

Then & Now Pocahontas



Before and After photos around Pocahontas, Arkansas, USA

Researched and Compiled 2024-2025
by Patrick W. Carroll

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patrick@arkansasguesthouse.com

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1890



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The Pocahontas Cornet Band assembled on the north side of the 1872 Randolph County Courthouse (extreme right), about 1890. The wood-framed St. Charles Hotel in the background was built in 1850 and burned in 1924.

The building to the hotel's right, built in 1859 as an addition/annex to the hotel, still stands at 104-106 North Bettis Street. It's the oldest building in Pocahontas, 13 years older than the old courthouse, and the only building in Pocahontas that witnessed the Civil War.

2024



1910



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2024



"The Hamil Block," about 1910. The block was so-named because early Pocahontas merchant R.N. Hamil owned and occupied most of the block in the early days of Pocahontas.

His big store stood at the intersection of Marr Street and Everett Street in Pocahontas. Most of these buildings burned in later years and were replaced with less impressive structures.

The building on the corner, with the word HAMIL on it, was the location of King's Department Store for many years. Since then, it housed many different businesses. In more recent years, several different restaurants have occupied the corner building.

1954



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2024



Tyer Brothers Grocery in Pocahontas, about 1954. The building now houses a law firm and other offices.

Tyer's was the largest downtown grocery store, and it operated into the 1980s. They not only delivered groceries to customer's homes, but they would carry them to the kitchen and put the items away in the cabinetry.

If you look closely, you can still make out the T of Tyer in the "after" photo. If you see it in person, you can see the "ghost" of Tyer still on the building.

1947



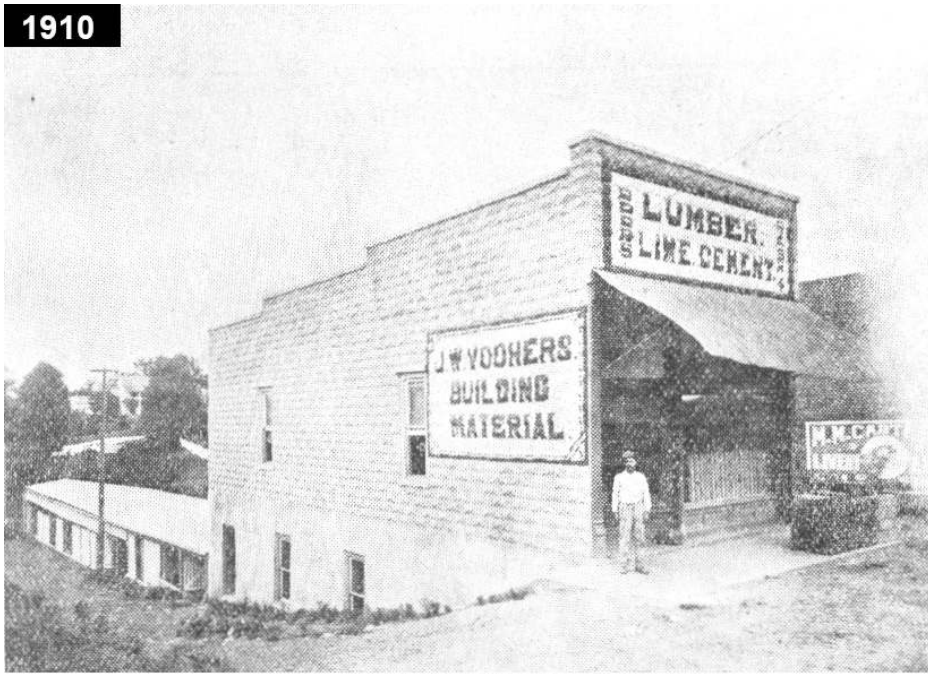
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2024



Million Motors was the Pocahontas Ford dealership in the middle of the 20th Century, and continued under other names, such as Smith Ford and Pocahontas Ford/Portell for nearly 50 years.

1910



J.W. Voothers Lumber Company photographed in 1910. Built by A.A. Sago, the building once served as the Randolph County Library, and was the location of Camera Corner for many years.

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2024





1955 Randolph County Fair Parade. The circular arrow Western Auto sign was destroyed in high winds just a few years ago. Johnston's Drug Store became Futrell Pharmacy in the 1960s.

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1895



West side of the Pocahontas Court Square. Brooks Pool Hall must have been a fun place to visit, though with no air conditioning everyone had the doors and windows open, and fly swatters were kept handy!

The State Bank building on the corner was later home to Randolph County Abstract Company, run by Jim Shivley for many years. In more recent years it housed White's Donut Shop, Computer Corner, and several different small cafes.

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2024



1947



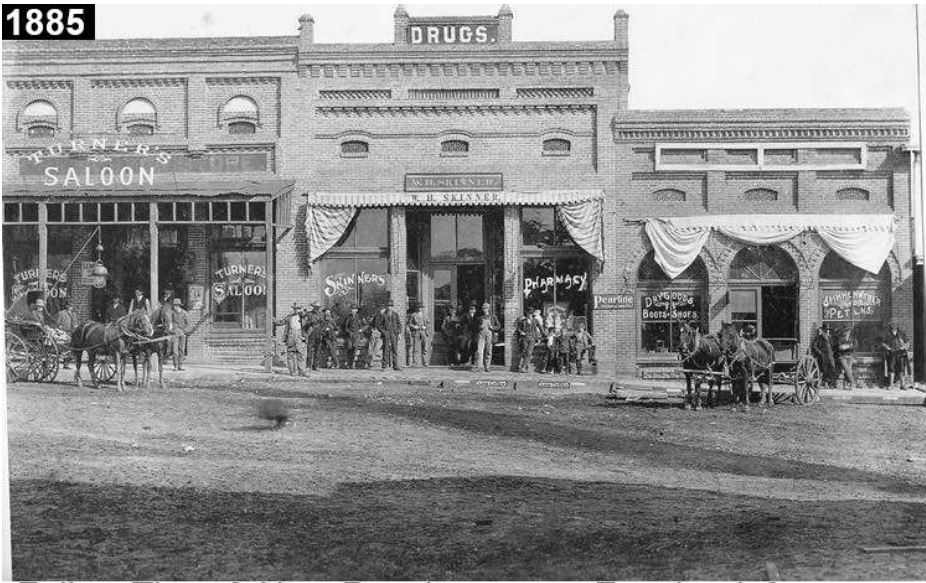
The Pyburn Street Church of Christ building was torn down about 1954 to make way for a larger church building.

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2024



1885



North side of the Pocahontas Court Square, about 1885. Will Skinner's Drug Store had been in a wood frame building on the south side of the court square before moving to a brick building on the north side.

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2024



1947



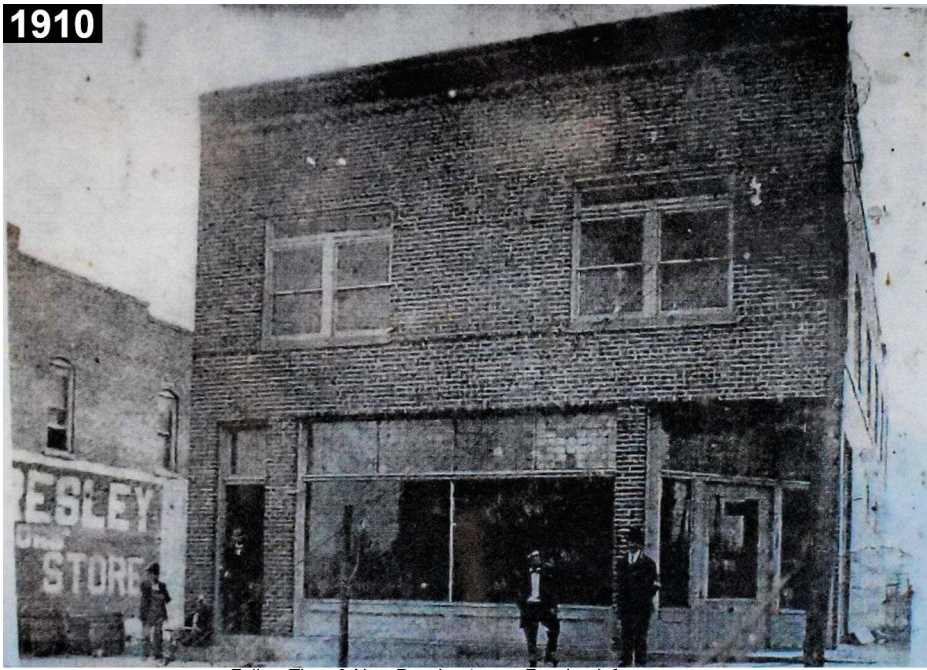
Warren Blankenship, editor of the Pocahontas Star Herald, when the newspaper was located in the St. Charles Annex Building at 106 N. Bettis Street, about 1947. Mr. Blankenship's father, L.F. Blankenship, established the Star Herald and moved it into this building about 1905, when he bought the Randolph Herald and combined it with the Pocahontas Star, a newspaper he already owned.

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2024



1910



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2024



Photographed about 1910, this building became Randolph County Bank before housing Western Auto, which later became Futrell Hardware.

1970



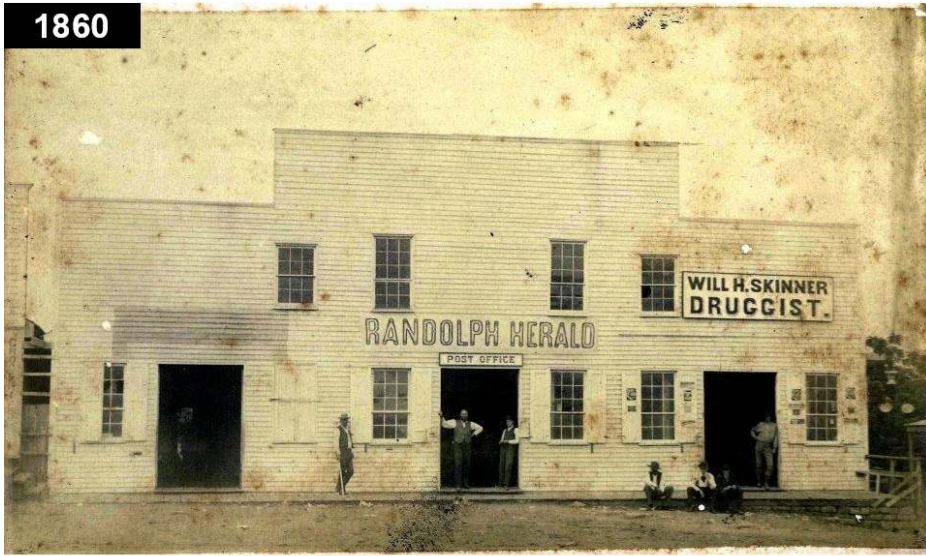
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2024



Peter's Variety Store, usually called "Joe Pete's" was a downtown institution in Pocahontas for nearly 100 years!

1860



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2024



This 1860 photo is one of the oldest Pocahontas photos in existence. Before the civil war, buildings in Pocahontas were wood frame, like this, except the courthouse and the St. Charles Annex, which were brick.

During the war, the U.S. Army burned many of the wooden buildings in Pocahontas. After the war, most downtown buildings were rebuilt using brick.

It's hard to tell, but it looks like there's a street light to the right of the building. This would probably have been an oil lamp that was re-lit each evening, since there was no electricity in Pocahontas until about 1910.

The Randolph Herald newspaper moved into this building in 1884 and remained there until L.F. Blankenship merged it, about 1905, with his Pocahontas Star, creating the Pocahontas Star Herald, which operated out of the St. Charles Annex building on North Bettis Street. Will H. Skinner's pharmacy later moved to a brick building on the north side of the court square, the building that later housed Burke's Shop, and more recently Studio B Salon.

1909



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2011



2014



Heinrich “Henry” Lesmeister and his wife Martha had immigrated to America from Essen, Germany, first settling in Lexington, Kentucky, before moving in 1880 to Pocahontas with their son, Henry Jr. and their daughter Theresa Frances. The Lesmeisters built this building on North Marr Street in 1902, to house their dry goods store and a grocery store.

A fire struck most of the buildings in this block about 1912, and the brick facade was rebuilt in a slightly different style, using what remained of the original building as a starting place. The Lesmeister's daughter, Theresa, married Hubert A. Peters, whose family were also immigrants from Germany, and the building remained in the Lesmeister-Peters family for over 100 years. Theresa Frances Peters' daughter was Mary Burke, who started Burke's Shop in Pocahontas. Mary Burke's daughter, Mary Frances Brackett, succeeded her mother at the store after Mrs. Burke's retirement.

After "modernizations" were removed in 2012, it was restored to its original appearance to become Lesmeister Guesthouse.

The 2-story building on the far left of the 1909 photo was Joe Peters' Restaurant on the ground floor and apartments upstairs. The second floor was removed in the 1950s and a more modern front facade was added on the ground floor. It later housed Ella Mae's Creative Gallery, and currently contains two upscale apartments.

1927



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2024



This photo was made after 1924, because the St. Charles hotel burned that year, and the hotel is gone, to the right of the courthouse, in this photo. The photo was made before 1930, when the Lewallen Hotel was built where the St. Charles burned. So we'll split the difference and guess that this photo was made in 1927.

A couple of things notable from the then and now photos of the old courthouse. Notice how much higher the original chimneys were, and notice the balustrades/rails that used to be atop the porches.

The original balustrades rotted away years ago, but Judge Jansen saved what was left of them so they could be reproduced again someday...but that day never came. It wouldn't be a surprise to learn that someone threw them away at some point.

They have been gone a long time, and they really need to be replaced! These days, they could be done in PVC so they'd last "forever" and never need repainting.

1930



Lewallen's Hotel was built in 1930 on less than half of the space once occupied by the much larger St. Charles Hotel, which was built in 1850 and burned in 1924. Lewallen's Hotel was well known for its excellent restaurant on the ground floor. After the hotel closed, the building housed Bowlin Furniture for many years.

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2024



1920



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2024



Starting out as First National Bank (the name is still over the front door), Pocahontas Federal and Martin Agency were there before they moved to their new building on Broadway Street about 1960. Not long afterward, Planters and Stockmen Bank started out there, before moving to their new building on the bypass. In the 1980s BRAD was in the building, before they bought the old hospital. The last business occupant was the Grider Law Firm.

Major changes have been made over the years, to the windows, the removal of a door on the left side, and conversion to a sloped roof, which raised the height of the front facade. The building suffered a major fire about 1983, but was repaired and saved.

1910



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2024

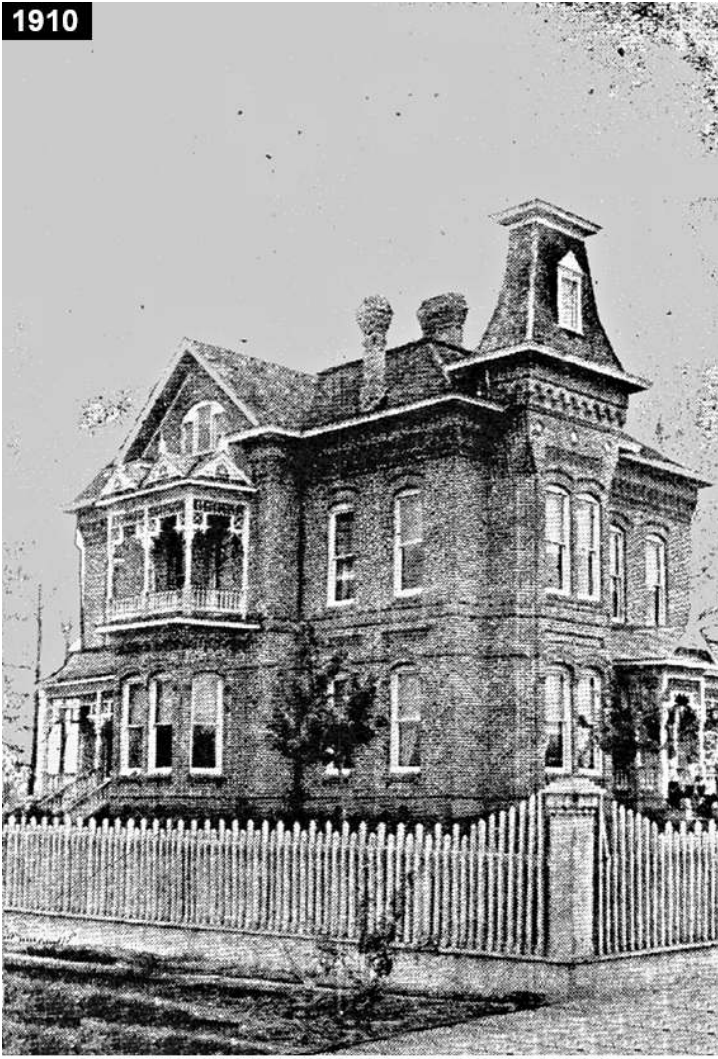


The Old Opera House at the corner of Pyburn and Marr Streets seated 800 people on the second floor, for plays and musical performances. The space also served as a basketball court before the public school built a gymnasium, even though players had to dribble around support columns in places.

Notice all the big windows all the way around the building. When they built this, there was no electricity in Pocahontas, so lots of big windows meant lots of natural light to live by. Such artists as W.C. Handy, Father of the Blues, and the National Chautauqua Association presented shows and recitals here often.

Sadly, it was torn down by the City of Pocahontas in later years to create a parking lot, helping spur the creation of Five Rivers Historic Preservation in 2006 to work to prevent future losses of our area history.

1910

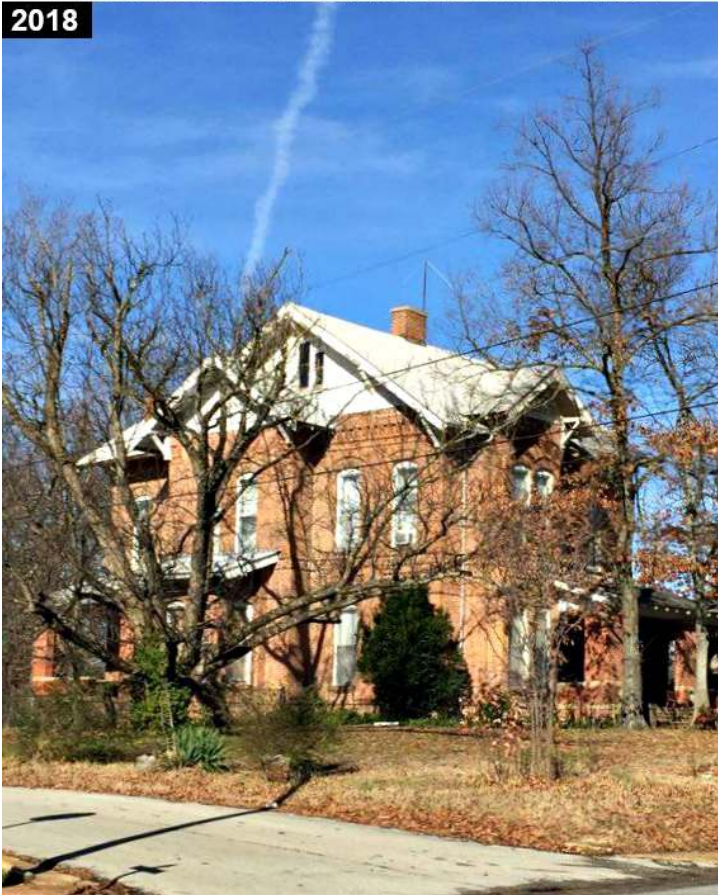


The home of prosperous farmer and horse breeder Minatree "Min" Carter and his wife, Mazie Esselman Carter, on Thomasville Avenue, in 1910. The roof was rebuilt and the tower, high chimneys, and ornate porches were removed long ago.

Mr. Carter died in 1925, at the age of 61, and many other families have enjoyed living in the big house since then.

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2018



1947



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2024



Marvin Wells' Esso service station, at the intersection of Pyburn and Van Bibber streets, about 1947. Note that the white pole holding the "Standard Esso Station" sign is still there, though it's no longer white.

In the 1950s this building was replaced by a more modern mid-century building, which is still there, but now beneath a lot of metal siding.

In the distant background on the right is the tower of the old Pyburn Street Church of Christ building.

1910



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2024



Court Square Hotel, south side of the Pocahontas court square, about 1910. Mrs. Annie Shivley was proprietress. Her son, Jim Shivley, was a Pocahontas business, political, and historical figure in Randolph County for almost 100 years.

1939

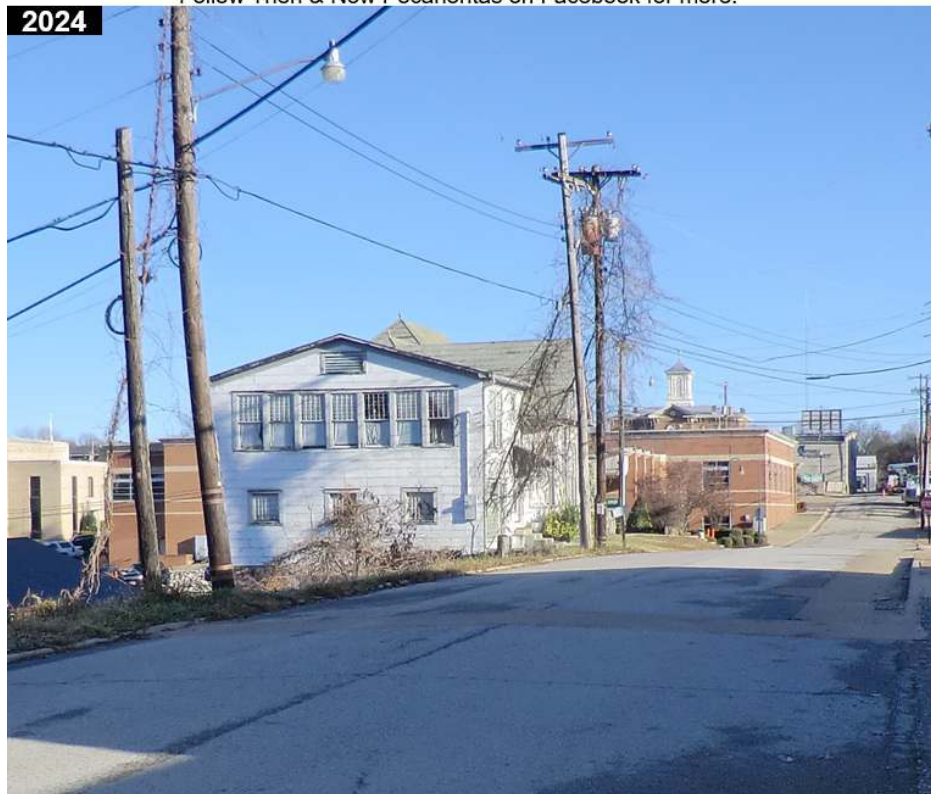


Labor Day Parade, Sept. 4, 1939, on South Bettis Street. The house in the background is the Joe Sallee family home.

Joe Peters photo, taken from what's now the parking area of Prichard's Furniture.

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2024



1955



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2024



Randolph County Fair Parade, east side of the court square about 1955.

Left to right, Tot Shop was Camera Corner for years, then Tamera's Corner children's clothing. Kevin Barnes is working in there now.

Bowlin Furniture and Maloy(?) Hardware are now offices and businesses downstairs and apartments upstairs.

George Baltz Appliances was later a soap store, then Buttercream Bakery, and Childs Jewelry is now our book store, Timeless Books.

1908

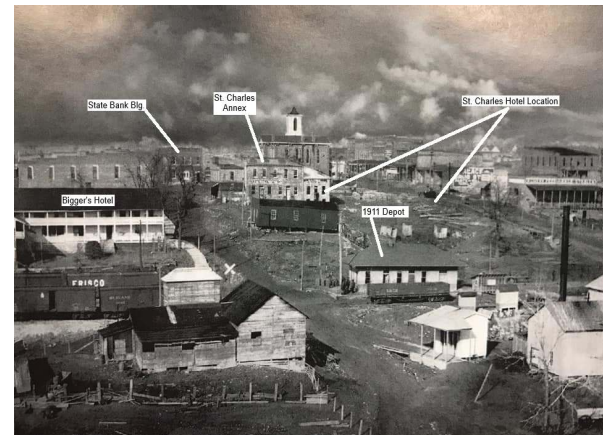


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Bigger's Hotel, from a 1908 Postcard. The train depot was just down the hill a little farther. The hotel was a brick building, though the white paint makes it look wood-framed.

The Bigger Family also owned the huge Ida Mae Hotel in Biggers. See another view of the hotel below.

2024



1950



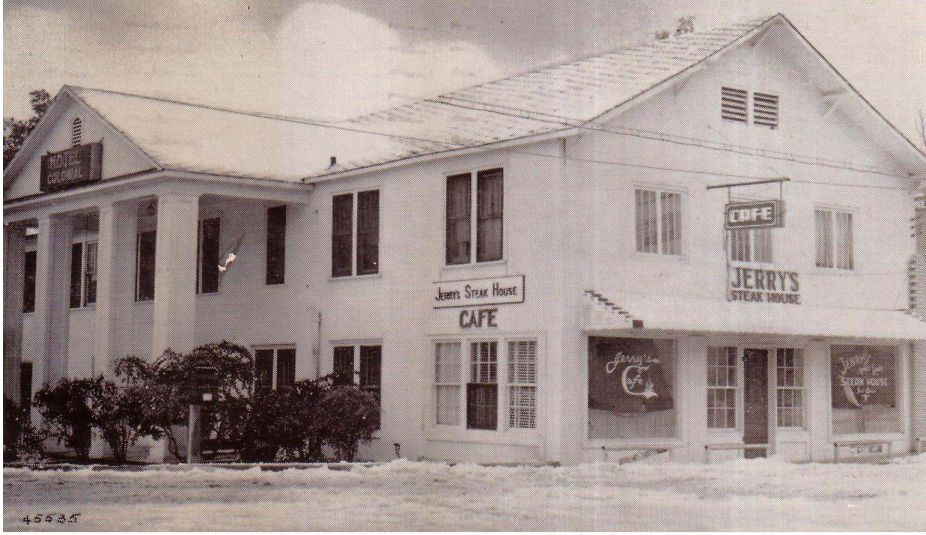
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2024



Parade on North Marr Street, about 1950. If you look at the people standing on the corner of Marr and Pyburn Streets, you'll realize that the building that now houses Mildred's Spice Corner had not yet been built. Of course, the huge "Old Opera House" building in the background is now a parking lot.

1951



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2024



Hotel Colonial and Jerry's Steakhouse/Cafe at the intersection of Broadway and Van Bibber Streets in 1951. The building was replaced in 1960 by a modern building housing Pocahontas Federal Savings and Loan, Martin Insurance Agency, and Guaranty Realty Company. River Bank restored and moved into the building in 2018.

1967

FRISCO DEPOT POCAHONTAS, ARK. 1967



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2025



The Frisco train depot in Pocahontas was built in 1921, replacing an older, smaller depot that stood a little to the west, at the end of Broadway Street.

The Frisco Railroad picked up their tracks and left Pocahontas and Randolph County in the 1980s. Over the years the depot housed Smokey James' Used Car Lot, as well as a church or two, before lying vacant for a few years.

Eventually, Michael Parker donated the property to the City of Pocahontas, with the stipulation that the building be restored to contain the local tourism office and a museum of transportation and commerce. State rehabilitation grants paid most of the cost of a major project to restore the building to good condition.

It's currently rented from the City by the Pocahontas Star Herald.

2010



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2024



Built in 1859 as a brick addition to the wood-framed 1850 St. Charles Hotel, the brick construction saved this building when the old St. Charles Hotel burned in 1924. It's the oldest building in Pocahontas and the only building in Pocahontas that witnessed the Civil War.

After "modernizations" such as plate glass windows, commercial aluminum doors and a rock veneer were removed in 2018, the building was restored, between 2018 and 2023, to its original appearance (based on photos of the building in late 1800s photos).

Over the years the ground floor was home to the Pocahontas Star Herald, OK Barber Shop, Singley Insurance, and Merle Norman Gallery. Upstairs, originally hotel rooms of the St. Charles Hotel, later became a "rooming house," with people living there long term. The upstairs sat empty from 1960 until 2023, when it again became occupied, as an upscale apartment, as well as one suite that's part of Lesmeister Guesthouse, with suite rentals by the night.

1940



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This 1940 photo shows Louis A. Froelich, owner of the Milwaukee Cafe, across Marr Street from the old Pocahontas Public School (near the current city tennis courts). Marr Street was U.S. Highway 67 at the time, before the City built the bypass that serves now as U.S. 67.

This building later became a private residence and looked much the same until it was torn down in the 1990s. It has been a vacant lot ever since. Note the 48-star U.S. flag.

1860



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2024



This 1860 photo of the south side of the court square is one of the oldest Pocahontas photos in existence. The gable-roofed building on the left says ISAAC HURST GROCERIES. That location is now occupied by Futrell Pharmacy.

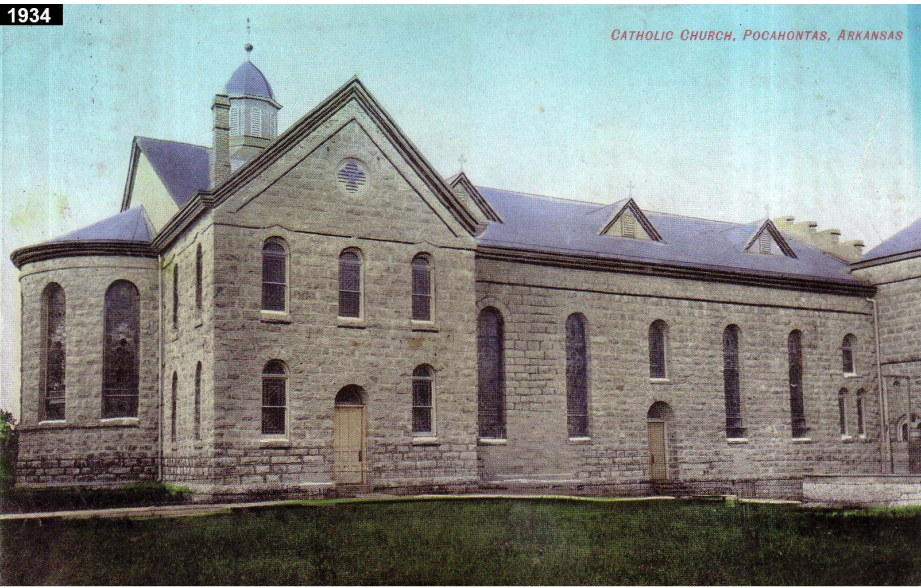
The Less Brothers building, with saloon, are forgotten in local history. The Randolph Herald newspaper moved into the building on the right in 1884 and remained there until L.F. Blankenship merged it, about 1905, with his Pocahontas Star, creating the Pocahontas Star Herald, which operated out of the St. Charles Annex building on North Bettis Street.

Before the civil war, buildings in Pocahontas were wood frame, like these, except the courthouse and the St. Charles Annex, which were brick. The courthouse then was not the current "old courthouse," built 1872, but an older, poorly built building from the 1830s, when Pocahontas became the seat of the new Randolph County. That building more or less collapsed by the end of the Civil War.

During the war, the U.S. Army burned many of the wooden buildings in Pocahontas. After the war, most downtown buildings were rebuilt using brick.

1934

CATHOLIC CHURCH, POCAHONTAS, ARKANSAS



St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church is Pocahontas' largest and oldest church building, built in 1901, primarily by German immigrants who moved to this area in the 1880s. The 1960s addition hides much of the building from this view.

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2024



1947



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Built on North Marr Street in 1941, on the site where the old county jail sat until 1940, The Imperial was the town's movie theater until it closed in the 1970's. After that, it was an indoor archery range for a few years, and was home to the Imperial Dinner Theater and the Randolph Music Theater for several years.

It was remodeled in more recent years to become home to the Downtown Playhouse, featuring live Broadway-style plays. It's now the Marr Street Playhouse and continues to offer live performances in a dessert and coffee setting.

2025



The smaller building that was a Food Center in the 1947 photo was later home to Ark-Mo Power Company, and was more recently Tom Rackley's barber shop before becoming part of the adjoining Playhouse.

1914



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2024



Pringle Drug Store, about 1914. There has been a pharmacy at the intersection of Bettis and Broadway Streets since 1895.

A few years ago Bill DeClerk removed the old metal "slip covers" on the two buildings on the right. I was excited to see the brick for the first time in my lifetime!

Sadly, he put new metal covers on the building, and the brick is hidden for another 50 years.

1940



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2024



Romine's Tourist Court on North Marr Street during the days when Marr Street was U.S. Highway 67. Tourist Courts were the motels of their day. Willis S. White, and later Enos French, ran a similar court one block south of the Romine court.

Other similar courts included Skyway Courts in East Pocahontas, as well as a court beside Jansen's Grocery at the intersection of Thomasville and Highland, and a court at Park and U.S. 62, near what's now Family Dollar Store, and Pocahontas Donuts.

The Romine courts looked much the same until very recently when, due to deterioration and no prospects of restoration, the City condemned them. After demolition, the City purchased the property and built a huge parking lot that's very rarely used.

1947



East side of the Pocahontas Court Square. The major improvement is probably the burying of the power lines.

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2024



1910



The residence of Dr. C.E. Pringle, photographed on North Marr Street in 1910. The more modern home, built by Max and Margaret Poe, has occupied the site for many years. It has more recently been the home of the Donald Waterworth family.

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2025



1960



Rand Bowling Lanes was originally the Rand movie theater. Early rock 'n' roll stars like Bill Rice, Sonny Burgess and Billy Lee Riley performed there. It's now a bank parking lot.

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2025



1936



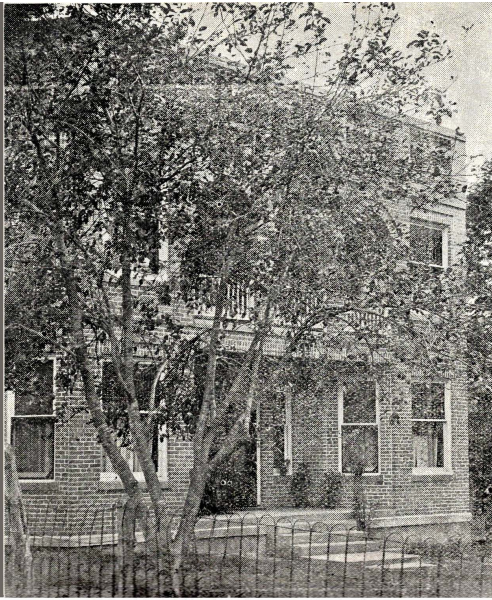
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2025



The then-new Highway 67 bridge over Black River, September 1, 1936. When the state highway department decided, a few years ago, that the old bridge was no longer suitable for highway traffic, they agreed to give the bridge to Five Rivers Historic Preservation, to maintain the bridge as a pedestrian trail, perhaps with a small restaurant with outdoor seating over the river. But the state reneged on the deal, demolished the bridge and replaced it with a modern, lifeless span.

1910



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2025



Successful businessman Ferdinand "Ferd" Spinnenweber built this house on North Marr Street about 1902. Born in 1864 in Saint Cloud, Minnesota, to German immigrant parents, Mr. Spinnenweber married Mary Katherine Frenken, who was born in 1856 in Aichstetten, Landkreis Ravensburg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Mrs. Spinnenweber spoke little or no English, so the children of Pocahontas were afraid of her.

The construction partnership of Spinnenweber and Peters constructed many buildings in downtown Pocahontas, including the Old Opera House and, near the end of Spinnenweber's life, the Imperial Movie Theater.

After Mr. Spinnenweber died in 1940, the home remained in the family, with his daughter Mary Spinnenweber Promberger living there, and later two of Mary's Promberger sons lived there.

Garry Palmer and Erin Huang purchased the property and rehabilitated it to become their home in more recent years. The home still appears much as it did in the 1910 photo, except for the roof, which was originally flat like Mr. Spinnenweber's downtown commercial buildings, but was later remodeled to have the pitched roof it has now.

1910



West side of the court square, about 1910. Most of these buildings were built around 1880. Note the change in the old Pocahontas State Bank building on the left. It didn't originally have basement windows and door.

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2025



1898



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2025

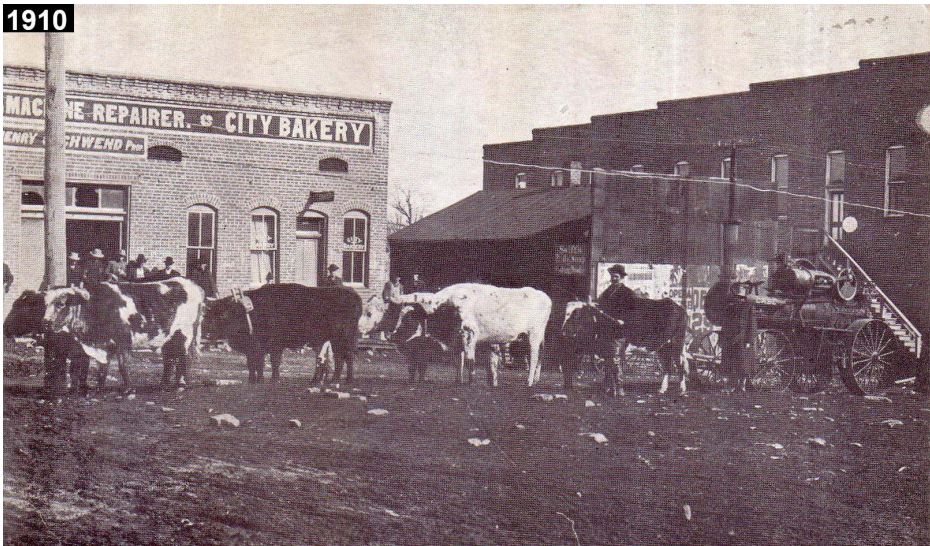


The home of Hubert and Therese Lesmeister Peters, in 1898. Peters was born near Aachen, Germany, in 1864, came to Pocahontas in the early 1880s and eventually met and married Therese Lesmeister, who was born in Essen, Germany, in 1870.

Their large home stood where the Pocahontas Post Office now stands. Family lore tells that each time Therese was expecting another baby, Hubert would add another room to the house! The home had a vineyard, a smokehouse, and a tennis court. The Peters' great-granddaughter, Melanie Brackett Orintas, reports that the home hosted wonderful parties with Japanese lanterns. There was a billiard room upstairs, and when one of the Peters girls needed a new dress, she would lay on the pool table to draw a pattern for the dress.

It looks like the house had an interesting tower in front, but it's mostly hidden by a tree in the photo. The house was demolished long before the postal service built the new post office there. Along with his business partner, Ferd Spinnenweber, Hubert Peters was very successful in business, running a general store on the court square before expanding into the construction business. Spinnenweber and Peters built many of the largest buildings in downtown Pocahontas.

1910



Pyburn Street in Pocahontas about 1910. Henry Gschwend, who came from Switzerland in 1882, had a blacksmith and repair shop and bakery there, and to the right is the side of the Old Opera House. The image seems to show a team of oxen pulling a malfunctioning Case steam-powered tractor.

Behind the rear-most ox, it looks like there's a sign advertising a show at the Opera House December 29.

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2025



1910



Thomasville Avenue residence of A. Zaniel "Zan" Schnabaum in 1910. Mr. Schnabaum, who was born in Vienna, Austria, was a successful Jewish merchant and cotton gin owner in Pocahontas. The house replaced a similar large Schnabaum house that burned in 1905.

The house was demolished about 1949 and was later replaced with the new home of E.C. and Tola Cox. That home is currently owned by David and Glenda Thornberry.

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2025



Schnabaum's Mercantile store was located at 111 N Marr, the building that in recent years has been home to Marilyn's Clogging.

1960



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2025



The Tastee-Freez, and to the right, Broadway Roller Rink, both owned by Jerrell and Fannie Broadway, served as the primary local hangout for Pocahontas teenagers in the 1950s through the 1970s. The "Feeze" was famous for their barbecue sandwiches, with choice of chopped or sliced meat, and the first Frito Pie most people ever had.

The original Tastee-Freez building was replaced in the 1960s by a large sit-down restaurant, still the TF, but a greatly enhanced version, with juke box and pinball machines. About 1970, Loyd and Edith Chezem took over the Tastee Freeze, but the Broadways continued to run the roller rink until their retirement.

Interestingly, the enlarged Tastee-Freeze building was dismantled and later reconstructed as the clubhouse of the Five Rivers Shooting Sports Complex, 177 Landfill Rd, Pocahontas.

1939



This was the Randolph County Jail up until about 1939, when a new jail was built behind the new Randolph County courthouse.

In 1901, George Cheverie was held in this jail for killing the town marshal, before a mob broke the door down, captured and lynched him.

Soon after the jail was demolished, the Imperial movie theater was built there. It's now the Marr Street Playhouse. The old jail door became the door to the theater's projection booth.

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2025



1940



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2025



Southern Baptist College, Pocahontas, in 1940. Built as a Community Center by the Depression Era Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, the building soon became home to Southern Baptist, now Williams Baptist University.

After World War II, the college moved to the Walnut Ridge area and the building later became the "Old Main" anchor building of Pocahontas High School. The building has, so far, survived several demolition threats. The school district is currently considering replacement of the old high school, but they pledge to preserve the rock building due to its historical significance.

1909



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2025



Joseph "Joe" Peters and wife Blanche, or perhaps a sister, in front of their restaurant on North Marr Street in 1909. Notice that the sidewalk was wood then, rather than concrete.

This building still stands at 214 N Marr Street, but the 2nd floor was removed in the 1950's and a "modern" front was added. In more recent years, Ella Mae Kincade had her store there, providing custom made window blinds and curtains and bedding. Garry Palmer bought the building in 2013 and it now contains two upscale apartments.

Peters later opened his well-known "variety store" on Everett Street. Blanche died in 1954. When Joe died in 1961, his daughters went on running the store for another 30 years.

1910



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2025



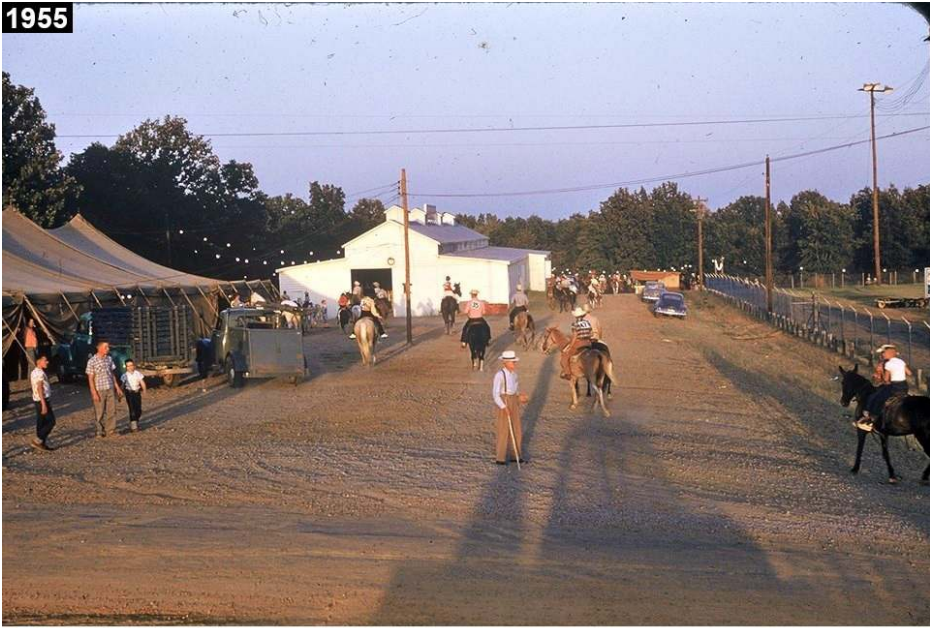
This is not a great photo, but it shows the south side of the Pocahontas court square in 1910. The two-story Court Square Hotel is in the middle of the block. At the far end of the block, where Futrell's Pharmacy is now, stood a two-story building that held Pringle's Drug Store. Dr. Pringle was one of the local physicians, and he owned a pharmacy.

A banner across the front of the building on the extreme right, now the County Clerk's office, says, "Moving Pictures HERE ToNight." This is 18 years after Edison announced the invention of the Kinetoscope, a machine that could project the moving images onto a screen.

There's also an advertisement on the corner of the building for Pearline, a popular laundry detergent of the time. To the left side of the photo, on the East side of the court square, there's a building on the corner that has a large sign on top: BANK. That was the location of Randolph County Bank at that time. The building was later home to the Arkoma Cafe. A newer building occupies the site today, and contains the Edward Jones financial offices.

Adjacent to the bank building, on the extreme left, is the St. Charles Annex building, the oldest building still standing in town, built 1859. It was an addition to the St. Charles Hotel, built 1850.

1955



It's hard to reproduce the view of the 1955 county fairgrounds because newer buildings now block the view. But if you look closely, the big fair barn remains pretty much as it was then.

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1875



R.N. Hamil, born 1847, died 1929, was a successful merchant, a "Dealer in General Merchandise." The wooden store building was replaced in 1884 by a large brick building, probably after a fire. R.N. Hamil was the father of well-known local physician, Dr. W.E. Hamil. In a few weeks, we'll see a photo of Mr. Hamil's home.

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1947



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All that remains is a short section of rock wall. This building on North Marr Street, and an additional one-story building behind it, housed the entire Pocahontas Public School system until a new high school was built on Thomasville Avenue in 1948.

After grades 7-12 moved to the new high school, the second floor of the old building was removed and the building continued, as a one-story building, to house grades 1-4, with grades 5 and 6 in the building behind this one.

When the new Alma Spikes Elementary School was constructed in the early 1960s, grades 1-3 moved to the new school, while grades 4-6 remained at the old school while two wings were constructed at Alma Spikes to hold the upper elementary grades.

Once Alma Spikes was completed and grades 1-6 were located there, the old school was demolished, though its gymnasium was saved and served as the St. Paul's school gym for a few years. It was kept as a community gym for a few more years, before being demolished after the new community center was built on Geneva Drive. Demolition of old schools is a sad Pocahontas tradition.

1947



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Building the Highway 67 bypass in 1947. Pocahontas built its own bypass, rather than waiting for the state highway department to do it, to get the truck traffic out of downtown Pocahontas.

The state then took it over and continued enhancements over the years. Before the opening of the new bypass, all northbound Hwy. 67 traffic came up South Bettis Street, between Futrell's Pharmacy and Futrell's Hardware, turned left for one block on Broadway, then turned right and followed North Marr Street to the old Hillcrest Restaurant area. South-bound traffic followed the same route, in reverse.

At one point, Dr. Dennis Holt remodeled the white house nearest the camera to become his dental office.

The white building on the right was built in 1942 to serve as an egg dehydrating plant, which made powdered eggs for army rations. It employed about 500 people. The building was later home to Pocahontas Lumber Company for many years.

1947



Silver Grill and Restaurant POCAHONTAS, ARK.



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Stella James' Silver Grill and Restaurant stood on US Hwy 67 just north of Tyler's 66 service station, beside Brown Shoe Company. Seafood was their specialty, but they also were known for their steaks, chops, and southern fried chicken, and delicious homemade pies.

1949



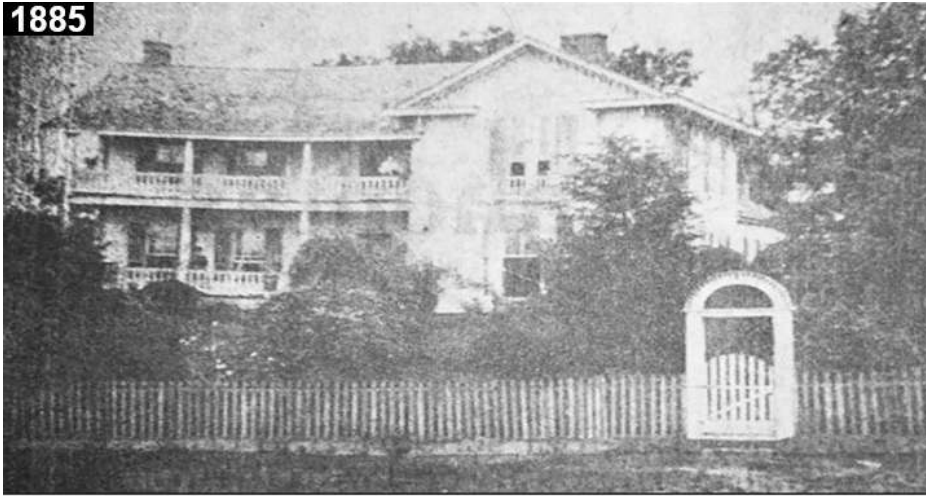
A state-of-the-art hospital when it was built, Randolph County Memorial Hospital served the county for many years before the county built a new hospital on Country Club Road. After the hospital moved out, Black River Area Development Corporation (BRAD) moved into the building.

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1885



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Wealthy merchant R. N. Hamil built his big home on Bettis Bluff, with a great view of Black River. This was the high ground above the river where Ransom Bettis settled in 1829 when he started the town he called Bettis Bluff.

Bettis established a ferry across Black River and the town grew up around it, and along Bettis Street. The town was renamed Pocahontas in 1835 when the town was chosen to become the county seat. Unfortunately, nobody knows why they chose the name Pocahontas.

Some have speculated the town was named because a town named for the father of the Indian Pocahontas, Powhatan, is downstream from Pocahontas. But Pocahontas had already been named Pocahontas for 14 years when the town of Powhatan was first laid out. A better guess is that Powhatan got its name because it was downstream from Pocahontas, which was the largest town on Black River.

R.N.'s son, Dr. W.E. Hamil, later built a brick house next door, where Prichard Furniture is now located.

The bluff where the R.N. Hamil house sat was later cut down so the new Planters and Stockmen Bank could be built near the level of the Hwy 67 bypass. Greatly remodeled since its construction, the bank building is currently occupied by First Horizon Bank.

1977



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Cade Coates furnished this photo of his uncle, the late Dr. Billy Coates on his first day of first grade at Alma Spikes Elementary School, in 1977, after their family moved here from New Jersey.

The amazing 1960 mid-century modern architecture of the school was ruined by later "modernizations" by the local school system, with large windows throughout the school being closed in to provide a more prison-like atmosphere.

Billy Coates went on to work with his parents at Liberty Mart/Flash Market and car wash before becoming Dr. Coates for a too-short lifetime.

1948



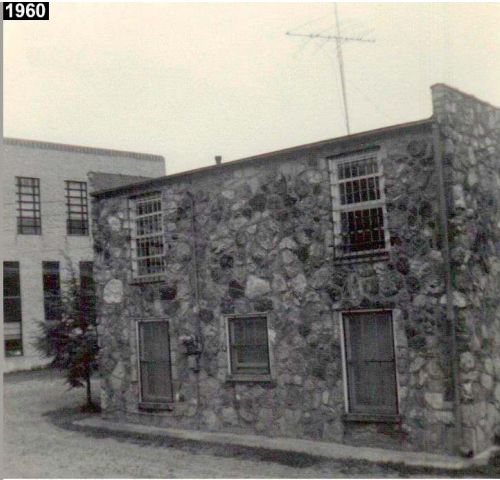
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2025



From the 1940s to the 1990s, St. Louis-based Brown Shoe Company was the largest employer Randolph County had ever seen, only being surpassed when Peco Foods came to the county in the 2010s.

1960



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The rock jail that used to stand behind the county courthouse was built in 1940, when the new courthouse was built. That's the same time that the old county jail on North Marr Street was demolished to make way for the Imperial Movie Theater.

On October 7, 1940, Henry A. Dust won the contract to build the jail for \$2,547, with the requirement that the jail be finished by Dec. 13, 1940, with a \$1/day penalty for late completion. Just over 2 months were allowed to complete the job!

The rock jail was demolished after county prisoners began being housed in the new jail at the Pocahontas City Hall, built in the mid-1970s, before the county built its own jail in recent years.

1936



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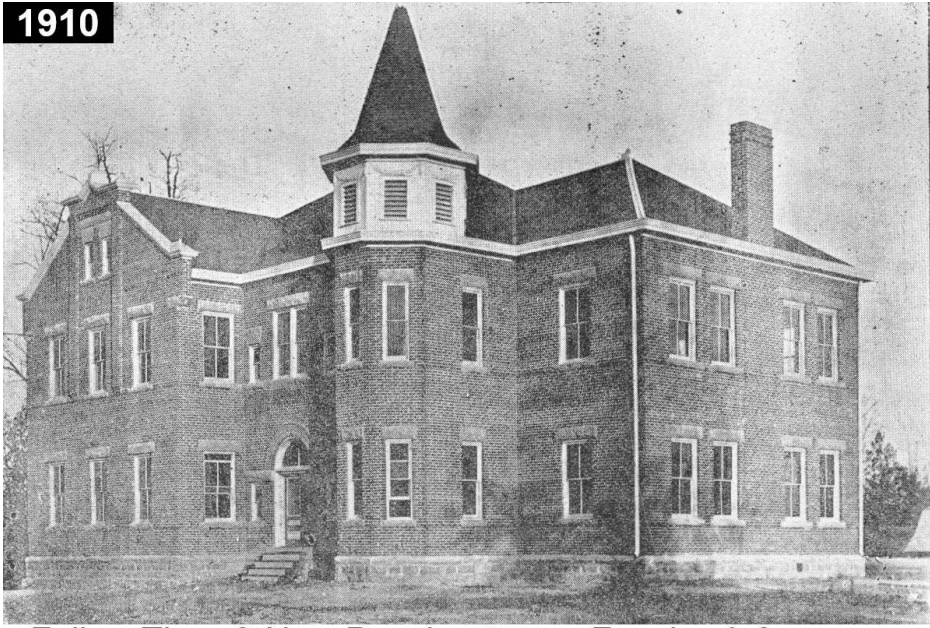
2025



A group of civic leaders and businessmen gathered in downtown Pocahontas sometime in the mid 1930s to witness lines being laid for the new Pocahontas Water and Sewer Department. The location on North Marr Street is where the city hall parking lot is today. The large rock house in the background still looks much the same.

Before the water & sewer department was established, most local homes and businesses had underground cisterns where they collected and stored rainwater, to be hand-pumped for use as needed, and of course they had outhouses or they had indoor plumbing that piped the sewage away from the house to a septic system. As recently as the 1950's a few homes along Marr Creek still dumped their sewage directly into the creek.

1910



The Pocahontas Public School in 1910. The building was built by A.A. Sago in 1904. It was later remodeled and greatly enlarged, and continued to serve the school district in various capacities until the 1960s.

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1910



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2025



View down West Everett Street about 1910. The building on the left still stands. It was the long time location of Peters' Variety Store.

The ornate 3-story building beside the Peters building held a grocery store on the ground floor. The upper floors were the location of the Meier's Hotel. Hattie King ran a store in the next building down the block, a 2-story building. That location is now occupied by the Rendezvous/Adams Hall Event Center.

The 3-story and 2-story buildings burned in the 1940's and were replaced by new 1-story buildings. Hattie King moved her business to the building at the far end of the block, where she ran King's Department Store for many years. It's now home to King's BNR and the Red Monkey Bar.

1950



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The team sponsored by Brown Shoe Company were the 1950 Pocahontas Soft Ball League Champions. Brown Shoe sponsored men's and women's softball teams as long as their plant was open in Pocahontas.



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We are not certain that this Skylark is OUR Skylark Drive-In Theater. It may be from a theater somewhere else, also with the name Skylark. But the image serves to bring back memories of the wonderful drive-in we enjoyed on Highway 67 South of Pocahontas, beginning about 1950.

After the drive-in closed, an indoor twin cinema was constructed near the entrance to the old drive-in, and that cinema lasted until about year 2000.

1930



South Bettis Street, looking north toward the court square about 1930. This was US Highway 67 at the time. Note the Sinclair H-C Gasoline sign. In 1926, Sinclair had leapt ahead of most of its competitors with H-C, the industry's original high-octane premium gasoline for motorcars.

On the left, behind the tree, stands Hotel Randolph, on the location that is now the Farmers & Merchants Bank parking lot, and beyond that, behind the car, is the building that is now home to Futrell's Pharmacy.

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2025



Hoyt Brown points out his father, Cliff Brown's service station between the Sinclair station and the back of Western Auto. If you look closely, you can see STANDARD OIL COMPANY OF LOUISIANA, and you can see the "Es" of Esso between the telephone pole and the globe of the street light.

1911



This was Pocahontas' first railroad depot. It is not the old depot that still stands at the end of Everett Street. This is an older, smaller depot that was at the end of Broadway Street, beside where the steps now lead down into Black River Overlook Park. It was demolished in the late 1920s.

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2025



1920



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Sallee Brothers Hickory Handle Mill was the first factory Randolph County ever had, and the business lasted nearly 80 years. On the left side of the "Then" photo you can see the west end of the old highway bridge over Black River. That bridge rested on a concrete abutment that's still visible in the "Now" photo of Black River Overlook Park.

About 1907, James and Sarah Sallee moved their family from their north Missouri home and settled in Success, in Clay county, where they started making hickory ax handles.

In 1909 three of their sons, Joseph, Oscar, and Robert Sallee, moved with their families to Pocahontas, where they established Sallee Bros. Handle Mill at the spot where Marr Creek enters Black River, part of Black River Overlook Park today.

It was a significant plus for Randolph County that this large (4 sons, 4 daughters), intelligent and industrious family came to our county, and stayed for a long time (Only 2 descendants, John and Raymond Jackson, still remain here. All the rest left for greener pastures).

Later, the youngest brother, Raymond (Ray) Sallee, Sr., moved here and became associated with the family business. Hickory and ash logs were delivered to the mill, where they would be sawed into blanks, then shaped into various handles for tools such as axes and baseball bats.

Ray Sallee continued to run the factory until his death in 1951, at the age of 66. Ownership of the business then passed on to his daughter, Genevieve Sallee Jackson, and her husband, J.R. "Dick" Jackson. Ray's son, Lt. Raymond Sallee, Jr., had been killed near Normandy, France, in World War II.

The mill continued making tool handles until it closed in the 1990s. At one time they also produced the famous Louisville Slugger baseball bats.

Adjacent to the handle mill, the Sallee family also operated the local ice plant. If you zoom in enough, you can read a sign near the center of the "Then" photo that says "SALLEE BROS. ICE." Later on, they built a new brick ice plant about where the bridge is in the Then photo.

For many years, the ice plant made ice in big blocks, and their ice man drove around town selling it. In the days before refrigerators, people would put a card in their window, telling the ice man how many pounds of ice they needed for their ice box.

The ice man would use an ice pick to split off the amount of ice the customer requested, then use ice tongs to pick up the block of ice and carry it to the customer's kitchen ice box. The block of ice would last a day or two, keeping perishable food cool, so it lasted longer.

The Randolph County Heritage Museum has the ice plant's ice crushing machine, which was used to generate crushed ice from block ice.

1910



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2025



View from the south lawn of the Old Courthouse, looking across Broadway Street toward the buildings that now house the Randolph County Annex offices. The buildings were home to Bank of Pocahontas for many years. The two story building on the extreme left was the Court Square Hotel. The vertical text on the building seems to say
FURNITURE HARDWARE
CLOTHING HATS-CAPS

1910



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2025

The home of Joseph O. and Mabel Sallee on the corner of Dunn Street and Pine Street in Pocahontas, about 1910. After Mabel died in 1956, Burr Sallee and his wife Clara lived in the house for many years. Burr was the son of Joe Sallee's brother, James Oscar Sallee. The property is now owned by Ronnie and Sonya Walker.

Sallee's Hickory Handle Mill, later known as Sallee Brothers, moved to Pocahontas from Success in 1909. It was indeed a family operation, with brothers Joseph and Raymond Sallee being principal operators, but with their older brothers, Robert and James also moving to Pocahontas to work in the family business.

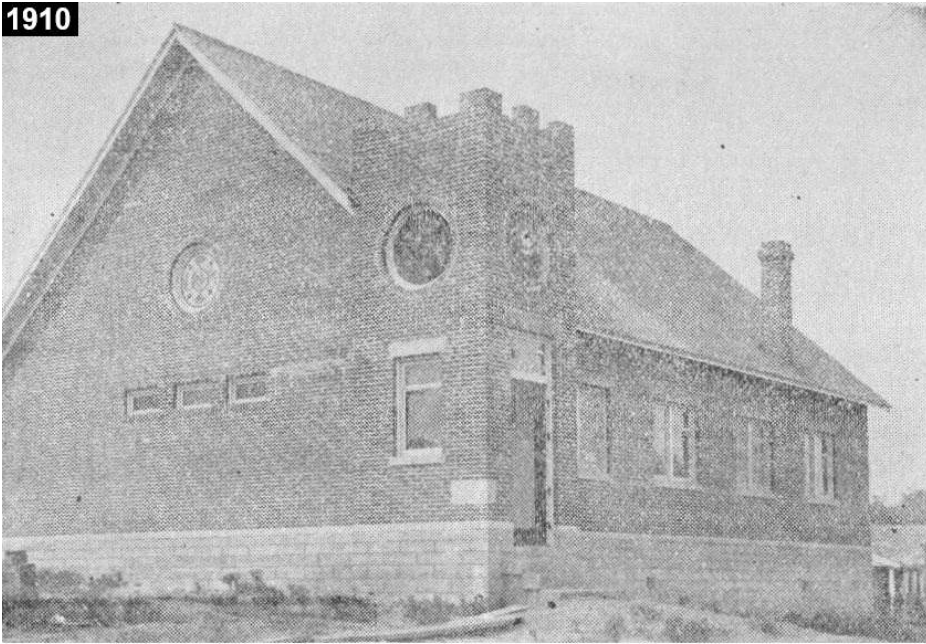
The mill was located at the Marr Creek end of what's now Black River Overlook Park.

Joe and Mabel's daughter, Ona Sallee, married Lantie Martin, founder of Martin Insurance Agency and Pocahontas Federal Savings and Loan.

Ona and Lantie named their son Joe Martin, possibly naming him after Ona's father Joe Sallee, although Lantie also had a brother named Joseph N. Martin, for whom the Jonesboro highway bypass was named. Joe Sallee died in 1927 and is buried in the stone Sallee family mausoleum he had built in Masonic Cemetery. The first casket in the mausoleum was that of Joe and Mabel's 11-month-old son Warren Brook Sallee, who died in 1906. The child's remains were moved from a standard grave after the mausoleum was completed.

Mabel joined them there in 1956. Also interred in the mausoleum are the remains of Ray and Marilee Ollis, who were friends of Jerry Sallee. Ray Ollis was an engineer who moved to Pocahontas, working at the local ESNA plant, making airplane parts. He had been a naval aviator during World War II. The Ollises had no place to be buried, so Jerry Sallee let them use a couple of empty spaces in the mausoleum, which the Sallee family call "the vault." There is room there for one more coffin. Joe's brother Ray Sallee continued to run the handle mill until his death in 1951. The mill continued to operate until the 1990s.

1910



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2025



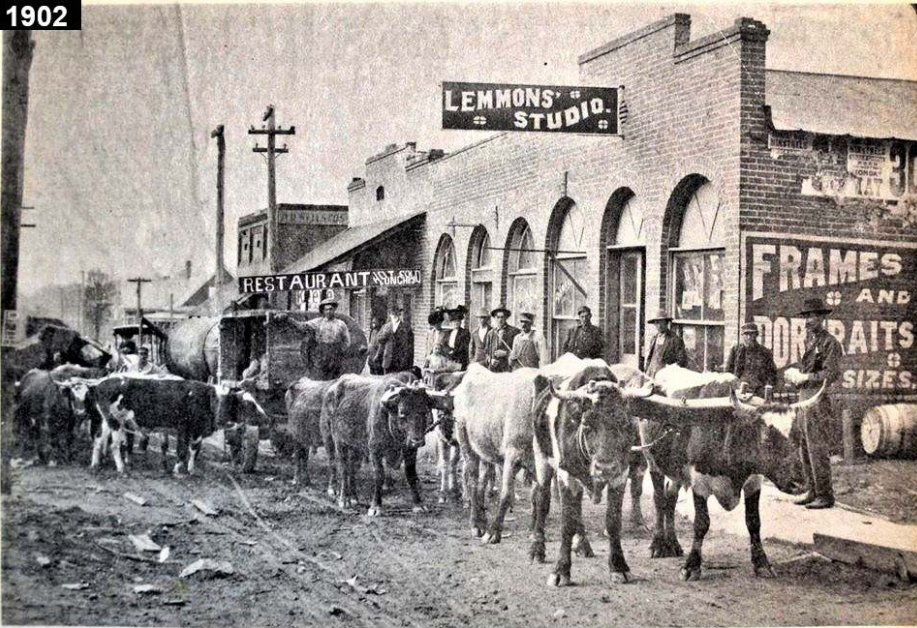
The oldest continuous church congregation in Pocahontas met from 1843 to 1853 as a non-denominational church that held services in the county courthouse, a brick building on the Pocahontas Court Square that preceded the current "Old Courthouse."

In 1853 the congregation voted to become a Methodist Church and they built the first dedicated church building in Pocahontas, a wood-framed building on a lot they acquired just south of the current Methodist Church, at the intersection of Jordan Street and Thomasville Avenue.

In 1909 the congregation paid the firm of Sago and Williams to build the brick building in the accompanying photo, dated 1910, across Jordan Street at the intersection of Jordan Street and Bryant. In 1926 that building was greatly remodeled by adding a second story as well as a large sanctuary on the west side of the building, reaching Thomasville Ave.

Notice how window locations in the older photo match the locations in the present building, though the narrow windows on the Jordan Street side were lengthened, and echoed on the second floor addition.

1902



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View of South Bettis Street in 1902, showing the buildings just behind what's now Futrell Pharmacy.

The RESTAURANT sign mentions HOT COLD LUNCHES.

George Francis Lemmons, Sr., was born at Noland in 1866. He established Lemmons' Photographic Studio in Pocahontas in 1901. For many years his was the only photographic business in the city. Many of the old photos we have of early Pocahontas were Lemmons photos.

2025



The site of the foreground buildings in the photo later became the site of the Hotel Randolph. It is now a parking lot for Farmers and Merchants Bank.

1930



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2025

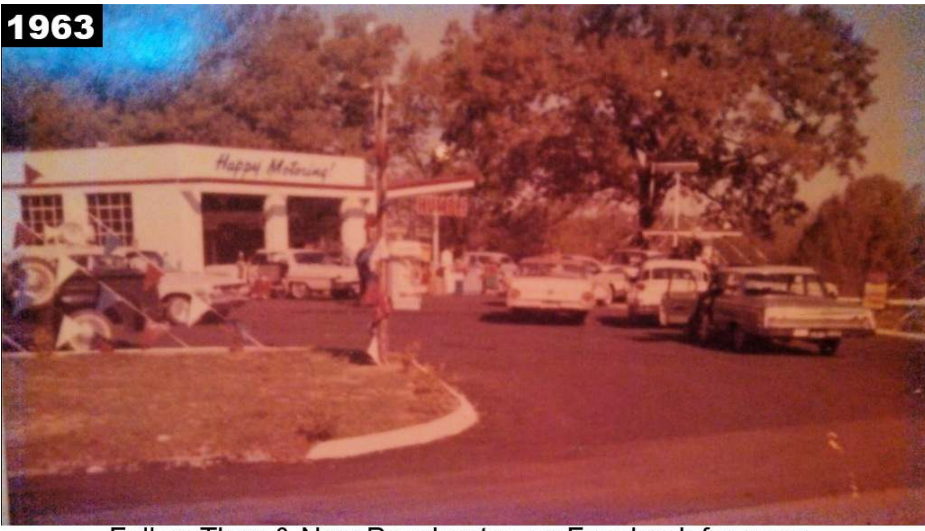


Hotel Randolph was located on South Bettis Street, behind what's now Futrell's Pharmacy. The hotel was owned by Glen and Pansey Barnes, and was well known locally for its excellent restaurant and meeting room.

Arson was suspected when the building, owned by Ferd Spinnenweber, who carried no insurance on it, caught fire in April, 1935. The arson theory was greatly reinforced when the fire department discovered that someone had cut up all their fire hoses before the fire broke out! The building was close to a total loss. It was rumored that a hotel owner in another town paid some local people to burn the hotel.

Amazingly, the Hotel Randolph was repaired and reopened just 7 months after the fire. It lasted into the 1950s. Bank of Pocahontas built their first drive-in banking location on the site in the 1960s. It's currently the parking lot of Farmers and Merchants Bank.

1963



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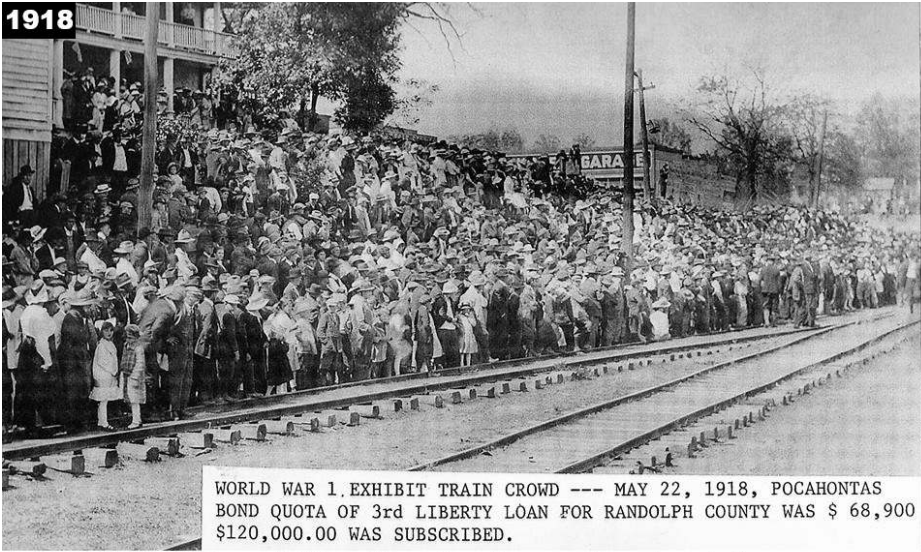


Dale Lewallen's Humble Station, September 1963. It was later renamed Lewallen's Esso, then Lewallen's Exxon. Humble Oil and Refining Co. was founded in 1911 in Humble, Texas. In 1919, a 50% interest in Humble was acquired by the Standard Oil of New Jersey, which acquired the rest of the company in September 1959.

The Humble brand was used by Standard Oil of New Jersey until 1973, when the company rebranded nationwide as Exxon and discontinued Humble, along with its other brands Esso and Enco.

The station was located where North Marr Street meets U.S. 67. The building was replaced by a new structure a few years ago.

1918



WORLD WAR I. EXHIBIT TRAIN CROWD --- MAY 22, 1918, POCAHONTAS
 BOND QUOTA OF 3rd LIBERTY LOAN FOR RANDOLPH COUNTY WAS \$ 68,900
 \$120,000.00 WAS SUBSCRIBED.

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2025



A large crowd gathered May 22, 1918 to view a World War I "Exhibit Train." The site was between Bigger's Hotel and the railroad tracks, about where Broadway Street meets the U.S. 67 bypass today. Randolph County's "3rd Liberty Loan" bond quota was \$68,900. They raised \$120,000!

In the background we can see a building with the sign GARAGE. Hiram Martin operated his garage there almost up to the time of his death at age 97, in 2001. The garage building was demolished after that, and became a parking lot.

After Bigger's Hotel burned, the Depression Era WPA built rock buildings to house City Hall (current Black River Beads location), the Police Station, and Fire Station there.

1960



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Many people remember Lewallen's Furniture Store at the corner of Everett Street and Thomasville. The building was built as the Lewallen family home by George Otis Lewallen, Sr., and his wife Thelma, sometime before 1925.

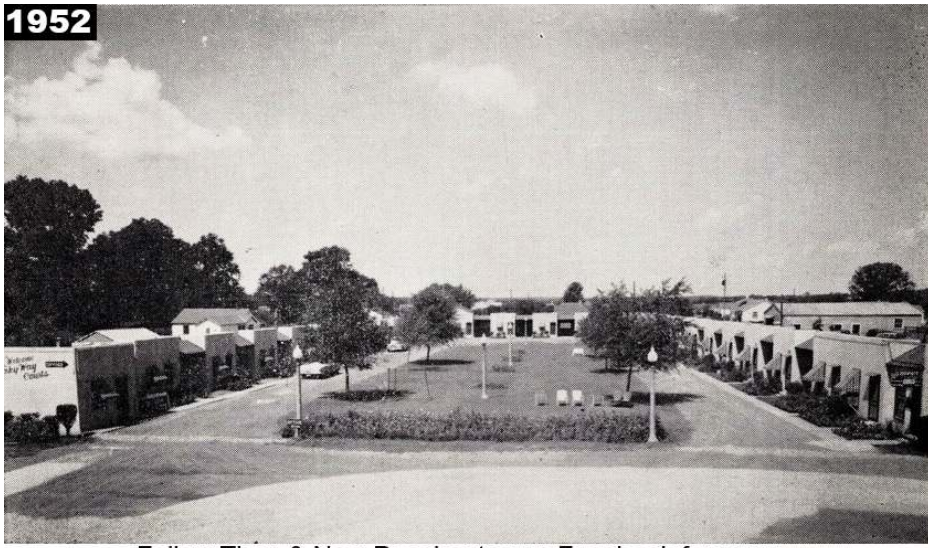
Their son, Lloyd Leo Lewallen, was born in the house in 1925. The Lewallens sold the house about around 1935, after they had built the Lewallen Hotel on the court square, but Lloyd Leo bought it back in 1951 to house his appliance repair shop and later his furniture store.

In the late 1950s they added the glass walls to expand the building. The furniture store closed in 1979, when Lloyd's health began to decline. Lloyd died in 1982, and his children purchased the building from their mother, and used the building for storage for many years, as well as renting it to a florist, an exotic pets store, and several other uses.

Many will remember the sign in front of the store, saying, "If you can't stop, smile as you go by." Many also remember the Halloween when someone relocated the sign to the lawn of McNabb Funeral Home!

The Lewallens sold the property to Dwayne and Gwen Sharp in recent years, and it currently is home to a church.

1952



Sky-Way Courts, a modern motel in 1952. The street lights placed around the property were originally street lights in downtown Pocahontas. The courts were demolished just a few years ago.

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2025



1893



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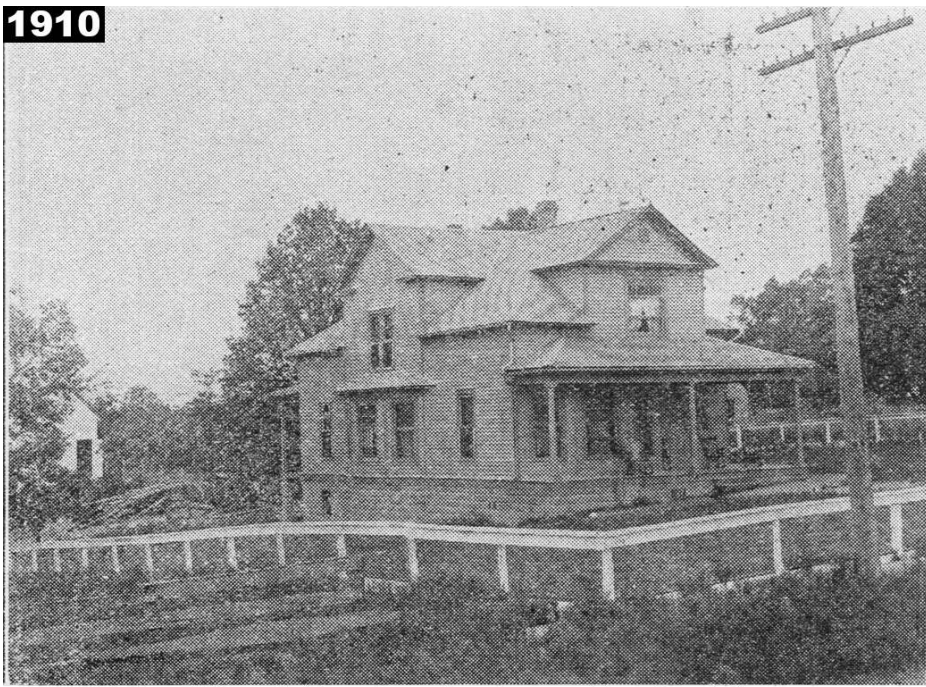
The Pocahontas Cornet Band, on the north side of the Old Courthouse, about 1893. Interesting how few cornets the cornet band had. One would assume that the dapper gentleman in the back was the band director.

Among the noteworthy differences between then and now, the porch columns were originally on wooden pedestals, while brick pedestals now support the columns, probably to avoid rotting wood.

Also, the glass in each door was once a single pane, rather than two panes per door as we have now.

The concrete walls at each end of the steps once slanted down with the steps, rather than coming straight out horizontally as they do now. The metal handrail now in the center of the stairs is a more recent addition.

1910



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The home of Anne Elizabeth Reynolds Martin, 1867-1959, at 813 Thomasville Avenue, in 1910. She was the daughter of Dennis Wells Reynolds, founder of the town of Reyno. Her father traveled to New Orleans and bought a piano for her when she was a teenager. The piano was put on a riverboat and came up the Mississippi River, up White River, and up Black River to the Reynolds home in the town of Old Reyno. That piano is now on display at the Randolph County Heritage Museum.

Anne Reynolds' children included sons Lantie Martin, who founded Martin Insurance Agency and Pocahontas Federal Savings and Loan Assn., and Joseph N. Martin, for whom the Jonesboro Highway Bypass was named, as well as daughter Lila Sallee, the first Public Health Nurse of Randolph County.

Her home stood at the corner of Thomasville and Pauline Street until the 1980s, when it was replaced by a triplex of apartments.

Grandchildren of Anne Reynolds Martin, about 1929.

Front row, L to R, Martha Blankenship (Murph), Mary Blankenship (Williams), Joe Martin, Evelyn Jones, Shirley Sallee (Crismon).

Back row Ann Blankenship (Carroll), Anne Reynolds Martin, Jean Martin (Olvey), and Barbara Sallee (Huggins).

The Blankenship girls, Ann, Mary, and Martha, were daughters of Anne Martin's daughter, Thelma Martin Blankenship, wife of Warren Blankenship.

Jean and Joe Martin were children of Anne Martin's son, Lantie Martin, and his wife Ona Sallee Martin.

Evelyn Jones was the daughter of Anne Martin's daughter, Edith Martin Jones, wife of Charlie Jones.

Barbara and Shirley Sallee were daughters of Anne Martin's daughter Lila Martin Sallee, wife of Jesse Sallee.



1935



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2025



To view the house now, it's hard to believe it once seemed like it was "in the woods!" We're not sure when the house at 302 S. Bettis Street was built, but we have a Sallee Family Reunion photo (in the comments below) of the family outside the house in 1920, so it's at least that old.

Raymond Sallee, Sr., and his beautiful wife Maude, raised their children Genevieve Sallee Jackson and Raymond Sallee, Jr., there. President of his PHS class of 1939, Lieutenant Raymond Sallee, Jr., lost his life near Normandy, France, in World War II, a month after D-Day.

Ray's brother, Joseph Sallee, started Sallee's Handle Mill in Success, Ark., in 1907, and the Sallee Brothers moved their mill to Pocahontas in 1909.

After his brother Joe died in 1927, Ray continued to run the Pocahontas handle mill until his death in 1951. Maude lived until 1953.

Joe and Ray's brother, Robert P. Sallee, ran a branch of the family handle mill in Piggott for many years.



Raymond, Sr. and Maude Sallee



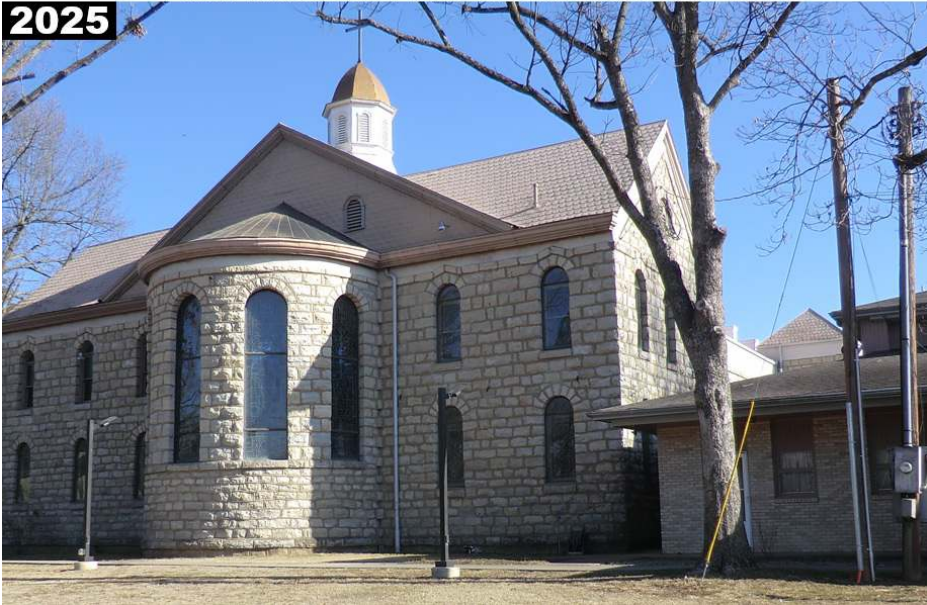
Maude Robinson, who later married Raymond Sallee, Sr., and Cona McGuire, later married to Edgar Williams. They were the first telephone operators in Pocahontas. The telephone office was on the 2nd floor of the St. Charles Annex, at 104 North Bettis Street.

1902



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2025



View of workers constructing St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Pocahontas in 1902. It became, and still is, the largest church in Randolph County. It was completed and dedicated in 1904.

At first glance, one might think the "Then" view is of the front of the church, as viewed from down the hill. But upon closer examination, note the unsymmetrical windows, three on the left of center and only two on the right. That view can only be seen from the back of the church.

1880



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2025



John Allen French provides this photo of the home of Pocahontas merchant Isaac Hirst and his wife Nora. Built about 1875, the home still stands, though reduced in size, on the corner of Wiley and Van Bibber streets. It's one of the oldest houses in Pocahontas.

Hirst, a member of the small population of Jews who lived in Pocahontas then, was born in Greece to German parents. The family moved to Pocahontas in 1855, when Hirst was age 13. He fought for the Confederacy in several battles of the Civil War.

At the time this photo was made, about 1880, Hirst's family had grown and he had become prosperous.



South side of Pocahontas Court Square prior to 1880. The gable-roofed building on the left says ISAAC HURST GROCERIES.



A 1947 view of the Pocahontas court square when the courthouse porches still had the balustrades atop. The photo shows that the original metal fence around the courthouse had been removed at that time. New fencing was installed in more recent years. Gary Gazaway has a section of the old fence at his home.

By 1947 the county government had moved to the "new" courthouse, and the vault addition on the east side of the old courthouse had been removed, though if you look closely, you can see the "ghost image" of where the old vault had been. That ghost image is pretty much gone now.

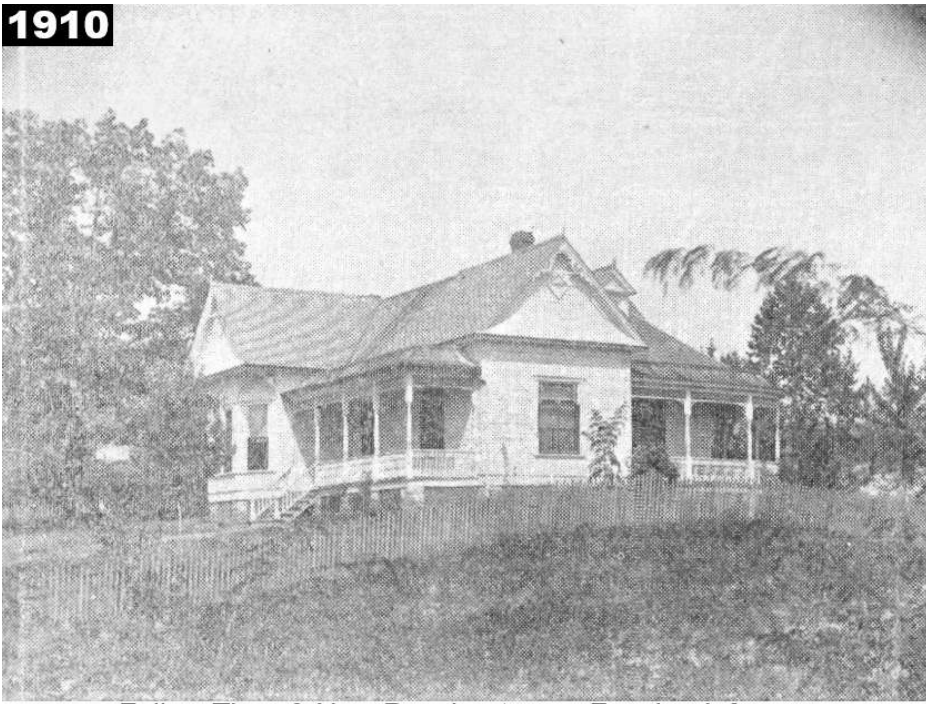
Note the building on the extreme right in the "then" photo. That building is gone. It housed the Arkoma Cafe at the time of the photo. The building was replaced a few years later by a newer building that's now home to Edward Jones Investments.

The building on the extreme left says "POE'S," the clothing store that occupied that location for many years.

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1910



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2025



The residence of attorney Eugene Gardner Schoonover and Estelle Waddle Schoonover on North Marr Street in 1910. The Schoonovers had two sons, William Jacob "Jake" Schoonover, a well-known local attorney, and Wear Kibler Schoonover, who went on to win many academic and athletic awards at the University of Arkansas, becoming Arkansas' first All-American football player, and the first All-American football player in the Southwest Conference.

He was also the first UA athlete to hold letters in four sports: football, basketball, baseball, and track.

At the same time as his sports success, Schoonover was president of his U of A senior class and ranked at the top of his class in his studies.

Wear Schoonover became a Rhodes Scholar and a lawyer and spent his career in the Legal Services Department of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.

Schoonover Field House and Stadium at Pocahontas High School were named for him.

The Schoonover homeplace was demolished in 1978, and the hill it was on was cut down to Marr Street level to make way for the new Pocahontas City Hall.

1936



Construction of the "old" Pocahontas Post office began in 1936 and it was completed in 1937. This Then photo shows construction of the loading dock in the rear of the building.

After the postal service moved out, the Pocahontas Star Herald occupied the building for many years. The property is currently owned by Randolph County, with plans for it to house the Circuit Clerk's office.

The two story building in the background on the left side of the Then photo was the Diane Theater, which was destroyed by a natural gas explosion in 1948.

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2025



Like many Arkansas post office buildings constructed by the WPA during the Depression, the Pocahontas Post Office featured a mural. The Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later renamed the Section of Fine Arts) administered this aspect of construction and chose Louis Freund to paint the mural at the post office. Freund visited Pocahontas in 1939 to gather historical information for his mural.

Titled Early Days of Pocahontas, the mural includes elements of life in Davidsonville in the early 1800s, the early dam and mill site at Birdell on the Eleven Point River, boat traffic on the Black River at Pocahontas, and downtown scenes of Pocahontas around 1900.

After the building ceased to be used as the Pocahontas Post Office, the mural was removed from around the postmaster's door. It is currently in storage at the Arkansas State University Museum. Efforts have been made to see the mural returned to



Black and White photo of the Pocahontas Post Office mural when it still surrounded the postmaster's door.

Pocahontas, into the care of the Randolph County Heritage Museum, but the ASU museum and the postal service refuse to return it, saying it can only be properly maintained at the ASU museum.



The Depression-Era painting/mural from the Pocahontas Post Office, while it was displayed at the ASU museum. The mural has been hidden in storage there for many years.

1948



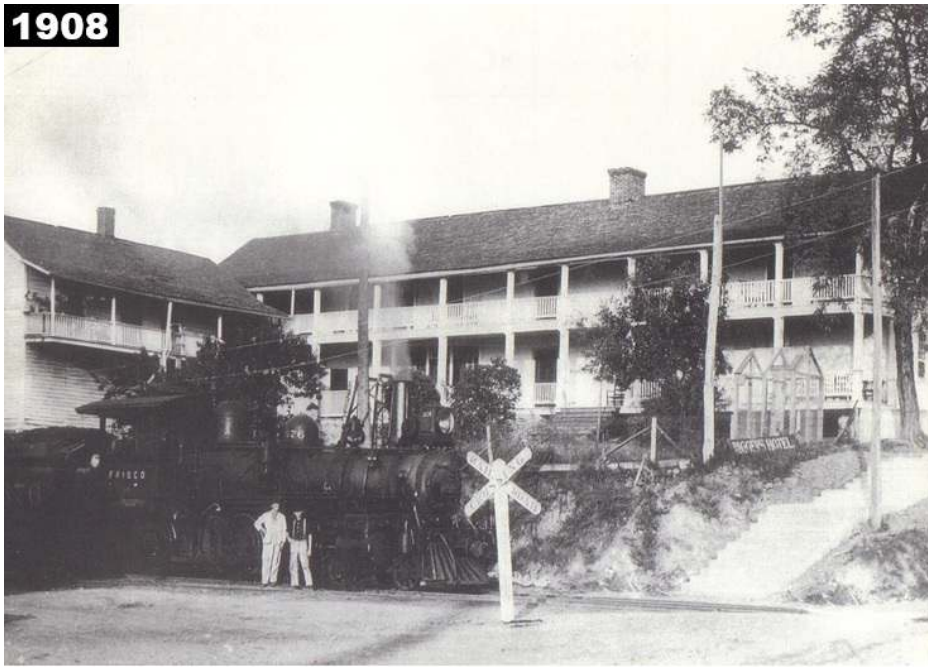
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2025



Baltz Equipment Co. has occupied the same location on Hwy 62W for nearly 80 years. Originally an International Harvester dealership, they have sold many brands of farm equipment over the years, as well as being a Chevrolet dealership.

1908



Another view of Bigger's Hotel, which was very close to the original train depot. The hotel was a brick building, though the white paint makes it look wood-framed.

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2025



1955



Another view of Sky-Way Courts, and Sky-Way service station. Built by Ray Bowlin, Sky-Way Courts were considered a modern motel in their day. The service station and courts were demolished just a few years ago.

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2025



1936



1936 view of 102 and 104 North Bettis Street. The building on the right was the Arkoma Cafe, run by Mary Brown. The upstairs was a rooming house also run by Mary Brown. The building was replaced in the 1950s by a newer building that is now home to Edward Jones Financial Advisors.

On the left is part of the St. Charles Annex building, which housed the OK Barber Shop on the ground floor and bedrooms for rent on the second floor.

The St. Charles annex building now has retail space for rent on the ground floor. Upstairs there's an upscale apartment for long term lease, as well as one suite that's part of Lesmeister Guesthouse, with short term rental by the night.

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2025



The OK Barber Shop team in the 1960s. Left-to-right are John ?, shoe shiner, and barbers Guy Amos, Jewel Forrester, and Raymond Caldwell.

The "Studio" sign belonged to Gene Allen's photography studio. In the background was Planters and Stockmen Bank, which started out in the old First National Bank building on the court square.

1962



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2025



Blake Slayton furnishes this photo of his grandfather, Blake Baker (B. B.) Barnes' Humble Station, about 1962. The station was located at the South Y, on the curve where Highway 67 prepared to cross Black River Bridge.

In the "now" photo, you can see the Pocahontas KFC in the background. Our first KFC location was beside, to the right, of the service station in the "then" photo.

The station later became Pocahontas Esso, then Pocahontas Exxon before it closed and the highway was reworked to its present configuration.

There still exists a "no man's land" section of the old highway that ran behind the station, see below.



You can still see the faint double yellow line on the abandoned section of highway that ran behind Barnes' station, connecting US 67 to US 62.

1935



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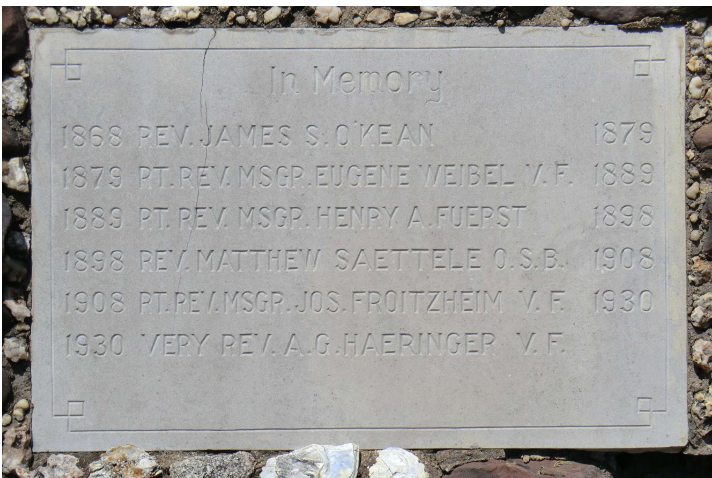
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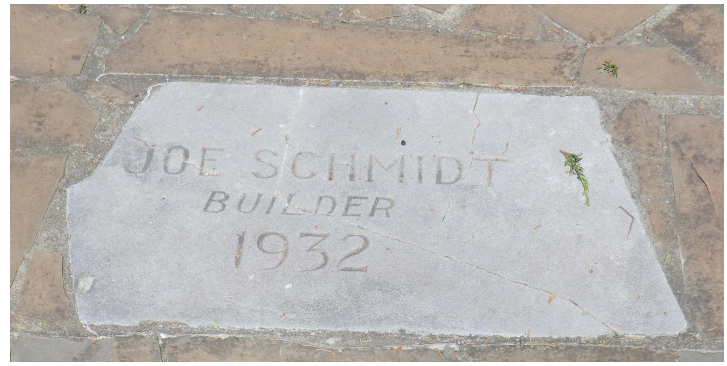


The Marian Grotto at St. Paul Catholic Church in Pocahontas was built in 1932, during the Great Depression, at a time when many experienced stone workers were out of work and available to help. Joe Schmidt designed and constructed the grotto, with help from the Knights of Columbus.

Other than the landscaping, almost nothing has changed about the grotto in its almost 100 years of existence. It's a Lourdes Grotto, a depiction of the Grotto of Massabielle in Lourdes, France, where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to Saint Bernadette Soubirous in 1858.

The grotto stands on the spot where the original 1874 wooden Pocahontas Catholic church building had stood. It appears to have a waterfall and pool, though those are not active now. There's also a small cave.



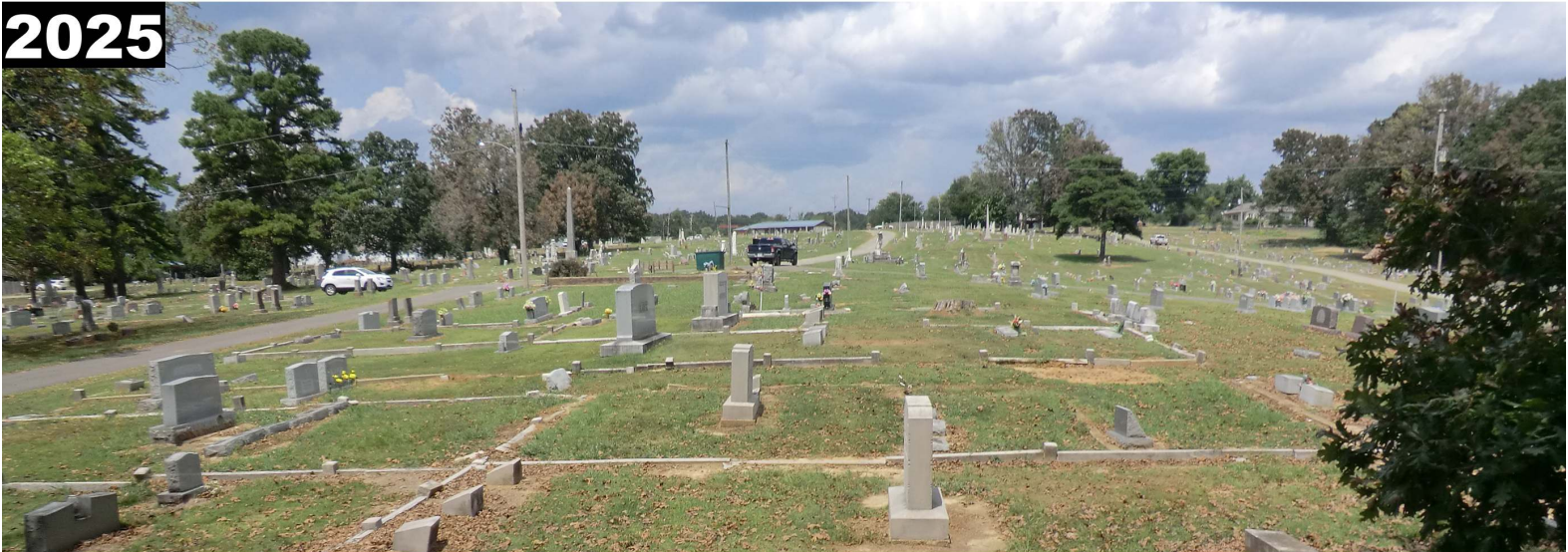


1923



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2025



Reburial of Governor Thomas Drew, Masonic Cemetery, Pocahontas, Memorial Day, May 30, 1923. It is speculated that the Then photo, which was made from high above ground level, was probably made by a photographer standing atop the newly constructed Sallee Family mausoleum, so the Now photo was made from a high step ladder in the same location.

It's amazing how many trees the cemetery had then, and how few it has now. Most of the remaining big oaks are now dead or dying, possibly due to spraying of herbicides to avoid having to use string trimmers around the grave stones.

The local Masonic Lodge reports that the spraying will not be done in the future, though it's probably

too late to save most of the trees. Of course, with the trees gone, the grass growth will be a bigger problem than ever.

Thomas Stevenson Drew, who moved to what's now Randolph County in 1826, was the son-in-law of Ransom Bettis, who founded Pocahontas in 1829. He was county judge from 1832 to 1835.

In 1836, when Arkansas became a state, Drew was part of the constitutional convention that wrote Arkansas' first constitution, and he was the third governor of Arkansas from 1844 to 1848. He died and was buried in Lipan, Texas, in 1879.

In 1923 an act of the General Assembly of Arkansas appropriated \$1,000 and created a

committee to go to Texas and exhume Drew's remains, bringing them to be reburied in Pocahontas. The committee included Senator W.A. Jackson, R.N. Hamil, and Judge J.W. Meeks.

It was said that when the Pocahontas delegation got to Lipan, nobody there was exactly sure where Drew was buried. It was an unmarked grave. Old timers made their best guess.

The committee began digging and they eventually found some darker dirt and one tooth, which were brought to Pocahontas and reburied surrounded by a huge gathering of local people.

William Jarret, who once boarded in the Drew home in Pocahontas, paying \$25 a month for four years, commented, "Thomas Drew was small in stature, had a kindly, friendly smile, and was one of the gentlest, most patient men you ever saw."



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Robert Callaghan provides this "Then" photo of White's Donut Shop in 1981. This is before the downtown improvement project added new, accessible sidewalks, the planters, and buried power lines. Note that we still had parking meters in 1981.

White's, at the corner of Marr Street and Broadway, was very popular on the court square for many years, both for delicious donuts and their cheeseburgers!

Below is a version where AI was asked to remove the "fog" from the "Then" photo. It did a good job on everything except the text!



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