

By Donna Dodson

Newton County is made up of 823\* square miles and as anyone who has ever been to Newton County can say, "There would be twice that much or more if it were all smoothed out." But then, it wouldn't be Newton County would it? It would just be like other boring pieces of flat land.

The old settlers picked this area for more than one reason. It was good to look at, the ground was fertile, there was plenty of fish and wild game, and there was always a hill close by to knock off part of the cold wind.

Newton County was formed in December, 1842 from Carroll County. The 1850 census, the first one taken after Newton was formed, showed there to be a total of 1,758 people living within its boundaries. By 1900 the population had grown to 12,538, the most densely populated the county has ever been. This increased population was brought about by the immigration of out-of-state homesteaders and land speculators. As the population grew, word had spread that there was free land available in Newton County. All that had to be done was to prove up on the land, and obtain title to it. It would seem that some who filed for free land had no intentions of staying in Newton County. They were just after what money they could make by selling the land after they obtained the title.

The ones who stayed must have been from special stock in order to make a living in Newton County. They were hard workers who loved their rocky patch of land and learned to make do with a lot less than their city cousins. They didn't mind if they were poorer than the Joneses. They just wanted to be left alone to live out their lives in this paradise called Newton County, Arkansas.

The 2000 Census showed there to be 8,608 persons living in those 823 square miles in 3,500 households. That would be 10.5 persons per square mile.

Year	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
Total Population	1,758	3,393	4,374	6,120	9,950	12,538	10,612	11,199	10,564
Percent Change	n/a	93%	28.9%	39.9%	62.6%	26%	-15.4%	5.5%	-5.7%

Year	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Total Population	10,881	8,685	5,963	5,844	7,756	7,666	8,608
Percent Change	3%	-20.2%	-31.3%	-2%	32.7%	-.01%	12.3%

\*Walter Lackey says 846 square miles, while a map in the County Judges office says 822.

\*\*There is a difference of 3,930 less in 2000 than there were in 1900.