

Pottsville and How it came to be, author unknown, written in 1993

The place we know as Pottsville was very different at the beginning, of course. It really began with the arrival of a man we know as Kirkbride Potts (his full name was John Kirkbride Potts), who is among a list of men who are recorded as having entered or purchased land in Pope County previous to 1845 (148 years ago). He is said in one history book to have arrived in Pope County one year before the county was formed. This man, Kirkbride Potts, was born in Pennsylvania, but moved to Missouri, then came to Arkansas a few years after 1820. He married Permelia Logan in 1828.

Kirkbride Potts is considered the founder of the town we know as Pottsville. You all know about Potts Inn, sometimes called Potts Tavern. Mr. Potts did not live in that big white house in downtown Pottsville when he first came to this area. No, he had purchased 160 acres of land and built a two-story log house on the east side of Galla Creek near a bluff. The log house was about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile northeast of the present downtown Pottsville. He lived here with his family for 25 years before moving across the creek to the home we know as Potts Inn.

This big new home was built after Mr. Potts had made three trips to California – the first in 1849 seeking gold. The other two trips were different. He drove cattle to California. He must have decided this was easier than looking for gold. There was a demand for food and he supplied it. So, you see, he was a smart businessman. He then had the home we know as Potts Inn built and moved his family into it. It took six years to build the home which was completed in 1858.

Kirkbride Potts was the first postmaster in what was then known as Potts Station. The Pottsville Post Office was established September 2, 1874. Kirkbride Potts served as postmaster 11 years. Then his son, Joseph Potts, took over and was postmaster for 12 years. The post office desk with its little pigeon holes for letters is still a part of the furniture at Potts Inn today.

On March 17, 1897, twenty-seven people at Potts Station filed a request with the circuit clerk at the county seat at Russellville that their town was incorporated. This means that they wanted the town to be an official body which could act as a single entity, with laws and elected officials. The petition was legally filed three days after the request and James Potts, son of Kirkbride, A.H. Boggess and J.H. Oates were appointed to act as agents. James Potts petitioned that the town be named "Pottsville" in honor of his father, Kirkbride Potts. The name of Potts Station was changed to Pottsville August 9, 1897. Some people will tell you that the town at one time had another name, Galla Station, but that was actually the train station. The town is still located in Galla Township.

As mentioned before, Kirkbride Potts was a good businessman. He operated a hotel in his home as well as the post office. His home was a stagecoach stop for the Butterfield Overland Mail route between Memphis, Tennessee, and Fort Smith. He was a farmer and the 160 acres he purchased grew to more than 200 acres before his death. He was described as "a very active citizen," and served as the government agent for the removal of the Indians. He and his wife had eleven children. Two of his sons were killed fighting in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Kirkbride Potts died in 1878, one of the best known men in the state.

Pottsville has never been a large town, but it has grown steadily. In 1910, it had a population of 205; in 1920, the population was 275. In 1930 Pottsville had a population of 293 and ranked as fifth largest city in the county.

Roads were being built but until 1919 when the Legislature authorized the construction of the first hard-surfaced road in the county from the Conway county line to the Johnson county line, most of the roads were dirt roads. The old iron bridge was built when this road was built.

Pottsville had a community-owned telephone exchange not long after 1899.

The first school could be considered the one Kirkbride Potts conducted in his home for his children. Records show that the Pisgah Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church was organized in 1853 at the Potts School. Referred to as "the old log school," it was located about ½ mile from where the present A.R.P Church stands. In 1894, the Potts Station School was built around 150 feet northwest of the present Baptist Church. Sometime between 1913 and 1915, Pottsville High School was built. It was a brick building and had four rooms; two upstairs and two downstairs. Later four more rooms were added and the school continued to grow.

We have already mentioned the organization of the Presbyterian Church at Pottsville. The Methodist Church was organized in 1868 in the old Cove School House in Bradley Cove (near where the reservoir is located) and later members built Kings Chapel, which we know today as the Masonic Lodge.

The first store was organized by farmers and operated by Bob Harkey. Other stores soon followed. Mr. L.L. Adams used to conduct court in his store. The bank was built in 1913. There was a drug store, several mercantile stores, a café, a post office, a barber shop, and students bought their books for school, and pencils and tablets at the mercantile store which is now Pottsville Grocery. In the fall, wagon loads of cotton lined up for the gin. It was a busy place.

Today we are mostly a bedroom community, living in Pottsville but going somewhere else to work. Pottsville has a population of 900 – some think at least 1,000 – and people go elsewhere to shop. We do have a proud history and I hope you will learn all you can about it. We are presently working to establish a Historic District to preserve this history for future generations. What can you do? Learn all you can, keep the town clean and be a good citizen.