

# Barham, Arkansas

*Written and contributed by Carolyn Cox; compiled from research and personal interviews.*

More than twenty years before Barham came into existence, settlers were already living in that area of northwest Ouachita County. Early land patents were awarded to Thomas Noland, James C. Tutt, John B. Pearce, and Elisha Jones. Other notable families in the vicinity were the Benton and Johnson families from Georgia, the Grayson and Frizzell families from Tennessee, and the Tuberville and Ridgell families from Alabama. Many of their descendants still live in Ouachita County.

The community of Barham was located between Sections 3 and 4 of Township 12 S, Range 19 W, about halfway between present-day Chidester and the old community of Sayre. It was named for Charles R. Barham (1825-1914). Ouachita County tax records show that he owned over 800 acres of land in the area. According to *Godspeed*, he erected a water-powered mill on a small stream in 1878. The mill was in operation for about ten years. It had the distinction of being the first sawmill on the Camden to Gurdon branch of the St Louis Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad when the track was completed in 1881.

The railroad took advantage of the water available near Barham's mill and installed a pump and a water tank to service their steam engines. They also constructed a small depot. A post office was established with John E. Bradley transferring from Red Hill to be the first postmaster. C.R. Barham and W.A. Cox also served as postmasters for a time. A 1900 business directory listed J.C. Grayson as postmaster and owner of a general store. Also listed were W.W. Camp, blacksmith; W.R. Cubage, justice; and J.M. Stinnett, lawyer. Barham students attended Center Point School in School District #27.

In 1917 the St Louis Iron Mountain & Southern was absorbed by Missouri-Pacific. Bryant Lumber Company put in a steam-powered sawmill and planer mill about this time, but the Barham community failed to thrive. As with many other small communities, the consolidation in 1928 of Barham / Center Point School with Chidester marked the beginning of the end. In 1931 the Barham post office was closed. Missouri-Pacific abandoned the depot after World War II and sold it to J.L. Benton. He moved it to his place just up the hill where it served for some years as a residence.

Union Pacific, who had bought out Missouri-Pacific in 1982, announced the abandonment of the Gurdon to Camden line in 1996 and began to remove the ties and rails. The roadbed with its gray granite rock is still visible just past Barham Branch on Ouachita Road 28. Down the roadbed to the right, one can see the old mill pond and a remnant of the Bryant sawmill. Behind tangled vines, a concrete slab about 15'x 45' stands as a monument to the Barham that once was.

