

April 1986

PITCHFORD'S

PRITTLE PRATTLE

Dear Members,

Close your eyes and relax for a moment. Listen carefully. There it is! Don't you hear it? It's a banjo, a guitar, and a jug...it must be the MacMillan Boys (and mother). Come on, let's hurry! Yeah, it's them all right! Now that we're closer, I can hear the old washtub bass. Who's that on fiddle? I can't see; walk faster! Oh, you're right; it's Ruel Bain! What would this day be without his fiddle? We're almost there...somebody's getting up on the speaker's stand. It's a tall, thin old gentleman with a handlebar mustache...I guess he's the master of ceremonies.

He's introduced that little fellow there...can you hear what he's saying? Yeah, sounds like a poem to me, too. Is that fellow imitating an owl? I wish we could hurry and get close enough to hear. Come on, walk faster!!

Who's that other old fellow? Yeah, the one with the little beard...the shorter one. Oh, you mean he's the taller one's partner? I see. Looks like the shorter one is going to sing a duet with that big young fellow...the one putting down that jar of...something...it looks like peanut butter!! Yeah, I can hear them. I've heard that song before...it's something about an old pine tree.

I hope we don't miss this shindig completely! Look at that banner hung over the top of that store...it says "50th Anniversary." Or does it say "150th?" Do you think this is a sesquicentennial party? No? Oh, this town is 50 years old, and this state is 150 years old? I see. Now that fellow with the handlebar mustache is getting back up there. Looks like he's going into a speech of some sort. Look at him swing his arms! I'll bet he's been practicing this one. I can hear him pretty well now. Sounds like Abraham Lincoln, doesn't he? Well, you know, he's talking about living in a log cabin, splitting rails, and...what did he say? Yep, that's it...walking to school through the snow barefooted.

Look, some of those folks are walking away! That fellow doesn't seem to notice; he's too wrapped up in his speech. Look, they've got four tables piled with food! Maybe we can get in on that! Who's this coming toward us? I don't trust him...what, sir? Yes sir, we're from out-of-town. This is quite a celebration you're putting on! So Pine Ridge is fifty years old this month? That's great! What? No sir, we're not interested in any insurance...no sir...say, isn't someone going to tell that poor old fellow that no one's listening to his speech? Oh...what's that? They've heard it all before? Oh, I see. Well, thanks, sir. No, we're not staying...just passing through. You have a nice little town here. It's the stuff dreams are made of!

Happy Demicentennial, Pine Ridge!!!



Uncle Donnie

Donnie Pitchford, President

Aunt Laura

Laura Pearson, Assistant To The President

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THE JOT 'EM DOWN JOURNAL

APRIL 1986

In This Issue



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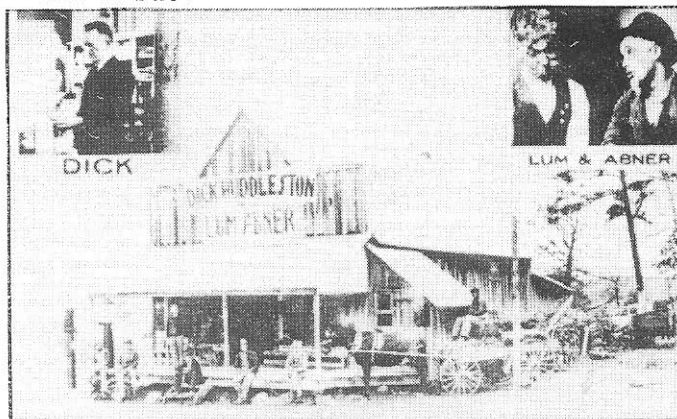
"I grannies, Pine Ridge is the
 greatest place in the world and
 you oughta visit there if you ever
 git the chance."

- Chet Lauck as Lum,
 1972

COVER: Illustration from the
 1936 Lum and Abner Almanac
 (courtesy of UALR Archives)

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 trademark. Used by permission
 of Chester Lauck, Jr.

Because of the special nature of
 this issue, we have temporarily suspen-
 ded most of our regular features. in
 order to commemorate Pine Ridge's 50th
 Anniversary. Such departments as "Lum
 & Abner In Hollywood," "Mousey's Corner,"
 "Back In The Feed Room," "It Could Have
 Happened," etc., will return in the
 June issue.



ABOVE: Dick Huddleston's Store as
 it appeared shortly after being made
 famous by Lum and Abner. (Courtesy of
 Lum & Abner Museum)





In 1841, the only mark on the extreme western Montgomery County map was the Jas. Potts farm just south of the Ouachita River from what is now Pine Ridge on lands now owned by Grady Daves and Billy Lewis. There were not any roads on the map ... only the river and mountains. Mr. & Mrs. Donald Snapp, now living in Pine Ridge, have a copy of the map.

The area near Waters/Pine Ridge began to be settled in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Census, tax, and deed records show the early settlers to be the Maddoxs, Bolins, Ellisons, Dees, Wilhites, Sims, Goodners, Goss, Brewers, Saliors, Smiths, Standridges, and Wilkins. In order to obtain a Homestead Deed for land the family had to remain on and cultivate it for five years. Some paid taxes on land for a few years but did not take title. Ira Bolin, W.E. Maddox, J.G. Ellison, and Robert Dees obtained the first titles to land in the immediate vicinity of what became the town. Bolin (Bolan) Creek west of Pine Ridge now passes through land owned by Ira Bolin.

In the 1870s and 1880s, the Bates, Dilbecks, Wimberleys, Walters, Lises, McKinzies, Drains, Fryars, Abbotts, Derrs, Dickensens, Cargills, Gilleans, Paynes (Paine), Pillows, Rodens, Harbins, Philpots, Waters, and Rices moved in and out of the area.

A school was established probably before 1880 in a building shared with the church on a low rise near the creek. In the mid-1880s, a young Mary Roden died and had asked to be buried under the tree near

the schoolhouse. It was her favorite playing spot, and the cemetery that now serves Pine Ridge grew around her grave. Before that time, the Simms family cemetery east of Hole In The Ground Creek (on land now owned by Bill Tolleson) served the community. The Simms girls married Wilhite boys, so the few stones in that older cemetery bear the Wilhite name.

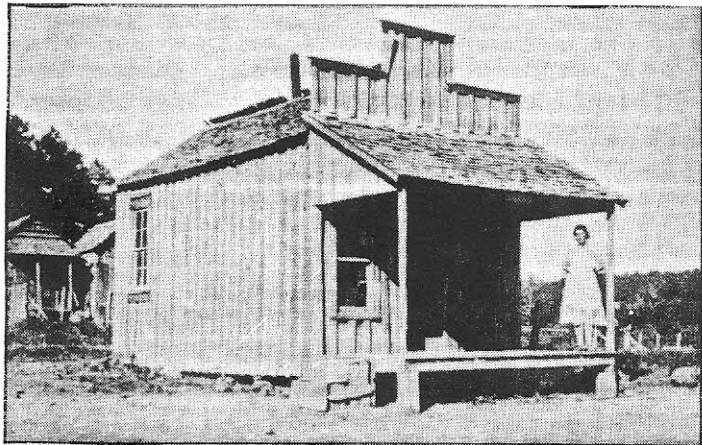
In about 1884, Henry M. Waters came to the community and operated a small sawmill and cotton gin where the Big Road (now the dirt road going west) crossed a creek (later Turpin Creek) west of the school on land now owned by Alton Dollar. It is believed that he also opened the first small store there, and in 1886, he applied for and was given the community's first postmaster position. Since the village apparently had no name, he named the post office after himself, and although he left by 1887 and never took title to any land, the town carried his name for the next 50 years.

"Uncle Joe" Rice became the next postmaster, probably at the same site. There was a shingle mill and grist mill run by Warney Morgan on the creek, and a baseball field on a hilltop west of the community. Ambrose Bates had a sawmill at Bolan Creek and the Big Road, and later his son Marion had a sawmill and cotton gin on Hole In The Ground Creek on land now owned by Lonnie & Mary Ray.

In the 1890s, the Hicks, Hills, Garretts, Billues, Huddlestons, and others came to the area. In 1895 George D. Drain took homestead title to the land now between the

old and new highways from Pine Ridge west to the first crossroad. That title exempted the school/church/cemetery property and a one-acre plot on the southeast corner where the McKinzie store and homes were soon to be built.

The third postmaster was Luke Snyder (or Snider), but by about 1900 Ansel J. "Ace" Risenhoover built his post office, a shotgun building, facing south about 1/2mile east of the original post office. He got homestead title to the land in 1907 and the post office remained in that building for most of the next 75 years. The 1900 census



Ace Risenhoover's post office about 1936

lists Marion Bates and Pinkney Dilbeck as ministers, Stephen Bates and Wadley Kezar as physicians, A.A. McKinzie as a merchant, and John W. Murphy as a teacher, with all other residents as farmers. Previous census records list all Big Fork Township residents as farmers. In 1900 the township lines were changed and the area west of Shirley Creek and north of the Ouachita River became Smith Township. (By 1970 the population had decreased to the extent that the area became part of Polk Township along with Oden.)

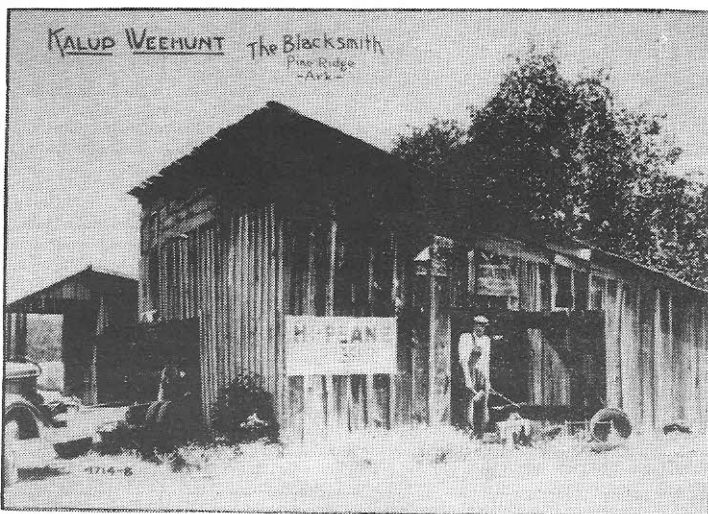
John "Uncle Mack" McKinzie and his son, A.A. (Alec Alexander) had operated their sales business from a peddler's wagon and made periodic buying trips from their new home in Waters back to the family home in Missouri. While A.A. was gone, "Uncle Mack" and his wife Mary sold merchandise out of the front room of their home, near Ace Risenhoover's post office. In 1904, A.A. built his small general merchandise store facing the post office, and his house behind the store. He continued to use the peddler's wagon to sell goods on buying trips to Hot Springs and Mena, trips that took several days.

In 1909, S.I. Wood and J.R. "Dick" Huddleston opened a much larger general store facing east toward both the McKinzie store and the post office. Dick had married Nan Goodner, the daughter of John & Louisa, one of the early settlers. With the construction of these three businesses, the site of the fledgling community was moved to its present location, but to this day has never been incorporated.

The house now directly across the road from Martin's Body Shop is probably the oldest original residence still standing in Pine Ridge. It is now owned by Erwin and Ellen Knuth and is rented by Rev. and Mrs. Werling. The house was built around 1900 and has been owned by a long succession of people. The builder is not remembered, but may have been a McKinzie; at any rate, the house has been there as long as the oldest residents can remember.

Henry Mourton and "Little John" McKinzie operated a grist mill and blacksmith shop behind Dick Huddleston's store, where they had to dig a 12-foot hole in the blue slate to make a well. "Aunt Nan" Huddleston washed clothes in the wet-weather spring there. Later, A.A. McKinzie had a grist mill and blacksmith shop behind his store on land that is now Charlie and Ethel Huddleston Ball's front yard. The trees and soil still contain souvenirs of those days: horseshoes and nails. The blacksmith was John Miller from Cherry Hill. The Gamble boys who had married McKinzie girls may have run a saloon next to the McKinzie store but barrels of whiskey may just have been tapped in the back of the store.

In 1912, the Wood-Huddleston Store burned to the ground. Young Edyth Gamble who lived on the hill across the road (where



E. BALL
L AND A MUSEUM
3



L AND A MUSEUM

Inside Dick Huddleston's Store, circa 1939

O.W. and Loretta Hatfield now live) reports that she watched the fire and cried and cried. She was sure that all of the candy in the world had burned. She had never bought candy anywhere else and was always able to choose from the great variety there. Dick Huddleston rebuilt as sole owner, and while construction was underway, business continued using young Ethel's bedroom as the store in their old house between the store and the later Huddleston house, now owned by Dorothy McClure.

Dick Huddleston was the fifth postmaster, with the post office in his store (to which it returned in 1983), but he soon became too busy to keep the position. The post office returned to the Ace Risenhoover building when Mrs. Laura Bates became the next postmistress. She was succeeded by H. J. Hoover.

In 1915, the Union Church was built in front of the cemetery, and in 1917 the two-room school was built on the hilltop nearer town. The town continued to prosper. In 1919, Mrs. Eddie Williams started her long term as postmaster, a position that she held for 33 years. Later she and her husband Jim built a new house to replace the one Ace Risenhoover had built, which was used by several postmasters. Willie Chambers Garrett and her sister Nancy now live in that house. Mail was brought on horse and wagon from Cherry Hill by Barney Harmon in the 1920s and by a Mr. Riddling before that. On the rural route, a 1¢ stamp could be bought directly from the carrier for a few eggs, according to Germa Shirley Garrett, who still lives on the family farm between Cherry Hill and Pine Ridge.

The Ouachita River was a natural barrier. A swinging bridge was near the Huddlestons' fishing camp, but the girls and women were usually afraid to use it. Arlie Gillean recalls crossing it carrying his



L AND A MUSEUM

Publicity photo for the Huddlestons' fishing lodge on the Ouachita River, circa 1940

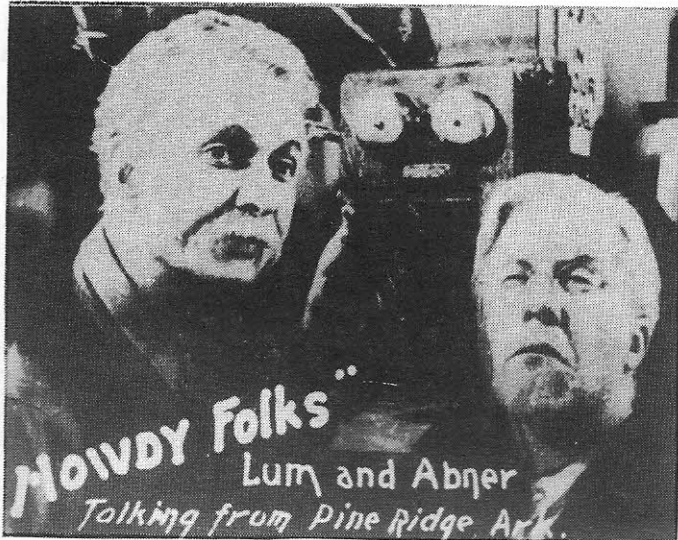
guitar to play at Caney before the boards were put on the bridge. The "Jack Fryar" ford was slightly downstream, near the swimming hole. Bad weather restricted travel even on the roads. To carry a heavy load to Mena, it required two teams to cross the "Seven Devils"...a series of steep hills east of Mena...so friends would travel at the same time, and harness both teams to one wagon when needed. Roy Simpson (now age 89 and living in Fayetteville) tells of one of his sharpest memories of Waters: "The front wagon would be (John) Goodner's with horses going as fast as his urging and yelling could get them to go. With reins slashing and the old man bouncing and yelling on the spring seat of the wagon, everyone knew that Dick was sending for supplies. Such things as calico, canvas for cotton sacks, sugar, flour, caps lined with fur, pocket knives, axes, cotton hoes, and all the numerous articles a country store carried would be brought out, but John Goodner would have to make a number of 'whopping it up' (predawn) exits from the village to have it all in. "

Few local people had cars in the 1920s, even after they became more common in other areas. Public transportation was a private enterprise. Mike Risenhoover (son of Ace's cousin) had a large car that served as a bus in the 1920s. He charged 10¢ for the ride into Mena on a trip that began before dawn and returned after dark. A quarter could pay for lunch and entertainment all day Saturday. Mike Risenhoover would do anything to get some money, including robbing a bank or a poker game. He was called the "Robin Hood of the Ouachitas" since he only robbed those he felt could afford the loss. On December 10, 1929, he robbed the Huddleston Store in Waters, but he used too much dynamite in blowing open the safe, and not only blew the safe's door

destroyed its contents. Although he didn't get much money for his efforts, his previous taunts to the law made the sheriff especially anxious to arrest him, and he was soon tracked down not far away.

School buses in the 1920s and 1930s were also privately owned, homemade vehicles. Those serving Waters/Pine Ridge were owned by Willie Maddox, Joe Standridge, and Billy Lewis. The low-water bridge across the Ouachita River just downstream from the ford was built by the W.P.A. in the 1930s, one of three in the county. It is now being replaced by a high-water bridge. Bridges and buses permitted school consolidation.

For a few more years, the town's general stores were still the center of activity for the surrounding farmers. A.A. McKinzie died in 1935 and his family soon closed his store. His father left for Oklahoma, and lived to be 99. There were many houses along the road in that era. On Saturday afternoon there would be up to 200 people in the town. The Staleys, News, Hoopers, Turpins, and many others had moved into the area. Dick Huddleston held a drawing each week and the prize would often be a piece of carnival glass, which several residents and visitors still have as now-valuable souvenirs. Gossip and goods were traded, and became the inspiration for the "Lum and Abner" radio program in 1931.



UCLR ARCHIVES

Tuffy Goff's father was actually the wholesale grocer for most of the stores in several counties. Chet Lauck's father owned the sawmill and was president of the Union Bank in Mena. Both young men had traveled to every hill and dale in Polk and Montgomery Counties, where they spent more time telling stories than delivering groceries or lumber. The people they swapped

stories with were to become an important part of their careers. Grandpappy Spears was based on Cling Wilhite...each wore a floppy hat and rode a white mule. Cedric Wehunt was based on Lester Goble...slow of speech and humorous. The real-life Ola Hooper became Elizabeth Peabody ... both large of heart and stature but stern of voice and hand. Eva May O'Neal became Little Pearl ... each planned on being a nurse, but Miss O'Neal died at age 18 following a fall from a horse. Margaret Wilhite became Sister Simpson; Anna Risenhoover became Aunt Charity Spears; Aunt Chat Lawrence became Widder Abernathy, etc. Dick Huddleston was portrayed much as he really was, so was too good a businessman to be directly involved in many of the plots which required complete innocence.

Waters itself was the model for Pine Ridge, with its little general store owned by A.A. McKinzie (the "Jot'Em Down Store" on the radio) and the big store owned by Dick Huddleston (in fact as well as on the radio). Dick was close to both the fathers and the sons (Laucks and Goffs) and through his efforts to publicize the beauties of the Ouachita Mountains and western Arkansas, he became known as "Arkansas' Ambassador of Goodwill." His Pine Ridge Follies of the 1930s and 1940s, a musical group, employed many talented local people in live and



L AND A MUSEUM

Dick Huddleston (standing, far right) and cast members of the Pine Ridge Follies, about 1942

radio performances throughout the area and in theaters in neighboring states. These people included Christine Doyel, Maxie Cobb, Laura Cobb, Ruby Steeley, Gladys Mae Rogers, and Betty Jo Rogers as the Mocking Birds.



"Dick's Pine Ridge Mocking Birds"

Ralph Godbehere of Oden recalls Ruel Bain, brothers Curtis, Ross, and Lloyd Lane of Mena, Toby Stafford and Arlie Gillean of Pine Ridge, and Marvin Davis of Board Camp as his co-performers in the band. Lester Goble as Cedric Wehunt traveled with them and was one of the main crowd-pleasers.

Pine Ridge was a real town in the minds and hearts of the millions of radio listeners who followed the programs regularly, so as a part of the Arkansas Centennial Celebration in 1936, to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Lum and Abner program, and to recognize Waters as the real-life model for the radio program, Dick Huddleston petitioned the U.S. Postmaster, Jim Farley, and Congressman Ben Cravens, to get permission to change the name of the post office at Waters to Pine Ridge. At 2:00 pm on April 26, 1936, in ceremonies on the steps of the Capitol Building in Little Rock, Governor Futrell presented Dick Huddleston with the Pine Ridge Charter. Mr. Harvey Couch, chairman of the Centennial Executive Committee, presented David O. Dodd Centennial Roses to Mrs. Harriet Lauck and Mrs. Elizabeth Goff. Chet Lauck and Tuffy Goff introduced Cedric Wehunt (Lester Goble) and Grandpappy Spears (Cling Wilhite) to the fans gathered at the steps. A live Lum and Abner radio broadcast began at 3:00 p.m. and lasted 30 minutes. Olen Goodner, still farming near Pine Ridge, recalls being ten years old when he, Robert Hogan, & Boyd Goodner were asked by Dick Huddleston to go along to sell the postcards of Pine Ridge characters, but that he was so awed by all the people and celebration that he forgot to sell any.



Cling Wilhite as Grandpappy Spears for the ceremony changing Waters to Pine Ridge, April 26, 1936

Much of the business at the Huddleston Store was that of tourists. The other stores and services all but disappeared as cars became more common. The "Big Road" (Highway 88) was still unpaved from Pencil Bluff to Mena, but when travelers asked Ora Garrett (1909-1984) how far it was to a good road, he always told them "only five more miles" to give them a little hope. In 1939, the road was named "Lum and Abner Highway" but remained unpaved and crooked.

In 1946, J.C. Vaught began delivering the rural route mail from Mena to Oden, and he continues to do so in 1986. The community honored him with a party in 1985. He was permitted to carry passengers and pick up merchandise (including the dry-cleaning) in the early days. Electricity had come to the area in 1945.

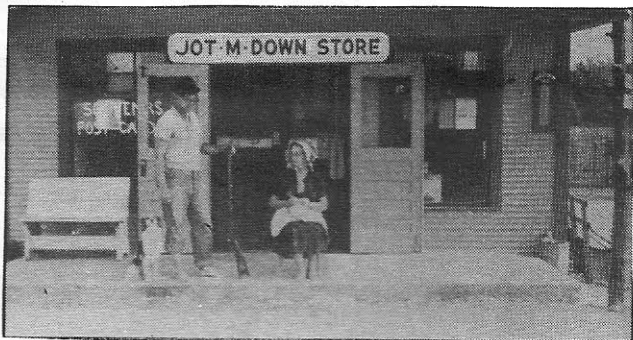
In 1951, the O.W. Hatfields moved to Pine Ridge and soon began to operate a sorghum mill which employed many residents to harvest the crop. It was on the same land just north of the Ouachita River that Billy Bates and his father had many years earlier cleared and planted in corn & cotton, and had likewise employed local residents to harvest.

In 1952, Ora Mack Garrett became the Pine Ridge postmaster, a position he kept

until 1973 when his wife Willie took over when it became a contract post office.

Highway 88 was straightened, widened, and paved in 1958 and is still the only paved through east-west road in western Montgomery County. The rerouting of the road required the removal of the A.A. McKinzie store (by then a home) and the other buildings in the path. The post office was moved farther from the road and several houses were demolished.

By then, local families had cars and went to larger towns to shop. General stores in remote towns lost business, but the fame of Lum and Abner kept Pine Ridge in the minds of radio fans. Most other stores and services in the town had closed, but Dick Huddleston continued to sell souvenirs. Because the original A.A. McKinzie Store was now a hay barn, a store near the creek, by then owned by Billy Bates, and later by the Barrows, was called the "Jot-M-Down Store," but it also closed in the early 1970s and later burned. On July 18, 1963, Dick Huddleston died but his daughter Ethel and her husband Homer Graham kept the store open.



LALR ARCHIVES

Pine Ridge's "Jot-M-Down" Store in the 1950s

In the fall of 1968, Ralph and Dorothy McClure of Fresno, California, came to Pine Ridge to visit Earl and Clara Miller, Ralph's cousins. They had retired from business in Fresno and were looking for a quiet place near their midwestern roots to enjoy their hobbies of antique gun and art glass collecting.

The "DICK HUDDLESTON STORE - MADE FAMOUS BY LUM AND ABNER" sign was still up on the old general store but it was practically closed. Their memories of radio were renewed and they approached Ethel Huddleston Graham about buying the old store and the Huddleston house. The deal was made, and they returned to Fresno for their belongings. They knew that other people were as interested as they were in pre-



D. PITCFORD

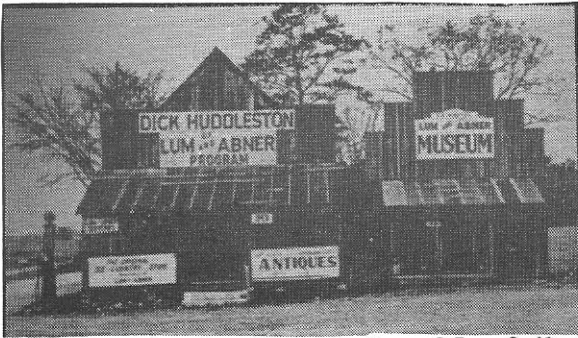
The Risenhoover post office building, still in use in 1982

serving the memory of the famous radio team if they only knew where Pine Ridge was and that the original store still stood.

In early 1969, the McClures arrived and began the work of remodeling the house and preparing to open the store that had been built in 1912. On April 1, 1969, the store opened under its first new management ever.

In the early 1930s when Lum and Abner became popular, Dick Huddleston had begun selling souvenirs to supplement the general store business. In 1969, what was left of the original merchandise and fixtures were displayed in the back of the store, but were no longer for sale. The McClures' extensive collection of antiques and the Lum and Abner souvenirs were the new merchandise. As the local memorabilia and Lum and Abner materials accumulated, and the demand for souvenirs increased, a need for more room and a separate museum area became evident.

On Christmas of 1971, Ethel gave another of the original town buildings to the McClures to house the museum. It was the A.A. McKinzie Store, which since 1958 had been



UCLR ARCHIVES

Photo taken shortly after opening of Lum & Abner Museum in 1972

sitting on a hill in the pasture & used as a hay barn. At one time, the McKinzie Store had had a barber chair, a checker board, a crowd of wizened farmers around the cracker barrel...all grist for the creation of the Lum and Abner stories. The structure needed major repairs, but was moved to sit beside the Huddleston Store. On April 1, 1972, the new Lum and Abner Museum opened. Ralph McClure had died on January 1, 1972, so did not live to see this dream completed, but he knew that it was to be.

Dorothy continued to run the store and museum with the help of her friends, especially Mrs. Jesse "Jake" Hatfield. Chet Lauck (Lum) continued to aid in the development of the museum, although he was more surprised than most at the renewed interest in the old programs.

In 1979, Dorothy's son, Lon Stucker, with his wife Kathryn and their children Laura and Scott, moved to Pine Ridge after a 20-year career in the Navy. They began management of the store that year. In 1983 the post office was moved again into the store, & Kathryn Stucker became the latest postmistress. In 1984, the two old store buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places, in time for the post office's 100th anniversary and Pine Ridge's 50th in 1986.

Roy Simpson, who taught school in Waters in the early years remarks that the various villages scattered about the Ouachita Mountains each had their individual characteristics. "You might call it local culture ... Though the changes that occurred during the '20s, '30s, & '40s have blurred the distinguishing differences, there are still traces, and at times more than traces, left ... It must be remembered that Pine Ridge had its peculiar rural flavor long before Lum and Abner had an imaginary store, and that changes came there just as it did to the remainder of the Ouachitas." But those of us who live here are glad to report that the changes have not been extreme and that it is still a wonderful place to live.

- Kathy Stucker,
Pine Ridge Historian

-----Advertisement-----

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How To Get To

PINE RIDGE, ARKANSAS

For any of you out there who are planning on helping us celebrate Pine Ridge's 50th anniversary at the Convention on June 14 & 15, it's probably about the time that you'll be deciding what route you want to take to get there. Well, it's all very simple: there are only two directions from which you can get to Pine Ridge; east or west (which one you choose depends on what part of the country you are coming from).

If you are approaching from the west, you need to find your way to Mena first. Once there, it's not very hard to find Highway 88, and Pine Ridge is almost exactly 30 minutes away from there. (It could take longer if you drive slowly to look at the beautiful Ouachita Mountain scenery.)

The route from the east is a little more complicated, but not as bad as it first sounds. The best way is to get to Hot Springs, and then take it from there. Get on Highway 270, which will carry you along the shores of Lake Hamilton and through the Ouachita National Forest; en route, you will pass through the quaint community of Mount Ida, so, if you get lost, just stop and ask Ben Withers' friend Homer Zincafoose for directions. At any rate, you will eventually reach Pencil Bluff, at which point you will turn left onto Highway 88. (You'll know you're on the right track when you see the Pine Ridge billboards shortly after you make the turn.) The whole trip from Hot Springs to Pine Ridge is approximately one hour.

Of course, it's up to you to decide how to reach Mena or Hot Springs from where you live, but these directions should help you once you manage to reach one of those two spots. See you in Pine Ridge!!



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