

RHEA'S MILL
North Wedington Blacktop Road
Lincoln AR 72744

William H Rhea, a prominent merchant in Cincinnati, got lucky at a rare gambling event and won enough money to buy a store in Wedington and a mill and farm a few miles northwest of Prairie Grove in the late 1850's. He set about refurbishing and modernizing the mill he bought from John P Kellam. His Valley Steam Mill became one of the best known and most up-to-date mills in the County. The settlement that grew around the mill became officially known as Rhea's Mill when a post office was established in 1867. Rhea also operated a large farm and store similar to the one he first ran in Cincinnati.

In 1859 Rhea began construction of his eight room, two story house that was completed just before the Civil War. Rhea's mill was commandeered by the Union Army to provide grain for the troops. Rhea joined the Confederate army. After the War, he was able to recoup his fortunes. Rhea died in 1884. His wife and sons operated the store, farm and mill for several years.

The village of Rhea continued to prosper so that by 1900, it had two churches, several stores, two physicians and a local telephone company. Having been bypassed by railroads and major highways, it finally went into a decline, losing its school to Prairie Grove in 1946, the post office in 1963 and the last business, a blacksmith shop, in 1979.

The old stone chimney from Rhea's mill was dismantled and moved to the Prairie Grove Battlefield Park where it can be seen today.

Bibliography:

The Prairie Grove Valley and its Communities part 1 by Willard Gatewood Flashback Winter 2003