



CLEVELAND COUNTY'S SECOND COURTHOUSE - LOCATED AT RISON

## Pioneer Village at Rison

by Annette Rawls

The ultimate goal of the Pioneer Village is to re-create a cross section of the social and economic strata they would have existed in South Arkansas during the last half of the nineteenth century. The Village is a growing restoration; it is growing in much the same pattern that occurred in the period which is portrayed. The hope is that you will enjoy your visit to the village and will take with you a deeper appreciation for life in those vital and formative years.

May we suggest that you start your tour at the one room log cabin and out buildings. The McKinney cabin was moved to the Village from the Herbine community in the southern

part of Cleveland County. It is the type of structure first built by the early settlers of Cleveland County in the 1840's. As they prospered the pioneers added a room and open hallway to their one room cabin. This type of building was called a "dog trot" cabin. Later the hallway was closed in and rooms added to the rear behind one side of the front rooms; thus making an L- shape structure. Clapboards were often placed over the logs to modernize the structure.

The early settlers ate and slept in the one room cabin. The children slept in the loft. They had few possessions when they came to this area in their covered wagons. They brought only the bare essentials with them such as straw mats for sleeping, a few pots for cooking, tools and seeds for cultivation after clearing land. Some may have brought a few farm animals with them. They then built a barn to house the animals and store their wagon and any grain they were able to raise. Later a blacksmith shop was built to make and repair

# Cleveland County Historical Society

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farm tools. Also a smoke house was built to smoke and store food. Smoking meat was the only form of preservation the early settler had. They would sun dry any wild or domestic fruit they were able to find and stored them also in the smokehouse.

After visiting the log cabin and out-buildings, proceed to the Church. It was often a days' ride by wagon or horseback to the few early churches in the area.

### MT. OLIVET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SOUTH

The Mt. Olivet Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1867. Anson Black and his wife Harriett gave one acre of land for the church which was located at the site of present day Calmer, Arkansas.

The first trustees of the church were Pleas Culpepper, James Chambers, Thomas Harper, John Culpepper, and Jonathan Cooper.

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The building is approximately forty feet by sixty feet. It was constructed of lumber hauled by oxen-drawn wagons from Warren, Arkansas, which was twenty-three miles away. The sills were long and heavy. Oxen were used to drag them and Richard (Dick) Breathwaite used a boom to put them in place. The roof was made of hand-hewn cypress boards or shingles made by the church members. The pews were made of virgin timber and hand hewn by Tom May and remain in the church today.

Three backless pews called "Mourners Benches" were placed near the pulpit. These pews or benches were used during the singing of hymns when minister would call for those in the congregation desiring an interest in a prayer to come and sit on the benches. The benches were also used for taking of the Lords Supper. The minister would pass the cup of wine and tray of bread. The communion bread was made by the women and the wine by the Stewards. One of the three mourners benches is still in use today. The first lighting system for the church was handmade tallow candles. These were replaced by kerosene bracket lamps as used in the church today, along with a swinging kerosene lamp which has been electrified. These swinging lamps were raised and lowered by chain. The church was heated by one large wood burning stove placed near the center of the church. A bucket of water with a long-handled gourd used as a dipper was always near the pulpit for the preacher's use.

The older men of the church sat in the Amen corner to the left of the pulpit. The women sat on the right side. The young people sat in the center pew.

In the summer, early churches held revivals outside under-brush arbors. In about 1910 circus type tents for revivals came into use. The revivals would last for several days sometimes. Those people coming from a distance by horse and buggy or wagon would stay in nearby homes so they could attend all the services.

Each evening at twilight, the women and men would hold separate prayer and testimonial meetings under nearby trees. During the services, the men would sometimes shout "Amen" and the women would rise to their feet, clapping their and shouting for joy, pleading with sinners to repent. During these long services, the young children would become very tired and sleepy. Their mothers would spread a quilt on the floor for them to sleep. Also, dinner on the ground would be spread for these day-long services.

This church was remodeled in 1950 with the ceiling being lowered and Sunday School rooms built in the back corners. In 1975 the church voted to build a new building and the old building was given to the Cleveland County Historical Society and moved from Calmer to its new location. The Church is being used today by an Episcopal Congregation.

Some early families in the church were: Tom Berry, Marion M. Kesterson, J.S. Melton, P.D. Williams, Robert, W.W., W.J. and Johnny Greenlee, E.B. and R.S. Henderson, A.P. Huselton, M.W., J.R., and H.W. Wilson, Nick, Ben and Jim Taliaferro, Edgar McLendon, William, John and Mrs. Horace Jewel.

When the church was moved to its present location, it was restored to its original appearance. The pews

are original and one Mourners Bench remains. The small pulpit table is also original as are some of the panes of glass in the windows.

The Church was placed on the National Register of Historic Structures in 1976.

## THE MERCANTILE

The Mercantile or Country Store originally was built for and used by the County Clerk in 1902 when the Clerk's Office outgrew its space in the first Rison Courthouse. It was located where the Courthouse parking lot is today. The Clerk's Office remained in the building until the present Courthouse in Rison was built in 1911. After the Clerk vacated the building, it was used by Pitt Holmes for his law office and later by Ira E. Moore as his business office while he was also serving as County Sheriff.

The building was constructed by J.W. Roebuck. He received \$139.00 for his labor. B.F. Quinn furnished the building materials at a cost of \$109.00. In the early thirties the building was moved to 2<sup>nd</sup> and Pine Street in Rison to be used as an office and clinic by Dr. A.B. Robertson, and later as a cleaners. In 1975 Mr. and Mrs. James L. Moore (Lois) purchased the building and presented it to the Historical Society to be moved to the Pioneer Village and restored. That same year, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## DR. JOHN SILAS MCMURTHREY HOME

This is the home of Dr. John Silas McMurtrey and his wife. They were the parents of Mayme, Elizabeth (Bee), Sue, and Jesse Lawley.

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Dr. McMurtrey was the son of Colonel Elisha Lawley McMurtrey and Louisa Baggett McMurtrey. Colonel McMurtrey was an outstanding soldier serving in the Second Arkansas Cavalry during the Civil War. Colonel McMurtrey came with his parents in 1840 to settle in the area that is today Rison. He also gave each of his sons and one daughter a tract of land and assisted them in erecting a home.

Dr. McMurtrey's home was a simple Victorian design built in 1892. It was built originally on the hill where the present Rison water tank stands. The home was visible to a large section of Rison. It has been said that the doctor placed a lamp in his bedroom window when he was out at night on a house call. The light could be seen by many. The doctor made his house calls by horse and buggy in good weather and by horseback in bad weather. He would carry his medicine and instruments in saddle bags on the horse. He was known to never refuse a call regardless of whether a person could pay him or not.

Dr. McMurtrey took great pride in the growth of Rison. He was a stockholder in several Rison businesses and the bank. He was also a deacon in the Baptist Church and a member of the Masonic and Odd Fellow Lodges. He served on the Rison School Board and taught and trained several young men to become doctors. Two of these young men later became prominent physicians – Dr. Albert Baggett of Hot Springs and Dr. Frank Crump of Pine Bluff.

Dr. McMurtrey's home was built in 1891 and has not been changed from the original, only the use of the rooms have changed. The home is unique in that it has not been

structurally altered through the years, except for closing in the central hall. The home features horizontal beaded walls and a fireplace in both the front room and the parlor.

The room to the right of the entrance is the front parlor as it was originally. The mantel is original. The floors are original in the left parlor. The furnishings are Victorian Eastlake. The room to the left was the doctor's bedroom. The small dining room served as his daughters' bedroom. His only son, Jesse, had his bedroom in the present bathroom. In the corner before entering the bath was where the doctor had his medicine shelf. Also, in the front hall is a walnut hall tree belonging to Colonel and Mrs. McMurtrey, the doctor's parents. It is the only McMurtrey piece in the house. The larger dining room was originally the dining room and the kitchen is also in the original place.

After being moved to the Pioneer Village the home was restored in 1980.

### **LOIS' COTTAGE**

Lois' Cottage is next door to the Doctor McMurtrey Home. It is a two room shot-gun dwelling with a wrap-around porch.

### **ONE ROOM LOG CABIN**

The one room log cabin is reminiscent of the time of the early settlers. The settlers cooked their meals in the fireplace, ate at the handmade table and warmed themselves by the fireplace in rockers bottomed with white-oak strips. A ladder on the wall led to the loft where the pioneer or some of the children slept on straw mats.

### **THE SMOKEHOUSE**

To the right of the cabin is the smokehouse where the settlers would smoke their meat to preserve it. Other foods may have also been stored in the smokehouse.

### **BLACKSMITH SHOP**

The blacksmith shop was complete with the anvil, bellows, tools of the trade which were used to make and repair farm tools, wagon wheels, and other necessary items.

### **BARN**

The barn is reconstructed with a hay loft and two side sheds. The barn housed the farm animals and was a place the farmer could store his wagon, plows and hayrake.

### **POST OFFICE**

The Post Office building was added sometime later but has some old post office boxes that would have been in use in the early days of a post office. Many times a post office was located in the local mercantile store.

## Article: John Cash Revolutionary War Soldier

by Wayne Cash

All Cash family members of Cleveland County descend from John Cash. John's grandson, Reuben Cash, Reuben's wife Pheletia, and all their children moved from Georgia to Cleveland County (then part of Bradley County) around 1857 living near Mt. Elba.

**Background** - Around 1800 John and wife, Lucy Campbell Cash, moved their family from central Virginia to Elbert County, GA where John received land for his military service during the war. John and Lucy later moved to Henry County, GA where he died August 13, 1836. Being of old age in 1832, John Cash applied for a federal pension for his service in the Revolutionary War that was granted under the Old Soldiers Act of 1832. Below is his affidavit (transcribed) submitted in the application process that provided his remembrance of his military service while serving in the Virginia Militia during the war.

### John Cash's Revolutionary War Service Affidavit:

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Nov. 1832 personally came JOHN CASH, a resident of Henry Co., 7th Dist., aged 75 yrs on 5th Apr. last, before the Justice of the Inferior Court, who being duly sworn, makes the following declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the Act of Congress passed 7 June 1832.

He enlisted to go out on the Cherokee Expedition on Holston River about the long Islands. He enlisted for during the expedition and was in service for 3 months, from September until just before Christmas. He enlisted in Amherst Co. Va. by Capt. John Sayle, Lt. James Franklin, Ensign Jesse Allen, and he thinks William & Nicholas Jones were sergeants. This company formed what was called a ranging or scouting party-there were no higher officers. A small skirmish took place at Fort Chissell. The Indian towns were destroyed and the country generally had been saved from the Indians by previous larger forces consequently the company returned home to Amherst Co. where this deponent was born and raised and lived for 6 yrs after the close of the Revolution, and then moved into Bedford Co. Va. in the vicinity of the Rev. James Turner, lived there 13 yrs, and moved to Elbert Co. Ga. from there to here. He marched with the company by the Big Lick, Botecourt, Va., English Ferry on New River, Fort Chissell & thence in various directions through the country. During this last winter of 1832 his house was consumed by fire, consuming his discharge from Capt. Sayle and a copy of an oath he made to save the country as also required.

His brother, PETER CASH of DeKalb County is acquainted with the circumstances of his enlistment, absence and return & who was a witness to other services rendered, as he will testify. Also, BARTLY CASH, one of sd company living yet in Amherst Co. Va., HOWARD CASH of Habersham, Ga., JOSEPH BOND, residence unknown, WILLIAM TYRY, JOHN SMITH, JAMES WARE, Dec'd, EDMUND HODGES, DAVID BELLOO.

Deponent was on 3 tours in the Virginia Militia. The militia was divided into numbers of ten and they were permitted to choose their numbers or were drafted. Deponent and his brother PETER CASH (who was present when this statement was made) chose number two and went into the militia service at the Barracks near Charlottesville in Albemarle & served 1 month Under Capt. James Pamplin. Col. Taylor was in command of the Garrison. No written discharges were given. Albemarle and Amherst counties had charge of the Barracks where were confined the prisoners of Burgoyne's defeated army who were afterwards removed to Winchester, Va. Again, deponent served in the second division, counted as minuteman, under Capt. Samuel Higginbotham, Lt. James Ware, Ensign Joseph Staples. This company marched through Albemarle, Fluvanna, & Goochland Counties to Richmond, Va. and took charge of the artillery. Capt. John Barnett's company marched with Higginbotham to Richmond from there to Petersburg. His company remained at Richmond until the end of the monthly tour & were dismissed by company until called again into service under Capt. Pamplin, marched to Jamestown, having first joined the main army under Gen. Lawson at the Ground Squirrel Bridge, was in hearing of the firing at the Battle of Jamestown. Next night after the battle, we

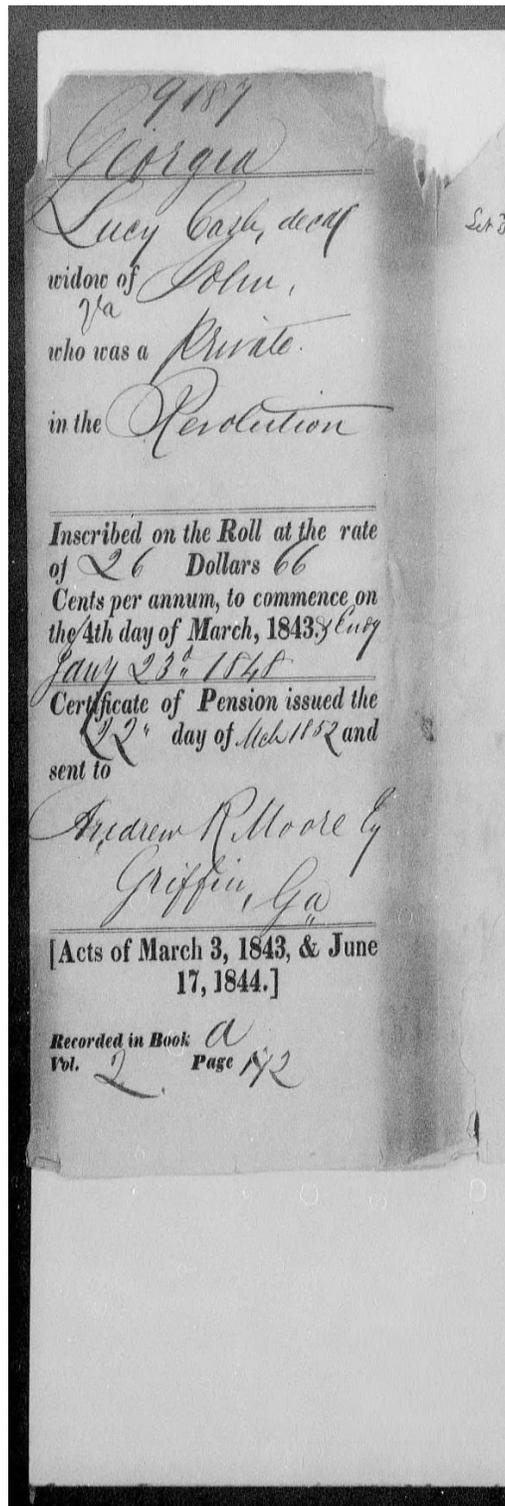
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marched by moonshine to the Battleground, were fired upon & retreated past Hickory Mill Church where wounded persons were receiving aid, from thence to Mobbin Hill, from thence to Richmond to New Castle upon Pamunkee River & there met Capt. Samuel Cabell, then lately exchanged from British confinement. About this time, Gen. Lawson, for some misconduct, was deprived of his sword and the command was given to Gen. Stevens. From New Castle deponent was marched towards York. A relief from Amherst overtook them at the Prickly Pear old field where he was discharged with others on 14th Aug. immediately preceding the capture of Cornwallis in Oct. Deponent received a written discharge which was burned up 4 Dec. 1831 when deponent lost nearly all his property. Deponent was on a trip after salt to Fredericksburg when an..... came for his decision to go to York, by which absence he missed being present at the taking of Cornwallis. Deponent is known by the Rev. James Gamble, John Lamar, Doctors Jacob Stokes & Francis E. Morrison. He hereby relinquishes any claim whatsoever to a pension except the present and declares that his name is not on the pension roll of any state ... further that nothing but old age & necessity arising from infirmity of himself & a helpless female family induces him now to call upon the generosity of his country. s/John Cash Henry Co. Ga. 2 Nov. 1832.

**Signed: John Cash**

Ultimately John received his federal pension that was administered through the State of Georgia. Following his death, a widow's portion was paid to Lucy. Following Lucy's death in

1848, a final payment was granted to their surviving children: Miss Mary Cash, Miss Lucy Cash, and James Cash (served in the War of 1812). Below is the final payment voucher that was distributed to the three surviving children in 1852.



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John served in the war with his brothers Howard Cash and Peter Cash. They also moved to Georgia with John and are buried there. To this date the location of John's actual burial site has not been located. Below are photos of Howard and Peter's military headstones.

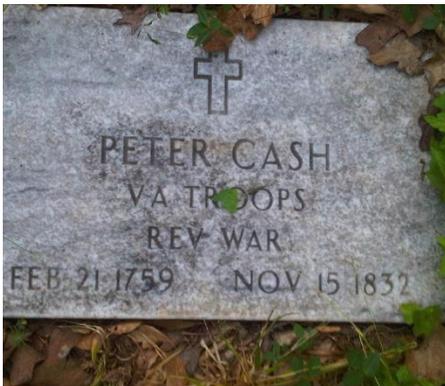
**Howard Cash**

**(Habersham County, GA)**



**Peter Cash**

**(DeKalb County, GA)**



## **Article: Felicia Gunn – Daughter of Nathaniel and Pheletia Jane Cash Gunn**

**Born: September 3, 1885 -  
Cleveland County, AR**

**Died: January 6, 1979 -  
Napa Valley, CA**

**By Felicia Phillips (granddaughter of  
Felicia Gunn) and Wayne Cash**

**Following is the story of  
Felicia Gunn Morgan of her  
early years in Cleveland  
County, move to Texas as a  
young girl, homestead in  
New Mexico, and marriage  
in California. Her story was  
recorded late in life and  
transcribed by her  
Granddaughter Felicia  
Phillips.**

She mentioned living in a little place called Risen though this was not their postal address. She said the family was from Virginia originally and that the Gunns were English. Her grandpa Cash (Reuben) died in her early childhood perhaps before the big move Ark./Texas. She remembered Uncle Billy Cash, a doctor, and his wife Susan. (Other records show that this must be William Henry Cash, a Baptist minister and brother of her mother that ministered in Arkansas. His wife was Rebecca Sarah Overton). There was also a Dr. England married to a sister of their mother Mary Frances Cash. Her dad never talked about his deceased wife or his own parental family. Charlie was 3 yrs. older than Felicia and they did a lot of scrapping. Pink was 5 years older than she. Some of the boys were grown and out of the home by the

time the mother died. When the big brothers would start teasing the little girls, dad put a quick stop to that. The big brothers were proud of the two little sisters. They would brag about being 11 older brothers and then two little sisters. Nola liked to romp with the boys outside and Felicia liked to play with dolls inside. Her father Nathaniel remarried about 9 mo. after the death of Pheletia Jane to a woman by the name of Susan) but the woman didn't care well for the children. They separated and she went to live/visit with a grown daughter, her only child, and soon after died. When she made a trip to visit her daughter in Missouri (According to Alice, perhaps TN according to grandma's fragile memory), grandpa packed up his things and apparently moved at that time to Texas where the oldest married son lived.

Grandma remembered having grown up in Texas. At first their dad rented a place and farmed for an old man in Bartlett. Later he bought a farm of his own in the area. Their dad was a cotton farmer. They lived in a big white house with 2 rooms upstairs and 2 rooms downstairs. Her dad would hire a couple to live with them for the woman to cook and keep house and for the man to help the boys in the cotton fields. He also grew Sorghum to make syrup that was used on pancakes. The boys would split logs for firewood for the cook stove. They grew up eating biscuits and cornbread, never "light" bread. Pink turned out to be the best household help. He taught grandma to make a bed, to wash dishes, and to cook. The family always had a garden and Felicia did her fair share of the garden work.

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A sister-in-law helped Felicia learn to sew. She had a china doll that she sewed for. The china doll's head got smashed and she cried and cried. Her brothers felt sorry for her and bought her another. She started making doll clothes around 10 yrs. old. When her dad saw that she could sew so well, he bought her a Singer sewing machine when she was about 14 yrs. old and she started sewing for herself and Nola. The children that were still at home had to walk a little over a mile to a country school. Their dad always said that a good education would help the kids do well in life and that he wanted them to be better educated than he was. The young lady teachers would ring a hand bell to signal the start of classes. They were pretty good at most subjects and often her brothers Pink or Charlie had to help the teachers with the math problems. Felicia went to about the 5<sup>th</sup> (in another recording she said she started but didn't finish the 8<sup>th</sup> grade) grade going to school several months each year. In school kids would say about her—Careful with that Gunn. You might get shot. One time Felicia stole some doll clothes at school and hid them in the attic. When she went back to find them the mice had eaten them. She dropped out of school to keep house and sew. Bartlett, the nearest town, was too far away to be able to continue her schooling.

When Felicia visited friends she was very blue about not having a mother to teach her things as the friends' mothers did. But her brothers treated her very well. She had some very nice sister-in-laws that helped fill the mother role until they got too busy with their own children. Nola had beautiful brown eyes, just like her mother, was pleasantly plump and had a beautiful complexion. She

was almost blond. When the big brothers came home after being away for a year or so they always marveled at how much Nola looked like their mother. As she grew older she was even more like her in looks and build. Felicia had sandy colored hair, was freckled and thin. She was jealous of Nola's good looks and wished that she could have been like her mother. Her father consoled her telling her that she was just like his mother. The two sisters didn't look like they were from the same family. Felicia never knew either set of grandparents, but Billy Cash (Rev. William Henry Cash) her mother's brother lived near them for a while. She couldn't remember the names of either set of grandparents and never saw photos of them. Felicia remembered being the sickly one of the family having a lot of illnesses in her childhood, but remarked how she had outlived all the other 12. At 7 or 8 years of age she nearly died of typhoid fever. Felicia recalled going to the Baptist church regularly on Sundays during her growing up years. Their father was quite strict about "Sabbath" keeping, but she remembered playing some on Sunday afternoon. On Sunday evenings their father would read the Bible to them. Their dad was quite strict. He would teach his children how to do a thing, and then he expected them to do it right from then on.

After her father died Felicia followed her brother Pink to Roy, New Mexico to homestead. She was about 27. They had adjoining claims of 320 acres each. Pink's plan was to raise cattle on the two properties. They raised cattle keeping the heifers. When they had bull calves they either traded them off or ate them. Their property was prairie. There was one low place

with a few trees. Pink lived in a tent while he built Felicia's one room cabin of abode blocks where they all lived while Pink built his own house. Felicia spent periods of time on her claim, but Pink and Ella were afraid for her to be alone. Charlie was there part of the time also. She often would go to spend time with different families to sew their clothes for the year or for a bridal party, and then they would take her back to Pink's house. One of those families was the Roys. Things were a bit crowded at Pink's with just 2 rooms and two kids. One night when she was alone in her cabin she heard a mountain lion prowling and then heard her pony Nellie, that she had bought from an Indian, screeching from the shed where he was tied. In the morning she was missing and so grandma went down into the canyon to the Indian camp with her bridle in hand. She found the Indians having breakfast and there was her Nellie well clawed and tied up waiting for her. Another memory was the morning she woke up in her cabin to see that snow had blown in under the rafters. A rug that was used as a ceiling was sagging with the weight. Even her bed that she had tried to protect with newspapers spread out over it was covered.

It was in Roy that she saw her first motor car. The proud owners offered her a ride. Roy was a small town with a store where the Gunns bought essentials. It would later have a real Baptist church that Pink and Charlie built. One year Felicia was elected the "most eligible bachelorette of Roy."

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One day Grandma was driving a team of horses that pulled a wagon as she carried a load of water. They bolted and the tongue of the wagon stuck in the ground and she lost the water as it spilled all over the ground. She declared in her distress, "I'll marry the first man that comes along that can drive a team of horses. On day Pink met Earl Morgan who had a homestead some way out of Roy and invited him to join them the next Sunday for dinner. Though Earl was a Methodist he joined the Gunns at the school house for the Baptist Sunday service. He often commented that the first thing he noticed were those long, slim legs getting out of the wagon. Felicia admitted that they took a liking to each other right away. Earl started coming around frequently to visit Felicia. When the relationship was cemented, he took off to make a place for them in Imperial Valley, Calif. When he had things set up, he wrote for her to come. But first Felicia would return to Texas to see her brothers and their families before boarding a train bound for southern Calif. They couldn't be married until the next day after her arrival. The lady manager of the hotel where Felicia stayed that first night sent Earl out for a ring and flowers. The hotel occupants were the wedding guests. The hotel had a lovely winding staircase for the bride to make her entrance. And thus Earl and Felicia were married. They started married life living for a time in Brawley. End

Taken in Texas, following is a photo of Felicia and her sister Nona and brothers the day following the burial of Nathan.



Photo of Felicia on her horse Nellie at her cabin and homestead in Roy, NM



Nathan Gunn and the Gunn Boys



# Old County Photos

(Photos from the Cleveland County ARGEN Project)

First County Court House at Toledo



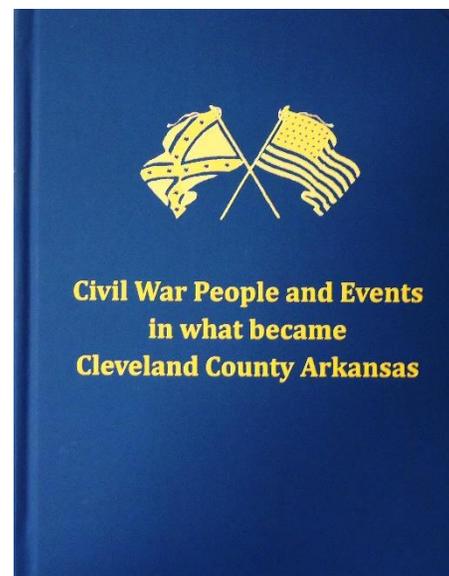
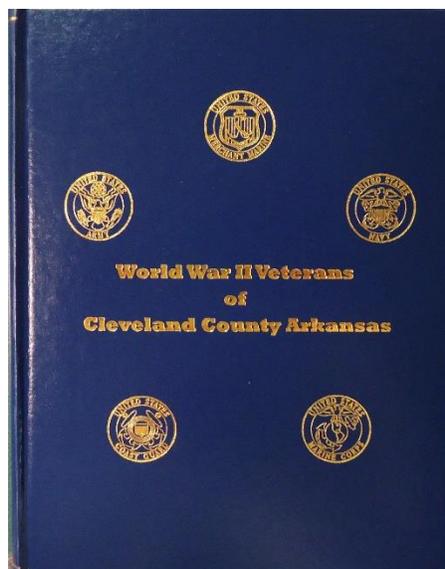
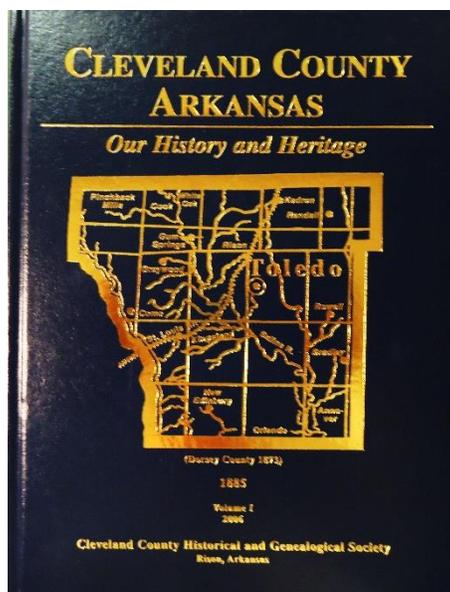
First Rison School



Second Rison School



## Cleveland County Historical Society Books



The Cleveland County Historical Society throughout its history has published numerous historical books and publications about Cleveland County and its people. Above are just 3 of our popular books. These include Cleveland County Arkansas - Our History and Heritage, the World War II Veterans of Cleveland County, and our newest book of the Civil War People and Events in What became Cleveland County Arkansas. To get yours today, visit our website at [www.clevelandcountyhistory.com](http://www.clevelandcountyhistory.com) and look under "Our Publications" for details, prices and order information.

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