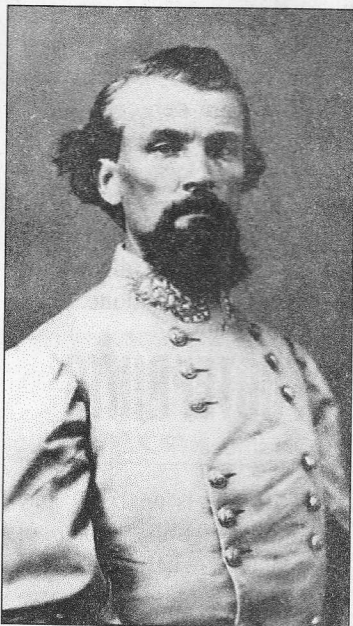


Under the administration of Governor James Alcorn, an act of the state legislature on July 15, 1870 provided for the formation of Benton County out of portions of Marshall and Tippah Counties. George W. Vaughn and Louis J. McDonald, local leaders, and Senator W. T. Stricklin led the campaign for the establishment of this new county.

The name Benton suggested by James M. McDonald and Oren Beck (Uncle of Nathan Bedford Forrest), at a meeting of the citizens, was selected for the name of the county in honor of Brigadier General Samuel H. Benton. General Benton was a prominent lawyer and citizen in Holly Springs who served and died in the Confederate Army. Many men from the two counties involved served under his command.

The county seat town, Ashland, was organized soon after the county was formed and incorporated on March 8, 1871. Louis J. McDonald gave the land on which to build the town. The name Ashland, suggested by James G. Hamer, at a meeting of the citizens, was selected for the town in honor of



the Kentucky country estate of the great statesman Henry Clay.

The first courthouse built was a frame structure later replaced by a brick building.

In the strip that was acquired from Tippah County was the town of Salem near the Salem Plantation of Governor Joseph W. Matthews and the most beautiful plantation in the area, the Hamer Plantation. Salem, a once thriving center of commerce was burned by the Yankees and is now extinct.

One of Salem's most famous citizens was Lieutenant General

*One of Salem's most famous citizens was Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate cavalry officer who became famous during the Civil War.*

Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate cavalry officer who became famous during the Civil War.

In the strip acquired from Marshall County was the small thriving town of Lamar, located two miles from present day Lamar as a stage road stopping point between LaGrange Tennessee, and Holly Springs, Mississippi. Temmon L. Tridwell was Lamar's leading businessman at the time. When the railroad was build old Lamar was pushed into the background and modern day Lamar sprang up around the railroad.

During the Civil War, old Lamar and Salem were repeat-

edly burned or raided by Union cavalry, and the infamous march to the battle of Brice's Crossroads ran through both towns.

From Marshall County, Benton also inherited the town of Michigan City, formerly known as Davis Mills, the site of a little known but remarkable Civil War battle. On November 28, 1862, Company A of the 25th Indiana Volunteer Infantry under Colonel William H. Morgan, were stationed at Davis Mill to protect a railroad bridge across the Wolf River. Confederate General Earl Van Dorn repeatedly attacked the small 250 man element was continually repulsed. Van Dorn

finally crossed the river several miles down.

Some of the finest agricultural land around this area belonged to families such as the Shoup, Aldrich, Hardaways, Masons, McKenzies, and Hamers. Their heirs still own much of it today and many remain outstanding farmers or planters.

In Benton's inheritance from Tippah County was the old Malone Mountain with all that level, fertile table land surrounding it and the little town of Canaan. Settlers were attracted to this Canaan just as the old Israelites were attracted to Canaan, the promised land.

The central part of the new county along the banks of the Tippah River and Shelby Creek had its beginning with the Simpsons, Greshams, Peelers, Graves, Crawfords, Walkers, Jones, Smith, Hudspeths, Cox, Autrys, Fullers, Maxeys, Thompsons, Westmorelands, and many more successful farmers.

In the southern territory around Hickory Flat we find the names of Marmons, Crums, Butlers, Matlocks, Abstons, and many too numerous to mention.

When the Frisco railroad was constructed, just like old Lamar, this old town lost its prestige and a new town arose on the railroad three miles away called new Hickory Flat.

The western section of the new county around the town of Shawnee had for its early settlers names such as Woffards, Andersons, Disloughs, Coopers, Claytons, Julians, Mizes and many others. In this section one of the largest plantations was owned and ran by a black citizen. Aaron Royston was a thriving farmer and the area is still held mostly by his descendants.

In the northern part of the new county there was a wide awake neighborhood with many attractions, such as a good school. Hopewell with the Hines, Burtons, Browns, Lowerys and others as leading figures.

It is impossible to go into detail about every section of the "New Benton County," of 1870, but based on courthouse records many of Benton County's new leading citizens were well known if not famous Marshall or Tippah County citizens.