

named Coffee aroused the ire of a drunken Irishman. Coffee's denunciation of the man made other Irishmen mad, and the lot of them gathered in the door with the intention of whipping him. However, O'Darr and six other men surrounded Coffee with clubs and protected him all the way home. This same pair of ministers encountered similar troubles when the Cove Church, later to be Pottsville, was organized in 1868, the same year in which Fords Chapel was organized by O'Darr. At the Cove Church, Coffee walked to the pulpit where O'Darr was preaching and said, "If that fellow interferes with us tonight, I will beat the devil out of him for the good of his own soul."⁴⁸ With this statement he proceeded to unwrap a bundle and display a dogwood club. O'Darr said this was in the days when preachers knew no better than to fight. They could not beg off, or as he put it in another way, in the days when they had not been taught a better way by the Holiness preachers. He indicated that the Pottsville Methodist Church would not have been established if its circuit men had tried to use the "love plan."

The Pottsville Circuit of the Methodist Church has been served by the following pastors:

Slusher-----	1893-1897
J. L. Masters-----	1897-1899
Brakenhill-----	1899-1902

⁴⁸ "Souvenir Program," Methodist Episcopal Church, Pottsville, Arkansas, Dedication Services, September 28, 1913.

Ingart -----	1902-1903
Gray-----	1903-1905
Beiber -----	1905-1908
Masters -----	1908-1912
Kurr-----	1912-1913
Bracewell -----	1912-1913
Hollingsworth -----	1912-1913 ⁴⁹

In 1913 there were five churches in the Pottsville Circuit:

The Pottsville, Union Chapel, Fords Chapel, Double Springs, and Bethel congregations. The first of these had Jason Stegall, J. A. Rackley, and W. T. Martin as trustees.⁵⁰

In 1880 the Potts Station Baptist Church was organized about one mile east of Potts Station and named New Prospect Baptist Church. In 1886 the name was changed to Potts Station Baptist Church.

The first pastor was E. O. Landers, who was followed respectively by J. A. Meyers, Rhoda Moran, J. T. Woodward, W. V. Walls, J. F. Brewer, W. V. Walls, O. H. Reid, M. F. Gathright, Roe Kelley, Robbin Worthington, Roscoe Stapp, R. F. Loyd, and J. F. Roxex.

The church was rebuilt in Pottsville in 1912, but has been

49

Ibid.

50

This information was acquired in an interview with Mrs. Martha Ann Harkey on August 23, 1961. Mrs. Harkey was born and reared near Fords Chapel on Crow Mountain. She remembers O'Darr who frequently visited her family when he was preaching at Fords Chapel. Her father often accompanied O'Darr on part of his return journey to Center Valley.

inactive for the past several years. The brick building stands approximately where the first public school was built in 1883.⁵¹

For almost forty years the citizens of Pottsville have participated in what is well known as the "Union Revival." The Pottsville Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church records reveal that plans for cooperative evangelistic services were made in 1921. At that time there were two Methodist Churches and a Baptist Church in addition to the Presbyterian Church. Following the original plans, the churches take turns in selecting the ministers to conduct the services which are usually held in July or August. The first of these union services was held in 1922 under a large tent, but it was discarded a few years ago because of age. Since the tent was discarded, the union services have been continued in the church buildings.⁵²

The town of Pottsville, which has always had an agricultural economy, probably had as its first business the inn and post office managed by Kirkbride Potts. His house, the second he built which still stands today, was one of the principal stops on the "Old Cross Country Wire Road." The Butterfield Stage, coming west from

51

This information was acquired in an interview with Mr. E. E. Allmon on June 12, 1961. Mr. Allmon has long been a member of the Baptist Church.

52

Arkansas Democrat, Little Rock, Arkansas, July 15, 1961.

Memphis, made regular stops there between 1858 and 1861. Here passengers stayed overnight on their way to Fort Smith, where they made connections with other stages for the trip across the plains. Even though this business was carried on in the home, it did help earn a livelihood and could therefore be called a business. Mr. Potts obtained most of his supplies from Norristown, a river port five miles to the southwest.⁵³

The first store at Pottsville, as such, was owned by an organization of farmers and managed by Bob Harkey. William Ferguson was manager of the next store.⁵⁴ Another source reports the first store built by John Rushing and located just west of the old railroad station on the north side of the street. This would place it near the small creek which runs under the railroad. Rushing's General Merchandise Store contained about everything one needed--whiskey by the pint, quart, gallon or keg, calico, beeswax, axle grease, seed, brown sugar, horehound candy, green coffee, shoes, and flour.⁵⁵ The location given here indicates that this business stood in the same spot as the Bell Store which was taken over later by W. P. Ferguson who managed the

⁵³ Courier Democrat, Russellville, Arkansas, 1952 Progress Edition.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The Weekly Tribune, Russellville, Arkansas, July 16, 1936.

Co-Op, or Grange Store, during the 1870's. Evidently these two stores were the same.

On the same side of the street, built at a later date, was the C. H. Boggess business, which later became the A. H. Boggess General Store. The latter Mr. Boggess advertised dry goods, groceries, clothing, hats, caps, hardware, tinware and everything kept in a first class store. Still on the north side of the street and westward, was Ragsdale's place and finally the Citizens Bank that was erected in 1913.

On the south side of the street and at the east end was located the second post office in what was later to be Towell's Drug Store and later still, Jim Beaty's Grocery and Drug Store. This was after the post office had been removed from the Potts' Inn. Uncle Joe Potts operated the post office until about 1893 (President McKinley's election). Following Mr. Potts as postmaster was Mr. Charlie Martin who quit when Woodrow Wilson was elected because he thought he would be removed. Guy Oates took his place as postmaster and served until World War I. John Rackley, Argus Robinson, and Lady Evelyn Weatherton have served since then.

The next store on the south side was the original J. D. Ragsdale business, later the Falls Store. It stood about where the Farmers Mercantile Building now stands. The Oates brothers' store stood where the now vacated drug store stands. Just west

of Oates Brothers was the new location of Falls Brothers General Store. The latter was originally an old wooden building which is now being used by E. H. Keener as a warehouse.⁵⁶

Falls Brothers, founded in 1887 by E. B. Falls, later became Falls and Gregory. Again it became E. B. Falls, and then E. B. Falls and Son. Later the name was changed to Roy Falls and finally to Falls and Sinclair. It has been owned and operated by E. H. Keener since 1946.⁵⁷

Oates Brothers, operated by Leslie, Harvey, and Monroe Oates, originated as a general store in connection with a blacksmith shop. Later it became a general store, dropping the smithy and handling the usual line of dry goods, groceries, and hardware. A railroad official once remarked that according to the size of the towns, Pottsville's business houses sold more farm tools than Russellville's.⁵⁸ In 1924 Homer Rackley bought the firm of Oates Brothers and operated it as the Farmers Mercantile Association until about World War II. The brick building has been used as a storage building since that time.⁵⁹

Dr. R. H. Gardner had his office just south of Oates Brothers.

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Interviews with Tom Falls and N. H. Bell.

⁵⁷

The Tribune, Russellville, Arkansas, July 16, 1936.

⁵⁸

Interview with T. B. Falls.

⁵⁹

The Tribune, Russellville, Arkansas, July 16, 1936.

Dr. Gardner spent little time in his office because his patients were scattered and he traveled by horseback and buggy.

Dr. L. T. Ragsdale also practiced there during the 1880's and 1890's. Doctors at that time did not give prescriptions. Instead, they carried the medicine with them. The drug stores carried patent medicines and other goods.⁶⁰

The Citizens Bank of Pottsville was organized in September, 1913 with R. O. Morton as the first president and N. H. Bell as cashier. From 1918 to 1922 A. H. Boggess was president, and Roy Falls, cashier. For the next several years D. H. Rackley was president and Cicero Owens was cashier.⁶¹

Jim Jameson operated the first blacksmith shop in Pottsville. He is possibly the James A. Jameson who later became a prominent citizen of Russellville.⁶²

One early business, located just outside the business district, was a grist mill which began operating about 1851. The mill was built by Reece Parker and operated by him until the Civil War. Located on Galla Creek, one and one-half miles south of Pottsville, the site is now referred to as the "Old Mill Dam." After Mr. Parker's

⁶⁰ Interview with T. B. Falls.

⁶¹ The Tribune, Russellville, Arkansas, July 16, 1936.

⁶² Interview with N. H. Bell.

death the mill was owned and operated by his son, Captain P. W. Parker until his death in 1892.⁶³ The mill was remodeled by Captain Parker who in September of 1880 informed the public that he had purchased a new double turbine water wheel from Springfield, Ohio, had it in position, and it worked like a charm. After Captain Parker's death the mill was leased by C. G. Oates who built a cotton gin and operated it in connection with the grist mill.⁶⁴

The following businesses and professions were in operation in Pottsville in 1913. They advertised themselves in this manner:

1. A. H. Boggess
2. L. Adams--Dry Goods, Hardware, Groceries, Medicines, Millinery, Hats, Shoes, Clothing, and Farm Implements
3. Citizens Bank--Capital \$15,000.00. R. O. Morton, President and N. H. Bell, Cashier
4. Oates and Pryor--First Class Smith and Repair Shop--Horse-Shoeing and all kinds of woodwork
5. Oates Brothers--W. L. Oates, T. M. Oates, and J. H. Oates--General Merchandise
6. E. B. Falls and Son--Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots, Shoes and General Merchandise
7. R. M. Jean--Physician and Surgeon--Telephone--1 long, 1 short
8. J. E. Allmon--Ginner, Miller and Cotton Seed Buyer--always pays highest price for white corn and cotton seed. Your patronage solicited.⁶⁵

This probably represents the business section at a near peak.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The Courier Democrat, Russellville, Arkansas, September 3, 1936.

⁶⁵ "Souvenir Program," Methodist Episcopal Church, Pottsville, Arkansas, Dedication Services, September 28, 1913.

No doubt there were other small businesses not advertised at this time, which might bring the number of establishments to ten or twelve.

Many of the citizens of Pottsville have helped make Russellville a thriving city. Among the families who have served as lawyers, teachers, doctors, ministers, and business men are the names Potts, Oates, Ferguson, Henry, Rackley, Falls, Gardner, Bell, and Jones.

The railroad, that came through in 1872-73, helped make Pottsville a major center of activity in the valley. The plans had been in the making almost twenty years before it became a reality. As early as 1854 work was underway on the Missouri Pacific Railroad. One citizen revealed his feelings by saying, "there is considerable excitement here about the railroad. the engineer is surveying the rout. he is some 12 miles from here, if he goes the way that he say he will the road will run with in one mile of me. it has cased the land to rise."⁶⁶

The station at Galla was a factor in causing people to move toward the nucleus. No longer would the town have to depend on the river ports of Galley Rock and Norristown.

The business section of the town presently consists of

⁶⁶Letter from Thomas M. Oates to Alexander Ware, March 9, 1854.

E. H. Keener's General Store, E. Walters' Grocery, The Citizen's Bank, Owen's Service Station and Garage, and the United States Post Office. The town had a drug store until 1960.

Another business area known as North Pottsville has slowly materialized on the new highway about one-fourth mile north of the original area. It consists of a grocery store, a garage, an antique store, a nursery, a hatchery, and a concrete block manufacturing plant.

A one-room building of log construction was the first to be established for the purposes of education. Now referred to as the "Old Potts School House," it was located about one-fourth mile southwest of the original J. B. Sinclair house where E. B. Sinclair now lives. To what extent it was used as a classroom is not known, but it is thought to have served in the education of the earliest settlers and their slaves. It is known to have been used for other public purposes, especially religious ones.

Public schools were not known in the Potts Station area for about fifty-four years after the arrival of the first citizen. Perhaps the "Potts School House" was used to good advantage during those years. At any rate, the records show the following request filed with E. C. Bradley, the County Judge of Pope County, on February 18, 1882:

We the undersigned petitioners and electors of Pope County

pray that a new school district be cut off and formed separate and apart from School District 33, subtracting Section 18, 1/2 Section 17, North Range 19 West, as shown on accompanying map. Said district having the required number of children between the ages of six and twenty-one years as required by law and leaving in the old or District 33, the required number of children between the ages of six and twenty-one as required by law. (Signed) L. T. Ragsdale and others.⁶⁷

Action came soon. On March 29, 1882, the court ordered the district to be formed as Potts Station District 61.⁶⁸

The earliest available school records show the first school warrant issued to the amount of \$17.32 on January 2, 1883, for a stove. The next expenditures show \$50.25 paid to C. B. Mosely on January 19, 1883, and \$90.00 to W. N. Oates in April, 1883. Mosely and Oates were the first two teachers.⁶⁹

School Directors in 1883 were M. R. Shinn and W. O. Ferguson.⁷⁰ One of these two men was probably president of the board. Directors who were appointed in September, 1883, were H. D. Brown, C. H. Boggess, and J. W. Williamson.⁷¹

67

Pope County Circuit Clerk's Record Book D, (Pope County, Arkansas), p. 330.

68

Ibid.

69

Register "A" Pope County School Warrants, (Pope County, Arkansas), p. 61.

70

Ibid.

71

Record of Plats and School Directors, (Pope County, Arkansas), Book 1, p. 117.

Other directors in the early years of Pottsville Public Schools were: 1885--J. F. Oates, 1886--H. D. Brown, 1887--M. C. Baker, 1888--R. O. Morton.⁷²

By 1894 the Potts Station School, located about one-hundred feet north of the site of the present Baptist Church, had a five-month term and was considered to be as good as any other school in the county. As a two-teacher school, it was conducted that year by John F. Rorex and Miss Carrie Brown, later Mrs. R. B. Henry. At this time Mr. Rorex was compensated at the rate of \$40.00 per month while Miss Brown received \$28.50 per month.⁷³

Improvements in the Pottsville school were slow, but they were forthcoming. In 1894 two important changes took place within the classrooms: the old home-made desks were replaced with new factory-made double desks, and the painted wall-type blackboards were replaced by factory-made hylotype boards. These must have been considered radical changes during that early stage of public education.

A short time later a third teacher was added and additional subjects were included in the upper grades.

⁷² Register "A" Pope County School Warrants (Pope County, Arkansas), p. 61.

⁷³ N. H. Bell, "Ninety Years of Public Schools in Pope County, Arkansas Valley Historical Papers, Number 22, July, 1960, p. 1.

In 1909 an act was passed that allowed schools to borrow money for building purposes when special school districts were organized. Shortly after this, about 1913, the Pottsville High School was built. At this time there was a basis for better grade organization and improved financing. Classification in earlier days had been by subjects taught--spelling, reading, and English grammar--rather than by grade. In other words, the student was classified by the courses he was taking rather than by his grade status. ⁷⁴

By the school year of 1918-19 Pottsville was offering three years of high school work. The only other school in the county that offered more was Russellville, the county seat, that had four years. Atkins also conducted a three-year high school program. Dover, London, and Hector had less than three.

By 1926 there were thirteen teachers in the county whose qualifications classified them as high school teachers. Three of these were in Pottsville and at this time Pottsville had seven teachers.

Other high points in the story of the Pottsville Public School System would include the beginnings of bus transportation in the early 1930's. As consolidations continued, a 1948 state law

74

Ibid., p. 5.

abolished all districts with fewer than three-hundred and fifty enumerates. With the adoption of this law, Pottsville was one of the five schools left in the county. The others were Russellville, Dover, Atkins, and Hector.⁷⁵

The present public school at Pottsville is continuing to progress. The school year of 1961-62 showed an enrollment of between 360 and 370 students. About 175 of these are in the upper six grades, fifteen of them in the senior class. This is an increase of two over the 1960-61 graduating class.

The physical plant includes a modern six-room grade school with auditorium facilities, built in 1950, the high school building, constructed about 1913, a gymnasium constructed about 1940, a hot lunch building, an agriculture building, a home economics building, and a bus garage. There are also two teacherages, not usually found in a school system of this size.

Pottsville has a consolidated school and runs six buses to all points in the community. The runs originate at Pine Ridge, Mars Hill, Holla Bend, New Hope and Bethel. In addition, one bus runs several miles east and west on Highway 64.

A recent millage increase from twenty-five to forty mills keeps the school progressing with the times. At this time Pottsville

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Ibid., pp. 6-8.

has a nine-month term with a faculty of fourteen, including the administration. The curriculum includes the usual courses. Chemistry was offered in the 1959-60 school year and physics in 1960-61. Although there was not enough student demand for these subjects in 1961-62, they will be offered in the future if there are enough requests. The school does have access to, and uses the "Continental Film Kit," which is a complete course within itself. ⁷⁶

Some of the older landmarks still stand as they were originally erected. The Potts' house, now about one-hundred and ten years old, is yet in excellent condition and occupied by members of the Potts family. The original well with the same wooden windlass, iron handle, and pulley wheel that Kirkbride Potts used are in use today. Nearby stands a small log building that was constructed from logs used by Mr. Potts at his first home site near the foot of Crow Mountain. At the west end of the house a Bois d'Arc tree stands, as it stood during the days when the Butterfield Stage coaches stopped here while traveling the "Old Wire Road."

Inside the house a few changes have been made, but most of it retains its original look. The solid doors and latches are the same ones used by the first inhabitants. The living room door still has

⁷⁶ This information was acquired in an interview with Mr. Doise Taylor on February 24, 1962. Mr. Taylor is Superintendent of Schools at Pottsville.

the original hickory bar and brackets that were used to bolt it. In the hall stands the first desk that was used as a post office by Kirkbride Potts. It has nine small boxes at the top that were used to hold the mail. Below are some pigeon-holes, probably used for stamps and coin change.

The "Old Masonic Hall," the original Methodist Church, stands on the north side of the underpass. This building was constructed about 1888 and has been used as a church, a community building, and now as a lodge by the Masons.

Across the highway and west of the Masonic Hall, stands the "House of Seven Gables." It was built by Dr. R. H. Gardner in 1887 and is a well known landmark.

The Sinclair house still stands on Highway 64, about two miles east of Pottsville. It has been remodeled recently but retains its original form. It was built before the Civil War and was visited by guerillas and night robbers during the war and Reconstruction Period.

The Potts' Cemetery is located in a grove of trees near the railroad, about one-hundred feet north of where the Missouri Pacific depot stood. There are numerous graves here, but many of the headstones are unreadable. Inside the Potts' family burial plot are nine graves, two of which are not marked. The headstone of Kirkbride Potts indicates that he died November 24, 1879, at the age of seventy-six years and one day. His wife, Pamela A. Potts, died

August 5, 1878, at the age of sixty-seven years, six months, and twenty-two days.

Since Highway 64 is no longer its main street, Pottsville today seems to have a quieter atmosphere than a few years ago. Many of its citizens are retired and appear to live a life of serenity and leisure, removed from the hurry that is found in many other communities. Often some of the older men can be seen sitting on benches outside the stores, possibly reminiscing about the past. A great many of its younger citizens commute daily to work in Russellville, the county seat.

Thus, the town whose founder arrived in the year that Andrew Jackson was elected President, the Working Men's Party was founded, and construction was started on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, still stands.

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G. INTERVIEWS

Allmon, Mr. E. E. Mr. Allmon has long been a member of the Pottsville Baptist Church.

Bell, Mr. N. H. Mr. Bell was born and reared in Pottsville and has a great knowledge of its history.

Falls, Mr. Roy. Mr. Falls was born at Pottsville and spent many years in business there.

Falls, Mr. T. B. Mr. Falls is a lifelong resident of Pottsville and the son of one of the early settlers.

Harkey, Mrs. Martha Ann. Mrs. Harkey was born and reared on Crow Mountain and has been a lifelong resident of the Pottsville area.

Jones, Mr. George. Mr. Jones has passed his ninetieth birthday and has been a resident of the Pottsville area throughout his life.

Johnson, Mrs. V. A. Mrs. Johnson is a native of Pottsville and is a granddaughter of its founder, Kirkbride Potts.

Johnson, Mr. V. A. Mr. Johnson was born about three miles southeast of Pottsville in 1876 and has an excellent knowledge of its history.

Taylor, Mr. Doise. Mr. Taylor is Superintendent of Schools at Pottsville.