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Daleville

Wendy Bradley Richter

Arkansas State Archives, wendy.richter@arkansas.gov

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Ferry on Ouachita River connected Arkadelphia and Daleville

Daleville

No one living today recalls the 1886 founding of one of Arkansas's largest lumber mills and its surrounding community, once located directly across the Ouachita River from Arkadelphia and known as Daleville. No visible evidence of the original mill remains today, but the operation played an important role in Clark County's economy for many years.

The organizer and first president of the Arkadelphia Lumber Company was R.W. Huie. Huie chose the mill's location, across the river east of Arkadelphia and on the Iron Mountain Railroad (later Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific). The mill sat at the end of the railroad's trestle, which proved to be quite advantageous during the spring rains and frequent flooding of the Ouachita.

Long before a bridge crossed the river, a ferry transported people and goods across the stream. The Arkadelphia Lumber Company arranged for its mill workers to ride free while traveling to and from work. During times of high water, when the swift river made it too dangerous for the ferry to operate, mill workers walked across on the railroad trestle. The company also built a boardwalk from the ferry to the mill, and the raised walk made it possible for workers to make the trek during times of minor floods. Few workers lived at or near the mill site; most preferred to reside on the higher elevations across the river in Arkadelphia.

Organized in 1886, members of the Arkadelphia Lumber Company's board of directors were R.W. Huie, president; E.G. Wilder, secretary; Dr. J.R. Dale (for whom the mill town was named); C.C. Henderson; J.F. Miles; P.C. Blair; S.L. Miles; and E.H. Warner. During its first years of operation in the late 1800s, the mill is said to have produced 100,000 feet of pine lumber per day, and employed 175 workers. It was Arkadelphia's largest payroll.

But, numbers increased even more. By 1902, pine lumber produced increased to 150,000 feet per day, and still later, to 250,000. Other investors began to buy into the company, including George Grayson, who became the largest stockholder. Grayson wanted to move the mill to the western edge of Arkadelphia, to be closer to more timber assets, but some townspeople opposed the move. He eventually moved the operation to western Clark County and developed the town of Graysonia. The Arkadelphia Lumber Company surrendered its charter in 1912.

While Daleville ceased to be the location of the original Arkadelphia Lumber Company (later Grayson Lumber Company), it continued to be the place of operation for various other lumber mills. For example, Jim and Tom Clark used the site in their timber operations. The Sturgis family also used the location as a lumber mill from the 1930s to 1950s. When their mill burned in 1955, it was not rebuilt.