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Denny Keith Cain

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CLANK COMPANY DURING THE DEPRESSION YEARS

1927-1932

A Research Paper

Presented to

Dr. Ray Grande

Central Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Research Seminar

by

Denny Keith Cain

December 1978

The Depression began in Clark County in 1927. The floods of that year caused extensive crop damage and hardship on local farmers and merchants. This depression affected every facet of society. When the "Great Depression" began in 1929, the county suffered even further. The lack of jobs and money were the greatest curse of the depression. The hardships led to the involvement of the federal government. The government started programs to put men to work and relieve the suffering of the people. The reaction of the county was mixed toward these programs. The money the government provided was the beginning of a new phase of government's role in society. This was perhaps the greatest reform of the depression. However, Clark County had to face other reform issues. Prohibition and evolution were two very major issues. The county had one great issue to decide that caused a conflict in beliefs, the presidential election of 1928. Clark County was a democratic county. They were also primarily Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian in religious beliefs. The conflict came with the 1928 presidential candidate Al Smith. Mr. Smith was a Catholic and was against prohibition. This conflict over religion and politics in 1928 saw politics winning by a landslide.

The attitudes of the people changed as well. They had been a fiercely independent people, but they soon adjusted to government aid.

The value of money and jobs became very important. Other aspects in the county saw no reform, such as the whites' attitudes toward blacks. The depression had an effect on every phase of society in the county.

The Depression began in Clark County long before the national crisis of 1929. The farmers received low prices for their crops as early as 1926. Bankers and other agencies had warned the farmers of over production in 1926. They did not heed those warnings, and cotton fell to 10¢ a pound. The low price of cotton, which was the staple crop, caused hardships on all. In January of 1927, local bankers again warned of over production and said they "saw no reason for alarm about hard times."¹ To add to the difficulties of the low commodity prices at the market, there was a flood in 1927 which was one of the worst in Clark County's history. This flood had disastrous effects on all of Arkansas.² The flood sent all the rivers in Clark County and surrounding areas over their banks at planting time. On April 21, 1927, the Red River, which is 40 miles south of Gurdon, was 11 miles wide.³ The Ouachita River stood at 35.6 feet and had overflowed at Arkadelphia.⁴ In June of 1927, it rained 4 1/4 inches in only one hour and forty-five minutes flooding the Ouachita River again.⁵ The farmers who escaped the flood waters did not, however, escape the wet weather. The crops were replanted several times and production was cut very short.

Mr. Oscar Moore of Gurdon said that he felt the effects of the flood for two years after the flood.⁶ In 1928 businesses in Arkansas and Clark County began to feel the strain of these conditions and began to collapse.⁷ The per capita income for Arkansas in 1929 was \$305, far below the national average of \$705.⁸ The average wage paid to farm workers in 1929 was \$1.65 per day.⁹ The national disaster in 1929 brought even more disastrous conditions to Clark County.

Curiously enough, when the stock market crashed in 1929, no mention of it was made in any of the local papers in Clark County. They soon felt the effects of the depression, however, and suffered a "scarcity of money, lack of food, and unemployment."¹⁰ 1930 began in Clark County with record breaking rains. There were 14.22 inches of rain from January 6 to the 16th causing the Ouachita River to flood.¹¹ Despite this familiar scene, prosperity was being predicted. State officials and industrial leaders had predicted that 1930 would be one of the most prosperous years in the state's history. Clark County was optimistic as well. Several new business deals were in the making and only had to be finalized.¹² There was an increase of \$3,739,162 in the assets of banks and trust companies over the state.¹³ But alas, the predictions did not come about. The whole state of Arkansas... "suffered from the most serious drought recorded until that time."¹⁴ The temperatures in July exceeded 107 degrees and topped 110 degrees in August.

The crops suffered from the heat and lack of water. The water shortage led to restrictions on water usage.¹⁵ The drought was so severe that eight hundred families were financially destroyed and were given turnip seeds to plant to get them through the coming winter.¹⁶ A local relief committee was formed, and the Red Cross came and helped local farmers.¹⁷ These conditions worsened as the depression lingered.

The declining financial condition of Clark County during this period can clearly be seen in the financial statements of the local banks. The Clark County Bank reported resources of \$335,890.68 for the fiscal year of 1926.¹⁸ The Merchants and Planters Bank reported resources of \$156,713.07 for the same year.¹⁹ The following year, 1927, both banks showed a decrease in total resources. The Clark County Bank reported \$324,862, and Merchants and Planters Bank reported \$151,696 in total resources.²⁰ The years of 1928 and 1929 saw even further decline. The Clark County Bank reported \$382,654 in resources in 1928.²¹ In 1929 the bank's resources were reported as \$281,875.²² These declining conditions worsened during the depression. The Clark County Bank reported \$86,071 in 1934.²³

The depression years often saw Clark County banks in difficulty. In December of 1930, a run on the Merchants and Planters Bank caused them to close their doors. When this bank closed its doors, a run on the other banks in town occurred.

They managed to survive this onrush, and "by night fall the rush had subsided."²⁴ The Merchants and Planters Bank, however, did not reopen until February of 1931.²⁵ Not all the banks were able to survive. The Peoples Bank at Okalona was liquidated in January of 1931. The bank's assets were \$34,000, and liabilities were \$24,000 at the time the bank closed.²⁶ These bank closings had an effect on everyone. Jim Hobgood said as a child he could get a nickel or dime if he wanted it until the banks closed. Then there wasn't any money.²⁷ The banks also foreclosed on those that could not pay their debts. Some of these debts were settled for 50¢ on the dollar, and some would eventually satisfy the entire debt. The banks would sell the land that they had taken over or would have to hold the land.²⁸ When the banks were liquidated, the bank depositors were paid 10¢ or 20¢ on the dollar if they received anything at all. There was a general feeling that when Roosevelt took office that the bank situation would stabilize.²⁹ Many people were caught by surprise by these bank closings. Bill McMillian had come home for the weekend with his paycheck of \$167. Before depositing the check in the Merchants and Planters Bank, he stopped to talk to his father. Mr. McMillian's father was an official of the bank and was in a meeting to decide whether or not to close the bank when Bill arrived. After talking a few minutes with his father, Bill went on to the bank and deposited his check. The next day the bank closed its doors.

To add to the irritation of Bill, the bank was closed when he arrived and had accepted his deposit after hours.³⁰ The conditions of banks did improve but not without government intervention.

Clark County was primarily an agricultural community. The years 1927-1939 were hard years for the farmers of Clark County. Cotton production had been up until 1927. In 1926 the county produced 20,615 bales of cotton, an increase of 3,326 bales over the previous year. The problem with this increase was that the price for cotton was decreasing with the surplus.³¹ The flood of 1927 decreased the acreage and production, but the price increased.³² The price of cotton in 1927 rose to \$10 a bale in early August and to \$15 later in the month.³³ In 1929 production was up to 14,909 bales.³⁴ This was an increase of 1/3 over the 1928 crop. The price of cotton went back down with the increase of production.³⁵ Farmers were again encouraged to reduce their production and to improve the grade to meet foreign competition.³⁶ The year 1930 was the year of the drought, and production was reduced by nature. There were only 7,978 bales ginned in 1930. These 7,978 bales of cotton brought \$389,900. In 1931 production was up considerably. The county produced 20,643 bales of cotton, but the price was down.³⁷ The price of cotton fell to 5.05¢ on the New York market in 1932.³⁸ The price soon dropped to a nickel a pound, the lowest price since 1897.³⁹

Some farmers refused to sell their cotton for 5¢ a pound and ended up burning it. Cotton was not the only product to suffer from low prices. Timbermen were advised to keep their timber off the market in 1932.⁴⁰

The scarcity of money affected families in Clark County. The farmers found it difficult to borrow money to equip their farms or to plant their crops. To add to the financial difficulties of some, farmers had to pay a drainage ditch tax which was about \$400 a year.⁴¹ Many of the farmers in Clark County were renters who had to pay 1/3 and 1/4 rent. With prices low, this made renting almost impossible. If a person did not have his own equipment, he could rent on halves; and the owner would supply the equipment. The farm laborers picked cotton for 50¢ a hundred. The farmers also worked at cutting lumber during the winter months. Contractors would go through an area and hire people for \$1.00 a day or 50¢ a ream. Mr. Oscar Moore tried farming for three years as a renter but "couldn't make a living" and started working at a sawmill for 75¢ a day for ten hours a day. Times got so hard for Mr. and Mrs. Moore that they didn't have a dime. They, like many others, found the country store would give them credit until they could make some money.⁴² The families were fed with home grown items. Cornbread was the staple bread with biscuits being "...served on Sunday."⁴³ The tenant farmers would have to borrow money to make a crop. This only led to further difficulties for the farmers.⁴⁴

The lack of money to buy feed for their livestock caused the farmers to use every part of their own grain. The blades were pulled off the corn stalk and used as fodder. They fed this to their horses and cattle.⁴⁵ The farmers would exchange work in an attempt to get their crops out. This was necessary because they could only pay 35¢ a hundred for cotton picking as the depression wore on. Some of the pickers could pick 300 pounds a day, but the average was 200 pounds. Unless these pickers had a large family, they could not make enough to buy groceries.⁴⁶ Parity payments were paid to farmers to reduce cotton acreage. The farm owners in Clark County received \$172,242.92 in parity payments in 1934. This helped farm owners but in no way helped tenant farmers or farm laborers.⁴⁷ The total cotton acreage in Clark County for 1934 was 16,783 acres. This was far below the 1926 acreage.⁴⁸

The women and children worked in fields just like the men. It did not matter what race a person was; the women and children worked. The children would begin working as soon as they were big enough.⁴⁹ The children who were too small to work were taken to the fields and left at the wagon. Mrs. Willie Goodloe would take her son as did Mrs. Baumgardener. Their feelings were mixed. Mrs. Goodloe saw it as something that could not be avoided and did not think too much about it. "... Everybody else was doing it so I did, too."⁵⁰

Mrs. Baumgardener also saw the situation as unavoidable, and she never wanted to do it. She said, "It was hard on me and the boy too."⁵¹ These women of the depression worked very hard. They helped their husbands put the crops in as well as to cultivate and harvest them. They also did the domestic chores of cooking, washing, and cleaning. To add to this, they often milked the cows and fed the chickens and hogs. The responsibility of maintaining a stable family unit fell directly on the women. The effects these conditions had on the children were varied. The children got the same amount for picking cotton, that is so much per pound, and worked just as long as their parents. The children often picked cotton and put it in their parents' sacks if they were too small to pull one themselves. These children had to work hard and suffer the same hardships their parents did. However, for most these hard times brought them closer to their families. Today, they remember the hard times vividly, but the bad memories are overshadowed by their memory of parental love.⁵² This was not true for everyone. For some the hard times left a bitter memory that took many years to overcome. The hard work, isolation, and lack of opportunity to express a talent gave some bitterness and a sense of shame. Mr. Dennis Holt who suffered through the depression changed his shame and bitterness to pride. This pride led him to write "Raincrow Summer", a play about his early experiences in the Great Depression.⁵³

The farmers were not alone in suffering from hard times. The whole population suffered. Jobs were scarce and unemployment soared. The unemployment figures for Arkansas in 1929 were 24,144. This figure climbed rapidly, and in 1933 it reached 244,809.⁵⁴ The unemployment decreased after 1934, and in 1935 the figure was down to 41,439.⁵⁵ Clark County suffered a high unemployment rate as well. In January of 1931, 2,000 people were cared for by the Red Cross. The figure was expected to double before spring. Blacks and whites were cared for by the Red Cross.⁵⁶ By June the number had grown to 3,000 people asking for food.⁵⁷ The State Emergency Relief Commission reported 1,000 unemployed in Clark County. 561 of these were from Arkadelphia.⁵⁸ The number climbed to 3,000 in 1933.⁵⁹ Until Roosevelt implemented federal relief programs, relief to help the unemployed was by the Red Cross or by local charity efforts. The state of Arkansas provided no relief funds from 1931-1934.⁶⁰ The women in Arkadelphia formed an organization which provided relief for the destitute in 1930. They formed this organization to help the families hurt by the drought.⁶¹ The lodges, churches, and schools formed a charity organization in December of 1930 for the same purpose.⁶² The Red Cross called on local people in Clark County to discard their old clothes for the needy. The clothes were distributed to the needy to help keep them warm.⁶³ The Red Cross investigated the individuals who applied for aid.

The conditions they found in the homes were deplorable. "Those applying for aid have nothing to eat...and no money with which to buy food."⁶⁴ The people who applied for aid had to get a statement from a reliable "white person." The statement had to show that the applicant was out of work and food.⁶⁵ The first 14 days the Red Cross opened, they supplied groceries to feed 1,081 people.⁶⁶ A report on the conditions of people receiving aid from the Red Cross in June 1931 stated, "Many cases are pitiful, especially among Negroes."⁶⁷ The employees of the Missouri Pacific Railroad met and agreed to participate in relief work among those employees out of work.⁶⁸ The county received \$12,150 from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for the last two months of 1932, and \$15,000 for the first two months of 1933.⁶⁹ The county was involved in a forrest project that President Roosevelt had designed to help get people work.⁷⁰ The relief fund from the federal government stopped in June of 1933, and people were "urged to look for employment."⁷¹ The trouble was that there were no jobs available except for government projects. The Civilian Conservation Corp opened headquarters for a sub-district in Arkadelphia in June of 1933.⁷² The citizens of Gurdon signified a willingness to fight depression in a campaign in 1933. The extent of this campaign and its effectiveness was not made clear.⁷³

The Emergency Relief Board distributed 6,000 pounds of dry salt meat to help people get through the winter of 1934.

This was in addition to the other supplies normally given out.⁷⁴ CWA projects were approved in November of 1933, and several men started work on road projects.⁷⁵ By December of 1933, the CWA had 55 projects going in Clark County. The expenditures for these projects were \$120,934. The weekly payroll was \$8,000. The rate of pay was 40¢ an hour for 40 hours a week for men working on the roads, and 40¢ an hour for 30 hours a week for men working on building projects.⁷⁶ By 1935 the unemployment rate was down to 7.4% in the county. These included people of all ages and were being supported by some institution within the county or state.⁷⁷ The total relief expenditure from April 1, 1934 to February 28, 1935 for the county was \$295,797.⁷⁸ The reaction of the people of Clark County toward these relief programs both local and federal was mixed. The people of Clark County had been an independent people. This change to dependence on the government reformed not only Clark County but the nation. The NRA required industries to pay 15¢ an hour. However, not all local establishments were willing to pay the nickel increase. Sturgis Lumber Company legally fought the order.⁷⁹ The government projects meant food on the table, but more importantly, they meant work. The feeling was negative for many, but there was simply no choice.⁸⁰ The pride of the people seemed threatened.⁸¹ The people who worked on the WPA were not looked upon favorably by some of the community. They had jokes about them leaning on shovel handles and not doing any work.⁸²

Some people felt so strongly about not working on the WPA that they would do almost anything to avoid it. They prided themselves on not working on the WPA.⁸³ Some felt the government programs did not really serve the purpose they had been designed for. A man in Clark County stated, "Some that were on government jobs didn't need it, and some that needed it couldn't get it."⁸⁴ These feelings were not held by everyone. Many felt the programs were a blessing.⁸⁵

The attempts to find employment was most often futile for job seekers in Clark County, but their search was unending. If people did have a job, they looked for better ones.⁸⁶ The hope of a job would send men great distances. Samuel Darrell Hasley's father heard a rumor that Hattie Caraway would put him to work as a jointor in the White House if he would go there. He left his family, hopped a freight train, and went to Washington. He was gone for two or three weeks, and upon his return, he informed his family that the rumor was untrue. He had traveled all that distance for just a possibility of work. The trip almost killed him because of the lack of warmth and food. Mr. Hasley's father later became a peddler. He would stop at houses in the country and barter for chickens, pigs, or anything the family had to trade. An abscessed lung ended any work or trading for Mr. Hasley's father. The Hasley's lived at several localities in Clark County. The young Hasley recalled seeing over 100 men riding boxcars on a single train going nowhere, because they couldn't find work.'

The conditions left the father passive, and he "would almost accept anything without protest."⁸⁷

Mr. Joe Barfield remembered men in the county leaving for California. They were trying to find work, but they discovered that the conditions in California did not meet their expectations. They returned to Clark County. "Sometimes young men would go away and ... sometimes they didn't reunite with their families."⁸⁸ Bill McMillian remembered men standing in front of Herris Bakery in Arkadelphia smelling the fresh baked bread, but they could not afford to buy any. These men stood on the streets and spent the day doing nothing. "These men were not lazy. They were just people who didn't have a job. There were no jobs." The people took the attitude of mistrust. They could not get a government job or work doing anything.⁸⁹ The people of the Gurdon community would also go to town and loaf away the day, because there wasn't anything else to do. For some, hunting was a means of earning a living. J. A. Bumgardener hunted mink during the winter and sold the hides for \$9.00 a piece in Prescott. He often went to the woods and killed a wild boar for food.⁹⁰ The only solution for many was to receive food from the Red Cross.⁹¹ The businessmen nor the people who were fortunate enough to have employment were secure either. The Sturgis Brothers Milling Company's president, Noel Adams, played the stock market and "when the stock market collapsed so did the milling company."⁹² A layoff at Missouri Pacific Railroad occurred in December of 1930.

The layoff was brief but not everyone that worked for the railroad was able to stay.⁹³ Perry Nelson went without a check for 2 1/2 months. He was a collector for the state in Clark County.⁹⁴ Herbert Stanford's father worked at a department store in Arkadelphia, and business became so slow that he only worked one day a week.⁹⁵ Jim Hobgood graduated from Ouachita Baptist College in 1936 and went throughout the state looking for a job in his field of training, chemistry. There were no jobs available, and he returned to Arkadelphia. He got so tired of doing nothing that he said he would work for nothing. He didn't have to work for nothing, but he only made a dollar a day for a local abstracting company.⁹⁶ The work was not always for money. J. A. Baumgardener dug ditches for 75¢ a day and was paid in lard and eggs.⁹⁷ The effects of the depression were not all bad. Fay Holiman was forced out of work, but she went back to school and got a Master's Degree at the University of Texas.⁹⁸ Jett Black changed jobs in 1936, and his pay increased from \$85.00 to \$150.00 a month.⁹⁹ Miss Lizzie Waldrum worked for Bell Telephone, and the only hardship she faced on her job was a cut in hours. She had been working 9 hours a day, six days a week. Her time was reduced to five days a week.¹⁰⁰ The inability to find work led one young Arkadelphia woman, Cunice Copeland, to commit suicide in 1930. She was 21 and a graduate from Henderson State Teachers' College.¹⁰¹

The hard times brought neighbors closer together, and "neighbors helped one another."¹⁰² They shared in the hardships of the depression, diseases, and death. They visited each other and shared with each other.¹⁰³ Charlie Holder and Gene Buck worked together in the early thirties and became very close friends. These men best exemplify how this closeness between neighbors was important. Charlie Holder's son died, and Gene Buck sat up with the family. However, he did not attend the funeral. He worked and gave Charlie the dollar he earned that day.¹⁰⁴

Negroes in the county also suffered financial and social hardship. They suffered from the loss of livelihood, and in 1931 more than 1/3 of the people on relief were Negroes.¹⁰⁵ They looked for work and had to accept what they could get. They earned \$1.00 a day for their labor.¹⁰⁶ The social status of Negroes was inferior. They had to tip their hats and get off the sidewalk for whites.¹⁰⁷ The Degray community did not allow Negroes to live past Degray Creek. They were allowed to cross during the day to work, but they had to leave at night.¹⁰⁸ These conditions were not new. The feelings these conditions produced were not new either. A large majority of the Negro population accepted their lot because "it was common."¹⁰⁹ There were a few who resented and hated the whites.¹¹⁰ The Negroes were kept in their places with little difficulty. However, there were other aspects of society not easily controlled.

Violation of the prohibition law was common in the county. The sheriff's department had its hands full trying to keep liquor out of the county. But not only was it brought in from other counties, it was made in abundance in Clark County. The efforts to halt this activity often produced results. Sheriff J. H. Lookadoo confiscated 75 gallons of illegal liquor and had a whiskey smashing in Arkadelphia on June 29, 1927. Quite a crowd gathered to see this spectacle.¹¹¹ The transportation of liquor was illegal as well, and the sheriff kept a sharp look out for anyone transporting liquor.¹¹² The problem kept everyone busy. There were 71 criminal cases tried in January of 1931, and 36 of these were for violating the prohibition law.¹¹³ The search for the still never stopped, but they were well hidden and guarded. Some of these stills had a capacity to produce 200 gallons of moonshine whiskey.¹¹⁴ They were often raided with good results. They often found not only moonshine but "government liquor."¹¹⁵

The year 1935 was a critical year in Clark County concerning liquor. The county had to face the possibility of having liquor sold legally for the first time since about 1893.¹¹⁶ This realization began to awaken citizens, and protests were begun. The loudest protests were in Arkadelphia. Arkadelphia had a law prohibiting the sale of liquor within three miles of its city limits. This law had been passed half a century before by a special act of the state legislature.¹¹⁷

With this kind of special law, the citizens of Arkadelphia led the way in protest. However, others in the county felt just as strong and fought just as hard against legalized liquor. The protests, led by Robert Naylor, did not stop the opening of liquor establishments; and the protestors called for a special election to end this problem.¹¹⁸ They felt that Clark County had two colleges in it, and the colleges' morals should be protected.¹¹⁹ The special election was held, and the voters outlawed liquor in the county by a majority of 315 to 56 votes.¹²⁰ The liquor question was again out of the way legally. The drinkers of the county were not to be denied, and they went elsewhere for their drink or made it themselves.

There were other issues faced by Clark County voters. On the ballot in the 1928 election, the voters defended Genesis by placing Act 1 on the ballot. The act read in part, "That it shall be unlawful for any teacher or other instructor in any university, college, normal, public school or other institution"¹²¹... "to teach man is descended from the lower order of apes."¹²² The act carried in the county by a vote of 281 to 110.¹²³ This gave Arkansas the distinction of being the only state to protect the teaching of Genesis by popular vote.¹²⁴ The vote by the people of Clark County was to be expected. The county held deep religious convictions that were not to be threatened. The county voted Democratic in the same election.

This was not unusual because Clark County had not voted Republican since 1904.¹²⁵ However, the Republican Party had a local organization. There were over 100 members by September of 1928.¹²⁶ These brave souls were subjected to public humiliation by an Arkadelphia newspaper. An article appeared in the October 11, 1928 issue of the Southern Standard. The headlines read, "Woman Tells of Seeing Negroes and Whites in Hoover Office." The women of the county were called upon to cast off their Hoover buttons and save the family name.¹²⁷ There were other Hoover supporters in the county. The Red River Baptist Association could not support anyone who supported the repeal of prohibition. Of course, Al Smith was known to drink; and after all, he was a Catholic. These two attributes were too much, and the association went on record for Hoover.¹²⁸ These organizations were not enough to sway the opinion of the voters, however. Smith carried the county and state. Hoover received more votes in Arkansas than any other Republican.¹²⁹ In the county, Hoover carried Curtis, Atlee, and Sloans Crossing; and Amity went 50-50. All the other towns went overwhelmingly for Smith.¹³⁰ The total votes in the county were 1817 for Smith and 913 for Hoover.¹³¹ The nation elected Hoover, but he was not popular in Clark County, especially after the depression hit Clark County. The term Hoover Days was coined. This term depicted a strong dislike for Hoover.¹³² There were other terms connected with Hoover. A rabbit was called a "Hoover Hog."¹³³

A car torn apart and abandoned was called a "Hoover Wagon."¹³⁴ This intense dislike for Hoover aided Roosevelt in the 1932 presidential election. The county voted overwhelmingly for Roosevelt. This would have happened anyway if past voting is any indication of voting habits. Roosevelt received 2,990 votes to Hoover's 183 in the county.¹³⁵ The election of Roosevelt brought thousands to Arkadelphia to celebrate. They had a parade and bands played. It was an affair of joy and expectation.¹³⁶

The unusual aspects of the 1932 election was that Clark County voted overwhelmingly to send Hattie Caraway to the United States Senate. She was the first woman who served a full six year term in the senate. Her platform was simply to give relief to the people that needed it and economizing the government. Of course, her biggest asset was the support of Huey "Kingfish" Long, the senator from Louisiana.¹³⁷ Mr. Long caused quite a gathering at the courthouse in Arkadelphia in August of 1932. The people gathered just to hear him speak.¹³⁸ The appearance of Huey Long was looked upon by some as interference from an outsider.¹³⁹ Some people were simply opposed to Huey Long period.¹⁴⁰ The other unusual event in the 1932 election was the entrance of an Arkansas man for president. Coin Harvey was the presidential nominee of the New Liberty Party. He only received 1,049 votes in the whole of Arkansas and only 9 votes in Clark County. The Octogenarian from Monte Ne, Arkansas was not taken seriously.¹⁴¹

The important figure in the election was Franklin D. Roosevelt. The programs he enacted shaped the society that followed the depression.¹⁴² He certainly had a great impact on Clark County. The attitudes of the people were uplifted, and their expectations were high for the future.¹⁴³ They listened to his fireside chats on the radio religiously.¹⁴⁴ However, there were a few who did not like Roosevelt or his programs. Robert Naylor said, "I consider Roosevelt responsible for the bankruptcy of our country."¹⁴⁵ President Roosevelt had a great impact on the county and the country. The reforms he instituted changed government's role in society.

The radio was a source of news and entertainment. The Grand Ole Opry was a big hit in Clark County, and the comedies were also popular. The favorite comedies were Amos 'n Andy and Lum and Abner.¹⁴⁶ Jimmie Rodgers led the list as the favorite country singer. He was not only a favorite in Clark County but in most of the country. Hank Snow referred to him as "The Daddy of us all."¹⁴⁷ He sang about the people and times of the depression. His songs reflect the mood of the Depression generation. He sang about men on the move without hope just riding trains to nowhere in particular. He sang songs like "Brakeman's Blues", "Hobo Bill's Last Ride", and "Waiting for a Train." The songs, "Never No Mo' Blues" and "My Rough and Rowdy Ways", reflected the feelings and lifestyle of men in the depression.¹⁴⁸ There were other favorites like Roy Acuff and Flat and Scruggs.¹⁴⁹

For those who could afford it, the local theater was a source of entertainment. The price of admission into the theaters was 10¢ for children and 35¢ for adults.¹⁵⁰ The movie theaters were a very big thing for the kids. They would save every penny they could get their hands on just to get to go.¹⁵¹ But for a lot of kids, the theater was an impossible dream. They simply could not afford the price of a ticket.¹⁵² Just going to town was entertainment. A trip to town was not an everyday event. The available goods for purchase in town were varied, and prices were substantial for people who made \$1.00 a day. A work shirt cost 49¢. Overalls were 89¢ a pair, and men's khaki pants were 98¢. Shoes were \$2.98 a pair for men and \$1.79 for women. If a person bought groceries, they paid 45¢ for 5 pounds of Great Northern beans, and lard was \$1.99 for 10 pounds.¹⁵³ As the depression years passed, prices did not fluctuate much. In 1938 flour was \$1.65 for 48 pounds, meal was 65¢ for 24 pounds, and sugar was 47¢ for 10 pounds.¹⁵⁴ If a person had the money, he could buy a Chevrolet Roadster for \$495.00 in 1930.¹⁵⁵ When the tires wore out, it cost around \$12.00 to replace them.¹⁵⁶ People bought food and clothing in stores only when it was absolutely necessary.

The churches were a place of worship and social gathering. Nationally, religion suffered tremendously during the depression. They suffered from a lack of finances, membership, and social status.¹⁵⁷ There was also a religious decline in Arkansas.

The Baptist denomination suffered from a lack of funds to support missionary programs. Many members felt no obligation to support their missionary programs. The standards of many church members seemed to lower. However, there were a few who remained faithful throughout this period.¹⁵⁸ In Clark County, the church suffered financially as did all organizations; but the membership in local churches did not suffer a mass decline or social rejection. The churches in the Red River Baptist Association showed over 100 additions per year to the church rolls by baptizing for the years 1927-1939. In 1933 the association reported a total membership of 2,888 and by 1937 the number had increased to 3,448.¹⁵⁹ The First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia had over 1,000 members in 1938.¹⁶⁰ Unlike the national and state trends, of religious decline, Clark County grew in numbers during this period. The financial conditions were another matter, however. In 1927 the First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia reported an expenditure of \$5,837 for missions and benevolence, and \$879 for the same purpose locally.¹⁶¹ The churches' treasuries began to dwindle. By April of 1930, the First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia had to borrow \$2,500 to pay taxes and insurance premiums.¹⁶² The reduction continued in 1931. In April the pastor's salary was reduced, and the mission budget was reduced to \$2,750.¹⁶³ In 1937 the Red River Baptist Association asked all the churches to participate in the 100 Thousand Club, a drive by Southern Baptists to pay their debts.

\$1.00 a month was called for per person for this campaign.¹⁶⁴

The churches managed to survive despite their financial conditions.

The churches' activities during this time were quite diversified. They kept the congregation pure by calling upon a member that had sinned to repent or be removed from the church role. The reaction to these attempts were just as varied. F. M. Thomas withdrew fellowship from Amity Baptist Church.¹⁶⁵ While Mrs. Boss Glover said she had nothing to ask forgiveness for, she later repented in front of the church. The church then voted to receive her back into the fellowship of the church.¹⁶⁶ Missions were a part of their activity. In 1927 the mission minded Red River Baptist Association decided that the Negro should be evangelized. This work was supported through the home mission program, and there is no evidence that much, if anything, was done locally.¹⁶⁷ The churches involved themselves with political matters as well. Perhaps their greatest efforts were directed at prohibition. In the 1928 election, the matter appeared on the ballot. The Red River Baptist Association began the fight in 1927 and called for "Baptist forces to unite in this warfare."¹⁶⁸ They continued to fight throughout these years. Even after the 18th Amendment was no longer law, they fought for local statute to prevent liquor from becoming legal in Clark County. They also were against public support for parochial education and passed a resolution stating their feelings in 1927.¹⁶⁹

The activities of the churches and association were a major political force in the county. The local people had strong attachments to their church and used the church as a place of worship and fellowship. They gathered on Sunday and discussed what had happened during the past week. Going to church was a "big social event." The summer brought revivals and visiting preachers with eloquent, thunderous voices. One of the big days in Clark County churches was Decoration Day. The churches sat aside one day a year to visit the graveyards and placed flowers on the graves. This event is continued in some churches today.¹⁷⁰ After church services, there was a lot of visiting between neighbors.¹⁷¹ The preachers were often paid with produce or not at all. The preachers had to work at other jobs to support their families especially in the rural churches. If the preacher worked, he probably paid more into the church than he received in salary. But preachers served and served well.¹⁷² Some of the churches and schools used college students to carry on their work.

The schools in Clark County suffered from the shortage of funds to operate. The salaries of teachers were reduced dramatically, and as the depression worsened, some of the teachers were not paid at all. The teachers in Arkansas averaged making \$643 in 1931. This amount dropped to \$540 in 1932. In 1933, 725 Arkansas schools closed, and many others had to shorten the school term in order to stay open.¹⁷³

The schools of Arkansas and Clark County were saved from total collapse in 1933. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration included schools in their relief projects.¹⁷⁴ This relief continued until 1937 when the state enacted a 2% sales tax. When the state did this, Arkansas "no longer appealed to Washington for school relief."¹⁷⁵ The schools of Clark County had to cut school hours. The hours were 8:15 A. M. to 11:15 A. M. or from 9:00 A. M. to 12:00 A. M. Afternoon classes were from 1:00 P. M. to 1:30 P. M. As the federal money came in, schools returned to their normal hours. Several of the teachers were from Henderson or Ouachita Baptist Colleges.¹⁷⁶ Teachers' salaries in Clark County were varied. Grace Nelson made \$125 a month at Gurdon teaching in the high school from 1928 to 1930. The next year it dropped to \$95 a month, and in 1932 she was paid in warrants worth \$80.¹⁷⁷ In Arkadelphia the salaries dropped from \$125 to \$50, and the teachers were paid in warrants as well.¹⁷⁸ For many in the county, an education was not important. The young would be taken out of school to help parents work in the fields.¹⁷⁹ But for others, an education was quite important. Dennis Holt is thankful for the schools staying open. If it had not been for federal money, people like Dennis Holt would not have had a high school to go to.¹⁸⁰

The colleges in the county also suffered financial hardships, but both Henderson and Ouachita remained open.

Ouachita Baptist College was accredited in 1927 by the North Central Association of colleges. They looked for 500 students to enroll that year.¹⁸¹ By 1931 the college was in financial difficulty. The salary of the faculty was the lowest in the state of Arkansas, and enrollment had dropped to 235.¹⁸² The same year Ouachita lost its accreditation.¹⁸³ The citizens of Arkadelphia purposed to provide \$10,000 for 5 years to help the college stay in operation.¹⁸⁴ In 1934 the senior class at Ouachita Baptist College started a 1,000 Club. The purpose of this club was to get 1,000 people to give \$1.00 a month to the club.¹⁸⁵ The teachers' salaries in 1934 amounted to \$13,842.¹⁸⁶ There were a number of social reforms for students during this period. The first prayer dates were started in 1927.¹⁸⁷ In 1928 dates could be taken to the theater. The writer in the Ouachitonian wrote, "The founders of our noble institution would be shocked ... if they could stand at any time ... and watch dates go by."¹⁸⁸ But with these new privileges came new rules. The financial difficulties were referred to by the students with this statement, "The fate of the old institution hangs in the balance."¹⁸⁹ Many of the teachers lost their jobs because of these conditions. The enrollment came back up to 556 in 1939.¹⁹⁰ Henderson was taken over by the state after the Methodists decided to close it. Hence, both colleges survived the depression.

The depression touched every life and institution in Clark County. Many reforms that started during the depression years continue today. However, not every institution was reformed during this time. Money and job security took on new importance during this period. The county faced old and new issues during this period. The citizens voted for a Catholic and helped put a woman in the United States Senate. The voting for a Catholic seemed strange, but he was a democrat. The people of Clark County survived the depression, but the hardships have not yet been forgotten.

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- ³The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, April 21, 1927, p. 1.
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- ⁵The Daily Siftings Herald, Newspaper, June 1, 1927, p. 1.
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- ⁷McKnight and Johnson, p. 296.
- ⁸David Ellery Rison, "Arkansas During the Great Depression," (Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation, University of California, 1974), p. 5.
- ⁹Gail S. Murrey, "Forty Years Ago: The Depression Comes to Arkansas," The Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. 29, 1970, p. 291.
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- 22 The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, January 16, 1930, p. 5.
- 23 The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, April 4, 1935, p. 4.
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- 25 Southern Standard, Newspaper, February 5, 1931, p. 1.
- 26 Southern Standard, Newspaper, January 15, 1931, p. 1.
- 27 Interview, Mr. Jim Hobgood, Box 219, Arkadelphia, Ark.
- 28 Interview, Mr. Jim Hobgood, Box 219, Arkadelphia, Ark.
- 29 Interview, Mr. Jett Black, 223 N. 4th, Arkadelphia,
Arkansas.
- 30 Interview, Mr. H. W. McMillian, 210 N. 5th, Arkadelphia,
Arkansas.
- 31 The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, January 6, 1927, p. 1.
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- 33 Southern Standard, Newspaper, August 11, 1927, p. 4.
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Rock, Arkansas: State Capital, 1936), p. 198.
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- ⁴²Interview, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Moore, Route One, Box 306. Gurdon Arkansas.
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- ⁴⁴Interview, Mr. Samuel Darrell Hasley, 1804 Silvia, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
- ⁴⁵Interview, Ethbert Ophelia, Cash, Route Three, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
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- ⁵⁰Interview, Mrs. Willie B. Goodloe, 2000 W. Pine, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
- ⁵¹Interview, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Baumgardner, Route One, Gurdon, Arkansas.
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- ⁵⁶Southern Standard, Newspaper, January 15, 1931, p. 1.
- ⁵⁷Southern Standard, Newspaper, January 22, 1931, p. 1.
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- ⁵⁹Southern Standard, Newspaper, January 5, 1933, p. 1.
- ⁶⁰The Book of the States (Chicago, Ill.: The Council of State Governments and The American Legislator's Association, 1935), p. 35.

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- 71 The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, January 26, 1933, p. 1.
- 72 Southern Standard, Newspaper, June 29, 1933, p. 1.
- 73 The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, September 7, 1933, p. 1.
- 74 Southern Standard, Newspaper, October 19, 1933, p. 1.
- 75 The Gurdon Times, Newspaper, November 23, 1933, p. 1.
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- 79 Interview, Mr. H. W. McMillian, 210 N. 5th,
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- 80 Interview, Mr. Samuel Darrell Hasley, 1804 Silvia,
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- 81 Interview, Mr. Dennis Holt, 610 Canter Road,
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- 82 Interview, Mr. Jim Hobgood, Box 219, Arkadelphia,
Arkansas.
- 83 Interview, Mr. Roosevelt Neal, 200 W. Pine,
Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
- 84 Interview, Mr. Neal Brewer, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

- 85 Interview, Mrs. Grace Nelson, 908 Pine, Gurdon, Ark.
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- 87 Interview, Mr. Samuel Darrell Hasley, 1804 Silvia, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
- 88 Interview, Mr. Joe Wheeler Barfield, 202 Clinton, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
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- 108 Interview, Ethbert Ophelia Cash, Route Three, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.
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- 110 Interview, Mrs. Vivian M. Harris, Arkadelphia, Ark.
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- 133 Interview, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Moore, Route One, Box 306, Gurdon, Arkansas.
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- 143 Interview, Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Bettis, Route One, Box 326, Gurdon, Arkansas.
- 144 Interview, Mrs. Opal Bell Dillard, Route One, Gurdon, Arkansas.
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Interview, Barfield, Joe Wheeler. 202 Clinton, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A Baptist Preacher and farmer during the depression years was able to provide insight into religious and social conditions during the Depression.)

Interview, Baumgardner, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Route One, Gurdon, Arkansas. (Provided valuable information in showing how people survived the Depression by using their wits and strength. Mrs. Baumgardner provided a look at a woman's life on the farm during the Depression.)

Interview, Bettis, Mr. and Mrs. Marvin. Route One, Box 326, Gurdon, Arkansas. (A valuable interview which related hardships produced by a flood during the depression years. They gave insight into farmers seeking other means of livelihood during this time.)

Interview, Black, Jett. 223 N. 4th, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A bankers recollections of the ecomic conditions leading to and stemming from bank closures.)

Interview. Blackman, Algia. 2000 W. Pine, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A Black woman who provided information concerning the social conditions of the Negro during the Depression.)

Interview. Brewer, Neal. Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (The information provided by this Black minister was sketchy and limited.)

Interview. Cash, Ethbert Ophelia. Route Three, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (The value of this interview was in showing how the Degray Community treated the Negro.)

Interview. Dillard, Opal Bell. Route One, Gurdon, Arkansas. (A retired school teacher provided information on teachers' salaries and farm life during this period.)

Interview. Goodloe, Willie B. 2000 W. Pine, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (Provided valuable information on the conditions of a Negro woman's labor on a farm while raising a family.)

Interview. Harris, Vivan M. Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (Gave some insight of the attitudes of the Blacks toward the Whites during this time.)

- Interview. Hasley, Samuel Darrell. 1804 Silvia, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A most valuable source of specific events and conditions during the Depression. He painted a clear picture of what great lengths men would go to to find employment.)
- Interview. Hobgood, Jim. Box 219, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (Provided an insight into the frustration of an individual seeking employment during this time.)
- Interview. Holliman, Fay. 400 N. University, Apt. 709, little Rock, Arkansas. (A woman who turned the hardships of losing a job to her advantage by going back to college and earning a Master's Degree.)
- Interview. Holt, Dennis. 610 Carter Road, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (Provided a most valuable look at a young man's mixed emotions produced by the Depression. He gave insight into the social conditions of this period. He is an example of how hardships can be overcome.)
- Interview. Knox, C. E. Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (Provided information on the attitudes of the people in Clark County concerning the liquor question.)
- Interview. Magby, Ray. Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (The greatest contribution of this interview was its showing how children had to work during the Depression.)
- Interview. McMillian, H. W. 210 N. 5th, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A very valuable interview which gave insight into personal, social, and economic conditions during this period.)
- Interview. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar. Route One, Box 306, Gurdon, Arkansas. (Provided valuable information on social and economic conditions of a sharecropper.)
- Interview. Naylor, Robert. P. O. Box 22000, West Seminary Drive, Fort Worth, Texas. (The pastor of the First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia during part of the Depression provided information on the church's effort to stop the legalization of liquor in Clark County.)
- Interview. Nelson, Grace. 908 Pine, Gurdon, Arkansas. (A retired school teacher gave information on educational conditions and teachers' salaries during the depression years.)

- Interview. Neal, Roosevelt. 2000 W. Pine, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A Black man provided information on the social and economic conditions of the Negro during this period.)
- Interview. Stanford, Herbert Stanley. 209 N. 8th, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (Now a school teacher in Clark County, he provided a look at education and social conditions.)
- Interview, Waldrum, Lizzie. 326 N. 15th, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. (A Bell Telephone employee during the Depression provided an insight on the life of a single working girl.)
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