



Jacob and Rebecca Barkman home

Clark County pioneer Jacob Barkman arrived in what is now Clark County about 1811 and quickly established himself as an entrepreneur and leader in river commerce. He opened the area's first cotton gin and became the first to operate a steamboat on the Ouachita River. Barkman became a large landowner, amassing holdings of approximately 22,000 acres by the time of his death. So significant was his impact on the area's economic growth and development, he is often called "The Father of Clark County."

Jacob Barkman was born in Kentucky in 1784 and lived there until moving to Clark County. He and his wife Rebecca first built a cabin on the Caddo River, then constructed a two-story home made of sun-dried bricks. The Barkmans' home was the site of much political and economic activity. Clark County's first postoffice was located there, and following the creation of Clark County in 1818, his house also served as the county seat. The home served as a stop for stagecoaches, and even performed duty as the county jail. Approximately five miles from Arkadelphia, Barkman's house was located along the Military Road, the primary transportation artery which ran from St. Louis to Little Rock to Mexico and the Southwest. One of the distinctive aspects of his property was the race track he built. Interestingly, it circled an old Indian mound. Local legend says that people came from as far away as Kentucky and Tennessee to wager on their favorite horses.