into the region to hunt deer for the deerskin trade. Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Cherokee moved across the Mississippi River and farther west up the Arkansas Valley. Hunting parties from many American Indian nations were noted along the Arkansas River. Together with American and French deer hunters, they harvested upwards of 100,000

²⁷ Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature," 29-33; Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 83.

²⁸ Carson, "Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830," 2-8; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 124; Ryan Springs consultation, January 28, 2016.

deer annually in Louisiana toward the end of the eighteenth century. Deer hunters of many tribes and ethnicities gathered each year for a rendezvous or trade fair on the St. Francis River.²⁹

Many of the hunting parties traveled over great distances, leaving home for months at a time. Others brought their families with them and were essentially emigrants rather than long hunters. Historian Stanley Faye traced the emigration of a group of Delaware to the St. Francis River as revealed in the correspondence of Arkansas Post commandant Jacobo Dubreuil and Governor Miró. One entire Delaware band of 200 warriors and their families, or perhaps 750 people, came from the Ohio Valley to the St. Francis River to make a winter hunt in December 1786, and asked permission of the Spanish to stay, which the governor granted them. In token of the arrangement, the chief of the Delaware band relinquished his British medal to Dubreuil and received a Spanish medal in its place. Spanish authorities expected the Delaware to sell deerskins and buy supplies at Arkansas Post, but in the following year they were disappointed to learn that a party of some twenty to sixty interlopers from Vincennes (probably a mixed party of French and Americans) had come down the Mississippi and settled among the Delaware on the St. Francis, preempting the anticipated trade between the Delaware and the Spanish at Arkansas Post. The Spanish authorities regarded the group from Vincennes as smugglers since they did not pay the Spanish tariff on American goods and undersold the merchandise sold at Arkansas Post. But the Spanish were powerless to dislodge them. When the Quapaw formed an alliance with the Delaware later that year, the Spanish recognized they had no choice but to accept the Delaware as new residents. The arrival of the Delaware illustrates how the frontier exchange economy spurred emigrations and interactions between groups independent of the aims of colonial administrators.³⁰

No tribe gained more in the frontier exchange economy in Arkansas than the Osage. Culturally and linguistically related to the Quapaw, the Osage lived in permanent villages on the Osage River in today's southwestern Missouri when Europeans first arrived in the area. They grew crops of corn, beans, and squash and hunted seasonally for bison, elk, and deer on the prairies and in the wooded Ozark uplands. The Osage were first drawn into the frontier exchange economy as slave raiders. Armed with guns and metal axes and knives by the French, Osage raiding parties attacked Pawnee and Wichita villages farther west, taking captives to sell to the French. As their power grew, they safeguarded their role as middlemen between the French and tribes farther west. They attacked Caddoan villages, enslaving some of the people and driving the rest southward to the Red River. By the end of the French

²⁹ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 41-43; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 160; Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 90.

³⁰ Stanley Faye, "Indian Guests at the Spanish Arkansas Post," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1945), 98-101.

period of colonial administration in Louisiana, Europeans perceived the Osage as rulers over a large area centering on the Ozark Plateau and touching on the Arkansas Valley.³¹

While the French largely avoided conflict with the Osage, the Spanish were more antagonistic toward this powerful nation. One source of friction between the Osage and the Spanish was the decision by the latter to outlaw American Indian slavery in Louisiana. That is, the Spanish regime declared it unlawful to buy, sell, or hold enslaved American Indians in the province; the edict did not apply to people of African descent who remained in bondage. The edict came as a relief for many tribes but it was an affront to the Osage, who had long played an active part in capturing American Indians and trading them to Spanish slave traders. To the extent that the edict was enforced, it eliminated a valuable component of the frontier exchange economy. Another disappointment for the Osage was the Spanish refusal to accept the Osage's territorial gains in the upper Arkansas Valley after the Osage had taken the area from the Caddo. The Osage wanted the Spanish to establish a trading post in the valley but the Spanish refused. So, the valley remained contested terrain, where Quapaw and Osage frequently fought and killed one another throughout the Spanish period. Still another problem for the Osage was the Spanish policy to sell guns to the Pawnee and other central plains tribes who had long suffered depredations by the Osage. By the time of the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Osage were still the masters of the lower Missouri River Valley, but they were being pressed by their enemies on all sides.³²

Community and Inter-marriage

From the beginning, Arkansas Post was a mixed community where people of different race, gender, creed, and culture lived together, fought side by side in defense of their homes, and had intimate relations. The community was knit together by several types of bonds. French and Quapaw were ceremonial kinsmen, trading partners, and military allies.

³¹ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 103-10; Garrick A. Bailey, "Osage," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 13, Plains*, edited by Raymond J. DeMallie and general editor, William C. Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 476-77.

³² Bailey, "Osage," 477; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 112-24. In these pages, Arnold provides a clear and concise narrative of the Osages' activity in the Arkansas Valley during the eighteenth century. While the Osages had a pervasive dampening effect on French and Quapaw hunting exploits up the Arkansas, almost none of the incidents mentioned in Arnold's account transpired at Arkansas Post; virtually all trading and warring with the Osages took place upriver and in the upper White River drainage. Arnold does describe two events that apparently took place at Arkansas Post. "For a few years after 1780, the Arkansas River remained relatively free of Osage depredations. Late in 1783, Captain Dubreuil of the Arkansas Post even rewarded a friendly Osage partisan with a European outfit, a medal, a gorget, a flag, and a commission as chief. Though this act predictably angered the St. Louis establishment, Governor Miró in the next year boldly broke the St. Louis stranglehold on the Osage trade and awarded the Arkansas Osage trade to François Ménard and Jean-Baptiste Imbeau. Excluded merchants at the Arkansas protested vigorously and in the course of doing so revealed that they had in fact already been trading with the Osages. In 1785, peace talks began again at the Post between the Quapaws, Caddos, Osages, and others..."

Europeans and American Indians intermarried and formed families together. Officers held military command over the soldiers. Slave owners controlled numerous enslaved people. Merchants and hunters often were bound by a contractual relationship. People mostly fell into discrete social categories, but there were exceptions to every social division. It was a community shaped by social dividing lines in which every line was blurred, every category carried exceptions. There was a soldier who was also a *habitant*, enslaved people who were American Indian, and mixed-race people who were free.

Several historians have made close studies of the historical records of Arkansas Post to tease apart various elements of the unusual social matrix and gain insights into how the community worked. Drawing their evidence from a fragmentary record of marriages and baptisms and informal censuses as well as officers' reports, merchants' correspondence, and travelers' commentary, these historians have tried to infer what conditions were like for the many community members who left no written record of their lives as well as for the few who did.

One may start with the eclectic census data. Post commandants often made a count of the population when they first entered on duty. The completeness and descriptiveness of these records vary. For example, the category of "slave" may have been specific to enslaved Africans in one case, while including enslaved American Indians in another. The category of "Frenchman" may have referred only to adult males (analogous to "warriors" when enumerating an American Indian tribe) in the first instance, and it may have included French women and children in the next. The census data are listed here in chronological order.

- In 1722, Bénard de la Harpe stated there were forty-seven men and women in Law's Colony inclusive of the garrison at Arkansas Post.
- In 1723, Diron d'Artaguiette found that fourteen Frenchmen and six people of African descent were all that remained of the colonists.
- In 1731, Pierre Petit de Coulange came with a command of twelve soldiers but there are no census data for the civilian population through the 1730s.
- In 1746, it is recorded that there were twelve traders and farmers and their families with ten enslaved people of African descent dwelling on the Arkansas River together with an unknown number of French hunters, a garrison of twenty French soldiers, and 250 Quapaw warriors.
- In 1749, there was no census, but the post commandant, Delinó de Chalmette stated that Linetot, a *habitant*, had seven slaves while he had three (race not stated).

- In 1751, the soldier garrison consisted of forty-five cadets, soon reduced to forty-one, and three officers.
- In 1755, after Arkansas Post was relocated downriver, the civilian population at the new site included thirty-one Frenchmen and fourteen slaves (again, race not stated).
- In 1757, the soldier garrison numbered about forty. In 1769, the post commandant, Alexandre De Clouet, reported there were thirty-five black, mixed race, and American Indian slaves present.
- In 1772, the post commandant Fernando de Leyba stated that Arkansas Post had a civilian population of seventy-eight persons, of whom sixty-two were free and sixteen enslaved. Among the free population, thirty-two were male and thirty were female.
- In 1776, the post commandant Balthazar de Villiers found a civilian population sixty-one, of whom fifty were free and eleven were enslaved. His command included sixteen soldiers.
- In 1783, after Arkansas Post was relocated again to Ecores Rouges, the garrison consisted of fourteen soldiers.
- When Josef Vallière arrived in 1787, he counted one hundred and nineteen civilians, while the strength of the garrison stood at thirty-two and was reinforced with another dozen soldiers the following year.
- In 1791, there were thirty-seven black and mixed race enslaved people in a total population of one hundred and fifty-one.
- In 1798, there were fifty-six black and mixed race enslaved people in a total population of three hundred and ninety-three – but the latter figure probably represents a census of colonists in the whole Arkansas Valley.³³

Intermarriage played a vital role in forging good relations between American Indian tribes and the French. Much more than the English or Spanish, the French recognized the value of intermarriage to enhance trade relations and strengthen military alliances. The French coureurs de bois married native women to help them bridge cultural barriers as well as for the obvious sake of companionship. Their wives took on the hard labor of preparing animal skins, helped them learn native languages, and gave them an inroad into a tribe's social structure. To varying degrees, American Indian peoples likewise promoted

³³ Smith, "Exploration of the Arkansas River by Benard de La Harpe, 1721-1722," 349; Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 21, 39, 43, 45, 59, 69-72; Faye, "The Arkansas Post of Louisiana: French Domination," 679, 710; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 49, 65.

intermarriage with the French because it would bring the tribe better access to European goods. Some American Indian groups thought the French “black chiefs” or missionaries might teach them new powers, protecting them against enemies.³⁴

In his book, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, Morris S. Arnold marshals evidence that the French found the Quapaw to be an unusually appealing people in physical form, temperament, and outlook. The French were only too happy to reciprocate the Quapaw’s interest in forming an alliance with them. Father Charlevoix stated that Quapaw men were “the largest and handsomest of men of all the Indians of this continent and are called by way of distinction *les beaux hommes*.” An early ethnographer, Antoine-Simon Le Page du Pratz, stated that the natural beauty and pleasant climate of Arkansas affected “the character of its inhabitants, who are at the same time very gentle and very brave.” An eighteenth-century French writer by the name of Louis Dubroca observed that his compatriots at Arkansas Post followed in the tradition of the French in Canada and married “the Arkansas girls without any difficulty and these alliances had the happiest consequences.” Dubroca further noted that “one never sees the least chill between even very different nations whom marriage has united.”³⁵ Many more examples could be cited. Historian Arnold concludes, “it should be reasonably clear that the Frenchmen of the Arkansas were quite high on the Quapaw nation and would hardly have been averse to establishing various kinds of liaisons with them, including sexual and connubial ones.”³⁶

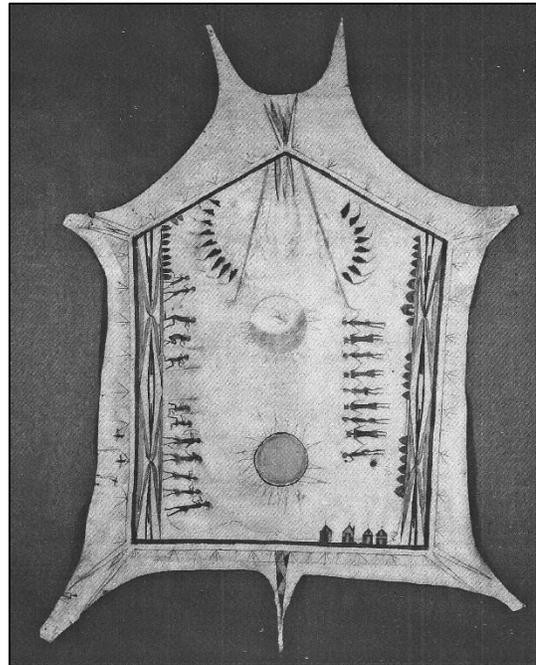


Figure 26. Painted buffalo hide believed to be of Quapaw origin and depicting ties between the Quapaw villages and Arkansas Post, shown in lower right. (Courtesy of Morris S. Arnold.)

Arnold treats French and Quapaw relations as a case study in how French and American Indian peoples fashioned enduring bonds of friendship and created a middle ground. However, he notes that in some respects Arkansas Post was unusual among French and American Indian frontier communities. For one thing, it was of very long duration. As Arnold observes in another book, *Colonial Arkansas*, the French and Quapaw lived together on the Arkansas River for “probably five generations.” Although genealogical data are

³⁴ Kathleen DuVal, “Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 65, no. 2 (April 2008), 267-70.

³⁵ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 3-14.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 3-4, 7.

lacking, Arnold infers that “by the end of the eighteenth century many of the European families there were of mixed blood or at least had mixed-blood collateral relatives.” French blood ran in the veins of Quapaw families, too, as evidenced by the prevalence of French surnames in the Quapaw population recorded in later times. One noteworthy example of French-Quapaw heritage is found in the person of Sarasin, a chief in the early nineteenth century. Born around the mid-eighteenth century and raised within the tribe by his Quapaw mother, Sarasin is presumed to be the son and namesake of the French interpreter at Arkansas Post in the 1740s and 50s, François Sarazin.³⁷

Arnold notes another rather unusual feature of French and American Indian intermarriage at Arkansas Post. Among the native women who married Frenchmen, a surprising number were not Quapaw; rather, they came from distant tribes. Referring to the incomplete record of Catholic marriages that were recorded at Arkansas Post, Arnold states: “One sees Osage, Paduca, Kansas, Abenaki, Loup, and Cherokee women joined in marriage with Arkansas Frenchmen in a six-year period alone.” He infers that these women who originated from afar were mostly “*de facto* slaves” – captured in war, perhaps long separated from their homelands, and then purchased in trade by the Frenchmen who made them their wives. Whether the ensuing marriage truly liberated the woman from captivity would have varied with each case. One is reminded of the enslaved woman who was purchased from the Pawnee by a voyageur at Arkansas Post on the understanding that she would marry her benefactor: she subsequently petitioned the authorities to save her from her obligation, saying that she now realized the marriage would be a worse fate than going back to her former status. Pitiful as her case was, Arnold believes such marriages were not the rule. Most Frenchmen probably found Quapaw women to marry, because only Quapaw wives gave them the desired link to the local tribe.³⁸

But historian Kathleen DuVal has questioned that assumption. She argues that marriages between Frenchmen and American Indian women at Arkansas Post may have involved not members of the Quapaw tribe but rather women of other tribes who had been taken captive and were reduced to slave status by the Quapaw. In a long, provocative article published in *William and Mary Quarterly*, she challenges the notion that the well-known pattern of French and American Indian intermarriage in New France can be generalized to French Louisiana. Even if Frenchmen had reasons for wanting to marry Quapaw women, one should not assume that the male suitors prevailed. “Though French views are important, they did not dictate reality,” she writes. American Indian motivations must be considered as well. Her scholarly article considers the circumstances surrounding marriages between slave

³⁷ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 68; Toudji, “‘The Happiest Consequences’: Sexual Unions and Frontier Survival at Arkansas Post,” 55; Ann Dubuisson, “François Sarazin: Interpreter at Arkansas Post during the Chickasaw Wars,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 71, no 3 (Autumn 2012), 260-61.

³⁸ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 68; Kinnaird, editor, “Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, Part 1, The Revolutionary Period, 1765-1781,” 373-74; Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 3-14.

women and Frenchmen, and then the marriage patterns in four “intact societies” in French Louisiana (Illinois, Apalachee, Quapaw, and Choctaw) to make her case that each tribe followed its own dictates on whether to encourage intermarriage with the French or not.³⁹

As DuVal reminds us, sexual alliances between Frenchmen and American Indian women took different forms. Catholic marriages, which implied that offspring from the marriage would be raised in the Catholic Church, only formed a fraction of marriages. Catholic marriages are most conspicuous in the records but they were not the prevailing form of marriage. The more usual form in New France was *à la façon de pays* (in the custom of the country), which suggested that the woman would retain her tribal association and the husband would acquire connections to the tribe. DuVal refers to these customary marriages as “trade marriages.” She distinguishes trade marriages from a third set, born of American Indian slavery, in which a man purchased an enslaved woman to fill the role of a wife. Most enslaved women who came to fill that capacity, DuVal finds, never became legally emancipated from slavery. Many did achieve a measure of freedom by participating in a “marriagelike union.” Some came to purchase their freedom or were freed in their husband’s will. Absent one of these actions, however, the woman never escaped her slave status. Detribalized in the first place by her captivity in another tribe, she could not provide her French marriage partners access to a native kinship network. Instead, the woman and any children who issued from the union were either absorbed into the French culture or drawn into the evolving institution of chattel slavery in the colony.⁴⁰

From her examination of marriage patterns among the Illinois, Apalachee, Quapaw, and Choctaw tribes, DuVal makes the claim that none of these tribes favored intermarriage with the French. The reasons varied from tribe to tribe. DuVal cites the fear of enslavement, the different European and American Indian customs around divorce, the dread of contracting European-borne diseases, and not least, the cultural barriers to a trade marriage that were sometimes present, as in the case of the Quapaw, when the native culture was a patrilineal and patrilocal clan-based society. (If the tribe strictly followed the rules of male lineage, then the marriage did not bring the Frenchman one bit closer to his wife’s clan.) DuVal’s point is that tribes like the Quapaw did not need intermarriage to achieve their desired goal of securing trade and a military alliance with the French; they forged a connection by other means such as the calumet ceremony.

But DuVal’s work is not the last word on this subject. Historian Sonia Toudji thinks the Quapaw and the French did intermarry extensively after all. In a recent article sprung from her dissertation research, Toudji maintains that the Quapaw embraced intermarriage with the French to offset catastrophic population loss and ensure the survival of the tribe.

³⁹ DuVal, “Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana,” 270-71.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 271.

Recounting the evidence on both sides of the argument over Quapaw-French intermarriage, Toudji finds that DuVal's thesis is simply improbable. The absence of evidence for the existence of Quapaw-French marriages *à la façon de pays* should not be taken as proof that those marriages never existed, Toudji writes, because it is known that those marriages almost by definition left no documentary record.⁴¹

The records being what they are, scholars will never reach a definitive answer in this debate. But each iteration adds more texture and nuance to what is known. Most recently, Arnold has delved into the issue again in an article titled, "The *Métis* People of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Arkansas," published in *Louisiana History*. Besides re-examining the evidence from the eighteenth century, Arnold considers the cultural and genealogical identities of several *Métis* who identified as Quapaw-French in the American period. Observed through the lens of the nineteenth-century documentation, the picture is kaleidoscopic; tracing the bloodlines of these individuals reveals a variable pattern which, in the end, is largely beside the point. In summing up these individuals' many stories, Arnold writes:

Some of them no doubt had Indian forebears who were not Quapaw by birth or otherwise. But it is plain that they all claimed to be and were widely regarded as part Quapaw, and there can hardly be any doubt that many of them were indeed Quapaw by blood and others probably by adoption as well. Those who had no Quapaw blood and who had not become Quapaws by adoption had simply become what we might call customary Quapaws, *de facto* Quapaws, or Quapaws by common consent.⁴²

Returning to the structure of society at Arkansas Post in the eighteenth century, it is evident that the relations between French and Quapaw must be understood in the context of evolving forms of slavery in the colony. Slavery existed in the region from the time of Arkansas Post's founding, but its influence on the community changed as the face of slavery changed. Long before Arkansas Post existed, slavery was already a feature of life in its Indigenous form as an offshoot of intertribal warfare and captive taking. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it changed into a commercial form, shaped by the disruptive forces of European colonization and the demand for human chattel to provide labor for the new plantation economy. And as the colonial era progressed, slavery changed again into a racialized institution centered on the exploitation of Africans.⁴³

⁴¹ Toudji, "The Happiest Consequences': Sexual Unions and Frontier Survival at Arkansas Post," 46-51.

⁴² Morris S. Arnold, "The *Métis* People of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Arkansas," *Louisiana History* 57 (Summer 2016), 294.

⁴³ A recent work on slavery in colonial New England emphasizes the English tradition of captive taking and enslavement of captives as a function of war. See Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015), 17-42.

The changing face of slavery is reflected in the census data for Arkansas Post cited above. In the early 1720s, European indentured servants worked in the fields alongside enslaved Africans. Though they were of different races, indentured servants and slaves faced similarly harsh conditions. If the indentured servant survived his or her two- or three-year term of indenture, then the person became a free citizen and might obtain a parcel of land in the bargain. Enslaved Africans faced a life of bondage, but not an insignificant number found a way to buy their own freedom. Over the course of the eighteenth century, especially after the adoption of the Code Noir in 1724, the outlook for the indentured servant improved while the freedom prospects for the African slave became bleaker. Then, with the advent of Spanish dominion in Louisiana, the colonial administration leaned even more heavily on the slave labor of Africans or people of African descent when it instituted a prohibition on the enslavement of American Indians. The purpose of the edict was to avoid an American Indian revolt against Spanish rule. However, as a sop to slaveholders, colonial officials did not go so far as to insist that all American Indian slaves must be manumitted (given their freedom papers); in practice, a slaveholder only had to describe his or her American Indian slave as black or mixed race to keep the person in bondage and circumvent the law. In 1769, the Arkansas Post commandant reported the number of colonists who were free and slave, and he counted American Indian slaves among the latter group. Later censuses either did not specify the racial makeup of the slave population or stipulated only to the number of blacks and mixed race. If American Indian slaves were still present in the community (and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise), then they were either not counted or they were redefined as black or mixed race.⁴⁴

Among the American Indian population, there were probably always more enslaved women than enslaved men. Before Europeans came on the scene, tribes took captives in war and used them as hostages or enslaved people to trade. In aboriginal times and continuing into the colonial era, American Indians often killed all the adult male prisoners taken in a raid, keeping only the women and children as captives. The purpose was not only to kill off enemy warriors, but to increase the victorious tribe's numbers by obtaining captives who would assimilate into the tribe or bear children or both. The bias toward taking female and child captives continued even after tribes began trading slaves to Europeans. In 1702, Tonty described how the Chickasaw locked their captives in holding pens until such time that they could be sold to English slave traders. Most of the Chickasaw's captives were women and children. Reports out of Arkansas Post refer to slave raiders killing male prisoners and taking

⁴⁴ Fon Louise Gordon, "From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: Blacks in the Delta," in *The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, edited by Jeannie Whyne and Willard B. Gatewood (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 99-100; Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 65; Dayna Bowker Lee, "From Captives to Kin: Indian Slavery and Changing Social Identities on the Louisiana Colonial Frontier," in *Native American Adoption, Captivity, and Slavery in Changing Contexts*, edited by Max Carocci and Stephanie Pratt (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 89-90.

only the women and children captives. One may infer that most of the American Indian slaves who were brought to Arkansas Post were women and children.⁴⁵

The English in Carolina sought American Indian slaves to work on the plantations on Barbados, creating a strong commercial demand for captive-taking that reached all the way to the Mississippi Valley. The Carolina trader Thomas Nairne reported that the price paid for one enslaved person would outfit a man with a gun, ammunition, a horse, a hatchet, and a suit of clothes. The price paid was equivalent to about 160 deerskins or roughly two years' worth of effort in the hunt. The Chickasaw seized the role of middleman in the deerskin trade with the Carolina traders, acquired guns from them, and quickly turned from deer hunting to the capture of humans as the more rewarding pursuit.⁴⁶

Raiding the Choctaw and other neighboring peoples to obtain captives, the Chickasaw earned the enmity of all the tribes around them while they jealously guarded their monopoly on guns to preserve their advantage in warfare. The English abetted the Chickasaw by refusing to supply guns to other tribes. Like the Iroquois in the north and the Westo in colonial Virginia, the Chickasaw became one of a handful of “militaristic slaving societies” in eastern North America that specialized in exploiting the new commercial slave trade. When the French arrived in Louisiana, they found that English trade goods had penetrated west to the tribes on the Mississippi River, but only the Chickasaws had guns. The raids by the Chickasaws to capture and enslave people stoked widespread intertribal resentment of the English in Carolina that culminated in the Yamasee War of 1715. The Yamasee War took place in Carolina, but it reverberated all the way to Arkansas Post. As ethnohistorian Patricia Galloway comments, “The Carolinians’ imperialist activities precipitated a rebellion against the English all across the Southeast and enabled the French regime in Louisiana to entrench itself literally in forts deep in Indian country.”⁴⁷

As soon as the French learned that the English were obtaining slaves from the Chickasaw, they proclaimed a ban on enslavement of American Indians in Louisiana. To the Choctaw and other tribes who suffered the scourge of Chickasaw raids, the French asserted that the English incited war between tribes to secure slaves, whereas the French desired only friendship with American Indian peoples and would not allow their enslavement. However, colonial administrators were unable to enforce the policy on the frontier. Coureurs de bois defied the prohibition and partook in the slave trade with the English for their own private

⁴⁵ Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 28-45; Brett Rushforth, “‘A Little Flesh We Offer You’: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October 2003), 784; Ethridge, “The Emergence of the Colonial South,” 61; Mattison, “Arkansas Post Investigations,” 01264.

⁴⁶ Ethridge, “The Emergence of the Colonial South,” 61; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 151-54; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 54-55.

⁴⁷ Ethridge, “The Emergence of the Colonial South,” 53-62; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 93-99; Patricia Galloway, “Foreword,” in *Nairne’s Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*, edited by Alexander Moore (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), viii.

gain. Scores of *coureurs de bois* came down from New France and settled in native villages to buy American Indian captives, whom they then took to Charles Town to sell to the English. One official warned that these French frontiersmen had become “very harmful in Louisiana. They only incite the Indian nations to make war in order to buy the slaves.” The murder of the missionary Foucault and two French soldiers was thought to be in retribution for one of these wars.⁴⁸

In frontier communities like Arkansas Post and Natchitoches, French colonists ignored the official policy on American Indian enslavement and purchased captives with impunity. Anthropologist Dayna Bowker Lee has made a close study of enslaved American Indians in Natchitoches in the colonial era. The records indicate that most enslaved American Indians were women or children, and it is likely that a similar pattern obtained in Arkansas Post. She writes:

Acquired ostensibly to serve as cooks, domestics, crafts people, and field hands, most captive women were in fact destined for lives of sexual servitude, or in some cases, marriage. The dearth of French women in the colony left a void that Indian women, both free and enslaved, would come to fill. Young children who could be reared “in the French interest” were also highly valued.⁴⁹

Lee researched the tribal origins of enslaved American Indians in Natchitoches and found that Chitimachas were most prevalent early in the eighteenth century while Lipan Apache came to dominate the enslaved population in the second half of the century. Natchez were common, too, which was a crucial factor in that people’s revolt against the French in 1729. The ethnic composition of enslaved American Indians at Arkansas Post would have been somewhat different, since Natchitoches was the primary point of entry for enslaved people traded from allied American Indian nations to the north and west (the Osage, Caddo, Comanche, and Wichita), whereas enslaved American Indians at Arkansas Post were likely to have been traded through the Quapaw.⁵⁰ Lee examined the record of American Indian and French intermarriage in Natchitoches. She finds:

Although some Indian slaves were eventually married by and/or emancipated by their masters, most who entered the Natchitoches post remained enslaved until death released them from captivity. As French women became more common and children were born and grew to adulthood in the colony, enslaved Indian women were less likely to be married by the men who owned them. The majority remained in domestic and sexual bondage until death or, if they were fortunate, manumission. Those who remained enslaved began to merge into the dominant slave population, producing

⁴⁸ Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana*, 226; Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 308-09.

⁴⁹ Lee, “From Captives to Kin,” 82.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 84-89.

children with both men of African and French descent. At least three *métis* infants born into slavery are noted in the church registers, and it is likely that these children of French fathers and Amerindian mothers remained enslaved if they survived. The designation *métis* was rarely used in notices of legitimate births of Indian/French children or in cases where the father claimed the child, but was used to indicate enslaved or freeborn Indian/French infants who were not awarded rights of paternity by their fathers, as in Simon the free *métis*, a well-known trader in the region.⁵¹

Equivalent records for Arkansas Post are sparse to non-existent. The smidgen of evidence found in the *Catholic Register of Arkansas* is anecdotal. For example, it records that an American Indian of unspecified age belonging to Captain Josef Vallière, post commandant, was baptized in 1789. That same year, an American guest of Vallière reported that he was served dinner by his host's "house servants." It is not clear whether the persons referenced were American Indians or Africans.⁵²

Race and Slavery

Africans were brought to Louisiana on slave ships and sold to plantation owners in New Orleans and Mobile, from which point they were taken by boat or made to walk to the owner's plantation. The first slave ships arrived in New Orleans in 1719. In the following year, an anonymous African man accompanied a French expedition on a journey up the Red River. The expedition was under the command of Bénard de La Harpe, and the purpose was to contact American Indian nations in the Spanish Southwest. When the expedition had gone several hundred miles up the Red River, La Harpe selected two officers, six soldiers, this African, and three American Indian guides, and proceeded northward on foot until they encountered the Mento, who occupied the banks of a stream that La Harpe identified as a tributary of the Arkansas River. If he was right about the geography, then the anonymous African man was the first of his race to set foot in the Arkansas Valley.⁵³

In 1724, the French adopted the Code Noir for regulating the lives of all black people in Louisiana, both free and enslaved. Under the law's 54 articles, enslaved people were prohibited from owning property, selling anything without their owner's permission, testifying in court against whites, bringing civil suit against anyone, assembling in a public place with other enslaved persons, or carrying weapons. The punishment for striking a slaveholder, if the blow caused bruising or drew blood, was death. The punishment for running away, if the person did not return within thirty days, was to have the ears cut off. The

⁵¹ Lee, "From Captives to Kin," 88.

⁵² Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 65.

⁵³ Mattison, "Arkansas Post Investigations," 01207-08.

Code Noir provided some minimal protection for enslaved people, such as requiring the slaveholder to observe certain standards for feeding and clothing them. Slaveholders were obligated to provide for an enslaved person's welfare in old age. However, in an area as isolated as Arkansas Post even those minimal protections were not enforced.⁵⁴

The Code Noir racialized slavery by drawing a sharp line between people of European and African heritage. Marriages between whites and blacks were strictly forbidden. Sexual intercourse between a slaveholder and enslaved person, or "living in a state of concubinage," was also forbidden. If a slaveholder should impregnate an enslaved woman and cause her to have a child, then the slaveholder would be fined 300 livres and the enslaved woman would be required to give up her child to a hospital. The code made a pretense that free-born blacks and manumitted enslaved persons would enjoy the same rights as free white citizens. But, in fact, free blacks lived in dread of being nabbed and sold into slavery. If they were illegally enslaved, they would have little recourse under the law to regain their freedom.⁵⁵

The census data for Arkansas Post report that there were six Africans present in Law's Colony in 1723. The reported number of enslaved persons rose to ten in 1746, fourteen in 1755, and sixteen in 1772. Three years before the last census, however, De Clouet stated that there were thirty-five black, mixed-race, and American Indian enslaved people present at Arkansas Post. Since he was the only one to mention enslaved American Indians specifically, and he counted around twenty more than were recorded in the censuses before and after his tally, one wonders if enslaved American Indians made up the difference. Perhaps De Clouet's report provides the basis for a best guess of the number of enslaved American Indians who were present at Arkansas Post: around twenty or so.⁵⁶

There is another, grimmer, possible explanation for the apparent spike in the number of enslaved people in 1769. After the Natchez revolt in 1729, France ceased shipping enslaved Africans to Louisiana, fearing that enslaved American Indians and African might join in a general revolt. (Some Africans did take part in the Natchez revolt.) Across the colony, the enslaved African population rose only a little through the rest of the French period, all through natural increase. Spain renewed the importation of enslaved Africans in 1763, six years before De Clouet reported a higher number of enslaved persons at Arkansas Post. Could De Clouet's number reflect a surge of imported African labor in the 1760s, and could the apparent decline to sixteen enslaved people in 1772 reflect a high mortality rate among the newly arrived Africans?⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Gordon, "From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom," 99-100.

⁵⁵ "Louisiana's Code Noir (1724)," at www.blackpast.org/primary/louisianas-code-noir-1724 <January 18, 2017>.

⁵⁶ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 21, 43, 51.

⁵⁷ DuVal, "Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana," 274; Taylor, *American Colonies*, 384-90.

Historical information about individual Africans in the community is extremely sparse. The census of 1791 lists two free mixed-race women named Marianna and Jean (no last names stated) whose occupations were given as “seamstress.” One Pedro Menard, a free black, was listed in the census of 1797 as having produced a corn crop of 20 bushels. An unnamed slave belonging to Vallière was said to have repaired a boat’s rudder, which implies that this man was a skilled artisan. Probably most African slaves were field hands. Across the colony, there were significantly more African men than women.⁵⁸ Europeans and Africans, free and slave, generally shared the same modest living space at Arkansas Post. In the various descriptions of the fort and community buildings that have survived, no mention is made of slave cabins or separate slave quarters.⁵⁹

At the end of the colonial era, the total population of Louisiana – American Indian, European, and African – stood at about 50,000 people. That was half of what it had been at the start of the eighteenth century. Epidemics, wars, captive-taking, and malnutrition had hollowed out the American Indian population, while European immigration and the importation of enslaved Africans had not made up the loss. But the populations of all three races had turned a corner. The American Indian population had stabilized and started to recover. European immigration was accelerating. The importation of enslaved Africans would soon cease, but the African population was growing through natural increase.⁶⁰

In 1800, the non-American Indian population in and around Arkansas Post was about 400, while the Quapaws’ population stood at around 500. Despite forty years of Spanish dominion in Louisiana, Arkansas Post remained essentially French. Its population included *Métis*, blacks, mixed race, Spaniards, and Americans. A growing number of residents were native-born. The officers and merchants and their families formed a small social elite within the community. Most of the residents were uneducated and lived humbly. The Quapaw were distributed in three villages along the south side of the Arkansas River. Each village had its own chief, with one, Wahpahtesah, acting as principal chief for the whole tribe. When the Americans took possession of Louisiana in 1803, there was a fourth village near the mouth of the Arkansas that was more Choctaw than Quapaw. In that village, so many Choctaw and Quapaw were intermarried that the Choctaw called the host tribe “bridal people.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 64-65; DuVal, “Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana,” 274.

⁵⁹ Etienne Maraffret Layssard was Arkansas Post’s civilian storekeeper in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1758, he wrote a long letter describing the flooded condition of the fort and community. He stated that he, his wife, four children, five slaves, dogs, and cats were all sharing one small house, “five feet long by sixteen feet wide with a single small fireplace. He did not indicate that the arrangement was temporary because of the flooding. To the contrary, he took pains in the letter to describe the levees around his property and the advantages he had over his neighbors as the flood waters threatened the whole settlement. Unfortunately, Layssard offered no further details about how his family and the five enslaved individuals lived together in that tiny shared space. Mattison, “Arkansas Post Investigations,” 01219.

⁶⁰ Morris, *The Big Muddy*, 92.

⁶¹ Arnold, “The Delta’s Colonial Heritage,” 66-67; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 51.

Arkansas Post from the Louisiana Purchase to the Trail of Tears

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Arkansas Post still served as a strategic outpost in a region mostly devoid of European settlements. When the United States acquired Louisiana from Napoleon of France in 1803, U.S. officials recognized the importance of Arkansas Post for securing friendly relations with the Quapaw tribe. From 1805 to 1810, the Americans followed French and Spanish precedent by establishing a trading post at the site to facilitate peaceful relations with the Quapaw and other tribes in the area. The U.S. initiative was distinct from the French and Spanish pattern in that the U.S. government established a federally-administered trading post or “factory,” which was run by a civilian administrator employed by the War Department.

However, despite a first appearance of continuity, Arkansas Post soon lost the importance it had had in colonial times and quickly faded into obscurity as the nineteenth century unfolded. With thousands of American settlers moving into the trans-Mississippi West, and American Indian tribes being compelled to abandon their former homelands in the Mississippi Valley and move even farther west to the Indian Territory, the strategic outpost of the colonial era was turned into a tiny backwater village. Perhaps there is no more striking indication of the changed context and diminished importance of Arkansas Post after a few decades of U.S. dominion than in Washington Irving’s short story, “The Creole Village: A Sketch from a Steamboat,” which was published in *The New-Yorker* in 1836. Irving presented a fictionalized Arkansas Post to his readers as a “serene and dilapidated” village where “art and nature stand still, and the world forgets to turn round.” The American writer portrayed the village inhabitants as exotic, anti-modern, and content in their “happy ignorance.” In less than a quarter century after the U.S. acquired Louisiana, the settlement had become a quaint relic of the former French and Spanish occupation.¹

Arkansas Post never grew beyond a population of a few hundred. As the fur trade moved farther west, the settlement clung to existence as a river port. Given its flood-prone location in a bend of the lower Arkansas River, the townsite would likely have been abandoned altogether had it not been for the sudden development of steamboat navigation in the 1820s and 30s. Because Arkansas Post was the only port on the lower Arkansas, it

¹ Washington Irving, “The Creole Village: A Sketch from a Steamboat,” *The New-Yorker* 2, no. 8 (November 12, 1836), 115. Irving’s short story is reproduced in Appendix B in Martin, *An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright’s Trading House and William Montgomery’s Tavern*, 93-96.

persisted; consequently, it played a role through the antebellum period episodically as Arkansas became a U.S. territory and then a state.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the Arkansas Factory (a government-owned trading post) and its role in federal American Indian affairs in the region in the first decade after the Louisiana Purchase. The next section of the chapter considers what happened at Arkansas Post when the federal government established Arkansas Territory. Arkansas Post briefly became the seat of government for the new territory. The third chapter section follows the Arkansas Post story through the upheaval known as the Trail of Tears. In the 1820s and 30s, when southeastern tribes were driven from their homelands, Arkansas Post stood along the path of some of those sorrowful migrations. One of the worst situations arose when a few thousand Choctaw became stranded in winter on the banks of the lower Arkansas nearby Arkansas Post.

President Jefferson and the “Civilization Policy”

With the Louisiana Purchase, President Thomas Jefferson nearly doubled the territory of the United States and put the nation on the path to westward expansion across the continent. The Louisiana Purchase advanced Jefferson’s vision for the growth of the American republic by providing more land for farmers. He believed farmers formed the backbone of America’s free and democratic society and that farmers would safeguard republican ideals into the future. Control of the Mississippi River would give western farmers the necessary access to international markets, while the vast, alluvial flatlands of the Mississippi Valley would yield handsomely to the farmer’s plough. All that remained for the federal government to do was to deal with the Indigenous nations who held aboriginal title to the new lands.

U.S. intentions toward American Indians first became clear in the Ohio Valley. The United States acquired that region after it won independence, and set it up as a federally-administered territory under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Thus, when American Indians and settlers clashed in the Ohio Valley, it became a signal challenge for federal American Indian and land policies. Following the Treaty of Greenville of 1795, the federal government began to coerce tribal leaders to sign treaties ceding American Indian title to the United States. In exchange for American Indian land cessions, the federal government promised the tribes annuities and protection if they would vacate their hunting grounds and move farther west. Jefferson claimed that land cessions were in the American Indians’ best interest, for they removed American Indians from conflict with Euro-American settlers and created conditions whereby the federal government could teach them the “arts of civilization” and prepare them for eventual assimilation into the dominant society. Consistent with

Enlightenment thought of the day, Jefferson perceived all American Indian peoples as belonging to a primitive race of hunters and gatherers. All human races, in this view, advanced by stages from a so-called “primitive state” or “state of savagery” through higher and higher levels of civilization. Having been cut off from the rest of humankind for eons, the thinking went, American Indians occupied a lower rung on the ladder of humankind’s evolutionary development. In Jefferson’s view, two centuries of European colonization of the New World left the U.S. government with no other choice than to raise American Indians from their primitivism or else they would soon face extinction. These ideas were lofty and idealistic on one hand, and dark and malevolent on the other. Jefferson’s “civilization program” provided a humanitarian cover for what was truly a U.S. offensive to wrest control of the Ohio country. The offensive against the American Indian tribes began more than a decade before the Louisiana Purchase, and it continued through the end of Jefferson’s administration, by which time the U.S. had extinguished American Indian title in all of Ohio and parts of the future states of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.²

Meanwhile, Jefferson initiated the “civilization program” for the many American Indian nations in the Louisiana Purchase, starting with the Osage. In 1804, Jefferson invited the Osage nation to send a delegation to Washington. A dozen leaders went, headed by Chief Pawhuska. After meeting with the president, the party continued onward to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, a tour of eastern cities that Jefferson compared with Lewis and Clark’s contemporaneous tour of American Indian nations out west. The United States treated with the Osage before any other American Indian nation because the powerful Osage had aggressed against all its neighbors and so the Osage nation held a lot of territory. The Osage nation, for its part, was beset by internal division as well as enemy tribes all around, so its leaders believed they needed U.S. friendship. In the Osage Treaty of 1808, the tribe ceded a huge territory of fifty million acres, or roughly half of today’s Missouri and Arkansas: a giant swatch of the mid-continent that stretched from the Missouri River on the north to the Arkansas River on the south. The Osage’s control over some of those lands was tenuous at best, but that did not deter U.S. officials from including those lands in the ceded area. In return for this massive land cession, the United States promised to build a fort, protect the tribe from its enemies, respect the tribe’s dominant place in the fur trade, and provide ploughs and a blacksmith so the Osage could become farmers.³

Jefferson made no equivalent overture to the Quapaw, whose population of around 600 constituted a much smaller nation than the Osage nation. However, the War Department did decide in early 1805 to establish a factory at Arkansas Post. The U.S. government was administering just eight other factories throughout American Indian country at that time.

² Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain 1776-1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 20-22.

³ Charles J. Kappler, compiler and editor, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II Treaties* (Washington: Government printing Office, 1904), 95-99; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 183-89, 200-05.

The factory was a government owned and operated trading post. The official in charge was called the first factor. The first factor served as a government trader, overseeing the purchase and shipment of American goods to the post and their exchange at fair market value for hides and skins brought by the American Indians; also, he served as a U.S. envoy to the American Indians, implementing the government's "civilization policy." The man appointed first factor at Arkansas Post was John B. Treat. One of Treat's responsibilities was to instruct the Quapaw in how to grow crops and settle in one place – how to become American farmers – even though the Quapaw already raised food and lived in permanent villages in their own cultural tradition. Ironically, Treat showed little business acumen and probably had little or no farming experience.⁴

The U.S. government established the factory system in 1796 to help the United States gain the friendship of American Indian tribes. The avowed purpose of the factory system was to supply American Indians with necessities at a fair price so they would give their allegiance to the United States and not be influenced by British and Spanish traders. The U.S. factory system aimed at driving off British and Spanish traders within U.S. territory; however, it could not do so without the help of independent, licensed American traders working in tandem with the government traders. So, another purpose of the factory system was to be a kind of watchdog on the independent traders, to ensure that they did not abuse their American Indian trading partners and drive them back to the British or Spanish traders. It fell to the U.S. factors to report on licensed traders who illegally trafficked in liquor, for example. The independent traders hated that kind of interference by the government. They constantly complained that the government-subsidized trading houses undercut their business opportunities and discouraged capital investment on the frontier.⁵

Much to the dismay of the independent traders, President Jefferson called for expansion of the factory system. Jefferson argued privately that the factories should encourage American Indians to go into debt in trade because the U.S. government could use their burden of debt to extract land cessions from them. Congress was not deaf to that argument, but it listened more earnestly to traders' demands that the factory system be dismantled. Congress's uneven support enfeebled the U.S. factory system, even during the Jefferson administration. The Arkansas Factory had its own share of problems stemming from inadequate funding and uneven support from Washington.⁶

⁴ DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 189-93; Aloysius Plaisance, "The Arkansas Factory, 1805-1810," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1952), 185, 193; Margaret Ross, "John Breck Treat Comes to Arkansas – Project Is to Establish New Trading Post," *Arkansas Gazette*, July 18, 1965.

⁵ R. S. Cotterill, "Federal Indian Management in the South, 1789-1825," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20 (December 1933), 333-46.

⁶ Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1974), 6-9; Plaisance, "The Arkansas Factory," 184-85.

Three other U.S. factories were established at the same time as the Arkansas Factory. They were at Natchitoches, Belle Fontaine (near St. Louis) and the mouth of the Chicago River (today's Chicago). Those four joined eight factories already in existence: two in Georgia, two in Alabama, and the others at Detroit, Michigan; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Tellico, Tennessee, and Chickasaw Bluffs, Tennessee (today's Memphis). Around a dozen more factories were established subsequently. The Arkansas Factory was one of the shorter-lived factories, lasting just five years. After it was gone, two other factories were established within the present state of Arkansas. A factory was established at Spadra Bayou (near today's Clarksville) for Cherokee who had moved into the Arkansas Valley. The factory at Natchitoches was relocated farther up the Red River at Sulphur Fork (near today's Texarkana) to serve the Caddo. The factory system was abolished in 1822.⁷

Treat was appointed in the spring of 1805, and reported to Superintendent of Indian Trade John Shee in Philadelphia before traveling to Arkansas Post via the Ohio and Mississippi rivers on a flatboat with a large supply of trade goods. He arrived on September 4, 1805. He shipped an additional quantity of trade goods by sea from Philadelphia to New Orleans. These goods were sent in care of his assistant factor, James B. Waterman, who brought them up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, arriving in early October. The cost of transporting goods to the remote site on the Arkansas was formidable whichever way they were sent. Treat experimented with both routes – from Pittsburgh by river and from Philadelphia mostly by sea – and determined that the route originating from Pittsburgh was “the most secure and most economical Route for this Factory.” He also experimented with different ways to pay for shipping hides and furs from Arkansas Post to New Orleans. Rather than pay exorbitant shipping costs for loading freight onto a private vessel at Arkansas Post, he had a keelboat purchased in Pittsburgh. After off-loading its cargo of trade goods at Arkansas Post, the government-owned keelboat was then loaded with hides and furs from the factory and sent on down the river to New Orleans, where the boat was presumably sold and the proceeds returned to the government.⁸

At first, Treat did not connect with Quapaw hunters as he expected he would. In a letter to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, he wrote that the private traders did not extend credit to individual American Indian hunters, or even chiefs. Rather, they gave it to Euro-American outfitters or lead hunters who were responsible for organizing hunting parties.

⁷ Ora Brooks Peake, *A History of the United States Indian Factory System 1795-1822* (Denver: Sage Books, 1954), 15; Edgar B. Wesley, “The Government Factory System among the Indians, 1795-1822,” *Journal of Economic and Business History* 4 (1931-32), 494-97; Russell M. Magnaghi, “Factory System,” in *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4907> <January 24, 2017>.

⁸ William Davy, Principal Indian Agent, Factories, to John B. Treat, May 10, 1805, Treat Letter Book 1805-1810, File 23, Box 1, Series II, Morris S. Arnold Colonial Arkansas Materials, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System, Little Rock [hereafter Treat Letter Book]; Plaisance, “The Arkansas Factory,” 196-97.

Each outfitter or lead hunter would equip about ten to twenty men and pay them wages. This man then took ownership of the whole product of the hunt – all the hides and furs – which he sold to the trader to retire the outfitter/hunter’s debt. It must have been a disappointment to Treat, as first factor, that these outfitters/hunters, his main dealers, were non-American Indians. At the end of his first winter in Arkansas, many of the goods he had brought with him from Pittsburgh he ended up selling to non-Indians. The surplus included farm tools that were intended for teaching Quapaw the “arts of civilization.”⁹

Treat thought there were nine or ten traders supplying the outfitters/hunters. The traders made a total outlay of about \$50,000 in credit to the hunters, with the largest trading house, Messrs. Bright & Co., making up half the total. There were two principals in Bright & Co., Jacob Bright and Benjamin Morgan. This company had moved to Arkansas Post from Chickasaw Bluffs about two years earlier. Bright resided in Arkansas Post while his partner lived in New Orleans.¹⁰

In March 1806, the Quapaw chiefs and other tribal members informed Treat that they wanted more from the U.S. factory than they had gotten during Treat’s first half year in residence. They expected the United States to distribute annual presents to the Quapaw as the French and Spanish had done. The desired goods amounted to \$600 worth of powder, lead, blankets, and cloth, plus rifles for the chiefs. The Quapaw argued in effect that the relationship was not strictly a commercial one, but a matter of honor between relatives. The Quapaw also tried to explain to Treat their understanding of the government’s interest in teaching them Euro-American ways. Overall, the Quapaw made a very favorable impression on the factor. He wrote to the secretary of war, “Certainly these people present to us the fairest prospect of civilization than any of the Indian tribes I have beheld in all my intercourse among the Aborigines of our country.” Treat informed the Quapaw that he would convey their request for annual presents to Washington and would expect a reply in about six months.¹¹

Treat’s correspondence suggests that he did deal directly with individual Quapaw hunters, but not in the numbers he wanted. In his inventory of goods needed for resupply of his post in 1807, he made a long list of items: heavy rifle guns, gunflints, scarlet cloth, men’s saddles, bridles, horse bells, tin kettles, butcher knives, and so on. To this inventory, he added a request for silver ornaments, which he called “the most commanding” items in the trade. “Arm and wrist Bands, Gorgets for the Breast, Bands for Hats, and plain round

⁹ John B. Treat to Henry Dearborn, November 15, 1805, Treat Letter Book; Plaisance, “The Arkansas Factory,” 190.

¹⁰ John B. Treat to Henry Dearborn, November 15, 1805, Treat Letter Book.

¹¹ John B. Treat to Henry Dearborn, March 27, 1806, Treat Letter Book.

Broaches are the articles most wanted,” he wrote. Treat expected to offer these items in trade not only to Quapaw, but also to Delaware and Cherokee who hunted on the White River.¹²

Treat reported that the resident non-American Indian population on the Arkansas consisted of about sixty to seventy families. Of these, nine or ten came from Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, two were of Spanish heritage, and the rest were French. All these families resided within about four miles of Arkansas Post, while another seven or eight families were strung out up the river for another fifty miles. The population included about sixty blacks, all but one or two of whom were enslaved persons.¹³

The village itself had a population of 120 residents, most of whom were French or Spanish. There were twenty houses lining two streets. The former Spanish fort, renamed Fort Madison, stood on a small rise.¹⁴

Over the course of his five years at Arkansas Post, Treat oversaw construction of a new complex of buildings on two and half acres of government property nearby the existing fort in an area he described as “a bowling Green.” The buildings consisted of a one-story dwelling thirty-three feet by twenty feet, with porches on front and rear, and a pitched roof extending over the porches; a two-story storehouse and skin room, thirty-eight feet by twenty feet; and a log stable, no dimensions given. The stable was partially built but probably never completed. The lot was enclosed with “strong oak posts and rails.” After the factory closed, the buildings were sold for \$200. Historians believe that the site of Fort Madison and the Arkansas Factory now lies underwater in Post Bend.¹⁵

In September 1808, a band of Osage came to the Arkansas Factory, announcing that they wanted to make peace with the Choctaw and Chickasaw. This may be the only documented reference to Osage at Arkansas Post. The Osage clashed with hunting parties in the White River basin and up the Arkansas Valley, but they seldom if ever came to Arkansas Post to trade. During their meeting with Treat in 1808, they requested that the U.S. government establish a trading house in their principal town, which was located three hundred miles to the northwest. Unbeknownst to this band or to Treat, a U.S. party was then

¹² Plaisance, “The Arkansas Factory,” 191-93.

¹³ John B. Treat to Henry Dearborn, November 15, 1805, Treat Letter Book.

¹⁴ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 77.

¹⁵ Peake, *A History of the United States Indian Factory System 1795-1822*, 29-30. The interior of the dwelling was described in 1810 as follows: “two bed rooms finished, seven windows with glazed blinds, two windows besides not glazed but with shutters. Small sitting room finished except ceiling which is only lathed overhead. The large room or kitchen has only a rough floor laid, but is well secured and used as the store.” On the location of the U.S. Factory, see Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 148; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 7-8; Walker, “Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas,” 21-22. Treat’s diagrammatic map of Fort Madison in 1807 does not reveal its position relative to the river, the factory, or the village. Perhaps the best evidence of the site location is found on the map by F. M. Quertermous, “Post of Arkansas, Territory of Arkansas, 1829.” It is reproduced in Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 219.



Figure 27. Osage: Tal-lee, Black Dog, Big Crow wearing roaches made of red dyed deer hair, by George Catlin, 1853. (Public domain.)

on its way to construct Fort Osage on the Missouri River near present-day Kansas City (on the opposite edge of Osage territory). The Osage Treaty of 1808 would be concluded soon thereafter.¹⁶

Osage aggressions in the Arkansas country caused Governor James Wilkinson to issue a proclamation in August 1805 prohibiting any more American Indian trade without a license. However, in the following month, Bright & Co. obtained a license from the War Department to trade with the Osages

anywhere in the Arkansas country. Probably Governor Wilkinson and the War Department were not intentionally at cross purposes, but rather the foul-up occurred in consequence of the slow pace of communications. In any case, Treat thought it gave Bright & Co. exclusive privileges to trade with the Osages.

The several French petty traders at Arkansas Post did not have licenses, so they temporarily had to desist from trading. As the Frenchmen learned about Bright & Co.'s privilege, they became convinced that the U.S. government was deliberately advantaging the American company. Treat wrote to Secretary of War Dearborn asking if it was indeed the government's intent to hand Bright & Co. a de facto monopoly, and Dearborn wrote back denying that it was, and empowering Treat to grant licenses to the petty traders. Dearborn's response came too late, however, to allay the Frenchmen's suspicions that the Arkansas Factory was working on the government's behalf to help Bright & Co. take over the trade.¹⁷

Treat's own opinion of Bright & Co. soon sank, for he thought the trading house aimed to press its temporary advantage and undersell both the petty traders and the U.S. factory and drive off all its competition. Following the winter hunt of 1805-06, Bright & Co. shipped 267 packs of deer skins compared to the Arkansas Factory's 61 packs. As an example of Bright & Co.'s aggressive efforts in the following spring, Treat stated that the trading house had just supplied one hunter at the head of a party of Choctaws with a whopping credit of \$3,000.¹⁸

The Arkansas Factory did not have the resources to compete with Bright & Co., and under Treat's administration the operation floundered. He and his assistant factor, Waterman,

¹⁶ Pleasance, "The Arkansas Factory," 198.

¹⁷ Ibid, 186-89.

¹⁸ Ibid, 188.

never obtained a sizable share of the trade in the area. Shipments of furs and skins were improperly packed, rotting before they reached their destination. In 1809, the Superintendent of Indian Trade informed Treat that the factory was conducting too little business to justify its existence. In 1810, the Superintendent of Indian Trade stated that the accounts for the Arkansas Factory showed \$2,500 in merchandise, \$2,400 in peltries, and \$2,300 in American Indian debts, and remarked that this was “a very improper proportion for the dealings of your factory.” The factory was closed, and Treat, despite the indications of incompetence, got reassignment to the factory at Chickasaw Bluffs.¹⁹

The outfitters/hunters of Arkansas Post generally organized one or two hunting trips each year. Numerous other hunting parties started from elsewhere and moved through the Arkansas country for weeks or months at a time. One original account of an American hunting expedition through Arkansas survives from this period. Colonel John Shaw, accompanied by two men, commenced in Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, on the headwaters of the St. Francis River, and proceeded due west. The party spent the fall of 1809 and the following year hunting in what is now eastern Kansas, southwest Missouri, and northwest Arkansas, and collected 50 beaver and otter skins, 300 bear skins, and 800 gallons of bear oil. Completing their hunt in the spring of 1811, they managed to get their load of commodities down the White River by canoe, only to learn upon their arrival in New Orleans that they were cut off from markets by international developments. The United States, heading toward war with Great Britain, had ceased exports to that nation. Shaw and his men, instead of selling their skins and oil for expected earnings of \$2,000 to \$3,000, had to dispose of everything for a paltry \$36.²⁰

Migration of American Settlers

American emigration to the Arkansas country in the early nineteenth century reflected an earlier migration pattern in the American colonies that dated back to the Revolutionary War period and even earlier. The Americans who swept into the Arkansas Valley in the years surrounding the War of 1812 mostly hailed from Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, and Illinois. They were mostly corn farmers. Their subsistence mode of living was based on a triad of occupations: clearing a patch of ground in the hardwood forest to grow a crop of corn, raising a few hogs and cattle in the surrounding woods, and hunting wild game for the pot. Their way of life developed when their recent ancestors – mostly their parents’ and grandparents’ generations – moved from crowded tidewater areas to sparsely populated piedmont areas in

¹⁹ Peake, *A History of the United States Indian Factory System 1795-1822*, 16-17.

²⁰ Colonel John Shaw, “Shaw’s Narrative,” *Wisconsin State Historical Society Collections* 2 (1903), 201-02. See also, Harold W. Ryan, “Jacob Bright’s Journal of a Trip to the Osage Indians,” *Journal of Southern History*, 15, no. 4 (November 1949), 509-23.

the mid-Atlantic colonies and adapted to the environment in what was then the southern backcountry. The combination of farming, herding, and hunting formed a mode of living that flourished in areas of low population density. It nurtured a culture of self-reliance and individual initiative. These settlers did not wait for their government's direction to pull up stakes and move farther west; they pushed ahead on their own. By the time of the American Revolution, growing population density in the southern backcountry reached a level to trigger a migration of settlers across the Appalachians into Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Ohio Valley. Many of these southern farming people had small slave holdings, which prompted them to stay south of the Ohio River since slavery was prohibited in the Northwest Territory. As the settler populations in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Ohio Valley increased, many of them looked still farther west for new unsettled lands. A few American settlers ventured into the Arkansas country while it was still Spanish territory. Many more migrated west after the Louisiana Purchase.²¹

The Osage Treaty of 1808 opened lands for settlement west of the Mississippi River in Missouri, as well as farther south in the valleys of the White River and the Arkansas River. In the years 1811 to 1814, more people moved across the Mississippi River from the Illinois country and elsewhere to escape the threat of American Indian attacks inspired by the great Shawnee war chief Tekoomsē (Tecumseh) and British attacks unleashed by the War of 1812. By the end of the war, the settler population in upper Louisiana reached 20,000. Most of the new population went to the future state of Missouri. The total number of American settlers within the future state of Arkansas may have reached 1,000.²²

Meanwhile, territorial government and land surveys took form behind the advancing tide of settlement. On June 12, 1812, Missouri Territory was incorporated as an organized U.S. territory, encompassing all of Louisiana north of the present state of Louisiana, with the seat of government in St. Louis. On December 31, 1813, Arkansas County was formed within the Missouri Territory, comprising lands that would eventually become the state of Arkansas. Arkansas Post was named the county seat.²³

With the return of peace and prosperity in 1815, a still larger flood of settlers poured across the Mississippi River into the Missouri Territory. Hundreds of settlers moved into the Arkansas Valley and the Ouchita Valley, ignoring the Quapaw's claim to the area. The Quapaw sent a delegation to St. Louis to see Governor William Clark and object to the settler invasion of their hunting grounds. In response, Governor Clark issued a proclamation ordering the settlers to vacate American Indian lands lying south of the Arkansas River. Few

²¹ John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *The Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (May 1985), 183-200; Charles S. Bolton, *Arkansas 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 1-2.

²² Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 22-23.

²³ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 81.

if any settlers complied. When U.S. army explorer Stephen H. Long went through the area in the fall of 1817, interviewing several of these pioneer families, the people professed their intentions to stay, saying they had sold everything they owned to get there and that they had come in the belief that the land belonged to the United States and was up for sale.²⁴

At the start of 1818, Governor Clark received orders from Washington to pursue a land-cession treaty with the Quapaw. Clark duly sent an agent to go among the Quapaw villages and invite tribal leaders back to St. Louis. In August 1818, the Quapaw sent another delegation, this one led by Chief Heckaton. The U.S. officials and tribal leaders negotiated a land-cession treaty on August 24, 1818. By its terms, the tribe ceded a vast area of thirty million acres bounded by the Arkansas River on the north and taking in most of Arkansas to its southern border with the new state of Louisiana. The tribe reserved about two million acres in the heart of the cession, an oblong tract likewise bounded by the Arkansas River on the north, which the tribe hoped to make its permanent home. The cession removed the last big obstacle to settlement of the Arkansas country, and cleared the way for the U.S. Congress to establish the Arkansas Territory in 1819.²⁵

However, many of the settlers who had recently made their homes along the Arkansas River were dissatisfied with the treaty because the Quapaw's two-million-acre reservation still stood in their way, threatening their preemption claims. After the treaty was concluded, they sent around a petition and gathered 144 signatures and dispatched their petition to Washington in early November. They insisted that the two-million-acre reservation should not be allowed to stand and that the Quapaw should be driven from Arkansas altogether. They alleged that the treaty was mainly the work of "a Knot of Designing and Interested men at the Post of Arkansas & St. Louis."²⁶

The petitioners' knock against Arkansas Post was emblematic of the changing times. The advancing frontier of Euro-American settlement, and the successive moves by the U.S. government to acquire American Indian title and remove American Indians to make way for white settlement, had a decisive influence on Arkansas Post. In a short time, it demoted the little settlement from a strategic outpost into a backwater village. As this 1818 petition makes clear, the settlers in the Arkansas Valley – almost all newcomers – already viewed Arkansas Post as a vestige of the American Indian frontier. They saw it as a town (together with St. Louis) where a wealthy elite of merchant/traders clung to their vested interest in the American Indian trade. To the settlers, Arkansas Post was no longer in step with the needs of

²⁴ Clarence Edwin Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 19, The Territory of Arkansas 1819-1825* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), 7-8, 10-12.

²⁵ Grant Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers: The Story of the American Southwest before 1830* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 159-74; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 53-60.

²⁶ Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 19, The Territory of Arkansas 1819-1825*, 10-14.

the territory. Arkansas was soon to become an organized territory on the road to statehood, and they viewed any accommodation of the Quapaw as an obstruction of progress.

Capital of Arkansas Territory

Around the same time that the petition circulated among settlers in the Arkansas Valley, another petition circulated among residents of Arkansas Post. This petition gathered fifty-five signatures and was sent to Washington probably late in the fall of 1818. It was referred to Congress on January 4, 1819. The petitioners prayed that Arkansas Post would be designated the territorial seat of government for the new Arkansas Territory. It was an expedient choice: Arkansas Post was then the only place in the territory with U.S. mail service (from St. Louis), it was accessible by river navigation, and it contained buildings that could be turned to use for public offices. As expected, Congress soon passed a bill establishing the Arkansas Territory. President James Monroe signed it into law on March 2, 1819. Section 13 of the act provided, “That until otherwise directed by the legislative department of the said Territory of Arkansas, the seat of the territorial government thereof shall be the post of Arkansas, on the Arkansas river.”²⁷ Arkansas Post’s role as capital of the territory would be short, but it was enough to give the old frontier village a new lease on life.

The fifty-five names on the petition from Arkansas Post included thirty-seven Anglo surnames and eighteen French surnames. The two-to-one ratio of American to French petitioners is consistent with newspaperman William E. Woodruff’s description of the population that he encountered there the following year. The founder of the *Arkansas Gazette* wrote that the population fell into three general categories: the French, the American “old settlers” who had been at the place for several years, and the American newcomers who (like Woodruff himself) were drawn by the excitement over the establishment of a new territory. Some of the fifty-five names on the petition can be run down in Josiah H. Shinn’s, *Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas*, a gossipy and not wholly reliable compilation of biographies of early Arkansans that was published in 1908. There is, for example, Shinn’s description of Samuel C. Roane, the first name on the petition: “a poor but a well-equipped young lawyer, [who] passed through the opening territorial gate and pitched his tent at Arkansas Post.” Roane would later serve in the state legislature. Most of the fifty-five petitioners have been lost to history, however. There appears to have been just one woman who signed the petition:

²⁷ Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 19, The Territory of Arkansas 1819-1825*, 21-24; 44-50.

Etienne Vasseur. She signed her name ahead of Victor Vasseur. All that can be learned about her is that she appeared in the 1820 census.²⁸

Two prominent citizens among the “old settlers” of Arkansas Post were the brothers Hewes and James Scull. If one is to trust Shinn’s *Pioneers and Makers*, Hewes Scull emigrated from Philadelphia to Arkansas Post in 1802. Hewes Scull’s original idea was to speculate in land near Cincinnati, Ohio. Upon reaching the Ohio country he learned from French traders of business opportunities awaiting at Arkansas Post, and he decided to travel onward to that place instead. Soon thereafter, apparently, he was joined by his older brother James Scull. The two brothers became merchants and traders and acquired substantial wealth.²⁹

Records of the Scull brothers’ property transactions over the years shed some light on the changing society of Arkansas Post as it became a blend of American and French cultures and the economy began to shift from the fur trade to agriculture around the time that Arkansas became a territory. In November 1807, James Scull formed a partnership with Benjamin Morgan (formerly of Bright & Co.) to enter into the fur trade. The firm was called James Scull & Co. Less than a year and a half later, James Scull & Co. paid one Daniel Mooney \$1,500 to construct a large building:

A frame house 50 feet in length, 32 feet in breadth, and twelve feet high & to erect a gallery on each side of the house 10 feet wide and to enclose the same under a good & sufficient roof, the said building to contain four rooms, six doors & eight windows....The two ends [of the house] to be weatherboarded, the upper floor to be laid down rough, the lower floor in house and gallery to be laid neat....gallery ceiled overhead, all doors & windows sheets paneled & cased & stairs to ascend the gallery on each side with hand rails & Ballustrades on each side.³⁰

On October 6, 1809, at the age of 31, James Scull married Marie Felicite de Vaugine, a native of Arkansas Post who was then around fifteen years of age. Her parents were Marie Felicite Vallière, daughter of the post commandant, Josef Vallière, and Charles François Vaugine, an officer in the post militia. With this union, James Scull married into the French

²⁸ Margaret Ross, *Arkansas Gazette: The Early Years 1819-1866* (Little Rock: Arkansas Gazette Foundation, 1969), 14-15; Josiah H. Shinn, *Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas* (Little Rock, Ark.: Democrat Printing and Lithography Co., 1908), 85. Another handy source for finding biographical information on early Arkansans is the Cumulative Index to the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* available online at arkindex.uark.edu/ahq.

²⁹ Shinn, *Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas*, 28.

³⁰ Edwin C. Bearss and Lenard E. Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History, Post of Arkansas, 1804-1862, and Civil War Troop Movement Maps, January 1863* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971), 188.



Figure 28. Marie Felicite de Vaugine, daughter of the former post commandant Josef Vallière, mother-in-law of James Scull. (Courtesy of Morris S. Arnold.)

bourgeoisie in his adopted community. James and Marie produced ten children, who were born during the years 1811 to 1834.³¹

James and Marie Scull inherited the Vallière estate at Arkansas Post. On a parcel of land formerly belonging to the post commandant's widow, James Scull built a cotton gin, press, and grist mill, as well as a dwelling. In 1823, James sold the land together with the dwelling to his brother for \$1,000, with the understanding that the commercial buildings were not part of the sale and would be removed from the property.

The younger brother, Hewes Scull, married another member of the French bourgeoisie, Athanese Bogy, in 1812. She was the daughter of Joseph Bogy, a trader and slaveholder who had moved to Arkansas Post from the Illinois country in 1787, probably to maintain his sizeable slaveholding after the Northwest Ordinance was promulgated. Athanese was born in 1796 at Arkansas Post. In her marriage to Hewes Scull she bore eight children, all at Arkansas Post.³²

Four years after Hewes Scull bought the property from his brother, he opened his own mercantile store and cotton gin on the premises. An advertisement in the *Arkansas Gazette* read:

The subscriber having just returned from New Orleans, has opened, in his new brick store, at the Post of Arkansas, a handsome assortment of Seasonable Goods, consisting of Dry Goods, Groceries, Liquors, Hard Ware, Crockery, and Glass Ware, Saddlery, Medicines, Boots, Shoes, and Hats, of every description; all of which he will sell low, for cash, or on a short credit.

In the same ad, Hewes Scull announced the opening of his cotton gin and stated that he had two keelboats ready to transport farmers' cotton crops to Arkansas Post and a cart and oxen to haul it from the river edge to the gin.³³

³¹ R. W. Dhonau, *A Collection of Early Arkansas County (Arkansas) Families 1760-1820 on Family Charts* (Little Rock: R. W. Dhonau, 1983), n.p.; W. T. Barron, "The Vaugine Arkansas Connection," *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* 21 (April 1978), 17-18.

³² Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686-1804*, 166; Dhonau, *A Collection of Early Arkansas County (Arkansas) Families*, n.p.

³³ Bearss and Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History*, 191.

Hewes Scull owned two enslaved females, a mother and daughter. He purchased them in 1809 under the name of James Scull and Co., as recorded in the following instrument:

I John W. Hunt of the District of Arkansas do bargain and sell and by these presents have bargained and sold to James Scull & Co. of same District...Sylvy about twenty-six years old and her child named Hannah in her seventh year for the sum of Eight Hundred Dollars to me in kind paid the Receipt of which I hereby acknowledge and do warrant and defend the said...Sylvy and her child from the claims of all persons whatsoever. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this second day of September 1809 before the witness present.³⁴

On the night of December 18, 1831, Hewes Scull's stable was destroyed in a blaze. With the help of neighbors, he saved four horses in the stable, but he lost 40 loads of hay and oats. Hewes Scull accused one of his enslaved females of having committed arson. The woman was arrested and hauled before a magistrate. After a two-day investigation, the magistrate released her for lack of evidence. Scull remained convinced of her guilt, and kept her in irons until he could arrange her sale to a slaveholder living far away.³⁵

Hewes Scull died in the spring of 1833. His considerable property was described in the settlement of the estate.

Situate[d] on the bank of the river, near the landing – a most eligible stand for business and embracing several lots of ground, improved and under fence, as garden and pasture lots. There are on the premises, a frame dwelling-house; with a spacious cellar and kitchen; a brick smoke-house; an excellent well of water enclosed, with meat cellar adjoining; a brick store and counting room, shelved and neatly filled up for the reception of merchandise, a warehouse, a large two story frame gin and press house, containing a Carver gin of the best quality, with the running gear and press.³⁶

James Scull and his wife moved to Pine Bluff in the early 1830s, where they remained the rest of their lives. Several French families moved from Arkansas Post to the Pine Bluff area around the same period. Marie died in 1859, while James died on July 3, 1864, in the fourth and final year of the Civil War.³⁷

The Arkansas Post vicinity briefly turned into an arena for land speculators. In 1815, the enormous Arkansas County (spanning all present-day Arkansas) was divided into two

³⁴ Arkansas County Records "Liber A" No. 1 and No. 11; Early AR County copied by the Colonial Dames of America in AR 1797, Microfilm Roll No. 100, AHC.

³⁵ Bearss and Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History*, 192.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 193.

³⁷ For more about the Scull family and business, see "Scull & Company" *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* (April 1973) and "Scull Family," *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* (April 1974).

counties with the northern portion forming Lawrence County. In 1818, the counties were further subdivided to form three more counties (Pulaski, Clark, and Hempstead). Since each new county required a county seat, the action prompted a burst of land speculation. The king of land speculators in Arkansas was William Russell, a land surveyor and resident of St. Louis. He visited Arkansas Post and formed a partnership with William Craig, a local tavernkeeper. Together they drew up plans for a new Town of Rome to be located north of Arkansas Post. Russell and Craig signed a bill of assurance covering 44 town lots and filed a plat with Arkansas County on May 6, 1818. The chain of title for the area started with a Spanish land grant that had been awarded to Etienne Vasseur on February 4, 1799. Vasseur and his wife sold the land to Daniel Mooney and Robert Aljorn, the latter subsequently conveying his half interest to Mooney. The United States government confirmed Mooney's title to the old Spanish grant after Mooney became the sole owner, whereupon Mooney deeded the land to William Russell.³⁸

Russell and Craig hoped that their Town of Rome would become the county seat of Arkansas County. Being on higher ground than Arkansas Post, it held more promise of permanence. Lots 29 and 30 were designated for a future courthouse and jail. Craig bought most of the lots west of Main Street, which ran north and south and divided the town down the middle. Other lots were acquired by the Bogy and Vaugine families. However, only two lots appear to have been developed: one by Craig and the other by a Joseph Cook. Most of the area remained wooded and unoccupied.³⁹

While interest in the Town of Rome was still lively, William O. Allen, a lawyer in Arkansas Post, platted another town just north of it, which he called the Town of Arkansas. He organized a board of trustees for the town and managed to sell several lots. It did not fare much better than the Town of Rome, however. Allen did not live long enough to see his speculative venture flop, for he fought a duel with another lawyer, Robert C. Oden, the following year, and received a shot in the forehead.⁴⁰

William Woodruff arrived at Arkansas Post on October 31, 1819, eager to launch the territory's first newspaper. He resided in the village for two years, and then moved with his newspaper operation to Little Rock when the territorial capital was transferred to the new location in November 1821. When he first arrived at Arkansas Post, Woodruff rented a two-room log cabin from Richmond Peeler that stood on a lot facing Front Street with the rear of the lot on the river.⁴¹

³⁸ Shinn, *Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas*, 112; Margaret Ross, "Arkansas's Rome: Few Roads Ever Led to It," *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (July 1960): 1-3.

³⁹ Shinn, *Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas*, 347; Ross, "Arkansas's Rome," 2; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 136.

⁴⁰ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 89-91.

⁴¹ Ross, *Arkansas Gazette: The Early Years 1819-1866*, 17.

The year 1819 also happened to be the year that the English naturalist Thomas Nuttall journeyed up and down the Arkansas River on a botanical expedition. On his trip up the river, he spent the better part of January on the lower Arkansas, lodging several nights at the residence of Doctor McKay in Arkansas Post and several nights at Madame Gordon's place, which was located six miles by land from Arkansas Post nearby the Menard Mounds. On his return trip, he passed two more nights at Arkansas Post. He kept a journal of his travels, and his entries about Arkansas Post are filled with colorful asides about the people as well as the lay of the land and the botany that was his chief interest. The few dozen pages in his journal stand as the most detailed description of Arkansas Post in this period.⁴²



Figure 29. Thomas Nuttall. His account of his travels through the Arkansas Valley in 1819-20 stands as the most detailed description of Arkansas Post of that time. (Public domain.)

Nuttall found the settlement of Arkansas Post “somewhat dispersed over a prairie, nearly as elevated as that of the Chickasaw Bluffs, and containing in all between 30 and 40 houses.” He included in his tally the widely-spaced habitations of farmers whose lands extended to the north of the peninsula of land where the village stood. When Nuttall returned to Arkansas Post after spending a few days back at Madame Gordon's place, he wrote in his journal that Arkansas Post was “an insignificant village, containing three stores, destitute even of a hatter, a shoe-maker, and a taylor, and containing about 20 houses.” On that day, he entered the village feeling self-conscious of his own humble appearance in the “garb of a working boatman, and unattended by a single slave,” so his disparaging remarks about the village's lack of clothing stores should be understood accordingly. Several days later, having by this time made several social acquaintances around the place, he wrote about the village with a little more sympathetic understanding, though he still betrayed a strong English prejudice against the Gallic culture:

The love of amusements, here, as in most of the French colonies, is carried to extravagance, particularly gambling, and dancing parties or balls. But the sum of general industry is, as yet, totally insufficient for the support of anything like a town.

The houses, commonly surrounded with open galleries, destitute of glass windows, and perforated with numerous doors, are well enough suited for a summer shelter, but totally destitute of comfort in the winter. Without mechanics, domestic conveniences and articles of dress were badly supplied at the most expensive rate.

⁴² Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory during the Year 1819*, edited by Savoie Lottinville (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 73-99 and 224-25. An earlier edition is found in *Early Western Travels 1748-1846, Volume XIII, Nuttall's Travels into the Arkansa Territory, 1819*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), 97-127 and 291-93.

Provision produced in the country, such as beef and pork, did not exceed six cents per pound; but potatoes, onions, apples, flour, spirits, wine, and almost every other necessary article of diet, were imported at an enormous price, into a country which ought to possess every article of the kind for exploitation to New Orleans. Such is the evil which may always be anticipated by forcing a town, like a garrison, into being, previous to the existence of necessary supplies. With a little industry, surely every person in possession of slaves might have, at least, a kitchen garden! But these Canadian descendants, so long nurtured amidst savages, have become strangers to civilized comforts and regular industry. They must, however, in time give way to the introduction of more enterprising inhabitants.⁴³

When Nuttall passed through Arkansas Post on his return trip in the following October, he recorded in his journal the change that had come over the village since the establishment of the Arkansas Territory. (Evidently, Nuttall revised the journal because he alludes to the arrival of the *Arkansas Gazette* in this passage even though he left Arkansas Post two weeks before Woodruff appeared.) Nuttall wrote:

Interest, curiosity, and speculation, had drawn the attention of men of education and wealth toward this country, since its separation into a territory; we now see an additional number of lawyers, doctors, and mechanics. The retinue and friends of the governor, together with the officers of justice, added also essential importance to the territory, as well as to the growing town. The herald of public information, and the bulwark of civil liberty the press, had also been introduced to the Post within the present year, where a weekly newspaper was now issued. Thus, in the interim of my arrival in this country it had commenced the most auspicious epoch of its political existence.⁴⁴

Nuttall also witnessed the first criminal trial in an Arkansas court, a case involving the rape of a young girl:

On arriving in the town, we found the court engaged in deciding upon the fate of a criminal, who had committed a rape upon the unprotected, and almost infant person of a daughter of his late wife. The legal punishment, in this and the Missouri territory, for this crime, castration! is no less singular and barbarous, however just, than the heinous nature of the crime itself. The penitentiary law of confinement, so successfully tried in the states of Pennsylvania and New York, for every crime short of murder, is an improvement in jurisprudence, which deserves to be adopted in every part of the United States.... Maim a man, or turn him out with the stigma of

⁴³ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels in the Arkansas Territory during the Year 1819*, 83, 86, 88.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 225.

infamy into the bosom of society, and he will inevitably become a still greater scourge to the world....⁴⁵

Nuttall's journal also provides information about habitations along the Arkansas River above and below Arkansas Post in 1819. Below Arkansas Post, Madame Gordon's place was the first house he saw while ascending the river. It was near the Menard Mounds. There, Nuttall observed "an enormous mound, not less than 40 feet high, situated towards the centre of a circle of other lesser mounds, and elevated platforms of earth." He found some vestiges of earthenware and weapons of hornstone flint scattered in the soil. Nuttall also reported walking from Madame Gordon's place about one mile to the house of Monsieur Tenass, but he did not indicate which direction. Monsieur Tenass grew corn and cotton. A mile and a half above Madame Gordon's place, on the way to Arkansas Post, he encountered a settlement of four or five French families. A foot path led from Madame Gordon's place through this settlement to Arkansas Post. The path was dry in winter but inundated by high water to a depth of four to six feet in summer.⁴⁶

Above Arkansas Post, there was a Quapaw village and a Choctaw village on the south bank, the latter occupied periodically. Above the American Indian villages was Mooney's settlement of three or four families, and above that was Curran's settlement of six families.⁴⁷

Nuttall's journal is rich with details about the natural environment around Arkansas Post. He names the predominant plants. He mentions that the village had been plagued by rats from time to time when the rodents sought high ground from the rising river. Since Nuttall visited the place in January and October, he did not see it during the torrid summertime when the river rose and nibbled away at the townsite's waterfront and the bayous filled with fetid water. The writer Timothy Flint visited Arkansas Post in May 1819 and took a more jaundiced view of the environmental challenges facing the community. He wrote that Arkansas Post:

lies between two *Bayous*, that are *gullied* very deep, on the bend of the river. The soil about the town is poor and heavy, and covered with shrub-oaks and persimmon trees. So perfectly level is the country, that there is not a hill or stone in forty miles distance.... The courthouse is situated within three hundred yards of the river in front, and about the same distance in the rear from a swamp, into which, in high water, White River flows.⁴⁸

A tax roll for Arkansas County for 1821 provides a roster of the town's prominent citizens in the last year that Arkansas Post served as the territorial capital. The roll includes

⁴⁵ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory during the Year 1819*, 224.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 182.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 100-02.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Bearss and Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History*, 11-12.

139 people who paid taxes in that year. The document reveals that the wealthiest individuals in the community were Robert Crittenden, the first secretary of Arkansas Territory, whose assets were valued at \$4,500; Frederic Notrebe, merchant, with assets came to \$2,800; John Taylor, Sr, with assets of \$2,700; and ten more men with assets valued at more than \$1,000 each: William Craig, John Larquire, Eli J. Lewis, William B. Locke, Francis Mitchell, Richmond Peeler, James Scull, Hewes Scull, Harold Stilwell, and Francis Vaugine. The document also reveals that there were thirty-nine slaveholders and one hundred and nine enslaved people over the age of ten. The largest slaveholders were Joseph Bogy with eleven, Terence Farrelly with eight, Frederick Notrebe with seven, and Hugh White with seven. Bogy's and Farrelly's assets were valued at \$500 and \$1,000, respectively, while White's assets were valued at just \$50 notwithstanding his sizeable slaveholding. The tax roll reveals the uneven distribution of wealth as well as the prevalence of enslaved people that had come to characterize Arkansas's first town.⁴⁹

River Port at the Edge of the Cotton Kingdom

When the territorial government moved to Little Rock at the end of 1821, many of Arkansas Post's newly arrived citizens moved with it. Others moved up the river to Jefferson County. For those who preferred village life over the solitude of a farm, the move was made to Pine Bluff, the Jefferson County seat. The population of Arkansas Post shrunk by half or more. Close estimates of the population of Arkansas Post in the 1820s and 30s are hard to come by because the community had no defined limits. Some thought of the village as the little thatch of streets next to the river and others saw the village as spreading out to include the scattering farms up and down the river, as well as away from the river on the Grand Prairie. With new settlers arriving, the number of farms grew as the village shrank.

Many of Arkansas Post's citizens gave up hunting and turned to farming. Traders such as Eli J. Lewis and James Scull ceased dealing in pelts and shifted their attention to agricultural markets. The trader Frederic Notrebe started acquiring land and increasing his slaveholding toward becoming a planter. Notrebe started with one town lot and two slaves in 1817, and increased his wealth to two town lots and seven slaves three years later. At the end of the 1820s, he had 805 acres of land in cultivation and a cotton gin and warehouse for the new cotton trade, and he was poised to reap the benefit of Arkansas's expanding plantation economy. At the end of his life in 1849, he would own several thousand acres in Arkansas and Desha counties and 71 slaves.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Bearss and Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History*, 224-32.

⁵⁰ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 81, 98; Boyd W. Johnson, "Frederick Notrebe," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1962), 274-75.

Most of the French inhabitants of Arkansas Post were non-practicing Catholics. Frederic Notrebe said he was an atheist, though late in life he sought a priest and converted. Despite the general godlessness of the French inhabitants, Bishop Rosati of the archdiocese of St. Louis occasionally received word that the people in the “Arkansas colonies” desired to have a priest. So, he sent one priest after another to tend to the “lost sheep” as he called them. Rosati loosely termed the intermittent effort the “Arkansas mission,” and he focused it mainly on Arkansas Post. The priests generally found the French Catholic inhabitants of Arkansas Post indifferent at best, and sometimes downright hostile. The first of them was a wandering priest by the name of Chaudorat who took up residence in Arkansas Post in April 1820 and stayed for one year. After he departed, three years passed until Bishop Rosati sent Father John Mary Odin and his assistant, subdeacon John Timon. These two men performed numerous marriages and baptisms in the Arkansas Valley. They visited the Quapaws who lived nearby Arkansas Post. Odin and Timon left Arkansas after a few months. Next, Rosati sent Father Martin of Avoyelles, Louisiana to Arkansas Post. Arriving in June 1829, this priest stayed only a short time before becoming hopelessly discouraged by the inhabitants’ indifference to religion. Father Antoine Joseph Lutz followed and had a similar experience. After another hiatus, Father Edmond Saulnier, pastor of the Cathedral of St. Louis, traveled to Arkansas Post in the depths of winter in December 1831. Along the way, he was joined by Father Beauprez. He and Beauprez rented a house from Frederic Notrebe, and held mass there. No one came to Saulnier’s first mass, but he was heartened when 50 souls appeared for Christmas mass the following week. Ten families came from as far as six miles away on horseback, Saulnier wrote to Bishop Rosati.⁵¹

Perhaps the high point of Saulnier’s mission occurred when he got 15 people to make subscriptions for construction of a chapel and support for a resident priest. Frederic Notrebe donated a parcel of land for the chapel. The other subscribers were James H. Lucas, Manuel Pertuis, Louis Placy, Rene Michel, Augustin Pinot, Antoine Pinot, Antoine Brinsback, François Daigle, Etienne Vasseur, Robert Brooks, Charles Bogy, John Pertuis, Hewes Scull, and William Cummins.⁵²

However, the subscriptions came to about half of the amount needed, and the chapel was never built. Saulnier may have worn out his welcome. The next summer, the priest found himself in the middle of a domestic squabble between Frederic Notrebe and his daughter and son-in-law. Suddenly, the young husband, William Cummins, brandished a pistol, cocked the lever, and pointed the weapon at the priest, accusing the priest of giving his wife “bad advice” and setting her against him. Saulnier denied it; then he dropped on his knees and begged Cummins to take his wife’s hand and reconcile. Cummins apologized to the priest,

⁵¹ Rev. F. G. Holweck, “The Arkansas Mission under Rosati,” *St. Louis Catholic Historical Review* 1, no. 3 (April 1919), 244-46.

⁵² Holweck, “The Arkansas Mission under Rosati,” 250.

but then he threatened to turn the pistol on himself and commit suicide. After many tense minutes, Saulnier persuaded Cummins to hand the pistol to his father-in-law. Although the incident was resolved without bloodshed, Saulnier was so shaken by it that he left the village soon thereafter. Saulnier’s assistant, Father Beauprez, left a few months later after falling ill.⁵³

Bishop Rosati made yet another try to establish the Arkansas mission, sending Father Ennemon Dupuy. When Dupuy arrived at Arkansas Post at noon on a Sunday, October 29, 1832, he found the inhabitants variously occupied: “Some were out hunting, others were busy at the gin mill, others trying or selling their horses, others playing billiards.” As word spread around the village that another priest had appeared, a group gathered and grilled the newcomer with questions. Some spoke mockingly of Father Beauprez, laughed outright at Father Dupuy, and predicted, “This one won’t stay long.” Dupuy stayed in Arkansas Post less than two weeks before moving to Pine Bluff, where he found the community more disposed to setting up a church. The residents of Pine Bluff, he wrote to Bishop Rosati, were “much more simple, more religious and less arrogant.” Thereafter, the Arkansas mission focused its efforts at Pine Bluff.⁵⁴

Steamboats became the new mode of river transport in the 1820s and 30s. Their timely appearance helped Arkansas Post survive its transition after the territorial government moved to Little Rock. The first steamboat to ascend the Arkansas River was the *Comet*,

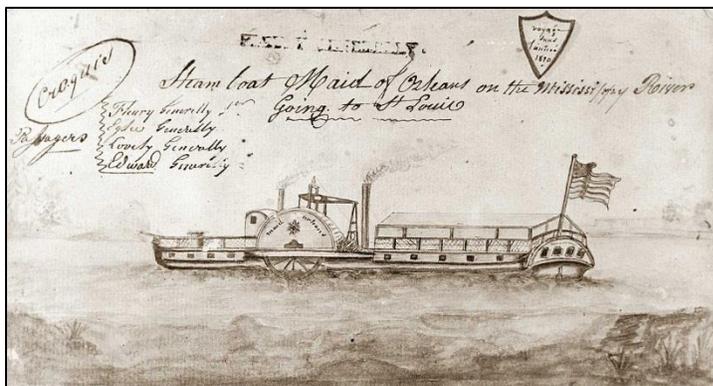


Figure 30. *Maid of Orleans*, watercolor and ink by Fleury Generally, 1820. Built in 1818 in New York, she sailed to New Orleans and became the first steamboat to ascend the Mississippi River to St. Louis. (Public domain.)

which arrived at Arkansas Post after dark on March 31, 1820. Despite the late hour, most of the village turned out to welcome it. The *Comet* made the trip from New Orleans in eight days, or 149 hours of running time, a relatively fast trip that heralded the new age of steam power. The *Comet* made a second trip from New Orleans two months later, and another steamboat, the *Eagle*, followed in April 1821. A steamboat navigated

the Arkansas River all the way to Little Rock in 1822. Steamboats became more common on the Arkansas River as the decade advanced, with Arkansas Post becoming a regular port of call. The steamboats on the river in the 1820s included the *Florence*, *Spartan*, *Superior*,

⁵³ Holweck, “The Arkansas Mission under Rosati,” 255-56.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 257-67.

Catawba, Velocipede, Highland Laddie, Facility, and Waverley. The vessels grew larger and carried more varied cargoes.⁵⁵

While the Arkansas River was navigable by steamboats to Fort Smith and beyond, it remained a perilous river with its shifting sandbars and many hidden snags. A snag could rip a hull apart and sink a steamboat in minutes with the loss of all its cargo. Such incidents were often the ruin of a small company. The Arkansas River's seasonal fluctuations played havoc with navigation as well. The river was subject to flooding in the spring and summer, and it was prone to drought in the fall. When the river was at low stage, boats did not run between Arkansas Post and Little Rock.⁵⁶

The second major river in Arkansas, the Red River, featured a mighty jumble of snags known as the "great raft" that clogged the channel for more than a hundred miles of its length. (The logjam was located in Louisiana, downstream from where the river passes through the southwest corner of Arkansas). The Red River was opened to navigation after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cleared a route through the debris in 1837, but the natural impediment was not entirely removed until the late nineteenth century.



Figure 31. Section of the "great raft."
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo.
(Public domain.)

A braided system of wagon roads and traces began to form between southwest Missouri and Texas in the 1820s, running across the middle of Arkansas on a northeast to southwest tangent. Used by emigrants primarily, the route would later be known as the Old Southwest Trail. One of the principal strands in the Old Southwest Trail was the Military Road between Memphis and Little Rock. Built by the army in the late 1820s, it did not go through Arkansas Post but it did bring overland travelers through the White River Valley. Lieutenant Charles Thomas, who took charge of the project in 1826, informed his superior that the section of road through the White River Valley would see additional use from people traveling southward "to the post of Arkansas and the mouth of the White River." He foresaw a branch road being built to those locations. Even as the Military Road became a main trunk route through Arkansas it remained primitive, with fords rather than frame bridges at most creek crossings and a ferry at the White River crossing. Father Dupuy covered a portion of the Military Road in 1832 and reported sinking up to his knees in mud. Another traveler in

⁵⁵ Walter Moffatt, "Transportation in Arkansas, 1819-1840," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15, no 3 (Autumn 1956), 194.

⁵⁶ United States Army Corps of Engineers, *The Arkansas: Renaissance of a River*, 5; William F. Pope, *Early Days in Arkansas: Being for the Most Part the Personal Recollections of an Old Settler* (Little Rock, Ark.: Frederick W. Allsopp, Publisher, 1895), 65.

1834 found the roadway filled with rocks and stumps and obstructed by the occasional deadfall.⁵⁷

President Jackson and “Indian Removal Policy”

When the outlines of Jefferson’s “civilization policy” became clear to the five largest southeastern Indian tribes, the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole tribes, they began taking steps to show the U.S. government they were “civilized” tribes and should not be forced to give up their lands. They adopted republican forms of government. They accepted Christianity. Tribal members took individual farms in the manner of Euro-Americans. The wealthier ones became slaveholders. Federal officials granted the southeastern tribes a measure of respect to the extent they were known as the “Five Civilized Tribes” to distinguish them from the “wild tribes” who lived out West. The proactive efforts by the Cherokee to assimilate American ways and maintain their homeland in Georgia antagonized white people in that state, however, who were loath to reach an accommodation with Cherokee residents who still held much of the state’s land area. The state of Georgia demanded the Cherokees’ removal. The contest between the Cherokee and the state of Georgia gave rise to two landmark Supreme Court decisions and pushed President Andrew Jackson and Congress to take decisive action. In 1830, the controversial Indian Removal Act was enacted, which made the removal of the southeastern tribes to the trans-Mississippi West the settled policy of the U.S. government. American Indian removal was central to Jackson’s rising appeal with the so-called “common man.” The Jacksonian Democrats who swept to power in the election of 1828 had their base in the South and West, where the white population was eager to take over American Indian lands.⁵⁸

The Indian Removal Act brought to culmination a policy that was already long in the making. Prior to the act, the U.S. had already negotiated nine separate land cession treaties with the Cherokee. It had concluded five separate land cession treaties with the Choctaw. The Creek had fought a war with the United States in 1813-14, and after the tribe’s defeat in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend it had ceded twenty million acres of land in Alabama. The Chickasaw had ceded all their lands in Kentucky and Tennessee to the United States in 1818, retaining their lands in northern Mississippi.

⁵⁷ Mark K. Christ, “Memphis to Little Rock Road,” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7503#> <January 30, 2017>; Clarence Edwin Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 20, The Territory of Arkansas 1825-1829* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), 597; Holweck, “The Arkansas Mission under Rosati,” 258; Moffatt, “Transportation in Arkansas,” 188-89.

⁵⁸ Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*, new edition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 19-21.

Long before the Indian Removal Act, a sizeable number of Cherokee and a smaller number of Choctaw emigrated west of the Mississippi River and took up lands in Arkansas. The first big wave of Cherokee emigrants went to the St. Francis River Valley in 1810 and 1811. There they made farms, grew corn, and raised cattle and hogs. Some owned enslaved people or operated stores. They dressed in homespun clothes in the style of their white neighbors and dwelt in houses of vernacular American design. However, these emigrants did not find the sanctuary from white settlers that they so desperately sought. Hundreds of whites moved into the St. Francis River Valley after them, and bad men stole the Cherokee's livestock and committed other depredations. A few Cherokee retaliated, and the white settlers soon petitioned the government for protection after one white settler was murdered and disemboweled in an apparent highway robbery.⁵⁹

In 1812, the Cherokee in the St. Francis Valley suddenly left. A major factor in their departure seems to have been the occurrence of three massive earthquakes that shook the St. Francis River Valley in the winter of 1811-12. Sparse documentation suggests that the earthquakes led to flooding, which wiped out many farmsteads though with few reported deaths. Many Cherokee took the earthquakes as a doomsday sign or a message from the great Shawnee chief Tekoomsē, who had been warning American Indians throughout the Mississippi Valley to renounce non-American Indian cultural influences and return to the old ways. In June 1812, a Cherokee prophet named The Swan told them more disaster awaited if they remained on the St. Francis River. An American naturalist, Louis Bringier, witnessed The Swan make a speech in the Cherokee settlement of Crowtown. Reporting on the event five years later, Bringier stated that the prophecy so unnerved the Cherokee that they moved west and south to the Arkansas River.⁶⁰

These Cherokee pioneers next settled in the Arkansas Valley above Little Rock. There, they found respite from encroachment by Euro-American settlers, but they came into conflict with the Osage. The U.S. government appointed an agent for these western Cherokee in 1813, and established Fort Smith four years later. Another wave of Cherokee emigrants from Georgia and Tennessee added to the population of western Cherokee in the Arkansas Valley after 1817. Thomas Nuttall described the many Cherokee farms and settlements in his journal of travels in 1819. Their cabins and farms were "thickly scattered." Their houses were "decently furnished," their farms "well fenced and stocked with cattle." Nuttall reported that the inhabitants dressed in a blend of native and European styles, and that their house architecture and furniture were imitative of Euro-Americans. He reckoned the more prosperous Cherokee owned property worth several thousand dollars. Altogether some 3,000

⁵⁹ Robert A. Myers, "Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas: The St. Francis Years, 1785-1813," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 152-53.

⁶⁰ Myers, "Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas," 154-55; Louis Bringier, "Notices of the Geology, Mineralogy, Topography, Productions, and Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Regions around the Mississippi and its confluent waters," *American Journal of Science and Arts* 3 (1821), 41.

to 3,500 Cherokee resided in the Arkansas Valley by 1820. The first Cherokee hamlet going up the river was called the Galley and consisted of about a dozen families. It was located by the mouth of the Petit Jean River near today's Morriltown, Arkansas.⁶¹

Living far from Arkansas Post, the western Cherokee were a large presence in the Arkansas Territory when Arkansas Post briefly served as the territorial capital. The Cherokee were frequently at war with the Osage, and their claim to a reservation in Arkansas, under the terms of a land-cession treaty made in Tennessee, was a constant worry to Euro-American squatters who did not want the reservation established. The U.S. General Land Office ran several provisional lines for the reservation during the 1820s, and each time it ignited more controversy over the Cherokee's elusive reservation.⁶²

In February 1822, a delegation of chiefs and headmen of the western Cherokee went to Arkansas Post to meet with Governor James Miller. Besides renewing their demand that the reservation be established, they complained that the United States had not delivered the western Cherokee's annuities for the years 1818 and 1819, nor had the government fulfilled its obligation to send a shipment of corn to help the second wave of emigrants in their first year. Concerning the corn shipment, Miller stated that the government had purchased the corn and brought it to Arkansas Post, where it had been entrusted to a Cherokee boat crew. He said that the boat crew had lost part of the corn in the river, and had sold almost all of what remained for whiskey. He told the delegation that it was the Cherokee's own fault that the corn shipment failed to reach them, and there was a claim "now in the agency against the Cherokees for this corn, and to be deducted out of their Annuity." Apparently, Miller struck a hard bargain with the tribal delegation: he would remove that claim from the books, and the tribe would give up its demand for a further shipment of corn.⁶³

⁶¹ Grant Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers: The Story of the American Southwest before 1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 38-39, 57; Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels in the Arkansas Territory during the Year 1819*, 191-92.

⁶² U.S. House, *Memorial of John Rogers, Principal Chief*, 28th Cong., 1st sess., 1844, H. Doc. 235, 6; Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2: 177-81.

⁶³ Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol 19, The Territory of Arkansas, 1819-1825*, 403-04. The February 1822 date of Governor Miller's letter to the secretary of war might suggest that the delegation found him in the new capital location in Little Rock. The letter was datelined "Post of Arkansas" and Miller began, "Since my return I have had in, a deputation of Cherokee Chiefs and head men, for the purpose of settling their complaints against the United States." If Miller followed through with his bargain, it took him a full year to do so. Another letter to the secretary of war dated February 4, 1823 elaborated as follows: "With respect to the Corn charged against the annuity of the Arkansas Cherokees. They state that they were to be supplied with that article agreeable to the promise of the President for one year, that a quantity, the amount not known to them, was forwarded by Gov McMinn, to the Post of Arkansas, a distance of 450 miles from their settlements, that they sent down a boat, which was loaded say with 500 bushels, over night which about 300 bushels were taken on board, which is all they received from that Supply – The river having become so low that the ballance [sic] could not be got up, which was sold by the agent at the Post to Citizens of that place. Thus disappointed, they were compelled to call on their Agent Mr Lewis, for an additional supply – in order to secure which, they were induced to pledge their annuity, they are however of opinion, that even a greater quantity than they received from Mr Lewis was justly due them under the promise of the President –

The Cherokee never enjoyed peace with the Osage while they remained in Arkansas. As their enmity continued through the 1820s, the Cherokee increasingly took the fighting into Osage territory. Sometimes the Osage sent war parties down the Arkansas River as far as Fort Smith. Both peoples claimed the Ozarks as their hunting grounds and went there at their peril.

The Cherokee in Arkansas eventually succumbed to pressures from Euro-American settlement to abandon their adopted home in Arkansas and relocate farther west. Citizens of the territory deplored the U.S. government's action in creating a Cherokee reservation in Arkansas. They claimed that the land held valuable mineral deposits and should not be reserved for American Indians. In 1828, the national council of the western Cherokee sent a delegation to Washington to discuss grievances, but it specifically withheld authorization for the delegates to agree to a land cession. But contrary to the delegation's instructions and authority, it signed the Treaty of May 6, 1828, whereby the western Cherokee surrendered all their land in Arkansas in exchange for seven million acres in Indian Territory (Oklahoma). The tribe's national council disavowed the treaty and severely censured the members of the delegation for betraying their instructions. It stripped them of their chieftainships and barred them from speaking for the tribe ever again. The delegates narrowly escaped being killed for what they had done, but they "suffered civic death" in DuVal's words, as they were totally disgraced. Nevertheless, the treaty was ratified by the U.S. Senate and proclaimed by President Jackson. The treaty gave the Cherokee fourteen months to vacate the area. Subsequently, it became apparent that the lands in Indian Territory that were pledged to the Cherokee overlapped with lands that were pledged to the Creek tribe by another treaty. Consequently, the western Cherokee were made to accept a further agreement, dated February 14, 1833, embodying a modified description of their new territory.⁶⁴

Little is known about the gradual movement of Cherokee out of Arkansas. It seems to have occurred over a long duration, perhaps 1828 to 1835. Their migration was eclipsed by the larger and longer movement of Cherokee out of the southern Appalachians in 1838 along the Cherokee Trail of Tears.

Quapaw Removal

Meanwhile, the Quapaw's reservation on the lower Arkansas River stirred as much controversy as the western Cherokee's reservation did. The territory's growing Euro-

which belief has been sanctioned by Governor Miller, who signified to them that they should be relieved from any Charge on that account." (Ibid, pp. 487-88.)

⁶⁴ Charles C. Royce, "The Cherokee Nation of Indians," *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1883-84* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), 247-50; Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2: 288-92, 385-88; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 237-42.

American population could not abide those lands remaining off-limits to Euro-American settlement. By the Treaty of 1818, the United States was supposed to prevent Euro-Americans from settling on the Quapaw Reservation, while the Quapaw were to allow all citizens safe passage through the area. The U.S. government was also pledged to provide the Quapaw with farm implements and other goods valued at \$4,000, plus an annuity of \$1,000 for a period of five years. For two years, the U.S. government provided the Quapaw with none of the promised items – no tools, no annuities, no protection from squatters, nor even a resident U.S. agent. Although the Quapaw reserved the right to hunt on their ceded lands, the U.S. government’s pledge to protect them rang hollow. When a delegation of chiefs complained to the acting territorial governor, Robert Crittenden, that three Quapaw hunters were killed by the Osage, Crittenden simply advised the chiefs to direct their people “to stay at home and tend their crops.” Finally, when the U.S. government surveyed the boundaries of their reservation, it deviated from the language of the treaty and reduced the area by about half a million acres.⁶⁵

Arkansas politicians began to line up in favor of a removal treaty with the Quapaw. Henry W. Conway, on his way to becoming the Arkansas Territory’s delegate to the U.S. Congress, stated that the Quapaw were willing to join the Caddo and would sell their reservation for just \$50,000. Crittenden disparaged the Quapaw in a letter to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun in the summer of 1823, calling them “a poor, indolent, miserable, remnant of a nation, insignificant and inconsiderable.” He thought the Quapaw Reservation’s 1.5 million acres could be purchased for as little as \$25,000. In October 1823, the General Assembly of the Arkansas Territory sent a petition to Congress saying that the Quapaw’s reservation stood in the way of building an east-west road across the territory, and that the tract in the heart of the territory encompassed good farm land that ought to be turned to cotton production. The land could support a population of 50,000, whereas the thousand or so Quapaw were a “remnant of a nation” who had “degenerated into the most perfect sloth and idleness.” The Quapaw were willing to sell their lands and join the Caddo in Texas, the petition claimed. The Quapaw’s leaders denied those assertions, but they could not make their objections heard.⁶⁶

In the summer of 1824, Congress acceded to the request of Conway, the Arkansas delegate to Congress, and appropriated \$7,500 for making a new treaty with the Quapaw tribe. Secretary of War Calhoun notified Robert Crittenden that he was appointed agent for the U.S. government for the negotiations. Crittenden was acting governor again. With territorial politicians shaping federal American Indian affairs in Arkansas, the Quapaw

⁶⁵ Jack Lane, “Federal-Quapaw Relations, 1800-1833,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1960), 64; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 63-64.

⁶⁶ Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 65-67; *American State Papers: Public Lands* 4, no. 414; Thompson, “A History of the Quapaw,” 367-69.

recognized that they had no choice but to cooperate. Led by Chief Heckaton, the Quapaw met with Crittenden and his assistants to negotiate terms. The date was November 15, 1824.⁶⁷

The place selected for this treaty council was the plantation of Major John Harrington. Harrington's property was located a few miles upriver from Arkansas Post just above the Samuel Moseley plantation. The area would later become known as Richland, a name that is preserved in Richland Township in the southeast corner of Jefferson County and the Richland Bend on the Arkansas River. Harrington had settled on his property in 1814 following military service in the War of 1812. He also owned property in the Arkansas Post townsite. The fifty-five-year-old Harrington and his grown son Bentley were known to the Quapaw, and the Quapaw purportedly held the senior Harrington in high esteem.⁶⁸

The treaty was devastating for the Quapaw. The tribe ceded its reservation and agreed to resettle with the Caddo and merge into that tribe. Four Quapaw chiefs were to receive \$500 apiece, and the tribe was to receive \$4,000 worth of goods plus an annuity of \$1,000 for fifteen years. Small allotments of land were granted to several named individuals who were part Quapaw and part French. Among them was one of the treaty signers, Sarasin. The Arkansas Post trader James Scull received two sections of land in compensation for a \$7,500 debt owed to him by the tribe.⁶⁹

After signing the treaty, the Quapaw faced removal from Arkansas. Because the tribe was small and defenseless, and because the Quapaw Reservation lay in the middle of a new territory striving aggressively to attract more Euro-American population so that it could attain statehood, the Quapaw found themselves confronted early by the nation's growing commitment to American Indian removal. The Quapaw set out on their trail of tears before any other southeastern tribe. Under Chief Heckaton's leadership, most of the tribe relocated to the Red River prepared to amalgamate with the Caddo. But they found both the Caddo and the environment to be inhospitable. A portion of the tribe under Sarasin's leadership returned to the Arkansas River expecting to obtain American citizenship and acquire land on the same terms as the Euro-American settlers. But those goals eluded them, so they resorted to hunting for the fur trade and picking cotton for planters. The main portion of the tribe trickled back to the Arkansas River over the next few years. One band lived near Arkansas Post, the other near Pine Bluff. During the winter of 1829-30, Governor John Pope learned that they were in extreme duress. He called on the local merchants to provide one hundred blankets in charity.

⁶⁷ Lane, "Federal-Quapaw Relations," 66-67; Lyon, "The Trail of the Quapaw," 208; Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 65-68.

⁶⁸ Lane, "Federal-Quapaw Relations," 67; Shinn, *Pioneers and Makers of Arkansas*, 73.

⁶⁹ Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties 2*: 210; Lane, "Federal-Quapaw Relations," 68. Four and a half years after the treaty was made, Scull sought patents for his two sections of land so that he could sell portions. See Clarence Edwin Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 21, The Territory of Arkansas 1829-1836* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), 47.

Rebuffed by the merchants, he sent an agent to Arkansas Post to purchase blankets to the amount of \$200 on government account.⁷⁰

Landless and impoverished and virtually friendless, the Quapaw faced expulsion again under another removal treaty in 1833. The second time they were removed, their place of exile was in the Indian Territory, where they were assigned lands close by their erstwhile enemies, the Osage.⁷¹

The Choctaw Trail of Tears

In the winter of 1831-32, Arkansas Post was at the center of a fiasco on the Choctaw's trail of tears. The Choctaw were the first of the Five Civilized Tribes to face removal. Under the terms of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the Choctaw were to be transported from the state of Mississippi to the Indian Territory by steamboats and wagons at U.S. government expense. They were supposed to be supplied with rations of beef or pork and corn during the journey and for one year after they arrived in the new country. The emigration was to be supervised by U.S. agents. The removal was supposed to occur over three years commencing in 1831, with the first wave composed of about one third of the nation, or as many as 5,000 to 8,000 people. The U.S. government was woefully ill-prepared to carry out this massive forced relocation. Officials in Washington were unaware of the exceedingly rugged conditions for travel across Mississippi and Arkansas. Agents on the ground were hampered by slow communications and an overall lack of coordination, as well as the federal government's constant demands for economy. One important economizing measure was the commutation plan, which President Jackson approved in the summer of 1831 as preparations for the great migration were coming to a head. By this order, all Choctaw were given the option to emigrate on their own instead of under the army's supervision, whereupon they would receive from the government a \$10 commutation fee

⁷⁰ Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 72-78. See also *American State Papers: Indian Affairs 2*: 704-08, "Conditions of the Quapaw Indians," containing correspondence of Governor George Izard and others during 1825-27, and Laura Hinderks Thompson, "Historical Translation of Antoine Barraque Manuscript," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 220-34.

⁷¹ Baird, *The Quapaw Indians*, 68-81; Thompson, "A History of the Quapaw," 370-72. Apparently, at least some of the Quapaws returned to the vicinity of Arkansas Post. Governor John Pope wrote to Secretary of War John H. Eaton about the Quapaws' distress through the winter of 1829-30, making passing reference to Arkansas Post: "Their annuity has been long withheld & my feelings were so awakened that I went to every merchant in the [area?] to purchase for them 100 blankets & offered to pledge myself that the amount should be paid out of the money due them from the government but they could not be procured – I then requested some gentlemen to purchase blankets to the amount of 200 dollars at the Post of Arkansas – These Indians were there & by law I was ex officio superintendent of Indian affairs & it was my duty to attend to them – On the Second day of December I left the Territory & no person has yet reached the Territory to attend to these Indian[s]." (Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 21, The Territory of Arkansas 1829-1836*, 195.)

after completing the journey. Commutation parties formed that were ill-equipped and ill-advised.⁷²

When the Choctaw removal began, the government had not attempted anything like it before. The army was assigned the task of moving thousands of people nearly a fourth of the way across the continent. In his classic study, *Indian Removal*, historian Grant Foreman wrote “the magnitude of the undertaking was not comprehended, and the tremendous responsibility for the lives and comfort of the men, women, and children was never appreciated by Congress and the administration. Embarked on a novel enterprise, lack of experience should have requisitioned extraordinary ability and concern for the helpless objects of their decrees, which they were denied.”⁷³ Historian Muriel Wright described the wilderness that the hapless and unwilling emigrants confronted:

In 1830, vast and dangerous swamps, averaging fifty miles in width, were on either side of the Mississippi River. Northern Louisiana and Arkansas Territory were a part of the western frontier, regions of heavy forests, unfordable streams, impenetrable swamps, and dense cane-brakes. The few white settlements were scattered along the larger streams which were the highways of travel for canoes and keel-boats. During high water, small steamboats ascended the Arkansas as far as Fort Smith, less often Fort Gibson, and up the Ouachita River as far as Ecure de Fabre (the present site of Camden, Arkansas). Overland travel was generally on horseback and pack animals along rough trails.⁷⁴

The Choctaw set out on their journey in the fall of 1831. Even though the fall departure meant they would be traveling in winter, that was considered the safer choice than to travel over the summer months when they would face the hazards of heat exhaustion and summer fever. Moreover, the Choctaw were farmers; agricultural peoples habitually move in the fall after the harvest is in.⁷⁵

The summer and fall seasons were extraordinarily wet that year, which made swamplands impassable and turned wagon roads to gumbo. The two lead agents for planning the removal, one in Mississippi and the other in Arkansas, vacillated over whether to use

⁷² Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 44-49; Muriel H. Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory 1830-1833,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6, no. 2 (June 1928), 9-10; Ethan Davis, “An Administrative Trail of Tears: Indian Removal,” *American Journal of Legal History* 50, no. 1 (January 2008-2010), 83-84.

⁷³ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, ii.

⁷⁴ Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory,” 10.

⁷⁵ Daniel Littlefield consultation, February 26, 2016. Round up of cattle was another consideration. Choctaws had to gather their cattle from the open range and sell them before departure. Summer was the best time to do that, before the cattle moved into the canebrakes for the fall and winter. As it turned out, the U.S. government appointed just one agent to visit all emigrating Choctaw cattle-owners and value their cattle. The agent could not complete his job in time, and many Choctaws were compelled to depart without the chance to complete the sale of their livestock. (Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory,” 114.)

steamboats or wagons. Steamboat travel was much faster and less arduous than overland travel, but steamboats were expensive to hire and American Indians generally distrusted them. At first, the two lead agents swung toward use of wagons, but the heavy rains that summer and fall caused them to swing back in favor of steamboats. Yet wagons would still be used for part of the trek. Since it took several days for correspondence to travel between the agent in Arkansas and the agent in Mississippi, the two men developed a misunderstanding as to where the steamboats would drop the Choctaw and wagons would pick them up. That was one cause of the fiasco that developed at Arkansas Post.⁷⁶

The plans were also thrown off track by other unfortunate circumstances. The agent in Arkansas delayed making contracts for supplies of rations until the agent in Mississippi could furnish him with reliable estimates of how many Choctaw would be emigrating and by which routes. As many Choctaw put off the fateful decision to join the first wave of people until the last moment, the final numbers were larger than anticipated. The sudden approval of the commutation plan confused the matter further, as people traveling on their own did not count on the rolls for receiving government rations but did count toward the number of steamboat passengers on the Mississippi River. In the end, about 4,000 Choctaw set out that fall, including about 1,000 under the commutation plan.⁷⁷

The Choctaw left their homes in November and walked or rode horseback to two main assembly points on the east side of the Mississippi River: Memphis and Vicksburg. At the latter place, around 3,000 people gathered, far more than could be accommodated in the sixty army tents that had been provided. On November 25, the huge throng crowded aboard four steamboats: the *Walter Scott*, the *Reindeer*, the *Talma*, and the *Cleopatra*. Shortly after they were embarked on the river, a severe blizzard swept into the region. A late-arriving commutation party of 200 missed their boat after hiking the last day to Vicksburg barefooted through new-fallen snow. The army tents had been loaded onto the boats, so the party was left without shelter. One of the U.S. agents wrote to the army quartermaster, “They are a wretched set of beings nearly naked. . . . If I could have done it with propriety I would have given them shoes.” After taking several days to recuperate from their ordeal, this party set out down the Mississippi aboard the *Fisher* on December 10.⁷⁸

The *Walter Scott* and the *Reindeer*, weighted down with around a thousand passengers apiece, and each towing a flatboat with the Choctaw’s horses and livestock

⁷⁶ DeRosier, *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians*, 140-41; Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory,” 112.

⁷⁷ Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory,” 113; Jacob Brown to George Gibson, October 11, 1831, Indian Removal to the West 1832-1840, Files of the Office of the Commissary General of Subsistence, M-00720, Sequoyah National Center, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville [hereafter M-00720].

⁷⁸ Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory,” 115-16; Jacob Brown to George Gibson, November 24, 1831, and William J. Graham to George Gibson, December 10, 1831, M-00720; U.S. Senate, *Removal of the Eastern Tribes of Indians*, 23rd Cong., 1st sess., 1834, S. Doc. 512, pp. 425-26.

onboard, navigated the White River cutoff to the Arkansas River and then turned up the Arkansas, putting in at Arkansas Post. There, the two steamboats disembarked all 2,000 passengers on November 26. It seems that the captain of the *Walter Scott* followed instructions in landing his passengers at Arkansas Post, while the captain of the *Reindeer* was supposed to take his passengers onward to Little Rock. The agent in Arkansas had laid in a supply of government rations at Arkansas Post as well as some forty wagons, but he was not prepared for so many emigrants to be disembarked there. Making matters worse, the steamboat *Brandywine* followed a few days later, offloading 500 more Choctaw who had embarked at Memphis. That swelled the number of people stranded at Arkansas Post to around 2,500. None could leave because the wagon road was under snow. All they had for shelter were the sixty army tents brought from Vicksburg.⁷⁹

The U.S. agent for Choctaw removal in Arkansas was Captain Jacob Brown, 6th Infantry. He stepped into the role in September following the transfer of Captain J. B. Clark, 3rd Infantry. From his station at Little Rock, Captain Brown directed orders to Lieutenant S. V. R. Ryan at Arkansas Post. On November 30, he ordered Ryan to reduce the ration of corn for the Choctaw from one quart to one pint per diem. The Choctaw's horses, which numbered about a thousand, were to receive one gallon of corn per diem if they were unable to forage. He also appointed Chief David Folsom, who was leader of the party that arrived from Memphis, as camp physician, and his brother Israel Folsom as interpreter, each to receive \$2 per diem. Further, he ordered Ryan to employ as many Choctaw as possible in organizing "a small corps of pioneers to go ahead and clear the roads of logs."⁸⁰

As the weeks passed, numerous purchases of corn were made from farmers in the vicinity to augment the government's inadequate supply of rations. Several purchases of corn were made from partners Roner and Cook of Hickory Point. Meanwhile, the temperature plummeted to zero and the Arkansas River froze in places so the encampment was truly cut off from transportation in or out. Brown reported that the severe weather caused "much human suffering among poor emigrants, many of them quite naked and without much shelter." On December 8, Brown informed his superior that the army would have to make repairs to the road to make it passable from Arkansas Post to Little Rock. On December 20, he contracted for bridge construction above Little Rock. Brown became more and more critical of the entire operation as problems with repairing the roads, requisitioning supplies, and coordinating with other agents along the route all mounted. He all but admitted that the effort had turned into a fiasco when he second-guessed the army's plans for "concentrating the whole mass of emigration at one point...increasing the land journey nearly two hundred

⁷⁹ DeRosier, *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians*, 144-45; William J. Graham to George Gibson, December 1 and 10, 1831, and Jacob Brown to Gibson, December 8, 1831, M-00720.

⁸⁰ U.S. Senate, *Removal of the Eastern Tribes of Indians*, 23rd Cong., 1st sess., 1834, S. Doc. 512, pp. 423-24; Jacob Brown to David Folsom, November 27, 1831, Indian Removal to the West 1832-1840, Choctaw, Box 1, Sequoyah National Center, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

miles at mid-winter, [and routing the removal through] a thinly settled country, with but few means of transportation, and that in a shattered condition.”⁸¹

For two and a half weeks the mass of Choctaw travelers was stranded at Arkansas Post in their improvised camp; then, for another four weeks, their numbers shrank as one party after another set out on the remainder of the journey. On December 13, Lieutenant Ryan departed the Arkansas Post camp with about 500 people in forty-four wagons. They covered the hundred miles to Little Rock in eight days. Two weeks later, Chief David Folsom led another party away from Arkansas Post in a second wagon train. About forty-five wagons returned there in January to retrieve a third lot of about 300 people, while the *Reindeer* was contracted to pick up the remainder. The temporary camp at Arkansas Post seems to have been vacated by mid-January.⁸²

Meanwhile, another temporary camp was set up three miles south of Little Rock where the Choctaw rested for a few days while a physician tended the sick. It was named Camp Pope after Governor John Pope. Many Choctaw went into town for supplies while they were at Camp Pope, and one may presume that many Choctaw went into the village of Arkansas Post while encamped at that location as well, although no record of it has been found.⁸³

Many Trails of Tears

The following spring, Captain Brown looked ahead to the next wave of Choctaw emigrants. He reiterated that Arkansas Post had been a poor location for concentrating the emigrants, and warned that it would be worse the next time as the supply of wood was now depleted. He reported that Arkansas settlers committed “barefaced extortions” in selling corn and other necessities to emigrant Indians and U.S. agents in charge. The settlers would do anything to detain emigrants in their neighborhood to sell them their produce at inflated

⁸¹ Note dated Post of Arkansas, December 4, 1831, Jacob Brown to George Gibson, December 8, 15, and 20, 1831, M-00720.

⁸² U.S. Senate, *Removal of the Eastern Tribes of Indians*, 23rd Cong., 1st sess., 1834, S. Doc. 512, p. 827; “The Emigrating Indians,” *Arkansas Gazette*, November 23, 1831; “The Emigrating Indians,” *Arkansas Gazette*, December 14, 1831; “The Emigrating Indians,” *Arkansas Gazette*, December 28, 1831; “The Emigrating Indians,” *Arkansas Gazette*, January 4, 1832; “The Emigrating Choctaws,” *Arkansas Gazette*, January 18, 1832.

⁸³ “The Emigrating Indians,” *Arkansas Gazette*, January 4, 1832; “The Emigrating Choctaws,” *Arkansas Gazette*, January 18, 1832. For more about Little Rock and the Trail of Tears see Amanda L. Paige, Fuller L. Bumpers, and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., “The North Little Rock Site on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail: Historical Context Report,” report prepared for the Long Distance Trails Office of the National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, June 15, 2003, pp. 10, 19-21. Father Saulnier arrived in Arkansas Post in mid-December 1831 and remained through the winter, yet oddly he never mentioned the Choctaws in his letters to Bishop Rosati. The priest’s astonishing omission suggests that the Choctaw camp may have been some distance away, “out of sight out of mind.”

prices. He strongly suspected that farmers had cut loose the ferryboat on the Arkansas River at Little Rock in December, allowing it to drift downriver to its destruction, just so that the emigrants would be stranded and agents would then buy their produce. To counter this problem, Brown recommended that subsequent emigrations should be split among more routes to spread out the demand for supplies.⁸⁴

Captain Brown listed improvements the army made to the wagon road up the Arkansas Valley during the spring of 1832. The improvements included 910 feet of frame bridges, about four and half miles of causeway across marshy areas, thirteen miles of new road, and replacement of the ferryboat at Little Rock.⁸⁵

Fortunately, the fiasco at Arkansas Post in the winter of 1831-32 was never repeated. Over the next decade, some eighteen parties of Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole passed by Arkansas Post on their way to the Indian Territory. All of them were aboard steamboats. Just two parties disembarked at Arkansas Post to travel onward by foot. Both parties who landed continued their journey without serious incident.⁸⁶

The first of those two was a party of Creek from Alabama. This large party of some 2,500 emigrants disembarked at Arkansas Post on August 25, 1836, and camped there for two weeks while their agents scoured the area for baggage transports and a few wagons to carry the sick and infirm.⁸⁷

The second of the two was a party of 175 Chickasaw led by Chief Kin-hi-che. They left their homeland with 206 horses and oxen and arrived at Memphis on January 18, 1838. There they boarded the steamboat *Itaska*, with their livestock on flatboats towed behind, and traveled by water as far as Arkansas Post to avoid the swampland in the Mississippi Valley. At Arkansas Post, they resumed traveling on horse and foot as far as Little Rock. There, the women and children once more boarded a steamboat while Chief Kin-hi-che and the men completed the journey by land with the horses and oxen, but not before being preyed upon by the whiskey peddlers at Little Rock.⁸⁸

Family stories about the trail of tears were passed down from generation to generation and a few of these were captured about one hundred years later in oral history interviews

⁸⁴ U.S. Senate, *Removal of the Eastern Tribes of Indians*, 23rd Cong., 1st sess., 1834, S. Doc. 512, pp. 443-44, 454-55.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 448.

⁸⁶ Nineteen instances of trails of tears that passed up the Arkansas River were identified in Amber M. Home, *Footprints across Arkansas: Trail of Tears removal corridors in Arkansas for the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles* (Little Rock: Department of Arkansas Heritage, Arkansas Archeological Survey, 2006), *passim*.

⁸⁷ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 215-16.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 216; Amanda L. Paige, Fuller L. Bumpers, and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr, *Chickasaw Removal* (Ada, Okla.: Chickasaw Press, 2010), 135-36.

conducted by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. One Choctaw's memory of the chaotic scene at Arkansas Post was passed down and eventually recorded in an interview with Josephine Uray Lattimer. Her grandparents came over the trail of tears. She recounted that when her grandparents' family reached Arkansas and disembarked from the steamboat, the government had wagons and teams ready. The Choctaw were loaded into wagons and started for the government post near Little Rock. On departing Arkansas Post, her people got separated because there were "hundreds of wagons on this journey." Lattimer did not elaborate on the nature of the separation, though one might guess that some family members got into the first departing wagon train and others did not. It was "raining and cold" and the roads were almost impassable. The journey was "almost beyond endurance." Lattimer stated: "Many were weak and broken hearted and as night came there were new graves dug beside the way."⁸⁹

Other oral histories recorded by the Works Progress Administration tell of disastrous river crossings and hardships and death along the trail. Wallace Cook recalled a story passed down from his Creek grandfather, Emethle Harjo. Harjo was in his late twenties when the family left Alabama for the Indian Territory. The steamboat that was supposed to ferry the party across the Mississippi River was a rotting hulk and it sank during the crossing. Harjo "swam pretty near all night saving the women and children," his grandson Cook recounted.⁹⁰ Cook undoubtedly referred to a tragedy that occurred on the night of October 29, 1837. The old steamboat *Monmouth*, which had been condemned and should not have been used to ferry passengers, took aboard 611 Creeks and proceeded up a channel of the Mississippi River that was officially closed to upstream traffic. It collided with another boat and the *Monmouth* was smashed in two. Half of the passengers were lost.⁹¹ Lucy Dowson related a story about this same incident that she had heard from Melissa Bird, an old woman of the Eufaula, a tribe of the Creek Muskogee Confederacy:

Although many perished, a few were saved or swam to shore. Many of the dead bodies were taken from the river and given burial on the west bank of the great river. Search was carried on for several days for other lost bodies yet a number were never found or recovered.⁹²

Lizzie Wynn recounted a story about the Creek removal that was passed down to her by her uncle, Willie Benson. When the people started out they were driven like cattle, Wynn related. At first the people had something to eat but later they were eating the bark off

⁸⁹ Josephine Uray Lattimer, oral history interview by Amelia Harris, October 13, 1937, in Lorrie Montiero, editor, *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears, Sequoyah National Research Center, Little Rock, Arkansas*, at www.ualr.edu/sequoyah/uploads/2011/11/Family%20from%20the%20of%20Trail%20of%20Tears.htm <January 26, 2016>.

⁹⁰ Wallace Cook, oral history interview by Grace Kelley, March 17, 1937, in Montiero, editor, *Family Stories*.

⁹¹ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 187-88.

⁹² Lucy Dowson, oral history interview by Grace Kelley, March 17, 1937, in Montiero, editor, *Family Stories*.



Figure 32. Louisiana Indians Walking along a Bayou, by Alfred Boisseau, 1847. The French painter lived in New Orleans in the mid-1840s when his brother served as secretary to the French consul, and this painting was exhibited in Paris in 1848. The American Indians depicted here are not on a forced march like those endured by the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole peoples in the 1830s. (Public domain.)

slippery elm trees. When they were too exhausted to walk, they would stop to rest for two or three days. Many became sick and died. Big boats took them across rivers. When they got to Arkansas, they were unable to walk further, so wagons were provided for the rest of the trip. This last detail in Wynn's interview suggests that the original storyteller was part of the large Creek removal that disembarked at Arkansas Post in August 1836.⁹³

W. W. Harnage, who was eighty-five years old when he was interviewed in 1937, related what his mother had told him about the Cherokee Trail of Tears. Her party started in Tennessee, and when they arrived at the Mississippi River it was in flood stage and they had to wait six or seven weeks for the river to recede as all they had for the crossing were canoes and flatboats. Once across, they had to go through a great swamp (the Arkansas Delta) with little food. Hundreds died from exposure and unsanitary conditions. As people died along the way they were buried in unmarked graves.⁹⁴

Lilian Anderson talked about her grandfather, Washington Lee, who was born in Georgia and was on the Cherokee Trail of Tears in 1838. Most of the Cherokees walked, she said, while the old and sick rode in supply wagons. The food was very bad and scarce,

⁹³ Lizzie Wynn, oral history interview by Grace Kelley, November 29, 1937, in Montiero, editor, *Family Stories*.

⁹⁴ W. W. Harnage, oral history interview by L. W. Wilson, March 19, 1937, in Montiero, editor, *Family Stories*.

consisting almost entirely of cornbread or roasted green corn. Sometimes, they would kill a buffalo and have some meat. Often, they went without water. Anderson's grandfather lost his father, mother, and sister on the trail. He never knew if they died or got lost.⁹⁵

Altogether, seventeen parties of Cherokees moved from the southern Appalachians to the Indian Territory in 1838 and 1839. Four of those parties traveled primarily by waterways, and each one of those four followed the Arkansas River past Arkansas Post. The first of those four, led by Lieutenant Edward Deas, departed Ross's Landing, Tennessee on June 6, 1838, and arrived at Fort Coffee, Indian Territory, on June 20. The second, headed by Lieutenant Robert H. K. Whiteley, left Ross's Landing on June 13, 1838, and arrived at Lee's Creek, Indian Territory on August 5, 1838. The third, led by Captain Gustavus S. Drane, left Ross's Landing by land on June 17, 1838, and arrived at Mrs. Webber's, near Stilwell, Indian Territory, on September 5, 1838. The last, headed by John Drew, left Fort Cass, Tennessee, on December 5, 1838, and arrived at Illinois Campground, near Tahlequah, Indian Territory, on March 18, 1839. U.S. army records show that the first and last of these parties completed the journey without loss of life. Whiteley's party of 737 people experienced 70 deaths along the way, and Drane's party lost 146 of 781 people.⁹⁶

It is not known if any Cherokee burials were made nearby Arkansas Post as the steamboats passed up the river. Deas and Whiteley each maintained a log of the expedition and neither one mentions Arkansas Post specifically. Whiteley's party passed Arkansas Post on July 4 or possibly July 5. The entries for those days are as follows:

July 4 – Lay too off Montgomery's point a few minutes for a pilot, entered White River at 10 min. past 8 a.m., the Arkansas river (by the cut off) at ½ past 9 a.m. & encamped on the bank of the Arkansas river at 7 p.m. *two deaths (children)*. [190 miles]

July 5 – Started at ½ past 4 a.m., stopped from 2 to ½ past 2 p.m. to wood and encamped on the bank of the river at ½ past 8 p.m. *one death (a child)* [125 miles]⁹⁷

Forced relocation was the common fate of many tribes in the Southeastern United States. For every tribe, the brutal exodus was seared into the cultural memory as their people's Trail of Tears. Untold numbers died of a broken heart after the journey was over. For the descendants of all those who made the trek, the entire route was – and still is – respected as a graveyard of their ancestors.

⁹⁵ Lilian Anderson, oral history interview by Magaret McGuire, August 20, 1937, in Montiero, editor, *Family Stories*.

⁹⁶ Frank Norris consultation, December 4, 2015.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Frank Norris consultation, December 4, 2015. Emphasis in the original documents.

The River Port from Arkansas Statehood to the Civil War

A territorial census taken in 1835 counted 51,809 people in Arkansas. That number met the minimum required for statehood. A bill to admit Arkansas to the Union as a slave state was introduced in Congress at the same time as a similar bill was introduced to admit Michigan. That pairing of two territories seeking statehood met another imperative for the admission of new states to the Union during the first half of the nineteenth century: states always came into the Union in twos, one free and one slave, to maintain a parity of free and slave state representation in the U.S. Senate. Arkansas became a state on June 15, 1836.¹

With a population density of a little less than two persons per square mile at the time of statehood, Arkansas still fit the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of an unsettled frontier. Its population grew considerably during the 1840s and 50s. Arkansas showed a population of 97,574 in the census of 1840, 209,897 in 1850, and 435,450 in 1860, by which time it had 8.3 persons per square mile. Its population density still fell short of its neighboring states, though. In 1860, Louisiana had 15.6 persons per square mile, Mississippi had 17.1, Missouri had 17.2, and Tennessee had 26.6.²

Arkansas faced several impediments to immigration relative to its neighbors. Arkansas had plenty of cheap land available, but outside of the Arkansas Delta the lands were too hilly to be well suited for cotton production. Its roads remained primitive and mostly unfit for emigrant wagons and ox carts, especially in the swampy bottomlands adjacent to the Mississippi River. Because of the challenges to overland travel, most emigrants entered Arkansas by water routes. The Mississippi River's two major port cities, St. Louis and New Orleans, tended to divert the trans-Mississippi immigration north and south of Arkansas. Historian S. Charles Bolton points out that the Ohio River funneled immigrants from the upper South into Missouri, not Arkansas. He says: "Arkansas would have received a lot more people if the mouth of the Ohio River were located somewhere in Tennessee."³

Immigration to the new state of Arkansas was also slowed by a downturn in the nation's economy. American Indian removal helped to stimulate a period of land speculation

¹ Marie Cash, "Arkansas Achieves Statehood," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (December 1943), 296, 304.

² Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless*, 19.

³ Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless*, 19-21; Robert B. Walz, "Migration into Arkansas, 1820-1880: Incentives and Means of Travel," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1958), 315.

and heightened interest in frontier settlement. The excitement created a western lands bubble. Arkansas achieved statehood just as the economy showed signs of faltering and the bubble began to reveal itself. President Jackson instituted a new monetary policy in July 1836 aimed at contracting the money supply and reducing land speculation. The constriction of credit fell especially hard on western states where proceeds from land sales were important for furnishing the state's supply of useable capital. Land sales dropped while unemployment rose. Starting with the Panic of 1837, depressed economic conditions persisted through the early 1840s.⁴

When the economy recovered, immigration to Arkansas picked up and was strong through the last decade and a half before the Civil War. The state's economy grew apace as well. The state's lowland counties, including Arkansas County, saw the most significant change as they found themselves on the leading edge of the South's expanding cotton kingdom. Since the cotton plantation economy depended on slave labor, the enslaved population in Arkansas grew at an even faster rate than the general population. The enslaved population amounted to one eighth of the free population in 1820, and it increased to one fourth of the free population in 1850. In numbers, it grew from 1,617 persons in 1820 to 47,586 persons in 1850. Arkansas experienced the fastest growth rate in its enslaved population of any state. As the enslaved population increased, it became more and more concentrated in the Arkansas Delta where most of the state's large cotton plantations were located. The state's economy became specialized around cotton production: in 1840, Arkansas produced fifteen bales of cotton for each one hundred people; on the eve of the Civil War, it produced eighty-four bales of cotton per one hundred people.⁵

Agrarian Village

Arkansas Post remained but a small village through these two and half decades from statehood to the Civil War. It never quite qualified as a river town but it was more than a mere landing. In the agrarian society that formed around the cotton plantations, it came to serve as a hub for the growing commercial and social life of Arkansas County. Several visitors to Arkansas Post in the 1830s and 40s saw it as a storied place worthy of their written description, even as they mocked it for being a backward settlement.⁶

⁴ Ted R. Worley, "Arkansas and the Money Crisis of 1836-1837," *Journal of Southern History* 15, no 2. (May 1949), 179-91.

⁵ Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless*, 61-62; Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 1-2.

⁶ Three visitors who described Arkansas Post were the writer Washington Irving, who visited in 1832 and published his story about the place five years later; Judge William F. Pope, brother of Governor John Pope, who visited Arkansas Post for the first time in 1832 (he does not say how many times he visited again), and the English geologist George William Featherstonhaugh, who journeyed through the Old Southwest with his son in 1834-35 and wrote about it in *Excursion Through the Slave States*, published in 1844.

In the mid-1830s, Arkansas Post presented an appearance of decay to these travelers, a community living amidst the ruins of an earlier time. Several houses built in the previous century were still standing though they had been long vacated, their tall chimneys crumbling or toppled over and their gabled roofs sprouting vegetation. Mature trees grew up through some of these empty structures. Some of the village inhabitants dwelt in old houses built in the French architectural style with broad covered porches on all sides; at least two other resident families had erected new homes made of brick. Commercial buildings included Frederic Notrebe's cotton gin and warehouse, a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop, a brick maker's shop, and a hotel or public house, among others. The buildings clustered near the river edge as they had in the past. There was also a scattering of dwellings away from the river onto the edge of the Grand Prairie.⁷

In 1840, the Arkansas Post Jockey Club held its inaugural meeting. The club sponsored a six-day sporting event held in late November and early December. The event marked the origins of a race track located north of the boundary of the Memorial Unit of Arkansas Post National Memorial. The event would have attracted horse racing enthusiasts from plantations for many miles around, and it illustrates how Arkansas Post came to serve as a social hub for the widely dispersed agrarian society that was forming in the Arkansas Delta in this period.⁸

Meanwhile, Arkansas Post acquired its most substantial building ever: a branch of the Arkansas State Bank. It was a large, two-story brick building. Specifications for its construction, which were given in a notice in the *Arkansas Gazette* on June 19, 1839, stated that the building was to be thirty feet and eight inches wide by sixty feet and eight inches long, including the projection of pilasters, and the walls were to be twenty-nine feet high. Unfortunately, no photographs, sketches or plans of the edifice have been found, but the site where the brick building once stood has been positively identified. Archeologist John H. Walker excavated the site in 1971.⁹

The branch of the Arkansas State Bank was chartered amidst an acrimonious national debate over the role of banks known as the Bank War. The twenty-year charter of the Second Bank of the United States was up for renewal in 1836. President Jackson fiercely opposed the Bank of the United States on grounds that the institution favored financial elites over the

⁷ Pope, *Early Days in Arkansas*, 67. Saulnier stated in 1831 that there were two brick houses, which belonged to Frederic Notrebe and Hewes Scull. (Holweck, "The Arkansas Mission under Rosati," 246.) Research by Bearss and Brown (1971) and Walker (1971) identified several businesses and the lots on which they were located.

⁸ Bearss and Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History*, 55-56; Bill Conine, "The Arkansas Post," *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* 47 (April 2004), 53.

⁹ John H. Walker, "Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas, Arkansas Post National Memorial," Report prepared for Southeast Archeological Center, Division of Archeology, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1971, typescript at Arkansas Post National Memorial, pp. 18-19.

agrarian masses, and intruded on states' rights. He diverted federal deposits from the Bank of the United States to selected state banks, or "pet banks," with the intent of crippling the Bank of the United States so it would not be given a new charter.

The state constitution of Arkansas provided for the incorporation of one state bank with its central branch in Little Rock and three regional branches in Fayetteville, Batesville, and Arkansas Post. Supporters of the state bank, who were Jacksonian Democrats primarily, assumed that the state bank would be capitalized mostly through deposits of federal moneys received from federal land sales in the state. Unfortunately, only one month after Arkansas became a state, Jackson issued his Specie Circular, which leaned on the pet banks to call in debt and reduce the circulation of paper money. The change in fiscal policy damaged prospects for the Arkansas State Bank just as it was being established.¹⁰

The first president of the Arkansas State Bank was none other than Captain Jacob Brown, U.S. Army, the former Superintendent of Indian Removal in Arkansas. Critics argued that he had a conflict of interest being an officer of the federal government, which led to his resignation as president of the bank in November 1837. The Arkansas Post branch officially opened on January 3, 1839, though its temporary physical location at that time is not known. Frederic and Felicite Notrebe sold an eighty-foot-wide lot to the bank on April 4, 1840, and groundbreaking for the new building probably took place soon thereafter. (Bank records show that funds were advanced to the builder to buy materials on April 30, 1840, and a final cost of construction was noted on February 1, 1841.)¹¹

The Arkansas Post branch of the Arkansas State Bank was authorized to make loans to the following counties: Arkansas, Chicot, Phillips, Jefferson, Monroe, Union, and Mississippi. Loans to the first three counties could not exceed \$15,000 and loans to the latter four could not exceed \$7,500. The bank could make loans to individuals of no more than \$10,000. On its opening day, the bank made \$60,000 in loans. The Arkansas State Bank financed its loans by purchasing bonds from the U.S. War Department and apparently foreign sources as well (likely Great Britain). The bonds were devalued during the depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s. The Arkansas state legislature liquidated the Arkansas State Bank in 1843. Subsequently, the bank building saw use as a place for holding elections and for stabling horses.¹²

In 1845, Arkansas Post had fewer than one hundred inhabitants though the population of the county had increased by several hundred since statehood. At that time, the commercial

¹⁰ Worley, "Arkansas and the Money Crisis of 1836-1837," 178-80.

¹¹ Ted R. Worley, "The Arkansas State Bank: Ante-Bellum Period," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1964), 67-68; Walker, "Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas," 18-19.

¹² Worley, "The Arkansas State Bank: Ante-Bellum Period," 68-69, 71-72; Walker, "Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas," 19-20.

establishments in the village included three mercantile stores, one hotel or public house, a blacksmith shop, two practicing physicians' offices, and a post office, and perhaps other buildings as well. A dozen families composed most of the community. Although most village residents can be identified by name, little else is known about most of them.¹³

One person for whom there is more information is Frederic Notrebe. All visitors to Arkansas Post in the 1830s and 40s echoed one another in describing Frederic Notrebe as the dominant figure in the community. The traveling Englishman George William Featherstonaugh wrote, "The great man of this place is Monsieur Notrebe, a French emigrant, who is said to have accumulated a considerable fortune here." Washington Irving called him the "great man, or Grand Seigneur, of the village." Judge William Pope referred to "the opulent Frederick Notrebe" and marveled at his "vast business enterprises."¹⁴

Notrebe emigrated from France about 1810. He connected with William Drope, a French merchant of New Orleans, and became Drope's agent at Arkansas Post. By the end of 1811, he owned a house and lot in the village and was married to Mary Felicite Bellette. Although Notrebe engaged in the fur trade, his first interest was cotton. The man he worked for was one of the principal cotton buyers in the Mississippi Valley, and Notrebe encouraged the development of cotton plantations in the Arkansas Delta as much as he could. Gradually, he invested his own money in land and slaves and became a planter as well as a merchant. He maintained his residence in the Arkansas Post townsite, while he grew his plantation three miles downstream on the left bank of the river.¹⁵

Judge Pope described Notrebe as "a man of commanding presence, with very black hair and eyes and dark complexion," handsome, refined, and elegant. When Notrebe hosted the territorial governor and his brother in 1832, he served them a "splendid dinner, set out with almost princely magnificence in silver, china and cut-glass," luxuries that his guests were astonished to find "in the wilds of Arkansas Territory."¹⁶

Washington Irving's fictionalized story of Arkansas Post made Notrebe into "a very substantial old gentleman" of "large frame, a ginger-bread complexion, strong features, eyes that stood out like glass knobs, and a prominent nose, which he frequently regaled from a

¹³ Halli Burton, *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County, Arkansas from 1541 to 1875*, 117. County deed books provide names and place of residence but the roster is limited to property owners. (See Bearss and Brown, 1971). Census data provide names and ages of everyone in each household but they only pinpoint place of residence to the township. (See R. W. Dhonau, 1977.) Cross referencing the two sources would afford a nearly complete list of village residents. However, it would miss free households without property as well as slaves, whose names were not recorded in the federal census rolls for 1850 and 1860.

¹⁴ Featherstonaugh quoted in Boyd W. Johnson, "Frederick Notrebe," *Grand Prairie Historical Society Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (April 1962), 28; Irving, "The Creole Village," 115; Pope, *Early Days in Arkansas*, 67.

¹⁵ Johnson, "Frederick Notrebe," 26-30; Boyd W. Johnson, "Frederick Notrebe," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1962), 278.

¹⁶ Pope, *Early Days in Arkansas*, 65.

gold snuff-box, and occasionally blew, with a colored handkerchief, until it sounded like a trumpet.”¹⁷

Irving also described the apparel of the Grand Seigneur’s “favorite servant,” an old man of African heritage. “He was dressed in creole style – with white jacket and trousers, a stiff shirt collar, that threatened to cut off his ears, a bright Madras handkerchief tied round his head, and large gold ear-rings.” Although fictionalized, this description of one of Notrebe’s enslaved persons is noteworthy as being virtually the only physical description of an enslaved resident of Arkansas Post in the antebellum period.¹⁸

The Growth of Slavery

Little is known about the enslaved persons of antebellum Arkansas County, much less the ones who lived in or around Arkansas Post. As in other counties of the Arkansas Delta, slavery grew spectacularly within the county in the late antebellum period as the center of southern cotton production shifted westward to the Mississippi Valley. There were 1,538 enslaved people in Arkansas County in 1850, and 4,921 in the county in 1860, a whopping increase of more than 300 percent in the last decade before the Civil War. In general, conditions of slavery tended to be harsher in the Arkansas Delta than in older southern states because plantations were relatively isolated and planters were intent on carving wealth from a wilderness. Slaveholders and their overseers required enslaved people to clear the forest, drain the swampland, and cultivate the cotton crops in savagely hot and humid conditions. That said, historical studies of slavery have long emphasized that conditions were highly variable from slaveholding to slaveholding. The conditions of slavery on a large plantation differed from those on a small hill farm or in a village or urban setting.¹⁹

For data on Arkansas slaveholdings one can turn to the half-century-old work of historian Robert B. Walz, who compiled figures on slaveholdings by county from the 1850 manuscript census returns. Walz inferred that a slaveholding of twenty or more people was likely to have been a plantation slaveholding. His research aimed at answering two questions: (1) how did the size of slaveholdings vary from county to county across the state of Arkansas, and (2) precisely who were the individuals who made up the class of slaveholders with slaveholdings of twenty or more slaves.²⁰

¹⁷ Irving, “The Creole Village,” 115.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Richard L. Forstall, compiler and editor, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790-1990*, report prepared for the Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), 17; DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 1-2.

²⁰ Robert B. Walz, “Arkansas Slaveholdings and Slaveholders in 1850,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1953), 38-40.

From Walz’s first data set, one finds that Arkansas County’s population of 1,538 slaves in 1850 was the ninth largest among fifty-two counties in the state. Two-thirds of slaves in Arkansas County were part of slaveholdings of twenty or more. In other words, Walz inferred that two-thirds of slaves in Arkansas County lived on plantations. Statewide, somewhat less than half of slaves met that criterion. At one end of the spectrum from large to small slaveholdings, Arkansas County had two slaveholdings of more than one hundred persons compared with nineteen across the entire state. The largest slaveholding in the county, numbering 207 persons, was the second largest in the whole state. At the other end of the spectrum, Arkansas County had just twenty-two slaveholdings of a single person out of a total of 1,381 such slaveholdings across the whole state.²¹

Walz identified a total of 522 slaveholders with slaveholdings of twenty or more persons. Those in Arkansas County were as follows (in alphabetical order by last name, starting coincidentally with the county’s largest slaveholding):

Name	State or Nation of Origin	Number of Slaves
J. W. Clay	Virginia	207
Robert H. Douglass	Virginia	44
Thomas Farrelly, Sr.	Ireland	33
Read Fletcher	Tennessee	39
J. A. Jordon	North Carolina	95
J. A. Jordon		31
Buckley Kimbrough	North Carolina	36
William Kimbrough	North Carolina	45
B. W. Lee	Virginia	23
Samuel Mitchell	Tennessee	65
E. C. Morton	Massachusetts	114
Felix Robertson	Tennessee	59
John Smith	South Carolina	75
H. J. Thompson	Pennsylvania	35
T. J. Thompson	Virginia	97
Benjamin Walker	South Carolina	33
R. H. Young	Kentucky	28

Historians suggest that the solitary enslaved person who was owned by an Arkansas hill farmer was usually somewhat better off than an individual in a big slaveholding who lived on an Arkansas plantation. Because of the intimacy of living conditions on the family farm, the farmer was more apt to feed and shelter the person with his own family, keep the

²¹ Walz, “Arkansas Slaveholdings and Slaveholders in 1850,” 41, 47.

person clothed in about the same attire as his own, and work the person no harder than he worked himself. By contrast, the field hand on a plantation lived in separate quarters and received substandard food and clothing. (This is evident, for example, in the advertising of two standards of groceries in Arkansas newspapers.) The health care for enslaved people varied widely, but slave mortality rates were exceptionally high in the pestilential Arkansas bottomlands. Most persons in a large plantation slaveholding had to work “from day clean to first dark” under the watchful eye of an overseer who was paid to get the most possible labor out of the slave gang. Of course, not all individuals in large slaveholdings were field hands; some served in the big house or were skilled artisans such as blacksmiths and carpenters. Sometimes enslaved people were hired out for skilled work.²²

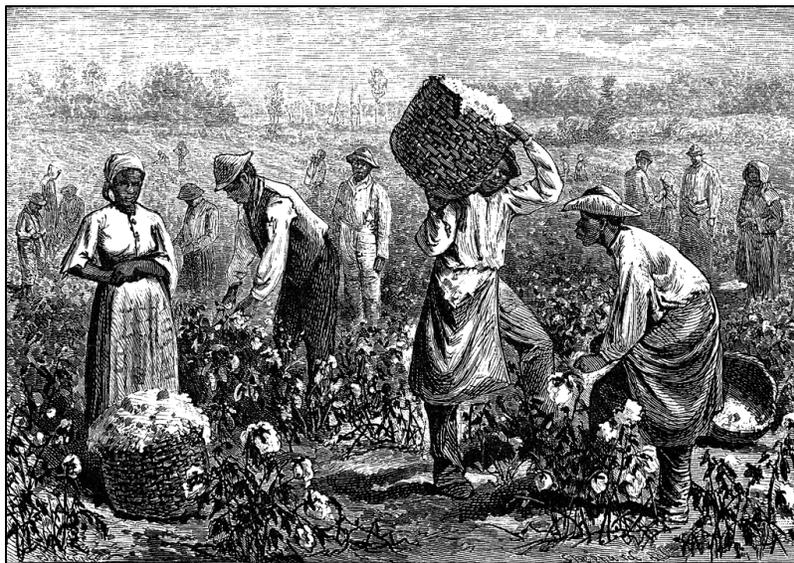


Figure 33. Scene on a cotton plantation. (Public domain.)

If a person in a small slaveholding was often materially better off than one on a plantation, the latter had the advantage of a large slave community close at hand. The plantation community of enslaved people provided the comforts of family and friends, a shared religion and folklore, and the rare holiday celebration. Scholars of slavery have long thought that the life of a small-farm slave, by contrast, could be exceedingly lonely, particularly when the slaveholder was insensitive to keeping families together. Yet vibrant cross-farm slave communities could and did exist where people of different slaveholdings managed to form friendships, romantic attachments, and marriages in the context of work frolics, church services, and other social gatherings.²³

²² Clyde W. Cathey, “Slavery in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1944), 84-90; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vantage Books, 1956), 299.

²³ John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), passim; Burke, *Slavery’s Border*, passim.

Arkansas had one of the smallest populations of free blacks of any state in the antebellum South. Free blacks maintained their freedom precariously, as the state legislature frequently considered bills to enslave free blacks or force them out of the state. In 1838, the state legislature passed a law restricting free blacks from entering the state, although the law was unenforceable. Calls to expel free blacks from the state gained force during the 1850s, and the legislature passed a law in 1859 that prohibited free blacks to remain in the state after January 1, 1860. This law appears to have had the desired effect as most free blacks fled the state. The 1860 census enumerated only 144 free blacks in the entire state.²⁴

Historian W. H. Halli Burton of Arkansas County recorded that a free black woman named Mary John maintained a hotel or public house at Arkansas Post in the mid-1840s. The business was the only one of its kind in the village, and it was celebrated for its cuisine. The census of 1850 recorded a free black woman named Marie Jean living in Arkansas Township of Arkansas County who was presumably the same person. She was then 62 years of age, and born in Arkansas. No other facts are known about this individual. It would be interesting to know how Marie Jean responded to the law in 1860, or to learn something of her fate during the Civil War, or to know whether she lived to see the end of slavery. Unfortunately, she barely rises above the total anonymity of virtually all other blacks who lived in Arkansas Post during the antebellum period.²⁵

The Changing Euro-American Community

In the last decade before the Civil War, the Euro-American population in and around Arkansas Post declined even as the Euro-American population of Arkansas County and the state grew dramatically. The Euro-American population of Arkansas County increased from 1,707 in 1850 to 3,923 in 1860. Meanwhile, the Euro-American population of Arkansas Township, which centered on Arkansas Post and encompassed roughly one-eighth of the county, decreased from 378 to 230. The number of households in the township dwindled from eighty to fifty-six. The households of predominantly French heritage shrank from about 30 percent to about 20 percent of the total.²⁶

²⁴ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 136, 372-73; Dwight Pitcaithley, "Settlement of the Arkansas Ozarks: The Buffalo River Valley," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1978), 221.

²⁵ Halli Burton, *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County Arkansas from 1541 to 1875*, 117. Marie Jean did not appear in the 1860 census for Arkansas Township of Arkansas County. See R. W. Dhonau, "1850 & 1860 Federal Census, Arkansas County, Arkansas," Arkansas Post National Memorial, 1977, typescript, p. 5.

²⁶ Dhonau, "1850 & 1860 Federal Census, Arkansas County, Arkansas," pp. 1-8, 56-60. Families interpreted as being of French heritage, based on their surnames and given names, totaled 22 to 25 of 80 households in 1850 and 10 to 13 of 56 households in 1860.

There were several factors involved in the drift of population out of Arkansas Post and its neighborhood in southern Arkansas County. As the state became more settled and overland travel got easier, the burdens of being near the river began to outweigh the advantages. In 1844, severe flooding in the lower Arkansas and White rivers caused many settlers to lose their farms. Many cattle and hogs were drowned and crops and buildings lost. After the devastating flood, people were more skeptical than ever of the future of Arkansas Post. Settlers moved into areas farther removed from the rivers. Stock growers used Grand Prairie as free range and raised large herds of cattle and horses there, so few people settled on Grand Prairie itself. As Arkansas Post was nestled between Grand Prairie and the river, it was somewhat isolated from the northern part of the county.²⁷

Arkansas Post became more and more culturally isolated, too. As the years passed, Arkansas Post's lack of church and school grew onerous to some families. A Catholic church and girls' school opened for a few years, but the Catholic Church closed the school in 1845 and the chapel was destroyed in a windstorm. Meanwhile, Protestants went to camp revival meetings on the rare occasion when a traveling preacher passed through the area. Two camps were established for holding annual camp meetings, one at La Grue Springs about twenty miles northeast of Arkansas Post, and the other at Lake Lenox about seven miles south of the village on the other side of the Arkansas River. Some Arkansas Post families doubtless moved away to avail themselves of town services. Many French families moved to the Pine Bluff area, joining the sizable French community there.²⁸

Besides an overall decline in numbers from out-migration, the population in Arkansas Township saw some other demographic shifts. Among the free population of the township in 1850, there were eleven foreign-born individuals in 1850: two from Ireland, two from Belgium, and seven from France. Ten years later, there were twenty foreign-born individuals in the free population in the township and they came from Ireland, Prussia, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, France, and Canada. In 1850, half of free citizens who were twenty-one years or older came from outside of Arkansas. At the end of the decade, that percentage rose to two-thirds. In 1850, the most common states of origin after Arkansas were Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Virginia. In 1860, the states were Tennessee, Illinois, and Mississippi.²⁹

²⁷ Halli Burton, *A Topographical Description and History of Arkansas County, Arkansas from 1541 to 1875*, 123-24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 118-19.

²⁹ Dhonau, "1850 & 1860 Federal Census, Arkansas County, Arkansas," pp. 1-8, 56-60. Adults' states of origin in 1850: Arkansas (74), Kentucky (13) Tennessee (12), Ohio (8), Virginia (7), North Carolina (6), Maryland (5), South Carolina (4), Louisiana (3), Alabama, Georgia, and Illinois (2), Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Massachusetts (1). Adults' states and countries of origin in 1860: Arkansas (37), Tennessee (14), Illinois (8), Mississippi (7), Ireland (5), Kentucky, South Carolina, and Prussia (3), New York, Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, Canada, and Bohemia (2), and Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, Massachusetts, Germany, Hungary, and France (1).

Arkansas Post and vicinity had an aging Euro-American population as well as a shrinking one. In 1850, 69 percent of the Euro-American population of Arkansas Township was under the age of twenty-one. In 1860, 45 percent of the Euro-American population was under the age of twenty-one. The actual number of young Euro-American people declined from 231 to 104.³⁰

Among the Euro-American adult males enumerated in the federal census of 1850, some fifty gave their occupation as “farmers” and twenty-five as “laborers,” while the occupations of merchant, lawyer, physician, school teacher, clerk, blacksmith, carpenter, saddler, and overseer were each claimed by one to three individuals. Ten years later, the Euro-American adult males in the census held a somewhat wider variety of occupations. There were twenty-four “farmers” two “stock farmers” and two “cotton planters” (some cotton planters preferred to call themselves farmers) and eight “laborers” (variously described as laborers, common laborers, and farm laborers). Another twenty-two individuals gave their occupations as merchant, lawyer, physician, blacksmith, carpenter, overseer, druggist, preacher, hotel keeper, stock grader, ferry keeper, or brick layer. One individual was described as “tending sawmill” and two as “selling goods.”

Adult females did not give their occupations in the 1850 census, but they did in the 1860 census. One grand dame of Arkansas Post, Mary Refeld, reported her occupation as “French Lady.” She was a fifty-seven-year-old widow and mother of five. Her oldest child, Joseph, was twenty-eight years old and a “farmer.” Her second oldest was Caroline, a “domestic.” The last three were Louisa, age seventeen, Julia, age fifteen, and Charles, eleven. A total of fifty women in Arkansas Township gave their occupations, and the other forty-eight adult females were listed as “housewife,” “housekeeper,” or “domestic.” Some housekeepers were wives of the male head of household and some, apparently, were eldest daughters where the wife was deceased. Domestic workers presumably worked for wages in someone else’s household. Domestic workers were apt to be foreign-born. Among seventeen women who listed their occupation as domestics, seven were of French background, three were from Ireland, and one was from Bohemia.³¹

The census record of the Jane Mitchell household is intriguing. Jane Mitchell, a domestic, born in Ireland, was a twenty-three-year-old widow and mother of three. She had two daughters ages seven and six and an infant son. The children were all born in Arkansas, which means Jane Mitchell emigrated to the state and gave birth to her first child by the age of sixteen. Also in the household was Mary Murry, a domestic, born in Ireland, a fifty-year-old widow. The Jane Mitchell household raises a series of unanswerable questions. What drew the young Jane Mitchell from Ireland to Arkansas Post of all places? What happened to

³⁰ Dhonau, “1850 & 1860 Federal Census, Arkansas County, Arkansas,” pp. 1-8, 56-60.

³¹ Ibid.

her husband? How did the older widow Mary Murry fit into this household? How well did this sisterhood, composed of the young mother and daughters and the older widow, succeed in the individualistic and masculine world of antebellum Arkansas?

Arkansas in the Civil War

Since Arkansas Post owed its existence to its strategic location on a major tributary of the Mississippi River, not surprisingly it drew the attention of Union and Confederate generals during the Civil War. Because of its location, the sleepy village of fewer than a hundred people was fated to be a battleground in the war.

Arkansas seceded from the Union on May 6, 1861. It joined ten other secessionist slave states in forming the Confederacy. When the border slave states of Missouri and Kentucky resolved to remain in the Union, Arkansas found itself in an exposed position militarily. It had a relatively small population to mobilize for its own defense: less than half the population of Missouri, and only one quarter the population of Illinois. Next to Texas, it was the state farthest away from the heart of Dixie. Other than as a source of recruits for the Confederate Army, the state was not strategically vital to the Confederacy. It shared with Virginia and Tennessee the misfortune of being situated on the border between North and South where most of the fighting would take place.

The Union Army's original strategy for defeating the Confederacy focused very much on waterways. General in Chief Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan called for blockading the South's ocean ports and taking control of inland navigation up and down the Mississippi Valley, thereby placing a stranglehold on the South's export-driven economy. Control of the Mississippi River would also cut the South in two, taking away its largest city, New Orleans, and isolating most of Louisiana as well as Texas and Arkansas from the rest of the Confederacy. General Scott pointed out that moving men and supplies by water was far easier than moving them by land, so the strategy of slow and methodical strangulation would spare the nation enormous blood and treasure. The Anaconda Plan was rejected as too slow, and instead the Civil War was fought as a land war between mass armies; nevertheless, parts of the plan were still put into effect. The idea of deploying naval forces on the Mississippi River and taking control of the Mississippi Valley to cut the South in two remained a vital part of the Northern strategy for winning the war.³²

Before the Union invasion of the Mississippi Valley began, Confederate forces seized the initiative in the Trans-Mississippi West. The wavering, border, slave state of Missouri

³² Dave Page, *Ships versus Shore: Civil War Engagements along Southern Shores and Rivers* (Nashville, Tenn.: Rutledge Hill Press, 2001), 11-16.

was the prize. Although Missouri stayed in the Union through the secession crisis of winter and spring 1860-61, many Missourians wanted to join the Southern cause. They found a military leader in Major General Sterling Price, who became commander of the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard. Coming to his support was Brigadier General Benjamin McCulloch of Texas. In the first year of the war, federal troops west of the Mississippi played cat and mouse with Price and McCulloch in Missouri and northwest Arkansas. The armies clashed at Wilson's Creek in August 1861, where both sides were bloodied but unbeaten. Through the fall and winter, the federal army prevented Price from advancing north and possibly taking Missouri out of the Union, but they could not deal him a defeat and remove the threat of invasion, either.³³

In February 1862, Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis took command of the federal army in Missouri and invaded northwest Arkansas with 10,000 men. The Confederate army that confronted him was more than twice as large and included 1,000 Cherokees. At Pea Ridge, the Confederate commander, Major General Earl Van Dorn, tried to surprise the Union army with his superior force but in the ensuing battle (March 7-8) the Union army held the high ground and was victorious. Van Dorn was ordered to withdraw from Arkansas and reinforce Confederate forces east of the Mississippi.³⁴

Following the Battle of Pea Ridge, Curtis pulled his victorious army back to Springfield, Missouri to await developments in the Mississippi Valley and east Tennessee. In April, Union and Confederate armies collided in the Tennessee woods at a church called Shiloh. While Union reinforcements arrived by steamboat on the Tennessee River in the nick of time to turn the battle, the ferocity and carnage on the Shiloh battlefield shocked both North and South. The number of casualties was staggering, proving that the war was bloodier and victory would be dearer than anyone had dared to imagine.³⁵

Three weeks after the Battle of Shiloh, General Curtis left Springfield, Missouri, with his army and invaded Arkansas again, this time by way of the White River. On May 2, he entered Batesville. With a force of 20,000 men, he threatened to march on the state capital. However, from the Northern perspective the fighting in Arkansas was of secondary importance to the Federals' advance in Tennessee. Curtis received orders to send nearly half his men to reinforce Federal forces operating on the other side of the Mississippi River, so with his depleted command he halted his march on Little Rock and seized the town of Helena instead.³⁶

³³ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 39-43.

³⁴ Stephen B. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 37.

³⁵ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 413-14.

³⁶ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 51-53, 60-61.

While Curtis was marching southward, Arkansas Governor Henry Rector complained to President Jefferson Davis that Arkansas was practically undefended. He warned that the state might secede from the Confederacy and negotiate a separate peace if it did not receive military support. In response, Davis appointed Major General Thomas C. Hindman, a former Arkansas congressman, to command of the Trans-Mississippi Department and gave him the task of raising a new army. With fanatical determination, Hindman began a vigorous push for conscripts, sending enrolling officers into all parts of the state. He declared martial law, established military-run factories, executed deserters, and imposed a scorched-earth policy to stop the Federal army from foraging on Arkansas soil. Although these harsh measures helped prevent the Union from taking Little Rock in the summer of 1862, they were too much for many citizens of the state who demanded Hindman's ouster. By July, President Davis was forced to remove him from the command and reorganize the department.³⁷

The new Confederate commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department was Major General Theophilus Holmes. Holmes put Hindman in charge of the Arkansas district. The passionate and aggressive Hindman soon had his forces in northwest Arkansas, threatening an invasion of southern Missouri. Union forces there were divided between two commanders, Brigadier General James Blunt and Brigadier General Francis J. Herron. Hindman conceived an attack on one opposing force before the two could unite against him. But as the armies maneuvered, Blunt and Herron succeeded in forming a junction for the decisive battle of Prairie Grove (December 7, 1862). The two sides traded bloody frontal assaults and suffered heavy casualties. Although the battle was tactically a draw, it was strategically decisive as it ended Confederate hopes of taking Missouri.³⁸

As the military campaigning in northwest Arkansas took place through the second half of 1862, Union and Confederate forces faced off across mostly stationary lines in the eastern part of the state. While Curtis did not move his army out of Helena, he did send out raiding parties. Raiding the many plantations in the Arkansas Delta, the Federal troops confiscated or destroyed valuable supplies of cotton. The Federals treated the cotton as contraband of war because the South used cotton exports to finance the war. Confederate forces responded to the Union raiding by seizing or burning baled cotton wherever it was in danger of falling into the Federals' hands. By the second year of war the nature of the conflict was changing, with the armies putting an ever-greater burden on the civilian population as they foraged for food and deliberately ravaged the countryside.³⁹

As the war intensified on the battlefield and engulfed the civilian population off the battlefield, it became increasingly clear that the root cause of the conflict was slavery. The

³⁷ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 61.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 64-72.

³⁹ Bobby Roberts, "Desolation Itself: The Impact of the Civil War," in *The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, edited by Jeannie Whyne and Willard B. Gatewood (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 80-81.

North was fighting not only to preserve the Union, but also to end slavery and reconstruct the South. When Curtis's troops invested Helena, the Northern general made his headquarters on Hindman's plantation and freed Hindman's slaves. On the march through Batesville to Helena, the Union army was joined by a growing number of freedom seekers, who received "free papers" as "contraband of war," and in that way obtained their freedom months before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. When the Federal troops conducted raids across the Arkansas Delta, thousands of enslaved men and women fled plantations and sought the protection of the troops. In some cases, Northern soldiers entered plantations and liberated slaves by force. By 1863, some 3,600 escaped or liberated slaves had found refuge in Helena. Under the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, all these people were freed.⁴⁰

The year 1862 also saw the start of naval action on the western rivers. The North's burgeoning fleet of gunboats on the Mississippi and its tributaries was known as the "brown

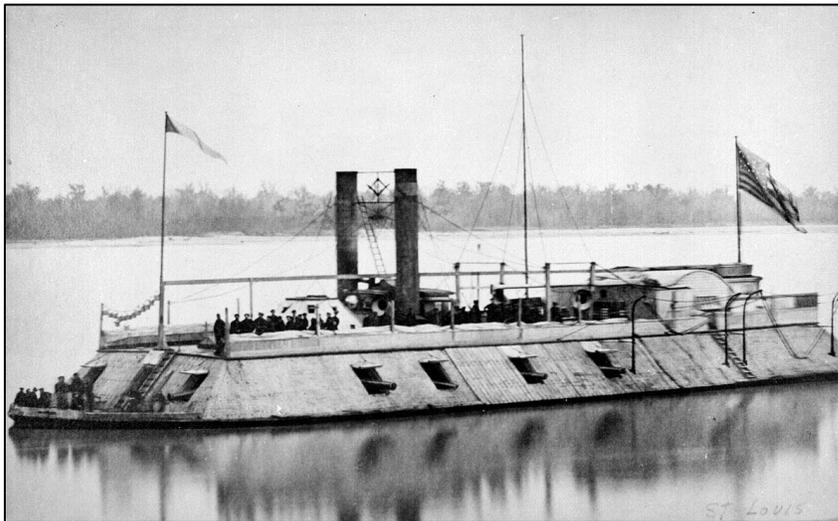


Figure 34. The gunboat USS Baron de Kalb was built in 1861 and served in the Battle of Arkansas Post. (Public domain.)

water navy." The gunboats were of a revolutionary design, armed with big guns and sheathed all over in thick iron plating for defense. As the boats were squat, wide-beamed, and flat-bottomed, with the paddle wheel, steam engine, and crew quarters concealed beneath a dome of armor, the newfangled gunboats looked like turtle shells as they glided through the water. They were nicknamed "Pook's turtles" after the inventor of the iron shell or casemate. The sloping armor on these gunboats was impervious to small arms fire and could withstand considerable artillery fire, too. The new form of weaponry led to many ship-versus-shore duels in which Union gunboats and Confederate shore batteries exchanged fire until one or the other scored a lucky shot. One such duel took place on the White River about forty miles north of Arkansas Post on June 13, 1862. Four Union gunboats engaged a Confederate gun emplacement guarding the river at St. Charles. A lucky shot from the shore battery penetrated

⁴⁰ Roberts, "Desolation Itself," 81; Stockley, *Ruled By Race*, 46.

the iron plating of the U.S.S. *Mound City* and exploded in its steam chest. The explosion of shrapnel and hot steam killed 125 men, which was nearly the entire crew. Another gunboat towed the stricken vessel out of range while the remaining two gunboats continued shelling the shore battery until the Confederate artillerymen were forced to flee.⁴¹

The gunboats by themselves could not capture territory or inflict much damage on the enemy, but when deployed in support of land troops they were a powerful weapon. As the year 1862 progressed, Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant and Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote coordinated the army and navy forces with increasing effect. The Union advantage along the riverways forced the Confederates to strengthen defenses there. After taking command of the Trans-Mississippi Department in August 1862, Major General Holmes decided that the river approach to Little Rock was vulnerable to Union attack and must be fortified. He assigned Colonel John W. Dunnington the task of preparing defensive works on all the state's navigable rivers. Dunnington selected the site of Arkansas Post to build an earthen fort where strongly emplaced guns pointing down the Arkansas River could check the advance of the Union ironclads. Like the French in the eighteenth century, Dunnington judged that any location nearer the mouth of the Arkansas would be vulnerable to flooding.

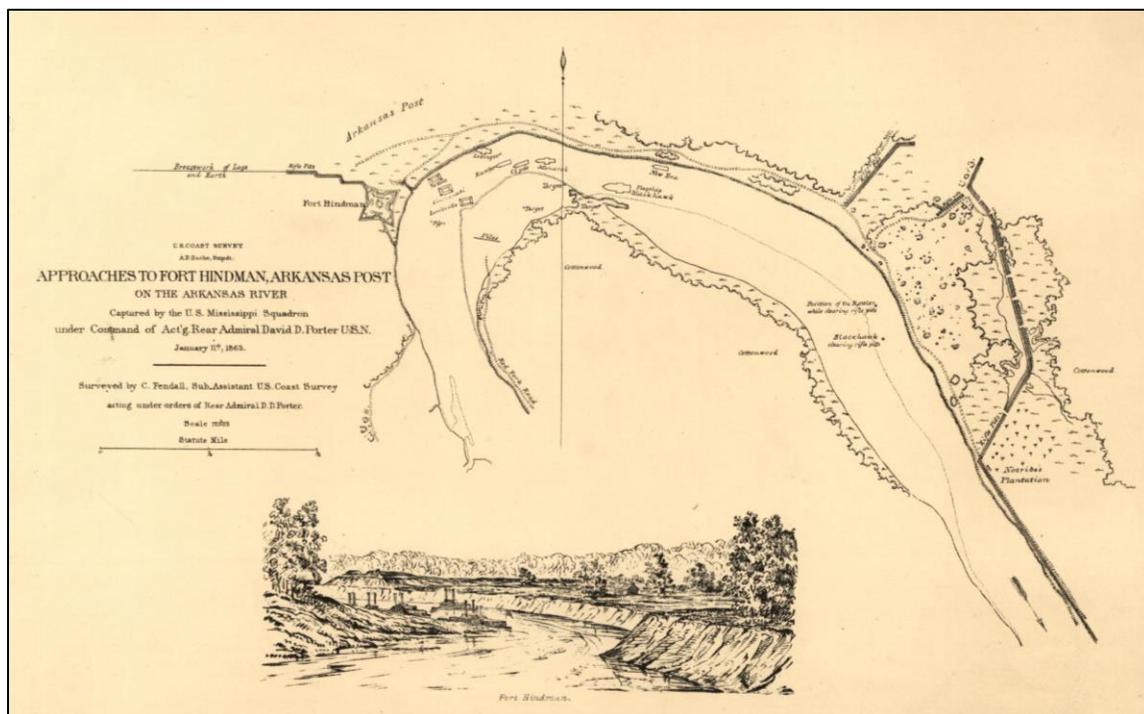


Figure 35. Survey map of approaches to Fort Hindman made after the Battle of Arkansas Post. (Library of Congress.)

⁴¹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 392-93; Page, *Ships versus Shore*, 334.

By the end of the year, the fort and its outer works were completed. It was named Fort Hindman for the gallant Arkansas general.⁴² Union Admiral David D. Porter later described the fort in his authoritative chronicle, *The Naval History of the Civil War*:

Arkansas Post was a large, well constructed fort built with the best engineering skill. It mounted thirteen guns: two ten-inch Columbiads, one nine-inch Dahlgren, and ten rifled guns of various calibres. The Columbiads were mounted in casemates covered in with four layers of heavy railroad iron, neatly fitted together to offer a smooth surface, and slanting iron roof to make the shot glance off. These were simply after the plan of the iron-clads afloat and were formidable structures.

The nine-inch gun was mounted in an embrasure protected by sand-bags, as were the ten rifled guns. All the guns except one bore down the river and on the vessels coming abreast of the forts. The fort itself was built close to the river; the front not being more than twenty yards from the bank.⁴³

In December 1862, General Holmes sent Brigadier General Thomas Churchill to take command of forces holding the fort. Churchill organized his men into three brigades. The 1st Brigade, commanded by Colonel Robert R. Garland, consisted of the 6th, 24th, and 25th Texas Regiments. The 2nd Brigade, under Colonel James Deshler, consisted of the 10th, 15th, 17th and 18th Texas Regiments. The 3rd Brigade, under Colonel Dunnington, included the 19th Arkansas Regiment, two companies of cavalry, and two companies of artillery. Included with Dunnington's units was a contingent of sailors and artillerymen from the Confederate gunboat, C.S.S. *Pontchartrain*, which had supplied the fort's guns before continuing up the river to Little Rock to undergo conversion into a ram. Altogether, Churchill's command amounted to between 5,000 and 6,000 men. However, many of those men were absent on furlough or sick, so the number of effectives may have been closer to 3,000.⁴⁴

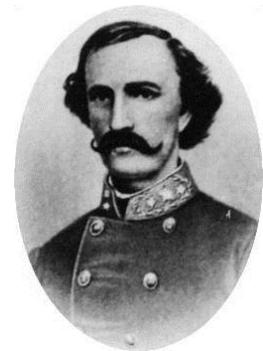


Figure 36. Brigadier General Thomas Churchill, commander at Arkansas Post. (Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*.)

⁴² Thomas A. DeBlack, "1863: 'We Must Stand or Fall Alone,'" in *Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas*, edited by Mark K. Christ (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 60.

⁴³ David W. Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: The Sherman Publishing Co., 1886), 289. DeBlack states that the fort had three heavy cannon and eight smaller cannon (p. 60) and Page concurs that it had "eleven guns of various calibers" (p. 336), not thirteen as Porter indicates. For a more detailed description of how the fort was constructed and how it appeared when complete, see Edwin S. Bearss, "The Battle of the Post of Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1959), 239-40.

⁴⁴ William J. Oliphant, "Arkansas Post," *Southern Bivouac* 1, no. 12 (May 1886), 736; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 – Reports (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886) [hereafter *O.R. Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1*], 780, 783; Page, *Ship versus Shore*, 335.

From his defensive position on the lower Arkansas, Churchill tried to interdict the movement of Union supplies down the Mississippi River to Milliken's Bend, where Union forces under the command of General Grant were dug in for an attack on Vicksburg. The Mississippi town was the last Confederate strongpoint preventing the Union from conquering the whole Mississippi Valley and cutting the South in two. But Grant's position in front of Vicksburg was exposed, and he depended on supplies being brought down the river. Toward the end of the month, Confederate forces operating out of Arkansas Post succeeded in capturing an unarmed Union supply vessel, the *Blue Wing*, as it tried to pass by the mouth of the Arkansas. The Confederates had managed to conceal a field gun in the river town of Napoleon, and firing upon the vessel from shore they forced the captain to surrender and land his vessel. The Confederates then commandeered the vessel and landed it at Arkansas Post later that day, where its cargo of ordnance and other supplies were triumphantly toted into the Confederate fort. Word of the loss of *Blue Wing* reached Grant's second in command, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman, just as he was pulling his troops out of the swamplands in the Yazoo River basin, where he had been probing for a weakness in Vicksburg's outer defenses. Sherman was as dubious about the Confederate stronghold up the Arkansas River as he was about the Confederate forces lurking in the Yazoo swamps; everywhere the Federal troops faced danger in their rear. Other Union generals agreed. Hearing their concerns, Grant reluctantly approved an expedition against Arkansas Post as a necessary preliminary for the coming siege of Vicksburg.⁴⁵

The Union general who was given command for the attack on Fort Hindman was Major General John McClernand. He was one of Lincoln's "political generals." An Illinois congressman and War Democrat when the war broke out, McClernand used his political



Figure 37. Major General John McClernand, U.S. commander in the Battle of Arkansas Post. (Public domain.)

position and his popularity with the people of his state to leverage a general's commission in Lincoln's army. Although he had no prior military experience, he won the president's admiration for his bravery and initiative at the battles of Fort Donelson and Shiloh. Then, in the fall of 1862, after delivering on a promise to rally his Illinois constituents and raise several more regiments of volunteers, he pressed the president to reward his efforts with an independent military command. His political maneuvering to obtain rapid promotion in the military did not endear him to career army officers like Grant and Sherman, nor to veteran soldiers who distrusted his competence as a military commander; nevertheless, he had the president's support. On January 4, 1863, Grant reluctantly put McClernand in command of the impending

⁴⁵ DeBlack, "1863: 'We Must Stand or Fight Alone,'" 61; Page, *Ship versus Shore*, 336; Bearss, "The Battle of the Post of Arkansas," 245-46. Grant characterized the expedition as a "wild-geese chase" in a telegraph to his superior. (Bearss, p. 278.)

operation up the Arkansas River, and temporarily demoted Sherman to commander of McClernand's Second Corps. Brigadier General George W. Morgan commanded McClernand's First Corps. McClernand grandiloquently named his expedition the Army of the Mississippi.⁴⁶

McClernand had a force of 32,000 men to attack Fort Hindman and a Confederate force less than one sixth its size. Moreover, the expedition was supported by three ironclads, *Louisville*, *Baron de Kalb*, and *Cincinnati* and another five or more lesser gunboats known as light draughts or tinclads, all under the command of Admiral David D. Porter. The soldiers were loaded aboard sixty transports at Milliken's Bend, and with Porter's gunboats escorting them the whole armada chugged up the Mississippi River, making several stops along the way to refuel.⁴⁷

To gain the element of surprise, McClernand had his whole amphibious expedition proceed past the mouth of the Arkansas and turn up the White River, then take the old White River cutoff, to enter the Arkansas River just a few miles below Arkansas Post. The expedition reached the Notrebe plantation, about three miles below Arkansas Post, just before nightfall on January 9. As the hour was too late to disembark all the troops, the huge flotilla tied up there and at Fletcher's Landing, six miles downstream, and waited for dawn.⁴⁸

McClernand's ruse of approaching by way of the White River fooled no one. On the morning of January 9, Confederate pickets stationed at the mouth of the Arkansas River observed the huge Union flotilla pass up the Mississippi and enter the White River. A messenger rode off to deliver the intelligence to General Churchill, who learned of the Federals' approach about the time McClernand's expedition was stealthily setting course for Arkansas Post through the White River cutoff. The Confederate commander immediately mustered his troops for battle. All but the fort's gunners were sent forward to occupy trenches about a mile downriver from the fort. A Confederate soldier later wrote that when the bugles sounded on that warm winter afternoon most of the men assumed it was a false alarm and neglected to grab their winter coats, thinking that that they would be back in camp by nightfall. The men soon realized their error. As they went to take their assigned positions, they met with retreating pickets who had already been dislodged from a farther line of trenches by enemy skirmishers. And as night came on, a hard rain began to fall.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 328, 577; DeBlack, "1863: 'We Must Stand or Fight Alone,'" 61; Richard L. Kiper, *Major General John Alexander McClernand: Politician in Uniform* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 156-59.

⁴⁷ Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, 289-91; Bearss, "The Battle of the Post of Arkansas," 247.

⁴⁸ DeBlack, "1863: 'We Must Stand or Fall Alone,'" 61-62; Bearss, "The Battle of the Post of Arkansas," 250; *O.R.* Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 749, 754.

⁴⁹ *O.R.* Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 780; Oliphant, "Arkansas Post," 786.

The Battle of Arkansas Post, First Day

Before dawn on January 10, the several thousand Federal troops who had passed the night aboard the transports began the process of disembarkation. With the sixty transports crowding the channel from Notrebe's plantation down to Fletcher's Landing, it was late morning before all the soldiers were landed and formed up in regiments ready to march. Morgan's First Corps was to approach along the river, pushing the Confederate skirmishers ahead of it, while Sherman's Second Corps was to swing around to the right and approach the Confederate defenses from the north and west, to form a broad line of attack that would trap their opponents against the river. Sherman led off with his First Division under command of General Frederick Steele, taking some freedom-seeking African Americans with him for guides. The column waded through swamp for about two miles before reaching a farm and cabin on dry ground. Sherman interrogated the civilian occupants along with some Confederate soldiers who were captured on the premises and determined that the terrain was unfavorable for the plan of attack; his men would have to march seven miles around an intervening bayou to reach the Little Prairie and get into position. He informed McClernand, and McClernand responded with orders for Steele's division to countermarch. Second Corps regrouped and advanced on Arkansas Post by way of the river. Despite those missteps, the federal troops got into position north of Fort Hindman, with Morgan's First Corps on the left and Sherman's Second Corps on the right, with help from covering fire from the gunboats late in the day.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the troops on McClernand's extreme left had better luck with their maneuvers. On the morning of January 10, a contingent of Morgan's First Corps under command of Colonel Daniel W. Lindsey – two regiments of infantry, one of cavalry, and three pieces of artillery – were disembarked at Fletcher's Landing with orders to proceed by road along the south side of the river, pass through James Smith's plantation, and gain a position on the south bank of the river a little upstream of Fort Hindman. There, the Federals would obstruct any Confederate reinforcements that might be sent from upriver, and they would cut off the Confederates' retreat. During the advance, Lindsey's cavalry skirmished with Confederate cavalry pickets; the Confederates rode off and alerted Fort Hindman to the presence of Federal troops on the south side of the river. As Lindsey's troops took up positions, they were harassed by exploding shells lobbed from the fort and had to pull back into the cover of the woods. Colonel Lindsey positioned his artillery pieces on the point of land opposite the fort, and the men built breastworks for protection against Confederate sharpshooters concealed on the other side of the river.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *O.R.* Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 754-55.

⁵¹ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 750-51; Bearss, "The Battle of the Post of Arkansas," 249-50.

The main action on January 10 occurred in the late afternoon as Admiral Porter responded to McClernand's request for the gunboats to lay down a covering fire against the fort while his troops maneuvered into position north of the fort. The three ironclads sallied forth, passing by a line of range buoys that Colonel Dunnington had placed at 1,200 yards on the supposition that Union gunboats would form a line at about that distance from the fort's batteries. The fort's guns opened on the ironclads as they reached the range buoys and made some good shots, but they lost their range as the ironclads swept closer. The ironclads kept coming, and finally took up position just 150 yards from the fort in calm water where the gunners could steady their aim. While the Confederates' shells bounced harmlessly off the ironclads' casemates, the Federals' superior firepower struck the fort with punishing effect. After an hour of shelling back and forth, the fort's guns fell silent. As daylight ebbed and a dense cloud of smoke darkened over Fort Hindman, the gunboats ceased firing and withdrew, returning downstream to tie up against the riverbank behind Union lines.⁵²

That night, General Churchill received a message from General Holmes ordering the defenders to hold out for reinforcements and if necessary fight to the last man. Churchill passed the order on to his brigade commanders, telling them "to see it carried out in spirit and letter." Privately, Churchill had other ideas. He had dispatched messengers to Colonel E. E. Portlock, who had a regiment at St. Charles, and Captain Alf Johnson, who had a company at the mouth of the Arkansas, requesting that they march with all due haste to join the battle. But much larger reinforcements were needed to hold the position. Churchill hoped to hold out until nightfall of the next day and then, "if re-enforcements did not reach me, cut my way out."⁵³

On the Union side of the lines, the soldiers passed a cold, restless night in their bivouacs. At about an hour past midnight, General Sherman was roused by the light of the moon in a clearing sky. He got up, mounted his horse, and with some aides rode out toward the Confederate lines to reconnoiter the intervening terrain by moonlight. Well within earshot of the Confederate lines, he could hear the soldiers chopping and felling trees and tearing down buildings and using the logs and salvaged lumber to construct more breastworks. The activity convinced him that the enemy was "resolved on a determined resistance." Fort Hindman was visible to him on the Confederate right, and a line of "parapets" or breastworks stretched from the fort across a neck of land to a bayou on the Confederate left. Six field

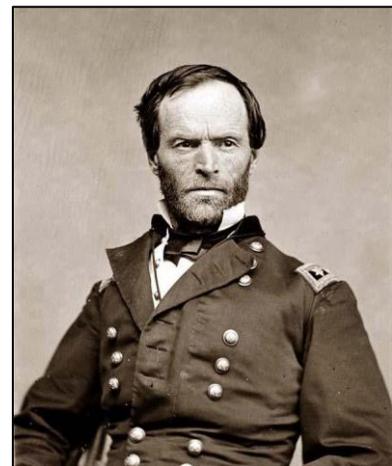


Figure 38. Major General William Tecumseh Sherman, second in command of Union troops at the Battle of Arkansas Post. (Public domain.)

⁵² Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, 289-90.

⁵³ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 781.

pieces – 12-pounder howitzers and 3-inch rifled guns – were positioned at intervals along the line.⁵⁴

The Battle of Arkansas Post, Second Day

Sunday, January 11, 1863, dawned clear and bright. McClernand finished bringing all troops into formation for the assault. As the Union soldiers reached their place in the line, they were ordered to take cover and wait for the signal to attack, which would come after noon. They waited through the long morning hours, hugging the ground as Confederate shells occasionally whistled overhead or exploded nearby. Last to come into line, Morgan's artillery pieces were wheeled into place in front of the fort on the Union left. At 11:20 a.m., McClernand notified Porter that his troops were deployed for the attack. The plan called for a 30-minute naval bombardment of the fort, to cease at precisely 1:30 pm. Three minutes after the cessation of naval gunfire, the troops would charge the Confederate line.⁵⁵

Once again, the ironclads closed on the fort and gave it a terrific pounding. Although the Confederates had worked through the night to repair damages, the fort was so wrecked by the previous day's action that its guns were soon silenced. A veteran of the battle later described the din and destruction of this second and final bombardment:

Field-batteries on the opposite side of the river blazed and roared at it, and the gun-boats and mortar-boats turned their entire attention to that devoted spot. Shot, shell, and minie balls rained into it from every direction. Solid shot from the gun-boats plunged through the packed earth which formed its walls, and huge mortar shells dropped into it from above. The thunders of the cannon and the bursting shells were terrible, and nothing could be heard above their roar.⁵⁶

When it was over, the gunboat *Black Hawk* slowly came abreast of the fort with its high upper deck on a level with the fort's embrasures, its mobile guns wheeled into position to fire into the inside of the works at close range if the garrison should put up further resistance. As Porter's sailors waited on deck for a formal surrender, they peered into the fort and were horrified by the mayhem and gore their guns had wrought. Shattered corpses and dead horses were strewn everywhere, mixed up in the heaps of torn metal, splintered logs, and churned earth. "It was a scene ever to be remembered," Porter wrote.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 755; William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman, by himself* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 298.

⁵⁵ DeBlack, "1863: 'We Must Stand or Fall Alone,'" 63; Kiper, *Major General John Alexander McClernand*, 174; *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 733.

⁵⁶ Oliphant, "Arkansas Post," 737.

⁵⁷ Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, 291. Confederate veteran William J. Oliphant described the bombardment from the Confederate perspective: "Field-batteries on the opposite side of the river blazed and

Over on the Union line, the soldiers heard the roaring cannonade at last subside, and they waited for the signal to charge. Some of Sherman's men opened with a volley of musketry, and then the whole line heaved forward. Here is an excerpt from the after-action report by one of the officers of First Corps, Brigadier General Andrew J. Smith, commanding the First Division in the center of the Union line:

My whole line, with a heavy line of skirmishers in front, moved slowly forward to the open field, across which my division had to pass under a heavy fire from the enemy's works. As we emerged from the timber the front line was hotly engaged for some minutes, driving the enemy before us, who first took shelter in a number of houses or cabins about midway between us and the fort, and from which they were doing great execution on our advanced lines,

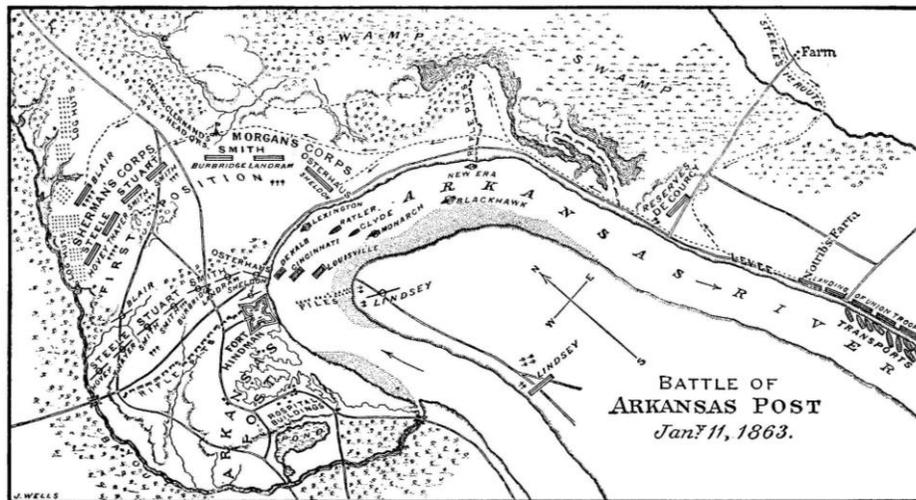


Figure 39. Battle of Arkansas Post mapped by historian Ed Bearss. (*Arkansas Historical Quarterly*.)

and checked for a moment our progress. The Twenty-third Wisconsin Volunteers, Colonel Guppy commanding, was ordered to charge upon the houses and take possession of them at all hazards, which was done in the most gallant manner, thus forcing the enemy to abandon their stronghold and flee under a hot fire from our troops to their entrenchments. Our line then continued a storming advance upon their works until within 200 yards of the main fort, from which point we kept up an incessant fire throughout the line for nearly half an hour.

roared at it, and the gun-boats and mortar-boats turned their entire attention to that devoted spot. Shot, shell, and minie balls rained into it from every direction. Solid shot from the gun-boats plunged through the packed earth which formed its walls, and huge mortar shells dropped into it from above. The thunders of the cannon and the bursting shells were terrible, and nothing could be heard above their roar.

About this time quite all the guns from the fort had been silenced; but Captain Cooley's battery, that had been advanced by General Osterhaus, and one from General Sherman's corps, continued to play upon the fort and works of the enemy. Captain Blount's battery, which had done such effective service, was compelled to cease in consequence of the advance of our troops. Seeing a Confederate flag floating on a house in rear of the fort I ordered up one of Captain Blount's pieces to play upon it, and after a few shots heard the cry that the white flag was raised. General Burbridge was handed a flag, with orders to be first in the fort and plant it. I am happy to say this was accomplished. The Sixteenth Indiana, Lieut. Col. John M. Orr commanding, was the first in the fort, followed by the Eighty-third Ohio, Lieutenant-Colonel Baldwin commanding, who were the first to plant their colors on the works of the enemy. They were followed immediately by the whole division, which entered the works of the enemy in the most perfect order.⁵⁸

The same sector of the battlefield and climactic phase of the battle is described in the following report by Colonel Richard Owen, commanding the 60th Indiana Infantry Regiment. Note his further description of the farmstead buildings present on the battlefield as well as his apt allusion to the fog of war:

About noon we received the general's order to prepare for the charge which we were to make whenever we heard shouting on our right. We commenced the charge with about 350 men...advancing at first at common time through the woods, and afterward in quick and double-quick, with shouts, for about 300 yards through the open field, in which, the ground being swampy, we sank over ankle-deep. This advance was made under the direct fire of six pieces of artillery and the crossfire of two lines of sharpshooters, besides others concealed behind the old buildings. We, however, dislodged those and held the frame house, stable, and sink house, commencing and continuing to fire by file, until finding that the whole murderous fire was concentrated upon that spot and that we were losing many men I thought it proper to endeavor to reform them a short distance in the rear. This I found impracticable to effect, under the heavy direct and cross fire, until we again reached the woods, where we rallied, under the general's directions, to the number of about 200, being compelled to leave the lieutenant-colonel wounded and the major quite exhausted (from a long previous sickness and from inhaling volumes of smoke while coolly giving commands to the left wing at the stable) and the adjutant temporarily stunned, but not seriously injured, by the explosion of a shell, which killed a man close by him.

⁵⁸ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 726.

The second charge was made by obliquing to the right along the skirt of woods to afford some protection from the artillery fire, and we could have maintained our position, but, having advanced so far as to be mistaken for the enemy, we were fired into by a Union regiment posted several hundred yards off on our right. This compelled us again to fall back to the point at which the general and yourself found us, when we made our third charge, with 111 men, and maintained our position in the front, abreast of the frame house above mentioned, until the white flag was hoisted, when we followed General Burbridge and yourself as rapidly as our exhausted condition would permit, and were the second regiment, if not the first, to plant the national colors on the fortifications, Lieutenant Ewing mounting the ridge of the south building for that purpose.⁵⁹

General Sherman could not see the gunboats from his position on the Union right, so he could only gauge the progress of the naval bombardment by the sound. It was like rolling thunder, starting slowly and then rising in volume rapidly as it approached the fort and “enveloped it with a complete hailstorm of shot and shell.” Sherman’s batteries joined in the rain of death, as did the Union guns placed on the far side of the river. When the fort’s guns no longer responded, he ordered his artillery to cease fire and his infantry columns to advance to the assault. The Confederates’ line of skirmishers had fallen back and Sherman’s men sprang forward with a cheer. The soldiers had to cross about one hundred yards of smooth, clear ground and then about three hundred yards of rougher terrain that was covered with standing trees and brush and fallen timber. The men dashed across the first bit of ground and checked when they reached the second. With shells bursting around them, they took cover where they could find it. The Confederate infantry, crouched in their rifle pits, laid on a withering musket fire. After an hour and a half of slow advance, the Federals were within one hundred yards of the enemy trenches, pouring their own musket fire into the whole Confederate line. Finally, the Confederate center broke and several white flags appeared. Just as reports of the enemy’s surrender reached Sherman, he saw “a large, conspicuous white flag displayed” and sent forward his aide, Captain Dayton, to communicate with the commander. Sherman reported what happened next:

Sending orders as fast as possible along the line to the right to cease firing, I followed Captain Dayton and found the place surrendered. Colonel and Acting Brigadier Garland commanded at the point where I entered the lines. I immediately sent orders to General Steele to push one of his brigades along the bayou to his extreme right, to prevent escape in that direction, and dispatched every mounted man near me, under charge of my aide, Captain Taylor, in the same direction, to secure all squads of men who had attempted, or might attempt, to escape. I soon however became convinced

⁵⁹ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 733-34.

that the surrender was complete and in good faith, and that we had gained the enemy's position with his fort, guns, men, and all the materiel of war.⁶⁰

But the surrender was not complete – not quite. A messenger informed Sherman that the Confederate officer on the Union's extreme right facing General Steele had refused to surrender to Steele until he received the order directly from his own commander, Churchill. Sherman, anxious that the shooting might resume on that sector of the battlefield, rode to the spot and personally demanded that the Confederate officer, Colonel Deshler, surrender immediately or risk terrible consequences. Deshler finally consented.⁶¹

With the Confederates' surrender complete, McClellan's expedition netted 4,793 prisoners. Despite his overwhelming superiority in men and firepower, McClellan lost 134 killed, 898 wounded, and 29 captured or missing for a total of 1,061 casualties, compared with Confederate casualties of 60 killed and 75 to 80 wounded. The lopsided numbers attested to the burden of assaulting an enemy who was well entrenched, and to the tenaciousness of the defenders even as they fought with little hope of escape.

The Battle of Arkansas Post, Aftermath

After the soldiers laid down their weapons, burial details went about the grim work of interring the dead. The Union dead were given proper burials, while the Confederate dead were pitched unceremoniously into the rifle pits and the earthworks shoveled in over them.⁶²

For the many Confederate survivors, the horror of the battlefield was followed by the ordeal of being taken prisoner. Veteran soldier William J. Oliphant gave an account of what they endured in his vivid though florid Victorian-Age prose:

On Monday, the 12th, the prisoners were assembled on the bank of the river, above the fort, and guarded during the day by men in blue, who, being veterans of many fields, respected the men who had offered their lives as sacrifices for what they deemed right.

At nightfall one of the prisoners started the song "The Bonnie Blue Flag," others caught up the refrain, and for more than an hour hundreds joined in the song, and made the woods, which had so recently echoed far different sounds, ring with the rich melody.

⁶⁰ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 756-57.

⁶¹ Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 299-300.

⁶² Bearss and Brown, *Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History*, 284.

Later in the night we were marched on board the steamboats for transportation to Northern prisons. Before the dawn of Tuesday a heavy rain began falling, driving the men to such shelter as they could find; and when daylight came the holds of the vessels were crowded, while the men in the engine-rooms were standing huddled together like cattle.

During the afternoon of Tuesday, the 13th, the boats bearing the prisoners, with a gunboat as convoy, turned their heads down stream, and we bade farewell to the scene of our first battle.

During the night that followed our departure, while the boats were taking on fuel at the mouth of the White River, the rain, which until then had not ceased, changed to snow, and as we turned up the Mississippi men from the far South were thrust unprepared into what seemed to us an Arctic region....

Of food, there was plenty and to spare, and no personal unkindness was shown by the guards, but the cold was intense. The kind citizens of Memphis were not permitted to give the clothing they so generously offered to keep us warm, notwithstanding a frozen Confederate had been that day carried dead to the wharf; and, as the men were not allowed to enter the cabins, the scarcity of overcoats and blankets caused great suffering. Many of the prisoners afterward lost limbs from being frostbitten, and scarce a day passed that we did not leave a lonely grave by the side of the great "Father of Waters," containing the remains of a brave man who had yielded to the seductiveness of that painless stupor which precedes death from freezing....

Although near a quarter of a century since then has come and gone, the eighteen days and nights which followed the capture of Arkansas Post seem like a long, dark, horrible dream, such a one as doubtless haunts the sleeping hours of the survivors of an Arctic expedition, as they dream of their frozen comrades and the ice and snows of the Polar regions.

On the morning of the 31st of January the gates of a military prison were opened to receive a shivering crowd of men, who would rather have braved death on a thousand fields than undergo the horrors of a similar experience, and for months afterward the doors of the prison dead-house were opened daily to receive the lifeless bodies of those who finally succumbed to the exposures of that terrible trip up the river.⁶³

⁶³ Oliphant, "Arkansas Post," 738-39.

After Confederate officers Churchill, Garland, Deshler, and Dunnington returned to the South in a prisoner exchange, they faced a court of inquiry into the loss of Fort Hindman and surrender. The court of inquiry was requested by Secretary of War J. A. Seddox and put into consideration by President Davis. Seddox referred to the “strange circumstances causing the capture of the Arkansas Post,” which included the fact that the men had surrendered in defiance of General Holmes’s order to hold the position at all cost. Holmes confirmed for the inquiry that he had indeed issued that order, but he frankly admitted that the order was ill-advised. “It never occurred to me when the order was issued that such an overpowering command would be devoted to an end so trivial,” he wrote. He defended the brave conduct of the officers and men who had fought against such odds. Churchill, Garland, and Deshler each submitted a report (Deshler wrote his report from a prisoner of war camp in Ohio) and the men’s reputations were cleared. Garland wanted more investigation of the role of Colonel Francis C. Wilkes, commander of the regiment who had first raised the white flag. The court of inquiry was finally terminated in March 1864 with all men exonerated. The Confederate officers’ reports, published along with the Federal officers’ reports in *The Official Record*, provide further insight into the ferocity of the fighting in the Battle of Arkansas Post and how the surrender occurred.⁶⁴

During the battle, the Confederate forces used the former bank building in the Arkansas Post townsite as a hospital. Various accounts of the battle state that the building was hit during the Navy’s bombardment of Fort Hindman, and one account says it was destroyed. There was probably more than one Confederate hospital, which adds to the ambiguity of each reference. In Colonel Deshler’s report, he refers to “our division hospital,” and says it was hit by an enemy shell. The explosion mortally wounded the assistant surgeon, one Dr. Wynkoop, as he was tending to wounded soldiers.⁶⁵ Sherman, in his memoir, described a “house which had been used for a hospital,” which was located “just outside the Rebel parapet.” Apparently, that building survived the battle relatively intact, because Sherman “had a room cleaned out, and occupied it” on the night after the battle.⁶⁶ William Heartsill of the Texas Rangers later wrote about the destruction of a hospital:

During the hottest part of the engagement, Boswell comes to where the horses are, from the Hospital, and reports that Doctor Burton has ordered all who are able to walk to make for a place of safety, as the Federals are NOT respecting our Hospital flag, and have fired three shots into the Hospital where Boswell was, killing two or our surgeons and a wounded man, who the surgeons were operating upon. A few moments and a tremendous volume of black smoke is seen boiling up; a moment of

⁶⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 780-96.

⁶⁵ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 17, Part 1, 796.

⁶⁶ Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 302.

painful anxiety confirms our apprehensions; one of our Hospitals is on fire, by the bursting of a shell under it.⁶⁷

Archeological investigation of the state bank site in 1971 revealed that the building burned and was likely destroyed in an explosion. Presumably, then, it happened in the way that Heartsill described. Other features of the battlefield, such as the Confederate rifle pits and the Confederate troops' winter encampment, have been described in detail in the Cultural Landscape Report for Arkansas Post National Memorial and do not need to be repeated here. Of course, the principal feature of the battlefield was Fort Hindman itself. Over the next two decades it would be obliterated by the changing course of the Arkansas River. While the physical site now lies submerged in Post Bend, it is possible to reconstruct what the fort looked like from numerous historical descriptions, diagrams, maps, and drawings.

The Battle of Arkansas Post left the state of Arkansas more vulnerable than ever. The primary purpose of Fort Hindman was to guard the river approach to Little Rock, and with the fort destroyed it seemed the way was now clear for a Union advance on the state capital. Low water in the Arkansas River deterred the Union from following up its victory with a move against Little Rock, however. Instead, the 32,000 troops under McClelland's command were returned to the Army of the Tennessee for action against Vicksburg. Besides securing the Union's supply line from Confederate marauders operating out of the Arkansas River, the Battle of Arkansas Post had the significant result of bagging nearly 5,000 prisoners who otherwise might have gone to the defense of Vicksburg.⁶⁸

After the Battle of Arkansas Post there was a lull in campaigning in Arkansas as the Union army focused on the capture of Vicksburg. When Vicksburg fell in early July 1863, it signified that the North had taken control of the Mississippi and had achieved the first step in dismembering the Confederacy. Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana were now cut off from the rest of the Confederacy east of the Mississippi. In the months following the fall of Vicksburg,

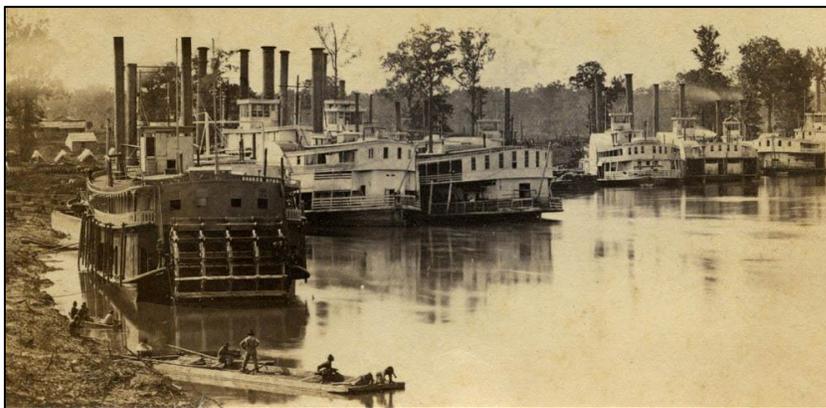


Figure 40. Union landing on White River at DeValls Bluff, Ark. After the capture of Fort Hindman, Union forces fortified this site and used it for a supply base. Note the camp tents in the background. Although the location is on the White River, the scene gives some impression of how the landing near Arkansas Post might have appeared. (Courtesy of Wilsons Creek National Battlefield and Trans-Mississippi Theater Photo Archive, Springfield-Greene County Library District.)

⁶⁷ Quoted in Walker, "Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas," 23.

⁶⁸ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 81; Kiper, *Major General John Alexander McClelland*, 179-80.

the Union army exploited its victory by turning against Arkansas's weak remaining defenses. Overall command of Union forces in Arkansas now went to Major General Frederick Steele. Steele called for a two-pronged invasion. Starting with his own army in Helena, he marched westward. A second force under Brigadier General James Blunt, who was based at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, marched eastward. In September 1863, Steele took Little Rock and Blunt occupied Fort Smith. With the removal of the Confederate government from the state capital the way was clear to establish a Unionist government and commence reconstruction.⁶⁹

But with major military campaigns in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia still raging, the North could only commit a minimal number of troops to occupy the conquered southern state. Remnants of the Confederate army remained at large in Arkansas. Over much of the state, including the Arkansas Delta, the Union occupation dissolved into guerilla warfare between Northern and Southern partisans. Freed slaves and white civilians alike faced two more years of devastating war. The years 1863-65 were in many ways the hardest, cruelest years of the war for Arkansas's non-combatants. Few residents remained at Arkansas Post when the war ended.

⁶⁹ Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 124-27.

The Village and Environs from Reconstruction to Recent Times

The Arkansas Delta was ravaged and impoverished when the Civil War ended. Homes and livestock were destroyed. Roads and bridges were in ruins. Not even the new year's crops were spared from devastation as severe flooding in the first spring after the war blighted them. Economic recovery in the area was further retarded by a disastrous fall in the price of cotton in 1867. Cotton production in the Arkansas Delta did not recover to prewar levels until the early 1870s.¹

For the freed population, hopes of a brighter future rose near the end of the war on the promise of forty acres and a mule being awarded to every ex-slave. But African Americans' dreams of equitable agrarian reform soon turned to dust. Plantation owners kept all their land, notwithstanding the fact that they owed their ill-gotten wealth to slave labor. African Americans, unable to acquire land for themselves, became tenant farmers – sometimes on the very plantations where they had worked as slaves before emancipation. A system of sharecropping developed. Southern white Democrats soon regained political ascendancy over white and black Unionists, stunted reform, and took away blacks' voting rights. Blacks suffered political and economic injustice, and were terrorized into submission.²

Incidents of violence and intimidation by whites against blacks were rife in the region. A black man in Arkansas County was shot in cold blood when his horse splashed water on a white man. In the worst race massacre in the state's history, white supremacists in Pine Bluff carried out a mass lynching of twenty-four African American men, women, and children and set fire to their homes. During the year 1866, a total of twenty-nine freedmen were slain in acts of racial violence in Arkansas, one Federal official reported.³

As precarious as political and economic conditions were for African Americans in Arkansas during the era of Reconstruction, things were worse in some other Southern states including neighboring Mississippi where the notorious Mississippi Black Codes were put in effect. Arkansas developed a reputation as a Promised Land and attracted a sizeable African American immigration from other Southern states. During the 1880s, black families poured into the Arkansas Delta, seeking safety in numbers and refuge from violence and poverty in upland districts of the South. The overwhelming majority of new arrivals became tenant farmers. Eventually, the large black population in the Arkansas Delta, together with a

¹ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 156; Roberts, "Desolation Itself," 86-90.

² DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 146-59.

³ *Ibid*, 148-49, 153.

growing black population in Arkansas's cities, became a threat to the rule of the Democratic Party in Arkansas. To preempt that challenge, the Democrats campaigned for a poll tax, which was adopted into the state constitution in 1892. Allowance of the poll tax in Arkansas and other states solidified a system of legalized racial discrimination, or Jim Crow, that would prevail across the South until the Civil Rights era.⁴

The second worst race massacre in the state's history took place in the small town of St. Charles in Arkansas County, about forty miles north of Arkansas Post, in March 1904. A black man and a white man got into a fistfight over a game of chance. Afterwards, the black man went into hiding, while whites came from four other towns, including DeWitt and Ethel in Arkansas County, as well as Clarendon and Roe in Monroe County, to participate in mob violence against the black community in St. Charles. The white mob drove sixty to seventy African American men, women, and children from their homes and forced them into a warehouse, which they threatened to burn down. Before the mob disbanded, thirteen people were murdered. No whites were ever charged in the crime.⁵

The remainder of this chapter focuses on developments specific to Arkansas Post and the 389 acres that eventually became Arkansas Post National Memorial. For more about post-Civil War developments in Arkansas County and the Arkansas Delta, such as the coming of the timber industry, railroads, and rice farming, the reader is referred to Chapter One on geographical setting.

A Crossroads Village

In the impoverished times following the Civil War, the Arkansas Post village community barely hung on. James H. Lucas, a wealthy St. Louis businessman who had once spent time in the community, sent \$300 of supplies on his personal account when he learned of the desperate conditions there. Lucas's private relief effort may have staved off disaster for one or two families, but others pulled up stakes and left.⁶

Meanwhile, the natural dynamism of the ever-changing river as it flowed through the alluvial landscape contributed in no small part to the village's decline in the post-Civil War era. During the latter decades of the nineteenth century, erosion of the riverbank accelerated. The cutting action of the Arkansas River as it flowed in a horseshoe bend past Arkansas Post

⁴ Otto, *Final Frontiers*, 24; Gordon, "From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom," 98-99, 108-09.

⁵ Stockley, *Ruled by Race*, 137-38; Vincent Vinikas, "St. Charles Lynching of 1904," in *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4753> <February 17, 2017>.

⁶ Coleman, *The Arkansas Post Story*, 119. Lucas was among the citizens who signed a subscription in 1832 to maintain a church and priest at Arkansas Post.

caused the riverbank to migrate north and west, carrying away a sliver of the old townsite and about half of the platted areas of Town of Rome and Town of Arkansas Post. The remains of Fort Hindman were probably carried off by the river during the 1870s. Then, after about 1886, the river channel swung to the east again. The cutting action of the current shifted to the opposite bank, while the low-lying area around the former Fort Hindman filled in with silt. Arkansas Post was left high and dry. Around this same time, in a somewhat separate development, a system of deep gullies cut into the terrace on which the old townsite was located. The gullying carried away soil and sculpted a shallow basin riven by small ravines. The eroded area grew and took more and more land out of cultivation. Archeologist Edward Palmer looked at the gullying in 1881 and thought it resulted from the old Confederate entrenchments, which were filled with rainwater and were like running streams at the time of his visit. Probably the gullying was not really the result of the entrenchments so much as it was a natural byproduct of the river's cutting action, since the river removed part of the bluff where the gully system intersected it. In any case, a spreading network of gullies formed in the area that is now covered by Park Lake.⁷

After several decades of rapid erosion in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the area that is now spanned by the Memorial Unit became relatively stable again when the Arkansas River cut through the neck of land south of Stillwell Point and formed a new channel just south of Arkansas Post. The new channel formed during a flood event in 1903. The natural cutoff turned the section of river fronting Arkansas Post into a quiet oxbow bend.⁸

While the river was changing course, the river-valley environs around Arkansas Post were changing in another way: wagon roads were gradually becoming more traveled and more prolific. In that context, Arkansas Post gradually changed from a river port into a crossroads village. Not long into the post-Civil War era, the center of the village moved from the river landing northward about a half mile to the junction of two county roads, one coming from the north and the other extending east and west. The road junction was located near the present junction of the road to the visitor center and the road to the picnic area. In its new location, Arkansas Post survived as a crossroads village serving local farmers. The census of 1880, listed thirty-seven village residents. The thirteen residents who were listed with occupations included three farmers, three farm laborers, one farmer/merchant, a merchant, a dry goods merchant, a dry goods clerk, a physician, a boarding house operator, and a saloon keeper.⁹

⁷ Jeter, *Edward Palmer's Arkansas Mounds*, 137; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 138.

⁸ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 139.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

Edward Palmer stayed in Arkansas Post for three rainy days while making his archeological investigation of the Menard Mounds in 1881. His diary reveals that Arkansas Post still retained its old character as a river port at that time even as it was changing into a crossroads village. He arrived by boat and was impressed that the place was “as old as Philadelphia.” He noted some brick remains of the state bank building, and recorded the fact that the “town was destroyed by the war and the change of the war.” His short stay happened to coincide with a visit by a circus. Palmer’s rough notes on the circus are suggestive of a scene and characters straight out of Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

Landed at the Post late in the afternoon. Staid at a noted hotel. . . . Circus that travels upon a river boat (admission 25 cents). Gambling tables, Dice Rolet, and guessing for dollars seem to be the main object, so as to pass counterfit money. There was also a 25 cent side show consisting of an exhibition tent & a dressing tent to accomodate a miserable variety show for which \$10 license was paid. Had the whole show exhibited it would have been \$100. The performers were a hard faced lot. The poor crowd of dupes, black & white, by their appearance had better put the money to their own comfort.¹⁰

Like many other southern communities, Arkansas Post separated into two racially segregated enclaves in the post-Civil War era. While the white community vacated the old townsite and relocated the heart of the community to the junction of the two county roads, African American residents of Arkansas Post, if any remained there after the Civil War, did not relocate with the whites. In the 1880 census, the thirty-seven people who were enumerated in the crossroads village were all white. Around the same time, a black community formed in and nearby the old townsite. Most, if not all, of the black families moved to the area from elsewhere. It seems that the newcomers built cabins in the woods surrounding the old village site rather than repair and reoccupy abandoned homes on the eroding village site itself. So, the white and black communities existed about a half mile apart, with the whites’ homes clustered around the crossroads and the blacks’ homes spread out around the old townsite.¹¹

The two communities were also segregated by occupation. The whites owned the stores and other businesses (as indicated by the census), while the blacks probably worked for farmers in the area. Most of the area between the river and the Post Bayou was planted with cotton, corn, and wheat crops. The landowners in the early twentieth century included L. C. Jones, the Place family, Charley Morphis, and Fred Quandt. Black residents included Richard Stovall, Rena Bass, Ambros Bass, and Emma Battles. The only description we have of the African Americans’ dwellings comes from P. C. Howson’s recollection in the 1920s.

¹⁰ Quoted in Jeter, *Edward Palmer’s Arkansaw Mounds*, 137.

¹¹ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 143, 148, 151-52.

He described them as austere log houses or cabins enclosed or adjoined by fences. By Howson's time of writing, the buildings were dilapidated and the fences were mostly lying on the ground. There is an implication that the tenant houses were unoccupied when the area became a state park, but that is unconfirmed. No record of evictions has been found. Some formerly cultivated areas had reverted to natural vegetation – "a veritable wilderness of old oaks...mulberry, pecan, and cedar" – and the old village streets were overgrown with briars and weeds.¹²



Figure 41. Cotton worker's cabin near Blytheville, Ark., June 1937. Photo by Dorothea Lange. (Library of Congress.)

The black and white communities persisted after Arkansas Post State Park was established in 1930-31. An African Methodist Episcopal Church was built around this time. It was most likely built after 1930 but before the end of the decade, by which time the community was fading away. The church was a 28-foot by 38-foot single-story frame building, and it occupied a one-acre lot north of the park entrance nearby the Stovall, Bass, and Battles residences.¹³

Arkansas Post State Park

The first proposal for preserving Arkansas Post as a historic site was put forward by Maude Bethel Lewis, a progressive club woman of Stuttgart, Arkansas, in 1923. Lewis presented her proposal at a meeting of the Arkansas Authors' and Composers' Society held in Stuttgart. She proposed preserving old buildings and erecting a memorial to Henri de Tonty and his men, who she identified as founders of "the first white settlement within the borders of the state." She expressed her admiration for the site as "a secluded spot where great oaks and cedars intermingle their branches in a land of legend and song."¹⁴

The idea of a commemorative site persisted. Lewis promoted it. Fred W. Allsopp of the *Arkansas Gazette* announced that his paper would erect a memorial plaque at Arkansas Post dedicated to the founding of his newspaper. The landowners at the site, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Quandt, indicated an interest in donating some of their land for a park. Six years after

¹² Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 143-44, 151-52; Worley, "Arkansas Post as a Historical Site," 16.

¹³ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 8, 152, 175.

¹⁴ Glenn, "Arkansas Post State Park," 9.

the idea was first proposed, state representative Ballard Deane of St. Charles, Arkansas introduced a bill to establish an Arkansas Post State Park Commission. The bill authorized the commission to accept a donation of land and make improvements for creating a state park that would “reflect credit on the State of Arkansas.” The purpose of the park would be to preserve and beautify the “historic spot for future generations, thereby promoting health and pleasure, providing a recreation place, resort and play ground.” The bill was passed and signed into law by Governor Harvey Parnell on February 27, 1929.¹⁵

The governor appointed eleven people to the Arkansas Post State Park Commission. They were: Mrs. Maude Bethel Lewis, Mrs. J. L. Rosencrantz, and Mrs. C. J. Brain of Stuttgart, Miss Janie Woodruff, Mrs. J. F. Weinmann, Mr. Fletcher Chenault, and Mrs. Charles Miller of Little Rock, Mrs. W. W. Lowe of Gillett, Mrs. M. F. Sigmon of Monticello, Mr. S. G. Cantlett of Dardanelle, and Mr. J.W. Burnett of DeWitt (chairman). Mr. Dallas Herndon, secretary of the State History Commission, served as an ex-officio member. All twelve members served on the commission without salary. Five progressive women’s clubs advised the governor on most of the appointments. The clubs were: the Arkansas County Federation of Womens’ Clubs, the Pioneer Association of Arkansas, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of 1812, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.¹⁶

The commission held its first meeting on February 11, 1930. The first objective was to acquire land. The meeting led to a correspondence with the U.S. Department of the Interior to determine the location of the former U.S. Military Reservation and inquire if the federal government would donate the land for the state park. Department officials researched the history of title. Unable to find plats showing property lines within the military reservation, department officials decided not to challenge Fred Quandt’s claim that he had acquired title to the 140-acre Post of Arkansas Reservation. With Quandt’s title confirmed, the commission accepted a donation of twenty acres from Mr. and Mrs. Quandt on June 17, 1930. The land donation was celebrated with an “old-fashioned picnic” attended by an estimated 500 people.¹⁷

By this time, the nation was in the grip of the Great Depression and funding of public works at both the state and federal level was shrinking. The commission was relatively fortunate, therefore, that the state legislature passed a bill in February 1931 appropriating \$5,000 to develop the state park. The commission contracted with P. C. Howson, a landscape architect in Pine Bluff, to take charge of the work. Initial efforts focused on clearing brush

¹⁵ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 53-55; Glenn, “Arkansas Post State Park,” 9; Arkansas Post State Park Commission, “Arkansas Post State Park Commission in Session,” April 7, 1931, Small Manuscript Collection, Box 128, No. 13.

¹⁶ Glenn, “Arkansas Post State Park,” 9-10.

¹⁷ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 55-58.

and removing old fences. Howson was assigned a crew of thirty-five men who were on unemployment relief from the Red Cross.¹⁸

At a meeting in Little Rock in April 1931, the commission decided to enlarge the land base. The commission soon purchased a tract of 11.25 acres from Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Place of Gillett, and it accepted the donation of another 9.75 acres from L. C. Jones of Arkansas Post. Evidently, the commission acquired another 21.65 acres sometime after that, bringing the total park acreage to 61.65 acres, as that was the acreage conveyed to the State Parks Board three years later.¹⁹

At the April meeting the commission also approved Howson's landscape design for the state park. The area north of the old townsite that had become diced up by gullies would be turned into an attractive lake. There would be an oval-shaped park road around the lake and the area would be planted with ornamental vegetation. Historical markers would be placed indicating where the first territorial capitol, state bank building, and home of the first Arkansas newspaper once stood. Outside of the oval-shaped park road, other improvements would include a picnic area and a caretaker's house. One more element of the plan that was never fulfilled was to build a replica of Tonty's trading house. Howson and his crew accomplished all the landscaping and construction except for the replica of Tonty's trading house during the spring, summer, and fall of 1931.²⁰

The making of the lake began with removing trees and stumps from the gullied area. An estimated 1,649 cubic yards of earth were excavated and scraped to form the earthen dam across the base of the gully system. The dam and concrete spillway were completed in August. The dam was sodded with Bermuda grass, and points of land jutting into the lake were landscaped. As a final touch, a statue of justice that had formerly graced the top of the Arkansas County Courthouse in DeWitt was installed on a concrete base and christened the "Lady of the Lake." Rainfall filled the lake to one-third capacity by the end of that year. When the lake filled to the brim it extended over seven acres. Once it had filled, the lake was stocked with game fish.²¹

Howson staked out the park road system and the roads were rough graded. Concrete curbs were included around the "historical circle." Outside the oval, the road system included a spur leading out to the caretaker's house and short roads connecting to the existing county roads. The park entrance was located just north of the oval at the north end of the lake. Pillars were erected at the park entrance using bricks salvaged from the ruin of the state bank

¹⁸ Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 59-60.

¹⁹ Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 62; Arkansas State Planning Board, *Progress Report of the Arkansas State Planning Board* (Little Rock, Ark.: Parke-Harper Co., 1936), 65.

²⁰ Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 60-61.

²¹ Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 64; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 163-64.

building. A cattle guard was installed at the park entrance and a fence was built around the outside of the oval to keep out livestock.²²

A picnic area was developed on the west side of the lake. It included seven concrete tables, two outdoor ovens, and restrooms. The area was delineated by cedar posts to “prevent autos from driving on the grounds.” A well was installed on the other side of a small ravine, accessible by a wooden footbridge across the ravine.²³

Efforts toward historic preservation centered on the old townsite. The site of the state bank building was known from a pile of bricks marking the spot. The site was partially excavated. Historical artifacts were recovered for display in a museum and bricks were salvaged and earmarked for use in the construction of the park entrance pillars. Other salvaged bricks were used in building walkways and outdoor ovens in the picnic area. The historic cistern and well was restored by a brick mason. A roof was put over the cistern for protection.²⁴

Construction of the caretaker’s lodge amounted to a historic restoration of the old Refeld-Hinman house. This old structure was a dogtrot house dating from around 1877. The house was dismantled and reconstructed at a new location near the park entrance. Several rotten logs were replaced with new ones, square-hewn to match the original members. After it was rebuilt, the structure consisted of two 18-foot by 18-foot rooms joined by a 12-foot by 18-foot breezeway, with two 12-foot by 18-foot porches attached. It was roofed with cypress shingles, chinked, and daubed, and the interior was renovated with new wooden floors, dropped ceiling, fireplace, and chimney.²⁵

Howson and his crew planted numerous perennials to make the park into a “real floral treat” in Howson’s words. An extensive list of the intended plantings was published in the *Grand Prairie Leader* in June. The plantings were done in the last week of November and the first week of December 1931.²⁶

With the \$5,000 appropriation expended, the Arkansas Post State Park Commission proposed more improvements and requested more funds from the state legislature. Its plans for 1932 included reconstruction of Tonty’s trading house and the first home of the *Arkansas Gazette*, memorials to the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, a memorial garden to honor

²² Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 64; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 162-63.

²³ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 63-64; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 167-68.

²⁴ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 63.

²⁵ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 62; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 167-68.

²⁶ Bearss, *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong’s Store*, 65. See also the Cultural Landscape Report for detailed information on vegetation.

Arkansas authors and composers, and a memorial circle for the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Some of these projects were to be funded through private donations. In the context of the Great Depression, neither the state legislature nor private organizations were forthcoming with funds. The following year, the commission asked the state legislature for a \$500 appropriation for the employment of a caretaker for two years. When the commission could not even get money for a caretaker, it petitioned the Arkansas State Parks Board to take over administration of the park. The State Parks Board formally accepted responsibility for the area on January 23, 1935. Shortly before the Arkansas Post State Park Commission turned over responsibility to the Arkansas State Parks Board, Chairman Burnett spoke with Park Service Director Arno B. Cammerer by telephone about the critical need for a caretaker. Federal help was on its way.²⁷

Starting in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal brought a different approach to government spending with sharp results for the Arkansas state park system. Looking to put people back to work and spark an economic recovery, the Roosevelt administration and Congress created a raft of public works and emergency relief programs. New programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided new sources of public funds and employment. Federal agencies including the National Park Service were tasked with putting the federal emergency relief programs into action. In the case of the CCC, the enabling legislation called on the combined efforts of the Labor Department, the War Department, and federal land management agencies in the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to make the CCC operative. The Labor Department was responsible for enrolling young men in the CCC and overseeing payroll and program administration; the War Department was tasked with building and running the camps; and federal land managing agencies (primarily the National Park Service and the Forest Service) were called upon to put together work programs for CCC camps and crews. At that time, the Park Service administered only one small unit in the state of Arkansas (Hot Springs National Park), so it directed virtually its whole effort with the CCC in that state toward developing state parks. In August 1935, federal and state officials cooperated in creating the "Arkansas Park Service," an entity that was entirely contingent on CCC funding. Four state parks in Arkansas saw major development by the CCC under NPS direction between 1935 and 1942. Consequently, those areas still bear the imprint today of NPS landscape and architectural design principles. However, Arkansas Post State Park did not receive that same level of attention from the NPS because it was already largely developed before the CCC and the Arkansas Park Service came into existence.²⁸

²⁷ Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 65-67; Arkansas Post State Park Commission, Meeting Minutes, February 2, 1933, Meeting Minutes, July 19, 1934, and Secretary to John Kochtitzky of Stuttgart, December 31, 1934, Small Manuscript Collection, Box 128, No. 13.

²⁸ Theodore Catton, *Life, Leisure, and Hardship along the Buffalo: Historic Resource Study Buffalo National River*, report prepared for Midwest Region, National Park Service (Omaha, Neb.: Midwest Region, National Park Service, 2008), 224-25.

Still, a CCC crew was assigned to the area during the winter of 1935-36, working under the direction of the Arkansas State Park Board while NPS landscape architects drew up plans for CCC-sponsored development of the other state parks. (NPS-guided CCC development of the other state parks would commence at Petit Jean, Devil's Den, and Crowley's Ridge in the fall of 1937, and would proceed to Buffalo River State Park in the spring of 1938.) The CCC program at Arkansas Post State Park in 1935-36 amounted to a second development phase to round out Howson's first development phase in 1931. At a cost of \$5,000 (equal to the sum provided for Howson) the CCC crew developed foot trails, a golf course, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, and swimming facilities. The latter included a wading pool, swimming platform, water slide, diving tower, and diving board. It also laid out a camping area and built four 12-foot by 18-foot log cabins for overnight visitor accommodation. The rustic cabins had no plumbing but did have electric lighting. The CCC also upgraded the park road, improved park landscaping, and rebuilt the dam and spillway.²⁹

The first caretaker at Arkansas Post State Park was a man named Herndon. Besides cutting the grass, cleaning drains, and attending to other grounds-keeping duties, Herndon gave guided tours. He lived in the caretaker's house and dedicated one of its two rooms for use as a museum. On display were such items as minie balls and shells collected from the Civil War battlefield, pioneer artifacts, and the rusted iron door from the vault of the Arkansas State Bank. As the Great Depression ended, the park was said to receive considerable public use. The picnic area was popular. School groups visited. The World War II years no doubt brought a reduction in public use as gas rationing and restrictions on rubber tires caused Americans to cut back on automobile driving. There are no visitation statistics. After World War II, public use surely increased as travel restrictions went away and Arkansans came to enjoy a higher standard of living with more leisure time. The Arkansas Department of Highways upgraded the access road to the state park, changing the east-west county road into State Route 169.³⁰



Figure 42. The caretaker's house was moved to the park entrance and converted into the Arkansas County Museum. Photo by Jim Bennett, 1963. (Grand Prairie Historical Society.)

²⁹ Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 67; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 160-73.

³⁰ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 3-4; W. H. Halli Burton, "An Arkansan Visits Arkansas Post," *Arkansas Gazette*, January 22, 1939; Works Progress Administration, *Arkansas: Guide to the State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), 359; Bearss, *Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store*, 68.

The state maintained the caretaker position for twenty-five years. After Herndon left in August 1941, George Mason was employed as caretaker from 1941 to 1945, Wiley Perritt from 1945 to 1948, George Minishev from 1948 to 1954, Roscoe Poore from 1954 to 1959, and Ovie Bradford from 1959 until 1964, when the Park Service took charge. In 1957, a maintenance garage, tool shed, and pump house were constructed near the caretaker's house. The pump house served as a storm shelter. In 1960, the State Parks Commission brought in a 40-foot mobile home for Ovie and Helen Bradford to move into, and the caretaker's house was converted into a museum.³¹

Historical and Archeological Investigations in the State Park Era

Creation of the Arkansas Post State Park spurred interest in determining the location of Tonty's trading house together with the multiple locations of Arkansas Post in the eighteenth century. The National Park Service began its investigation in February 1935 and made a preliminary finding that contained three salient points. First, the colonial-era Arkansas Post had been repeatedly rebuilt and relocated (though much more research was yet to be done to develop a complete chronology of Arkansas Post's many phases). Second, the site commemorated by Arkansas Post State Park was primarily associated with the late colonial era and territorial period, not the first French settlement. And third, because the banks of the Arkansas River were such a dynamic environment, the earlier sites of Arkansas Post were obscure at best and could well have been obliterated by the natural forces of the river.³²

The Historic Sites Act, enacted on August 21, 1935, gave the Park Service more scope to investigate the history of Arkansas Post. In 1937, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments found that the site of Arkansas Post had national significance. In 1939, the board gave Arkansas Post further consideration and found that "as one of the earliest sites in the lower Mississippi Valley and as an area of transition between the regimes of the Indians, the Frenchman, the Spaniards, and the American, Arkansas Post should be classified as an eligible site within the scope of the Historic Sites Act." It was understood, however, that archeological excavations were needed to confirm where the early settlements were located and to assist historical interpretation. Therefore, the NPS put off further historical study until the study could be coordinated with archeological investigation.³³

³¹ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 4; Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

³² E. T. Scoyen to W. F. Norrell, March 1, 1956, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

³³ Hillory A. Tolson to W. F. Norrell, June 9, 1958, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC; E. T. Scoyen to Members of the Advisory Board on National Parks,

In 1956, Congressman William F. Norrell of Arkansas prompted a renewal of Park Service attention to the site. He wanted the Park Service to advise Congress on the potential for making Arkansas Post a unit in the National Park System. With Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, he secured an appropriation for the NPS for conducting historical and archeological studies of Arkansas Post as a preliminary step toward preparing a feasibility report for Congress. The NPS duly initiated a two-pronged study, one prong focused on historical research and the other prong aimed at archeological investigation.³⁴

NPS historian Ray Mattison investigated historical records relating to Arkansas Post. Whereas the preliminary historical survey in the 1930s revealed that Arkansas Post had moved location at least twice, Mattison found that the fort had been rebuilt no fewer than eight times and had changed locations nearly as often. Including the original Tonty trading house, that made nine distinct Arkansas Posts. Furthermore, Mattison showed conclusively that there was a long hiatus in the French occupation of the lower Arkansas River from when Tonty's trading house was abandoned around 1700 until John Law's colony was established in 1722. Mattison also confirmed that the site occupied by Arkansas Post State Park was not the site of earliest French occupation; rather, it corresponded to the site selected by La Houssaye in the mid-eighteenth century. These circumstances were crucial to the evaluation of the site's national significance because they undermined the claim that Arkansas Post was the "oldest continuous French settlement on the lower Mississippi." Other places such as Natchitoches, founded in 1713, and New Orleans, founded in 1718, had stronger claims to continuity, Mattison argued.³⁵

Meanwhile, the NPS sponsored two archeological investigations, one near Arkansas Post State Park and another downriver at the Menard Mounds site. For the first of these two studies, the NPS contracted with archeologist Preston Holder of Washington University in St. Louis to conduct investigations in the area just south of Arkansas Post State Park. Holder believed he found the remains of the colonial-era French and Spanish forts, namely the fort built by La Houssaye known as Arkansas Post (1751-1756), and the fort built by Villiers named Fort Carlos III (1779-1792). Holder recovered ceramic sherds that he interpreted as mid-18th century. He identified linear features that he interpreted as traces of three distinct

Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, January 30, 1959, enclosing memo entitled "Arkansas Post Project, Arkansas," File L58, Box 2022, General Records Administrative Files 1949-1971, Record Group 79 – Records of the National Park Service, National Archives II (hereafter File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NAII).

³⁴ W. F. Norrell to *Daily Leader*, April 13, 1956, and Hillory A. Tolson to Norrell, June 9, 1958, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

³⁵ "Statements by Ray Mattison, historian, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, prepared prior to final report on archeological investigations of Menard Mound Site, which were undertaken to pinpoint location of original Tonti Arkansas Post of 1686," 1958, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC. See also Ray H. Mattison, "Preliminary Report on the Various Locations of the Arkansas Post, 1686-1791," September 1956, File report at Arkansas Post National Memorial.

“compounds” or outer walls of a fort. However, later investigators thought Holder’s compounds were lot lines and Spanish land grant boundaries.³⁶

For the second archeological study, the NPS contributed to an investigation of the Menard Mounds site by James A. Ford. Although Ford’s main interest was the Quapaw village of Osotouy, he was tasked with locating the site of Tonty’s trading house if possible. Ford’s excavations turned up scant evidence of European occupation; nevertheless, he found a close correspondence between Joutel’s 1687 description of how the trading house was once situated relative to the river and the Quapaw village, and Ford’s own direct observation of the lay of the land at the Menard Mounds site, where traces of the former river channel were still discernible. Combined with the evidence of European trade goods from Clarence Moore’s excavation of the site in 1911, Ford thought there was a strong case for presuming that Tonty’s trading house once stood on the nearby Wallace site.³⁷

Notwithstanding Mattison’s dubious assessment of the national significance of Arkansas Post, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments reviewed the historical and archeological findings and found that Arkansas Post did have national significance. In March 1959, the advisory board passed a resolution stating that Arkansas Post State Park and its environs had “exceptional value for commemorating the important historical events associated with the exploration and settlement of the lower Mississippi Valley.” Congressman Norrell stayed in frequent communication with the NPS over the research projects and the advisory board review. As soon as he received the advisory board’s resolution he took it to the local press and confidently predicted that Arkansas would soon have a new national park.³⁸

From State Park to National Memorial

Internally, the NPS resisted making Arkansas Post into a unit in the National Park System. Senior officials agreed with NPS historian Mattison that Arkansas Post and the Menard Mounds were “not truly of national significance” and “would not probably make a suitable area if they were.” However, the NPS faced pressure from Congressman Norrell as well as members of the Advisory Board to look on the proposal more favorably. As the NPS prepared to be overruled on the matter, it equivocated in its messages to Congress. It adopted

³⁶ Preston Holder, “Archeological Field Research on the Problem of the Locations of Arkansas Post, Arkansas, 1686-1804,” September 1957, report prepared for Region One, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, in File H22 – Arkansas Post, Arkansas Post National Memorial, p. 24; William A. Westbury, “Investigations at Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas,” report prepared for National Park Service by the Archaeology Research Program, November 1975, typescript at Arkansas Post National Memorial, p. 8.

³⁷ Ford, “Menard Site: The Quapaw Village of Osotouy on the Arkansas River,” 181-82.

³⁸ W. F. Norrell to *Daily Leader*, March 25, 1959, and various newspaper clippings, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

the position that if Congress should decide to establish a unit, it should be a national memorial rather than a national park or national monument because the site would “memorialize events which took place some distance away for the most part, at locations which are today unknown.” Furthermore, it recommended that a minimum area of about 700 acres around Arkansas Post State Park should be included to make it an effective administrative unit.³⁹

On March 26, 1959, Congressman Norrell introduced H.R. 6108, “a bill to provide for the establishment of the Arkansas Post National Park in the State of Arkansas.” After the bill went through committee, the designation was changed to national memorial in line with the NPS’s recommendation. Congress passed the bill and President Eisenhower signed it into law on July 6, 1960.⁴⁰

The bill authorized the Secretary of the Interior to take steps toward establishing the national memorial; namely, to commence the process of acquiring land and to draw up plans for park development. Director Conrad L. Wirth had already provided Congress with a preliminary cost estimate of a little more than \$400,000 for development and acquisition. His inventory included items for an administration building/visitor center, employee housing, maintenance buildings, utility systems, comfort stations, roads, trails, parking areas, and signage, as well as landscaping, erosion control, and rehabilitation of one historic structure dating from the Civil War period. About one sixth of the funds was allocated to land acquisition.⁴¹

In the fall of 1960, the NPS refined its recommended boundary lines and list of lands to acquire. A description of proposed boundary lines for Arkansas Post National Memorial was prepared, and the area was said to contain about 740 acres. The area overlapped nine Spanish grants plus the Post of Arkansas Reservation. It included twenty-five parcels of private property plus the 61-acre Arkansas Post State Park. Parcels were identified by name of owner as well as by the Spanish grant they fell within; that is, some tracts in single ownership were broken into two or more parcels when they crossed Spanish grant lines. The cost was figured at about \$60 per acre.⁴²

No sooner had the NPS identified all the land it needed to acquire when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced its plans on January 7, 1961 to build a dam on the

³⁹ Ronald F. Lee to Regional Director, March 12, 1958, E. T. Scoyen to Legislative Counsel, May 5, 1958, and E. M. Lisle to The Director, November 5, 1958, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II.

⁴⁰ “Norrell Offers Bill to Make Post Nat’l Park,” April 28, 1959, and other newspaper clippings, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

⁴¹ Conrad L. Wirth to Clinton P. Anderson, April 8, 1960, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II. Wirth did not identify the historic building slated for rehabilitation, but newspaper articles referred to the “Old Doc Hudson House.”

⁴² Elbert Cox to The Director, November 14, 1960, with attachments, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II.

lower Arkansas River that would inundate more than half of the 740-acre area. It is surprising that the issue of damming the river did not arise earlier, since the Corps' plans for building dams on the Arkansas River had been on the books for many years. Indeed, the Corps started work on the first dam, above Little Rock, in 1959, with much fanfare. Nevertheless, the looming conflict between flood control and historic preservation at Arkansas Post appeared to take all parties by surprise, even though the disclosure came just six months after Arkansas Post National Memorial was authorized.⁴³

A partial explanation of the miscommunication may lie in the fact that the Corps was considering four possible routes for improving navigation through the Arkansas Delta where the White River and the Arkansas River form an intersecting maze of bayous, and any other route than the one selected would have had less impact on the historic site. Unfortunately for Arkansas Post, the Corps concluded that the other three routes were inferior; a navigation canal between the Arkansas and the White would take off through the delta right below the site, which necessitated locating Dam No. 2 right below the site as well. Adding to the complexity of the Corps' decision process, responsibility for selecting the navigation route transferred from the Vicksburg District to the Little Rock District shortly before the Arkansas Post National Memorial was authorized.⁴⁴

Sadly, Congressman Norrell died suddenly on February 15, 1961, only a month after the conflict between the dam project and the park project became public. Norrell's widow, Catherine Dorris Norrell, took her late husband's seat on April 25, 1961, following a quick, hard-fought campaign in a special election. She labored to keep the park project on track even as it became apparent that the landscape around Arkansas Post would be drastically altered after the dam went in.⁴⁵



Figure 43. Congresswoman Catherine Dorris Norrell fought for the establishment of Arkansas Post National Memorial. (Public domain.)

The Corps informed the NPS that its provisional plan was to construct Dam No. 2 on the Arkansas River at river mile 46, only one mile below Arkansas Post National Memorial. The tentative pool elevation behind the dam would be 162 feet above sea level. The effect would be to drown 440 acres of the proposed 740-acre area at normal pool. Furthermore, the Corps cautioned the NPS that the level of the pool would go higher in exceptional years. The best guess was that the higher pool level would inundate another 170 acres within the park perhaps one year in ten. The Corps listed even higher

⁴³ "Dam Will Alter Sponsors' Plan for Park Site," and other newspaper clippings, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

⁴⁴ Acting Regional Director to Director, February 14, 1962, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II.

⁴⁵ "Mrs. Norrell Reveals Protection Plan for Arkansas Post Memorial," and other newspaper clippings, in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

elevations for dealing with a fifty-year flood stage and the maximum flood of record. The figures given were:

- a. Normal pool – elevation 162.
- b. 10-year flood stage (modified) – elevation 168.
- c. 50-year flood stage (modified) – elevation 175.
- d. Maximum flood of record (1927) – elevation 176.⁴⁶

Director Wirth raised the possibility that the national memorial and the dam were incompatible; if the dam was to be built, then the plans for the national memorial should be canceled. However, neither the public nor the Congress was inclined to give up the national memorial, and the dam could not be stopped. A proposal to protect the national memorial by selecting one of the other routes for navigation through the Arkansas Delta barely received a hearing; the Corps had technical information to shoot it down. NPS officials were left with no choice but to develop the national memorial on high ground and accept the loss of low lying areas.⁴⁷

The Park Service and the Corps worked out mitigation plans. In the first place, the Park Service determined that the low-lying area that would be inundated was most likely devoid of significant archeological resources. The site of Tonty's trading house was probably near the Menard Mounds site, which was out of harm's way below the proposed dam. The site of Fort Hindman and the Arkansas Factory were in the low-lying area; however, since the river channel had swept back and forth over that ground during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was doubtful there were significant archeological resources remaining. As the low-lying area probably did not contain significant archeological resources, it was decided to forego construction of protective levees around Arkansas Post National Memorial. Such levees would "introduce an artificial element into the historic scene which would destroy its historical integrity." Instead of levees, the Corps would install revetments around the new shoreline where Arkansas Post National Memorial would extend into the navigation pool to protect the area from erosion from wave action. "This would preserve archeological remains on the high ground of Arkansas Post and permit Memorial development in keeping with conditions generally resembling the historical ones at Arkansas Post throughout the latter part of the 18th Century and during the 19th Century." The mitigation plan also

⁴⁶ Regional Director to Director, June 2, 1961, E. M. Lisle to The Director, February 14, 1962, and Charles D. Maynard to Raymond O. Mulvany, August 6, 1962, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II.

⁴⁷ Conrad L. Wirth to Regional Director, December 22, 1961, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II; "Mrs. Norrell Reveals Protection Plan for Arkansas Post Memorial," and other newspaper clippings in Arkansas Historical Commission, Arkansas Post Scrapbook (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

committed the Corps to clearing timber within the navigation pool, and performing periodic maintenance to protect the banks within the national memorial.⁴⁸

The Corps installed rock revetments between elevations 160 and 165 around the most vulnerable areas. When the navigation pool filled, the 25-foot bluffs that once characterized the site were mostly hidden below waterline. Post Bayou and Post Bend, formerly filled with vegetation, became watery arms of the new navigation pool. The high ground around Arkansas Post became a peninsula between those two new water bodies and the Arkansas River flowing past the area's southern tip.⁴⁹

Before the dam was built, the Corps of Engineers offered to team with the Arkansas Highway Department in building a highway bridge across the Arkansas River at Dam No. 2. The project called for rerouting and upgrading a section of State Route 1, which was soon to become U.S. Highway 165. The state balked at the \$5 million price tag. Instead, the Pendleton Bridge was built and opened in 1971. Replacing the Pendleton Ferry, it served as the only bridge spanning the Arkansas River between Pine Bluff and the Mississippi River.⁵⁰

While the road system in the area was being modified to accommodate the new canal, dam, and navigation pool, the Park Service negotiated with the Corps of Engineers and the Arkansas Highway Department to reroute State Highway 169. The road was moved north of its existing alignment so that it crossed Little Post Bayou on a new causeway, joining the north-south county road near the north boundary of the park. In its new alignment, State Highway 169 diverted local traffic away from the park and provided space for a longer, more dignified, park entrance road. The old crossing of Little Post Bayou was obliterated. The remnant section of old 169 within the park was left as a stub road terminating at a picnic area.⁵¹

The process of turning the state park into a national memorial culminated with a ceremony held at the site on June 23, 1964, when Governor Orval Faubus presented to Regional Director Elbert Cox a package of deeds for the 740 acres of land, including the deed for the 62-acre state park. In his remarks, Cox read a quotation from *Proverbs*: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." Then the U.S. flag was run up the flagpole over the Arkansas state flag by a Marine color guard. A local newspaper reporter commented that it was the third time a U.S. flag had been hoisted over Arkansas Post: the first time was in 1804 following the Louisiana Purchase, and the second time was in 1863 when federal troops took Fort Hindman.⁵²

⁴⁸ W. K. Wilson, Jr. to Charles Buckley, June 20, 1962, File L58, Box 2022, RG 79, NA II.

⁴⁹ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 180-81.

⁵⁰ "AHC Studies Bridge at Arkansas Post," in Arkansas Historical Commission, *Arkansas Post Scrapbook* (microfilm), MG 03212, AHC.

⁵¹ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 186-87.

⁵² "Deed Transfer Brings Post to National Memorial Status," *Daily Ledger* (Stuttgart, Ark.), June 24, 1964.

Development of Arkansas Post National Memorial

T. Reid Cabe was appointed first superintendent of Arkansas Post National Memorial. His first task was to inform locals that the area was now under the administration of the Park Service, off-limits to hunting and such activities as metal detecting and souvenir collecting. He also had to be vigilant to the work of the Corps of Engineers' contractors as they cleared, piled, and burned brush on NPS lands below the 162-foot level, ensuring that fire did not spread to the protected area.⁵³

In preparing for development of new landscaping and visitor and administrative facilities, the Park Service oversaw removal of several buildings. The former caretaker's house, also known as the Refeld-Hinman house (reconstructed in 1931), which had since become the Arkansas County Museum, was moved to its present location at the junction of State Highway 169 and U.S. Highway 165. The Ina Hudson house, which stood on the west side of the road across from what is now the Battle of Arkansas Post wayside exhibit, was moved to Gillett. The post office and store, last operated by Louis C. Jones, which stood about 400 feet north of the Ina Hudson house, was removed at the same time. The "Lady of the Lake" statue was returned to the town of DeWitt. A gallows platform, which had been brought to the state park from the county jail in DeWitt in 1961, was returned to DeWitt. The shelter that had been erected over the historic cistern was removed.⁵⁴

The next step in development was to complete the park's physical plant. Some of the physical plant was inherited from the state park. Besides the existing loop road around Park Lake, there was a gravel road extending from there north to the Scull cemetery. Six outhouses and a sewage disposal system were already in place, as was a septic tank for the caretaker's trailer, and a well and sprinkler system. The Park Service brought in a second trailer and installed a second septic tank in 1966. The following year, it installed an underground electric system and underground telephone wires, and it widened and paved the entrance road and the road to the picnic area. The road work included a few hundred feet of sidewalks. All construction work was performed by contractors.⁵⁵

Above-grade improvements began with the construction of two buildings in the summer of 1967. The first one, a maintenance garage, designated Building No. 1, was a frame, single-story building measuring 1,107 square feet. It included office and storage rooms as well as a shop area and was intended to serve as an interim visitor center. The second structure was designated Residence Building No. 7. It was a frame, single-story building measuring 1,280 square feet, and containing three bedrooms, one and one-half

⁵³ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 7.

⁵⁴ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 7; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 172, 382.

⁵⁵ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 8-10.

bathrooms, and carport. Both buildings were furnished with central heating and air conditioning and were tied to the electric and telephone systems. A second well and a bacterial treatment sewage lagoon, enclosed by a chain-link fence, completed this infrastructure.⁵⁶

The construction contracts also included development of trails and landscaping. The main trail was an interpretive loop trail, about one-quarter mile in length, which ended near the dam. It was five feet wide and paved with a bituminous surface. Landscaping included seeding, dressing, and planting the area around the two new buildings. The plantings included shrubs and trees.⁵⁷

The Park Service replaced the state park's interpretive signs with new ones. Eight large signs, each measuring 30 inches by 36 inches and mounted on 7-foot posts, were installed in 1966. Thirty-five smaller aluminum signs, each measuring 6 inches by 8 inches, were installed along a nature trail that followed the shoreline around the peninsula. They were in place in 1970, and an audio station was added at the exhibit about Tonty and his men in 1971.⁵⁸

All the foregoing development was guided by a master plan drawn up in the early 1960s. The master plan went through several iterations but never became finalized. In April 1970, the Park Service issued a task directive to the Eastern Service Center to prepare a more thoroughgoing Master Plan, Interpretive Prospectus and Development Concept Plan for the area. The six-person planning team included landscape architects and a historian as well as the park's superintendent and management assistant. The team made a field visit to the area in the fall of 1970 and prepared the Interpretive Prospectus and Development Concept Plan over the following winter. The Interpretive Prospectus was approved in April 1971. The Master Plan dovetailed with the other documents and was presented in public hearings in the following spring and summer. It was printed in 1973 and formally approved in 1975. These documents guided a second round of infrastructure development through the 1970s culminating with the opening of the visitor center in the summer of 1981.⁵⁹



Figure 44. Interpretive sign on the trail through the Old Townsite, 2016. (Photo by the author.)

⁵⁶ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 13-14.

⁵⁹ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 8, 25; National Park Service, *Interpretive Prospectus, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas* (Denver: Government Printing Office,

The plan divided the area into three land classifications or zones: a general outdoor recreation zone, a natural environment zone, and a historic area zone. The general outdoor recreation zone consisted of the park road corridor together with the northern half of the old state park oval. The natural environment zone took in approximately one fourth of the national memorial along its northern edge. The historic area zone encompassed the rest of the



Figure 45. View north of Little Post Bayou along northern edge of the Memorial Unit, October 2015. (Photo by the author.)

national memorial and centered on two distinct historical landscapes: one was the old townsite including all the land to the tip of the peninsula, and the other was the 1863 battlefield area including the line of Confederate trenches.⁶⁰

The land classification scheme led to a decision to relocate the road to the picnic area. As it existed in 1971, the road to the picnic area was the remnant of old route 169: it extended from the north end of the old state park oval to the northwest corner of the national memorial, terminating near the point where it formerly crossed Little Post Bayou. The terminal point was designated as the national memorial's new picnic area though it was not yet developed. The problem with this arrangement was that the road cut through the Confederate trenches. To remedy the situation, the road was relocated so that it lay north of the line of trenches for its entire length. Instead of linking to the oval, the road now linked to the park entrance road. The project entailed construction of about one-third of a mile of new road. The portion that traversed the historic area zone was obliterated. The realignment was completed in 1975 for a cost of \$94,408. In the meantime, the Park Service put in the new

1971), 4; National Park Service, *Master Plan, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas* (Denver: Government Printing Office, 1973), 31.

⁶⁰ National Park Service, *Interpretive Prospectus*, 15-16.

picnic area for a cost of \$20,870. The picnic area included twenty-five picnic tables, fifteen fireplaces, and comfort stations with the requisite water, sewer, and electrical hookups.⁶¹

The plans for Arkansas Post National Memorial were predicated on having a visitor center with a history museum, but the plans did not provide any detail about the building's design or location. That was because the national memorial's authorizing legislation placed a ceiling on development costs that would have to be lifted before the facility could be built. In 1974, the Park Service drew up plans for the facility and entered a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to get the plans implemented. The parties agreed that the building would have "no adverse effect on the historic setting," as it would be separated from the old townsite by the lake and partially hidden by a screen of vegetation. The building was to have "a straight-forward appearance without any intrusive ornamentation." With the SHPO in full support of the Park Service's plans, the Arkansas congressional delegation bent to the task of getting congressional approval for the large development project. In 1976, Congress approved a measure that raised the development ceiling for Arkansas Post National Memorial to \$2,750,000.⁶²

The Park Service developed architectural plans for the administration and visitor center building over the next two years. It obtained initial drawings under a contract agreement with Comprehensive Professional Services of Little Rock. Park Service staff in the Denver Service Center and Harpers Ferry Center refined the plans. While the plans were in progress, the Park Service revamped the utility systems. Overhaul of the water system to accommodate greater demand included construction of a 68-foot-tall water tower behind the maintenance area. Other new infrastructure included a parking area at the visitor center facility, an interpretive trail around the old townsite, and connector trails. The old state park road around Park Lake was converted into a walking path.⁶³

Work on the administration and visitor center building began in August 1979 and was completed in the summer of 1981. The building was constructed of reinforced concrete grade beams on a concrete slab with 16-inch columns, a 4-inch structural roof topped by 2 ½ inches of rigid insulation and 4 inches of cementitious deck, 12-inch insulated exterior walls and 8-inch masonry interior walls, and brick paved interior hall and exterior plazas outside the front and rear doors. The building's 6,490 square feet of floor space included three large exhibit

⁶¹ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 9.

⁶² Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 20; Joseph C. Rumburg, Jr. to Robert R. Garvey, July 30, 1976, File ARPO Section 106, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁶³ Carrera, "Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History," 22-24; Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 200.

rooms, an orientation area, an auditorium with stepped seating, five rooms for administrative offices and work space, storage, and restrooms.⁶⁴



Figure 46. Fort Carlos III exhibit, 2016. (Photo by the author.)

The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) sponsored development of a large outdoor exhibit about the Colbert raid of 1783. After much deliberation, the exhibit took shape as a reconstruction of a corner bastion of Fort Carlos III. Installed in 1976, the structure overlooked the general location of the original fort, now submerged in Post Bend. Mounted near the inside of the bastion walls were four metal panels displaying photographs of four DAR-commissioned paintings depicting the

historical event. Also featured was a full-scale replica of a Spanish 6-pounder cannon measuring 6 ½ feet long and weighing 1136 ½ pounds, fabricated by Adirondack Machine Corporation of Glenn Falls, New York, also paid for by the DAR. The gun was added to the exhibit in 1977, and the metal panel displays were provided by the Harpers Ferry Center in 1981.⁶⁵

Other developments were aimed at protecting resources. The land base of the national memorial was extended northward to provide a buffer area. The Park Service acquired 80.51 acres in two tracts known as the Hudson tracts. The land was purchased for \$11,270 from B. D. Truax, guardian for Ina Hudson, on April 20, 1977. An additional 4.1 acres just to the east of the two tracts was acquired by donation by way of the Arkansas State Department of Parks and Tourism on October 1, 1981. The area of the national memorial above waterline went from 305 acres to 389.2 acres.⁶⁶

More revetments around the shoreline were put in to protect the area from erosion from wave wash. The original protection was limited to the tip of the peninsula, where the shoreline was most exposed to wakes from passing barge traffic. About 1,000 feet in length, the revetment consisted of a rock dike, backfill, and a covering of sod. Each end of the rock dike was reinforced by an abutment of quarry run stone with fines.⁶⁷ The revetment worked

⁶⁴ Carrera, “Arkansas Post National Memorial Administrative History,” 23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 14-15, 25.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

⁶⁷ Larry S. Bonine to D. L. Huggins, September 16, 1981, attaching map labeled “Lock and Dam No. 2, McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, Arkansas Post Bank Protection, Arkansas Post National Monument, Navigation Mile 19.0,” File D3219, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb.



Figure 47. Paved footpaths trace the historical village streets in this view east across the Old Townsite, October 2015. (Photo by the author.)

as far as it went, but park managers detected that wave wash in both Post Bend and Post Bayou was causing erosion of both the eastern and western shorelines where the revetment ceased. Superintendent D. L. Huggins estimated that the western shoreline in front of the picnic area receded about 15 feet over a decade's time.⁶⁸ At the Park Service's request, the Corps extended the revetment and bank stabilization all the way up the eastern shoreline in 1978, and it reinforced a portion of the western shoreline in 1982. The latter project was said to be identical to the earlier one, and was described by the Corps in a letter to the SHPO: "The project will consist of a revetment or a 12- to 14-foot-wide layer of granite stone along approximately 1400 feet of threatened shoreline." In addition, the Corps replaced 200 feet of eroded shoreline in front of the picnic area. "Pilings or posts will be driven into the bayou between 6 and 10 feet from the shoreline," the Corps stated to the SHPO. "Then backfill of gravel or dirt will be brought in until the level of the shoreline is reached. Finally, sod will cover the backfill." The revetment projects in 1978 and 1982 were cleared by archeologists under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and they were visually unobtrusive.⁶⁹

Vegetation management at Arkansas Post National Memorial generally aimed at preserving an "open park-like setting" in the outdoor recreation and historic area zones and a

⁶⁸ D. L. Huggins to Regional Director, September 24, 1981, File D3219, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb.

⁶⁹ Robert Kerr to Wilson Stiles, January 14, 1982, and Donald A. Dayton to Hester A. Davis, File ARPO Section 106, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb.

woodland biotic community through most of the natural environment zone. Mown areas around Park Lake largely retained the vegetation patterns from the state park era. At the north end of the national memorial, the existing woods matured into stands of large hardwoods. Former open fields were overtaken by young forest growth.⁷⁰

There were a few exceptions to the general pattern of vegetation management. The Park Service made a concerted effort to develop a screen of vegetation around the staff residential and maintenance area both for the privacy of park staff and for the aesthetics of the visitor experience. Likewise, it maintained a screen of vegetation between the visitor center and the old townsite. A large tract in the northwest quadrant of the national memorial was managed as restored prairie. An area bordering the Confederate trenches was managed so that the woods would be “opened up enough to invite visitors to walk along them.”⁷¹

Historical and Archeological Investigations, 1960s to the Present

Planning and development of Arkansas Post National Memorial pointed to the need for more historical and archeological investigations, both to inform the NPS interpretive program and to identify where cultural resources were located so they could be protected. Several NPS-sponsored studies in the 1960s and 70s expanded on the preliminary surveys performed by Ray Mattison and Preston Holder in the late 1950s.

The preeminent historian of Arkansas Post through the 1970s was Edwin C. Bearss. A military historian with a special interest in Civil War battlefields, Bearss began a career in the NPS working at Vicksburg National Military Park. In 1958, he was promoted to southeast regional historian though he continued to make his home in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Well before Arkansas Post National Memorial was established, Bearss published an in-depth account of the Battle of Arkansas Post in *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*. In 1964, he researched Arkansas County records in the courthouse pertaining to the old townsite and produced a preliminary report, “Structural History of Post of Arkansas, American Period, 1804-1863,” to help guide and inform the forthcoming archeological investigations. In 1970, he was tapped to serve on the planning team for Arkansas Post National Memorial. His ongoing historical research for Arkansas Post National Memorial resulted in the completion of three more detailed reports in rapid succession in the early 1970s: *Montgomery’s Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong Store* (1971), “Civil War Troop Movement Maps, January 1863,” which was combined into one report with the 1964 study (1971), and *The Colbert Raid* (1974).⁷²

⁷⁰ Quinn Evans/Architects, *Arkansas Post National Memorial Cultural Landscape Report*, 195-96.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 195-96.

⁷² Morris S. Arnold deserves recognition as the preeminent historian of Arkansas Post in recent times. Arnold published his first book on colonial Arkansas in 1985 and has turned out several since. See Chapter 3.

Rex L. Wilson, an archeologist with the NPS's Southwest Archeological Center, directed the first archeological investigation of the old townsite in 1966. Wilson found remains of four building sites dating from the American period before the Civil War. Based on the archeological evidence together with the historical information Bearss had developed, Wilson identified the sites as the Arkansas State Bank building, Frederic Notrebe's cotton gin, Notrebe's warehouse, and Notrebe's combined residence and store. He believed the bank and two of Notrebe's buildings burned, but he could not say they were destroyed by gunfire during the Battle of Arkansas Post.⁷³

John W. Walker, an archeologist with the NPS's Southeast Archeological Center, expanded upon Wilson's investigation of the bank site. He concluded that the bank had been used as a hospital during the Battle of Arkansas Post and that it was very likely destroyed during the battle. Walker ended his report with a comprehensive list of recommendations for further historical and archeological investigations.⁷⁴

In 1971, the NPS contracted with the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas Archeological Survey to conduct an archeological field school at Arkansas Post National Memorial with the purpose of locating remains of a commercial house used in the fur trade by Jacob Bright during the period 1804-07, and remains of a tavern run by William Montgomery in the period 1819-21. Archeologist Patrick E. Martin, who was then a graduate student, led the effort in the field while William A. Westbury, a professor at Southern Methodist University, acted as an advisor. The excavations failed to determine the precise locations but they did turn up several concentrations of artifacts.⁷⁵

In 1974, Westbury conducted an archeological investigation of the proposed construction site for the administration and visitor center building to determine if there were archeological resources there. Westbury was also tasked with preparing an archeological assessment for the national memorial, evaluating and synthesizing previous archeological findings. Westbury confirmed the view of others that Holder's speculation in 1957 that he had found the remains of Fort San Carlos III should not be relied upon. Henceforward, it was assumed that the forts of the colonial era, as well as Fort Hindman and the Arkansas Factory,

⁷³ Rex L. Wilson, "Archeological Explorations at Arkansas Post – 1966," report prepared for the National Park Service by the Southwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Globe, Ariz., 1966.

⁷⁴ John W. Walker, "Excavation of the Arkansas Post Branch of the Bank of the State of Arkansas, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas," report prepared for the National Park Service by the Southeast Archeological Center, Division of Archeology, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 1971, typescript at Arkansas Post National Memorial, pp. 237-47.

⁷⁵ Martin, *An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright's Trading House and William Montgomery's Tavern*, 8-11; Westbury, "Investigations at Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas," 11; "Arkansas Post National Memorial," in National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, *Midwest Region Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program Plan*, report prepared by the Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb., revised June 2003, at https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/discEvalPdfs/MWR_SAIP_Plan.pdf <September 23, 2016>

were all located on sites that had been eroded into the river. However, the possibility remained that submerged cultural resources were located somewhere in Post Bend. A system-wide archeological inventory report in 2003 stated that no underwater investigations had been conducted, and despite occasional low water stages of the river in drought, as of that date there had been no confirmation as to whether any remains were present.⁷⁶

In the second phase of development plans for Arkansas Post National Memorial, which culminated in the master plan adopted in the mid-1970s, further emphasis was given to the importance of historical and archeological investigations. Hester A. Davis, state archeologist for Arkansas, concluded her comments on the NPS planning documents with an overall general comment concerning Arkansas Post National Memorial's interpretive orientation. "We would like to suggest that consideration be given to a long-term, on-going archeological research project at the Park," she wrote. She noted the need to avoid causing harm to archeological resources as the park became further developed, as well as the need to highlight archeological findings for interpreting the site. "There is nothing now visible above ground and the whole environment [has] considerably changed within the last 100 years," she noted.⁷⁷

NPS historian Richard West Sellars similarly stressed the need for historical research to compensate for a dearth of physical cultural resources at Arkansas Post National Memorial. He wrote:

The historical resources at Arkansas Post are complex, varied, and difficult to interpret. They consist of structures which date from three periods of occupation, the French, Spanish, and American, covering a time period of approximately two hundred years, from the early eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, and including a brief period of Confederate control during the Civil War. For purpose of interpretation, the chief difficulties lie in the fact that with the exception of two cisterns and a small row of Confederate rifle pits, the existing historical resources have vanished from sight and lie hidden beneath the surface of the ground.⁷⁸

Sellars and Davis only partially succeeded in getting the NPS to commit to further historical and archeological studies at Arkansas Post National Memorial. Sellars presented a long list of proposed actions in the master plan that would impact cultural resources, a few of

⁷⁶ "Arkansas Post National Memorial," in National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, *Midwest Region Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program Plan*, report prepared by the Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb., revised June 2003, at https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/discEvalPdfs/MWR_SAIP_Plan.pdf <September 23, 2016>.

⁷⁷ Hester A. Davis, "Comments on the Master Plan, Arkansas Post National Memorial," no date, File D18, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb.

⁷⁸ Richard W. Sellars, "Report of the Section 106 Consultation for the Master Plan and Development Concept Plan at Arkansas Post National Memorial," May 1974, File ARPO Section 106, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb.

which were subsequently dropped from consideration, such as a reconstruction of a historic structure and a proposed docking facility for recreational boats. But Sellars's call for the establishment of an on-going, long-range program of history and archeology to mitigate effects of trail development around the old townsite never materialized. After Westbury completed his study in 1975, very little additional archeological investigation was done in the old townsite area. Hester Davis, for her part, proposed that the NPS and the Arkansas Archeological Survey (AAS) undertake a ten-year cooperative program of archeological investigation. Nothing like that emerged for the Memorial Unit; however, the NPS and the AAS did subsequently establish a record of cooperation after the Osotouy Unit was added to the national memorial.⁷⁹

Recent archeological investigations in the Memorial Unit have been confined to archeological monitoring or Section 106 surveys. For example, in 2003, archeologist William J. Hunt, Jr. of the Midwest Archeological Center monitored extensive trench excavations that were being dug for new underground electrical lines. The trench lines mostly avoided areas known or expected to contain archeological resources; however, one trench line intersected the line of Confederate rifle pits. Near the point of intersection, Hunt recorded a site containing a fragment of a 6-pound round shot case as well as various ceramics, stoneware, glass, brick, and cut nails. Hunt interpreted the site to be a house site on the western margin of the Town of Arkansas, occupied circa 1830 to 1920. Hunt's limited testing yielded only an archeological site form and a trip report together with the recovered artifacts.⁸⁰

Much historical and archeological thought went into the preparation of Cultural Landscape Reports (CLRs) for Arkansas Post National Memorial's two management units. The first, a Cultural Landscape Report prepared under contract by Quinn Evans/Architects for the Memorial Unit, was initiated in 1998 and completed in 2005. The report presents the changing landscape of the Memorial Unit through the concept of "layers of history." Using a common approach to defining cultural landscapes, the CLR segments the past into distinct eras based on the idea that each era put its own unique thumbprint on the land, one overlaying the next. The CLR segments the Arkansas Post story into seven eras bounded by the following date ranges: pre-1673, 1673 to 1803, 1804 to 1855, 1856 to 1865, 1866 to 1928, 1929 to 1963, and 1964 to 1998. A strong feature of the CLR is its use of cultural landscape base maps to show changing patterns of cultural modifications of the landscape in relation to the changing position of the river. Although the maps inevitably are conjectural, they are nonetheless a powerful aid in understanding the historical process. The authors conclude the report on a note of disappointment, emphasizing that little remains of past "layers of history" except for the imprint of the state park.

⁷⁹ National Park Service, *Osotouy Cultural Landscape, Arkansas Post National Memorial*, p. 2-55.

⁸⁰ Archeologist to Manager, April 11, 2003, File ARPO Archeology 2003, Box 2, Park Files Midwest, MWAC-15-01, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Neb.

The second CLR, prepared internally by the NPS for the Osotouy Unit and produced in 2014, contains more archeology than history and is structured around weighing treatment options. Its second chapter consists of a historical narrative of the Menard Mounds/Osotouy/first Arkansas Post site, which is usefully presented in the form of a timeline.

NPS historian Roger E. Coleman of the Southwest Cultural Resources Center produced a history entitled *The Arkansas Post Story* in 1987. It was the first comprehensive history of Arkansas Post to be written. It provided a valuable narrative synthesis for the interpretive program and the interested public, as well as a good reference work for researchers and specialists. Together with recent academic monographs by historians Morris S. Arnold and Kathleen DuVal, previously discussed, Coleman's special history report was an invaluable source in the preparation of this study.

Conclusion

Arkansas Post National Memorial preserves a place with a long, storied past. Its historic resources are limited, but its history is rich. The unit was designated a national memorial rather than a national monument or national historic site to underscore that there is not much for the visitor to take in at the site besides the high quality of information imparted by NPS exhibits and interpretive services, as well as the sheer inspiration of connecting with the place.

The NPS has been engaged in historical and archeological investigations surrounding Arkansas Post for more than eighty years. Matters of historical interest have changed through the changing times, but the Arkansas Post story continues to be relevant. Nowadays, the fascination with the *first* European settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley or the *first* home of Arkansas's *first* newspaper – elements of the story that inspired local citizens to pursue historic preservation in the first place – can appear to the contemporary history-minded citizen to be somewhat antiquarian or ethnocentric. Yet other elements of the Arkansas Post story speak to topics of lively historical interest today: American Indian responses to European colonization, cross-cultural relations and intermarriage in frontier communities, or the forced relocation of tribes during the Jacksonian era, to name a few. The keen interest shown by the Quapaw Tribe in partnering with the AAS and the NPS on archeological investigations in the Osotouy Unit demonstrates how the park's audience continues to change and new elements of the story come to the fore of the public's attention.

The Arkansas Post story is dominated by the river. For the people and cultures who made their homes next to the river, it was always both a source of bounty and a source of destruction. From the rise of Mississippian chiefdoms to the halcyon days of King Cotton, river-borne trade sustained the river-port communities located on the lower Arkansas River. River navigation and trade translated into power, which was why the French and then the Spanish maintained a military fort and garrison at Arkansas Post for some 80 years. At the same time, the river served as a pathway for invading armies, from Soto's expedition in 1542 to General McClelland's army of 32,000 men in 1863. The fortified post could be turned into a target or a trap, as when Arkansas Post was hit by Colbert's raid in 1783 or when Fort Hindman was demolished by Union gunboats in the Civil War.

The river's natural forces were both life-giving and destructive as well. The river brought nutrients to the people living on its bank and conveniently carried away their waste. But river people had to live with the constant threat of flooding and the long-range problem of the river's shifting course.

Historic changes in the river channel can make an investigation into the past a complicated puzzle, especially for archeologists when they are investigating the remote past. Historians and archeologists have used experts' reconstructions of the former bed and banks of the Arkansas River to help guide their investigations. Among the reconstructions that were most helpful for this study were the series of six maps in the NPS's *Geologic Resources Inventory Report* at page 23 (for the long view) and the series of cultural landscape base maps in the CLR for the Memorial Unit (for the shorter view). The most important change in the river occurred in 1967 with the completion of Lock and Dam No. 2. Any historical investigation that seeks to relate Arkansas Post to the geography of the river must begin with an appreciation of how different the landscape is today from how it was when the Arkansas was a free-flowing river.

For the modern-day visitor to Arkansas Post National Memorial's original Memorial Unit, the river is a palpable presence and contributes in no small part to the power of place. For the visitor who is trying to imagine what the place was like in the past, however, the mass of water surrounding the park can be disorienting.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are notes to resource managers and future historical researchers.

1. *Park administrative history.* Gregory Carrera produced an administrative history for Arkansas Post National Memorial in 1975 and updated it in 1988. The history is useful as far as it goes, but standards for park administrative history have risen since the time it was written so a more in-depth treatment could be expected in a new one. Besides bringing the park story up closer to the present, a new administrative history could do much more to describe the origins of Arkansas Post National Memorial in the state park era during the 1920 and 30s. It could explore NPS decisions surrounding the construction of Lock and Dam No. 2 and mitigation effort in the years 1961-67. It would be interesting to know why there was no salvage archeology performed in Post Bend. There are state records on the state park era in Little Rock that were barely tapped for this study. There is material in the Norrell Collection. There may be additional material in National Archives II not reviewed for this study, and no doubt there is much more material in regional branches of the National Archives.
2. *More research on the Trail of Tears.* One element of the very involved history of American Indian forced relocation in the Jacksonian era is how the U.S. government was so ill-prepared to administer such a massive program. The tragic consequences of

- that ill preparation fell heavily on the Choctaw since they were practically the first to undergo relocation in 1831. As this study points out, Arkansas Post turned into a fulcrum for that fiasco. Muriel H. Wright wrote a solid account of it in 1928, which still stands up, but more could be done with the story. This study made use of primary sources at the Sequoyah National Center in Little Rock and in S. Doc. 512 as well as consultation with Daniel Littlefield at the Center and Frank Norris at the NPS National Trails System office in Santa Fe. There is more research to be done.
3. *More research and synthesis on the Battle of Arkansas Post.* The most in-depth account of the Battle of Arkansas Post is Edwin C. Bearss' "The Battle of the Post of Arkansas" (1959). It would take a detailed narrative to surpass what that article already covers. Yet the source material is available: *The War of the Rebellion: Official Record* contains numerous after battle reports by Federal officers as well as a rare collection of reports from the Confederate side, and there are memoirs and other sources available as well. The battle has many interesting features: the amphibious operation to get the Union troops there, the ship vs. shore battle, the lopsided forces, the confusion around the surrender, the personality conflicts within the Union command. Perhaps a short monograph on the Battle of Arkansas Post is warranted? Perhaps the NPS would have an opportunity to support a graduate student in that endeavor?
 4. *More research on the Arkansas Factory, 1805-10.* The Arkansas Factory was one of about a score of factories in the American factory system (1798-1823) and it lasted a relatively short time (1805-10). Nonetheless, there appears to be much more primary source material in the National Archives on this episode than could be tapped for this study. An in-depth study of the Arkansas Factory might go in a few different directions. It might provide a window into the Arkansas Post community at an interesting time when it was undergoing Americanization. If the records fall short of providing that window, then it would be interesting to use a close study of the Arkansas Factory as a vehicle for learning more about federal American Indian policy in the Louisiana Territory during Jefferson's administration – a topic with potential connections to Lewis and Clark, Manuel Lisa's Missouri Company, and the Burr Conspiracy.
 5. *Research on the African American experience.* African Americans were continuously present at Arkansas Post from 1722 to the late 1930s and beyond but their story is virtually unknown. If one focused only on Arkansas Post's period of national significance, circa 1722 to 1865, it would be very difficult to report much more than the census data to get names of residents, could oral history with living descendants form the nucleus of a story about the African American experience since

- Reconstruction, with perhaps a little information brought to light on the African American experience in slavery?
6. *Submerged cultural resources.* In researching this study, several NPS documents were found that speculated on the potential for finding submerged resources in Post Bend. Before such an effort should be considered, more research should be done on Fort Hindman. This study passed over considerable documentation on Fort Hindman's architecture, armaments, and other features, considering that extra material to be more detailed than the broad scope of this study could handle.
 7. *Care with conflicting sources.* Numerous secondary sources on Arkansas Post were found to contain errors, or to be inconsistent with one another. This probably relates to the challenge of working with seventeenth and eighteenth-century texts in French and Spanish. Spelling of names, people's titles, and dates were often cited incorrectly or inconsistently. More than usual, it seems, researchers who work on the Arkansas Post story should take care to check facts and find corroborating sources whenever possible.
 8. *The river and the car culture.* The NPS could do more to interpret the landscape transformation that occurred at Arkansas Post after the damming of the Arkansas River. Not only would it help the visitor imagine the landscape as it looked in the past, it could also inspire greater environmental awareness. Picking up on the "layers of history" concept in the CLR, the NPS could draw attention to the parklike quality of the place that comes down as a legacy of the state park era. Furthermore, it could draw attention to the changes in highway and bridge access to the park, the changes in road alignments within the park, and the present layout of the parking area and visitor center. These features point to a revolution in transportation from the era of the riverboat that was so crucial to Arkansas Post's existence to the automobile era that was in fact the seedbed of the state park era. To make visitors conscious of how the car culture brought them to that place, and to have them understand how the car culture has shaped the built environment of the national parks, including Arkansas Post National Memorial, would provide a useful perspective to the visitor who wants to appreciate a historical scene that has largely been erased.

Appendix 1

Cultural Resource Base Map. Eight exhibits from the Memorial Unit CLR

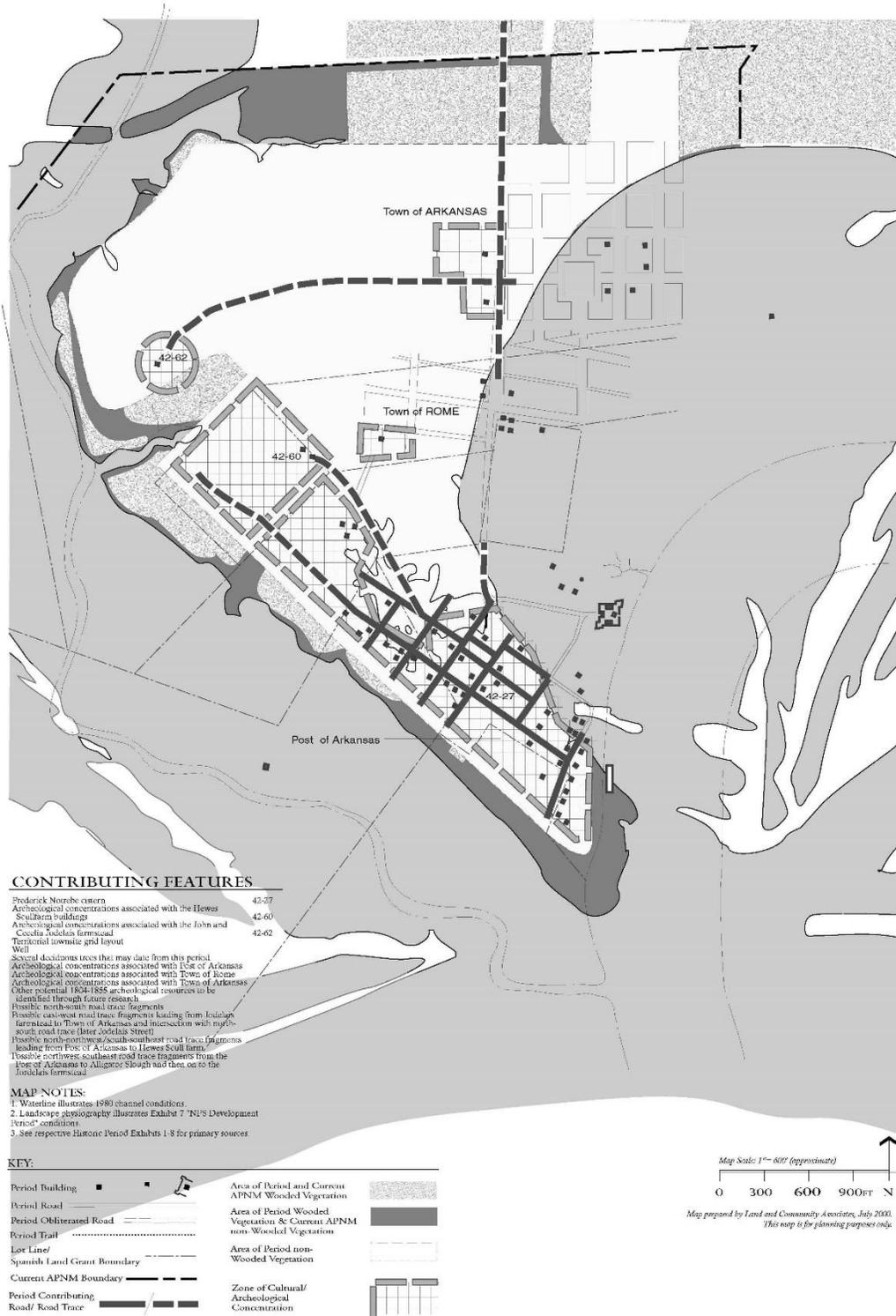
- (a) Pre-1673 / Pre-Contact Period Contributing Features
- (b) 1673-1803 / Colonial and Revolutionary Period Contributing Features
- (c) 1804-1855 / Settlement and Early Statehood Period Contributing Features
- (d) 1856-1865 / Civil War Period Contributing Features
- (e) 1866-1928 / Late 19th and Early 20th Century Period Contributing Features
- (f) 1929-1963 / Early 20th Century Period Contributing Features
- (g) Non-contributing Features
- (h) Archeological Analysis



EXHIBIT 40: PRE-1673
 PRE-CONTACT PERIOD CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

ARKANSAS POST
 NATIONAL MEMORIAL

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT



**EXHIBIT 42: 1804- 1855
SETTLEMENT/ EARLY STATEHOOD PERIOD
CONTRIBUTING FEATURES**

**ARKANSAS POST
NATIONAL MEMORIAL**

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

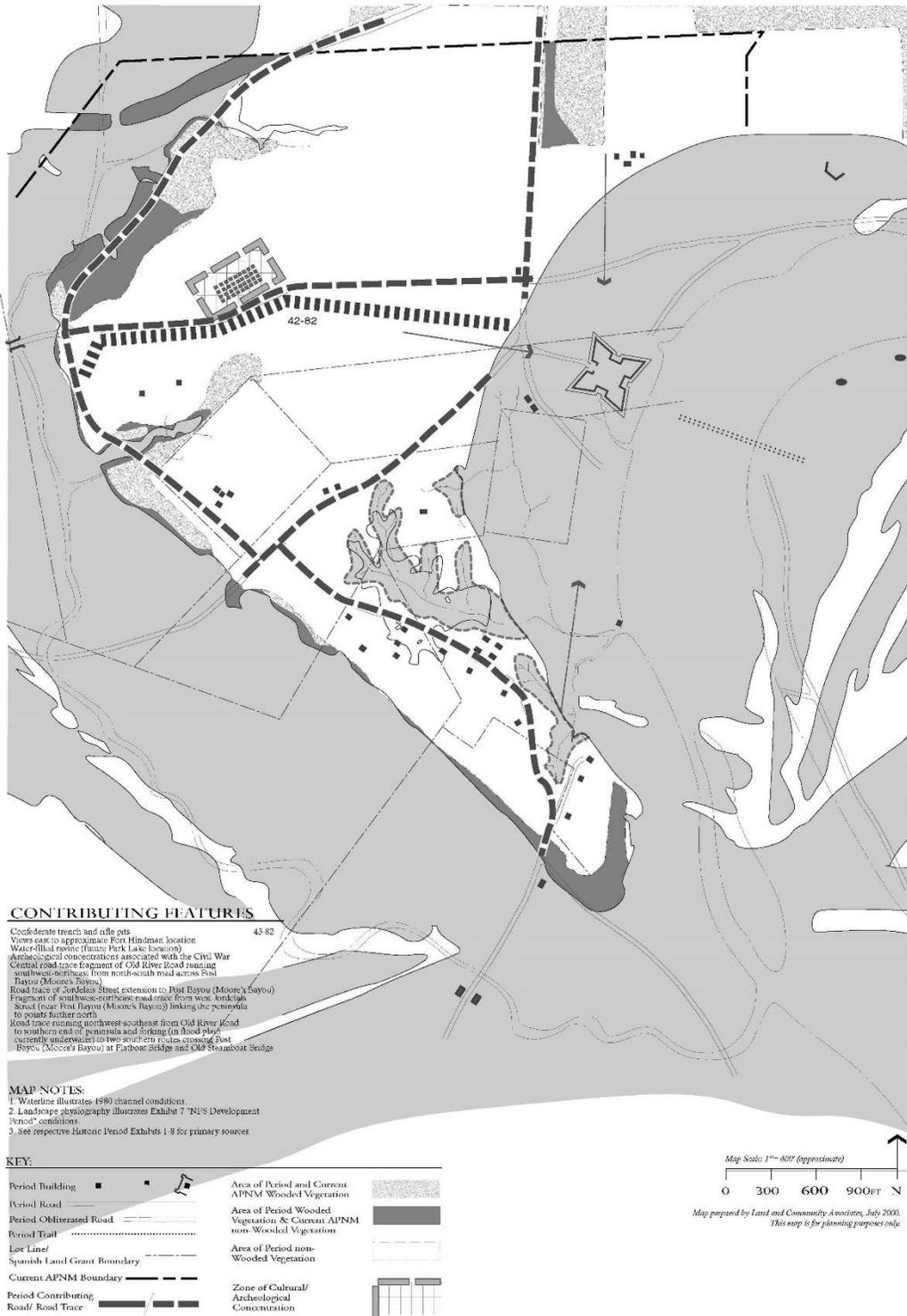
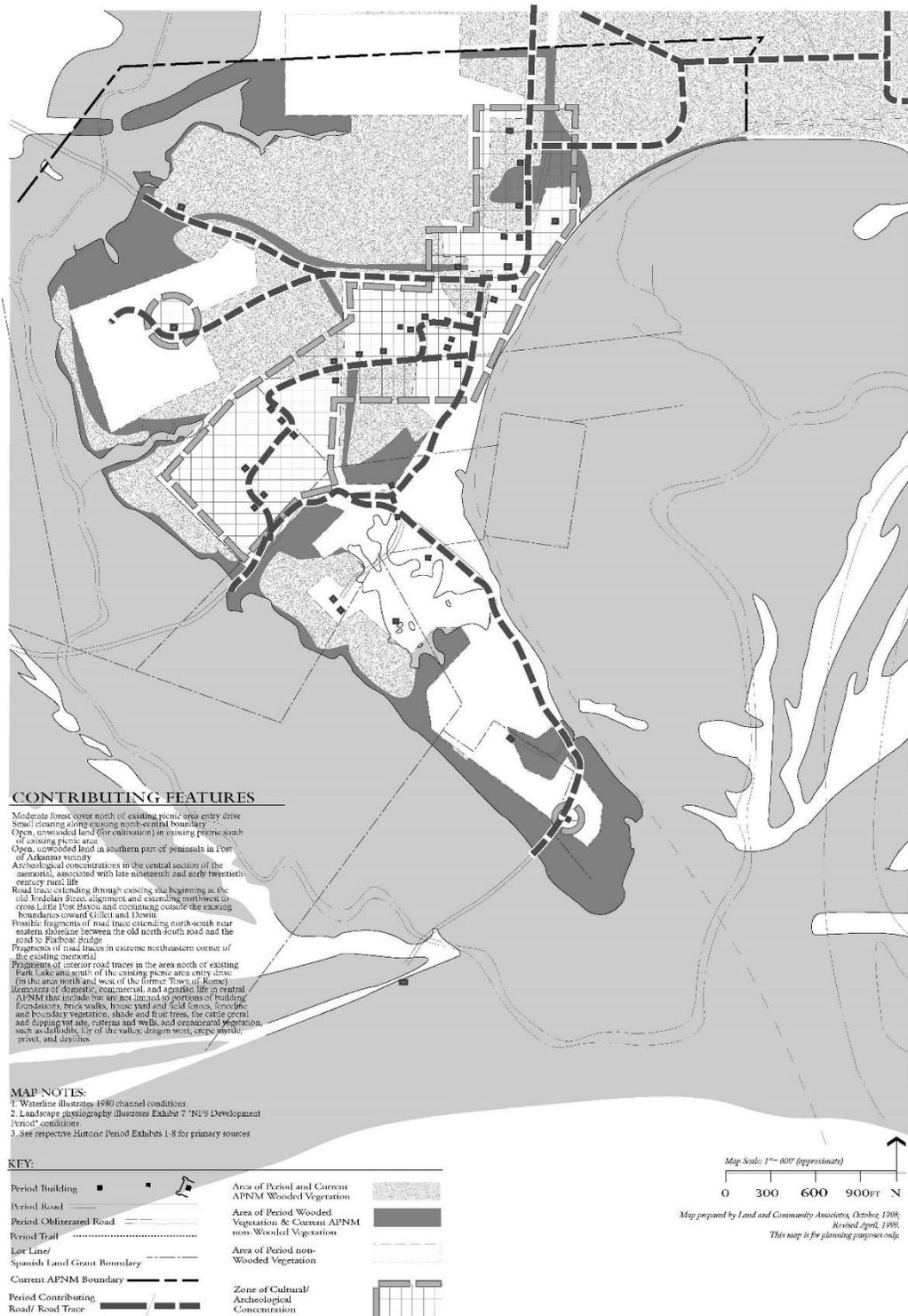


EXHIBIT 43: 1856-1865
 CIVIL WAR PERIOD CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

**ARKANSAS POST
 NATIONAL MEMORIAL**

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT



**EXHIBIT 44: 1866- 1928
 LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH-CENTURY PERIOD
 CONTRIBUTING FEATURES**

**ARKANSAS POST
 NATIONAL MEMORIAL**

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT



EXHIBIT 45: 1929-1963
 EARLY 20TH-CENTURY PERIOD
 CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

**ARKANSAS POST
 NATIONAL MEMORIAL**

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

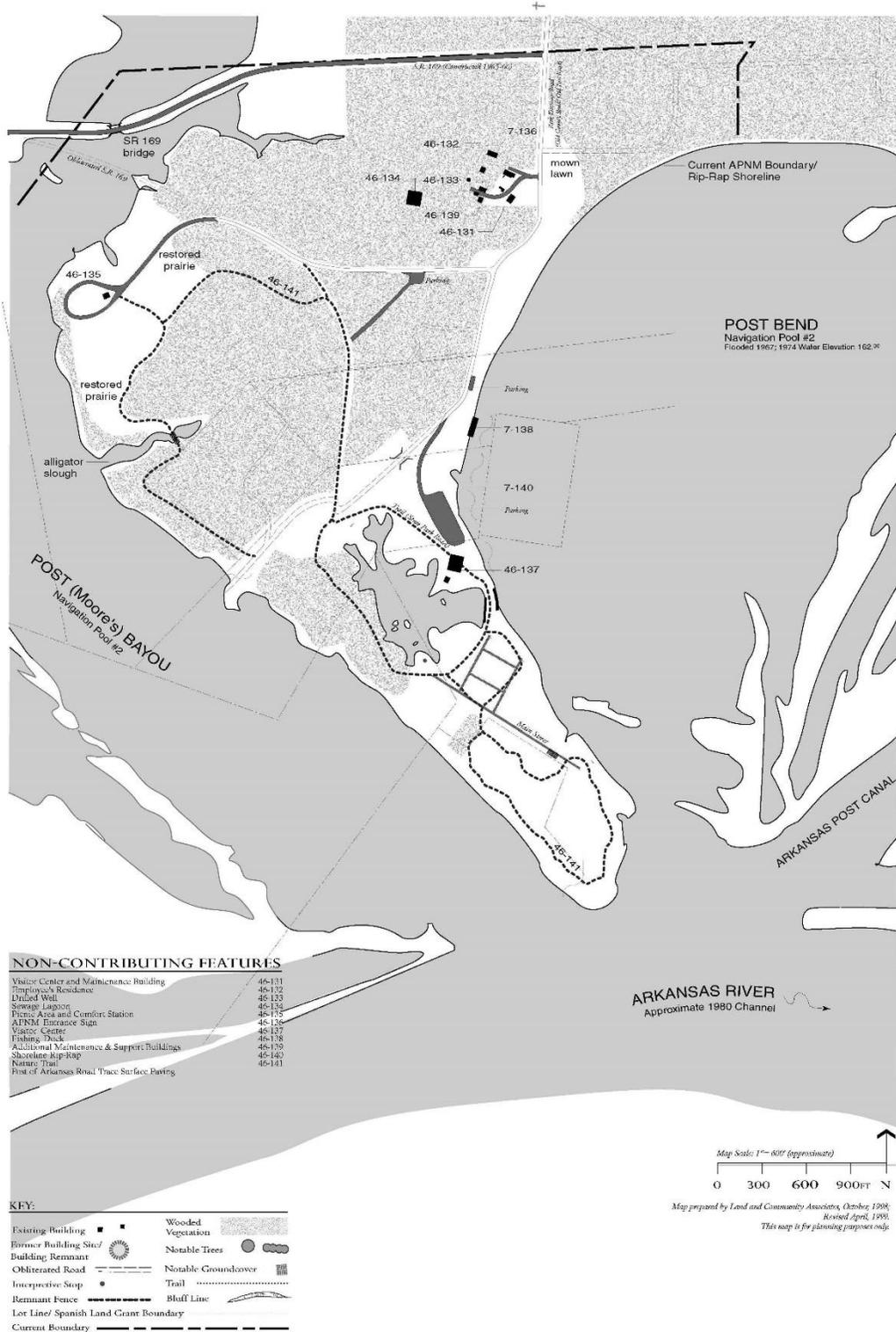


EXHIBIT 46
NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

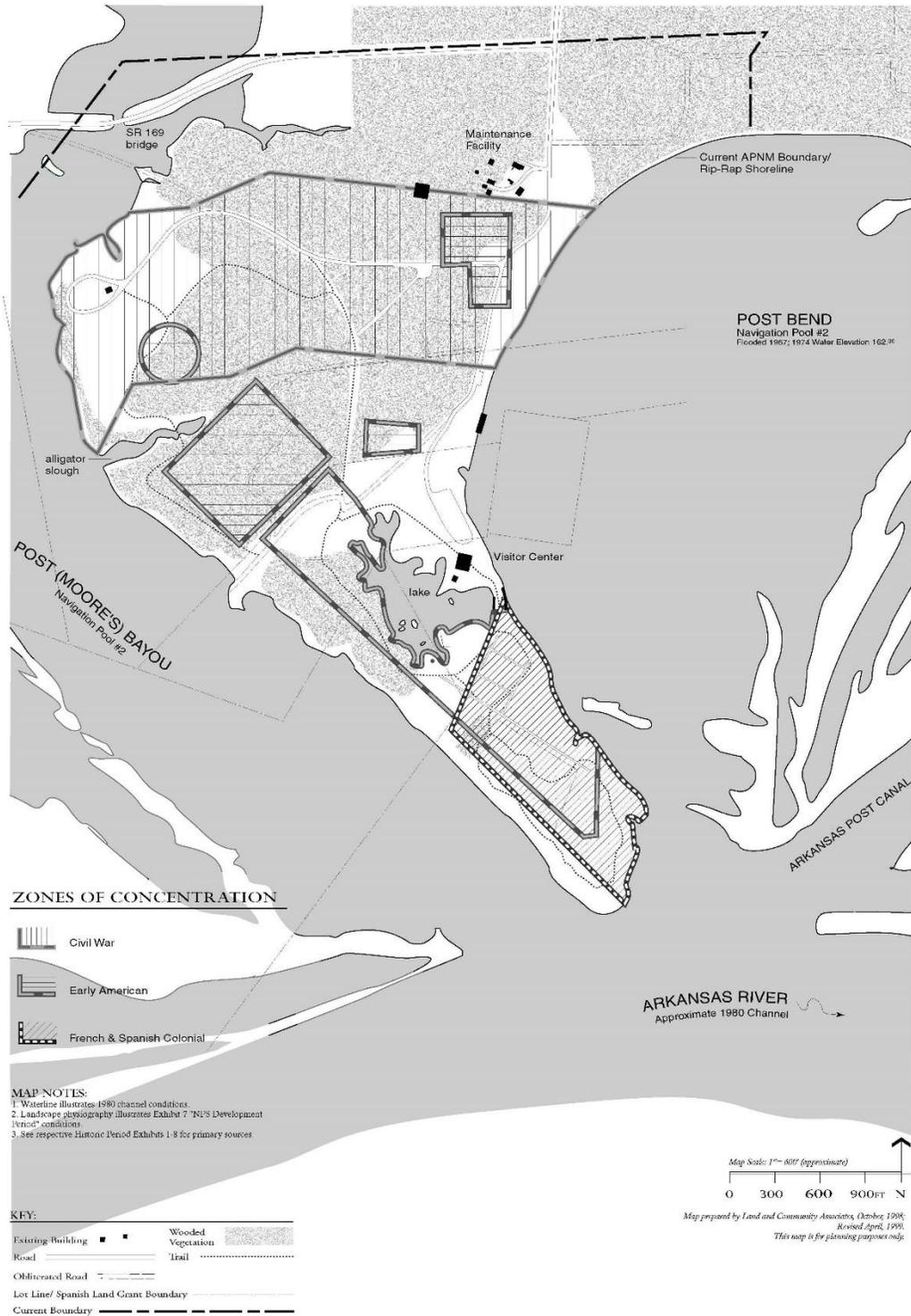


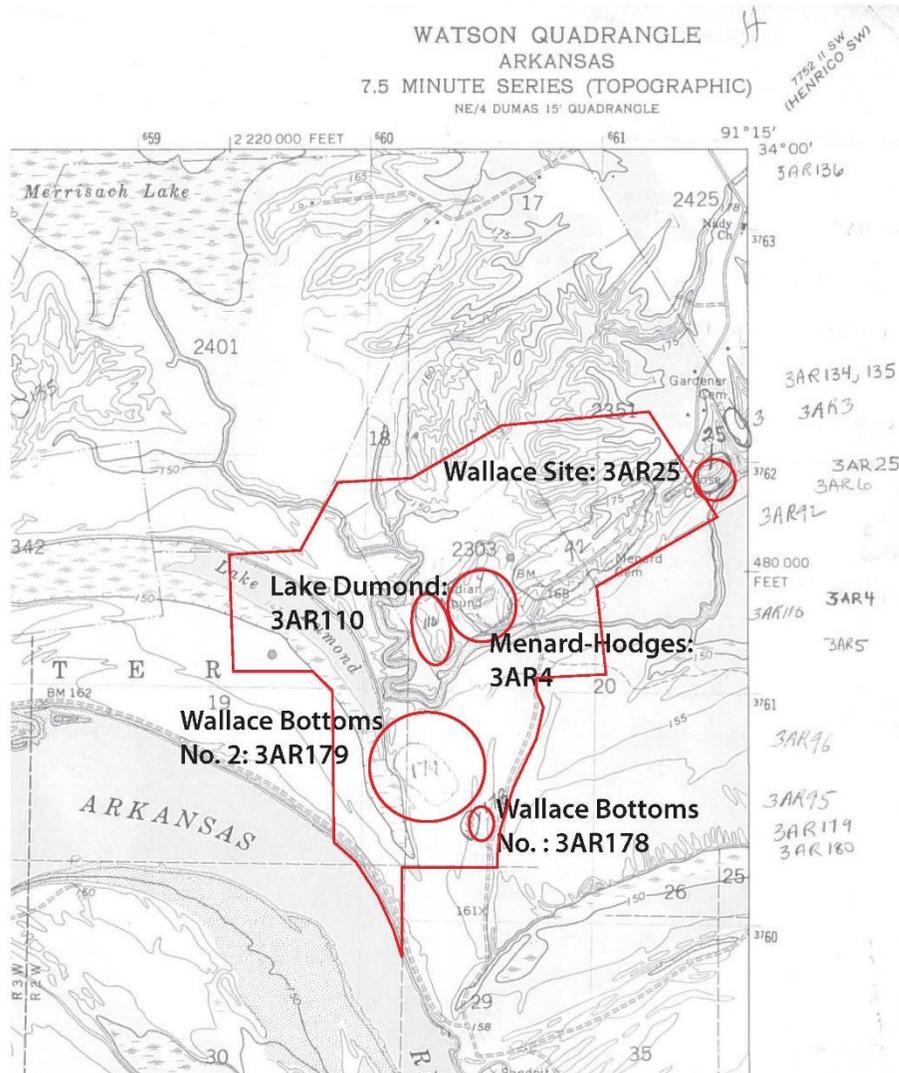
EXHIBIT 47
ARCHEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

ARKANSAS POST
NATIONAL MEMORIAL

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Appendix 2

Osotouy Unit Archeological Sites: Map from the Osotouy CLR



Appendix 3

Area Overview: Aerial photograph and unit boundaries from the Osotouy CLR



Appendix 4

Schematic of River Change: Maps from the Geologic Resources Inventory Report



1779—The Arkansas River and adjacent bluffs were farther east of current positions. The river flowed through a tight bend lined to the west and north by bluffs.



1820—The Arkansas River migrated west and north of the 1779 position, carving back the bluffs. Upland gullying began. Post Bayou migrated south and west away from the bluffs.



1863—The Arkansas River migrated east and north of the 1820 position, carving back the bluffs. Upland gullying was extensive. Post Bayou continued to migrate south and west.



1928—The Arkansas River continued to migrate east of the 1863 position. Post Bayou lengthened flowing across the riparian zone at some distance from the abandoned bluffs.



1950—Prior to the construction of ACOE engineering structures, the Arkansas River was migrating west and cut off a meander. Post Bayou joined the river near its present position.



1980—ACOE engineering structures raised the river level, inundating all the low ground in the memorial area and greatly diminishing the prominence of the historical bluffs.

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