



TRAIL OF TEARS Gateway to Maysville



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PEA RIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK



TRAIL OF TEARS

Often called one of the saddest chapters in American History, the Trail of Tears was exactly what its name indicates. Following the discovery of gold on Cherokee land in North Carolina and Tennessee, attempts were made to purchase the Indian land. When these attempts failed, President Andrew Jackson ordered the Cherokee Nation removed during the late 1830's to Indian Territory, what is now Oklahoma. The Supreme Court, in its decision, declared the move was illegal. However, President Jackson, ignoring the Court, forced the Cherokees to begin their long trek westward. The Court, having no way to enforce its decision, could do nothing. In one of several routes used, the Tribe travelled through central Tennessee, north through Kentucky, across southern Illinois, to central Missouri, then across the northwest tip of Arkansas, its route closely following what is today Arkansas route 72 and also a small section of U. S. 62.

As you travel this section of the Ozarks, try to recall what these people must have felt during their long journey — some 15,000 started the migration with 1/3 dying along the route from cholera, dysentery, fever and a general loss of will to survive. As we are now celebrating our Nation's Bicentennial, we should reflect on all our nation's heritage — including the portions, such as the Trail of Tears, which do not necessarily portray the highest in American ideals. Only from viewing past injustices and learning from them, can we hope to make the following 200 years a better and more enlightened period for future generations.

By following the Trail of Tears route (72), one may get a glimpse of both history and nature. By entering Arkansas at the small hamlet of Gateway, you will encounter the first Trail of Tears markers. Approximately four miles west on U. S. 62 is the town of Garfield. Garfield received its name and beginning in 1881, one year before President James Garfield was killed. In the years immediately following Garfield's beginning, the business district included a hardware, jewelry, grocery, confectionary and drug stores. By the late 1880's, the town could boast of a hotel and post office. Two of its most important businesses included a lime works and a fruit evaporator.

The lime works made 200 barrels of lime per day and provided enough work for 75 men. The fruit evaporator business employed 15 and could evaporate 100-150 bushels of fruit per day.

By the 1920's, the vicinity surrounding Garfield had become an even larger fruit producing area, having huge orchards of peaches and apples. However, during the latter part of the '20's and early '30's, Garfield was on its way down in terms of growth, due in part to the Great Depression.

Today, as you drive through the little community of some 300 people, Garfield serves as the starting point for vacationers travelling to Lost Bridge Recreation area located some seven miles southeast on Arkansas route 127.

"On Tuesday evening we fell in with a detachment of the poor Cherokee Indians. . . about eleven hundred Indians — sixty wagons — six hundred horses, and perhaps four pairs of oxen. We found them in the forest camped for the night by the road side. . . under a severe fall of rain accompanied by heavy wind."

Continuing west on U. S. 62, you will pass Pea Ridge National Military Park, the scene of the most important battle fought west of the Mississippi River.

Here on March 7-8, 1862, Union forces numbering some 10,500 under General Samuel Curtis defeated the Confederate army of 16,000 under General Earl Van Dom. Pea Ridge, which saved Missouri for the Union, was an unusual battle in that the southern forces were attacking from the north; among the Southern soldiers were troops from Arkansas, Missouri, Texas and Louisiana. Also included in Van Dom's army were some 1,000 Cherokees, some who as youths had participated in the Trail of Tears and had passed this way some 25 years earlier. This was the only major Civil War battle in which such a large force of Indians participated. Their leader, Stand Watie, was to become the last Confederate general to surrender in June, 1865.

You may wish to tour the battlefield where a museum, 20-minute slide program and seven mile tour road await you. An entrance fee of \$1 per car is charged. Hours of operation are 8-5 with extended hours during the summer months. Included on the seven mile drive is Elkhorn Tavern which is open during the summer season.



ELKHORN TAVERN

"With their canvas for a shield from the inclemency of the weather and the cold, wet ground for a resting place, after the fatigue of the day, they spent the night. . .many of the aged Indians were suffering extremely from the fatigue of the journey, and the ill health consequent upon it. . .several were then quite ill, and one aged man we were informed was then in the last struggles of death." #1

Leaving Pea Ridge NMP continue on U. S. 62 until you reach the intersection of Arkansas route 72. Turn right and proceed some five miles to the town of Pea Ridge.

Pea Ridge, founded in 1850, received its name from the many wild pea vines which covered the ridge, located east of the town (Pea Ridge National Military Park). The first settlers in the community, William Reddick and Samuel Burks, came from Illinois. Reddick is best remembered for first building what was to become a well known landmark nationwide — the Elkhorn Tavern. Benton County Veterans served as hosts for the 25th anniversary of the battle by having a reunion of Confederate and Union veterans in 1887. This was the first reunion of veterans of the Civil war.

In 1876, Professor J. R. Roberts founded the Pea Ridge Academy. The academy served as a four year college as well as a grade and high school. Later, the school's name was changed to the Pea Ridge Masonic College.

Today, Pea Ridge with a population of some 1,400, has 12 fraternal and service organizations, six churches and a modern school system complete with a new gymnasium.

"The sick and feeble were carried in wagons, — about as comfortable for Traveling as a New England ox cart with a covering over it — a great many ride on horseback and multitudes go on foot — even aged females, apparently nearly ready to drop into the grave, were traveling with heavy burdens attached to the back — on the sometimes frozen ground, and sometimes muddy streets, with no covering for the feet except what nature had given them." #1

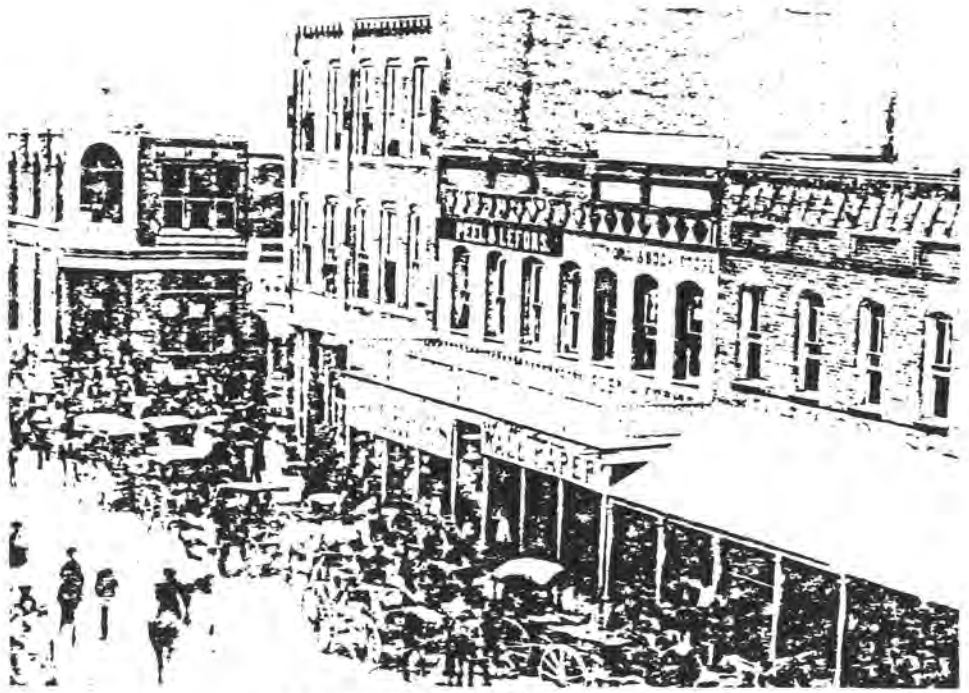
From Pea Ridge, you may continue on Rt. 72 until you arrive at Bentonville, the county seat, or you may elect to follow Rt. 94 to Rogers, then take Rt. 71 north to Bentonville where it will intersect with Rt. 72.

The towns of Rogers and Bentonville are the largest and most important in eastern Benton County.

Rogers' history dates back to May 10, 1881, when the first Frisco trail pulled into the fledgling community on the edge of the Ozarks. Named for C. W. Rogers, general manager of the railroad, the town grew quickly to more than 300 by the end of its first year. The first bank was established in 1883 and in 1888, Rogers had its first water works. In the early days of the community, Rogers saw several famous people visit. Among them were William Jennings Bryan, who ran for the Presidency three times, and Will Rogers, one of America's most famous humorists. Will Rogers eventually married a local girl, Betty Blake, in 1908. He often returned to visit friends and relatives. Another famous visitor in 1906 was Carrie Nation, one of America's early proponents of Prohibition. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending upon one's point of view, Mrs. Nation found no saloons to condemn.

By 1911, Rogers already had electricity, city mail service, a library, a movie theater and its first phone. It's early businesses included an apple evaporator, furniture store, tin shop and hardware store. Rogers continued to progress when nearby towns began to decline.

Today, Rogers is one of the county's fastest growing communities with a population of 14,000. With the construction of Beaver Dam and lake, Rogers serves as a focal point for lake enthusiasts and an ideal spot for retirees.



BENTONVILLE TOWN SQUARE

Bentonville, the county seat of Benton County, is one of our oldest cities. Founded in 1837, it was named after Thomas Hart Benton, Senator from Missouri. Senator Benton was instrumental in having Arkansas admitted as a slave state in 1836, the same time as Michigan was admitted as a free state. The population of Bentonville in 1830 was 30; by 1860 it had grown to 500.

During the Civil War, Bentonville was pro-Confederate; the result being that all but 12 of its buildings were burned. The majority of the buildings which now stand in the town square were built between 1875-1888.

Perhaps the most famous of Bentonville's early establishments was the Eagle Hotel. Here on the morning of March 6, 1862, Union General Franz Sigel was having breakfast when approaching Confederate cavalry interrupted his meal. Sigel barely escaped to later participate in the Battle of Pea Ridge. On March 6, 1867, General Sigel returned requested that he be allowed to finish his breakfast. The Eagle Hotel stood on the corner of S. W. "A" Street and West Central.

Prior to the Civil War, Bentonville's main source of income lay in cotton, hogs and cattle. Tobacco was also an important crop with a local factory processing 1/2 million pounds per year.

The area surrounding Bentonville and indeed all of Benton County, was known nationwide for its apple orchards. Between 1890-1910, the county had more apple trees than any other county in the United States. The peak year being 1919 when 5 million bushels were produced. In later years, cold weather and a steady decline in prices saw a reduction of the fruit industry. During the 1930's a trend toward poultry and dairy cattle was seen.

As you drive through Bentonville, take note of the Confederate monument which stands in the center of the town square. It is one of the very few monuments of this type to be seen in Northwest Arkansas. Bentonville, population 7,000, continues to grow and prosper.

"We have now been on our road to Arkansas seventy-five days, and have traveled five hundred and twenty miles. We are still nearly three hundred miles short of our destination. . . It has been exceedingly cold. . . those thinly clad very uncomfortable. . . we have, since the cold set in so severely, sent on a company every morning to make fires along the road, at short intervals." #2

Leaving Bentonville, continue on Rt. 72 west following the Trail of Tears signs. In approximately eleven miles, you will travel through the small hamlet of Hiwasse. This tiny community was once known as Dickson and was not changed until 1899 when the railroad came through. Before the rail lines became apparent in this section of the country, a stagecoach line ran through the town, traveling from Fayetteville to Neosho, Mo.

Northwest Arkansas is noted for its many clear, sweet springs. Approximately 1/2 mile northwest of Hiwasse lies what is known as Buttermilk Spring. As the early stagecoaches traveled by the spring its owner, William Hopkins, would serve cold buttermilk to its passengers, thus the name of the spring.

Hiwasse's heyday was near the turn of the century when in 1907 the community had three large apple evaporators. Today, Hiwasse is but a few houses with many memories.

"They have upwards of one hundred wagons employed in transporting them; their horses are the finest I have ever seen in such a collection. The company consumes about one hundred and fifty bushels of corn per day. It is stated that they have the measles and whooping cough among them and there is an average of four deaths per day." #3

Following Rt. 72, you will next come to the city of Gravette.

Founded in 1893, the town was named for E. T. Gravett, who was to establish the first bank. You may notice the town's name is now spelled with an "E". This was added by the railroad and adopted by most businesses. Only the bank keeps the original spelling.

One of the largest businesses in early Gravette was the Chalk Valley Distillery which could produce between 30-50 gallons of corn whiskey per day. As you drive through Gravette, you may wish to stop by the town park for a picnic lunch. The park was named after World War I ace, Field Kindley. The town also boasts of a new pool and civic center.

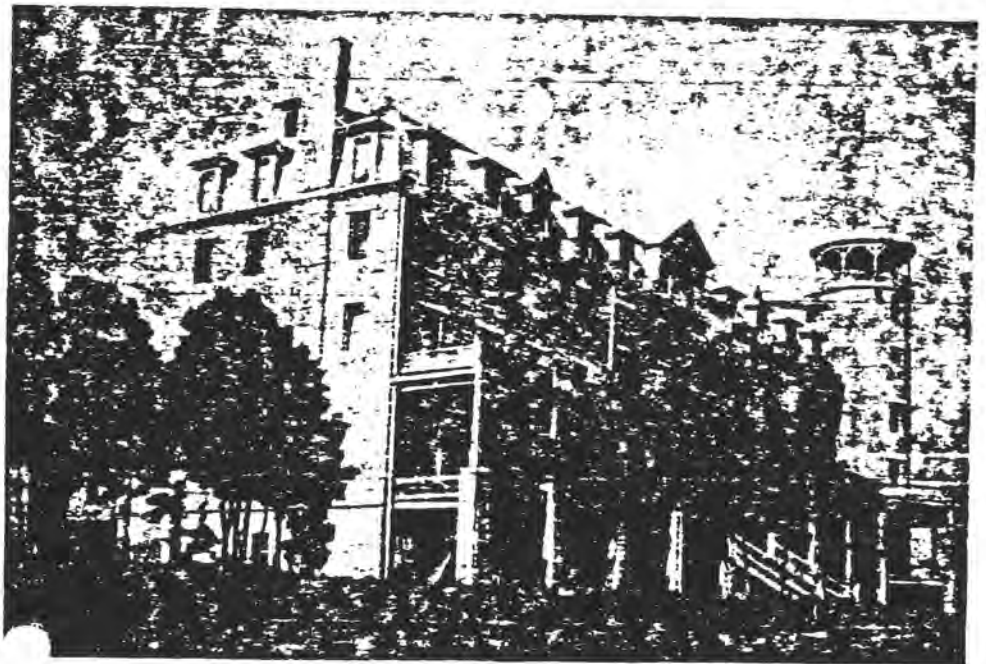
Gravette is also the home of the only pharmaceutical company in the state of Arkansas. There is also a large black walnut processing plant. The Gravette school system serves several smaller nearby communities such as Maysville, Hiwasse and Sulphur Springs. During August, it is the scene of a founder's day celebration. Gravette — an important community in the western section of Benton County.

"On the morning of November the 17th we encountered a terrific sleet and snow storm with freezing temperatures and from that day until we reached the end of the fateful journey on March 26th 1839, the sufferings of the Cherokees were awful. The trail of the exiles was a trail of death." #4

If you have time for a short detour, take Rt. 59 north from Gravette to Sulphur Springs, a five mile drive.

Sulphur Springs is a small village rich in history. The town was started in 1885. On the geological survey team which occurred during the period in and around Sulphur Springs, was a young man working in between college semesters — his name, Herbert Hoover.

In 1889, the Kansas City Southern railroad first steamed into Sulphur Springs. By this time, the town also had a newspaper — the Sulphur Springs Speaker.



KIHLBURG HOTEL

After the turn of the century, Sulphur Springs became a vacation haven for people seeking rest and relaxation through the use of the springs. In May 1909, the Kihlberg Hotel opened. The five story structure with 100 rooms was a grand addition to the growing city. The hotel's rooms had electricity, steam heat, hot and cold water in each room, and an electrically operated elevator. The grounds also included a dining room, library, gym, and ballroom. The grand opening was attended by many people. A local resident recalls "Some of the more affluent ladies had their long hair 'dône' by a Kansas City hairdresser for the gala occasion, and dressmakers were in a dither for weeks trying to fill all their orders for the latest style gowns." Some 5,000 people visited Sulphur Springs during the summer of 1909.

In 1921, Walter Eaton developed the Ozark Colony. He built several rustic cabins and stressed Culture — with a capital C. Lake La Balladine was made by damming Butler Creek and a Grecian theater built to overlook the water. Many people who loved the arts were urged to live in Sulphur Springs. By now, an additional 7-9 hotels had been built.

In 1924, John Brown purchased the old Kihlberg property and city park, establishing the Academy of the Ozarks. In later years, the city bought the park property back.

Presently, Sulphur Springs has a population of 500 and hopes to attract more retirees in its beautiful surroundings.

"They had to sleep in the wagons and on the ground without fire. And I have known as many as twenty-two of them to die in one night of pneumonia due to ill treatment, cold and exposure. Among this number was the beautiful Christian wife of Chief John Ross. This noble hearted woman died a martyr to childhood, giving her only blanket for the protection of a sick child. She rode thinly clad through a blinding sleet and snow storm, developed pneumonia and died in the still hours of a bleak winter night, with her head resting on Lieutenant Greggs saddle blanket." #4

Now drive back on Rt. 59 to Gravette and continue following Rt. 72 to Maysville.


This settlement is the oldest in Benton County, the first settler arriving in 1828. The town is named after Reynolds Mays who came in 1831. It was a short distance west of Maysville where many of the Cherokees saw their first glimpse of the new home — Indian Territory.

In the early days of Maysville, three forts were situated nearby — Ft. Wayne, Camp Walker and Camp Jackson. All three sites were used during the Civil War by Confederate forces. On October 22, 1862, a skirmish occurred between opposing Union and Confederate troops in and around Maysville.

Approximately four miles east of the town was the Harmonial Vegetarian Colony. This huge structure contained some 85 rooms, all with their own running water.

Maysville has been partially destroyed by fire on several occasions — the first fire occurring in 1891 with the most recent happening in December, 1975.

Maysville today is a small border community rich in heritage.



If you have followed the Trail of Tears markers on their entire route, you have driven some 55 miles. This has probably taken you no more than two hours, according to the number of stops you have made. Depending upon the time of year, you more than likely have been most comfortable in your trip across Benton County. How utterly different it must have been for the thousands of Cherokees, as they trudged over ancient roads, not knowing what their future might hold. In this year of celebration of our Nation's past, present and future, let us learn from the Trail of Tears, tears shed by Cherokees, but in reality, tears shared by all Americans.

Quotes taken from:

1. "A Native of Maine, traveling in the Western Country," appeared in **New York Observer**, January 26, 1839.
2. **Baptist Missionary**, XIX, 89.
3. **Batesville, Arkansas News**, in **Arkansas Gazette**, December 20, 1838.
4. **Cherokee Legends And the Trail of Tears, The John Burnett Version of the Cherokee Removal**