

Congressmen, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee of National resources regarding H.R. 442, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the Wolf House as a unit of the National Parks System. The United States Territorial Courthouse is located in Norfork, Arkansas located at the fork of the Norfork and White Rivers.

The Wolf House, also known as the Territorial Courthouse, is the oldest two story log structure and the oldest Territorial Courthouse in the United States west of the Mississippi river. The Wolf House has the unique distinction of being designated by the territory of Arkansas as a county seat and courthouse in 1825 and is the only surviving one of the territorial period. The Wolf House's hand hewn logs date back to 1820's. The county laid entirely on the eastern side of the White River

in 1825, until 1827. Major Wolf, while in the territorial legislator had county borders extended about 120 miles westward around the Indian lands, to the Osage Indian boundary line. During 1825 until 1838, John P Houston was the county clerk of IZARD County, his office was located in the territorial court house. He was one of the most colorful people and was the brother of better known General Sam Houston. Sam Houston visited the Wolf House on his way to Texas, he got in a fight with his brother, and vowed never to return.

Liberty (known as Norfolk today), where civilized society ended and the entrance point to the wild frontier. From New Orleans up the Mississippi to the mouth of the White River canoes and keel boats traveled to Liberty.

The first inhabitants of the White River Valley were known as the Bluff Dwellers, then came the Osage Indians and the Cherokee Indians which brought Jacob Wolf as the U.S. governments Indian Agent, along with the territorial court house to settle disputes between the Indians and settlers.

Other famous frontiersmen that visited the territorial courthouse, the Wolf House, were Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone. Fur traders would go up the White River to the Buffalo rivers mouth to trap and hunt bear, turkey, deer, beaver and raccoon. They would bring their furs down the Buffalo River America's first National River to Liberty to trade them or sell them.

The territorial circuit court of the United States of America met in the large second story court room in the early 1830's before Arkansas was a state. There have been many famous lawyers and judges to hold U.S. court at Liberty (know as Norfolk today).

In the early 1800's there were several buildings around the Wolf House which consisted of a blacksmith shop, slave cabins, a barn, a

kitchen, a trading post, and a tavern. Early pioneers camped at the fork of the White and Norfork rivers then traded furs off for numerous different things that were necessities at the Wolf House's Trading Post.

Archaeologists were able to locate all of the outbuildings precisely as they had been documented by Wolf's son's map. The grounds of the Wolf House are considered to be one of Arkansas's richest archaeological sites. The structure has been restored on its original site under a Courthouse Restoration Grant provided by the Arkansas historic preservation program in 2002. Archaeologist studies around the court house have not been completed.

The goal of the restoration was to return the structure and out buildings to their original form when it served as a U.S. territorial courthouse. The White River was one of the main transportation routes for early pioneers going west. In 1825-1827 when Jacob Wolf built this massive structure, he built it out of huge hand hewn logs with the the impressive two story porch facing the river where it would have been easily noted by all travelers. Jacob Wolf was a blacksmith as well is a carpenter. An exceptional amount of original construction material remained at the start of the restoration which has served as a guide for the restoration craftsmen. All of the rafters in the roof and the whole second floor are all original and the hardware was reproduced from Wolf originals.

Today the oldest public structure in Arkansas, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the oldest two story log structure west of the Mississippi is just setting there, boarded up, not open to the public, even after \$1,000,000 has been put into this wonderful historic place to restore it. Calls come in every day to the Baxter County Judges office wanting historical information and tours of

the famous structure. Our school children, families and historians deserve to learn and feel America's frontier heritage. At this point they can only sit there and admire the outside of this United States Landmark. It's exterior of an imposing structure with literally a million dollar view of the White river bears great significance, not only for Arkansas history, but for the United States history as well. Lack of money keeps the territorial courthouse site shut down. Arkansas and Baxter County (the county that owns the building), cannot afford to open it as a park site of territorial United States history.

I ask you as congressmen, to fund the study on the feasibility of designating the Wolf House Territorial U.S. Court House and grounds located in Norfork Arkansas, as a unit of the National Parks Systems.

EXCERPTS FROM THE BAXTER COUNTY CHRONICLES 2005

THE WOLF HOUSE

Nestled in the beautiful Ozark Mountains, in the little town of Norfork, Arkansas is a large two story log mansion. This house stands on an eminence commanding a sweeping view of the confluence of the North Fork and South Fork of the enchanting White River. The Wolf house was built in the winter of 1827-1828 in an area commonly known then as the "jumping off place" into the unknown. Today the Wolf House stands as a monument to the past. One has to search the mind very little when suddenly face with the question' how and why did this house survive almost two centuries of the decomposing elements of nature and escape developmental greed of modern man, Major Jacob Wolf, neither the building, the place, nor possibly the history of this area would be the

same. Today, this building is viewed as an important record of the past and of considerable historical importance today and in the future. However long the building may stand, it will be a personal memorial and monument to its original owner, architect, and builder, Major Jacob Wolf (1786 - 1863). What more appropriate legacy would he have chosen, or could he have bestowed upon the future? Negro slaves, native Indians, and such whites as available under the personal supervision of Major Wolf built the house. Unknown to Major Wolf and its builders, this house would someday become the most famous house in the State of Arkansas. The downstairs rooms each measured eighteen feet square with a twelve-foot dogtrot area between the two rooms. The south upstairs room measured eighteen feet in width and thirty feet in length while the north room was eighteen feet square. A broad two-story veranda on the west side fronted the White River. Yellow pine was extensively used in its construction, and each log was hewn and dovetailed to fit perfectly. (To dovetail is to notch the log so the water runs out, not in.) Prior to building the house, Wolf constructed a blacksmith nearby to fashion the wrought iron hinges and rivets to hang the doors and window shutters. Now and then, a few square cut nails made in the blacksmith shop were used in the building. In direct contrast to the Wolf House, at that particular time in history most homes were simple log cabins with dirt floors.

Comfortable fireplaces were located on both floors and in every room. They were made of dried brick and were in use for more than fifty years before removing any cracked bricks.

The roof was made of clapboards, well pitched, and has defied destructive forces and elements of wind and storm. The floors and beds

were not the ordinary puncheon type in vogue at the time, but were made of sound hewn planks and lumber. the resourceful master of the house, after completing the building and heave furnishings, proceeded to make with his own hands the knives, wooden bowls, and many other small articles commonly used for the household.

The Wolf house has heard the debate of judicial council on Indian and slave protection. This old house has felt the charm of beautiful women whose lives echoed the simpler form of pioneer gaiety, as well as the more complex society of the Virginia reel and the cotillion dances. It has been a nursery for laughing children and an abode for the strong pioneer men. Among the most famous guest to visit here were Texas heroes, Davy Crockett and General Sam Houston, who was later to become the President of the Republic of Texas. Sam Houston's brother, John P. Houston, was Iazard County's first clerk, and served in that position until 1838. It was in the upper north room of the Wolf House.

THE WHITE RIVER

Since the beginning of civilization in this area, the White River has served as a super highway in the settlement of the Ozarks. The river being the fourth largest stream in the Unites States was a crucial player in the early settlement and development of Baxter County, Arkansas. It was along the bank of the White river and near the confluence of the Big North Fork of the White River that Jacob Wolf settled in 1820, and what was considered then as the jumping off place in America... where a civilized society ended and the entrance point to the wild frontier began. From that beginning point in time, the White River has been one of the most valuable natural resources in this area. It functioned as a vital artery in providing sustenance to the early

pioneers who settles in this region. Bringing to them many of the vital necessities of life, and also offered a means to export their produce to other market then considered far away. Since these early days of the early white man to this area, the White River has been the life-line for the economic prosperity that Baxter County continues to enjoy and experience to this day. From this early beginning, the 720-mile journey of the White River has undergone a number of transformations. Today, this cold water section of the Whit River is among the states major tourist destinations. In the past, it has produced the world's record trout. In the near future, expectations are that it will produce another world record luncker exceeding fifty pounds. People from distant points and time have commented on the beauty of the White Ricer since 1819 when explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft said of the stream, "It unites a current which possesses the bounty of crystal with a smooth and gentle flow, and the most imposing, diversified, and delightful scenery..." Our canoe often seemed as if suspended in the air, such is the remarkable transparency of the water." Today's visitors will not be in the same wilderness that Schoolcraft experienced, but there are still plenty of good scenery-towering bluffs, wildflowers, thickly forested hillsides, and lots of wildlife.

JACOB WOLF

Sometime around 1820 after being appointed Indian Agent for the territory, Major Jacob Wolf with his young wife, children, and a number of slaves arrived after a long and arduous journey from Kentucky. They settled near the Big North Fork of the Whit River to assume his duties. In the winter of 1827-1828 he along with slave and what Indian labor was available built a large two story (with dogtrots on both floors)

log house in what was Arkansas Territory. The large two story log structure stands today in the town of Norfolk having been restored at least three different times, most recently in 2002. The house is now among the inventory of Baxter County and is under the watchful eye of the Baxter Count Historical and Genealogical Society.

THE EARLY INDIAN DAYS - Chapter 3

The Osage were the dominant Native American tribe of the Ozark plateau when the Europeans first explored the interior region of the Ozarks. In 1680, there were a reported 17 Osage villages in the Ozarks. The tribe without debate is recognized in the annals of American Indian History as on of the most warlike Indian tribes in North America.

The Osage built their villages around a complex design based upon their religious beliefs. Dwellings were made of wooden poles, which formed a circle or an oblong structure covered with hides. A ventilation hole was at the apex of the dwelling to allow the campfire smoke to leave. The Osage were striking in appearance and practiced selective breeding so only the physically fit survived. Most of the warriors were tall with few being less than 6 feet in height. They plucked their eyebrows, shaved their heads, and often went naked. They often tattooed their bodies and painted them with brilliant colors. Men wore only a simple breechcloth and leggings while the women wrapped a piece of deerskin around their waist.

The Osage were obsessed with bathing almost daily and considered other Native American tribes and the white settlers as filthy. The Osage became even greater warriors once they acquired horses and firearms. The established important trails across the Ozarks that later became

major travel routes that eventually marked many of our modern day highways. Within the boundaries of the early Osage Territory lay the first dominant control to the lands of present day Baxter County, Arkansas. By 1800, the Osage Territory was that great body of land that embraced the Ozark Plateau that extended from the Missouri River on the north to the Arkansas River on the south, and from the Mississippi river on the east to the western prairies. However, even after this time their hunting and raiding trips often exceeded those limits. Before the Osage signed away the region in 1808, the Cherokee, along with smaller numbers of Delaware and Shawnee, had begun to settle the Ozarks. The Cherokees in 1808 then retained title to the lands until 1828, when forced to exchange their Arkansas lands for 7 million acres of new land in the Indian Territory.

Although the Osage gave up their claims to this land, they would often make hunting voyages into their old domain.

Their primary avoidance to unsanctioned recovery of their earlier territory came from the migrant Indians (Kickapoo's, Cherokees, Piankashaw's, Shawnees, Wea's, Peoria's, and Delaware's) who had exchanged their lands east of the Mississippi for a home in the former land of the Osages. Many clashes developed between the mighty Osage and the Cherokees. The Cherokees most of the time being victorious since they were armed with rifles, and whereas the Osages were armed with bows and arrows. However, the Cherokees would become the big losers in the overall fighting. They had farms and houses, which the Osage burned or ruined, and the Cherokees had horses and cattle that the Osage stole. The Osage had nothing to begin with and if they survived, they had more after the battle was finished.

THE CHEROKEES-Chapter 3

The Keetoowah [Western Cherokee or Old Settlers] had their origin with a small group of pro-French Cherokee that relocated to northern Arkansas and southeastern Missouri after the French defeat the British in 1763. The Spanish welcomed the Cherokee and granted them land. Toward the end of the American Revolution in 1782, a group of pro-British Cherokee joined the Keetoowah.

Following the Treaty of Hopewell in 1785, a number of the Cherokee were unhappy with the terms of the treaty descended the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers to re-establish their villages along the St. Francis River and later moved to the White River Valley. With the migration of the Chickamauga (1794-99), the Ketoowah became formidable and a threat to the Osage who originally claimed the territory. Cherokee and Osage warfare was common in 1803 when the United States gained control of the area through the Louisiana Purchase. With continued migration, the Western Cherokee steadily gained at the expend of the Osage, and by 1808 over 2,000 Cherokee had established themselves in northern Arkansas. Not too long after the Louisiana Purchase had been accomplished in 1803, there were a reported five hundred families, which included Cherokees, Delaware's, Shawnees, Miami's, and Peoria's living on the southeastern borderlands of the Ozarks. In time, more and more small bands of Cherokees continued to cross the Mississippi to join their Arkansas relatives. A large concentration of Cherokee settlements lay along the White River from the Missouri-Arkansas state line to the vicinity of Batesville. Nevertheless, the Cherokees like the Osage Indians seldom limited their hunting range to their assigned territory.

The Turkey Town Treaty of 1817 was the first formal recognition of the Western Cherokee by the United State. Under its terms, 4,000 Cherokee ceded their lands in Tennessee in exchange for a reservation with the Western Cherokee in Northwest Arkansas. With this new immigration during 1818-1819, the number of Western Cherokee swelled to over 6,000. However, the Osage continue to object to the Cherokee presence, and the Americans were forced to build Fort Smith (1817) and Fort Gibson (1824) to maintain peace. White settlers living in Arkansas Territory soon began demanding the removal of the Cherokee and Osage. The Cherokee continue until 06 may 1828 to hold and maintain their tract of land, which began on White river near Norfork and extended to the Arkansas River about ten miles above For Smith. They were then forced to exchange their entire Arkansas claim for a portion of seven million acres of choice land north of the Arkansas River in Indian Territory [present day Oklahoma] that had been set aside for all Cherokee Indians, including the Cherokees east of the Mississippi.

The Cherokees, like other Indians, had no concept of private ownership to the land. Individuals did not hold the land, but it belonged to the tribe as a whole. Those Western Cherokees who were living adjacent to the Arkansas river soon moved within a year after constant harassment by white settlers, but the Cherokees who lived along the White River seemed to be in no hurry to leave their settlements. As late as 1837-1838, a number of Indians continued to remain and live along the White River.

THE FIRST SETTLERS-Chapter 4

John Lafferty left his home in Tennessee to settle his family in a log cabin on a rise above the west bank of the White River in what today is a part of Stone County. Lafferty, the first recorded white settler in

the Arkansas Ozarks, was a veteran of the American Revolution, and he was a professional keelboat operator who had explored the upper White River as early as 1802, a year prior to the Louisiana Purchase. In late 1810, Lafferty and his son-in-law Charles Kelly permanently relocated their families in the wilderness, which was teeming with bear, deer, and panthers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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