ARKANSAS: THE MYTH AND THE STATE

By

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A little over half a century ago a covered wagon headed west and stopped in front of a cross-roads store in Western Oklahoma. The driver, a tall, lean man climbed down leaving his wife sitting on the spring seat while three or four small fry peoped out from beneath the brown, tattered wagon cover. The stranger approached the little group of three or four loafers who occupied a bench on the shady side of the store and made some inquiries about the road. Having received the required information he turned to go back to his wagon when some overly inquisitive individual asked: "Mister, where are you folks from?" The newcomer grinned as he answered: "Arkansas! Now laugh 'til you dare ye!"

The incident was typical of the time. For a period of some seventy-five years, extending well down into the present century, the citizens of Arkansas bore with good humored tolerance numerous gibes, wisecracks, and comic jokes about their state and its people. It was asserted that sorghum molasses and corn-skins were legal tender for the payment of debts throughout the entire state of Arkansas and that few of its inhabitants had ever been more than fifteen miles from home. The state was portrayed as a region where the average home was a small cabin with a lean-to and only an occasional aristocrat lived in a double log house with a "dog trot" in the middle. The typical household in such a home was alleged to consist of a wife clad in a calico dress and shenbander, who worked barefoot in the field while her husband sat in the shade and whistled as he chewed and spat and viewed the landscape. Half a dozen ragged children who fled to the woods, or hid behind the door, upon the approach of a stranger completed the family group picture.

Absurd as it may now seem, many residents of other states a generation ago had some such viewpoint of Arkansas and its people. Even in more recent years the shades of the Arkansas Traveler and a Slow Train Through Arkansas still hover over the state and are embodied somewhat by the work of Bob Burns and the radio comedians, Lum and Abner of Pine Ridge. Bluff to its beautiful towns and cities and rapid industrial and cultural development many persons, who should know better, still picture Arkansas as a backward, rural state, a fit subject for many humorous tales revealing the simplicity and "behind the times" attitudes of its people.

There is nothing caustic or critical about these jokes and stories, which the citizens of Arkansas probably sense and in consequence accept with a good natured exasperation. On the contrary these would-be humorists seem to regard Arkansas as a naive, lovable child entirely lacking any of the sophistication found among the other members of the great family of states of the Union. Perhaps there is even considerable envy to be found in the attitude of these persons of the surrounding states who think of Arkansas people as unworldly innocents.

A large proportion of the more prominent and successful business and professional men of the past fifty years were born and reared on farms in a day and age when farming was not a business but a way of life.

As he sits down each morning to a bowl of cereal, and a little fruit juice and coffee the mind of such a man goes back to other mornings when he was awakened by the sound of the coffee mill and the fragrant odor of frying sausage. Respectfully he recalls how he scrambled from his bed in the loft, pulled on his overalls, and hurried downstairs to take his place, with his numerous brothers and sisters, at a long table. He remembers the slight impatience as his father said grace, and then the vigor with which he attacked the sausage, hot biscuits and gravy, and topped off the meal with more biscuits and golden syrup or peach preserves.

In fancy he sees once more another old time world which held big smoke houses filled with hickory smoked hams and side meat and cellars with one wall filled with
shelves holding long rows of jam, jelly, and preserves and
the other with bins of potatoes, apples, and turnips. He
recalls the nearby spring house with its jars of milk and
cream and large rolls of sweet butter. He even contrasts
his busy days spent in the office worrying over a hundred
intricate problems with those of his boyhood when he worked
in the open air at plowing corn, or hoeing cotton with
nothing on his mind of greater importance than speculating
as to what his mother might have for dinner. In con-
sequence the past suffers by comparison with the past
for “memory is the greatest and most convincing of liars.”

Many a man visualizes Arkansas not as it is but as
he conceives it to be and as such it is to him the embodi-
ment of his lost youth. He thinks of it as a land where, if
it is not exactly “always afternoon,” it is at least one in
which the people take time to live and to practice the well
forgotten virtues of hospitality, simplicity, and neigh-
borly kindness. They have the largest possible freedom
for they live on the products of their farms rather than “out
of paper sacks”; they keep their hearts “unsplatted from
the world,” and cling closely to the lifeways and spiritual
faith of their fathers.

In some cases, as he rummages through the refrigera-
tor seeking a cold snack, he may even contrast his own
spouse, always running hither and yon to club meetings,
bridge sessions and cocktail parties, with his concept of
the Arkansas housewife. “There is a woman,” he reflects,
“that is a real help meet. She feels that a good husband
is someone to be cherished, and waited on hand and foot,
and provided with three square meals of tasty ‘vittles’ every
day, a calico dress once in a while, and a pair of shoes
each year to wear on Sunday.” In a latter of self pity he
wonders why she did not seek a wife in the hills of Arkansas!

It is this feeling of envy, rather than a sense of su-
periority, which has helped to keep alive the tradition of
an Arkansas that perhaps never existed, though many
gentlemen cling persistently to such an illusion. They love
to believe that there still remains in America one region
with a pattern of life similar to that of their own childhood
as they recall it.

Instead of resenting such a myth it is to be feared

that the people of Arkansas themselves have done much
to preserve it. They are proud of the tradition that their
state is a rural, unsophisticated region and will not let
others forget it. Their attitude is like that of many per-
sons of the western prairie states, only a generation ago a
part of the Cow Country. Not a few of these men take
delight in dressing up in what they conceive to be cowboy
garb to celebrate “frontier week” or attend an old settlers’
banquet. Some, sober businessmen will even purchase ten
gallon hats, high headed boots, and checked flannel shirts
and work to a convention in the East. If the people of the
Atlantic Seaboard expect that Westerners ordinarily wear
such clothing, why disappoint them? So reasons many a
man “who could never ride anything wilder than a wheel
chair.” That such histrionics may give an entirely false
picture of his state never enters his mind any more than it
does that of the citizen of Arkansas who fosters and ex-
aggerates the peculiar legend that has grown up about
his own state. Yet, in both cases the temptation is too strong
to be resisted.

During the peak of enrollment which came
two or three years after the close of the recent war, I was
walking down a street of our university town with an old
friend from the Arkansas hills. It was a warm, sunny after-
noon and we were forced to weave our way in and out of a
continuous procession of little G. I. wives each pushing a baby
carriage. When we had met twenty or thirty my
friend turned to me and said: “Well, from the looks of
things around here it seems that in about eighteen or twenty
years we will either have to start another war or clear more
land!” Here spoke a voice from the past hinting at the
problem which confronted the woodland settler of a century
ago who must provide for a large and fast growing family.

Some forty years ago, as a graduate student at Har-
vard, I ate at Foxcroft Hall where the service was entirely
a la carte. One day I sat down at a long table opposite the
only other occupant—a tall, gaunt looking chap with a sunburned
face and prominent Adam’s apple. Before him was a bowl
of spinach, six pieces of cornbread stacked on a plate, a
small platter of liver and bacon, and a cup of black coffee.
He was making rapid inroads on the array of foods that he was strongly reminiscent of the fare of Texas Cross Timbers. An inquiry as to whether or not he might be from the Lone Star State, however, elicited the laconic reply: “No, sir! Arkansas!”

In the weeks that followed I became well acquainted with this young man, who was in one of my classes and may be called Smith, though that was not his name. To my question as to whether he came through New York on his journey from Arkansas to Cambridge, he replied emphatically: “No, sir! You don’t catch me in New York by myself.” Reminded that he would not be by himself since there were several million other people there he answered: “I know it but I wouldn’t know none of ’em. I was in New York once and stayed all day but there was another feller with me that used to live there and knew all about the place. I’d won a state speaking contest and was sent East to compete in the National and this feller went with me and took me around to see a lot of things in New York.”

“Where did you go, Smith?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I know we went down to that ‘aquarium’ where they have all them whales and things. Then we got in an elevator and went up to the top of the highest building I ever saw and looked down on the city spread out just like a map. After that we got on a two story bus and rode a long ways. I sat on top. It cost a dime to ride it but you didn’t give the dime to the conductor. He held out a sort of a little box with two handles like a pair of pincers, you put the dime in a slot and it fell down into the box when he squeezed the handles.” An awful funny thing,” he concluded, “looked somethin’ like a hog ring.”

Later when Smith needed to do some work in the Boston Public Library he asked me to go with him asserting that he “never would find the thing” and if he did “never would find his way back.” To my offer of a ticket to the Harvard-Princeton football game he responded that he’d take it if he thought he could find his way over to the stadium! Smith must have had a lot of fun playing ig-

A boy ranger, crassened half-century man, was a device resembling a large pair of shears. It was used to cut down trees in the woods of yore to prevent them from slipping under forest with their own and up-ending crops.

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nevan but when we had our first hour exam in a graduate course in government he made an “A” while my best efforts brought me only a “B.” Unquestionably there is still a good deal of such posing by numerous citizens of Arkansas, which has helped to give outsiders quite erroneous ideas as to the state and its people. Any legend, even one without the slightest basis of fact dies hard but one carefully nurtured has more than the nine lives said to be allotted to cats.

There is a definite reason for the growth of every legend, however, and most of them embody at least a modicum of truth. The Arkansas tradition is no exception to this general rule, for so much smoke could hardly have been created without at least a little fire, and the peculiar flavor of Arkansas is unlike that of any other state. For more than half a century its people differed to some degree from those outside its limits; and traces of these differences still linger as a heritage from a pattern of life now gone forever.

II

The characteristics of a people are not due to accident. Behind their formation always lie vital forces that have called them into life and shaped their development. Some of these forces, as climate and topographical features, are quite obvious while others are deeply rooted in the subsoil of history. The unique flavor of society in most of Arkansas once readily apparent and still discernible in some portions of the state like Tupelo “just grown” as the inevitable result of a unique history.

Soon after the first English colonies had been planted in America there began that steady movement of population westward which has been of such great significance in the history of our nation. Population movements, like those of water, always follow the line of least resistance. Long tongues of settlement reaching out toward the interior were soon formed along the rivers which were not only highways of travel and transportation but in most cases flowed through valleys of fertile soil. Westward migration, on the other hand, was often halted by ranges of mountains or hostile tribes of Indians or deflected by rough
lands, swamps, or areas of barren soils. Yet, neither mountain barriers nor hostile Indians could permanently stop the inexorable march westward. Eventually passes or gaps in the mountains would be found through which population trickled and no Indian tribe was powerful enough to resist for long the relentless pressure of the overwhelming number of whites.

By the time of the American Revolution most of the better lands east of the Appalachians had been occupied and settlers were beginning to pour through Cumberland Gap or float down the Ohio River to people Kentucky and Tennessee. Before the end of the century both of these states had been admitted to the Union and the admission of Ohio in 1803 added a third state beyond the mountains before our western boundaries were so greatly extended by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The acquisition of this great territory opened a vast region to settlement and emigrants soon began to cross the Mississippi to establish homes in the new domain.

The peopling of Arkansas, like that of Missouri, was fostered by the fact that it had a broad river flowing across it making it easy to reach the interior. Settlers moved up this river, spreading out on either side to establish farms and plantations. Fort Smith, in the extreme west, was established on the Arkansas River in 1817 and two years later, on March 2, 1819, the “Territory of Arkansas” was created by act of Congress.8

With a lack of finesse all too typical of official Washington, a New Hampshire soldier, General James Miller, was appointed as the first governor of the new Territory. Miller’s fame was primarily due to three brief words uttered at the Battle of Lundy’s Lane, July 25, 1814. When asked if he could take a British battery pouring a deadly fire into the American lines from the crest of a hill he replied: "I’ll try, Sir." He not only tried but succeeded and a grateful Congress voted him a gold medal and raised his rank from colonel to brigadier general.

Doubtless the Chief Executive was willing to try to make a good governor. At any rate he sought to impress the native population by a dramatic entry. He had been provided with a keelboat to make the long journey from Pittsburg to the "Port of Arkansas" which the Organic Act had designated as the temporary seat of government. He sailed up the Arkansas River in this craft, on either side of which appeared in huge gold letters the word "Arkansas," while from a staff rising above the cabin floated a banner bearing the fateful words, to which he doubtless owed his appointment, "I’ll try, Sir."9

Miller soon realized that it was far easier to capture a British battery than to govern the widely scattered and more or less turbulent population of a new frontier Territory. His dramatic entrance did not appeal to these democratic pioneers. His influence, never great, rapidly declined and in 1825 he was doubtless glad to exchange his job as governor for the obscure post of collector of customs at the Port of Salem.6

At the time of its establishment the "Territory of Arkansas" had a population of slightly over 14,000 exclusive of Indians.9 Of the latter there was a very considerable number. In the northwestern part of the Territory there were about 7,000 Cherokees. These, known as the Western Cherokees had received from the United States by a treaty signed in 1817 a large grant of land in this region between the Arkansas and White rivers.8 In the southwest part of the Territory was a fairly large population of Choctaws who had drifted west from Mississippi. In 1819 they occupied these lands only as squatters but the following year the Choctaw tribe, by the first of a series of treaties with the federal government, secured title to a huge tract of land including this area in Arkansas and approximately the southern third of the present state of Oklahoma.8 In addition to these two groups of Indians there were also a few Chippewas who had been given a large reservation southeast of Little Rock by a treaty signed in 1818.

None of these Indians remained very long in Ark-

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12 Stat. p. 175.
Arkansas after it became a Territory. In 1824 the Quapaws signed a treaty by which they gave up all their lands in Arkansas Territory and agreed to join the Caddo tribe living just below Red River in Louisiana. In 1825 the Cherokees surrendered the Arkansas portion of their domain, retaining only that part in what is now Oklahoma. This the United States guaranteed to the Cherokees forever and promised that it should never be included within the limits of any state or territory.

In the meantime the Western Cherokees found their lands perennially encroached upon by white settlers. In consequence these Indians signed a treaty with the United States in 1838 by which they gave up all their lands in Arkansas in exchange for a new grant of 7,000,000 acres in the northeastern part of the present state of Oklahoma. In addition they were guaranteed a "perpetual outlet" some fifty-four miles wide extending westward to the boundary between the United States and Mexican territory which was at this time the tenth meridian. The Quapaws disliking the lands given them by the Caddoos soon drifted back to the region of their former homes in Arkansas. Here they met anything but a cordial welcome from the white settlers and in 1833 were given by treaty a small tract of land in the extreme northeastern corner of what is now Oklahoma.

By these various treaties all Indians were removed from Arkansas to lands beyond its western limits. During the next few years, however, large numbers of Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes, crossed the state on route from their former homes in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi to new ones in Indian Territory.

Any comprehensive account of the removal of these Indians from their old homelands to the Indian Territory lies outside the limits of this study. Perhaps it is enough to say that by a series of treaties signed between 1825 and 1837 all of these tribes gave up their lands east of the Mississippi and were removed to what is now Oklahoma.

The removal of all the Five Civilized Tribes was accomplished peacefully except in the case of the Seminoles who waged a long and bloody war to retain their lands in Florida where a few of them still live. Some Cherokee also fled to the mountains where their descendants known as the North Carolina Cherokees still reside. A considerable number of Choctaws also remained in Mississippi though most of them migrated soon after 1830. By around 1842 the removal of all of the Indians of these tribes was virtually completed and they were firmly established in the Indian Territory.

In the midst of these migrations of Indians across its territory Arkansas was admitted as a state in 1836. Its western boundary except for some thirty miles south of Red River was the Indian Territory of which all but the small area in the northeast corner belonged to the Five Civilized Tribes. Their lands had been given to them by treaties with the provision that no person other than their own citizens should be permitted to live among them without the consent of the tribal governments. Indian Territory was not open to settlement by whites.

It was as though an impenetrable wall had been extended about this great Indian country—an intangible wall of course, but none-the-less real because of that. Protected against the entrance of white settlers by this barrier the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes developed their own tribal governments and lived under their own laws. Every tribe except the Seminole eventually established a written constitution and code of laws. All lands were held in common ownership with individual use. The only way a white man could obtain citizenship in one of these Indian Nations was by marriage with a woman of the tribe. There were very few of these "intermarried citizens" until the last decade of the nineteenth century. Tribal laws made it dif-
frequent for a white man to obtain a license to wed an Indian woman and besides it was very infrequent for an Indian maiden to prefer a white husband to one from her own people.

After the close of the War between the States the tribal authorities sometimes gave permits to white persons to come in to serve as farm laborers for an Indian citizen, or to work in the coal mines, or establish a business in one of the towns. There was not a large number of these until toward the close of the century and their position was not an enviable one. They could not own land, share in the tribal government, and had no free schools for their children. They were merely tenants at will of the Indians with scant protection of law and were subject to removal at any time.

After statehood the population of Arkansas increased rapidly. From 14,273 in 1820 it rose to 39,338 in 1830, and to 75,734 in 1840. By 1850 this population had more than doubled and was 209,897 while by 1860 it had more than doubled again and was 435,440. The decade of the War Between the States was a very difficult period for Arkansas as well as for most other western states. In 1870 it had only 484,471 people—a gain of less than 50,000 in ten years.14

In fact during the war years and for five years after Appomattox there was comparatively little advance of settlement along the entire western frontier. This was in part due to the devastations of war and reconstruction and the checking of immigration from Europe. An added factor was that by 1866 the best lands of the first tier of states west of the Mississippi had been fairly well occupied and beyond lay the wide prairies of the second tier of states west of that stream. Here the homeseekers hesitated for several years, more than a little reluctant to attempt to cope with a land so different from any that they had known in the past. Just how to deal with the vast areas largely lacking both timber and water puzzled the man accustomed to life among wooded hills traversed by many spring-fed streams.

After 1870, however, the growing scarcity of lands

farther east, the westward advance of railroads, and the Homestead Act of 1862 all combined to cause a great outpouring of settlers to the Prairie West. In the twenty year period from 1870 to 1890 the population of the Dakotas increased, in round numbers, from 14,000 to 719,000; that of Nebraska from 123,000 to 1,058,000; Kansas from 304,000 to 1,457,000; and Texas from 818,000 to 2,227,000.15 Except for the European immigrants the greater portion of this population came in every case from the state directly east or across it from regions east of the Mississippi.

III

In considering how mass movements of population tend to follow lines of least resistance the factor of distance to be traveled is very important. It is true that the lure of gold in California or the widely advertised beauty of Oregon's soil and climate led many earlier in the century to make the long and arduous journey to those distant lands. The man seeking free or very cheap lands upon which to establish a home, however, usually removed to those closest at hand. As a rule these lay directly west of the settled areas.

In consequence the westward advance of pioneer settlers, from colonial times to the close of the nineteenth century was, broadly speaking, along parallel lines. Western New York was largely peopled by New Englanders, while settlers from New York and Pennsylvania in turn moved on to form a conspicuous element in the population of Northern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Kentucky and Tennessee were chiefly occupied by immigrants from Virginia and North Carolina, while Alabama and Mississippi received the overflow from Georgia, together with many people who came southwest from Kentucky and Tennessee. The two last named states, especially Kentucky, also supplied many of the settlers of Southern Indiana and Illinois.

Beyond the Mississippi this same tendency to move west along parallel lines continued. Louisiana had peopled largely from Mississippi as was part of Southern Arkansas, though the central and northern parts of that state were

14 All these figures are from the census.

15 Figures are from census.
occupied mainly by settlers from Tennessee and Kentucky. These two states also furnished a large part of the population of Missouri. Illinois supplied some but the fact that it was a free and Missouri a slave state had its effect. Iowa was settled largely from Illinois, and Minnesota from Wisconsin, though a large proportion of its early inhabitants were Scandinavians, coming directly from Northern Europe.

Once this first tier of states west of the Mississippi had been well settled there came in the decades following the close of the War between the States that great outpouring of population to the Prairie West. This migration followed the same pattern of most earlier ones. Once the free or cheap lands of Minnesota and Northern Iowa had been occupied the surplus population moved westward into the Dakotas and that of Southern Iowa and all of Missouri pushed on into Nebraska and Kansas. Farther south the pioneer settlers of Texas had what seemed almost unlimited room for westward expansion within the limits of their gigantic state.

Of all the states lying immediately west of the Mississippi River, Arkansas alone found further westward advance of its citizens stopped at its western border by the Indian Territory. Except for the same thirty miles south of Red River where Arkansas is bounded on the west by Texas the impenetrable wall of the Indian country extended northward for over two hundred miles barring the people of Arkansas from any further movement toward the West.

When the vanguard of the broad current of settlers moving westward across Arkansas struck this wall it came to an abrupt halt. Yet the human tide of settlers continued to advance and press against this immovable barrier until virtually every acre of arable land in the western half of the state was occupied as had been that in the eastern half long before. What took place was what occurs when a broad, sluggish stream has had thrown across it a dam rising higher than the river’s banks. Gradually the water rises until it forms a broad, deep millpond behind the dam, at either end of which a spillway eventually carries away the surplus.

In exactly the same fashion was formed a millpond

The above map, showing the extent of frontier settlements in the year of 1888, graphically illustrates the fact that Arkansas alone, of all the states of America, had its westward advance stopped short at its western borders by the Indian Territory.

The situation thus created, much like a millpond behind a dam of a swift flowing stream, developed a new type of American personality, not like any other state or region unaffected by the stoppage of western migration as frontier America continually expanded.
of population behind the impenetrable dam which was the
eastern border of the Indian Territory. The living waters
of this great pool were very clear, still, and deep. They
were not stagnant but were static, comparatively little re-
newed by water from farther up stream, and there were al-
most no currents flowing across it from east to west.
Streams of western immigrants going to the Prairie West
from Tennessee, Mississippi, and the regions east of these
states did not cross Central and Western Arkansas. They
split near its eastern boundary, one moving northwest across
Missouri into Kansas, and the other southwest into Texas.
So a huge triangle made up of Central and Western Ar-
kansas was left comparatively little traveled by people out-
side its own limits.

Families were usually large on the American frontier,
frequently there were a dozen children. As the sons of
the pioneer settlers of Western Missouri, Iowa, Louisiana,
or Eastern Texas reached maturity they often moved a com-
paratively short distance west to virgin lands on the Kansas
or Nebraska prairies, or in Central and Western Texas.
The sons of the pioneer settlers of Western Arkansas, how-
ever, found their advance westward barred by the invisibil-
ity wall along the eastern boundary of the Indian Territory.
To reach free or very cheap lands they must make the
long journey, either northwest into the central prairie
states, or southwest to Central and Western Texas. This
was a great distance to travel in a "horse and buggy age"
and such a new location was remote from the land of their
birth and the homes of their parents.

In consequence there was a strong tendency for the
young man born in Western Arkansas to remain in the
community of his birth. His father had usually "cleared
more land" as the family increased. When a lad had reached
manhood he married one of the local girls and established
a new home on a portion of these ancestral acres. As his
brothers reached their majority they usually did the same
or became tenants of a nearby farmer. In some cases they
acquired, at a nominal price, a small tract of rough land with
enough level, fertile soil to enable them to live as subsistence
farmers. Only in rare instances did one of them remove
more than a few miles from his birthplace.

In this way communities grew up in which society was static. Many of the residents were related by ties of blood or marriage forming an expanded family resembling a clan. Its members sometimes fought "like cats and dogs" among themselves but were to the outsider that tried to pick on one of them! There was almost no infusion of new blood. With no westbound immigrants passing through rural people seldom saw anyone from outside the immediate neighborhood. In consequence they practiced the lifeways of their forebears. The women often went barefoot in summer, made soap and hominy, spun and wove in the home, and dosed iling children with the traditional home remedies used in the family for a century.

The farm supplied nearly all the food consumed and traditional methods were utilized for curing meats, preserving fruit and vegetables and preparing them for the table. The speech, superstitions, social forms and amenities, religion, and manner of thought remained little changed for generations. The young people sang the old time songs learned from their grandparents and great-grandparents. More important, they practiced the old time virtues of honesty in thought and deed, of simplicity, courtesy, respect for their elders, hospitality, and neighborly kindness. As sophistication developed in other parts of the Nation and Victorianism passed away the occasional visitor to this part of Arkansas reported on his observations and sometimes exaggerated them. So grew up the legend of a backward and provincial Arkansas.

It must not be assumed that the barrier to westward expansion along the Western border of Arkansas was alone responsible for the peculiar tradition so long associated with the state and its people. Yet many other states have large areas of the same type of land, and were occupied by a similar type of a pioneer but lack the legend which characterizes Arkansas.

The surrender of the western half of their lands to the United States by the Five Civilized Tribes in 1856 to provide a home for other Indians eventually brought about the creation of Oklahoma Territory. When the first opening of these ceded lands came in 1889 some few citizens of Arkansas crossed the lands of the Five Civilized Tribes to join in the run for homesteads. Others went out to secure lands in the subsequent openings, but they were not numerous. The habit of "staying put" developed during more than half a century was not easily broken, and it was necessary to travel nearly two hundred miles to reach these lands in Oklahoma Territory.

Moreover, the few who went carried with them "cultural baggage" in the form of their habits and ways of life developed in the old home land. Fifty years ago Bill Jones of Western Oklahoma once remarked: "If you want a good hand go back to Arkansas and get you a young fellow brought up in the hills." He further asserted that: "The women will be an excellent worker for two or three years. By that time he will have lost his old industrious habits and be riding around sparkin the girls and going to frolics just like the rest of these boys brought up on the prairie."

Other traditions than that of hard work were transplanted by natives of Arkansas to states farther west. Some forty years ago an elderly man came from Arkansas to Western Oklahoma where he acquired 320 acres of rich prairie land a few miles from the little town where I was superintendent of schools. One blazing hot Sunday he asked my high school principal and me to come out to dinner, apologetically saying that he hoped we could eat the plain country fare which was all he had to offer. When we sat down at the table we discovered that the "plain country fare" consisted only of fried chicken and gravy, thick slices of boiled ham, roast beef, over half a dozen vegetables, two or three kinds of pie and cake, hot biscuits, cornbread, coffee, buttermilk, and an assortment of jellies, preserves, and pickles.

Accustomed to skimpy boarding house meals and encouraged by nagging of the good wife and the example of her husband and the youngsters we stuffed ourselves until we "could still chew but no longer swallow." Then as we rose from the table desiring nothing but a cool spot to lie down and sleep the old man said, "Now that we've et I want to take you all over the farm and show you the crops."

Stifling our grumbling we set out with dragging feet, our host in the lead and his ten year old son, Jefferson Davis,
trailing along behind us. We had not gone fifty yards until the old man noticed that one of the four or five dogs we had seen sleeping on the back porch or under some cistern bean stalks was following us.

"Drive that dog back, Jeff," he called vigorously to the son. "Learn him to be obedient. Get you a stick and make him go back and stay in the shade!"

Then he turned to me and said confidentially: "There's nothin' in the world harder on a dog than bein' out in the sun and wind!"

Apparently it was all right to take us "out in the sun and wind" to tramp over 500 acres of cropland but a dog was valuable property that must be conserved. Truly one who left the Arkansas hills in those days always carried something of the Arkansas hills with him wherever he might go.

IV

There is not much left of the substance of an old Arkansas today but its spirit still lives on and the people rightfully treasure their historical heritage and seek to keep it alive. The football team of the University is called the Razorbacks, the student paper is The Arkansas Traveler, and a large sign on the highway through Van Buren directs the tourist to the former home of Bob Burns. The "old time religion" is still preached and practiced in the churches of the better known Protestant denominations as Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Christian. Yet there is a surprisingly large number of "off brand" religious groups each with a very considerable following. Classical studies seem more popular in the colleges than they are in most other states and three or four years ago all members of the faculty of at least one college wore caps and gowns at every convocation—a practice long ago discontinued at most similar institutions. The friendliness and hospitality of the people, so characteristic of earlier days, still lingers and has been a powerful factor in building a new Arkansas which has excited the admiration and sometimes envy of neighboring states.

The first step in the formation of a new Arkansas came with dissolution of the common land holdings of the

Five Civilized Tribes and the admission of Oklahoma as a state in 1897. This destroyed the barrier to westward advance which had kept the people of Western Arkansas behind a retaining wall for three quarters of a century. Some of them pushed out into the new state to rise quickly to positions of leadership. They were not numerous, however, for by this time farm lands in Oklahoma sold at higher prices than did those of Western Arkansas. Also many people felt that they knew a good place to live when they found it. So for the first third of the twentieth century Arkansas remained much as it had always been—a state whose population was largely rural and whose educational and economic advancement lagged to a degree deplored by its more progressive citizens.

Change was in the air, however, and the old conservatism in the pattern of society eventually began to break down. Many factors were responsible for this. They include World War I, the rapid increase in the use of the automobile, the coming of radio and mechanized farming, the boom period of the late 1920's, and the depression years that followed, with the outpouring of federal funds to finance various projects of the New Deal.

All of these things had their influence in destroying the isolation of the people in many large regions and changing their way of life and manner of thought. Finally came World War II and its aftermath which served on the whole to complete a transformation already well on the way.

Able and aggressive leaders had long realized that Arkansas had every opportunity for greatness. It had magnificent resources in minerals, soil, and timber together with a mild climate and abundant water supply. Most important of all were its human resources—a population of intelligent, industrious, Christian people.

Before the outbreak of World War II it was plain that people were leaving the Arkansas farms attracted by high wages offered by industry in other states. Employers of labor had learned the truth of the words of Bill Jones of Western Oklahoma: "If you want a good hand go to Arkansas and get you a young fellow raised in the hills." With the coming of war the numbers of those leaving the farms vastly increased. Young men entered the armed
forces, many other persons flocked to towns in Arkansas or other states to work in factories producing war materials. Those left on the land began to use more machinery and to specialize more in certain staple crops. A money economy began to take the place of the earlier subsistence farming.

Clearly a new generation had grown up "which knew not Moses." More correctly this generation was ready for a new Moses and he appeared in the person of C. H. Moses, president of the Arkansas Power and Light Company. In 1943 he led a movement by businessmen from all over the state to establish the Arkansas Economic Council and became its president. The objectives of the new organization were to work for the retention of the new industries that had come to Arkansas as the result of war. Also to promote a greater industrial development and a further utilization of the natural resources of the state.

It was plain that those persons from the rural districts who had enjoyed for a time the fruits of high wages of shops and factories in towns would not willingly return to farm life in their native hills. When the war ended if jobs for industrial laborers were not available in the state they would go to seek employment elsewhere as many had already done. On the other hand if such jobs could be obtained they would stay and not a few of those who had left would return to the state they loved, to work among their old friends and former neighbors.

Under the leadership of Mr. Moses the Economic Council organized county units with an active chairman in each of the 75 counties of the state. Home-town clinics were conducted again and again in 122 towns attended not only by leading businessmen but by clerks, delivery boys, truck drivers, school teachers, high school students, housewives and in fact people from every walk of life. At such clinics problems were discussed and answers found as to what resources the town had, what were its needs, and how these could be met.

Early in 1945 the Economic Council was merged with the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce. At the same time the legislature established the Arkansas Resources and Development Commission. The University of Arkansas set up an Institute of Science and Technology to do research that would be used to industry. When Governor Sid McMath took office in January, 1949, he used all his influence to put the power of the state government behind the movement and the Arkansas Plan came of age.

Almost immediately it attracted nation-wide interest. Committees of leading businessmen and chamber of commerce representatives from other states came scurrying to Arkansas to study the Plan on the ground and obtain ideas that they could bring home to their own people. Metropolitan newspapers carried feature stories and editorials on Arkansas and its new development. Leading magazines took up the story and brought it to millions of readers.

It was a story well worth telling. Arkansas, which at the beginning of the Plan had 1,178 manufacturing establishments, big and little, now has nearly 4,000 and the number is steadily increasing. The new enterprises have brought to the state over 200 million dollars of new capital and furnished jobs for more than 150,000 workers. The state now has over 400 food processing plants, 22 shoe factories, 50 that make textiles and clothing, 70 which manufacture ceramics, plastics and glass, 120 metal working plants, and 40 mining, quarrying and milling establishments. In addition it has some 3,000 other smaller factories and plants, most of them established in the last eight years.

It might be supposed that such a vast industrial development must have been achieved at the expense of agriculture, so long the basis of the state's economy but such is not the case. Arkansas, which in 1940 had only eight crops with a value of more than a million dollars in 1949 had seventeen. The nine added were apples, beans, grapes, lespedeza seed, oats, safflower, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes. In 1949 the state stood second among the states of the Union in the production of cotton and cotton seed which had a combined value of over a quarter of a billion dollars.  

See Oklahoma City Times, Sept. 26, 1942, for editorial and news story.

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dollars and fourth in the production of rice and spinach.\(^{23}\)
In the same year the farm sales of livestock and poultry
including butter, cream and milk amounted to nearly 150
million dollars. In 1949 dairying alone brought to the state
some 30 million dollars.\(^{24}\)

It is true that between 1940 and 1950 the population
of Arkansas declined about 49,000 and that most of this
loss was suffered by the rural areas. Yet by scientific
farming, the increased use of machinery and fertilizer, new
crops, improved seed, and better breeds of livestock, fewer
people were able to increase enormously agricultural pro-
duction.

The loss of population in some rural districts of the
state must have been considerable since in 1940 77.8 of
the people of Arkansas lived in rural areas and only 22.2
per cent in towns of 2,500 or more. By 1950 these figures
had changed to 67.6 per cent rural and 32.4 urban.\(^{25}\)
In 1950 Arkansas had twelve cities with over 10,000 people,
twenty with a population between 5,000 and 10,000 and
thirty with 2,500 to 5,000 inhabitants. Only three towns,
all in the third group, had a slight decline in population
between 1940 and 1950. The remaining 50 all increased
usually from 20 to 50 per cent and in a few cases 100 per
cent or even more.\(^{26}\)

Most of this increase was due to the coming of new
industries largely brought in by local initiative usually with
the aid and advice of community counselors of experts from
outside. Always was stressed the fundamental truth that
more and better business must be accompanied by better
living conditions. Industrial leaders simply will not estab-
lish plants in a town which lacks an adequate water supply,
good schools, hospitals, parks and play grounds, paving,
sidewalks, and attractive homes. In short a town must be
a good place to live as well as to do business before it is
likely to attract industrial enterprises. The urban inhabi-
tants of Arkansas became so fully imbued with this idea
that the enormous advance of industry and agriculture has

\(^{23}\) See The Arkansas Story p. 62. Also, The Arkansas Resources and Develop-
ment Commission, Facts about Arkansas, p. 57.
\(^{24}\) Facts about Arkansas, p. 28.
\(^{25}\) Ibid. p. 9.
\(^{26}\) Ibid. pp. 3-11.