

Two Centuries Ago



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Project REACH – Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage

This narrative summary is extracted from a *Historic Structure Report* by Tommy Jameson A.I.A., Jameson Architects, P.A., Little Rock, Arkansas and Joan L. Gould, Preservation Matters, Fayetteville, Arkansas to be presented to Black River Technical College in three volumes – *The Rice-Upshaw House, The William Looney Tavern, and Rice and Looney History*. The *Historic Structure Report* incorporates independent research by: Scott Akridge, Gerry Barker, Maria Barker, Christopher M. Branam, Kathleen H. Cande, Bill Carroll, Joan L. Gould, Dr. G. Dale Greenawald, Dr. Donald R. Holliday, Robert M. Myers, Ronnie A. Nichols, Rick Parker, Dr. Eric Proebsting, Steve Saunders, Dr. Leslie C. Stewart-Abernathy, Ronnie Walker, and Dr. Jan Ziegler.

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Pocahontas & Paragould, Arkansas

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Funded in part by grants from Arkansas Natural & Cultural Resources Council

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Transforming a Wilderness

The story of early Arkansas is told in many places across the state. The colonial story is told at Arkansas Post. The story of surveying the new lands of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase originates from a swamp in southeast Arkansas. Little Rock tells of the founding of the capital city in the 1820s. Now, importantly, the 200-year-old story of settlement in the Eleven Point River Valley is coming into focus. Yeoman farmers, some with a few African American slaves, arrived in this valley prior to 1815. Using the natural resources surrounding them, they transformed a wilderness and prospered.

They had settlement down to a science

The lifestyles of these pioneering families were rooted in the 18th century. They transferred the culture of their homelands directly to the new land that was to become Arkansas. They established scattered farmsteads along the river banks. They developed the commerce, roadways, and governance for their valley and, indeed, the territory and later the state. They were the very type of individuals the Jeffersonian Democracy envisioned for the peopling of America.

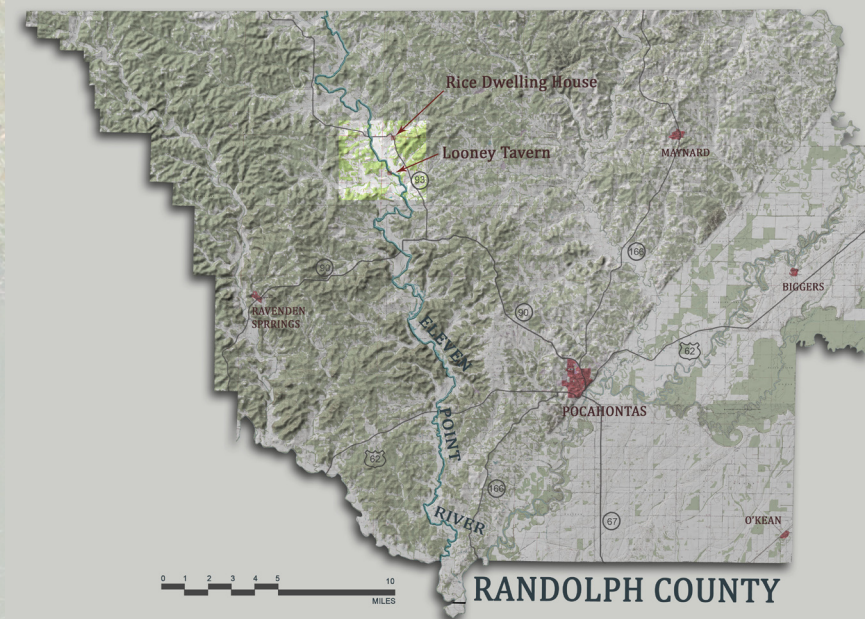
These frontier men, women, and children from North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky were part of family groups interconnected for generations. Many had opened other eastern frontiers before traveling together to the Eleven Point River Valley. The traditions they transferred to their new homeland were not only seen in the structures they built, they were evident in their material culture and activities of daily life. They did not consider themselves exceptional.

Today there is an aura of near disbelief at the tenacity and strength it took to participate in a group migration to a destination hundreds of miles distant. They had the process of migration and the building of a new settlement down to a science. Once these sturdy pioneering families arrived at their destination they planted a seedbed of agricultural heritage that flourishes yet today.



Silent Educators

Two territorial period log structures - the 1828 Rice-Upshaw House and the 1833 William Looney Tavern - standing on opposite sides of the Eleven Point River in northwest Randolph county, Arkansas have inspired a multi-disciplinary cultural study. The study has served as a window through which to view not only Arkansas's early built culture but the lifestyles of the Anglo American and African American migrants arriving in the valley in the first decade following the Louisiana Purchase. These structures have earned the well-deserved title of 'silent educators.'



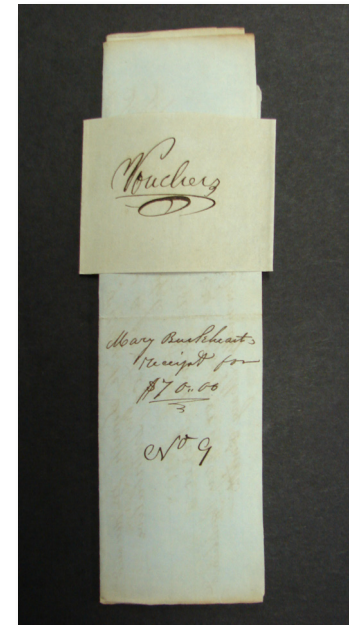
Site analysis area represents
Historic Davidson Township

Window into a Society

The families who so generously donated these two territorial log structures to Black River Technical College in Pocahontas, Arkansas are themselves descendants of these pioneering families and own land first settled by Rice and Looney. They were aware of the significance of this continuity of 'connections' as well as the continuity of land ownership. As was pointed out in *The Restoration Journey*, we realized early that this project was destined to go beyond restoring unique examples of the state's built culture; it would indeed be a journey that would open, as Dr. Dale Greenawald has said, *a window into a society*.

The restoration of these donated structures, which are among the state's oldest, was funded by the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC). The rich family legacy extending over the past 200 years was, in part, what inspired the project title of *Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage* or REACH.





Top page, left, is a hand-stitched document from the 1821 Lawrence County Court of Common Pleas case that helps to establish Reuben Rice's role as a country merchant. Bottom page, left, is from William Looney's 1846 will. Vouchers from 1840s probate records, above, are bundled together for continuity – an example of early 19th century records management.

Kin & Connections

Reuben Rice and William Looney are considered to have been the builders of the two 'silent educators' standing on their original sites on opposite sides of the Eleven Point River. Their families were among the earliest to arrive in the valley; they, like so many others in the valley, had been connected by kinship or as neighbors for years. These 'connections' are clearly evident in the 1811 will of John Rice, Reuben's father. The senior Rice lived in Hawkins County, Tennessee in the Holston River Valley. In his will he identified his neighbor, Michael Looney, father of William Looney, as his *trusty friend*.

From initial stages the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council recognized the potential this project held for revealing one of the state's earliest settlements of yeoman farmers with their small number of African American slaves. Their support allowed for the multi-disciplinary research team of architects, archeologists, and historians to uncover the story over a five year period from 2006 to 2011. Architects uncovered the story of the built culture as they removed layer upon layer of materials that had covered the log framework of the structures. Archeologists uncovered more of the story buried under the ground. Historians uncovered another perspective through official records. Each discipline has been dependant on the other in order to present the summary of our discoveries shared here.

The early-19th century settlement story for the Eleven Point River Valley has not come forth without first wiping the proverbial 'slate' clean, erasing the boundary between Arkansas and Missouri, and then chronologically addressing the transformation of a wilderness. Official records have helped to redraw the scene in the valley according to where and how the settlers built their homes, their mills, and their roads as none existed when they arrived.

Establishing Perspective

By 1782 ELISHA BAKER had settled on the Nolichucky River in the Holston River Valley. In 1783 the area was designated as Greene County. Baker was well acquainted with the family of John Sevier who resided nearby.

In 1796 Baker assisted in writing the constitution for the new state of Tennessee when John Sevier served as governor. Prior to the Louisiana Purchase Baker and his family emigrated to the trans-Mississippi West; by 1815 two of Elisha's sons resided in the Eleven Point River Valley on a creek in Davidson Township that still bears their name.

Many of Arkansas's early and most powerful political leaders were born and raised in Greene County, Tennessee. For example, Ambrose H. Sevier (1801 – 1848), grand-nephew of Governor John Sevier and one of the first two state senators for Arkansas in 1836, did not leave Greene County until 1820.

The Baker family had been residing in Davidson Township for several years before Ambrose left Tennessee providing a significant perspective for the early settlement in the Eleven Point River Valley.

Davidson Township 1800 – 1860

The inter-connectedness of the pioneering families coming into the Eleven Point River Valley two hundred years ago made it impossible, and ill-advised, to extricate the Rice and Looney families alone for study. Although boundaries have changed somewhat over the years, the Rice-Upshaw House and the William Looney Tavern are still located in the same township created in 1818 and named Davidson. The arrival of the families pre-dates the creation of the township...and that is part of the story.

Some residents of the Eleven Point River Valley had first visited the valley as hunters prior to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. That too is part of the story. In order to understand the inspiration for planting their roots in the Eleven Point River Valley we had to begin our journey of discovery at the very beginning of the nineteenth century. We focused research on the lives of the earliest settlers. Only one of these first American migrants, Fielding Stubblefield (1785 – 1866), survived the Civil War period. Thus, 1800 – 1860 was deemed to be appropriate.

Multi-disciplinary Discoveries

With these two log structures dating to Arkansas's territorial period and representing the dominate form of built culture in the early settlement period, it was determined that the structures would be returned to their original forms as closely as could be determined. Now restored, Rice and Looney would find them little changed from the structures they knew in their lifetimes. Descendants recently gathered to celebrate their exceptional legacy so long cherished.





Dr. David Stahle, Director of the Tree-ring Laboratory, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, points out that the *educational potential of ...a field laboratory of settlements that preserve authentic 19th century cultural, historical, and natural archives... cannot be overstated.*

The Research Team

A diverse and wide-spread group of architects, archeologists, and historians have conducted research for Black River Technical College's Project REACH. All must be credited with uncovering the early settlement history of the Eleven Point River Valley. Additionally, the carefully documented research of professional and amateur family genealogists across the country contributed to the overall migration story. Most have participated strictly as volunteers.

Significantly, several of the researchers have been doctoral students in historic archeology and history. One doctoral dissertation has focused, in part, on the antebellum manuscript census history of Davidson Township 1820 – 1860. Scholarly research conducted by this multi-disciplinary team has resulted in numerous papers, presentations, and articles at multi-state academic meetings and conferences.



*Living History is the recreation
of a part of the past.*

Gerry Barker



The Research Team, continued

The diverse group of historians contributing to the research and interpretation of the early settlement in the Eleven Point River Valley includes living history reenactors, authors, and artists Gerry and Maria Barker from Frontier Resources, Edminston, Kentucky. Although they have spent years living the early lifestyles they interpret, they hold multiple academic degrees as well as having years of museum management experience.

Gerry, Maria, and Jacob Yoder visited Randolph County in October 2011 to help celebrate the opening of the REACH sites for public visitation. Their four oxen trod the same ground that Reuben Rice's oxen trod two centuries ago. As part of the interpretive effort for REACH, earlier video interviews with Gerry and Maria are used on the website and for site tours. They can relate from first-hand experience the hardships of a group migration and the effort required to transform a wilderness into productive farms.



Telling Us About Us

The Eleven Point River Valley holds decades of cultural heritage stories of rural Arkansas waiting to come forth from architectural remains, historic documents, and the people of the valley themselves. They are the very foundation of Project REACH – Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage.

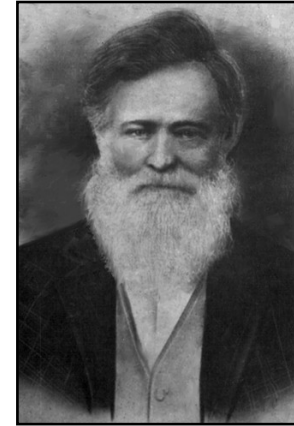


A Local Study Telling an American Story

The advantage of local studies...is the wealth of detail they can provide. By dealing with limited numbers of people, historians can carefully investigate the social, economic, and political status of individuals and competing segments of their communities. By getting to know these people intimately, scholars can better understand what motivated them and interpret their behavior with more confidence. They can flush out local stories to provide insights denied them when taking the longer view of events.

Daniel E. Sutherland, Ph.D.
Department of History
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In October of 2006, ninety-one-year-old Alma Smith vividly recalled the day when she was about ten years old and her Grandmother Looney asked her [[Uncle Bud]] to climb up the ladder that led to the attic space above the breezeway of the family's house at Elm Store, a now non-extant community in northwest Randolph County. Alma's grandparents, William C. and Caldonia Looney lived in the one-and-one-half story log dog-trot house that had been built by her great-grandfather, Michael Looney. Michael was the son of William and Rhoda Stubblefield Looney, Alma's great, great grandparents. Reuben Rice was also her great, great grandfather on the other side of the family. That makes Alma a fifth generation descendant of the interconnected Looney, Rice, and Stubblefield families of Scotch-Irish origins who settled in the Eleven Point River Valley of Davidson Township in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Some families brought their African-American slaves with them to the valley.



There are no known images of the first generation of pioneers who came into the Eleven Point River Valley 200 years ago. The earliest image is that of William and Rhoda Stubblefield Looney's son Michael (1823 – 1887), shown above. Below is a photograph of Michael's son, William Clinton Looney (1856 – 1933) and his wife Caldonia (1855 – 1946).



Cultural Heritage

For nearly a century past emancipation a few of the former slaves of the Eleven Point River Valley continued to live and work with the families of their former owners. Alma related the story that her father, Jasper, had been taught how to jig dance on the wooden sidewalk of her grandfather William's store by Rose, a former slave.



Alma Rice Smith and her great-granddaughter Emily are shown above in this 2006 photograph. Until her death in 2009, Alma was the oldest living fifth-generation descendant of William Looney and Reuben Rice. Emily is among the eighth-generation of descendants who live in Randolph County.

That day in the mid-1920s Grandmother Looney wanted young Alma to hand down the old flax wheel. By that time it had been out of use for decades. She wanted Alma to see the well worn wheel and to hear the stories of how it was used by past generations of her kinfolk to produce their own linen for household needs. Life had already changed so much by the 1920s that Grandmother knew Alma would never have the need to use the wheel for its intended purpose. Young Alma was receiving a lesson in the early cultural lifestyles of the ancestors from whom she descended (Alma Smith Interview 10/04/06). Now many of her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren live in Randolph County – the great-great grandchildren are among the ninth generation of William Looney and Reuben Rice descendants.

Another of the voices telling of the interconnected heritage of the Eleven Point River Valley families comes from Melissa Ozella Miller Upshaw - great-great-granddaughter of William Stubblefield and great-granddaughter of William Looney – who married the son of Lydia Rice Upshaw, grand-daughter of Reuben and Lydia Rice. Melissa Ozella, or Ozella as she was more commonly known, penned the stories of life in the Eleven Point River Valley as Lydia had told them to her with many having been told earlier to Lydia. Practically every remembrance presented in this history has been substantiated through architectural, archeological, and historical research.

The names of the original Rice settlers, Reuben and Lydia, had escaped Ozella – perhaps because their graves are marked with only field stones with no inscriptions. She did not have the advantage of modern technology to aide in recovery of past historical fact. Ozella's words from her charming book, *Lydia of the Valley*, have been excerpted from the original and are presented throughout Volume I. Her references to Thomas Blackman, Senior in place of Reuben Rice are noted with Reuben Rice in brackets only for clarification. Ozella's creative endeavors didn't end with *Lydia of the Valley*. Her artistic talents were expressed through paintings, music, poetry, and short stories all telling of a multi-generational cultural heritage that invites future academic discovery.

For the scores of families in Randolph County who have lived on generations-old homesteads and have remembrances and artifacts from bygone days, Project REACH - *Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage*, speaks of "home" and "ancestors." These families and their histories form a basis for studies that will, as Dr. Daniel Sutherland states, *allow scholars the opportunity to get... to know these people intimately,... better understand what motivated them and interpret their behavior with more confidence. They can flush out local stories to provide insights denied them when taking the longer view of events.*

The following historical overview covers the past two centuries of life in the beautiful and fertile Eleven Point River Valley in what became Davidson Township in northwest Randolph County, Arkansas - part of the Ozark Highlands region. The early history associated with the Anglo American and African American settlement on the Eleven Point is documented by a virtually unbroken chain of official records that can only be briefly explored for this study. By exposing this

wealth of primary sources related to the pre-territorial, territorial, and early statehood periods of this specific area of early settlement, the door is opened for future in-depth studies in numerous disciplines.

For any local study, and particularly one involving migrations to and continued settlement in a defined area such as Davidson Township, accurate identification of family units is imperative. The tremendous pride the residents of Randolph County have in their family ancestry and heritage has been handed down from generation to generation as noted in *Lydia of the Valley* and the lesson Grandmother Caldonia Looney gave to young Alma. This 'pride of place' has led to numerous carefully documented archives of family lineage extending for centuries and spanning continents. Oral traditions have been backed up with supporting facts; items of material culture have been cherished and preserved. These keepers of family heritage have generously shared their stories, their research, their heirlooms – the best examples of this generosity being the donations of the Rice – Upshaw House and Looney – French House to Black River Technical College. Without this background of cooperation, this study would not have succeeded in unlocking a most significant legacy of early Arkansas settlement.

Yet this particular history of early Arkansas settlement cannot start with the arrival of William Looney and Reuben Rice in the Eleven Point River Valley. These men were adults or nearly so when they established settlements on the river in the early 1800s, bringing with them the lifestyle traditions of their Scotch-Irish and English ancestors of the Appalachian Highlands. The history associated with Looney's and Rice's formative years provides an understanding of not only the lifestyles they transferred to what was to become Arkansas but, very specifically, the styles of houses they chose to build approximately one mile apart on either side of the river were part of the heritage they each brought with them.

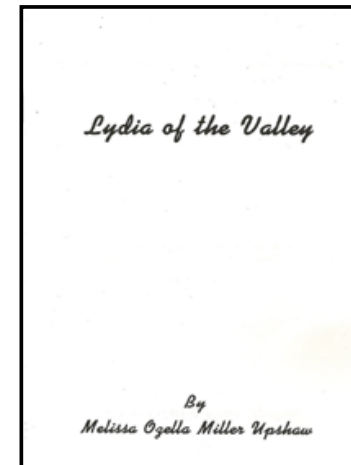
The early history of the Looney and Rice families, their kinfolk and neighbors prior to their migration west of the Mississippi also helps to shed light on the conditions and attitudes that inspired their relocation. This migration is part of the genesis of Arkansas's own Anglo American and African American history.

Because of the interconnectedness of these pioneering families who settled this part of the upper Eleven Point River Valley, it is impossible and ill-advised to extricate the historical background of only William Looney and Reuben Rice, the builders of the two log structures that form the foundation for Project REACH. Therefore, the scope of this historical overview has been expanded to incorporate all of Davidson Township, the governmental division of both Randolph County and its parent county, Lawrence, where the homesteads are located. This study is only the beginning of the vast amount of information to be gathered. Further study of the township is required to develop a comprehensive view of the settlement during the lifetime of these builders.

The inability to extricate the histories of either William Looney or Reuben Rice has led to the



Folk artist and author Melissa Ozella Miller Upshaw, above, penned the family memoir entitled *Lydia of the Valley*, below. Her paintings, including the Rice-Upshaw House during the years she resided there, are cherished by the recipients. She also wrote short-stories and poetry. She was a direct descendant of the intertwined Rice – Looney – Stubblefield families of Davidson Township.





Pictured at the age of 104 the late Vada Kirkpatrick Stubblefield, who lived the majority of her years on the banks of the Eleven Point River in the Dalton community, shared her vivid memories of life along the river. Historic photographs on the screen of the laptop she is holding, above, prompted remembrances of her family's store in Dalton and disastrous floods on the river. Her oral history of the town and her grandfather's days as a county doctor were captured via a digital recorder. Vada passed away in 2008 at the age of 105. The above photograph of Vada has become symbolic of the twenty-first century technology inspiring and capturing the remembrances of a centenarian about life in the Eleven Point River Valley – *telling us about us.*

development of one intertwined historical overview associated with the restorations of the both the 1828 Rice – Upshaw House and 1833 Looney – French House. While these two structures were constructed only five years apart and are located within one mile of one another they possess great diversity; this diversity speaks to the importance of understanding the varied log building traditions each builder brought to the valley. Numerous students at all academic levels – elementary through post-graduate – as well as independent scholars have contributed to the research related to the settlement and industry of early Davidson Township. Their studies are examples of the enlightenment that continued multi-disciplinary research efforts can produce.

Acadia Roher, a Centennial Scholar at Barnard College and Visiting Scholar at the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, is incorporating the Project REACH sites for cultural comparisons with the 1930s Williams Woods site located near St. Paul, Arkansas in Madison County. Faced with challenging interpretive complexities for the Williams site that includes a hand-hewn log house constructed a century after the Rice and Looney structures, Ms. Roher summarizes those challenges of gaining perspectives *from every possible angle* stating *[e]xploration is not the goal...finding the links, the interconnectedness...a challenge indeed.*

Like the challenges described by Ms. Roher, the Davidson Township retrospective is not simple, nor easy to establish, which underscores the years of research potential envisioned for Project REACH. This Rice & Looney History is only the beginning and there is no conclusion. The two territorial period log houses on either side of the Eleven Point River have inspired new beginnings – new beginnings for expanding knowledge of the early cultural heritage of Arkansas.

The native wild plum, like the one at the right blooming in a field once owned by Ezekiel Rice, son of Reuben, was highly valued by early settlers.



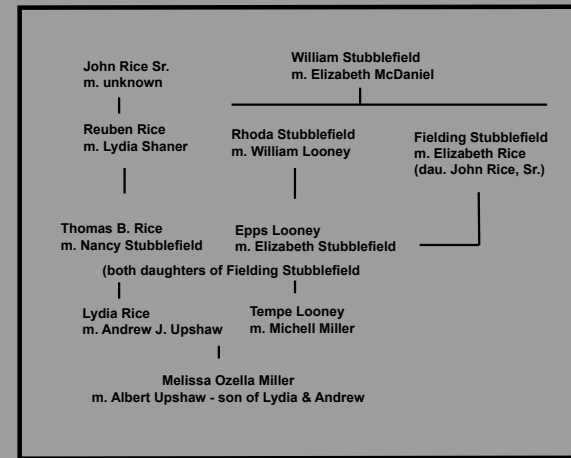
Ozella

In 1873 Melissa Ozella Upshaw, great-great granddaughter of William and Elizabeth (McDaniel)Stubblefield, great-granddaughter of William and Rhoda Looney, married Albert Lee Upshaw, a great-grandson of Reuben and Lydia Rice. Albert Lee was the son of Andrew Jackson and Lydia (Rice) Upshaw. Lydia, namesake of her grandmother Lydia, was the daughter of Thomas B. and Nancy (Stubblefield) Rice. The younger Lydia was born, grew up, and raised her own family in the old log house that Ozella named Old Monarch. Albert Lee and Ozella, too, lived in the Old Monarch throughout their married life and three children were born to them in the home. Lydia continued to live out her final years in this beloved log home with her son and daughter-in-law. It was during these years that Ozella grew to love Lydia and the cherished family memories she recounted. Ozella preserved these memories in a charming memoir entitled Lydia of the Valley.

Lydia of the Valley was only one of Ozella's artistic expressions. When she was over 80 years old she picked up a paint brush for the first time and painted the Old Monarch that was once again transformed from the alterations Lydia and Andrew Jackson Upshaw had made prior to 1900. The old logs walls sheltered the secrets of their beginnings from the younger Lydia and Ozella. Brightly colored flowers and trailing vines surrounded Ozella's Old Monarch. Within these walls Ozella wrote short-stories, poetry, composed music and sent it off to be scored. Family members to this day cherish the special gifts of paintings or poems from Ozella.



Melissa Ozella Miller Upshaw, age 16, from a painting by a St. Louis, Missouri artist.



Ozella's Family Tree



Albert and Melissa Ozella Upshaw, seated above, on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary. Standing behind them are their children, left to right, Willard, Mildred, and James Upshaw.

Ozella expressed her artistic talents in differing mediums from those of her ancestors. Oftentimes she had to 'make do' with the cardboard back of a paper tablet serving as the canvas for her paintings or scraps of paper for her poems. She frequently gave her paintings or poems to family friends. These were always cherished by the lucky recipients.



It was Thomas Blackman Rice who purchased the portion of the land his parents originally patented in 1823. Thomas B. is credited with transforming the original 1828 one-story secondary building on his parents' farm into a dwelling house for his own young family in the mid-1840s. The historic photograph, right, was taken ca. 1900. Ozella's painting was executed in the 1970s.

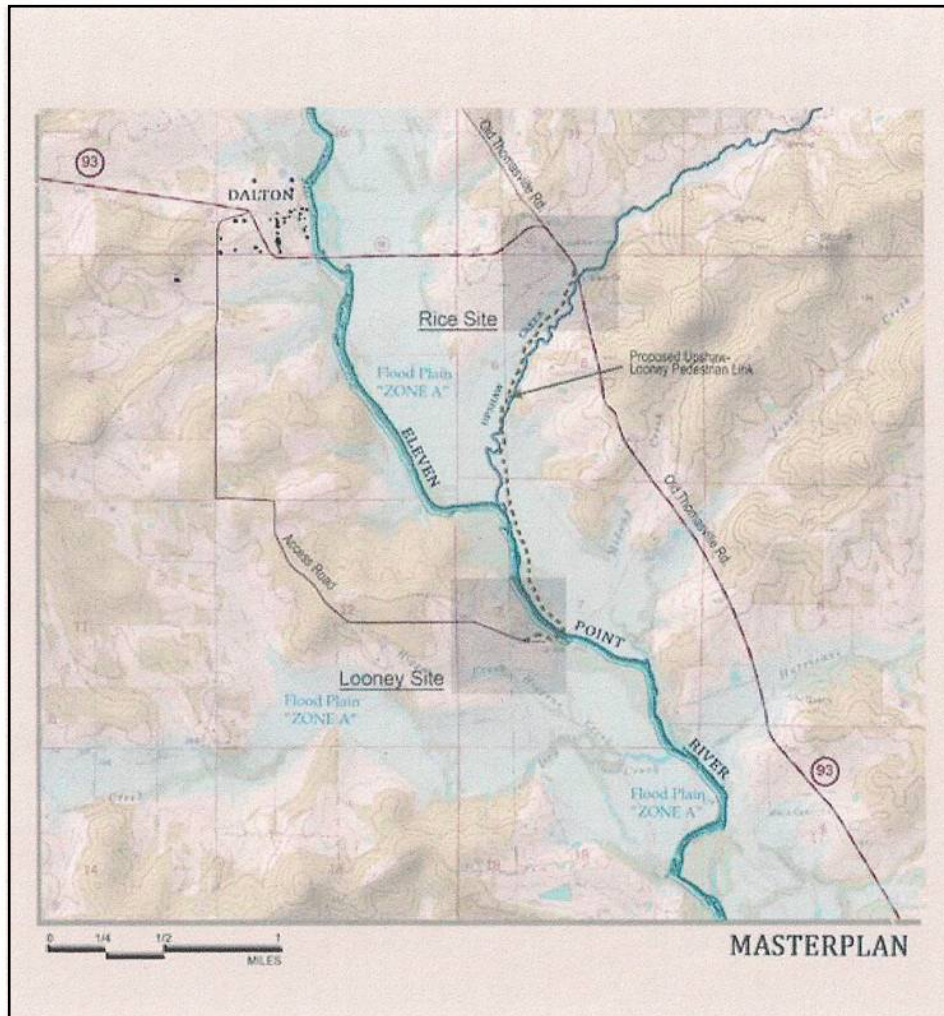
Our sincere appreciation

Only a brief summary of the historical research is presented here as a chronological narrative. Twenty-first century technology including use of digital photographs of restoration activity, archeological findings, and scans / photographs of related historic documents provides 'visual' footnotes throughout. More complete sourcing will be available as the *Historic Structure Report* in three volumes – *Rice-Upshaw House*, *William Looney Tavern*, and *Rice & Looney History* - is completed.

Twenty-first century technology is also allowing us to share what we have learned through an internet website and interpretive videos. We are not professionals in all these skills as will be evident. But we, like Reuben Rice, William Looney, and their kinfolk and neighbors, are not letting that fact hold us back from opening a new interpretive frontier focused on what Black River Technical College calls Project REACH – Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to all who have assisted in bringing this historical perspective into focus. Appreciation is also extended to the administration of Black River Technical College and the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council for the opportunity to participate in this adventure.

Tommy Jameson, AIA
Joan L. Gould



Historic Structure Report

The *Dictionary of Building Preservation* defines a *Historic Structure Report* (HSR) as “a written summary of a detailed analysis of a historic building or structure and its site; typically includes historical research, data from nondestructive testing, descriptions of the property and its physical condition, drawings, photographs, analysis of which components are original or later additions, and recommends preservation treatment” (Bucher, p.236). This approach for responsible documentation was developed by the National Park Service in the 1930s and remains the basic tool for assessing historic properties.

Cultural Heritage

The study of cultural heritage is *telling us about us*. The American Heritage Dictionary defines culture as:

The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought...These patterns, traits, and products (are) considered as the expression of a particular period, class, community, or population.

It further defines heritage as being both tangible and non-tangible:

Property that is or can be inherited... Something that is passed down from preceding generations; a tradition.