

# Benton County Historical Society



## BENTON COUNTY TIMELINE, 1541-1999<sup>1</sup>

This chronology lists key events relating to the origins and development of Benton County. The document is intended to stimulate interest in our local history, and to serve as a starting point for further study. The timeline extends from de Soto's exploits to the Louisiana Purchase to the near-simultaneous openings of XNA (the regional airport), I-540, and the Two-ton Loop.

### Arkansas & Benton County Roots

- 1541 - Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto, traveling from Florida, discovered the Mississippi River.
  - His party journeyed up the Arkansas to the west as far as present-day Oklahoma.
- 1682 - French explorer La Salle traveled from Mackinac Island on the Great Lakes to the upper Mississippi, thence descending to the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle claimed the entire Mississippi Valley, named Louisiana, for France.
- 1762 - France ceded Louisiana to Spain by the secret Treaty of Fountainebleau
- 1800 - Spain ceded Louisiana back to France.
- 1803 - Louisiana Purchase doubled size of the United States by transferring c. 828,000 sq. mi., including future Benton County, from France.
  - New lands (all located to the west of the Mississippi) designated as Louisiana Territory, with headquarters at St. Louis.
- 1806 - Territorial legislature created District of Arkansas as one of five districts; it included present AR and most of OK.
- 1812 - Louisiana Territory renamed Missouri Territory; Arkansas District became Arkansas County, with its seat of government at Arkansas Post.
- 1819 - Arkansas County separated from Missouri, becomes Arkansas Territory.
- 1827 - Major William Lovely, an Indian Agent, purchased land from the Osage Indians that later became Benton County.
- 1828 - Washington County established by Territorial Act. Included future Benton County, plus parts of Madison and Carroll.
  - Osage Indians are moved west from the area that would become Benton County.
  - Adam Batie, first white settler, moved to area near where Maysville is today.
- 1831 - Influx of white settlers from Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia begins.
- 1832 - Tobacco cultivation introduced from Kentucky.
- 1833 - John Keith of Maysville is reported to be the first white child born in what became Benton County.
- 1836 - Arkansas admitted as 25<sup>th</sup> state of the union, on September 30.
  - Benton County is established as 34<sup>th</sup> county, on the same day.



<sup>1</sup> This timeline was revised and re-compiled by Tom Duggan from an earlier version prepared by Anna Mae Searles, and appeared in the *Benton County Pioneer*, July-September, 1998. It has been further updated and edited by Bill Millager, with valuable assistance from the Rogers Historical Museum, the Rogers Public Library, the JBU Library, and others. ©1998 - 2002 BCHS. All rights reserved. 6/04/02

- Building Today's Benton County**
- 1836 - Benton County and Bentonville named in honor of long-time Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who promoted Arkansas statehood.  
 - Bentonville chosen to be County Seat.  
 - First General Store opened in Bentonville.
- 1837 - Cherokee Indians forced to migrate from Eastern States through Benton County to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). The route has been named "The Trail Of Tears."
- 1839 - First school in Benton County opens at War Eagle.
- 1840 - First Commercial apple orchard is planted.
- 1846 - Abraham Whinnery of Spavinaw enlists for the Mexican-American War and later becomes the first Army General from Benton County.
- 1857 - Bentonville establishes the county's first "Poor Farm" for the indigent.
- 1858 - Butterfield Stagecoach Line, from St. Louis to San Francisco, establishes stops at Elkhorn Tavern and Callahan Springs, in what is today Rogers.
- 1860 - U.S. Army constructs Telegraph line to Fort Smith along Stagecoach Road which is today known as Old Wire Road.  
 - Federal Census reports Benton County has 1,486 households composed of 8,905 Whites, 380 Blacks, and 16 Indians.
- 1862 - Battle of Pea Ridge (Elkhorn Tavern), the largest battle fought west of the Mississippi River. It prevented Confederate forces from advancing into Missouri.  
 - Downtown Bentonville is largely destroyed by fire related to Civil War action.
- 1872 - Bentonville establishes first free Public Grade School in Benton County.
- 1873 - Bentonville is re-incorporated.
- 1874 - Pea Ridge Academy opens with high school and vocational courses.
- 1875 - Benton County Medical Society established with five members.
- 1881 - St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad (Frisco) reaches Benton County.  
 - The first passenger train arrives in Rogers on May 10.
- Rogers is named in honor of Captain C. W. Rogers, manager of the Frisco.  
 - Avoca is moved to present location; Avoca's old location becomes Brightwater.  
 - Lowell (formerly Mudtown) is established along the Frisco Route.  
 - Post office and newspaper opened in newly incorporated town of Rogers.  
 - James H. Berry, of Bentonville, is elected Governor of Arkansas.
- 1883 - Bentonville Branch Railroad opens May 1; linked Bentonville with Frisco's main line in Rogers.
- 1885 - Town of Sulphur Springs laid.
- 1886 - Much of downtown Rogers is destroyed by fire. - Stroud's General Merchandise Store opens for business in Rogers.
- 1888 - Bentonville establishes school for blacks that operates until 1932.  
 - Rogers opens its first free public School.  
 - First Benton County Fair held in Bentonville.  
 - The town of Garfield is incorporated. Formerly known as Blansett.  
 - Bentonville is site of the Bentonville Evaporating Company whose plant used 800 bushels of apples a day to make dried apples.
- 1889 - Kansas City, Ft. Smith & Southern Railroad reaches Sulphur Springs. It would later become the Kansas City Southern Railway that operates today through Western Benton County - Sulphur Springs, Gravette, Decatur, Gentry, and Siloam Springs.
- 1892 - Rogers holds first local Chautauqua-type educational program.
- 1893 - Henry Starr gang robs the People's Bank of Bentonville.  
 - The Macon-Carson Distillery, the largest west of the Mississippi River, opens in Bentonville.
- 1894 - The town of Gentry is established.  
 - Post Office renamed Orchard in 1897.  
 - Town incorporated in 1898 as Gentry. Post Office re-renamed Gentry in 1900.  
 - William Jennings Bryan, two-time Democratic Presidential candidate and famed orator, is featured speaker at Rogers Chautauqua.  
 - Large commercial shipments of apples from Benton County commenced with

- Rogers shipping 287 carloads.
- 1898 - Rogers telephone office opens.  
 - Electric arc lights and board sidewalks are installed in Rogers.  
 - The Arkansas & Oklahoma Railroad of Bentonville starts building new line from Bentonville that reaches Grove, Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) by 1900.  
 - Two young men from Bentonville see fighting in the Spanish-American War with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders.
- 1900 - Extraction of pearls for buttons from White River mussels becomes major activity.  
 - William "Coin" Harvey, famed financial writer, arrives Benton County and begins creation of the Monte Ne resort colony.
- 1901 - Benton County produces 2.5 million bushels of apples - the most of any county in the United States.  
 - Bentonville celebrates orchard business with its first Fruit Fair.  
 - Rogers is noted as being the largest town in Arkansas that is not a county seat.
- 1902 - Coin" Harvey opens 4.11 mile long Monte Ne Railway.
- 1904 - Rogers fails in its effort to move the County Seat from Bentonville.  
 - First Public Library opens in Rogers.
- 1905 - Kruse gold mine opens in Rogers but soon fails due to lack of Gold.  
 - Large vinegar plant opens in Rogers to process cull apples unfit for shipment.  
 - The Rogers White Lime Company begins operations in Cross Hollows section of Rogers.
- 1906 - U. S. Weather Bureau opens in Bentonville, the smallest town in the U.S. to have a Weather Bureau Office.
- 1908 - Confederate Memorial monument in Bentonville is unveiled.
- 1909 - First Automobile Agency in Benton County opens in Rogers.
- 1912 - New York City orphans and foundlings arrive on "Orphan Train" in Rogers for possible adoption.
- 1913 - Ozark Trails Assn. formed to promote travel and tourism in four-state area.
- 1914 - Bank of Rogers collapses and creates severe hardship in that area.  
 - Arkansas Northwestern Interurban Railroad starts short-lived operations between Rogers and the Park Hotel in Bentonville.
- 1915 - Rogers builds new water and sewerage plant following severe typhoid epidemic.
- 1918 - Influenza epidemic sweeps the world and kills 7,000 in Arkansas: more than three times the number killed from Arkansas in World War I, then in progress.  
 - The Linebarger brothers begin development of Bella Vista resort.
- 1919 - John Brown University (originally Southwestern Collegiate University) founded in Siloam Springs by Methodist evangelist John Brown, Sr.  
 - Benton County apple crop peaked at five million barrels, worth \$5,000,000.  
 - Arkansas General Assembly grants women the right to vote.
- 1920 - Captain Field L. Kindley, a World War I Flying Ace from Gravette, is killed in aircraft accident.
- 1921 - Large-scale broiler chicken production begins in Benton County.  
 - Benton County ranked as largest egg producing County in Arkansas.  
 - Allen Canning Company begins operations in Siloam Springs.
- 1923 - First Apple Blossom Festival is held in Rogers.
- 1924 - John Brown purchases almost the entire town of Sulphur Springs, including several historic hotels and spa buildings, to establish another JBU campus.
- 1927 - Heavy floods hit Arkansas and devastate its agricultural economy.  
 - First 4-H Club established in Benton County.
- 1929 - First golf course built at Bella Vista.
- 1930 - Highway 71 constructed between Rogers and Bentonville.  
 - Wonderland Cave nightclub opens in Bella Vista.
- 1932 - William "Coin" Harvey of Monte Ne runs unsuccessfully for President on Liberty Party ticket.  
 - The First Girl Scout troop in Benton County is founded in Rogers.  
 - Federal Government's WPA Program offers Benton County men the chance to earn up to \$12.00 a week on roadwork.  
 - William Sullivan, last Bentonville Civil War Veteran, dies at 86.
- 1935 - Pet and Carnation Milk Companies

- establish milk processing plants in Rogers.
- 1936 - Rogers's Lake Atalanta constructed as WPA Project.  
- Bentonville's Louise Thadden, a famous aviatrix, is first woman to win the Bendix Transcontinental Air Race.
- 1937 - Carroll Electric Cooperative established to bring electric power to rural areas of Benton County.
- 1942 - Bates Memorial Hospital, the first modern hospital in Benton County, opens in Bentonville.
- 1945 - Rogers Municipal Airport opens with a 50-foot (wide) sod runway.
- 1947 - Munsingwear plant opened at 4<sup>th</sup> and Oak in Rogers (the round-top building, now part of Tyson's operation).
- 1948 - Hastings chicken hatchery, then the world's largest, opens in Rogers.
- 1950 - Sam Walton opens Walton's Five and Dime store on Bentonville Square.
- 1954 - Rogers Tool Works opened (as TRW/Wendt Sonis Co.).  
- Benton County Historical Society (BCHS) is founded in Bentonville.
- 1956 - Television comes to Northwest Arkansas.
- 1960 - Army Corps of Engineers begins work on Beaver Dam, which will impound a major part of the White River and create Beaver Lake.
- 1962 - The First Wal-Mart store opens in Rogers.
- 1963 - Pea Ridge National Military Park established.  
- Cooper Industries, Inc., purchases much of Bella Vista and begins large-scale resort development.  
- The Frisco discontinues rail passenger service in eastern Benton County.
- 1968 - Shiloh Farms Community, founded in New York State by E. Crosby Monroe, moves to its historic 117-acre site in the Sulphur Springs town center.
- 1969 - The Kansas City Southern ends passenger service in western Benton County.
- 1972 - President Nixon signs bill establishing the Buffalo National River, after a long struggle led by Dr. Neil H. Compton of Bentonville.
- 1975 - Rogers Historical Museum opens in downtown Rogers.
- 1978 - Volunteer-run recycling center is opened in Rogers.
- 1989 - Bekaert tire cord plant opens in Rogers as first foreign-owned (Belgian) plant.
- 1990 - Benton County has 97,499 residents including 24,367 in Rogers.
- 1992 - Sam Walton, Founder of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., receives the Medal of Freedom from President George Bush. Two weeks after receiving the nation's highest civilian award, Mr. Walton died.
- 1995 - Northwest Arkansas Community College opens Central Education Facility at Bentonville.
- 1998 - President Clinton dedicates Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA) at Highfill.
- 1999 - Interstate 540 completed from Benton County to I-40 west of Alma.  
- "Two-ton Loop" pipeline carries badly-needed water from Beaver Lake to western parts of Benton and Washington Counties, ensuring active development.

**BCHS Membership:**

Annual membership in BCHS costs \$15 (individual/household). Membership privileges include four quarterly issues of the *Benton County Pioneer*. Story ideas are welcome: [bchsark@juno.com](mailto:bchsark@juno.com).

**More Information:**

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**Visit the BCHS Website:**

<http://www.uark.edu/gmss/bchsark>  
Additional copies of this Benton County Timeline, in color, available at the site.