

# Photo of the Month

J.A.C. Blackburn (1841-1919)



J.A.C. Blackburn, about 1900.  
(Negative #N009797)

James Alexander Cameron Blackburn, who was recognized in the late 19th century as the “lumber king” of Northwest Arkansas, was born in 1841 at War Eagle to Sylvanus and Catherine Blackburn, two of the earliest settlers in this area. The sixth of nine children, J.A.C. assisted his father in his grist mill. He then spent four years in the Confederate Army, about which time he said “I never got a scratch, or a full meal.”

Blackburn returned home in 1865 to farm. In 1867 he started a small store and in 1873 rebuilt the War Eagle saw and grist mill, which he managed. In 1884 he sold both mills and succeeded his neighbor Peter Van Winkle as proprietor of the Van Winkle mills; eventually he also owned three other mills, including one in Madison County. By 1889 his total output was over 3 million feet of lumber per year. He also owned more than 17,000 acres of timber lands throughout Northwest Arkansas. In 1890 he transferred his offices to Rogers, where he lived until his death in 1919. The house he built in 1907 at 220 N. Fourth Street, designed by A.O. Clarke, still stands.

Blackburn is credited with having built the first structure in Rogers from his War Eagle mills. He took an active interest in the new town and engaged in numerous business pursuits, including the organization of the Rogers Milling Company and ownership of three hotels. He was elected to the Arkansas senate in 1895 and again in 1897 as a democrat.

In 1868 Blackburn married Ellen Van Winkle, a daughter of Peter Van Winkle, who died in 1884, having borne four daughters. In 1886 Blackburn married Belle Harris of Springdale. Upon Blackburn’s death in 1919 Mayor Funk closed all public offices and businesses for his Masonic funeral. Like the rest of his pioneering family, Blackburn is buried in the War Eagle cemetery.