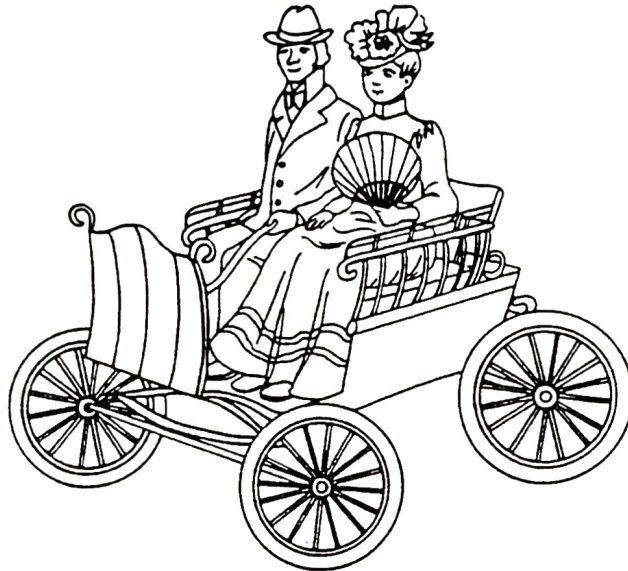


CHAPTER 8

EARLY 1900's



Change was in the air in the 1900's. Circuit riding preachers led revivals in local churches. Many people were born again (John 3:3) and their lives changed (II Cor. 5:17). The majority, however, were looking for a way to have some change but keep their sin. The progressive movement offered this solution. The progressives were also concerned about the social evils, drunkenness, divorce, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and venereal diseases. Progressive philosophy said that government could make the changes happen.

Numerous laws were passed regulating people's behavior. Progressives joined with churches in a fight to prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcohol. After a long battle, Arkansas became a dry state in 1916. No liquor could be made or sold in Arkansas. This victory for the church and progressive partnership led Christians into a dangerous compromise.

Progressive roots came from Darwinian evolution. The promoters behind progressive thinking believed that man was evolving to higher levels, and with a little help he could evolve faster. Progressives tended to view the human being as a government resource. Resources are to be used wisely, just as timber, minerals, or water. People were not seen as made in the

image of God, having a body, soul, and spirit. Progressives believed that social action, education, and an enlightened government were the answer to all man's problems. In other words, man was basically good and could be reformed. On the contrary, *the Bible presents a different world view.

As a result of this new thinking, many new government programs began. Of course, higher taxes and debt were necessary to begin these programs. In 1912, Arkansas held its first Conference on Charities and Corrections. State government began to take over the care of orphans, the handicapped, the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and other disadvantaged people. All this had previously been the role of the family and the church.

Progressive education was the foundation for this movement. A State Board of Education was established in 1909. A state high school board was set up in 1911. Teacher training colleges were also established. The consolidation of small schools began in 1911 and has continued until present times.

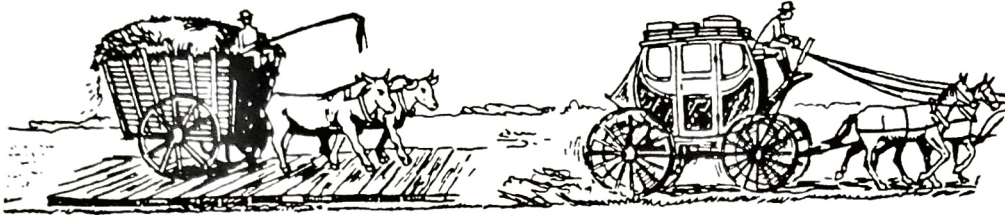
State agencies for health, crime, youth, and social welfare became permanent institutions. Counties started "poor farms" or "poor houses" where orphans, older people, the disabled, and the mentally handicapped were cared for. These farms usually had large gardens where enough fruit and vegetables could be grown to feed the residents. Whoever was able helped work these gardens. Usually, the county government contracted out the care of the "poor people" to the lowest bidder. Some administrators tried to do a good job; others cut every corner to make a profit.

Many new laws were passed by the progressives. The Child Labor Act of 1914 restricted the employment of children. Railroad, sawmill and mining workers had been working from daylight until dark. Laws passed in 1903 and 1905 limited work hours to a ten-hour day. In 1914, a law was passed limiting women to a fifty-hour work week.

Many of these changes were good. The real danger ahead was the wrong philosophy that would enter society's thinking. People began to depend upon the government to solve all of their problems. These ideas would ever increase as Arkansas moved into the mid and late 1900's.

* Consider Romans 3:23

ROAD BUILDING



First there were just trails through the woods barely wide enough for a horse and rider to squeeze through. Then the trails were widened to permit wagons and ox carts through. Wagons, however, often bogged down in the mud. Corduroy roads came next. These were made by cutting nearby poles and laying them crosswise, side-by-side across wet, muddy areas. The logs would sink into the mud and keep the wagon wheels from being buried in the mire.

The invention of the automobile would forever change Arkansas. With the automobile came a need for improved roads. A State Highway Department was established in 1913 in response to this need.

Engineer London MacAdam designed a road made by crushing rock and binding it with fine gravel. This material was placed on a roadbed that had been raised above the surrounding terrain. These were expensive to build, but were a big help in improving Arkansas roads.



SIDE GLANCE

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

By the 1900's, many acres of Arkansas farmland was seriously depleted of fertility. On hilly land, the topsoil was badly eroded. Signs of both gully erosion and sheet erosion were in every field. On more level land, years of farming cotton had removed needed soil, minerals, and organic matter.

George Washington Carver, a Black scientist, probably helped solve this soil problem more than any other one person. Mr. Carver was born into slavery. Even as a youth, he had a keen and inquiring mind. He loved plants. His desire to learn and determination to achieve was greater than the discouragement of his race or circumstances.

Through very hard work, he earned not only a Bachelor of Science degree but also a Master of Science degree in botany at Iowa State Agricultural College.

Booker T. Washington, a famous Black educator, convinced George Washington Carver to move to Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Mr. Washington had a similar background of slavery and of success in spite of odds against achievement. He had a burden for the education of the newly-freed Black people. As a Christian, his faith carried him through many difficult days.

It was at Tuskegee that Carver acquired a vision for helping to solve the enormous soil problem in the South. Carver discovered ways of restoring the soil by planting nitrogen-producing legumes. He also found that peanuts and sweet potatoes would yield productive crops on "worn out" cotton soil. He taught farmers to plant different crops in alternate years.

When many obeyed his advice but found limited markets for peanuts and sweet potatoes, Carver began work in his lab. His experiments yielded more than three hundred by-products of these two crops. These products forever changed the economy of the South, including Arkansas.

Carver also began a "school on wheels," teaching farmers about fertilizer and conservation methods. Arkansas fields greatly increased production as a result of his work. Many Arkansas farmers may not have been able to continue farming if it were not for Carver.

Both George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington became outstanding examples of the character qualities of perseverance and diligence. Many Black Americans owe their success to the examples of these two men who would not give in to difficult circumstances.

COTTON PICKING

The harvesting of cotton was very hard work in the early 1900's. Cotton was picked out of the "boll" or burr and placed in a long sack. When the sack was full, it was taken to a scale (similar to the one pictured above) to be weighed. It was then emptied into a wagon. The sack was ready to be filled again with about forty to sixty pounds of cotton.

When the wagon was full, it was hauled to a gin in town where the cottonseed was removed and the cotton was compressed into a rectangular bale weighing about 500 pounds.

Cotton harvest usually began in September and lasted until after Christmas. Cotton pickers were paid according to pounds of cotton harvested. A skilled cotton picker could earn over \$2 per day. Many families depended on this income to carry them through the rest of the year. Children who were big enough to drag a sack were expected to work. Families who came out of the "hill country" to the "flatlands" to pick cotton often had to live in wagons or tents. When harvest was over, they returned to the hills to live off wild game, gardens, and a few animals.

THE WORLD WAR I ERA

World War I is the name given to the war of 1914 through 1918 which eventually involved all the continents of the world. German submarines sank ships on which Americans were traveling to Europe. The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917.

The war brought excitement and activity to Little Rock and North Little Rock. Businessmen of both cities organized the Army Post Development Company. This company bought and leased 13,000 acres of land north of the Arkansas River. They offered this land to the government to be used for an army post.

The War Department accepted the offer of this land and allotted \$3,500,000 for construction of Camp Pike. At times during the war, the soldiers training at the camp exceeded the population of Little Rock. In 1918 an influenza epidemic hit Arkansas, including the soldiers at Camp Pike.

The "flu" killed over 7,000 people in the United States. This was three times more than all those who lost their lives in the battles of World War I.

The war brought an increased demand for Arkansas products. Mining became a big industry. Cotton was needed for army uniforms and tents. Lumber was used for ammunition factories and troop housing.

Liberty Bond drives were held, and Liberty Bonds were sold to raise money for the war. During this time, many needed items were hard for people to get. Even food was rationed. Although there was some opposition to the war, a patriotic spirit prevailed throughout the state.

The United States soldiers fought alongside the English and French. Finally, the Germans were driven back into Germany. The war was over! A peace treaty was signed on November 11, 1918. All the Arkansas boys came home except the 883 who died during the war. The price for freedom is high.

The state's economic boom continued for a short time after the war. In agriculture, however, it was very short lived. Cotton prices fell dramatically after 1920. Prices were so bad that some cotton was left in the field to rot. Owners could not afford to pay field hands to pick the cotton. Many small farmers faced bankruptcy. The hill country farmers who were not so dependent on cotton for income were not in quite so much trouble. Again, their subsistence farming pulled them through hard times.

ROARING TWENTIES

The so-called "roaring twenties" is an expression used to describe the period from 1920-1929. This era was one of many changes. Country people began moving into towns seeking jobs. New kinds of entertainment and easier forms of transportation also began to make changes in lifestyle. Even though Arkansas had a law against teaching evolution as fact, it could be taught as theory. Evolutionary ideas also penetrated the thinking of teachers and textbook writers. *Those who stood against it were portrayed as "ignorant hillbillies" by the media.

* Nancy Pearcey, "Trial by Press: What Really Happened at the Scopes Trial?" Bible Science Newsletter, November 1989, pp. 6-9.

Despite all this, there was a continuing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in many churches. A large number of churches grew both in numbers and in spiritual maturity.

Tourism became a recognized industry for Arkansas in the 1920's. Two developments caused this to happen. Cheap automobiles together with better roads gave large numbers of people real freedom of movement for the first time in history. Also, Americans in larger numbers enjoyed more prosperity and spare time. Vacations were no longer only for the rich and famous.

Promoters and businessmen organized the Ozark Playground Association. Bella Vista in Benton County became one of Arkansas's first tourist centers. During the summer of 1926, more than 600 cottages were rented to vacationers. "Tourist courts" cropped up all over Arkansas. These were usually a group of one-room cabins furnished with a bed or two. Before 1926 ended, over 500,000 visitors had come to the Ozarks.

There was some improvement in agriculture in the 1920's. New crops were being tried and found successful. A few acres of rice was planted which proved to be well adapted to the rich, wet bottomlands. Over six million acres were planted to crops in the 1920's. By 1930, soybeans had been introduced to Arkansas farms. Peanuts were also tried on sandier soils.

KU KLUX KLAN

There was an enormous amount of fear and anxiety in the 1920's. Many "socialists" talked of changing our government into something like the new Communist government in Russia. They envisioned everyone sharing equally in wealth and living happily ever after. In the neighboring state of Oklahoma, organized crime was seizing control of local governments, including the police and sheriff departments.

In the early 1920's, the Ku Klux Klan became very powerful in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Meetings were rigidly secret, held at night in open fields under the emblem of a fiery cross. Claiming to be defenders of moral values, patriotism, and religion, they were just the opposite. The KKK was filled with hatred for Jews, foreigners, Roman Catholics, and Blacks, and

carried out acts of violence against all these groups. Sometimes white people who were considered "too friendly" with Blacks were attacked.

Evil is always eventually self defeating. The decline of Klan power in the 1920's was as swift as its rise. Klan leaders selfishly used Klan funds and greatly profited from the sale of Klan literature and equipment, such as official robes. Many bad incidents came to light, and by 1930 the official Klan in Arkansas was disbanded. Afterward, however, there were isolated incidents of wicked people using the Klan name to do terrible acts of violence and spread hatred.

FLOODS

In 1927, heavy spring rains and melted snow in the upper Mississippi Valley swelled rivers to levels beyond memory. The White, St. Francis, Arkansas, and finally the Mississippi River itself overtopped the primitive levee system. The Mississippi Valley became an inland sea eighty miles wide. Steamboats were even used to rescue families from roofs and treetops. Crops, cattle, buildings, roads, and bridges were carried downstream or buried in mud. Over 143,000 people were victims of the flood. Most of these took shelter in refugee camps.

Citizens of Arkansas cried to the government for help. Congress was quick to pass the 1928 Flood Control Act. The government first became involved in river work in 1824. Congress then assigned the Army Corps of Engineers responsibility for controlling the rivers.

Genesis 1:28 instructs us to "subdue the earth," so flood control is a worthy goal. The problem is that water is a very powerful instrument. The Corps of Engineers has been fighting this battle for over 170 years, and flooding is still a real possibility. Massive improvements have been made, however, and flood damage is much less threatening. Many levees were built following the 1927 flood. Levees stretch more than 2,000 miles along the Mississippi River. They extend from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to Venice, Louisiana. Their purpose is to confine flood waters to the main channel and to certain floodways.

A TYPICAL FLOOD

COURTESY: PATRICK M. REYNOLDS



DEPRESSION 1930-1940

The "roaring twenties" ended with a crash. This was not a physical crash but an economic crash in the stock market. In November of 1929, stocks dropped drastically in price. The Federal Reserve Banks had decreased the money supply. Governments and businesses alike were deeply in debt. This, combined with overpriced stocks, caused a rapid drop in prices and the ensuing depression. The years 1930 through 1940 were hard for all America. In fact, the depression was world-wide. Factories and all types of businesses closed permanently. Thousands of employees were suddenly without jobs. Many could not make their mortgage payments so they were without homes. The Red Cross and the Salvation Army formed "soup lines" for thousands of people who were out of food.

The people in the hill country of Arkansas again endured the "hard times" much better than some others. City dwellers or cropland farmers on more productive lands who were growing cotton, rice, and soybeans were in trouble. The subsistence farmers just continued on. Their lives were somewhat primitive before, so they remained the same. Few ever knew what it was like to have running water or indoor plumbing. They had less cash income, but were accustomed to harvesting most of their food off the land.

The period from 1930-1933 was the first phase of the Depression. This was when rapid job losses occurred and people were making adjustments to hard times. Many city people moved to the country to raise enough food to eat. Squatters on uninhabited land were a common sight.

These were slower, more quiet times in which people could be still and know God (Psalm 46:10). Some of the stillness lasted until World War II.

The second phase was from 1933-1940. With the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt came the "New Deal." This drastically changed government in the United States. The government borrowed money as never before. Welfare programs, work programs, and agricultural programs were established. Surplus grain, cotton, cattle, hogs, and other farm products were destroyed, hoping the price would go up. The prices rose very little. The government guaranteed certain prices for the farmer.

The government began construction of buildings, dams, and bridges, employing thousands of people. A new set of government agencies suddenly

came to life. Some people called them "alphabet soup." The WPA (Works Project Administration), CCC (Civilian Conservation Corp), SCS (Soil Conservation Service), Triple A (Agricultural Adjustment Administration), FHA (Farmers Home Administration), and many more were organizations whose stated purpose was to ease the Depression. They gave temporary relief to many, but they also created untold problems. For example, the AAA programs cut back cotton acreage causing sharecroppers to be unemployed. They lost the little security they had.

The wage usually paid to government workers was \$1 per day. The CCC was administered by the U.S. Army. Many of Arkansas's young men joined the ranks. They not only received a small wage, but room and board. They lived in barracks, and had military-style uniforms and discipline. They planted millions of trees on Arkansas public lands. They cleared fire roads through forests, improved national and state parks, built dams, and did other good works.

All this government borrowing pulled money from use for private enterprise. It was difficult for businessmen to find capital to expand factories and other private businesses. Many farmers could not get credit except from the newly-formed government loan agency. As a result, there was very little hiring of new employees. All business was slow for the rest of the decade.