

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **LATE 1800's**

### **ARKANSAS GOVERNMENT**

Government means the flow of power and force. It is the exercise of authority over people. There is civil government, family government, and church government. In civil government we have different levels; city, county, state, and federal. Local governments are closest to the people and therefore more accountable.

Arkansas adopted its current constitution in 1874. The state government is designed using the same principles as our Federal Government. The United States Constitution and our government are based on the Bible. Arkansas could not have used a better model. For example, there are three branches dividing the power structure. The legislative branch makes the laws, the judicial branch interprets the laws, and the executive branch enforces the laws. This division provides for a more balanced government.

Arkansas's legislative branch is a general assembly consisting of two bodies: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The 35 members of the Senate are elected by the people for four-year terms. The 100 members of the House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms. The Lt. Governor presides over the Senate. The leader of the House of Representatives is called the Speaker of the House. New laws begin as bills. To become laws, they must be passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The judicial branch consists of four kinds of state courts: minor courts, circuit courts, chancery courts, and the Supreme Court. The state Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and six associate justices.

There are 75 counties in Arkansas. County and local government have authority in various local matters, including taxation. The county officials

are the sheriff, the county clerk, the county treasurer, the county tax assessor, and tax collector. The county clerk is responsible for records. The county assessor appraises the amount of taxes due.

In city government, there is a mayor, from three to ten people on the city council, and often a city manager to care for the daily business. The city council members are elected and serve without pay. They hire the city manager, who receives a salary.

Voters in Arkansas must be at least 18 years of age by the time they vote. Registration can be earlier. Some register when acquiring a driver's license. Others register to vote at the county clerk's office. Qualifications for voters include living in the state for twelve months, the county for one month, and the district for one month prior to the election.

Primary elections are held to select candidates for the general election in November of each even-numbered year. These general elections are on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

Voters do not always know about the character of the candidates. Ignorance concerning the character of prospective government officials many times leads to the election of ungodly leaders. A study of the voting record of candidates should lead to wise voting.

# DUTIES OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Governor - is responsible for the enforcement of state laws. He is responsible for all state government.

Lieutenant Governor - is the first in line to assume the governor's job if the governor is not able to perform his duties.

U. S. Senators - represent our state at the Senate in Washington. They help to make laws for the entire United States.

U. S. Representatives - represent our state at the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. They help make laws for the entire United States. They are responsible for the spending of United States taxpayer money.

State Senators and Representatives - help to make state laws and spend state tax money.

County Commissioners - are responsible for county government. They also are responsible for county roads.

County Sheriff - is responsible for enforcement of state laws within a county. The Sheriff is in charge of the county jail.

County Treasurer - is responsible for collecting property taxes, issuing certificates of birth, death, and marriage.

County Attorney - files a charge against a suspected law violator.





## **SIDE GLANCE**

### **LAW AND ORDER IN ARKANSAS**

Since the "fall of man" recorded in Genesis, Chapter 3, we have a nature that requires laws to govern our society. Before Adam chose to disobey God, no laws were needed. Man finally became so wicked that God destroyed all but eight people on the earth. These eight people, during a worldwide flood, were spared on a big boat built by Noah. God knew that these people would need a human government because of their sin nature. God said in Genesis 9:6, "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Capital punishment was commanded by God many times in the Bible.

In the late 1800's, Arkansas and nearby Indian Territory was under attack by murdering outlaws. No home was safe from thieves and murderers that roamed the land. The Indians were responsible for enforcing the laws on their land, but the forests and mountains made this difficult. The situation was ideal for outlaws to move about freely near the hills of western Arkansas without fear of being caught and punished by the law.

The Federal District Court in Ft. Smith was responsible for enforcing the law for whites in Indian Territory. The area was so large and difficult to travel that no one attempted the job until Judge Isaac Parker arrived. In 1875, Judge Parker began a famous career that brought some peace to Arkansas and Indian Territory. It took 21 years to convict over 9,500 criminals.

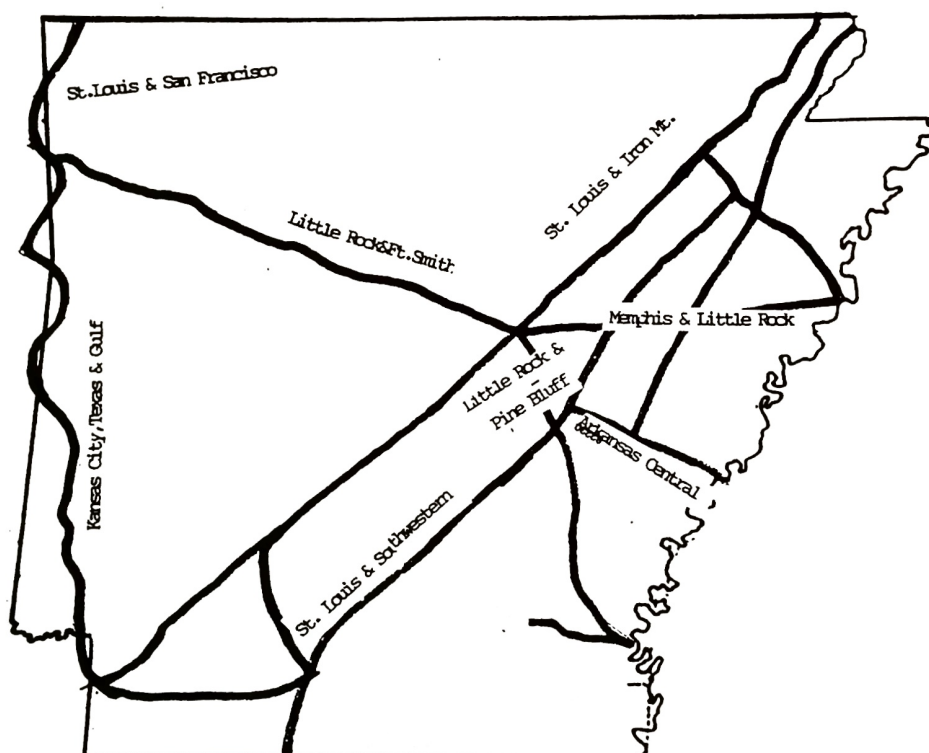
At the beginning of his term as judge, he hired 200 federal marshals to patrol the large forested area. He became known as the "hanging judge." The 88 criminals hanged on the streets of Ft. Smith gave him this famous reputation. In an effort to frighten outlaws into obeying the law, Parker opened the hangings to the public. Today, a museum representing Judge Parker's courtroom and the famous gallows is open to the public in Ft. Smith.



## SHORT LINE RAILROADS

These roads were built because there were many communities isolated from cities and larger towns. It was difficult to move heavy freight. Passenger service was also needed. Before 1900, thirty-three of these short line railroads were built. The average length of these roads was twenty-eight miles. The shortest line had less than a mile of track; the longest had seventy-four miles.

## MAIN LINE RAILROADS



## ECONOMIC EXPANSION

Arkansas's financial condition in the late 1800's was bad. There were several reasons. First, the Civil War cost Arkansas a generation of its most able young men. Also, at this time, Arkansas was a semi-frontier area and had not had the opportunity to accumulate capital or develop industry and technical skills. In agriculture, cotton was about the only crop that produced income. High taxes caused by the war and "carpetbag" government took a large share of the cotton money.

To help solve the problem, a sound banking system was proposed. For more than two decades, people of Arkansas had done their banking either out of state, out of their pockets, or from a hiding place in the barn. The Constitution of 1874 specifically permitted the chartering of state banks. By the late 1870's, Arkansas had both national and state banks.

In the political arena, "Redeemer" Democrats gained power in 1874. The "Redeemers" were financial as well as moral conservatives. They wanted smaller government and less taxes. As they took control, they reduced taxes considerably. These steps all helped, but the poverty remained until the 1900's.

There were those, however, who began to develop a new vision. They could see the vast resources of land, raw materials, and cheap labor. Ahead, they could see a new Arkansas based on a healthy mix of industry and agriculture.

## **MINERAL RESOURCES**

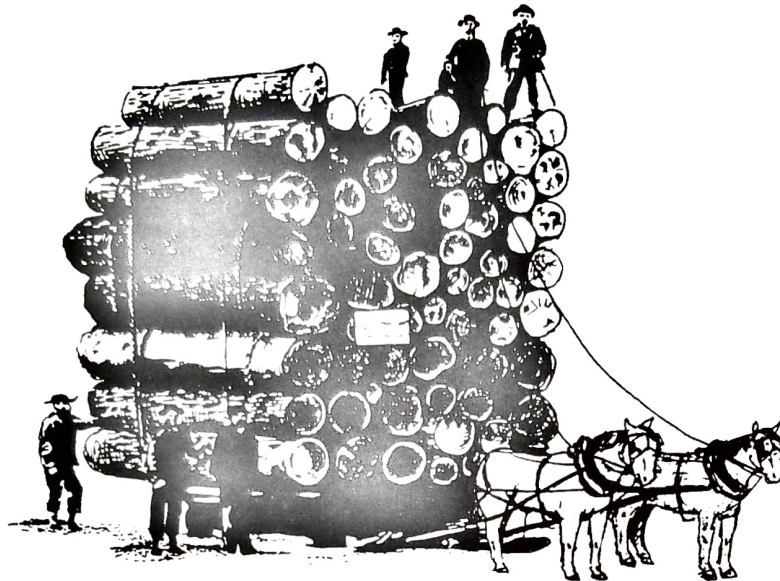
Deposits of bauxite (aluminum ore) were discovered south of Little Rock in 1887. By the end of the century, large amounts of bauxite were being mined. Also, discoveries of manganese, lead, and zinc caused new mining activities to boom in Arkansas.

In 1870, the first coal mine opened in Johnson County. Rail service was extensive enough by 1883 to permit larger coal mining operations not only in Johnson County but also in Scott, Sebastian, Pope, Crawford, Yell, Franklin, and Washington counties.

## **TREE RESOURCES**

The lumber industry gave hope to the Arkansas economy in the late 1800's. By the 1880's, needs for lumber in the north were greatly increased. Arkansas had the supply and northern states had the demand. Also, northern forests were being depleted. The many miles of railroads across Arkansas completed the triangle of demand, supply, and accessibility.





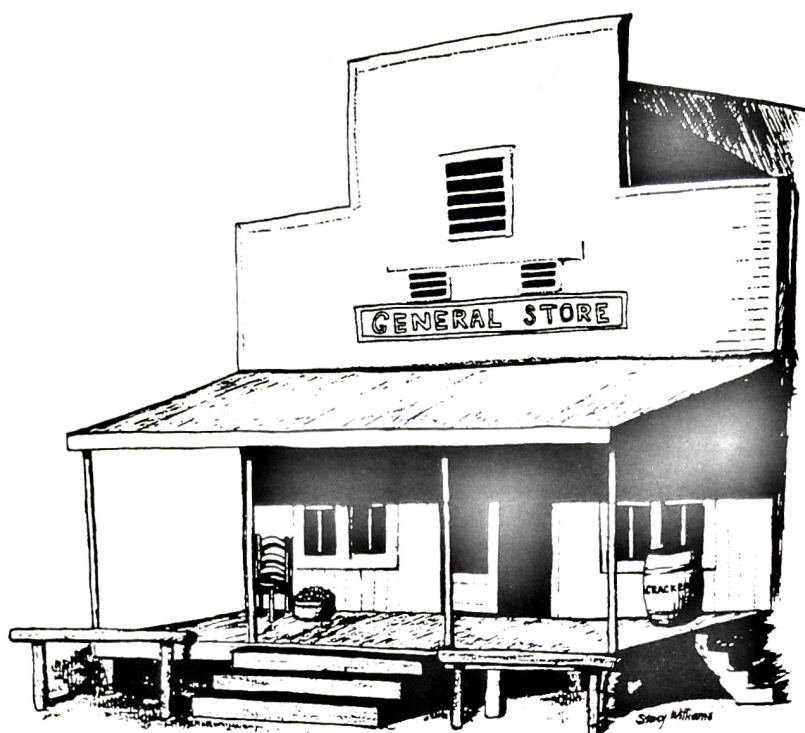
Stacy Williams

When the logging trails were covered with ice, a huge load could be pulled by two horses. A water wagon would wet down the road. When the water froze, a rut cutter made ruts for the logging sleigh. The logs would then be easily towed to a nearby stream. Logs were then floated downstream to a sawmill.

Much labor was required to harvest the timber. Trees had to be cut with an ax or hand saw. Then the logs were hauled on a skid pulled by horses or mules to the nearest railroad or sawmill. Steam-powered sawmills could be found throughout the pines of southern Arkansas. Hardwoods of the Ozarks and Ouachitas provided railroad crossties, furniture, and trim lumber. All this employed many laborers, which helped local economies.

Conservation harvesting of timber was almost non-existent. Trees were stripped off the land, leaving bare soil to erode. Tons of precious Arkansas topsoil was carried into streams and downriver to the New Orleans delta. High intensity rainfall on bare mountain slopes not only erodes soil but causes flooding downstream. These problems would be addressed in the 1900's.





## THE GENERAL STORE

By the late 1800's, most small towns had a general store. During that time, there were over 1,300 in Arkansas. Anything from wash tubs to sewing needles could be found there. The store was much more than a business. General stores also served as post offices, meeting halls, libraries, places to vote on election day, and occasionally they even served as churches. Since many people socialized there, it was an excellent place to witness for Jesus. Often Christians would bring their Bibles and discuss the Scriptures.

The owner had many problems. It was a long way to wholesale markets in St. Louis, Memphis, or in some cases even Little Rock. The cost of hauling merchandise was high. This was especially true if the store was not near a navigable river or a railroad.

Credit was another big problem. Suppliers had to be paid on time. Customers often did not have grocery money. If they had a big family at home to feed, the store owner had a serious decision to make. "Should I be a good businessman and not give credit, or should I have mercy and feed them?" Often, farmers would ask to postpone payment until they sold their crops. If their crops failed, the store owner had to use his own money to buy more supplies. Many Christian store owners have kept hungry families alive at the risk of losing their stores.

## RISE OF THE LABOR UNIONS

Greedy employers demanded much from their workers for very little pay. Hard work from daylight until dark was the norm. Many of the jobs, especially in the mines, were very dangerous. Accidents occurred almost daily. If workers objected, they were fired. Twelve hour days, six to seven days per week were expected of factory employees. Workers in mines became weary of rarely seeing the daylight. Children often worked in the mines full time at age fourteen.

As a result of this oppression, an organization called the Knights of Labor was founded in 1869 and enrolled hundreds of thousands of hopeful workers. Arkansas, however, enrolled fewer than most states. This was partly because many in this state were working only temporarily until enough money could be made to begin a farming operation.

By 1889, the Knights of Labor began to sign on many Arkansas railroad workers. Arkansas's first labor dispute came in 1884 when those who controlled Arkansas railroads cut the already low wages. The Knights called a strike. Trains stood still as Texas and Arkansas joined in a battle of wills against the mighty railroad companies. Most Arkansas newspapers supported the strike. The railroad conceded to union demands since most of the public favored the strikers.

Although wages for the railroad workers were finally restored, this success was short lived. In 1885, many workers were fired and wages were reduced again. In 1886, the remaining workers went on strike. The strike failed. Striking workers were fired and new workers were hired at low wages. By 1890, the Knights of Labor disbanded their union.

The big, powerful American Federation of Labor tried to recruit members into its union in the 1890's. It was toward the end of the 1890's before organized labor gained strength in this state.

The bright spot in the poverty of the workers was that some were open to the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Most, however, sought refuge in a jug of cheap, homemade liquor. Drunkenness was a common site. Prostitution and gambling were also commonplace.



## FARM PROBLEMS

By 1880, thirty-one percent of Arkansas farmers were tenant farmers. By 1890, the number increased to forty-five percent. If you did not own your farm, it was very hard to borrow money from the bank. Private lenders sometimes charged up to 100% interest. Other sources of credit were store owners who furnished farmers with needed supplies. The farmer signed a mortgage on the next crop. Supplies were sold on credit at a much higher price, thus giving the store owner interest on his money. Often called the "debt trap," farmers were never quite able to pay all their debt. They seemed to be in bondage to the ones \*loaning the money.

One of the big problems was that cotton was almost the only crop grown. Wheat was grown in a few places, and a small number of cattle were produced; but most of the Southern states had a one crop economy -- cotton.

A farmers' revolt began to take shape in the 1880's. Many farmers organized into groups which demanded an end to "monopoly and oppression." One organization was called the "Agricultural Wheel," and another was called "Brothers of Freedom." These groups tried unsuccessfully to elect candidates to political offices. They did cause a stir, however, and some of their ideas were eventually adopted. Ironically, the adoption of the income tax was one of their ideas. Now it is a burden to the freedom of farmers, and some are trying to stop it. The regulation of huge monopolies of business and industry was one of the farm organization's proposals. This did happen to a mild extent, and most of the people of the state benefited from these regulations.

There was light available for the farmer as well as the laborer. This light does not come from organizations or government. Some of the grandchildren of these farmers became rich, but are still \*\*walking in darkness.

\* Consider Proverbs 22:7

\*\* Consider Luke 12:16-21