

ARKANSAS

HISTORY

Arkansas has been home to mound builders, Native nations, French traders and American settlers. Each of them helped shape the state you see on the map today.



The First Peoples

People have lived in Arkansas for at least 12,000 years. More than 1,000 years ago, Native people near the Arkansas River built tall **mounds** of earth for ceremonies. Later, the Caddo farmed in the southwest. The Quapaw had towns where the Arkansas River meets the Mississippi. The Osage hunted in the Ozarks. These nations traded with each other and sometimes fought over hunting land.



Spain and France

In 1541, Hernando de Soto led a Spanish army across the Mississippi River. His soldiers were the first Europeans in Arkansas. They looked for gold, fought several Native towns and left. In 1673, the French explorers Marquette and Jolliet reached the Quapaw towns. France claimed the land, and French traders built Arkansas Post in 1686. The Quapaw became their allies. Spain held the post by 1783, when British raiders and Chickasaw fighters attacked it. Spanish soldiers and Quapaw warriors drove them away.

A Territory and Its Treaties

The United States bought the land from France in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Settlers came for farmland. The army built Fort Smith in 1817 to keep

peace between the Osage and the Cherokee, who were fighting over hunting grounds. Congress made Arkansas a **territory** in 1819. In **treaties** signed from 1808 to 1828, the Osage, Quapaw, Cherokee and Choctaw gave up their Arkansas land for payments and land in other places, mostly farther west. In the 1830s, the government moved more nations from the East to what is now Oklahoma, and their routes crossed Arkansas. Native people still live in Arkansas today.

Statehood and the Civil War

Arkansas became the 25th state on June 15, 1836. Farmers grew cotton on **plantations** along the rivers. Enslaved Black people did much of that work. By 1860 they were about one of every four people in Arkansas. In 1861, Arkansas left the United States and joined the Confederacy. The Union army won the Battle of Pea Ridge in 1862 and captured Little Rock in 1863. The Union won the war in 1865, and slavery ended.

Building Arkansas

After the war, workers laid railroads across the state. Towns grew along the tracks. The University of Arkansas opened in Fayetteville in 1872. Sawmills cut pine forests into lumber. Miners dug the ore used to make aluminum. In 1921, drillers struck oil near El Dorado. In 1962, Sam Walton opened the first Walmart store in Rogers. In 1971, new locks and dams let barges travel the Arkansas River all the way to Oklahoma.

ARKANSAS THROUGH TIME



PEOPLE TO KNOW

Henri de Tonti	Founded Arkansas Post in 1686.
Hattie Caraway	First woman elected to the U.S. Senate.
Douglas MacArthur	Army general. Born in Little Rock in 1880.
Maya Angelou	Writer and poet. Grew up in Stamps.
Sam Walton	Opened the first Walmart in 1962.

WORDS TO KNOW

mound	a hill of earth built by people
territory	land run by the United States that is not yet a state
treaty	a written agreement between nations
plantation	a large farm that grows a crop to sell