

A Brief History of South Fayetteville – by J. B. Hogan

The area of town known as South Fayetteville has a long and interesting history. Most of us know South Fayetteville as the poor side of town, which it has been for nearly all of our history.

This is the working class section of Fayetteville, with small, older homes, little corner groceries and neighborhood schools (all of the latter two now nearly defunct). But it wasn't always where the less affluent citizens of Fayetteville lived – far from it.

Much of South Fayetteville, in fact, belonged to one man: arguably the most famous person to ever live here: the second Governor of the State of Arkansas, Archibald Yell.

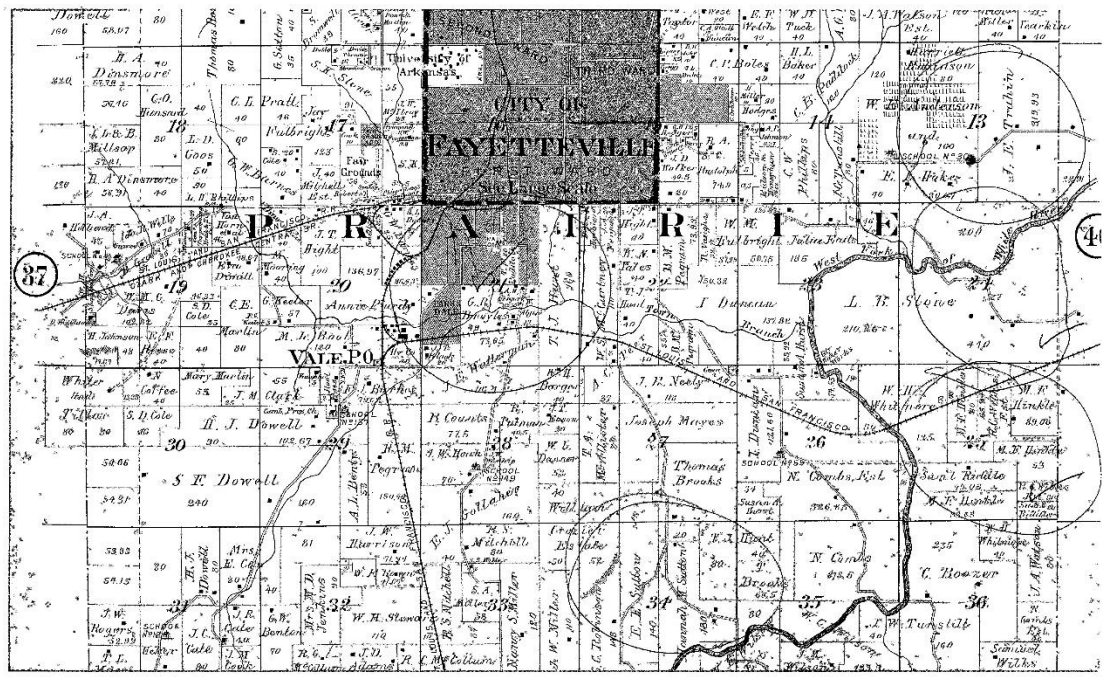
Archibald Yell isn't just a bypass through the middle of town, he was a living, breathing politician, lawyer and military hero. Yell gained notoriety and the lasting appreciation of Andrew Jackson, Old Hickory, through his military exploits in the War of 1812 and other conflicts in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was President Jackson who gave Yell his first positions in the Arkansas Territory and Yell was also close friends with President James K. Polk, another favorite of Andrew Jackson.

After starting in Little Rock in late 1831, by 1834 Yell had moved to Fayetteville – early enough to qualify him as a founding father if not a first settler of our town. Yell was smart with his income and bought up lots of land around town, eventually owning some 900 acres of prime real estate. 500-600 of those acres were in what is now known as South Fayetteville.

The northeast corner of Yell's property began at the corner of 7th Street and S. College Avenue (where a monument stands today across from Jefferson School):



Yell's land then continued south to below 15th Street, west to around Hill or Buchanan Avenue (where Fayetteville High School is located), then north to where 7th street would extend and back east to the starting point across the street from Jefferson School.



****Note that all the sections circled indicate where Yell owned property in Fayetteville.**

The section circled just below the City of Fayetteville label is the property in what we now call South Fayetteville that belonged to Yell.**

Included in Yell's property was his lovely old home, Waxhaws (named after the area where President Andrew Jackson had been born), which sat on the hill just northeast of today's Senior Center on S. College Avenue. Waxhaws was torn down between September 1962 and March 1963. Flat stone steps leading up to where the house stood can still be seen today.



Waxhaws – Archibald Yell's Home in South Fayetteville

Yell's law office was saved and is now on the grounds of Headquarters House, home of the Washington County Historical Society on E. Dickson St.



Archibald Yell Law Office

Archibald Yell resigned his position as U. S. Senator in 1847 to enlist as a private (he was quickly elevated to the rank of Colonel) in the War against Mexico. He died valiantly, if impulsively, at the Battle of Buena Vista that same year.

He was first buried near the Mexican battlefield but was later re-interred at Waxhaws. When the Masons, of which he was a local leader (even providing the land for their first lodge in Arkansas here in Fayetteville), bought what would become Evergreen Cemetery, Yell was re-interred there, marking that his third and final burial.

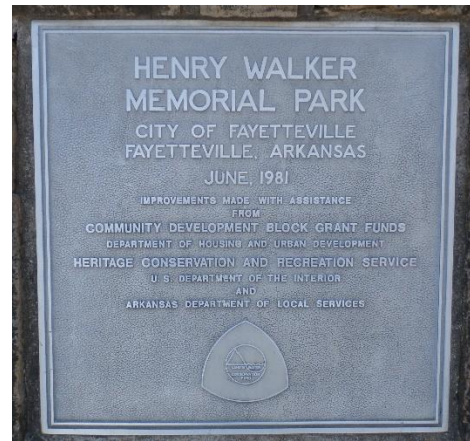


Archibald Yell Monument in Evergreen Cemetery

As the years passed after Yell's death, south Fayetteville – perhaps because of its location below the Square and the flatter land where our wealthier residents lived in such places as the Washington-Willow Historic District – became home to the less affluent in town. But that didn't mean it didn't have a character and personality of its own.

South and west of Waxhaws, beyond the current Senior Center is one of Fayetteville's main city parks – Walker Park. Given to the city by Mrs. Fannie Walker, widow of Henry

Walker, and their son Bryan Walker, the park was dedicated Thursday, June 1, 1961 with University of Arkansas football coach Frank Broyles giving the main speech.



Today Walker Park has outgrown its original three youth baseball fields to include soccer fields, basketball courts, volleyball, tennis courts, and hiking/biking/jogging trails. One highlight of Walker Park is a large mural depicting the history of South Fayetteville.



Historical Mural in Walker Park

One of the main things that South Fayetteville has always been is a neighborhood. Even a place where poorer families, both black and white, commingled long before efforts were made to alleviate the strict segregation that existed in the century after the end of the civil war and slavery.

Besides wonderful little homes and neighborhood grocery stores that used to dot the area, South Fayetteville is also home to the National Cemetery, built after the civil war as a resting place for the Union dead who fought and died in this area.



National Cemetery

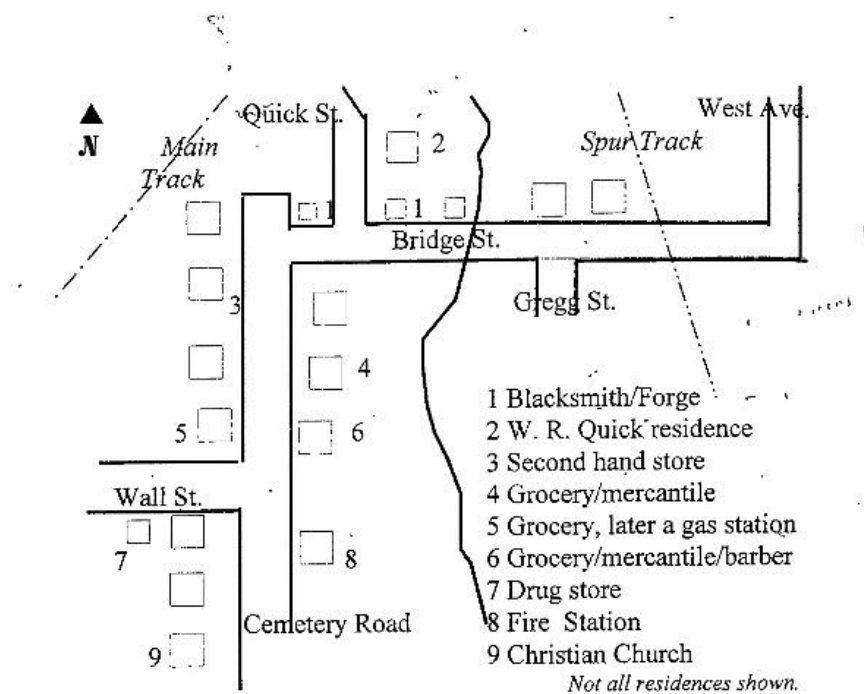
Just south of the National Cemetery is Oaks Cemetery, our traditionally African-American cemetery, founded in 1867. Oaks Cemetery has just recently been placed on the Arkansas Register of Historic Places and efforts are underway to give it the attention it has deserved over these many years when the caretakers had little or no resources to maintain this significant and historic location.



Oaks Cemetery – view from western (newer) area

Just north of the National Cemetery, at the corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard (formerly 6th Street) and Government Avenue was a small neighborhood once known as

Quicktown. The neighborhood got its name from James W. Quick and William R. Quick, a father and son and their families, who lived in the area and owned businesses there.



QUICKTOWN

Fayetteville Arkansas Circa 1908

Not to scale



"QUICKTOWN: A RELIC OF EARLY FAYETTEVILLE"

DONALD CAMPBELL

FLASHBACK, Vol. 56, No. 4, Autumn 2006

Currently, there are plans to put a Walmart Neighborhood Market, with gas station, on the northwest corner of Government and MLK. This will basically absorb that portion of old Quicktown and will have an undeniable impact on the neighborhood.

Leapfrogging back to the eastern-most portion of South Fayetteville, is the neighborhood historically associated with South Fayetteville – the area in and around Jefferson School. Jefferson School, reflecting the Art Deco style of the 1930s when it was built, sits at the southeast corner of S. College Avenue and MLK Boulevard (formerly 6th Street).

The children who were educated in Jefferson belonged to the working poor families of the area – the part of town basically bounded by about Wood Avenue on the east, S. School on the west, by 15th Street on the south and by either South, Rock or Huntsville Road on the north – the boundaries varying and dependent upon particular eras in Fayetteville history.



Jefferson School

In this neighborhood of old Craftsman and rock homes (now mingling with newer row homes), you could usually find little mom and pop stores, garages, and such within a few blocks of each other. Johnson's Store (shown below), on the northwest corner of (then) 6th and S. College across from Jefferson School being a classic example.



At the far southwest part of South Fayetteville is Fayette Junction, which many years ago operated as a small railroad switchyard where the main line of the Frisco Railway was intersected by the Fayetteville and Little Rock R.R. line, known as the St. Paul Branch, which ran east from Fayetteville into the timber country in far Madison County. Remnants of the junction still exist at the corner of Cato Springs and Vale Avenue, although the spur line to St. Paul has been long gone (from the website FayettevilleHistory.com created and maintained by Charlie Alison).



Fayette Junction

Back on South School Avenue, South Fayetteville history can be traced by keying on certain business and areas as the road heads north towards the Archibald Yell Bypass and the new Fayetteville Public Library beyond.

Marvin's IGA, for example, has been in the Southgate Shopping Center on the southeast corner of 15th Street and S. School Avenue since the mid-1960s. It originally occupied the building on the western edge of the center where Mountain Man Supplies & Pawn is today and Fayetteville's first large Walmart occupied the property where Marvin's is currently located. Walmart abandoned the area in the 1980s and Marvin's took over the large, vacated building.



Further north, on the east side of the curve where S. School winds to the northwest before heading due north to the Yell Bypass, is City Lumber. Sitting down below the roadside, City Lumber, which has been at this location since the early 1970s, was once home to the Fayetteville Roller Rink. From the 1930s until the early to mid-1960s, the roller rink provided generations of locals many hours of entertainment.



Beyond City Lumber are a series of businesses on each side of S. School. Various businesses have come and gone along this strip over the years. The Parrish Garage, on the west side of South School, for example, was a Gulf Service Station in the 1950s. Just north of it beyond the new Frisco Trail, was Walker's Drive-in and then later the Nickell's Dari-Castle. Both sides of the street have similar histories, with numerous homes and businesses occupying the same space at different times in our history.



Further up South School, northwest of the intersection with MLK Boulevard, was the Mill District. It was once home to the Farmer's Co-op building and the Campbell Soup Mill building. In recent years, the buildings that remained were renovated and others added to make the new Mill District a decidedly more modern and utilitarian area.



Just as South School briefly blends into the Archibald Yell Bypass, on the west side of the road and on the corner at Prairie Street is the Areco building. Years ago this was Campbell's Grocery, one of several stores owned by this enterprising family whose grocery stores dotted the town for decades.



Taking the jog off Archibald Yell and on up the hill on South School, the remains of the second iteration of our City Hospital, now out of business, can be seen directly north of South Street. The original City Hospital, a beautiful, white columned structure on land donated by Stephen K. and Amanda Stone, was built in 1911 and served the city for nearly half a century.



The last building in the north end of South Fayetteville is the award-winning Fayetteville Public Library (FPL), an eye-pleasing example of twenty-first century modern style architecture. FPL has a long and important history in Fayetteville and has been in other locations prior to this newest and most appealing one. In the 1950s, the library was on the second floor of the Wolf Building (just up Mountain Street from where it is today). The Wolf Building is also known as the City of Fayetteville Administration Building. Prior to the move into the new library, it was located in the Fulbright Building on East Dickson Street.



Fayetteville Public Library

Today, for the purposes of our work with Main Street Fayetteville, the South Fayetteville area encompasses the following area: to the north the boundary reaches and includes the Fayetteville Public Library at the corner of W. Mountain and S. School; to the south and southwest Fayette Junction; to the east Morningside Drive; and to the west Cato Springs Road and the I-49 Bypass.

The hope is that with cooperation and support of the city and the businesses and citizens, specifically those in South Fayetteville, the area can be revitalized to the benefit of everyone in our community.

Primary Sources:

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"Quicktown: A Relic of Early Fayetteville," Denele Pitts Campbell, *Flashback*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Autumn 2006, pp. 127-136.

On the Avenue, Anthony J. Wappel, Lost Creek Press, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 2014 (forthcoming).

For Further South Fayetteville Reading

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http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/strategic_planning/documents/city_plan_2025/City_Plan_2025_Appendix_B_-_Historic_Structures.pdf

Fayetteville, Arkansas, Late 1960s, family film, online link at:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/111836098987937/330198340485044/>

Extra listing for Quicktown (Government Avenue and MLK Blvd.):

“Quicktown: A Relic of Early Fayetteville,” Denele Pitts Campbell, *Flashback*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Autumn 2006, pp. 127-136.

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Websites: www.fayettevillehistory.com(Charlie Alison); www.historicwashingtoncounty.org (A.D. Poole)