

Batesville was served by roads running in all directions from the town, though the roads were little more than widened trails with stumps cut low enough for wagons to pass over. It was possible for a wagon to travel from New Madrid, Missouri, to Batesville as early as 1818, for there has survived at least one account of such a trip.<sup>17</sup> Some early settlers had followed an Indian trail from Memphis to Poke Bayou. By 1838 a road led from Batesville to Clinton and thence southwest to Dwight on the Illinois Bayou, about four miles west of the present Russellville. Eastward a road led from Batesville to Sulphur Rock and Litchfield, thence southeast to St. Francis, where it joined the Helena-Memphis road. To the northwest a road led through Pine Bayou and to Yellville, thence through Crooked Creek, which was about four miles south of the present town of Harrison, and on to Fayetteville. Perhaps the most traveled road of all ran from Batesville to Hix's Ferry at the Missouri border and from there to St. Genevieve, Missouri. Southward a road ran over substantially the same route as today through Pleasant Plains, but from that vicinity the old road lay west of the present highway and passed through Cold Well, from which the present Cold Well Township of White County takes its name. Over this road travelers passed from Batesville to Searcy and to Little Rock.<sup>18</sup>

Batesville's mail, of course, depended on the roads and rivers. A stage arrived more or less regularly from the north carrying mail and passengers. From areas directly east mail came on horseback. Most of the newspapers coming to the office of the *News*, however, came by way of Little Rock, to which point it was brought by stage coach up the valley. Mail from the east and the north was, for some reason unknown to the editor of the *News*, "like angel's visits—few and far between." Even the mail service between Batesville and Little Rock left much to be desired in 1838. For that year two men had contracted to carry the mail between

<sup>17</sup>The Benedict Narrative. The writer remembered that from Batesville to the mouth of Devil's Fork on the Little Red a road had to be chopped out a part of the distance. Beyond that point on the Red it was impossible to take a wagon farther to the southwest in 1818, and the Benedict family abandoned their wagon there and continued on to the Cadron without it.

<sup>18</sup>These roads are traced on an undated map in the writer's possession. The map, judging from the counties in existence at the time, shows the state as it was about 1838.

the two places three times a week in "four horse post coaches," but the contract was broken. Instead of coaches the carriers used horses, giving as the reason the scarcity of feed between Batesville and Little Rock. The fact that it was a year of severe drouth lends weight to their argument. Travelers arriving at Batesville from the north by coach had been led to believe that they could continue by the same means of transportation to the capital. The *News* attacked the contractors for having abandoned the coach line, and for several months, beginning in November, 1838, the editorial complaint was chronic. It was finally charged by the *News* that Batesville was suffering from a political conspiracy along with all north Arkansas, which had resulted in federal neglect of internal improvements of all sorts as well as mail service in that area. When the rumor got to Batesville that the mail service to Little Rock was to be discontinued altogether, the editor got more specific in his charges. Batesville was Whig in politics, and the Van Buren administration was making the community suffer on that account.<sup>19</sup>

Into this political quarrel Noland jumped with his usual enthusiasm and caustic pen. Batesville was suffering, Noland said, from the Jacksonian principle that "to the victor belong the spoils." He accused Amos Kendall, Postmaster General, of being mean to Independence County. In a second letter to the *News* on the same subject, Noland said:

You must know that in a purely Republican Government, *offices* should be bestowed upon the learned and unlearned, the ignorant and the wise—the rich and the poor—for unless this be the case ours would not be a government of equal rights. Well, thus premising, I touch the thread of my discourse. Tis (sic) said (for I have *hearn* it myself) that there is one postmaster in Arkansas, living at a crossroads, who can't read and write, and he is driven to the necessity of measuring the mail—sending three pecks to Little Rock, and two pecks to Batesville, and dwindling down to a gallon

<sup>19</sup>In the Congressional election of 1838 Independence County was reported to have cast 286 votes for the Whig candidate and 193 for the Democratic Party's candidate.

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to the Indian Territory.

The Indians native to the region were pushed to the west, and as early as 1820 none were left around Batesville. The town did, however, have some experience with the Cherokees, some of whom passed by Batesville in 1838. A party of these Indians, which left Gunter's Landing on the Tennessee River, about thirty-five miles above Huntsville, Alabama, on October 10, 1838, and consisting of about 1200 people when it reached Arkansas, was reported at Smithville in Lawrence County on December 12. William Byers himself was at Smithville at the time and wrote the report to the *News*. Byers described them as being in excellent condition—except that measles and whooping cough were killing about four per day. The Indians passed near Batesville December 15, 1838, and many of them came through the town to have horses shod and carriages repaired. The *News* reported many of the Indians barefooted. About fifty had died since leaving Alabama. This second account of the Cherokees was written by G. W. Morris, a Methodist preacher, who had been a missionary to the Cherokees in 1826, and had taught school among them. Morris praised them for their sobriety, culture, and religiosity.<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion it is best to sum up Batesville and its future as it appeared to C. F. M. Noland in 1839. It should be recalled that he was writing in the midst of an economic depression aggravated by the banking chaos and by the drouth of the previous year, but like the typical pioneer that he was, he was living in the future. He headed the piece with "Our Little Village" and wrote as follows:

It may savor of vanity to speak of our little village, but so rapid has been its improvements, that we cannot forbear a few words. House after house has gone up—a Bank, a Church, and an Academy are all "being built". We have a fine Female Academy, with Mr. and Mrs. Hunt at the head of it, and we are pleased to learn that their school is quite full. They are a great ac-

<sup>46</sup>October 17, 1839.

<sup>47</sup>December 20, 1838. An account of this party of Cherokees is given in Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 308-309, and according to Foreman the party moved from Batesville to the southwest through Van Buren County and Pope County, thence to Oklahoma (Map opposite 394).

quisition to the North. We have a Male Academy with Mr. Pim at its head—it is in a flourishing condition and his scholars progress rapidly.

Day and Co. have a splendid establishment for manufacturing furniture. They can rig out a married couple to a shaving.

But the great improvement, that is to make Independence County the first in the State is a project that is now on foot, to build a splendid mill on Poke Bayou—one that will cost some ten thousand dollars, and manufacture about twenty barrels of flour per day. The water power is sufficient to turn twenty pairs of French Burrs; in fact it is inexhaustible. The northern part of Arkansas is well adapted to wheat, and a sufficient quantity can be raised in this County alone to run such a mill the whole year around. Connected with the mill will be a large distillery.—(This must not frighten the temperance folks.) We look upon the carrying into effect of this project, as the only way in which the North can rid herself from *debt*. Ours has ceased to be a cotton country. The range is nearly all eat out.—Corn yields but little profit when fed to hogs—hogs are scarce—horses and mules we could raise, but we lack pastures and fine meadows. In short we *import every thing, and export nothing*. This will ruin us as certain as "falling off a log". But once we have a good mill established, and every fellow will raise from 50 to 1000 bushels of wheat, how nice it will be to drive one's wagon to the mill with a load of wheat, and carry home to the old woman and the little ones a barrel of *valuable* flour—none of your shorts or chops stuff. The gentlemen at the head of this affair, are all men of property, and the very men who will stand up to their fodder. We say God speed them—every good citizen, we doubt not, will respond Amen.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup>March 8, 1839.