

CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF ARKANSAS

by Dallas Herndon

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The History of the Formation of Cleveland County, Arkansas

The County was created by the Act of April 17, 1873 and was first called DORSEY COUNTY, in honor of Stephen W. Dorsey, then one of the U. S. Senators from Arkansas. Senator Dorsey rendered himself unpopular with the people of Arkansas and in 1885 the name was changed to CLEVELAND, in honor of Grover Cleveland, who had just been elected President of the United States.

On July 7, 1873, TOLEDO was designated by the BOARD as the permanent County Seat.

The residence of M. T. McGehee was purchased and remodeled for a Courthouse. This building burned on March 9, 1889. Rison, Kingsland, Beasley’s Switch, and New Edinburg then became candidates for county seat honors. An election held on June 29, 1889, none of the above places received a majority. A second election held August 17, 1889 and RISON won by a small margin of seven votes. Kingsland people contested the election and the County Court decided in favor of Kingsland. The Risonites appealed to the Supreme Court which decided that the election was legally held, the votes correctly counted and that Rison was the county seat.

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CLEVELAND COUNTY TOWNSHIPS

- |              |              |                |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Bowman    | 6. Kingsland | 11. Rison      |
| 2. Harper    | 7. Lee       | 12. Saline     |
| 3. Hudgin    | 8. Miller    | 13. Smith      |
| 4. Hurricane | 9. Niven     | 14. White Oak  |
| 5. Jackson   | 10. Redland  | 15. Whiteville |

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Facts on towns in Cleveland County

Rison in 1920 had a population of ----- 685  
Rison was incorporated on September 1, 1890  
Kingsland in 1920 had a population of ----- 397  
Kingsland was incorporated on July 22, 1884

Dallas Tabor Herndon (b: 1878 – d: 1953) - Father of the archival movement in Arkansas - was the first director of the Arkansas History Commission and State Archives. From 1911 until his death in 1953, he labored tirelessly to preserve manuscripts and other material relating to Arkansas history and culture.

The above historical information is contained in the Cash Family Papers of Clara Marie Cash of Cleveland County - compiled 1972.