



Boone County Heritage Museum

The Batavia community

BY SHELLY DIRST AND SAMMIE ROSE

PART 1 OF 2

By JEFF MIDDLETON
bchm@windstream.net

Editors' Note: Much of the information for this article was gained through Sammie Rose's August 6, 1996 interview with Audrey (Raynor) Fields. Other sources are articles by the late Lena Hunt and Emma Fields in the "Harrison Daily Times", also information from Earlene Allen and back issues of the Boone County Historian. All old photos are courtesy of Audrey Fields, some re-photographed and enlarged by R. Don Repenning.

History of Batavia

The town of Batavia, in Boone County, was named in 1883 by a surveyor from Batavia, N. Y. This man, Roswell Emerson Underwood, had come west and lived in Eureka Springs a year before purchasing land in 1881 on the Old Stagecoach Road by old Carrollton from George Benham. This 160 acre farm was the beginning of Batavia, Arkansas. President Chester A. Arthur allowed Underwood to name the area and become the first postmaster. Underwood served in that capacity until his death some twenty years later, at the age of eighty-seven, except for one term served by Matthew A. Campbell beginning in 1887.

During its heyday, Batavia grew to a size that accommodated several stores, a sawmill, a hotel, a canning factory, a blacksmith shop and barber shop as well as a school and several churches. As with many small towns which sprung up and thrived during the early part of this century, it was the railroad, that made such commerce possible.

In 1900, the Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad came to Batavia. It ran freight mostly but also ran a small passenger train of one car. This ran twice a day. Emma Fields, whose father, John Edmund Cook worked on this railroad as an inspector, said, "I can still hear in my memory the sound of the whistle as they rounded the bend from the west, coming into view about a mile from the depot and on down the grade bordering Walter Markley's field and then around the curve just beyond the depot. It would stop if a passenger was to get off but if anyone wanted to get aboard, someone would get out on the track as it came around the curve and flag it down, otherwise,



Batavia School--Some of the pupils in the 1916-17 school year included: teacher Eula Travis, teacher Ida Beene Middleton, Audrey Raynor, Carrie Fullerton, Edna Daniel, Mary Travis, Thelma Farris, Ellen Pierce, Cornela Daniel, Lorena Heaton, Ida Lee Farris, Rhoda Payne, Cleo Fullerton, Helen Daniel, Raliene Martin, Wayne Shrum, Lyle Travis, Bertie Raynor, Montie Fullerton and Merle F. Travis.



Louis Raynor, Hattie, Ida and Bessie Raynor. Doc Raynor's father, step-mother and half-sisters.



Students posing in front of the school include Delmar Fields (front left seated), Eliza Fields (fourth in the first row) and Clyde Fields (seventh in the first row). Teachers include Mrs. Leon Green (left back) and Audrey Watkins Davis (right back).

it passed right on through."- John Cook was a car inspector. He worked out of several towns along the line. Clyde Fields also worked a number of years for the railroad on the section crew. John had the responsibility to see that the trains were ready to roll and Clyde the responsibility of making sure the tracks and bridges were repaired, cleared and safe for the trains to run. The train sped up the process of mail in Batavia.

Many remember Johnny Martin hanging mail (see map for location) near the tracks when the train didn't happen to stop. Johnny could also be seen hauling mail to and fro in his wheelbarrow. The depot was a very busy place in Batavia. Mary Brackett's husband, Lee, worked there. She was often seen (and heard) calling him to lunch from the back porch of the nearby store and post office. In 1921 Cornelia Clapper Strait Martin was appointed Batavia postmistress and served in this capacity until 1936 when her daughter, Mary Brackett accepted this position. Some of those serving in the office before Mary and Mrs. Martin were E. A. Stoddard, followed by his daughter, Mrs.

Jessie Farris, John Mashburn and Ralph E. Estes. The post office was discontinued April 30th, 1955. The steam engine and cars of the passenger train were eventually discarded and replaced with a motor car, nicknamed "The Blue Goose". It was being used during World War II.

After the war had ended, due to misfortunes on the road, rising costs and demands for higher wages, the railroad was discontinued. Its loss had a severe effect upon the towns and communities it had served. The depot was soon moved to another sight and converted into a dwelling house. The tracks and ties were removed and a portion of the old roadbed was put to use as a road for automobiles.

Audrey (Granny) Fields Remembers.....

One of the best historians of the Batavia community was born there on February 9, 1903 and lives there today. She was born Audrey Raynor to parents, Janie and Henry "Doc" Raynor, who was a self-made veterinarian. There was also another daughter, Bertie (Raynor) Hewett. Audrey attended

Batavia School through its culmination to the 8th grade and helped her family farm the land. The Raynors put out corn which they took to Osage to be ground into meal. They also raised chickens, pigs, had milk cows and made molasses down at the nearby spring. Important food crops such as potatoes, cabbage, apples, turnips and sweet potatoes were laid-by, for storing in an old shed where her father had some large boards he placed over the produce and topped with dirt so they would not freeze. As was typical of the day the family canned most of their food and used the available natural gifts like picking wild berries, especially black berries and raising bees for honey. Granny always enjoyed a little honey-comb in her coffee. She also has the blessing of being able to handle bees without being stung. Her father "Doc" was vital to the community as a veterinarian and provided music sometimes as well, playing the banjo at community dances. The self-sufficiency and the community way of life thrived in Batavia during much of Audrey's childhood

and adulthood. She married Clyde Fields on June 25, 1921.

Albert Clyde was born March 25, 1897, the son of Squire W. and Magrette Ann Fields. Both, Clyde and Audrey participated in factory work, in the tomatoes at Markley's canning factory. They also farmed, raised large gardens and even made their own homemade apple butter. She and Clyde lived their entire life in Batavia except for about two years in nearby Alpena. They were parents to three sons, Ralph, Omel and Leonard. They had two daughters Stella and Maxine. Ralph Edward married Emma Louise Cook.

They had three children: Thomas Edward, Anna Louise and James Franklin. Stella Mae married Alvin Lee David Maynard. Their children are: Wanda Lee, Roy David, Gary Dale, and Debbie Gale. Omel Lee married Patsy Sparks. They had two children: Christy Lee and Timmy Wayne. Evelyn Maxine married J. T. Flippo. Their children are: Clara Belle, Janet Kay, Patricia Anna and Connie Lyn. Leonard Jarrell married Gayl Eleanor. Their children are: Robyn Denae and Kim Ladawn. His second wife is Charlotte. There are over sixty descendants in children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great great grandchildren.

Clyde and all three sons, served their country in the armed forces. Clyde died June 1, 1982. Brother Tollie Sutterfield says Granny Fields used to always go to the youth rallies and revivals whenever the church bus was going. It was at one of those revivals at Oak Grove that Audrey gave her heart to Jesus. Then she wanted to be baptized in a creek. So a baptismal service was held on Long Creek near the cemetery in Alpena. Clyde also gave his heart to the Lord a few weeks before he was laid to rest in that cemetery. Besides being so well-known for her cooking and hospitality, Granny makes beautiful, hand-stitched quilts. She has probably made around a hundred and fifty, maybe more.

She has seen a lot of changes in her lifetime, seeing the first trains, first cars and airplanes. During her childhood the mode of travel was on foot, by horse. The family had a hack and a wagon. Another big change from kerosene lamps to electrical lights. Just think of the changes in ninety-four years.

THANK YOU FOR VOTING
WOOD MOTOR COMPANY



#1 New Car Dealership
#1 Used Car Dealership
#1 Service Department

A Solid Name You Can Trust

600 HWY 62-65 North • 870-741-8211

WoodMotorChevy.com

WoodMotorNissan.com



BEST of
HARRISON
Harrison Daily Times

2023