

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Southwest Historical Sites

Arkansas takes its name from the Indian word Ugakpaha, or Quapaw, meaning "down stream people," after an Indian tribe which once inhabited the lowlands of the state. But contrary to this statement made in the Automobile Tour book, a very old map hung over one of the fireplaces at the Territorial Restoration in Little Rock, gave the meaning of Arkansas an entirely different translation: "Handsome Men." You may take your choice.

The first large influx of settlers came to Arkansas after 1803, when the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory, the state being included in the purchase. We traveled through Fort Smith where in 1849 large caravans of covered wagons gathered to set out for the gold fields of California.

Historic markers generously mark the highways through Arkansas, and we made full use of the items each records and turned from the main highways many times to see interesting places and meet interesting people. Everywhere in the state the natives were hoping for rain. Many of them told us that it had been six years since the farmers had had good crops, so long had the drought lasted.

At Sallisaw in Oklahoma, a few miles over the state line of Arkansas, we detoured to visit the log cabin home of the Indian Sequoyah who invented the famous Cherokee alphabet. His cabin, built by Sequoyah in 1829, is preserved by the State's Division of Highways. Over it has been constructed a larger building of native rock, much as was done to protect the log cabin birthplace of Abraham Lincoln.

Sequoyah was born in 1760 and died in 1843. It is thought that he is buried in Old Mexico, according to the curator of this State Historic Shrine. Sequoyah is said to have been able to speak the language of seven different tribes. In California, we have a national park named by the famous Indian and our famous redwood trees also honor his memory.

Santa Fe, the capital of New Mexico, is the oldest seat of government in the United States. Its settlement by Europeans dates from about 1610, which we must admit is a long time ago, but it is thought that the Indians had a pueblo here as much as 400 years before

the white man saw it. After the Indian pueblo it became the Spanish capital, then an Indian city again, then Spanish, Mexican and finally American.

Santa Fe has maintained an atmosphere much more Mexican and Spanish than American, which makes it that much more attractive to artists and visitors than it otherwise would have been. Its quaint adobe architecture, the Mexican and Spanish shops and the old Plaza, all make for a fascinating visit.

We visited the Palace of the Governors, a long, low structure with massive walls, built about 1612, which was the seat of government for three centuries. Lew Wallace, the author of "Ben Hur," lived here when he was governor of New Mexico, and wrote part of the famous novel in the residence.

Today the Historical Society of New Mexico and the Museum of New Mexico occupy the building. An added feature to the exterior view of the palace is the presence of a dozen or so Indian men and women in colorful dress and shawls, sitting along the wall, with their wares spread before them, offering the passerby their handicraft for a sum.

Other equally satisfying places we visited in Santa Fe were the State Art Museum and the Museum of International Folk Art. The Art Museum is in a unit of the Museum of New Mexico and includes the work of Santa Fe and Taos artists. The Folk Art Museum has an exceptionally well arranged exhibit from 50 countries including dolls, ceramics, sculpture, jewelry, costumes, textiles, and other examples of folk art.

We spent one whole day at Taos and motored away with regret, there is so much to see and to enjoy there. The town is located in one of the most beautiful and fertile valleys of New Mexico. It is a Spanish town and an artist colony. Here, after visiting the many other historical sites the community has, we walked into the Kit Carson Home where many of the personal belongings of this famous soldier and scout are on display. The house was built in 1825 and occupied by Carson and his family from 1858 to 1886. It is now maintained and owned by the Masonic Lodge of Taos and is open daily to the public.