

Calico Rock Post Office

Between 1852 and 1879, Calico Rock had no Post Office. During the 27 year lapse, folks got their mail by **steamboat** from Batesville.

The Calico Rock Post Office was re-established on May 2, 1879. **William Aiken** was the first Postmaster.

For many years, the Calico Rock Post Office was housed in the present-day visitor center.

In the 1880s, Cyrus Cresswell applied for a Post Office South of Calico Rock. The application was granted the **Cresswell Post Office** was established. For years, it operated in the Cresswell Store.

Many post offices were placed in **general stores** to save money. It was a natural fit, too, because folks could do their trading and get their mail in one stop.

The post office boxes in our general store display are the original boxes from the Cresswell Post Office. They are on loan from Steven and Sarah Mitchell.

Jot Em Down Store

Aiken's General Store was the largest store during Reconstruction. Mr. Aiken was also the ferryman.



Nearly everybody traded on credit. It wasn't uncommon for folks to trade on up to nine month's credit.

Families went to town to buy the necessities and the store clerk "**jotted down**" the items and amount on a ticket.

Once the crops were harvested and sold, folks **settled up** with the store owner. If there was any money left over, the store owner paid the farmer in cash.

Merchants traded **cotton bales** bought from the farmers at Calico Landing. Depending on the time of year or weather, cotton bales might sit stacked on the banks of the river for two to three months at a time.

Steve Matthews in Pineville, Billy Swan in Iuka, and Nick Rand in Wild Cherry ran "**jot em down stores.**"

A store clerk made **\$6.25 per month** in 1885.

Garner General Store

Joseph T. Garner moved his family to Calico Rock in 1902 to get rich. The railroad was coming and Mr. Garner had heard rumors about folks finding fresh water pearls and making a fortune. Mr. Garner never got rich from **pearling**, but he did become a successful store owner.

As a railroad boom town, Calico Rock was **notoriously rough**. Being a merchant didn't carry the level of respect it does today. Laborers routinely shot at Mr. Garner's store or tried to throw chunks of wood through the glass windows.



The Garner General Store measured 30 feet by 60 feet. The family lived “**above the store**.” Eventually, Mr. Garner added a warehouse on one side and a barber shop on the other.

Most families came to town once a month. It was a whole day affair. They'd pack lunch in their “**grub box**.” For those living too far from town, they might sleep over in their wagons. During cotton harvest, store owners kept 16-18 hours per day buying and selling.

Mr. Garner traveled to market in **St. Louis** twice a year for new merchandise, fabrics, and wares.

The **counter and scales** in our display are original to the Garner General Store c. 1902.

Joseph T. Garner

In 1937, Mr. Joseph T. Garner, one of Calico Rock's first merchants, said:

*I had the idea that a **storekeeper** always had everything he wanted and made money. People bought a lot of **patent medicines** and there was a good profit in them. Nearly everyone used tobacco and snuff.*



*People didn't need as many things to get along in those days. All they wanted were the bare necessities, the **staples**.*

*They bought sugar, coffee, and tobacco. **Sorghum molasses** was a substitute for sugar and most farmers raised their own tobacco.*

*In **dry goods**, there were four staples—jeans cloth, linsey, cotton plaids and old-style calico cloth.*

*I used to sell a lot of shoes—**Brogans** that sold for \$1 a pair. Women wore cheap **black button shoes** for 75 cents a pair.*