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Marker highlights significance of Military Road

Wendy Bradley Richter

Arkansas State Archives, wendy.richter@arkansas.gov

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Marker highlights significance of Military Road

By Wendy Richter

For the Siftings

A historical marker standing near the Diamond Lakes Visitors Center in Caddo Valley highlights the significance of the Military Road as a major transportation artery during the Civil War and throughout Arkansas's early history.

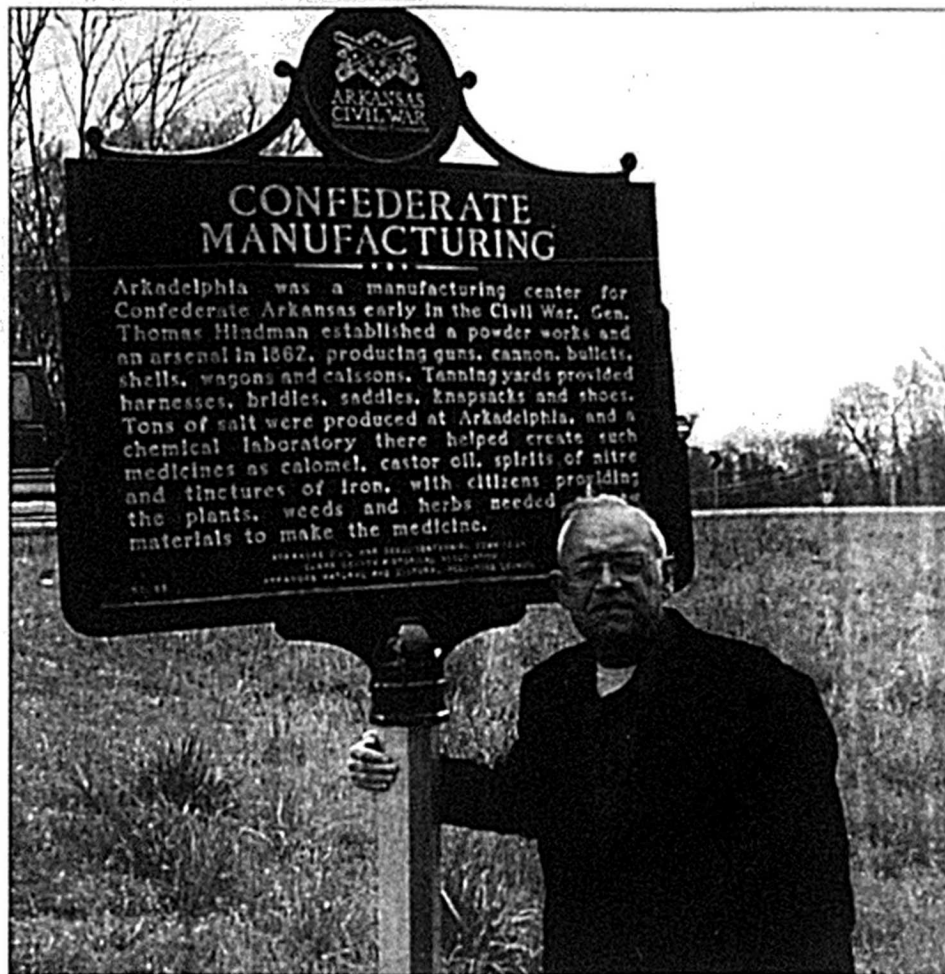
It also describes Arkadelphia's role as a Confederate manufacturing and supply center during the war: The "powder works" and "arsenal" were among this area's significant contributions to the Confederate war effort.

Unveiled back in 2014, the marker was sponsored by the Clark County Historical Association, the Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission, and the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council.

The "Confederate Manufacturing" portion of the marker reads: "Arkadelphia was a manufacturing center for Confederate Arkansas early in the Civil War. General Thomas Hindman established a powder works and an arsenal in 1862, producing guns, cannon, bullets, shells, wagons and caissons. Tanning yards provided harnesses, bridles, saddles, knapsacks and shoes. Tons of salt were produced at Arkadelphia, and a chemical laboratory there helped create such medicines as calomel, castor oil, spirits of nitre and tinctures of iron, with citizens providing the plants, weeds and herbs needed as raw materials to make the medicine."

General Hindman believed these operations at Arkadelphia to be quite beneficial in supporting the army's efforts.

However, in May of 1863, an explosion at the Powder Mill killed one man, and blew up the building and its machinery. But downtime was brief, for by mid-June, the mill was up and



running again.

As the war continued, Union troops occupied Little Rock in September of 1863, coming ever closer to Clark County. The decision was made to move the Arkadelphia facility to a safer location--Marshall, Texas.

According to historian Margaret Ross, writing for the Arkansas Gazette, "Not only the machinery and supplies were taken, but also the experienced workers who were employed at the plant." At Marshall, "Construction was

soon begun on the buildings to house a small arms factory, carpenter and blacksmith shop, powder mill, and magazine." It is likely that the new Marshall structures were similar to those that had operated in Arkadelphia.

The location of the Arkadelphia's Powder Works is believed to have been located in Section 18, Township 7 South, Range 19 West, based on the legal description found on page 477 of Deed Book M, housed at the Clark County

(Confederate.)

H1 37 Ark.

N. D. Harper
 Pot., Co. F., Bell's Regiment,
 Arkansas Infantry.

Appears on
 Company Muster Roll
 of the organization named above,
 for Dec. 31, 1863 to Feb. 29, 1864.

Enlisted:
 When *May 7, 1862.*
 Where *Clark Co.*
 By whom *W. J. Smith*
 Period *3 years*
 Last paid:
 By whom *Myr. Duval*
 To what time *Oct. 31, 1862.*

Present or absent *absent*
 Remarks: *Retained Ord. Dept. Ark.
 delphia, June 29, 1862.*

IMAGES COURTESY OF CLARK COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

At left, former Arkadelphia Mayor Chuck Hollingshead in 2014, at the time of the marker's unveiling. Above, Confederate service record of a soldier assigned to the Ordinance Department, Arkadelphia.

Court House.

Today the vicinity is a far cry from being industrial: the north side of Mill Creek and west of 15th Street is now a residential area.

For additional information about Clark County history, visit or contact the Clark County Historical Museum (www.clarkcountyhistory.org or 230.1360) or the Clark County Historical Association's Archives at the Ouachita Baptist University Library (www.obu.edu/archives or 245.5332).