The Hunt for Historic Barns of Clark County

Have you ever driven a rural Clark County road and noticed the number of barns dotting the scenery? This aspect of the history of Clark County became my passion during the spring of 2017. During this time, I found myself enrolled in a class at Ouachita Baptist University entitled *Local and Community History*. This class was filled with a variety of projects. One of the projects was to create a brochure on a specialized local history topic. Students could decide between multiple areas which to focus on for their brochure. This is when I chose to focus on the Historic Barns within Clark County.

Throughout the research portion alone, I discovered that Clark County has many barns that were built prior to 1950. I was able to utilize the Clark County Historical Journals for 2006 through 2009. These issues contained multiple articles focused on the historic barns of Clark County. I also discovered information on the National Historic Register for one of the barns I discuss in my brochure.

Prior to building my brochure, I decided that I wanted to try to locate some of the barns that I had uncovered through my research. Based on the descriptions I found in the Clark County Historical Journals I became a detective as I sought clues to their possible locations. One sunny weekend in early spring my mom and grandmother traveled to Arkadelphia with one goal in mind: to locate as many historic barns as we could. I was armed with a spreadsheet I had created with barn description and vague locations. My hope was that I could see the barns firsthand, take photographs, and possibly speak to the current owners. We began our trek at Caddo Valley. Traveling south on Highway 67 we turned west onto Old Military Road. A few miles down this road we made our first discovery. The Rosedale Plantation Barn. This barn was unique not because it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, not because it is one of the largest log structures in Arkansas, but because of the architect…Madison Griffin. This was important to me because my name is Mattison Griffin. After we left Rosedale we were off to locate our next barn. We decided to travel Highway 8 to the city of Amity and then work our way back to the center of Arkadelphia, and then south to Gurdon. The journal articles had identified Highway 8 as the whereabouts for multiple barns so I was excited at the prospect of locating several. After spending several hours driving through the county we came up empty handed. I had only taken a photograph of one barn; Rosedale. I decided that it would be best to base my research upon the hard work and diligence of the contributors of information contained in the Clark County Historical Journals.

At the end of the day three generations of my family from Western Arkansas had traveled many miles throughout Clark County. From Caddo Valley, to Amity, from Arkadelphia to Gurdon, I can honestly say the scenery was magnificent. Our goal for the day was not achieved. While we encountered numerous barns I did not photograph the specific historic barns that I had sought. I did however spend a wonderful day with my family exploring off the main roads and in a sense traveling back in time. Clark County has a rich history. One facet of this history is the variety of barns. Barns which were used as storage for crops, livestock and even dairy barns have dotted the landscape. Many of these barns may now only be distant memories; however for this one college student they are fresh and exciting.