

Hiking History

**RANDOLPH COUNTY
TRAIL OF TEARS**

Randolph County Arkansas

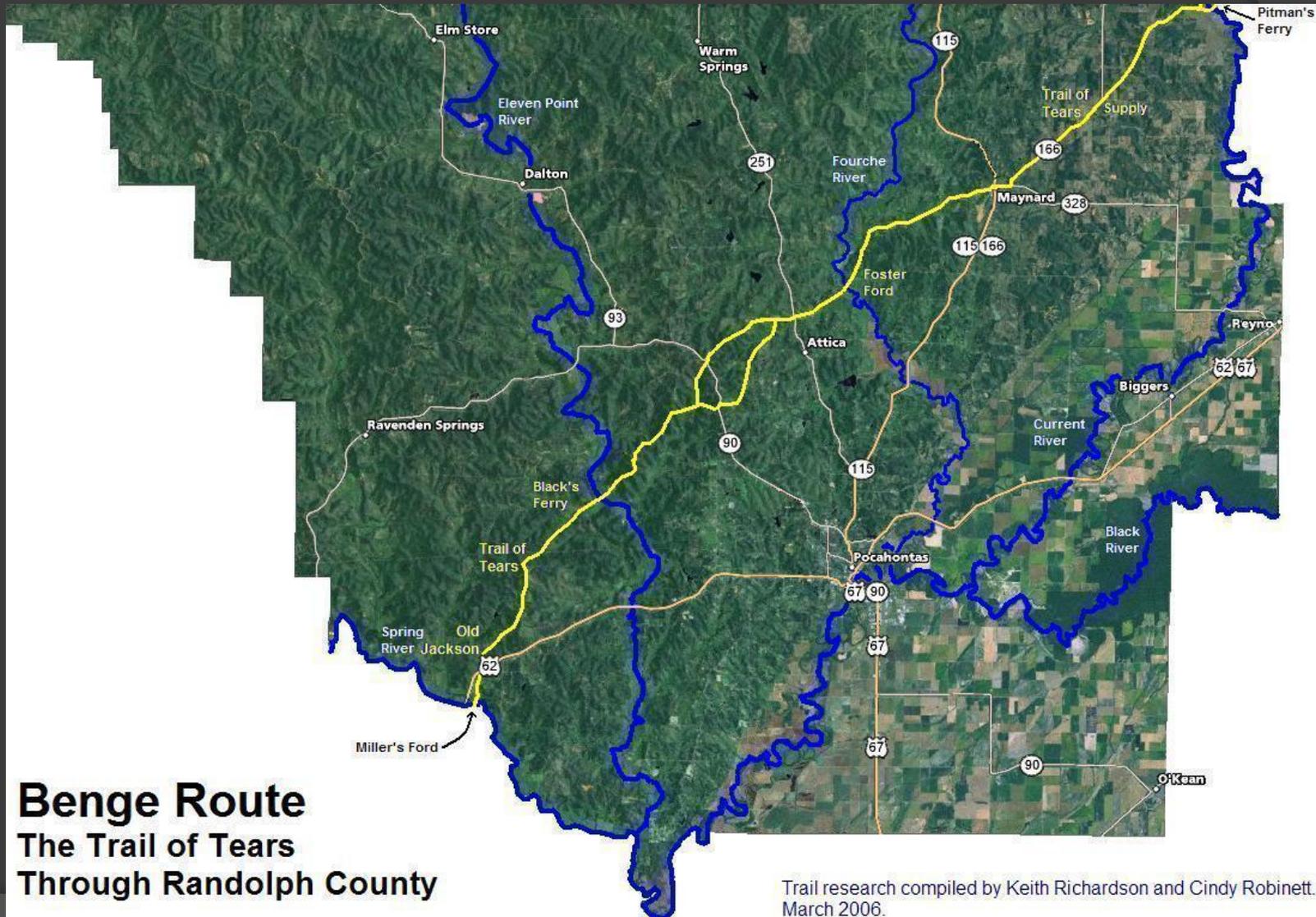
Before you spend days hiking the Trail of Tears, we encourage you spend 15 minutes here, learning about what you will see on your hike...



History of the Local Trail

- After being elected President in 1828, Andrew Jackson acted to seize the property of Native Americans in the eastern U.S. and move them to what is now Oklahoma. Over a period of years, Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw and Seminoles were forced to make the long march west.
- In 1838 one group, led by a Native American leader named Benge, took a route that passed across Randolph County, from Hix Ferry on Current River in the northeast corner of the county, to Miller's Ford on Spring River just east of Imboden, fording four of the county's five rivers in the cold of December. They camped four nights here, and buried several dead who didn't survive the river crossings.
- Their route across Randolph County is now a part of the National Trail System and an important part of our county and national history.

The Actual Trail of Tears Route



The Hiking Route



The 21st Century Hike

- ⦿ Avoiding crossing private property, we have created a 37-mile walking/riding trail that, using existing paved and gravel roads, closely, and for the most part exactly, follows the Trail of Tears' path across Randolph County. No permits are required to hike this route.
- ⦿ Hikers will see the sights, hear the sounds, smell the smells, and feel some of the fatigue experienced by those who walked this path in December, 1838.
- ⦿ Note that walking past farm houses sometimes means walking past territorial farm dogs. Carrying a can of dog repellent spray may be a good idea.
- ⦿ This presentation provides GPS coordinates on the maps, to make following the trail easier.
- ⦿ Both AT&T and Verizon provide cell phone service along most of the route. Hilltops will have stronger signals and valleys will have weaker or sometimes no signal.

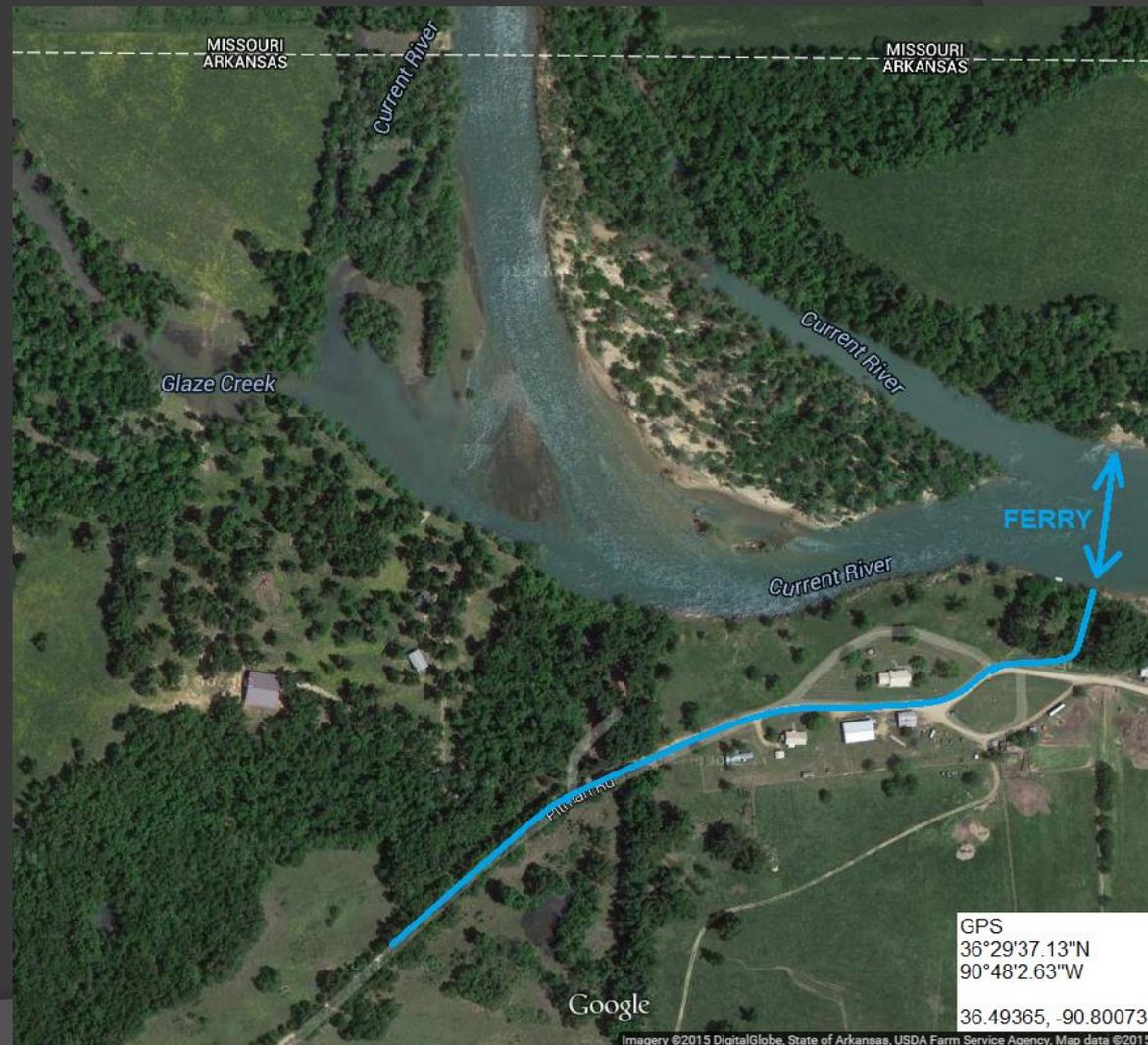
The 21st Century Hike

- ⦿ While it's possible to begin at either end of the trail, we recommend starting in the northeast, where the Trail of Tears entered Randolph County, and follow the route across 4 rivers, moving south and west.
- ⦿ It's a 37 mile hike. Covering 13 miles/day makes a good hike without being overly tiring. Conveniently, the Fourche River Bridge is at mile 13, and the Blacks Ferry Bridge is at mile 26. These locations can make good daily goals, with camping possible on public property on the river banks.
- ⦿ We will highlight many points of interest along the trail. *Please be mindful of people's private property as you pass along the route.*
- ⦿ Since the route follows public roads, *please watch for cars approaching you as you walk, being especially careful as you approach hill tops. It's best to walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic, when possible.*

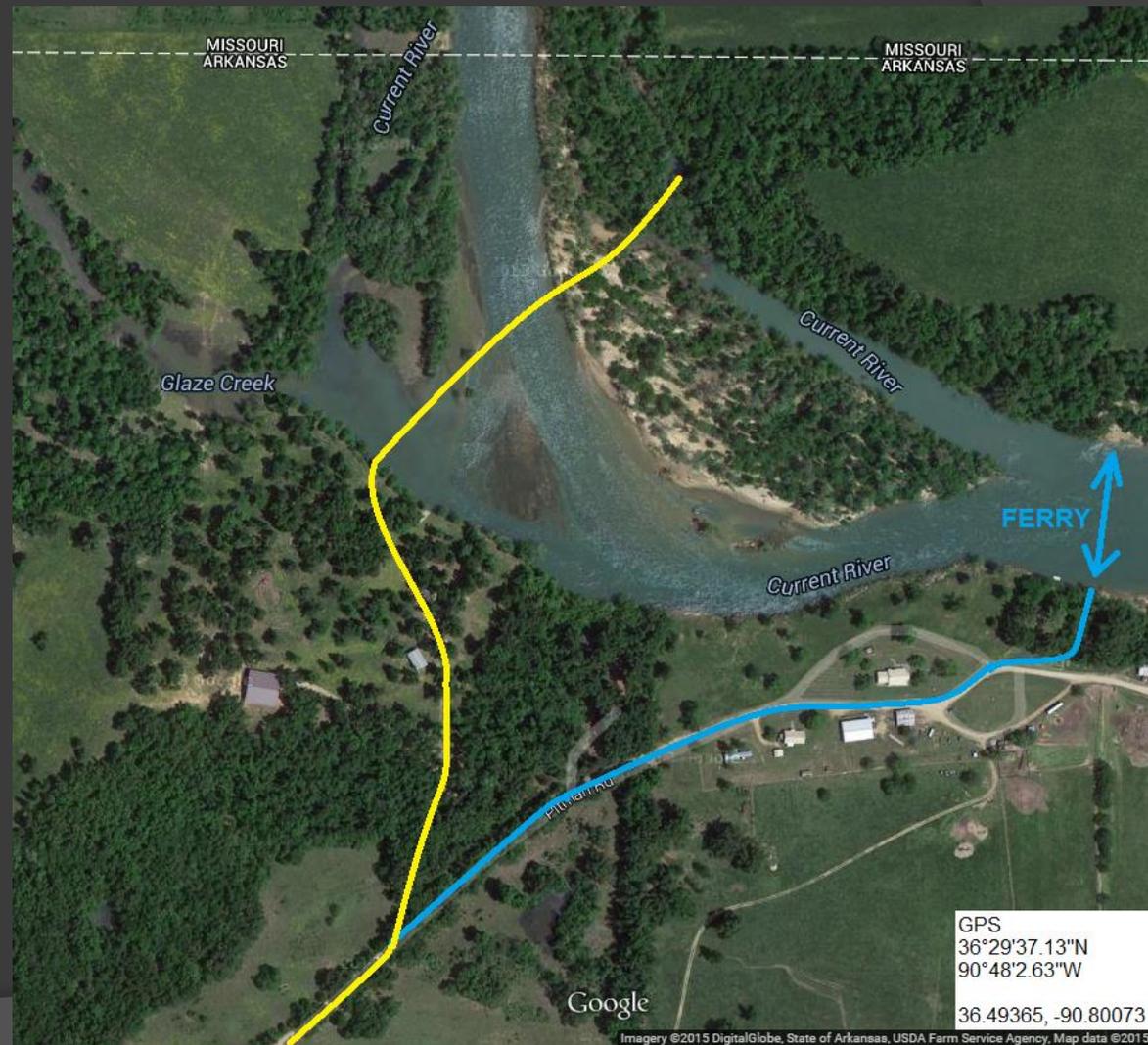
Hix Ferry, later Pitman Ferry, was the entry into Arkansas for most people who came here before Arkansas became a state. After the Louisiana Purchase, the federal government built a “military road” from Hix Ferry south and west so troops could be more easily moved as needed to defend the new territories from Spanish forces in Texas. This was also an early Union route of entry into Arkansas during the Civil War. Several north/ south skirmishes occurred around the ferry.



Hix Ferry crossed the Current River as shown in this image, then the military road proceeded along the turquoise line indicated. But when the Bengé group arrived at the ferry, Hix raised the price of crossing in hopes of making some easy extra money. Bengé refused the price gouging, and his group forded the river upstream from the ferry.



The yellow line shows the route the Benge party took to cross the river then rejoin the military road. We will use the same yellow line in the following images to show the hiking route. The hike begins at the point on Pitman Road where the Benge route rejoins the military road (the ferry location and ford location are on private property, so are not part of the hike).



Walking southwest along Pitman Road, take note of how, in many places, the road bed is lower than the land on each side of the road. This is typical of old roads, where years of travel and erosion leads to a sunken bed. By Arkansas standards, this is a very old road!

After passing Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, you come to the “ghost town” of Pitman. A historical marker tells the history of the ferry.



Mile 1.5
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
& Cemetery

Ruins Of
Old Store

Historical
Marker

Pitman

GPS
36°28'42.22"N
90°49'19.90"W
36.47839, -90.82219

Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Map data ©2015 Google

At Mile 2 enjoy the look of, but not a taste from, the spring on your right. No doubt native Americans drank the water here for millennia before the Benge party passed this spot.



At Mile 2.6, the remains of the Oakland School are well worth a pause for study.



If the store is open at Supply, it's a great place to stop for a rest and a snack. They'll slice meat and cheese and build you a sandwich, if you'd like. They also have cold drinks and ice cream.

Five roads come together at this location, and this spot served as a central supply location for people who lived in this area.

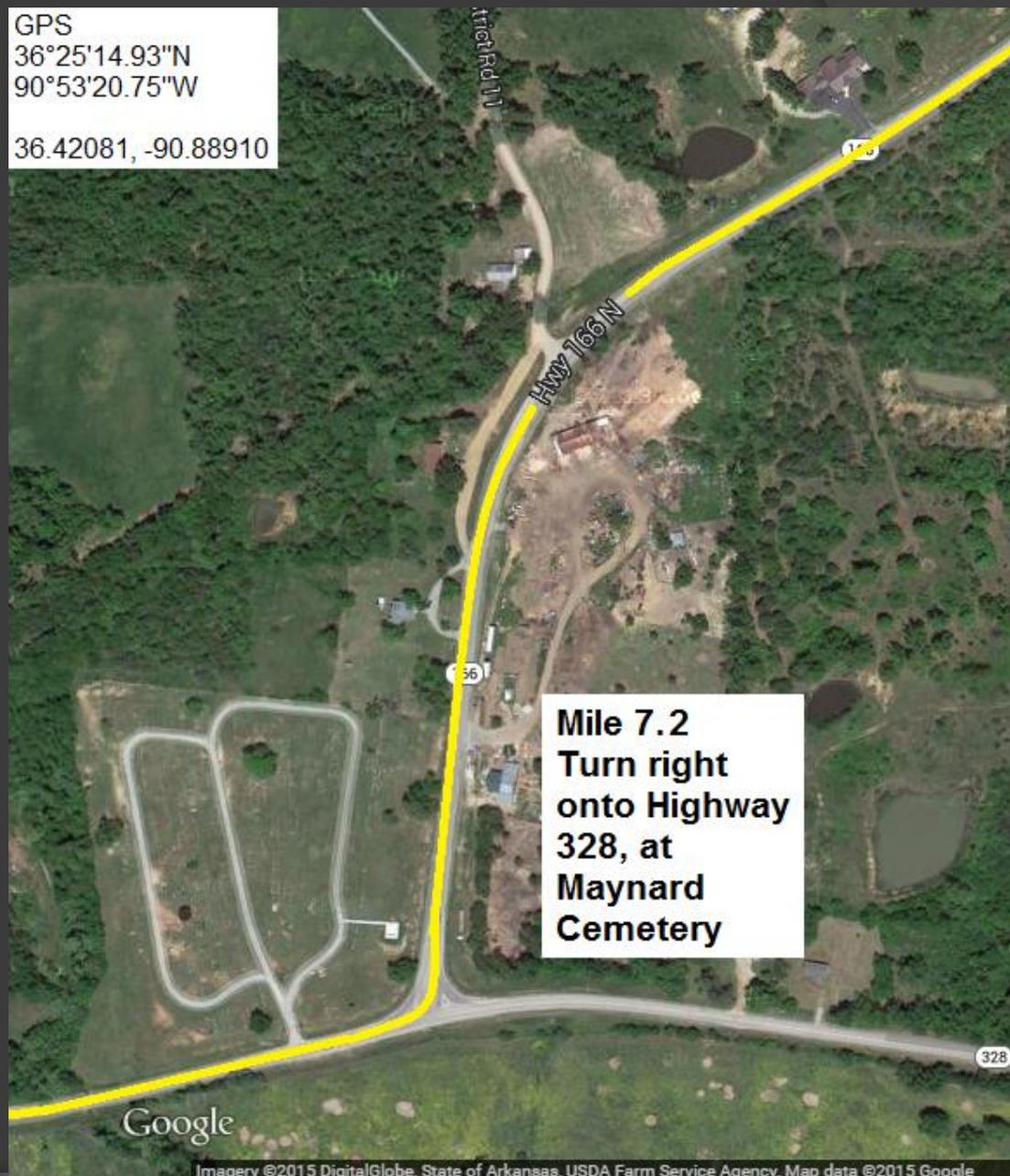
There was once a well here, where the historical marker stands today, making Supply the center of local activity.

(The historical marker just repeats the same information displayed on the marker at Pitman.)



At Maynard cemetery,
turn right onto highway
328.

The old cemetery holds
the graves of many early
residents of this area,
including several who
witnessed the Benge
Party passing by this
cemetery.



The small town of Maynard is right on the Trail of Tears, and contains a few stores and a café.

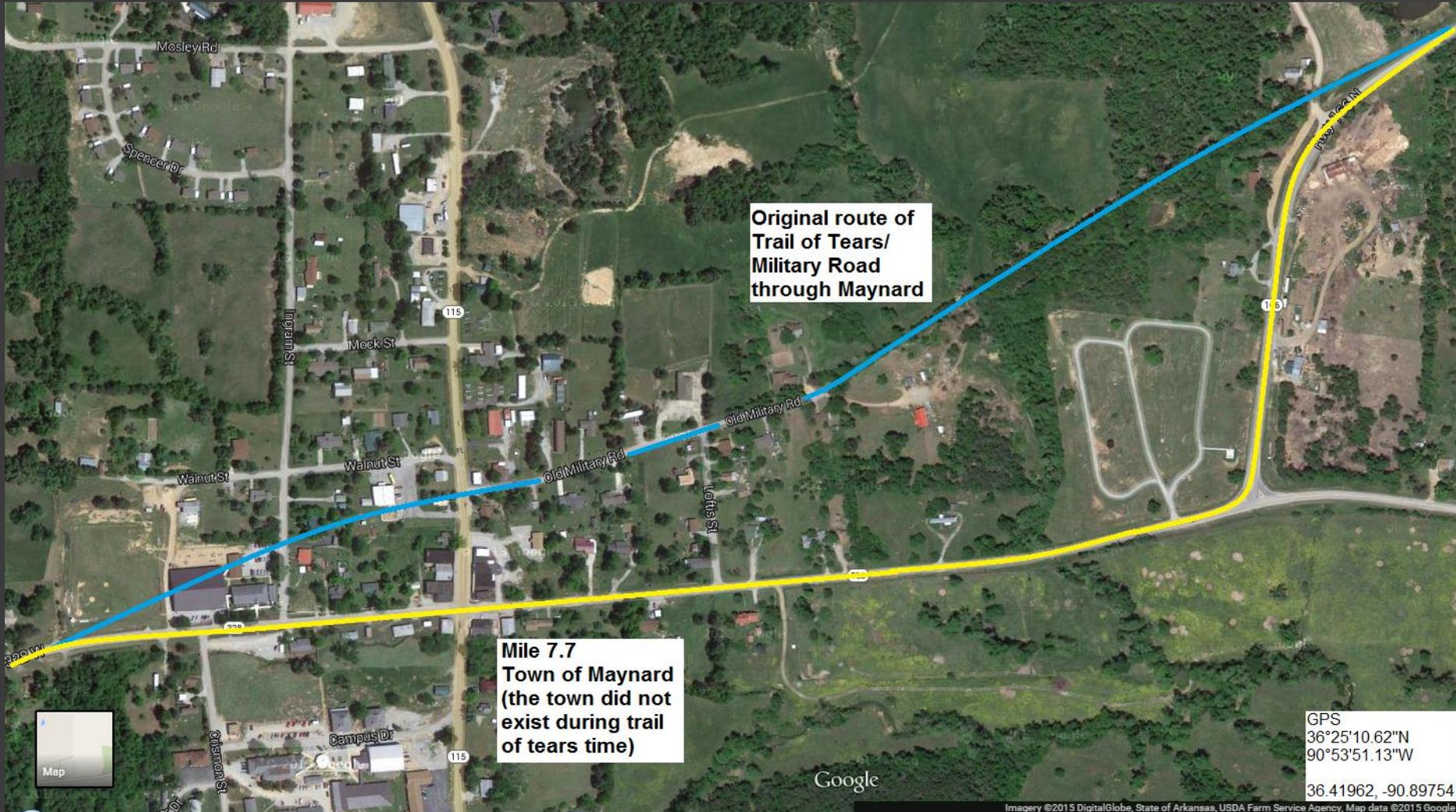


Mile 7.7
Town of Maynard
(the town did not exist during trail of tears time)

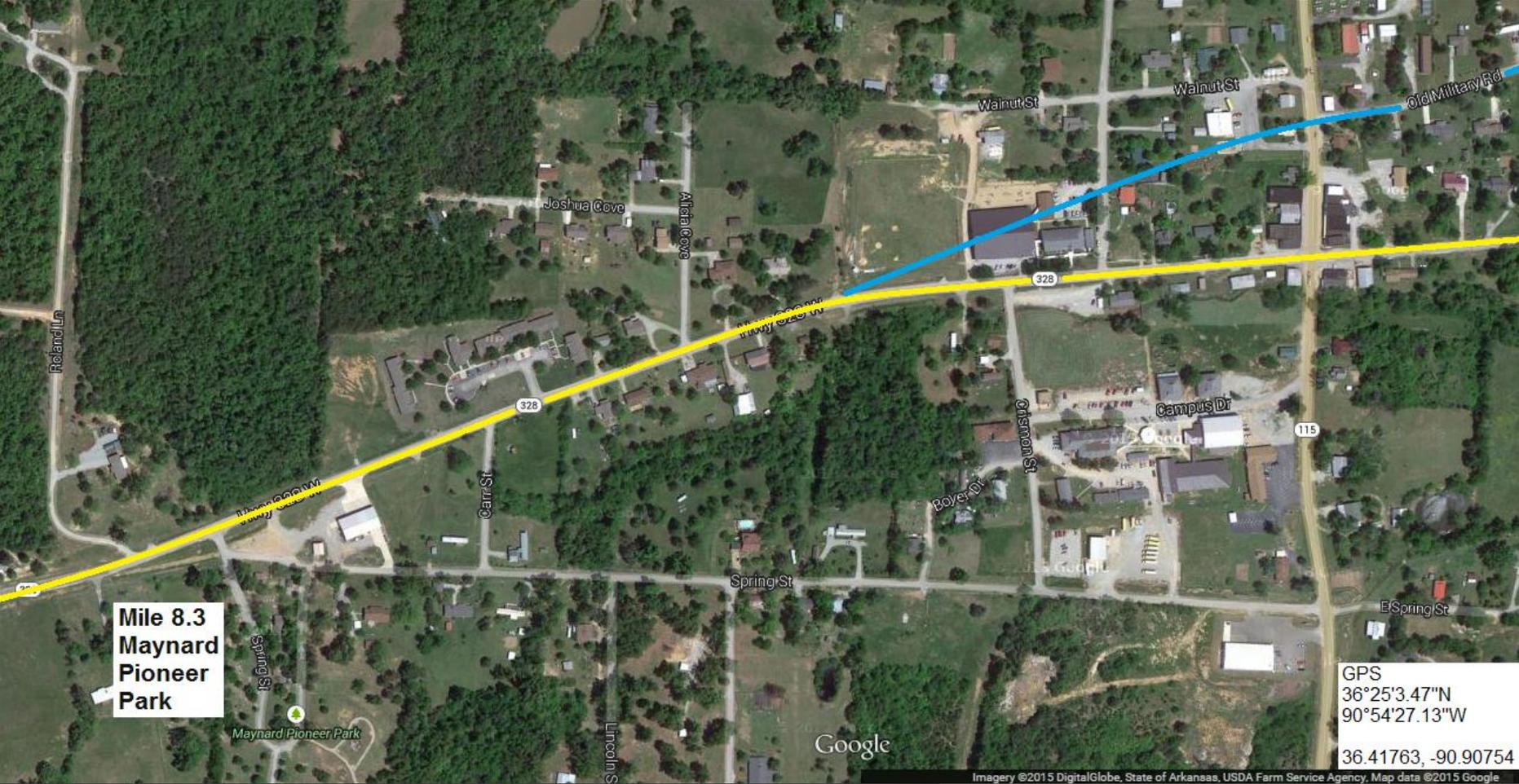
GPS
36°25'10.62"N
90°53'51.13"W
36.41962, -90.89754

Google

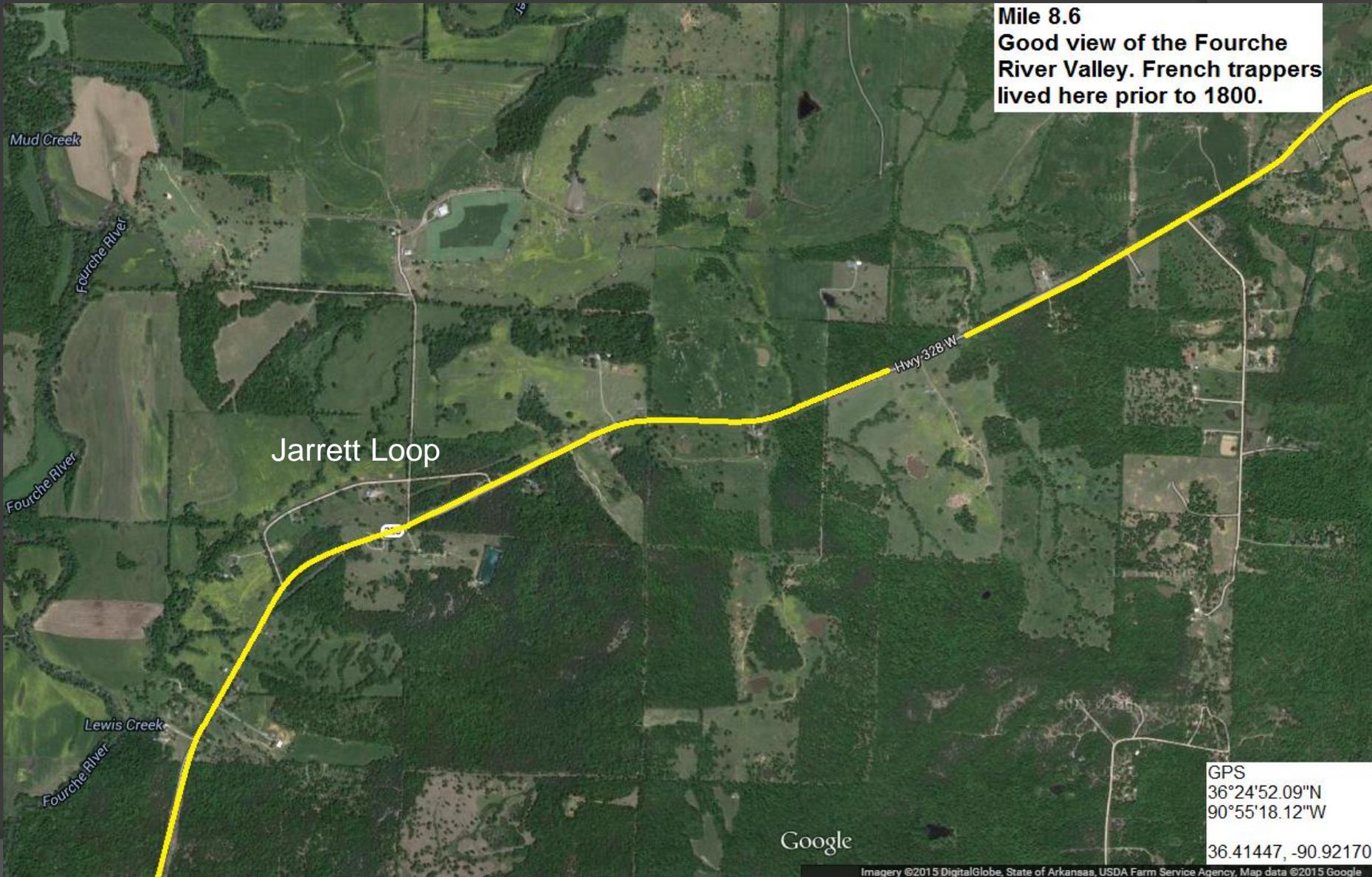
This image shows the route the original trail took, before the town was built around it.



Maynard Pioneer Park, on the trail at the edge of town, includes a very interesting museum housed in a log cabin moved to this site many years ago. It's well worth a stop if you have the time.



Soon after leaving Maynard hikers will be treated to a nice view of the Fourche River valley, once home to many early settlers of what became Randolph County.

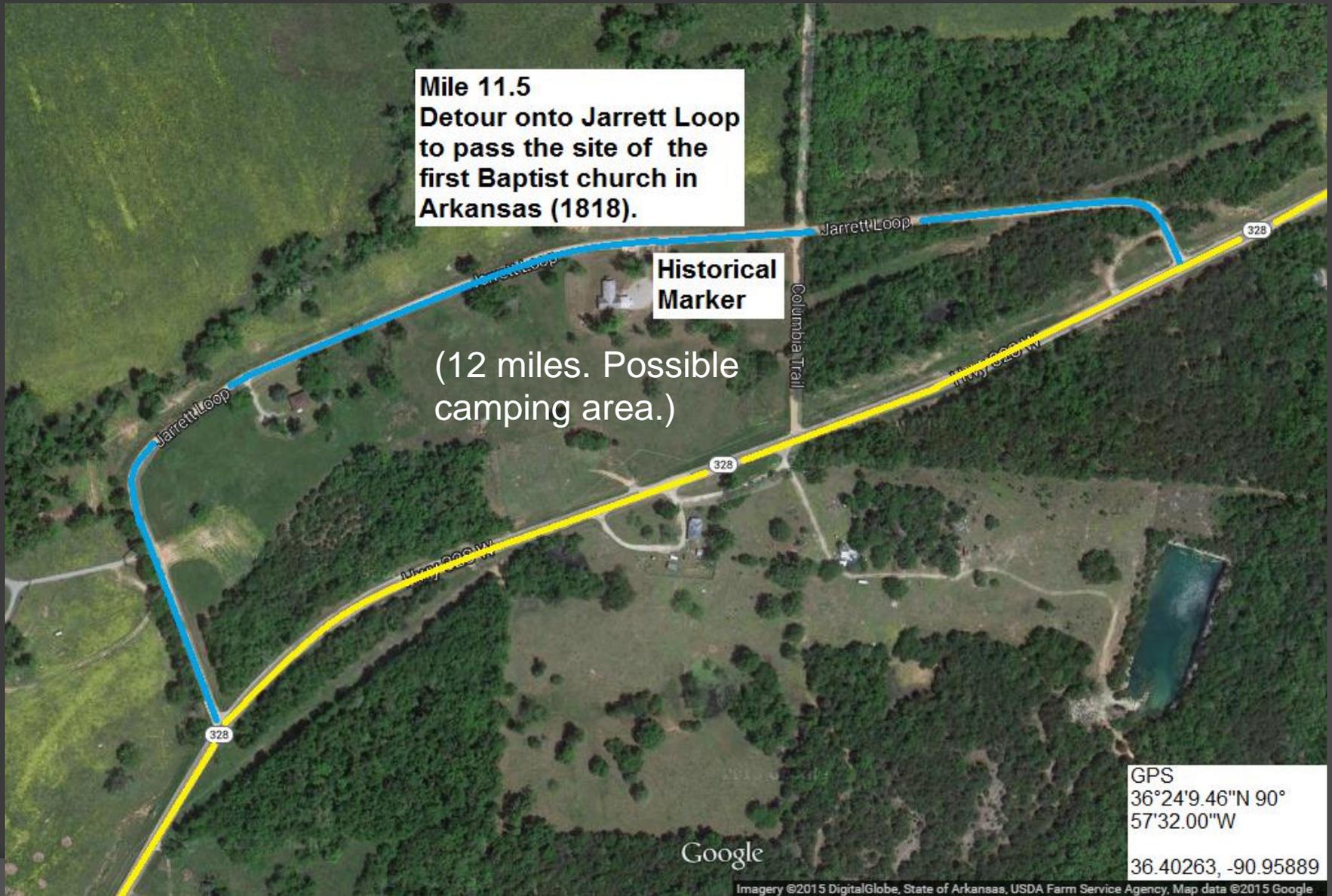


Mile 8.6
Good view of the Fourche River Valley. French trappers lived here prior to 1800.

GPS
36°24'52.09"N
90°55'18.12"W
36.41447, -90.92170

Google

The old church described in this image was built on the original Military Road, so taking “Jarrett Loop” will take you on this section of the original Trail of Tears.

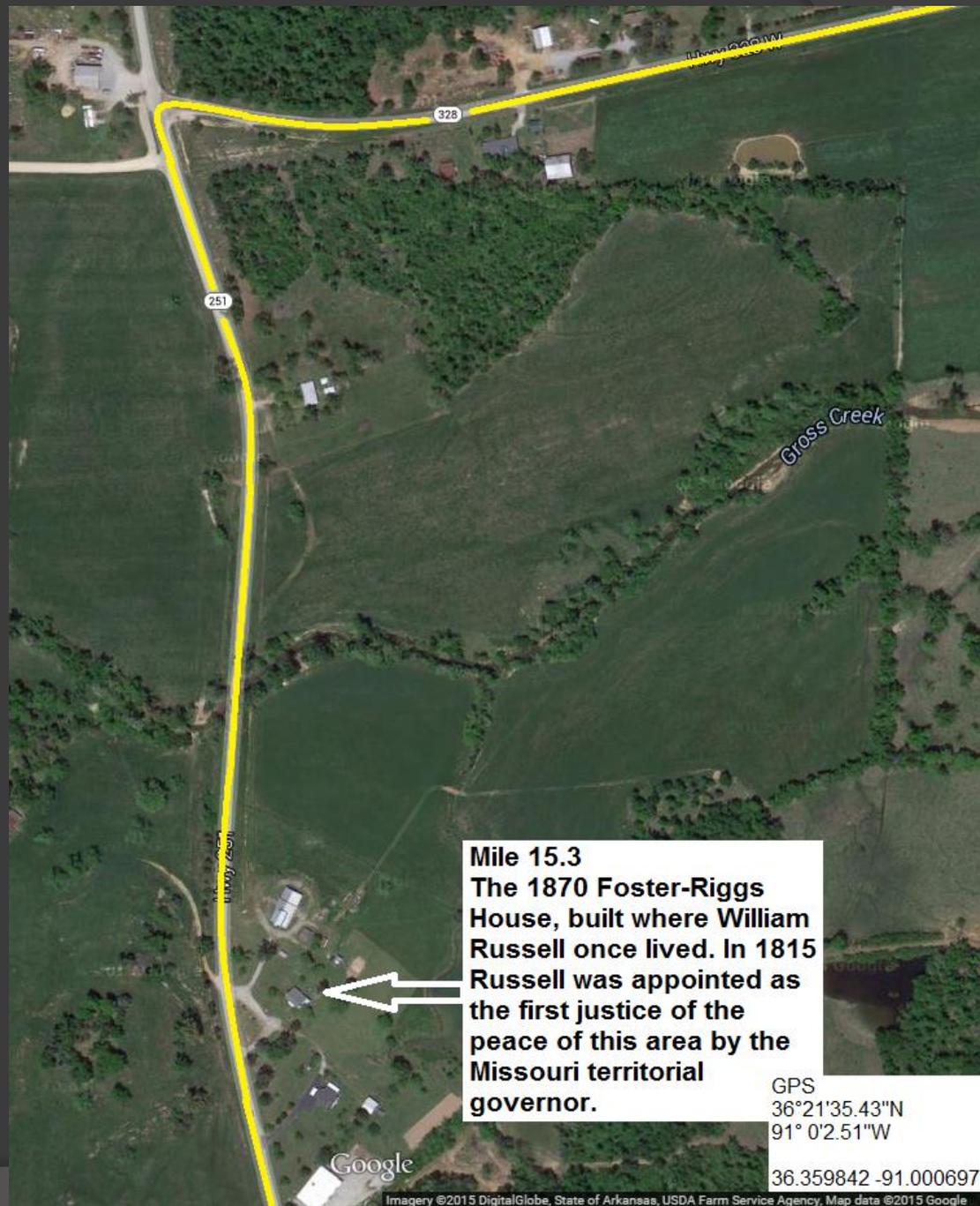


The Fourche River Bridge is built where the Benge Party forded the river.



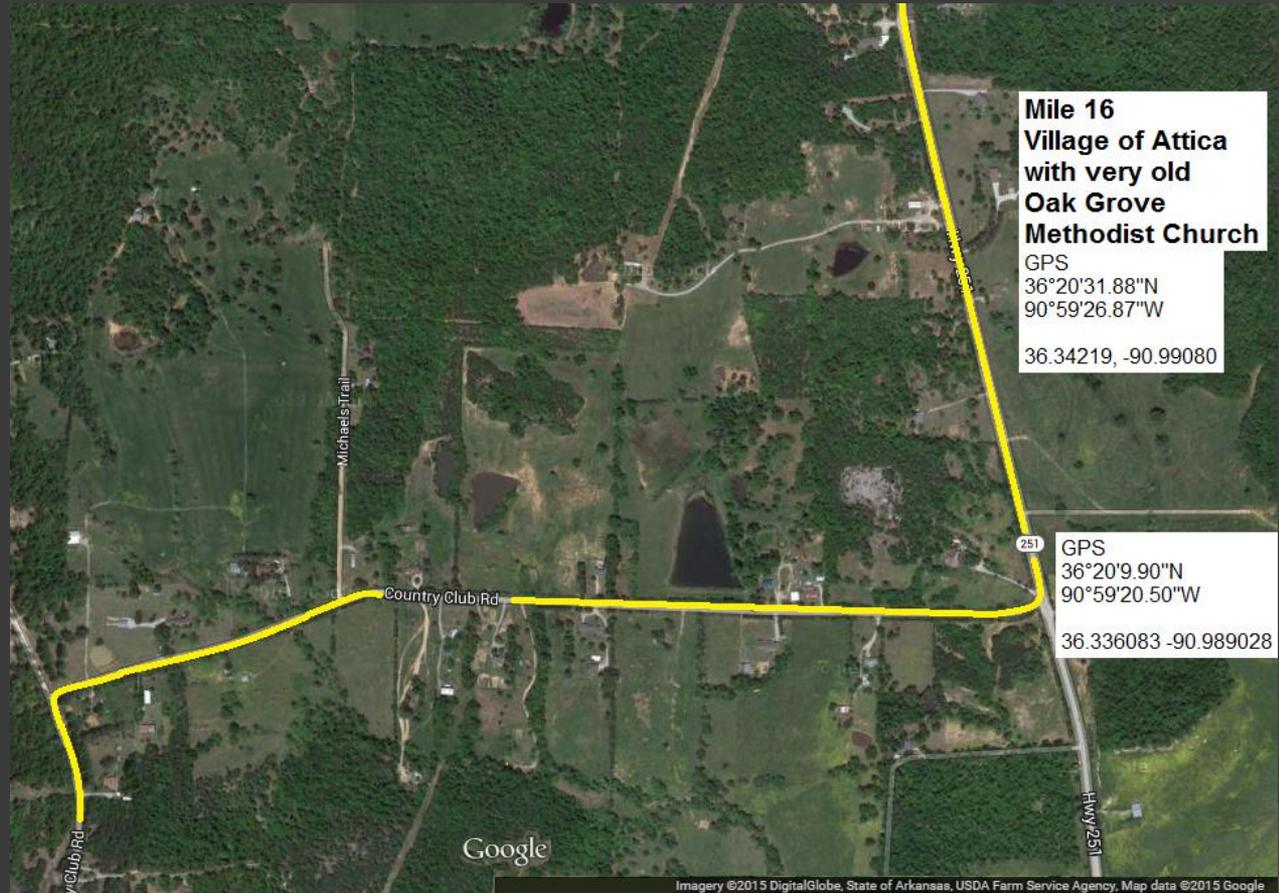
Turn left onto Highway 251 and proceed south.

You'll soon see the old Foster-Riggs House, which was built near where the Russell House stood, by a spring on the Military Road. The remains of the Russell House, which witnessed the passing of the Benge Party, were torn down in the mid-20th century.

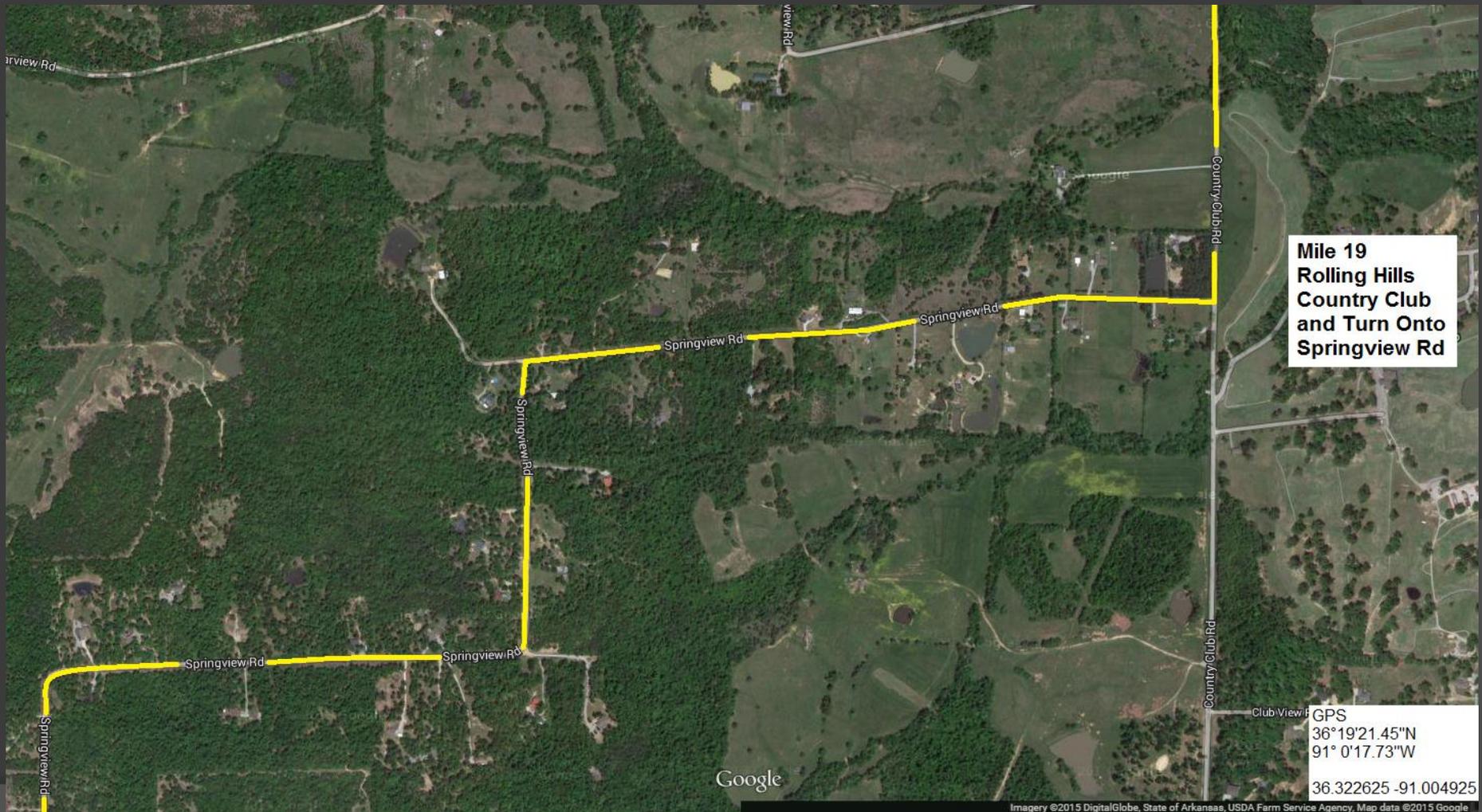


Tiny Attica has an old country store, a cemetery, and two of the oldest church buildings in Randolph County.

Not long after passing through Attica, you'll turn right onto Country Club Road.



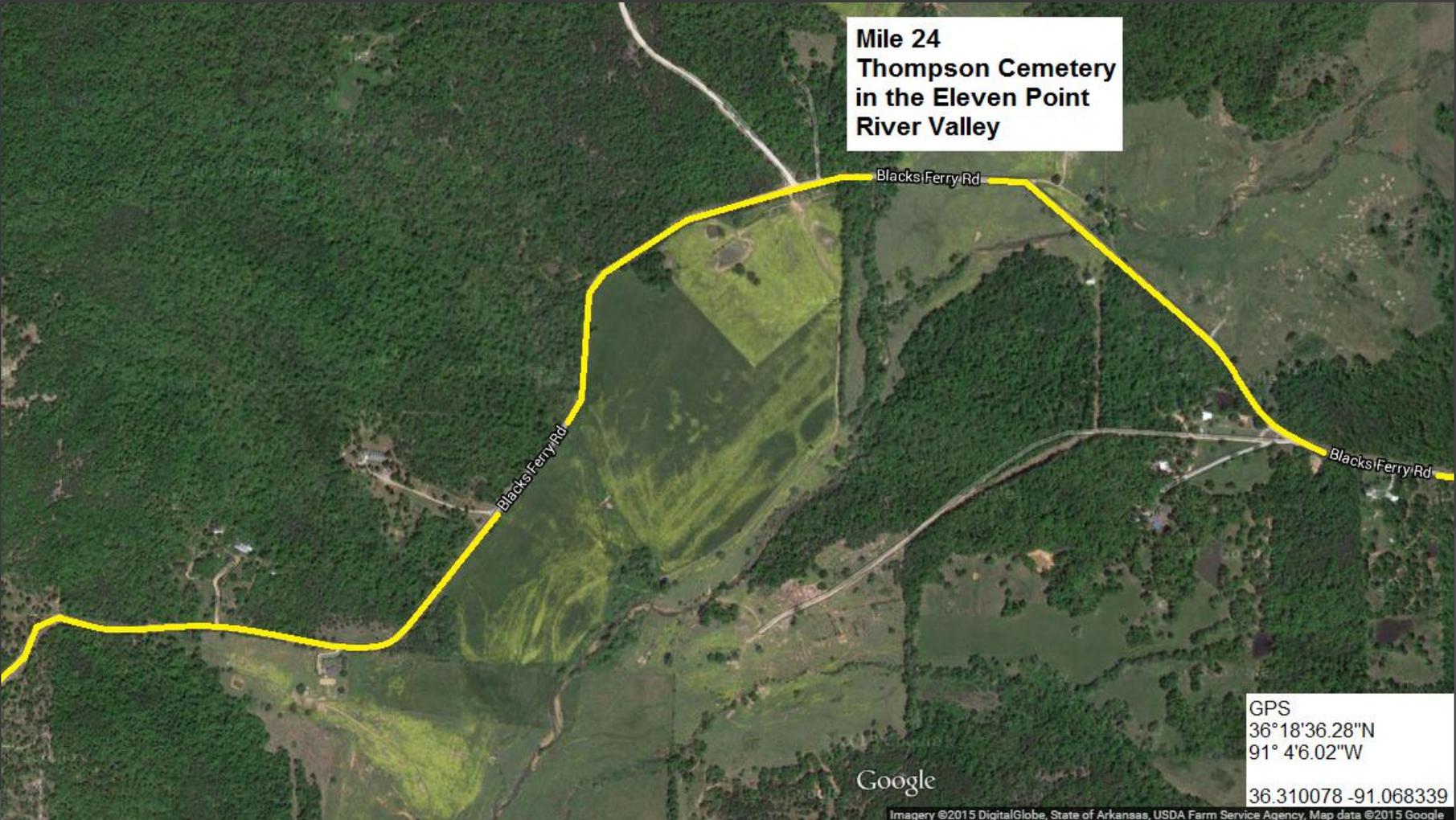
Country Club Road eventually takes you by Rolling Hills Country Club, where the appearance of the golf course on your left will signal a turn soon, to the right onto Springview Road. Springview is known for it's many ninety degree turns through some nice wooded land.



When Springview meets Highway 90, turn left, following Highway 90 just a short distance before you will make a right turn onto Blacks Ferry Road.



Blacks Ferry Road passes Thompson Cemetery. In the days before cars, people were usually buried close to where they died, so there are many small cemeteries, like this one, distributed all over Randolph County. You will soon be treated to the walk down into the beautiful Eleven Point River valley.



**Mile 24
Thompson Cemetery
in the Eleven Point
River Valley**

Blacks Ferry Rd

Blacks Ferry Rd

Blacks Ferry Rd

GPS
36°18'36.28"N
91° 4'6.02"W
36.310078 -91.068339

Google

The ferry across the beautiful Eleven Point River on the Military Road is now replaced by a bridge. Soon after crossing the river, follow the Trail of Tears straight, as Blacks Ferry Road becomes Valley Chapel Road.

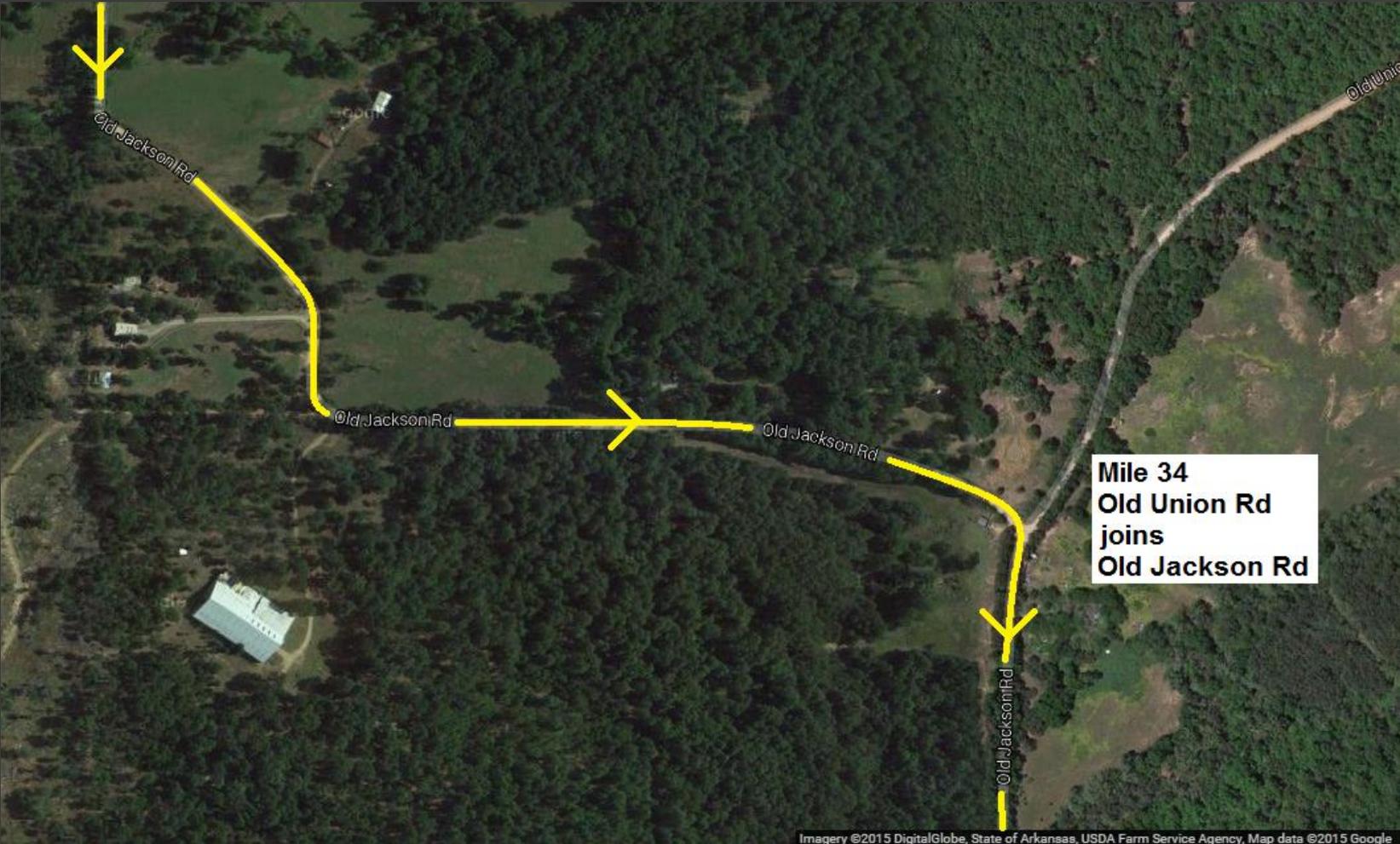


You will turn left onto Old Jackson Road at the location indicated in the image below. The town of Jackson was the location of Randolph County's second courthouse, after the nearby town of Davidsonville was abandoned a few years before the Trail of Tears forced march.

Davidsonville, now the location of Davidsonville Historic State Park, was the location of the first courthouse, post office, and land office in what is now Arkansas.

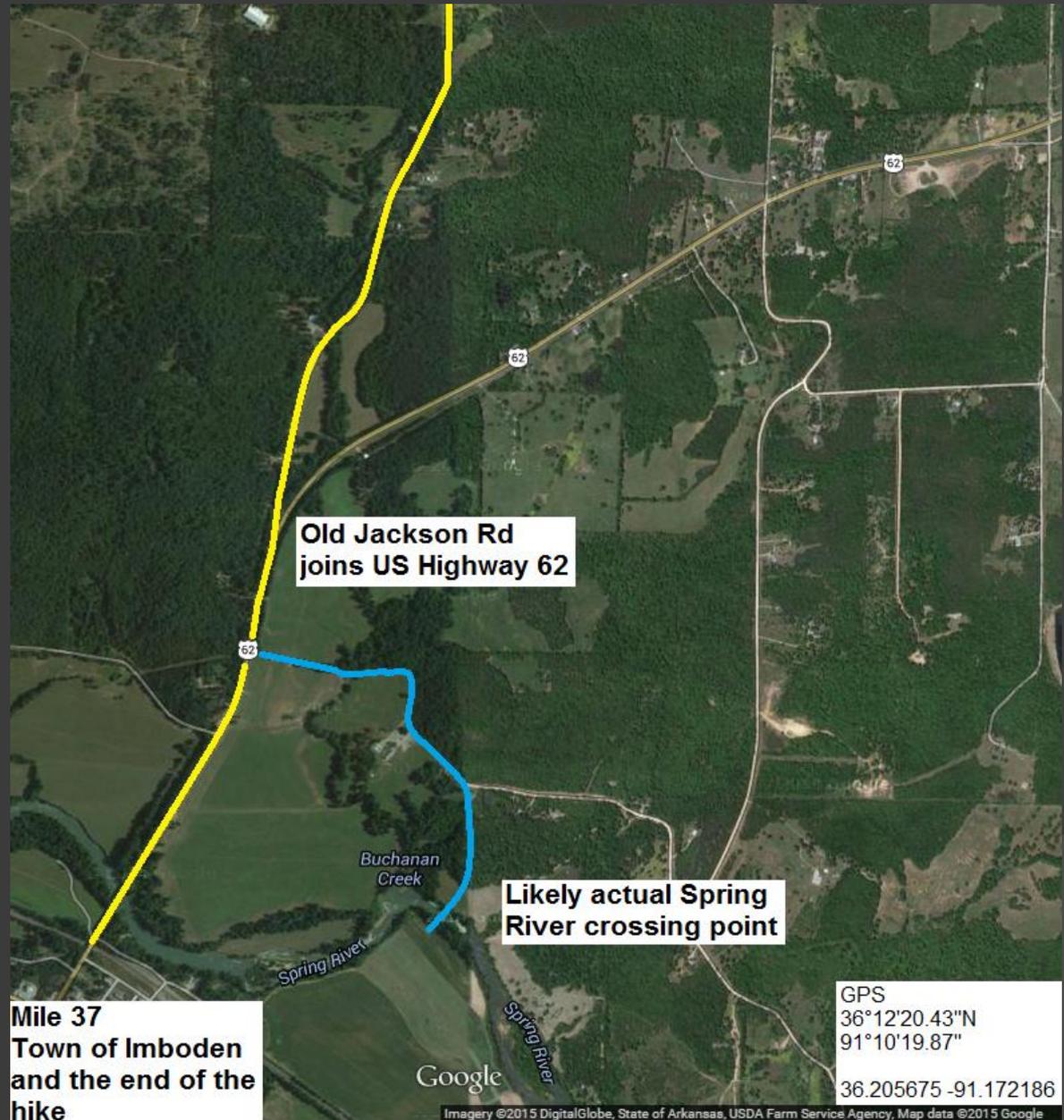


Old Union Road merges with Old Jackson Road at the location indicated in the image below. Continue south on Old Jackson Road. You will soon come to U.S. Highway 62 for the final short walk along the Trail of Tears in Randolph County.



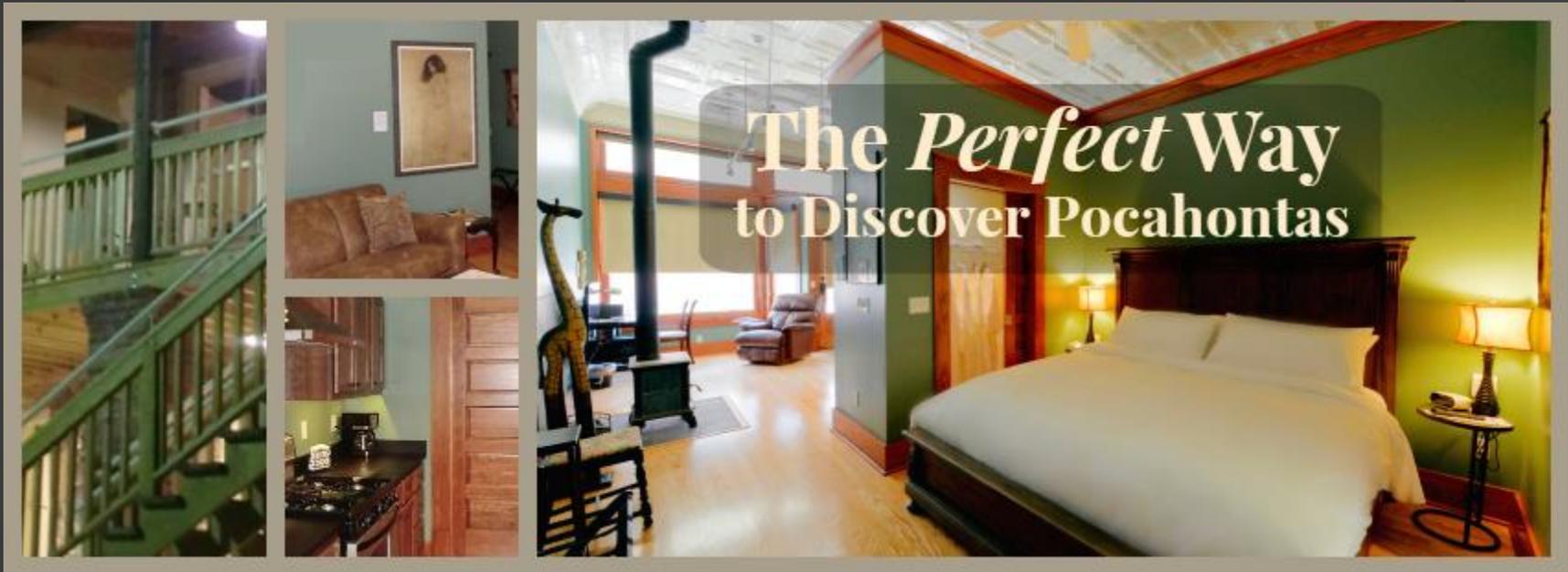
When you arrive at Highway 62, turn right and follow the highway across the Spring River Bridge into the town of Imboden.

Imboden is in Lawrence County, meaning you have completed your tour of the Trail of Tears in Randolph County. Note in the image to the right that the Benge Party actually crossed Spring River at a ford just downstream from Imboden.



The Randolph County

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