DEWITT EAST



HISTORICAL SQUARE OF DEWITT ARKANSAS

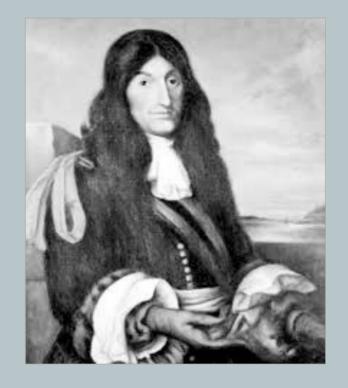
Delia Barrett & Shelby Anderson

CHAPTER 1

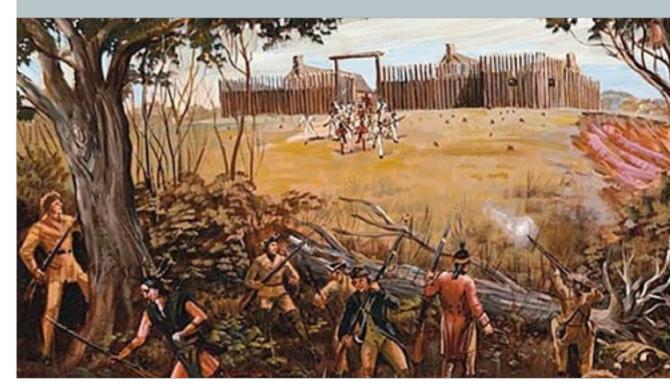
Sec. Streets

1813: THE DAWN OF SOMETHING NEW

DeWitt did not just pop up out of nowhere. Just about 130 years before a man named Henry de Tonti, a French officer, established a trading post on the banks of the lower Arkansas River. Arkansas Post was the first French establishment west of the Mississippi. The settlement, which consisted of six men, was supported and welcomed by the Quapaws. Arkansas Post was the territorial capital of Arkansas until 1821, when it was moved to Little Rock. It still remained as the Arkansas County Seat, however. St Charles and Old Auburn, two towns closer to the heart of the county, wished to move the County Seat. A voting was called, and the two towns won the battle. The Arkansas County Seat was to be moved to a new town. After the site was selected, Colonel Charles W. Belknap and Leroy







Montgomery, and county surveyor Adam McCool gathered to create a name. The three men argued, but eventually decided to pick a name by writing a name on a piece of paper and placing it in a hat. Adam McCool admired Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York, and thus had inspiration for the new town. The name drawn from the hat was DeWitt. Colonel Belknap built a log courthouse south of the Square, and once a new brick courthouse was completed in 1862, DeWitt finally became a real town.

CHAPTER 2

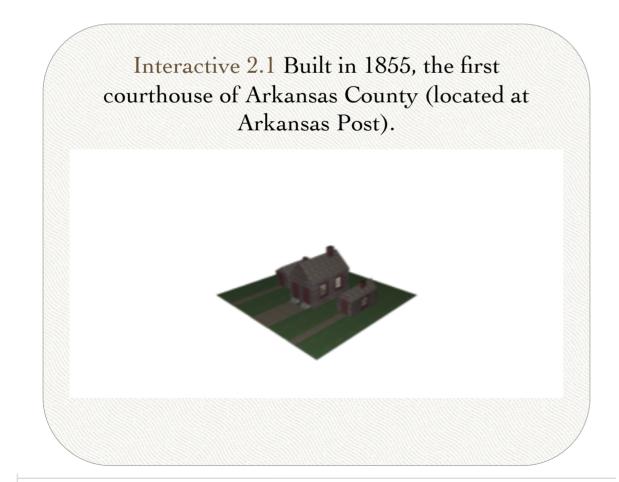
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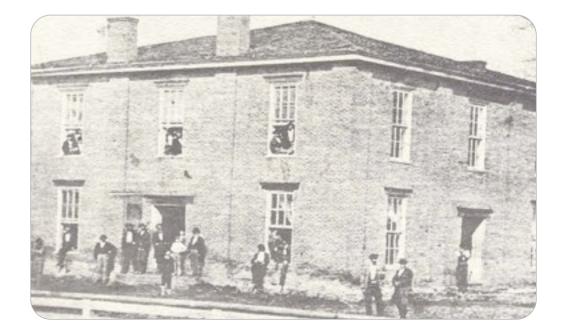
VARIOUS COURTHOUSES

In the summer of 1855, DeWitt got its first county courthouse. It was a log structure and was located on what is now south Main Street. It had on large room where the court sessions were held, and two smaller rooms to the side. One of the rooms was used to keep the county and circuit clerks records. The other room was used for a jail. The last term of county court was held on July 17, 1855 at Arkansas Post.



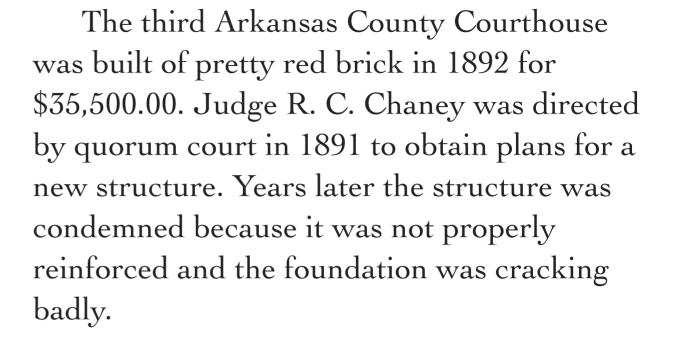
DeWitt's population started growing rapidly. Soon, the county decided that the first courthouse was becoming to small, and wanted to build a new courthouse that would be located on the Court Square.

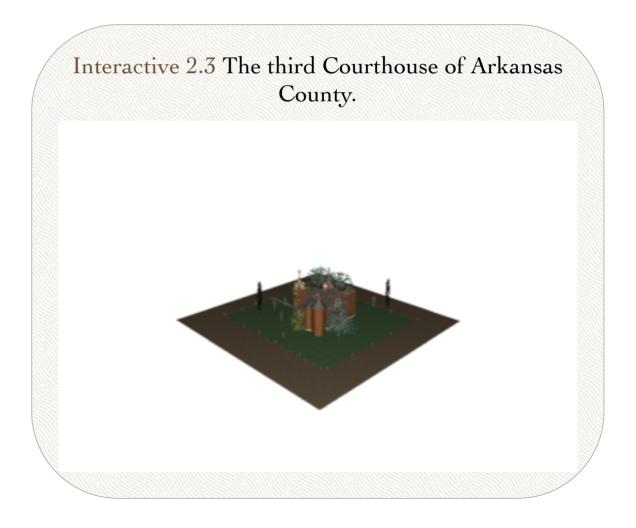
On May 5, 1858, an order was issued in the Arkansas County Courts for the building of the Second County Court House in DeWitt. This was only 3 years after the small log building of the First Court house had been constructed. Bids were advertised for contractors to build the new structure in

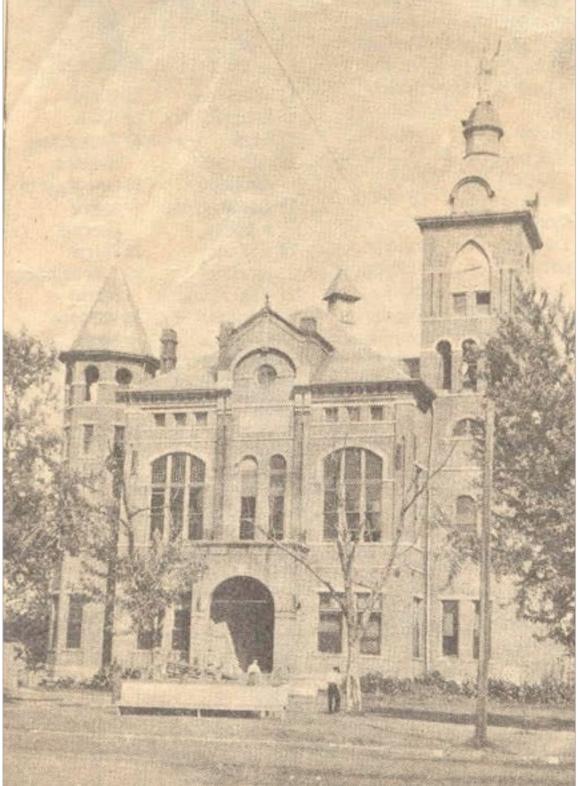


DeWitt. The contract was awarded to David Quertermous and the building was finished by July 1861, at a cost of \$1,619.89. It was a square brick structure and was considered a splendid building for that day.

Interactive 2.2 The second Courthouse of Arkansas County.







After much deliberation and debate, money was set aside for a new courthouse to be built in DeWitt. Construction began in 1931 and was completed in 1933. The 4th and current courthouse Is the Arkansas County Southern District Courthouse, located on 101 Court Square, DeWitt, Arkansas. It is still standing today. (Pictured on chapter cover.)



The fourth and current Courthouse.

The third Courthouse.

CHAPTER 3 DILLDINGS OF THE SQUARE

Dragon Garden

Built about 1915 with a tall parapet that makes it almost as tall as the two- story building to its west. This building and the identical double-storefront building at 100 Court Square feature simple recessed panels and decorative tie-rods. 106 Court Square was a hardware store in its very early years, and then it was Walt "Fibber" McGee's Dime Store (called the Ben Franklin Store) beginning in 1938.

108-110-112 Court Square

108-110-112 Court Square was constructed about 1915. This building features paired second-story windows, brick corbelling at the cornice, transom windows, and a central stairway between the storefronts. By the early 1930s, Schallhorn Hardware occupied this building. William Frederick Schallhorn, Sr., moved to DeWitt from Indiana to work as a railroad agent. He opened up a hard- ware store on the square to sell products from Sears that came in on the railroad. Schallhorn Hardware was called "one of DeWitt's oldest and most reliable establishments." W. F. Schallhorn was also president of DeWitt Bank & Trust, mayor of DeWitt for 10-12 years, and planted the sycamore trees by the old Methodist Church. In August 1938, Schallhorn Hardware moved to the south side of the square next to the Merritt Building at 304 Court Square. All that remains of the old Schallhorn building is an empty lot surrounded by a fence. W. F. Schallhorn, Sr., was John H. Schallhorn's grandfather. John was elected mayor of

DeWitt in 1964 at the age of 24 and remained in office until 1990. After Schallhorn's moved out of this building, it was home to P. E. Martin's Grocery, followed by Laron Young's Grocery. In 1956, Dr. John Hestir and Dr. Nolan Beverly established a medical office downstairs, and Dr. Shelby A. Woodiel opened a dental office upstairs in 1957. Dr. Woodiel took over Dr. E. A. Morris's dental practice, which had been located upstairs in this building for many years. In 1963 Dr. Hestir and Dr. Woodiel moved to a new clinic at 220 W. Gibson in DeWitt.

Kelly's on the Square

Built circa 1905 114 Court Square is the second oldest building in the district, after Leibrock's. It was constructed to house Home Bank, which went under in 1928, and then became DeWitt Bank & Trust. The bank remained here until its new building next door was completed in 1954. Later in 1954, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Scougale moved their jewelry store into this building. It was Scougale's Jewelers until 1962, when Charles "Chuck" Morton purchased the business. It later became DeWitt



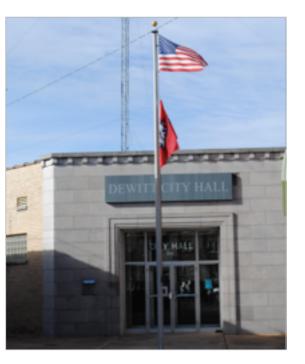
Florist. Currently, there are plans to restore this building and turn it into a restaurant/bar. This is probably the most elaborate commercial building in the district with triangular pediments

over the second story windows, medallions in the upper façade, a decorative parapet capped with tile, and brick quoins at the corners.

City Hall

There was a small one-story building on this northwest corner lot by 1933. A man by the name of W. W. "Red" or "Windy" Smith

moved that building out to the south side of town near the cemetery to make way for the current structure. The current building was con- structed about 1954 as a new



location for DeWitt Bank & Trust. It features buff brick side walls and a chamfered corner entrance faced in cut stone with dentils at the cornice. The bank re- mained here until 1977, and the building was purchased in 1979 to serve as City Hall.

Mojo's

Lizzie's was built in 1922, as you can see from the cast concrete panel in the upper façade. This building exhibits some nice brickwork with its inset rectangles of red brick with cast concrete squares at each corner. The building was constructed to house Burd's Drug Store, and you can still see the name "Burd's" written in tile below the plate glass windows. Then Coker– Hampton Drug Store moved to DeWitt from Stuttgart (the original Coker–Hampton remains in Stuttgart) and purchased the old

Burd's Drug Building. You can still see the name "Hampton" written in tile by the

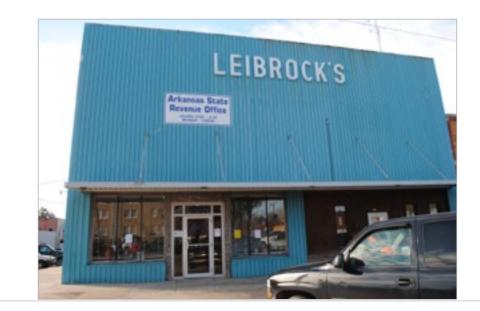


front door. At an unknown date, Hampton Drug bought the Domino Parlor, which at that time was next door in 136 Court Square, and the two businesses switched places — Hampton Drug moved to 136 Court Square, and the Domino Parlor moved to 138 Court Square (where many people remember it being located). It is now under new management and has been named Mojo's.

The Leibrock Building-Revenue Office

The Leibrock Building is the oldest building in the district with a construction date of about 1904. Although the original brick façade is obscured by blue metal siding, the building originally had second story windows with decorative hood molding, brick corbelling at the cornice, and three symmetrically-placed roofline projections. In

1913, the build- ing housed a general store with a telephone office on the second floor. By 1919, it was a barber and grocery. Doctor's offices have historically been located upstairs, beginning with Dr. Charles William "Will" Rasco, whose family moved to DeWitt in 1896. Dr. Rasco went to medical school in Memphis and returned in 1906 to practice in DeWitt. His brother, Senator Roy Daniel Rasco, who was a lawyer by profession, also had an office upstairs for a time. Will Rasco's son, C. W., Jr., also had an office here. Leibrock's was a sporting goods store.

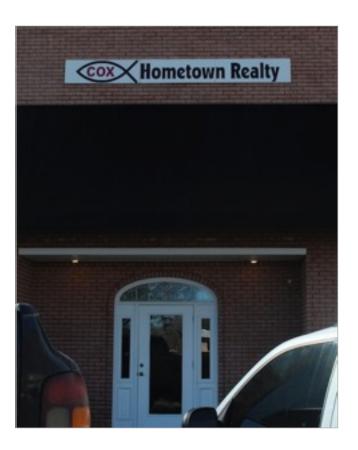


Behind Leibrock's to the west—There was a hotel behind the Leibrock Building for many years. By 1913, it was the Arlington Hotel, and then in 1919, it was the Parks (or Sparks) Hotel (post- card below), followed by the Hampton, and it finally burned when it was called the Rice Hotel. It had a large dining room and many people remember the building's mismatched additions.

Cox Hometown Reality

This is a new building (or at least a new front façade), however this location had some important occupants. There were two building storefronts here before Berry Law Firm & Title Co. constructed the current building. About 1915 a two-story building was constructed on the south side of this space to house Burnett Drug Store. It was operated by Gordon Burnett's father, Shelby G. Burnett. Shelby Burnett's aunt lived upstairs. When Burnett Drug closed in 1932, Merle Hornbeck moved the DeWitt Domino Parlor into the left side of the current building. As I said earlier, the Domino Parlor switched places and eventually ended up at 138 Court Square (where Mojo's is now). About 1925, another two-story building was constructed on the north side of this lot.

Gordon Burnett's uncle, B. Hudson, had a barber shop here in the 1930s and 1940s, and then Red Adams had a barber shop here. Will Rasco's other son, Dr. James Burnett Rasco, Sr., was a dentist and



moved into the space above B. Hudson's Barber Shop in 1938. The Berry family purchased it to become part of the law office, and created the current façade across both buildings.

Gallery G

Built in 1910 to house the First National Bank of DeWitt, it didn't officially open until 1912. The bank remodeled the building two times-once in 1923 and again in 1940. A telephone exchange office was located upstairs, and for a time in the 1930s, the post office was located in the rear portion of this building. First National Bank survived the Great Depression, buying up other Arkansas County banks when they failed. At one time, it was said that DeWitt's banks had more money in them than in the banks of any other city of its size in the state.

Gallery G is located in the building today. Ruth Garot leased the old First National building in 1964 and established Gallery G Antiques and Gifts. In 1997, her daughter Nancy, purchased the building from the bank and added estate jewelry to the inventory. In 1999, the upstairs (formerly George Pike's Law Office) was remodeled adding more floor space for antique furniture. The store remains in the family to this day. (Chapter cover.)

New Leaf

Built about 1925 and housed H. B. Dudley Hardware one can still see the Dudley name in the tile by the front door. Later it became the Busy Department Store. The outside stairs from the alley went up to a lawyer's office. Today 210 Court Square is occupied by New Leaf. New Leaf is the most popular florist in town.



located in this building and had an alley entrance. Mr. Patrick's Shooting Gallery was temporarily located in the north-south part of the alley. Today the building is known as Funcessories Too- the sister store to Funcessories. It sell clothes, purses, decorations, and the owner can monogram ANYTHING.

Fun

Accessories

Constructed about 1940, it replaced a twostory building that housed a furniture store on this site for



many years. Hef Wells's Liquor Store was

Tommy's Rexall Drugs

The Rexall Drugs Building was constructed about 1949 to fill the empty space left in the block after the New Theater burned. As far back as 1933, the theater was located about where the east (left) half of Rexall Drugs is now. After the fire, the New Theater relocated circa 1940 to a building off the alley at the southwest corner of the square. Just to the west (or right) of the theater was a little restaurant stand known as the Burger Tent. It was run by Barney Burnett and sold hamburgers, hotdogs, pie, and sodas. After the current building was constructed in 1949, it housed Western Auto, Delian's Jewelry Store, and Dollar General before becoming home to Tommy's Rexall Drug Co. in August 1999. The Rexall had operated next door at 216 Court Square from

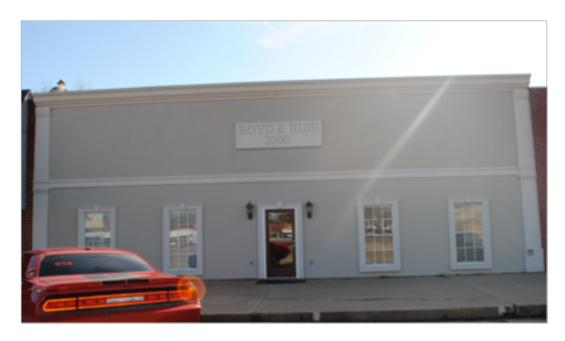
1951 until 1999.



Boyd&Buie Law Firm

The current building at 308 Court Square was totally rebuilt in 2000. Before that, there

were two buildings in this space — one was a two-story building and the other a one- story building, both dating to about 1910. The twostory building was on the east side (left) and housed Joe Stephens Hardware in the early 1900s. Tony Mory's Bakery was located somewhere along these storefronts.



Big Time Rentals

The current building was constructed about 1925, but this block has changed a lot since that time. From that time until at least 1943, there was a two-story building to the south of this one, followed by a three-story building, and then a small, one-story building on the corner lot. They are all gone now. But Harry Lipman Dry Goods was in the northern storefront (left) of this building, and Snarr Drug Store was in the right hand

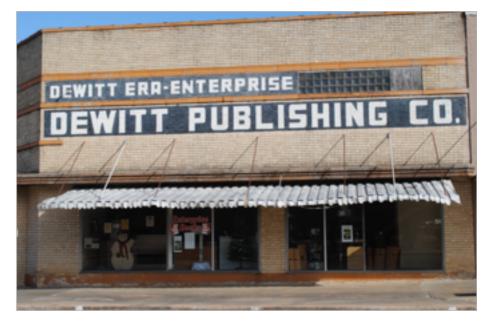


portion. In the next building over was Moncrief Grocery and then the Blue Front Café moved into that building. Underwood Dime Store was on the corner.

DeWitt Publishing Company

From at least 1913 until the early 1950s, this corner was occupied by a two- story building owned by Maggie Goodwin. She had a grocery on the first floor and she lived upstairs. Then this building was constructed in the early 1950s to house a short-lived farm

co-op business. When it went out in 1954, this became Harold



Young's

Department Store. Young's Dept. Store really defined the 1950s and 60s in DeWitt. The store carried a large selection of goods, from toys to clothes to furniture and appliances. There was a service station in the back of the building and a meat market to take your animals for butchering. Most people remember riding the mechanical pony in Young's as a child. DeWitt Publishing Company and the DeWitt Era-Enterprise moved into this building in 1981 after Young's closed. The DeWitt New Era was founded in 1882 by Charles H. Spiller, and was appropriately named because it broke from the old era of short-lived newspapers in DeWitt (17 short-lived papers in all). The DeWitt Enterprise was founded in 1916, and in 1929, it absorbed the DeWitt New Era to become the DeWitt Era- Enterprise. The paper continues today, claiming to have never missed an issue in 128 years (since the 1882 founding of the New Era).

Jason's Consignment and Caring&Sharing Pantry

This entire block, including 410 and 400 Court Square, was occupied by L. A. Black Hardware. Lester Asher Black was involved in a



number of businesses, including hard- ware, rice and seed, farm implements and machinery, and he grew cotton, rice, and livestock. In 1912 he was one of the founding shareholders in the First National Bank of DeWitt, and by 1915, he was the bank president, a position he held until his death in 1945. He also founded Blue Seal Petroleum in 1929. L. A. Black Hardware's original buildings burned in the late 1920s, but Mr. Black reconstructed this block, as you can see by looking at the concrete panel reading "L. A. Black 1938." There was also a blacksmith shop behind Black's to the east run by Mr. Earl. After the fire, Mr. Black moved his operations to the corner where Fault Line is now. So after these buildings were rebuilt in 1938, Bill Lorrick's Dry Goods occupied this storefront at 410 Court Square. In the 1950s, this was Ed McKay's Grocery and meat market.

McGahhey Hardware

Built circa 1918 and housed the DeWitt Pharmacy, owned by Mr. Booker Latimer, from that time until 1945. Mr. Latimer also had the town's first liquor store in this building. Meanwhile, Clifton McGahhey ("McGah-ha") had spent several years in the hardware business, first at Stephens Hardware and then with L. A. Black Hardware. Then on March 15, 1946, Clifton McGahhey and his nephew, Floyd, who had just returned from the Army, opened McGahhey Hardware Store. Clifton had actually purchased the building from Doc

Lumsden, who briefly owned the building, as there had always been doctor's and dentist's offices upstairs. After it

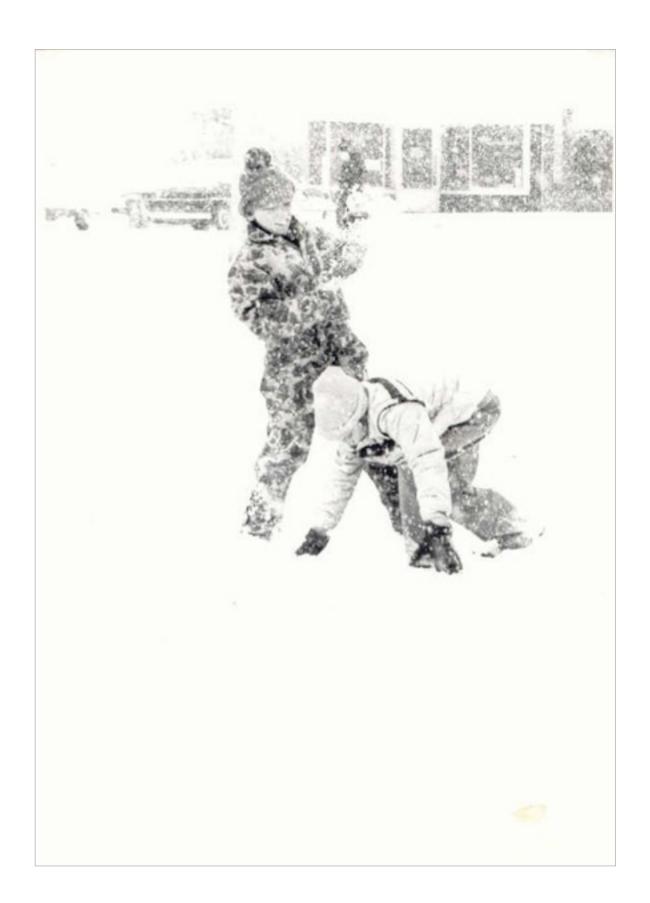


became McGahhey Hardware, Mr. Eason

rented out hotel rooms upstairs and had a taxi service as well. As you can see, McGahhey Hardware is still open today. It's operated by Floyd's son, Gary McGahhey.



Throughout the years, DeWitt has been a hubbub of activity on the Courthouse Square. In the 50s, nights were spent cruising around the square, non adherent to the law and sometimes even on top of the sidewalk. Music would be blasting, sodas were bought, and not to mention the post-game shenanigans were just some of the many activities the Square brought. Some even say that a visit home is not complete without a "drag" around the square. To commemorate this activity, it is still practiced today. The elderly and young alike will drive low and slow on these special nights. High School students that attended All Region and succeeded drove around the square in the school bus after a long day of travel, in celebration. Being the center of DeWitt as a community, the square has brought many together in a bubble of happiness and fellowship.



Since City Hall has switched locations, the square has not been as bubbly as it once was. DeWitt High School students are working on restoring the square to its once glorious days. Buildings are in the process of being reestablished, holidays are being lit-up around the courthouse, and, sometimes students try to linger after a game in order to celebrate the "big win."







CHAPTER 5

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

On December 14th, 2013, DeWitt Square celebrated 200 years of a thriving and populated community. The Bicentennial was hosted at the DeWitt Courthouse, with live music, a play, a showing of a documentary, and various booths of historic paraphernalia. The local high school East Lab provided a QR Tour and printed QR codes(located on pages 8-18) to post on all the buildings around the square. The QR codes allowed for people to read and take knowledge of the historic businesses once located in each building. The Bicentennial also hosted a costume contest, with many showing up in various era clothing. (See picture on the right) A time capsule was also buried on the Court Square grounds containing 200 years of the past history of Arkansas County. With friendly faces and plates of cake, all who attended were most likely satisfied if not enjoying such an occasion.





Winners of the Bicentennial Costume Contest shown above.

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RESOURCES

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Image of Arkansas Post in Battle,

http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/testing/American Latino Heritage/Arkansas Post National Memorial.html Various authors. *Arkansas County Historical Review: Bicentennial Edition*. DeWitt: Courtesy of the Arkansas County Elected Officials, Arkansas County Records Preservations Committee, and Arkansas County Bicentennial Committee. 2013. Print.

A SPECIAL THANKS

To the lovely team of ladies who made all of this possible. This whole project would not have been at all possible without the doings and hard work of these ladies.

Row 1 (right to left): Kristen Bradley, Kahlan Philip, Kourtney Hill

Row2 (right to left): Delia Barrett, Shelby Anderson, Erica Amyx, Emily Tripplet, Rylee Beaty

