**Caddo Indians of Clark County**

**By Taylor Jones**

The Caddo Indians occupied the area that is now Clark County, many years prior to the arrival of the European Explorers. The Caddo peoples were widely known for their beautiful pottery pieces. They designed it so it would be distinctive of their tribe, such as a seed jar. The seed jar is found only on one stretch of the upper Ouachita River that seems to coincide with the part included within Clark County. Pottery was made by molding with hands and stones to smooth out the rough edges. The Ouachita Baptist University Library displays a lot of beautifully preserved pieces of Caddo pottery. A lot of this pottery has been preserved for study and comparison because of the burial customs of the Caddo. When they were buried, many items that that person treasured, such as pottery, bottles of liquids, and whatever other personal items that were important to them, were put into the grave that they were buried in. Because of this belief of an afterlife, the bodies were also fully clothed. Around his/her head and on the sides the items were arranged so that they could easily access them in their new life journey.

Clark County is home to many Caddo Indian sites. There are mounds, village, and burial sites. Many of these places have been studied by archeologists, and that is how a lot of the artifacts have been found. There are many Indian mounds in Arkansas, and some are found right here in Clark County. Some mounds are cone-shaped, and have steep, sloping sides and only a small area on top. One of the best-known local mounds was located on pioneer Jacob Barkman’s place, near the Caddo River. Barkman supposedly held horse racing events there, with the horses running around the mound.

Another thing that the Caddo peoples are known for are the salt works, and there are a number of prehistoric salt-making sites in southwest Arkansas. One prehistoric Caddo salt-making settlement, the Hardman Site, is in Clark County near the Ouachita River. Salt-making was carried in Arkansas for hundreds of years, first by the prehistoric Caddo peoples who began to make salt during the time in which corn and other domesticated plants became a big part of their diet. Eventually they figured out that salt was also good for adding extra flavor to their meals. French settlers picked up on this luxury and began trading salt for other valuables with the Caddo people as well as the European settlers. Bayou Sel, one of the Clark County locations at which salt was extracted, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Indians as well as early Europeans manufactured salt at the site, and a salt-processing facility operated there in the early 1800s, making it one of Arkansas’s first industries.