

# Made *in the* Timber



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A Settlement History of the  
Fort Leonard Wood Region

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Steven D. Smith

The plateau and hill regions of the central Ozarks were settled last, in part because of their poverty, but principally because of their isolation.

— Carl Sauer

Despite its isolation, tough, independent-minded pioneers from Tennessee and Kentucky gradually settled the land between the Big Piney River and Roubidoux Creek in southern Pulaski County, Missouri, beginning in the early nineteenth century. This book relates the settlement history and use of this beautiful but tenuous Missouri Ozark region from its initial exploration to its purchase by the U.S. Army just prior to World War II for the construction of Fort Leonard Wood. It is a story of a distinctly American-bred culture that took what the land provided to sometimes flourish, sometimes just survive—but in all things and at all times act with an autonomy that today defines the Ozark land and people. This book is presented to the people of Pulaski County by the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood in memory of those who came before.



Steven D. Smith is the Associate Director for Applied Research at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina. He has a B.A. in history from the Virginia Military Institute and an M.A. in anthropology from the University of Kentucky. As a research archaeologist and historian, Steve has received awards for his research on African American military history and on Francis Marion. He has written and published extensively on American military history and settlement history. Steve lives in Columbia, South Carolina with his wife Pat and son Nathan.

# Made in the Timber: A Settlement History of the Fort Leonard Wood Region

by  
Steven D. Smith

with contributions by  
Alex Primm



**Cover Photo: Tie raft along an Ozark River** (courtesy Pulaski County Historical Society).

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*If you had a good river bottom farm you could make it. But it was a poor livin' in the fort. The people there grew everything they needed. But mostly, people there made it in the timber.*

GEORGE LANE—MAY 16, 1992

This book is dedicated to Richard Edging, Adam Smith, the late George Lane, and the people who lived in Southern Pulaski County, 1800–1940.





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# Acknowledgments

In 1991, I was asked to develop an overview of the history of the Fort Leonard Wood region in order to place the historic sites in a regional context. The result of that effort was *Made It in the Timber, A Historic Overview of the Fort Leonard Wood Region, 1800–1940*. This book is a reevaluation and expansion of that work. The research for this study was originally conducted for the Cultural Resources Management Program, Fort Leonard Wood, under the auspices and funding of the Department of Defense. The work was originally performed under the direction of the Cultural Resources Research Center, Planning and Mission Impact Division of the Land Management Laboratory, U.S. Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL), and this final manuscript was under the direction of the Land and Heritage Conservation Branch of CERL, part of the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Champaign, Illinois. Although it is my name on the cover, it took a great many people to research and write such a work. Acknowledging those many people is a joyful but anxious duty. I am delighted and humbled to name those who have assisted, but at the same time anxious that no one is missed. So let me begin by thanking any and all who, through my own inattention, are not included herein.

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he was conducting, and was always helpful throughout the several years of research for this book. He also allowed me to computer scan photographs from his personal postcard collection of the region.

At the Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, Illinois State University, Dr. Charles E. Orser, Jr., and Mr. Jerry Moore assisted in the historic overview. The maps used were originally generated by Jerry and modified for this book. At the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, Dr. Bruce Rippeteau is Director and constant encourager of historical and archaeological research. Among my colleagues there I must include Dr. Christopher Ohm Clement, who listened long hours about diverse aspects of the northern Ozarks and provided much-appreciated assistance in preparing the photographs and maps for this book, as did Ms. Tamara Wilson and Dr. Jonathan Leader. Although nothing herein was written *sine numine*, remaining errors and omissions are mine alone.

Steven D. Smith  
July 2003





# Foreword

## The Hill

...Where are Uncle Isaac and Aunt Emily,  
And old Towny Kincaid and Sevine Houghton,  
And Major Walker who had talked  
With venerable men of the revolution?—  
All, all are sleeping on the hill.

They brought them dead sons from the war,  
And daughters whom life had crushed,  
And their children fatherless, crying—  
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill...

Edgar Lee Masters—*The Spoon River Anthology*

The purpose of this book is to examine a small part of the northern Ozarks from the perspective of a landscape history. The manuscript took shape during discussions on how we could build upon the success of the technical report *Made It in the Timber: A Historic Overview of the Fort Leonard Wood Region, 1800–1940* by Steven D. Smith. Completed in 1993, the original report was a landscape approach for evaluating historic sites discovered during archaeological survey. At Fort Leonard Wood and the United States Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, we proposed that archaeological sites need to be addressed through a regional context. Our approach to site significance emphasized the development of a regional or local history, within the framework of the cultural and geographical landscape, and unifying these into a historic context statement. Such historical contexts assist in managing and preserving those archaeological sites that best represent the full range and variety of the area's cultural history. The first step identified distinct chronological changes to the landscape as regional settlement progressed. The second step was using

these landscapes to identify a historic context, defined here as a unifying cultural theme describing the region, its people, and their historic resources. The third step was to integrate the history and context statement with recorded archaeological resources. From this work we developed a detailed research and management plan for the evaluation of historic sites. Historical documentation in essence brought the archaeology of our region to life.

For this volume we stressed the first two steps as ordered by the natural and cultural landscape. We were also interested in how the northern Ozarks fits into the larger picture of American history. This approach created many layers of research that focused on how frontier and backcountry settlements changed through time. New research was added as well as additional emphasis on the Civil War, transportation, agriculture, tie-hacking, people, and landscape changes. Oral histories, photographs, maps, and illustrations added flavor to descriptions and historical accounts. In total, it is a vastly different work that blends extensive historical documentation with oral history.

To summarize this volume, Smith introduces perspectives that use archaeology, history, and geography in an attempt to portray the northern Ozarks as a unique Upland South tradition. Although separated by time and culture, pre-Columbian Native Americans adapted to Ozark isolation, living in hunter-gatherer bands for millennia. Late in the pre-Columbian era they organized into small agricultural communities and neighborhoods. As a thread that binds the early chapters together, Smith follows the Turpin family through the early years of historic settlement and the growth of Pulaski County. A major portion of the volume is devoted to early settlement and antebellum history due to its influence on the character of the region. The region's involvement in the Civil War, while removed from the major theaters of war, produced profound results. Smith's research skillfully summarizes Pulaski County's role in the conflict and how its outcome affected the region for generations. After the war, the railroad boom that swept the country chose a northern county route, creating a dichotomy of development. The northern part of the county became more Midwestern and market-oriented while the south remained a more traditional Ozarkian prewar landscape. This theme and the growth of farming communities are wonderfully portrayed through economic and societal changes. These changes are set against the background of early twentieth century life, the Depression, and preparation for World War II. Smith's research chronicles an accurate and poignant picture of Pulaski County history before the establishment of Fort Leonard Wood in 1941. Meshed with this history are the words of the people who once lived on the land, elegantly recorded by Alex Primm.

The history of a landscape—whether frontier, backcountry, or urban—is a rich tapestry of people, events, tragedy, and triumph. The threads that unite the Ozark landscape with other frontier and backcountry histories are adaptation, isolation, and culture. This book attempts to explain the northern Ozarks as a unique region but one that also mirrors cultural influences that formed and shaped its Upland South heritage. Viewed from the perspective of a county's history as a framework, Smith has deftly captured the essence of northern Ozark culture through a century-and-a-half of incremental change. Although this change was hardly noticeable and many aspects of the distinctive Ozarkian lifestyle remain, change did come, interwoven with major events of American history—trans-Appalachian settlement, the Civil War, the railroad, market economies, and World War II. And while these major events help frame the distinctive history of the northern Ozarks, the history of individuals, their families, and their work is paramount. Smith has not lost sight of this perspec-

tive. He has embraced the successes and frailties of everyday people, who lived, worked, raised families, and died in a land between two rivers, now called Fort Leonard Wood.

The training of our Army requires room for maneuvers and cantonment; however, the installation has protected vast stretches of land, creeks, and rivers. Spread across this landscape are the remains of several ancient communities that, like their historic counterparts, attest to the people's skill in adapting to a land removed from more complex cultures. Later, historic Ozark settlers would bypass the Mississippi River, travel the route of Native Americans, and build mills, towns, churches, schools, farmhouses, and cemeteries in the backcountry. These historic archaeological sites speak to us now as silent reminders of a culture that worked hard to earn a living, and along the way, loved the land they shared with nature. A visit to one of the hundreds of farmhouse ruins leads one to imagine the laughter, the celebrations, the births, and deaths that must have taken place. A walk through one of the fort's cemeteries is a reminder of how families lived to old age, knew their grandchildren, or sometimes died tragically young. These were the pioneers, these were the hard workers, and these were the people that endured. It is to these people and their descendants that we dedicate this book.

Richard Edging, Ph.D.  
Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

Suzanna Langowski  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
July 2003





## Introduction

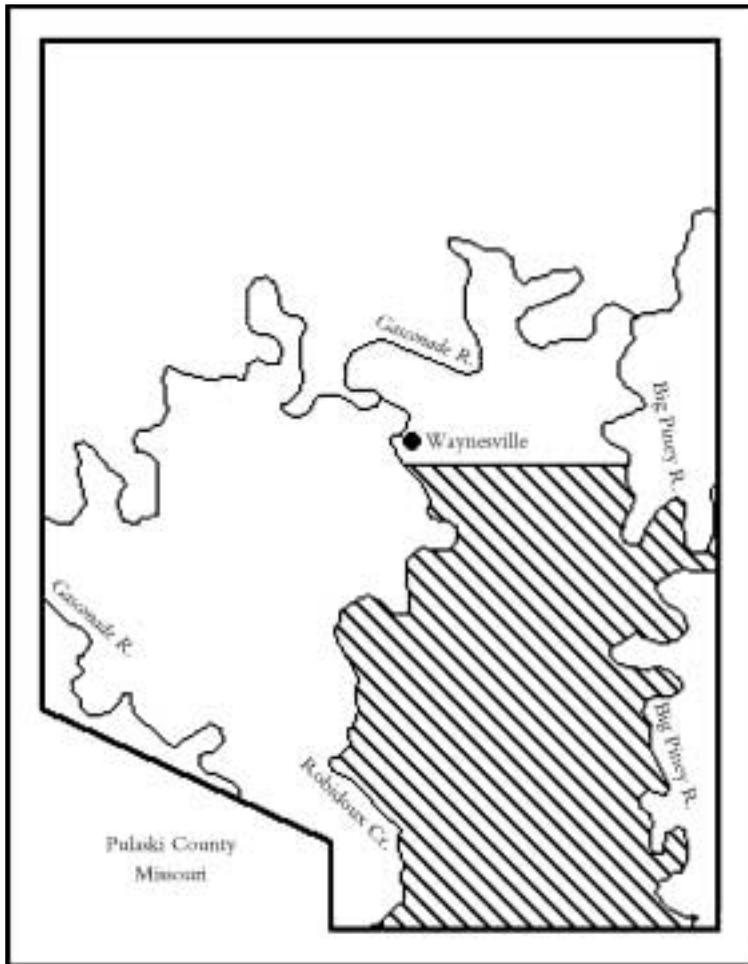
# Landscape and Life in Southern Pulaski County

The plateau and hill regions of the central Ozarks were settled last, in part because of their poverty, but principally because of their isolation.<sup>1</sup>

Carl Sauer

Despite its isolation, tough, independent-minded pioneers from Tennessee and Kentucky gradually settled the land between the Big Piney River and Roubidoux Creek in southern Pulaski County, Missouri, beginning in the early nineteenth century (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> This book relates the history of human occupation and use of this beautiful but tenuous Missouri Ozark region from its initial exploration to its use today as the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood. It is a story of a distinctly American-bred culture that took what the land provided to sometimes flourish, sometimes just survive—but in all things and at all times act with an autonomy that today defines the Ozark land and people.

For cultural geographer Carl Sauer, the late settlement of the Ozarks was due to its landscape—timbered, infertile, and rough. It was largely unattractive to those pioneer farmers seeking rich, broad river bottomlands where they could grow tall corn. Most preferred the Missouri River and its major tributaries. Unalluring to cash-crop farmers, the Ozarks were also avoided by most speculators, merchants, millers, and even politicians, all of whom relied on large agrarian populations supported by fertile lands. But rolling lands like those found in the Ozarks were attractive to a particular type of pioneer, the hunter-stockman, who looked upon the woodland as a land of enough. Within the wooded hollows and on the prairie uplands there was enough game to hunt and enough timber to build a cabin. The forests provided plenty of means to make it, one just had to be flexible, making use of what was seasonally available. An infertile upland backwoods like the land between the Roubidoux and the Big Piney was a homeland. Its isolation may have even been desired. Isolation meant freedom and independence from encroaching neighbors and government.



**Figure 1.** Location of Fort Leonard Wood and The Study Area (Courtesy of South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology [SCIAA] 2003).

Historically, the Missouri Ozark's isolation was an environmental fact that became a cultural attribute.

But Ozark isolation is not, nor has it ever been, total. It did not mean that nothing beyond the Ozarks affected the landscape and lives of Ozark people. Although insulated from the world at large, especially when it came to day-to-day events, national and world trends and governmental policies still affected the Ozark settler's way of life. If anything, the following history of southern Pulaski County demonstrates not so much a dependency, but perhaps, from an Ozarkian point of view, an often irresistible and sometimes necessary intrusion of the outside world into a cherished lifestyle. The Civil War changed the lives of Ozark people. Likewise, the ever-increasing national demand for natural resources in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed the natural landscape in southern Pulaski

County. Eventually, both land and people were exhausted by this exploitation. Once this region of the Ozarks was opened and exploited by outside stresses, the cherished traditions of isolation and independence that had served the people well were no longer able to serve them further. In this light the following history of the Fort Leonard Wood region is the story of a highly adaptable people who struggled to maintain a way of life on a fragile landscape.

Fort Leonard Wood's regional history is in its landscape. Because the Ozarks are both a distinctive place and a people, it is nearly impossible to relate historical events and trends in southern Pulaski County without also relating the changing natural and cultural landscape. Therefore, this book is not just a history of the Fort Leonard Wood region; it is a history of a landscape. History as landscape change is not a new way of looking at the past. The eminent cultural geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer defined the term landscape and its study in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> Sauer saw landscape as the result primarily of human activity, in which human works are inscribed on the earth's surface giving the land its characteristic expression.<sup>4</sup> He also recognized the importance of the historical dynamics of the landscape, the changes or evolution that occurred to create the cultural landscape. Although Sauer was interested in the formation of landscape and the culture that produced it, he was less interested in understanding the culture itself. His focus was on the effect culture had on the landscape. The culture's lifeways and traditions were of lesser importance in landscape study. "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result."<sup>5</sup> For Carl Sauer the landscape was primarily a place and the artifacts of that place were buildings, roads, and fences. In this sense landscape was culture, intruded upon nature. Later geographers wrestled with his definition, and sought to broaden its scope. Like anthropologists, they desired to do more than merely describe the landscape and its features; they sought to interpret meanings and structure within the landscape. Cultural geographers today have moved on and expanded Sauer's original concept and continue to debate and offer differing theoretical and interpretive approaches. Still there is some basic agreement within the profession that the concept of landscape incorporates "Those works of man that are inscribed into the earth's surface and give to it characteristic expression."<sup>6</sup>

Archaeologists too have focused on the landscape in their understanding of the past, but with different meanings. Landscape archaeology in America developed out of the study of regional prehistoric settlement patterns and systems; measuring and examining sites in time and space.<sup>7</sup> With the advent of historical archaeology as a subdiscipline, studies of the historic landscapes were the result of a natural progression of settlement pattern studies, as archaeologists struggled to get beyond the narrow single-site studies. In a sense, almost any multisite archaeological study incorporated at least an aspect of landscape examination simply in the discussion of the special relationship between sites. But that was not landscape archaeology. It sought much broader and complex meanings and structure, in a manner similar to the post-Sauer studies by modern cultural geographers. Archaeologists took a decidedly multidisciplinary approach to include the theoretical perspectives of anthropology and ethnohistory. Obviously, the landscape in archaeological studies also included the subsurface manifestations of previous landscape features, which are useful in examining past landscapes and landscape change. However, recent studies may have gone even beyond 'place' and artifacts. What is sometimes labeled landscape archaeology has, within the past ten years, shifted

the focus from settlement patterns and systems to the study of how humans use and create 'landscapes' in social control, power, gender, and group identity.<sup>8</sup> While such studies have their place, this broadening has created a kind of tower of Babel for landscape archaeology within the subdiscipline of historical archaeology. As cultural geographer John J. Winberry has commented in a critique of archaeologically oriented landscape studies, archaeologists have not agreed on a single definition of landscape.<sup>9</sup>

One important past effort in landscape archaeology merely defines it as "the spatial manifestation of the relations between humans and their environment."<sup>10</sup> This definition offers a good starting point for the present study of the Fort Leonard Wood region. Landscape as used in this book returns to Sauer's concept of place and the historical changes that have occurred within that place, but adds another dimension. The author views landscape as the land's influence on the construct of human occupation, and vice versa, the effects of human exploitation on the land. As we occupy the land, we mark, scar, and modify it in ways that reflect our culture. As our culture changes, the land is altered, creating new landscapes. Further, our culture is transformed by the challenges of living on the land. Thus, landscapes are formed as human interactions modify the land, and at the same time, the characteristics of existing landscapes influence human interactions. This 'interaction' of humanity and nature constantly creates the current landscape while fragments of past landscapes survive. Drive down any country road, any city street, and see both the past and the present—and where construction intrudes, glimpse the future landscape. The landscape as defined here then, is both a cultural and natural phenomena—it is the result of the interaction of the two. This definition is neither totally environmentally deterministic nor totally culturally deterministic. It views the creation of the landscape as the result of the physical attributes of the land's geology and geomorphology, and of the cultural traits and traditions of the people who made a particular region their home. Like Sauer, the author is less concerned with the landscape as symbolic of political, social, or economic meanings or of deep ideological meanings.

And this is where this study diverges from both a cultural geographer's definition of landscape and also from a strictly archaeological definition. This book seeks simply to relate the history of a small region of the Ozarks noting the landscape change and the persistence of cultural traits uniquely Ozarkian within that area. The landscape approach herein simply provides an organizational framework for telling the history of southern Pulaski County. In the following chapters, the region's history will be told by painting the initial landscape prior to Euro-American settlement, and then by describing the changes that occurred as Americans occupied the region in gradually increasing numbers. Through time from around 1800 to 1940, four chronological landscapes will be painted. The first landscape is the prehistoric landscape. This was the landscape the Europeans and Americans found when they first arrived. Even then it was not a pure natural landscape, as Native Americans had occupied and modified its setting for thousands of years. The second landscape was that of the explorer and early settlers continuing up to and including the Civil War. This was a time of formation, organization, and hope until the tumultuous Civil War derailed hope for many. The third landscape was a period of postbellum rebuilding and growth and a new wave of settlers rebuilding their lives and society. The pace of landscape modification and resource exploitation quickened, and as this occurred the region became less and less isolated. But in the final twentieth century landscape, the resources eventually gave out, and overexploitation led to

another period of turmoil, exacerbated by a collapsed world economy. In this state of national economic stagnation, the United States government began purchasing the land; eventually the people were relocated to make way for the army.

Within each of these landscapes, the book will discuss the development of settlement and population (including villages and hamlets), agriculture and industry, transportation, and sociopolitical change. The landscapes will describe the interactions between the people and the land in an attempt to reconstruct a sense of place in time and space. This will be accomplished in seven chapters. A final chapter concludes with some observations about the nature of isolation that Sauer deemed characteristic of the Ozark and Fort Leonard Wood landscape. They are offered to the modern residents of Pulaski County as points of discussion and debate with the hope that they invigorate that Ozark sense of place and tradition among those who now call it home.

Finally, sprinkled through this history, the author, with the help of contributor Alex Primm, has incorporated stories collected from residents whose ancestors lived within the region. This oral history provides insights about the cultural landscape that neither documentary history nor archaeology can reveal. It is through such oral history that the region's traditions are kept alive. Novelist G.K. Chesterton has stated that tradition is the democracy of the dead. By integrating these stories within the book, the author hopes that those residents of the Fort Leonard Wood region who are no longer living have yet had a chance to speak and shape their own history.

## Notes for Introduction

- 1 Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Geography of the Ozark Highland of Missouri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1920), p. 148.
- 2 Specifically, this book focuses on the history of settlement along the river valleys of Roubidoux Creek and the Big Piney River, and the upland between (Figure 1). The northern border can be sharply defined as the Gasconade River, while the southern border is loosely the Pulaski-Texas County line, although some interesting aspects of the study will include northern Texas County between the Roubidoux and Big Piney. Obviously, historical events beyond these borders that affected the people within are also discussed.
- 3 John J. Winberry, "The Geographic Concept of Landscape: The History of a Paradigm," in *Carolina's Historical Landscapes, Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by Linda F. Stine, Martha Zierden, Lesley M. Drucker, and Christopher Judge (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), p. 4.
- 4 Carl Ortwin Sauer, "Cultural Geography," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* Volume 6(1931):21–24.
- 5 Carl Ortwin Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape," in *Land and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, edited by John Leighly (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 343.
- 6 For a more detailed discussion of the history of academic debate in the study of landscapes, see Winberry, "Geographic Concept of Landscape." Quote is from p. 11 of this article.
- 7 K.C. Chang, *Settlement Patterns in Archaeology*, Module 24 in Anthropology (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publications, 1972); Carole L. Crumley and William H. Marquardt, *Regional Dynamics: Burgundian Landscapes in Historical Perspective* (New York, Academic Press, 1987); Karl W. Butzer, *Archaeology as Human Ecology: Method and Theory for a Contextual Approach* (England: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

- 8 See for instance, Dee Dee Joyce, "The Charleston Landscape on the Eve of the Civil War: Race, Class, and Ethnic Relations in Ward Five," in *Carolina's Historical Landscapes*, (University of Tennessee Press, 1997) pp. 175–185.
- 9 Winberry, "Geographic Concept of Landscape," p. 11.
- 10 Crumley and Marquardt, *Burgundian Landscapes*, p. 1.

