

LITTLE ROCK'S STREET NAMES

The best description of early Little Rock was written by Judge William F. Pope in his book "Early Days in Arkansas". His account of the city's streets as they appeared when he arrived here in 1832 is particularly interesting.

The streets in the town proper which extended south from the river did not run due south, but had a variation of eight degrees west. The names of all except two of these streets remain unchanged today. Starting at the eastern city limits, they were: Rock, Cumberland, Scott, East Main (now Main Street), Louisiana, Center, Spring, West Main (now Broadway), Arch and Gaines. East Main and West Main were 80 feet wide, and the others were 60 feet wide. Rock was the only street that extended all the way to the southern city limits.

The streets running east and west were: Elm (now Bridge Street), Markham, Cherry (now 2nd Street), Mulberry (now 3rd Street), Walnut (now 4th Street), Orange (now 5th Street), Elizabeth (now 6th Street), Chesnut (now 7th Street), Hazel (now 8th Street), Holly (now 9th Street), and Caroline (now 10th Street). The southern boundary of the city was one block south of Caroline Street. All of these streets were 60 feet wide, with the exception of Orange (5th Street), which was 80 feet wide. North and Water were two short streets west of Arch and north of Markham. The earliest town plat also shows a two-block-long street called East Street, which began at Hazel (9th Street) and ran southward to the city limits.

Elm Street (now Bridge Street) was described by Pope as "a narrow street, scarcely more than an alley". It extended from the extreme western city limits, at Gaines Street, eastward to what is now Commerce Street. At that time, Commerce was not inside the city limits, and was only a block long. It was called First Street, and it extended from the steamboat landing at the river's edge to the end of Markham Street.

In 1870 the city council passed an ordinance changing the names of the streets running east and west. By that time, many other streets had been opened up, and several of these newer streets also received new names. Second Street became Sherman Street, Sevier Street became 11th Street, and Fulton Street became 12th Street. The present 13th Street was formerly known as Arsenal Street, 14th Street was Watkins Street, 15th Street was Woodruff Street, 16th Street was Pope Street, and 17th Street was Russell Street.

In February of 1870, a few months prior to the changing of Little Rock's street names, the city council instructed the street commissioner to number the houses in the city. Center Street was the first street in Little Rock to be paved its entire length. It was opened to traffic from Markham to 18th on January 17, 1906. On February 14, 1906, the contract was let for the paving of 22 blocks on 15th, Cross and 16th Streets, and on the following day the contract was let for the paving of Main Street from 8th to 24th Streets.