



PULASKI COUNTY: RICH IN OZARK HISTORY

Pulaski County, in South-central Missouri, is in an area 520 square miles. The general base formation of the county is made up largely of porous volcanic rock and irregular magnesian limestone into which rainfall sinks and eventually escapes in the numerous and splendid springs of the county. Numerous caves, at one time the most discovered in the entire state, dot the county.

In the Pulaski County Census of 1847 the county had 592 polls... 18,999 acres of land... \$531 in taxes and 95 slaves. In 1880, the old settlers paid these prices for goods: Corn 50 cents; oats 35 cents; hay \$7; oxen 50 cents; horses \$40; mules \$50; Milk cows \$14; sheep \$1.75; hogs (alive) 2 cents per pound; Government timber land 25 cents to \$250 per acre.

If numerous mounds all over the valleys of Pulaski County were positive proof of the existence of the ancient people called the "mound builders," it could be safe to say that this area was once densely populated with them. Old settlers plowed over many of them. Some were opened accidentally and some on

purpose. Crockery, pipes, rock pictures and letters, bones and other fragments were taken.

The only trail or trace through Pulaski County passed from "Little Piney" through Waynesville's present site, and that of Bartlett's Mill, past the old "California House," on to Chief Muncie's headquarters in Springfield. Chief Muncie was held in great respect by settlers on account of his rigid honesty. This trace became known as the "Old St. Louis and Springfield Road," and later the "Old Wire Road."

The Indians gave settlers little trouble other than to occasionally kill a hog when hunting was not successful. One Indian legend tells of an incident at Saltpeter Cave, five miles west of Waynesville.

The Osages, Shawnees and Delawares had a battle. The cave had been used to manufacture gunpowder and after its evacuation about 1817 or 1818... some friendly Indians, about five Shawnees and two Delawares took possession. About one hundred Osages attacked, but the Indians in the cave defended them-

selves until nightfall with the loss of only one man.

During the night, the Indians blocked the cave entrance and escaped through a secret passageway. The Osages gave a wild attack the next morning only to find their birds had flown.

It is said the Osages left the bodies of their dead piled in a heap and their bleaching bones were still a visible memorial of the fierce fight even as late as 1875.

Early settlers were chiefly occupied in clearing and cultivating their little valley farms along with raising hogs and cattle. They hunted and did some fur trading. The "squatter" camped only long enough to cut, shape and raise logs for a cabin usually with the help of a neighbor. Anyone within thirty or forty miles was a neighbor. "Stills" gave a cheer to the log raising.

Pulaski County at one time included all of its present boundary and also encompassed what is now most of Dallas, Texas, Webster, Phelps, Maries, Miller and Camden Counties, plus all of Laclede and Wright. Until Texas County was established in 1845 it was part of Pulaski County.

The pine woods of the county were first developed in 1816. Within a few years, saw mills were built and by the spring of 1820, the Piney River was filled with sawn or hewed lumber and floating logs.

The Indians who were found in this region were the Shawnees, Delawares, Paola and Piankashaws. They had a village or two and lived in caves along the rivers, hunting and fishing and raising a little corn.

One of the pioneers named Duke was a hunter and trader. At times, he would ride into the mill settlements along the Piney reportedly mounted on a great elk and clad in bear skin. He later joined the 49ers in the California gold rush, setting out with six elk.

There was an abundance of game in the Gasconade Country with wild deer, turkey, black bear, panther, the black and grey wolf, wildcat, catamount and a few elk until 1870 or 1880.

The Frisco Railway was the only one ever completed through Pulaski County. It was surveyed through the old South Pacific regime and by 1866 bore the name Atlantic and Pacific.

First cases of the circuit court proceedings went like this. The first case of assault was heard in 1833. The first case of perjury ended in acquittal. The first case of adultery found the man guilty and he was fined six and one fourth cents and given five minutes imprisonment. The first man indicted for shooting with intent to kill was fined and committed to the county jail for one minute. The first stabbing case with intent to kill resulted in a fine and one hour in the county jail. The first penitentiary commitment sentenced a man for two years for horse stealing.

Father and mothers taught their children at home from either an old spelling book or from the family Bible. In the long huts of the old settlers, there were few books and meager educational advantages.

As time went on, private schools were held at the house of some settler where the children of the community would gather and an older man of the area would hold a subscription school at his home during the winter months.

In 1857, Waynesville attempted to start an academy.

A place was even secured on the hill south of the courthouse and the lumber on the ground for which to build.

The coming Civil War caused the matter of education to fall in the rear of the struggle.

Richland was the first in the county to provide higher education for youth with the Richland Institute started in 1870.

Many stories have been told on just where some of the places in Pulaski County got their names. Possible origins for Pulaski County place names can be found by researching old newspaper files. Most of the towns and streams in the Ozarks are named for people who settled or for someplace from which the settlers came from.

Richland was given its name in honor of G.W. Rich, a director of the old Atlantic and Pacific Railway.

Crocker, which came into being in 1869 when the depot was built, got its name from one of the prominent men of the railroad company.

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PULASKI COUNTY: RICH IN OZARK HISTORY CONTINUED

Waynesville was named by Harvey Wood, who secured the first post office and named it for General "Mad Anthony" Wayne. G.W. Gipson "squatted" on the townsite early in the year 1831, when the nearby Waynesville spring was a watering place on the Kickapoo trace later known as the old Wire Road.

The Roubidoux was named in honor of a fur trader and explorer of that name.

The Big Piney got its name from the short leaf pine forests along its banks.

Devils Elbow, listed as one of the state's seven beauty spots of Missouri, is said to have been given its name by lumberjacks who had a lot of trouble with log jams at the bend in the river.

Bloodland, which no longer exists due to the coming of Fort Leonard Wood, got its name from the redness of the soil where the town was built.

The Niangua was named by Indians because so many springs are at its source and was once famous for bear hunting by the French and Indians.

The town of Dixon was laid out in 1869 by Milton Santee,

a surveyor of Rolla. As Dixon was also a railroad town, laid out on both sides of the railroad track one mile square, it is believed that Dixon got its name from another railroad official.

Hancock was first called Iron Summit, but was given the name Hancock by the railroad company when they built a depot there.

Hancock was once a thriving little village. The land site was entered in 1865 by Isaac Goodman who sold it in 1868 to W.H. Murphey who laid the town out in 1869 and Murphey Brothers opened a store there in August of that year.

In 1870, a Mr. Brant opened another store and began dealing in merchandise. About 1872, Brant sold his business to E.A. Lombard of Iberia.

Murphy Brothers moved to Dixon in 1877. The late D.A. Clairborn had a store and blacksmith shop there during the 1880s.

Did You Know?

Kit Carson's Wild West show performed in Dixon in 1911.



The men in this picture are standing on a raft made out of railroad ties. In the background in Waynesville's Bell Bluff. Men would tie the railroad ties together and wait for the Roubidoux to rise then ride the "raft" down to Crocker to sell them to the railroad. Sometimes the raft was over a mile long. (Photo courtesy of George Lane)



Early PICNICS

The gatherings of the early days was a long looked forward to event. The old settlers picnic was a time when neighbors and friends gathered... Women visited and exchanged recipes... Children would ride the old fashioned horse drawn swing and drink a lot of lemonade from barrels or tubs.

The men would talk crops or politics. Political talk could sometimes become heated if it was an election year. Most often the gathering would be at a city park and the city merchants would go all out to lure people into their stores. Merchants would also donate prizes to be given away during the day's events.

Sometimes, a long list of orators, politicians, and entertainers would be scheduled to appear, speak, or perform. It is in this spirit that the modern "Old Settler's Day Picnic" is held.

Congratulations to the Waynesville Community Betterment Council on their hard and diligent work to bring another Old Settler's Day to life again.

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