

A History of the Pope County Library System

• Russellville

- 1885-86- The Excelsior Club Library is formed
- 1899- Meetings are held to discuss the formation of a public library
- 1900- The Russellville Public Library Association is formed
- 1902- Library books are stored in the Wholesale Grocery Store
- 1904- Dr. H B Wiggs Drugstore becomes the new home of the 400-book collection; there is a \$1 yearly membership fee
- 1905-06- The books are housed by the San Scuco Club, Mrs. Jas. A. Miller, and Mrs. W. L. Oats. There are now 500
- 1918- The library is moved to Central Presbyterian Church
- 1920- The Russellville Loan Library opens
- 1924- A building is built for the library near the church,
- 1937- A library is built on 114 E.. 3rd St. (the site of Heritage Hall) by the WPA and holds a 5,000-book collection
- 1957- The Pope County libraries join with the Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System
- 1976- A new building, and current home, is built on 116 E. 3rd St.
- 1985- The Pope County Libraries withdraw from the Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System
- 1989- The Don Harkey Addition and Katie Murdoch Genealogy and History Room are built

• Atkins

- 1933- The library room is established
- 1942- The library is moved to the Agricultural Building on the high school campus
- 1943- The library is moved into the high school
- 1958- The library is moved to East Broadway; it has 340 books
- 1959- The library is moved to 219 E. Main
- 1975- A new building, and current home, is built on 216 NE 1st Street
- 2000- The Mary Catherine Maxwell Room was completed

• Dover

- Late 1950s- Books are available in the rear of the Bank of Dover
- 1974- The library moves to the new Dover City Hall
- 1988- A new building, and current home, is built on Library Road

• Hector

- 1996- The Hector Library is built

• Bookmobile

- 1957- The Bookmobile first came to Pope County with the Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System
- 1985- With the withdrawal from the Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System, the Pope County Library purchased its own Bookmobile to continue outreach services

For more information about Pope County, check out these books available through the Pope County Library System.

- They Sought a Land: A Settlement in the Arkansas River Valley, 1840-1870 by William Oats Ragsdale, AR 976.732 Rag
- Early History of Pope County by D. Porter West, AR 976.732 Wes
- Tattered glory: a Documentary Civil War History of the Arkansas River Valley by Nancy Dane, AR 973.7 Dan
- A History of Pottsville, Arkansas: A Research Paper by Mace A. Dunn, AR 976.732 Dun
- The Potts Family and Early Pottsville by Margaret Motley and Kara Bowers, G AR 929.376732 Mot
- A History of the Rushing Community, 1830-1930 by Edith Simmons Martin, AR 976.732 Mar
- A Pictorial History of the Arkansas River Valley Vol. 1 and 2, AR 976.73 Pic
- History of Pope County, Arkansas Vol. 1 and 2 by Pope County Historical Association, ARK 967.732 His
- Early History of Pope County: a History of Pope County in the Nineteenth Century and in the Early Part of the Twentieth Century by David L. Vance, AR 976.732 Van

For more recent history, check the Vertical Files located at the Genealogy Department in the Pope County Library. You may also check the non-circulating collection for more information.



The Pope County Library Genealogy Department's



Short Pope County History and Fact Sheet

From 1829 to 2024

POPE COUNTY LIBRARY
116 E. 3rd St, Russellville
479-968-4368



The Early Years

- Pope County was inhabited during the Mississippian Period (900-1600 AD) and possibly earlier, with rock art visible today.
- In 1541 Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto traveled through the Arkansas River Valley. Thomas Nuttall, another explorer traveled through in 1819.
- By the early 19th century, the Osage claimed the land north of the Arkansas River as hunting grounds but did not live there.
- 1808- The Osage sign a treaty giving up ownership of their hunting grounds in Arkansas
- 1817- The US government establishes a reservation for Cherokee from the eastern states; about 4,000 move
- 1820- At the request of the Cherokee leader Tahlonteskee, Dwight Mission is established. It contains a school, post office, library, sawmill, gristmill, blacksmith shop, gardens, and residences
- 1828- Kirkbride Potts settles and homesteads 160 acres
- 1828- A new treaty removes the Cherokee to Oklahoma; the Dwight Mission closes in 1829 to accompany them

POPE COUNTY LIBRARY

RUSSELLVILLE, ARKANSAS



1829 - 2024

- 1829- Pope County is established, named after John Pope, 3rd Arkansas territorial governor
- 1829- A temporary county seat is established near Scotia
- 1830- The county seat is established at old Norristown, settled by Samuel Norris in 1829
- 1832- The county secures a post office
- 1835- Dr. Thomas Russell buys a home in Pope County
- 1840- The county seat is moved to Dover; the first courthouse is a log structure that later burns in the Civil War and is rebuilt in Brick
- 1870- There are 13 townships and a public school system; Russellville is incorporated
- 1873- The Little Rock-Fort Smith railroad is completed through the valley
- 1876- Russellville has a population of 800, with a newspaper and a growing commercial sector
- 1888- The county seat moves to Russellville by a margin of less than 100 votes
- 1905-15- An earthen dam is built on the Illinois Bayou, but it erodes to uselessness
- 1909- The Second District Agricultural School, which later became Arkansas Polytechnic College then Arkansas Tech University, is founded
- 1910- The Agricultural School opens with 186 students
- 1923- Arkansas Power and Light (AP&L) rebuilds the dam which remains an important source of power
- 1935-43- The WPA is active in Arkansas; some of their projects in Pope County include building a school, a library, bridges, and roads, including the Russellville-Dover Highway, paving the streets of Russellville, and building dorms at ATU
- 1957-69- Dardanelle Lock and Dam number 10 is built
- 1965- Lake Dardanelle is in place
- 1966- Lake Dardanelle State Park is commissioned
- 1967- Plans for the construction of Arkansas Nuclear One are announced by AP&L
- 1970- AP&L constructs the second unit at ANO
- 1974- Unit One at ANO begins commercial operation
- April 4, 2024- Total Eclipse



Historic Points of Interest

- 1852- Pope County's first postmaster appointed in Russellville
- 1861-65- During the Civil War, Court House records are stored in caves near Dover to keep them safe
- 1869- Pope County has at least 13 public schools
- 1917- A vein of gold and silver is reported to be found within four miles of Russellville at Cagle's Rock
- 1925- St. Mary's Hospital is established and named after a local nurse
- 1930- Will Rogers visits the Tech Airport, which was later replaced by the Municipal Airport in 1960
- 1932- Attempts are made to organize Arkansas's first and only gold mine at the rediscovery of gold
- 1945- The Goldsmith Pickle Company is established in Atkins
- 1988- Louis and Thelma Gregoire of Pelsor donate a 100,000-piece collection of prehistoric artifacts to the US Forest Service; most pieces were found within a 15-mile radius of Lurton
- The Pope County vertical files contain at least one entry for 94 historic and current communities