

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Articles

Faculty Publications

2-14-2018

Barkman considered "The Father of Clark County"

Wendy Richter

Arkansas State Library

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/articles>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Richter, Wendy, "Barkman considered "The Father of Clark County" (2018). *Articles*. 279.
<https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/articles/279>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

Barkman considered “The Father of Clark County”



By Wendy Richter
For the Siftings

neur and leader in river commerce. He opened the area's first cotton gin and became the first to operate a steamboat on the Ouachita River. Barkman owned a huge amount of land, amassing holdings of approximately 22,000 acres during his lifetime. So significant was his impact on the area's economic growth and development, he is often called “The Father of Clark County.”

Jacob's wife, Rebecca Barkman, was an equally fascinating figure. The daughter of a legendary bear hunter, one man claimed she “chewed tobacco, she smoked a pipe, she drank whiskey, and cursed and swore as heartily as any backwoodsman, all at the same time.” Another described her as “weighing along in the latitude of 200. She is illbred, or rather not bred at all, smokes a dirty pipe, talks all manner of nonsense, and never had a bonnet on her head in her life.”

Jacob and Rebecca Barkman first built a cabin on the Caddo River, then constructed a two-story home made of sun-dried bricks. The Barkman home was the site of much political and economic activity. Clark County's first postoffice was located there, and following the creation of Clark County in 1818, the house also served as the county seat. The home served as a stop for stagecoaches, and even performed duty as the county jail. Approximately five miles from Arkadelphia, the Barkman house was located along the Military Road, the primary transportation artery which ran from St. Louis to Little Rock to Mexico and the Southwest. The building no longer stands.

One of the distinctive aspects of Jacob and Rebecca Barkman's property was the race track he built. Interestingly, it circled an old Indian mound. Local legend says that people came from as far away as

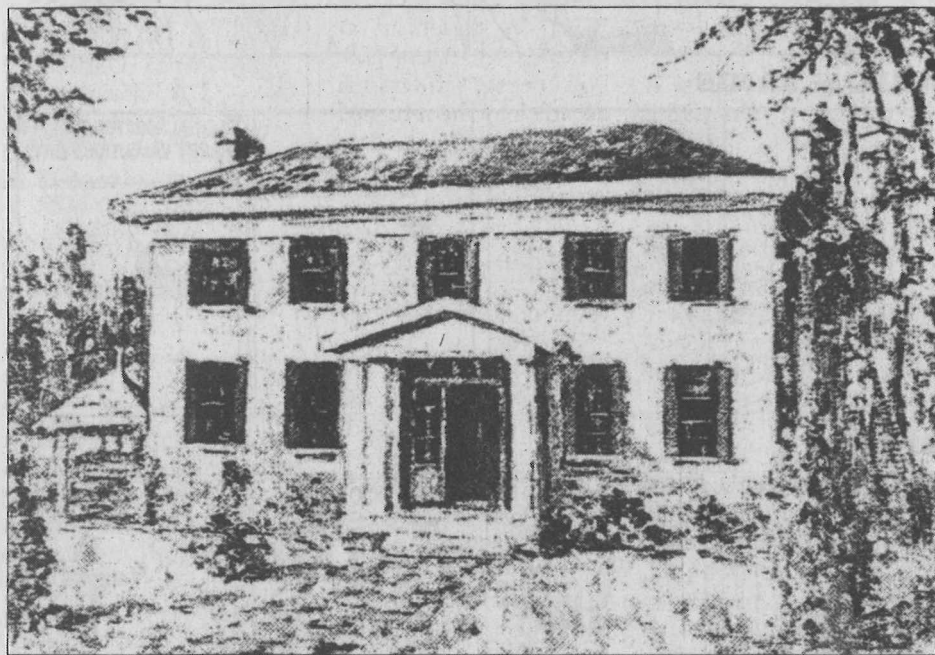


IMAGE COURTESY OF CLARK COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The home of Jacob and Rebecca Barkman.

Kentucky and Tennessee to wager on their favorite horses. Today, the mound is extremely difficult to see in the summer months, due to thick vegetation. However, in the winter, travelers headed southwest on Interstate 30 can still catch a

glimpse of it: Simply look slightly to the right of the highway while crossing the Caddo River bridge to see the former site of Clark County's very own racetrack.

For additional information about Clark County history, visit or contact

the Clark County Historical Museum (www.clark-countyhistory.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).