

12-13-2017

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Wendy Bradley Richter

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By Wendy Richter
For the Siftings

In the early days of Arkansas history, counties were physically much larger, although much more sparsely settled.

Clark County was one of five counties in existence when Arkansas Territory was established in 1819. In fact, the county celebrates its 199th anniversary later this week.

The area that would later become the state of Arkansas became a part of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Officials established new political boundaries there, and the Louisiana Territory included all of the new land north of the present Arkansas-Louisiana border; the Or-

leans Territory lay to the south. When the Orleans Territory became the state of Louisiana in 1812, the area to its north became Missouri Territory, including what is now Arkansas. As population increased, additional counties were created in Missouri Territory. Within what is now Arkansas, the counties of Arkansas and Lawrence were first. Then, came Clark, Hempstead, and Pulaski, all established by the Missouri Territorial Legislature on December 15, 1818.

The title of the Act that created Clark County read "An Act providing for dividing the south-western part of the county of Arkansas into three separate counties." As specified, the act also estab-

lished Hempstead and Pulaski counties as well as Clark. All three spanned very large areas. The description of the new county of Clark read this way: "All that portion of the county of Arkansas, bounded as follows, to wit: beginning at the west boundary of the Quapaw claim, at a place where Michael Boon's road crosses the same, then west on said road to the south fork of the Saline creek, then up said creek to its head, then due west to the Indian boundary line, then with said boundary south with said Indian boundary line, until a due east line will intersect the head of the north branch of Little Missouri, then down the Little Missouri to its mouth, then with the Oua-

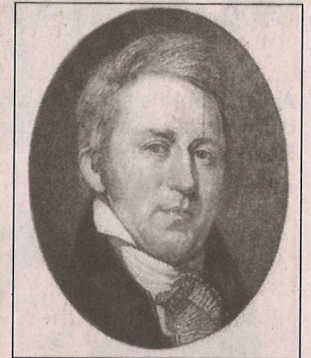
chitas river to the mouth of the Saline creek, on the boundary line of the Quapaw Indian claim, then with the Quapaw boundary line to the place of beginning, is hereby laid off and erected into a separate county, which shall be called and known by the name of Clark County."

The new county was named for William Clark, best remembered for his exploration of the Louisiana Purchase lands west of the Mississippi River acquired by the United States in 1803. The Corps of Discovery, as Lewis and Clark's expedition came to be called, provided new information about the culture and geography of the West. Significantly, Clark also served as the governor of

Missouri Territory from 1813 to 1820, which includes the time Clark County was established.

At the time of its formation, the new Clark County was a part of Missouri Territory--the creation of Arkansas Territory remained a several months away, March 2, 1819. The five counties that became a part of Arkansas were Arkansas, Lawrence, Clark, Hempstead, and Pulaski.

The Clark County Historical Association plans many special activities and programs leading up to the county's bicentennial on December 15, 2018. For additional information about those plans or Clark County history, visit or contact the Clark County Historical Museum



William Clark of the famed Lewis and Clark Expedition, for whom Clark County, Arkansas, is named. SUBMITTED

(www.clarkcountyhistory.org or (870) 230-1360) or the Clark County Historical Association's Archives at the Ouachita Baptist University Library (www.obu.edu/archives or (870) 245-5332).