

John Huddleston (1862-1941):  
The Man Behind the Myth of “Diamond John”

By  
Dean Banks

Online edition, © 2008

Copy 2, CD for Crater of Diamonds State Park.

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## Foreword to the Online Edition

This study revisits a subject that received attention only briefly in my comprehensive history of the Crater of Diamonds, the unusual volcanic formation now featured at the popular state park just outside of Murfreesboro, Arkansas.<sup>1</sup> Upon beginning the research for that work twenty-three years ago, I found the man who discovered the first gems at the Crater in 1906, John Wesley Huddleston, was hardly the simple farmer depicted in the current literature. Preliminary review of public records at the nearby Pike County Courthouse even suggested there were two John Huddlestons in the unfolding story: “Diamond John,” the essentially fictional character described for decades in folk tales and promotional writings, and John Wesley, the rural Arkansan and family man who remained hidden behind that colorful imagery.

The following pages acknowledge those longstanding folk tales as an entertaining facet of the man’s history, but concentrate on the person portrayed by more-reliable sources such as property deeds, tax books, legal proceedings, photographs, and other documents. Aside from census reports, the public records have been virtually ignored by those writing about Huddleston. Readers familiar with the popular tales probably will find this side of the story surprising, particularly John Huddleston’s family background and his personal ambition where property ownership was concerned.

Although substantial and thoroughly documented, this treatment has its limitations. It reflects the evidence available up to this time, including a certain amount of data considered suggestive or tentative to some degree. *Apparently* and *evidently* are watchwords throughout the text and notes. To some extent, this uncertainty reflects the absence of personal correspondence and other family records, largely a result of the widespread illiteracy of Huddleston’s time. Descendants say he left only a few photographs and some old furniture when he died in 1941, and the furnishings were destroyed later when a storage shed burned.<sup>2</sup>

An online publication such as this has several advantages over its counterpart, printed hardcopy. Among other things, readers can easily respond to the author through email or a website and offer constructive criticism or new information. The subject at hand can be pursued further through collaboration. In this case, Huddleston’s many descendants and other interested persons are invited to participate *through the author’s email address*, provided below. Periodic updates of the study will include an Addendum acknowledging any significant information provided. Once recorded, copies of all photographs and other documents will be deposited at the Pike County Archives and History Society in Murfreesboro. Photos scanned and sent by email should be kept under one-half megabyte.

Online publication also allows readers to take advantage of their computer’s Search/Find capability to locate names, topics, and sources in an article or book. When a study is posted as a single webpage (usually a PDF file), a search can quickly cover the entire publication; if chapters are posted as separate webpages (the common HTML

format), each must be searched individually. In either case, Search/Find offers an efficient substitute for the standard index found in printed works, and it often replaces the separate bibliography or bibliographic essay needed for those publications.

In this study, full bibliographic entries occur with the first citation, often with helpful annotation and Bibliographic Notes. Abbreviated citations usually appear in following notes. Any full entry can be called up quickly by scrolling to the beginning of the endnotes, setting the cursor (left-clicking the mouse), and typing key words into Search/Find. Although there are several ways to scroll, this is the quickest method: left-click on the button of the vertical scroll bar (usually located on the right side of the window being viewed); holding the click, move the scroll button up or down. The pages will zip by. This method of scrolling also allows readers to jump quickly from text to related endnotes (CDs copied from the original Word document offer another approach: place the mouse cursor on the endnote number in the text and all except the extremely long endnotes will pop up fully on the screen, in slightly simplified style).

Most important, digital publishing allows ample space for documentation. Writers can do a thorough job of not only citing sources, but also qualifying them—clarifying their strengths and weaknesses, indicating how reliable they are compared with others. This running commentary is, I think, a significant feature of this study. Overall, the work serves as a guide to research as well as a detailed account of findings to date.

Among other things, this study takes advantage of digital space to include a thorough, detailed review of tax and land records relating to the farmland and other properties held at some time by John Huddleston and forebears. This weighty detail is confined to a few endnotes, and primarily will interest descendants of the Huddlestons and perhaps others living in the Murfreesboro area. In a sense, each piece of property was a footprint of the Huddleston family group as it spread across the lower townships of Pike County after the 1830s. Similarly, readers in nearby Clark County might be interested in John and Sarah Huddleston's extensive holdings in the area around Arkadelphia at one time. For readers interested in pursuing their own family history, the extensive review of sources should prove useful.

A word about illustrations. To the extent allowable, the PDF version of this online study will include photographs, maps, and other documents. That type of file (Portable Digital Format) is relatively easy to post on the website, compared with the HTML format. PDFs require the Acrobat Reader software for downloading; but that program is available free from many internet sites if it is not already on your computer. For technical reasons, the HTML of this online edition, which downloads without the Reader, includes very few illustrations. Fully illustrated CDs of the study are available at the Pike County Archives and History Society, in Murfreesboro, and at a number of other archives and libraries in Arkansas.

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## Introduction

In July 1905, a middle-aged couple living on a small farm near Murfreesboro, Arkansas, took on the biggest obligation of their lives when they finally decided to buy a special 243-acre tract lying beside the county road only a short distance back toward town. About a year later, the husband found two strange little crystals on the surface of the new property and soon became known as the first person outside of South Africa to discover diamonds at their original source—in this instance a known volcanic deposit geologists had examined periodically since the 1840s.<sup>3</sup>

The event assured widespread name recognition for John Wesley Huddleston, the discoverer; but the ensuing publicity told very little about the man, himself. Unless they knew him personally or saw his image on a “picture post card,” those outside the Murfreesboro area could only imagine the appearance of that lucky rural Arkansan: newspapers, magazines, and journals, the news media of the time, carried no photographs or sketches of him. Their reports focused upon mining groups and others involved with the new Pike County diamond field and rarely included even a brief comment from the person who set it all in motion.<sup>4</sup>

Even basic details of the discovery varied from the beginning, thereby leaving ample room for the growth of imaginative stories over the years. Boosted to some extent by Huddleston’s own embellishments, the folk tales were already assuming a life of their own before his death on November 12, 1941, at almost eighty years of age.<sup>5</sup> Then, inevitably, more variations appeared after he left the scene. In 1949, a journalist visiting Murfreesboro listened awhile and concluded that John Huddleston “now ranks in local tradition with the legendary Paul Bunyan of lumber camps.”<sup>6</sup> Had the writer returned a few years later as private interests began promoting the diamond field as a unique tourist attraction, he would have found the legend sprinkled with outright myths-in-the-making.<sup>7</sup>

The most influential collection of tales finally appeared in 1976, in Howard A. Millar’s memoir about his long experience at the Pike County diamond field.<sup>8</sup> In that account, Huddleston emerged basically as a “son of a sharecropper,” a “dreamy backwoodsman who loved to roam the forests, seeking buried treasures and ‘prospecting’ for precious metals . . .” Buying “160 acres” in “1906,” the lucky prospector found diamonds on it later that year and quickly sold out for \$36,000 cash, “to be paid in \$10 bills.” Then he proceeded to squander his fortune, Millar said. Part of the money was siphoned off somehow during an ill-fated second marriage. “He also bought several pieces of property around the courthouse square in Murfreesboro and two farms near Arkadelphia [in adjoining Clark County]. In each case he put down only a minimum payment and in time lost what he had invested.”<sup>9</sup>

In Millar’s version of events, a lack of both ambition and good judgment finally left John Huddleston broke and virtually begging for loans. The memoir failed to clarify when all of this happened, but it implied the downfall began soon after the Discoverer sold his property in 1906. Neglecting to mention the 1930s and the impact of the Great Depression, Millar’s disjointed account left the impression Huddleston fell into poverty

long before the onset of those hard times, apparently before the prosperous decade of the Twenties.<sup>10</sup>

As the memoir suggested, personal limitations affected John Huddleston's encounter with fame and fortune. He clearly contributed to some of those tales unfolding in the early decades; yet, being totally illiterate and evidently inarticulate in dealing with the public, he could hardly control the overall process.<sup>11</sup> Gangly; characteristically serious and unsmiling; burdened to some extent by a moderate harelip—he hardly inspired journalists or scholars to probe beneath the popular imagery. Well into middle age, a thick, black mustache accented the facial expression that some interpreted as an unfriendly attitude. Later as the aging process and a clean-shaven face softened his features, personal tragedies intervened to help maintain the seemingly uninviting appearance.<sup>12</sup>

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**Left, John Huddleston the Discoverer, late 1906. By all accounts, he stood well over six feet tall. Photographs from Crater of Diamonds archive.<sup>13</sup>**

**Below, a mellower John Huddleston, c. 1930. A harelip is clear on his upper-right side (zoom in).**



Of course, mere illiteracy does not imply John Huddleston was ignorant or basically inarticulate. Howard Millar, himself, called the elderly Discoverer “rather intelligent,” “likeable,” and “entertaining” in private conversation; and journalist Tom Shiras clearly had a favorable impression of him in the mid 1920s.<sup>14</sup> Yet, those writing about

Huddleston never indicated he had given a public speech or had even commented when appearing as a guest of honor at events. Journalists, scholars, and others who encountered him rarely used even a brief quotation. Although Howard Millar's description of the man overstated the effects of the harelip and the serious expression, it made a valid point in underscoring the general impact of speech and public personality.

For those pursuing the real John Huddleston, the illiteracy of the man, his wife, and many others within their extended family looms as a handicap—a barrier that has caused even leading family genealogists-historians to fall back upon Millar's collection of tales.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in those days reading-and-writing was a smaller part of the language of rural life than it is now. Among other forms of expression, John Huddleston bought and sold property and paid taxes, and in Arkansas almost everything of value appeared in the county tax assessments (at one point, dogs over three months of age were added to the personal-property list). Huddleston and his wife Sarah produced a substantial number of public documents before his discovery of diamonds; afterwards, they had over \$40,000 at their disposal and generated an amazing quantity of tax entries and real-estate deeds, along with numerous court cases.

The public records reflect more than John Huddleston's property ownership, economic conditions, values, and character; they also tell a great deal about his forebears and extended family group. Generally, they help define the man in relation to his socio-economic context. In the process they challenge basic tenets of the prevailing Huddleston image: that he was essentially a foolish farmer-pro prospector who sprang from a poor rural background—the sort of man who seemed predestined to waste his fortune soon after selling his diamond-bearing land.

## A Notable Family Background

Regardless of “Diamond John’s” eventual reputation, John Wesley Huddleston of Pike County, Arkansas, had at least two outstanding qualities: a devotion to family and an unwavering faith in the value of land. Neither was unusual among men living in rural America during his lifetime. Neither would seem remarkable without the detrimental imagery of the folk tales looming in the background, especially the suggestion he was shiftless and irresponsible as a farmer. A reporter once came much closer to the truth when he wrote, after a long interview, “Land had always been a topic of thought with John, for he saw in it the source of all wealth.”<sup>16</sup>

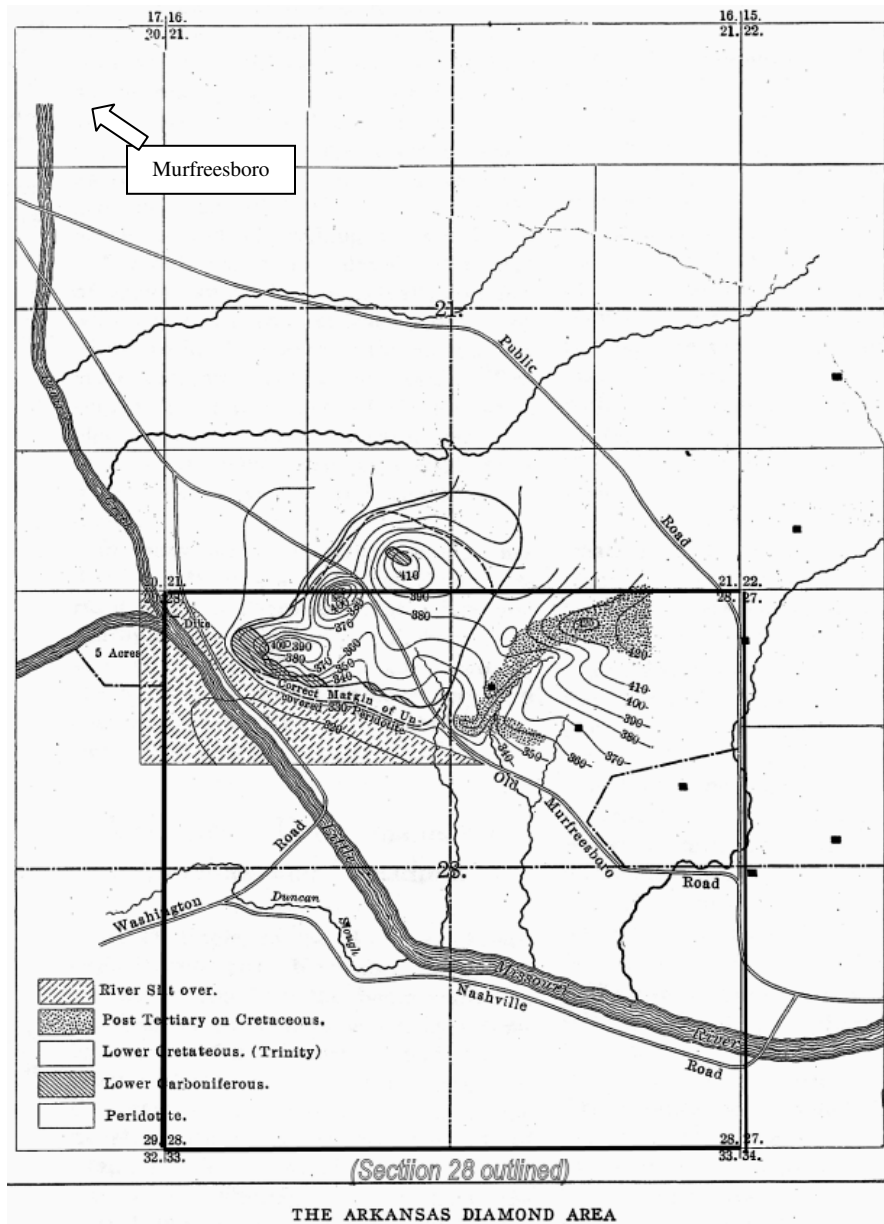
In that respect, the son followed the example of his parents—David Fielding Huddleston and America White Huddleston—and other members of a large extended family. John’s grandfather David Huddleston, the group’s most prolific patriarch, had settled in Pike County in late 1835 as Arkansas Territory achieved statehood; and he soon became an outstanding leader of the community developing around the new county seat of Murfreesboro. Between 1840 and his death in October 1880, David Huddleston served as County Judge for eleven two-year terms. His two brothers, Lewis and William, also rose to prominence in the 1840s and ‘50s. Lewis occupied the Sheriff’s office from 1843 until his death in March 1853.<sup>17</sup>

These three founders bought considerable land in Pike County before the Civil War. Initially settling east of Murfreesboro, David and William Huddleston eventually concentrated their holdings along the Little Missouri River a few miles southeast of town. David, the most enterprising of the three brothers, accumulated 307 acres by 1861. Lewis initially chose 102 acres just south of town by the junction of Prairie Creek and the river, immediately west of the future diamond discovery; then he and his wife, Mariah, bought a combined eighty acres of federal river-bottom land about two miles farther west. Shortly before John Wesley’s birth, which evidently occurred in 1862, his father bought 150.82 federal acres along the bank of the river beside Lewis’ second property. Lying in a wide floodplain of the untamed Little Missouri, the land in that area cost as little as 50¢ an acre, compared with the standard price of \$1.25, and was suitable for crops and livestock.<sup>18</sup> (See Plate 1, next page, for reference.)

John Huddleston grew up with an unusually large number of relatives at hand. His grandfather David Huddleston produced at least twenty-one offspring, about half of them females. His great-uncle Lewis had only four children before his early death, while William apparently had none of his own; but David’s descendants more than compensated for that deficit. John Wesley, himself, had seven siblings from his father’s first marriage and three half-sisters from the second. After the Civil War, many in those second and third generations accumulated land along the Little Missouri—including several properties around the 243-acre tract where the diamonds eventually turned up.<sup>19</sup>

In early 1887, John Huddleston married Sarah A. Keys, an older woman with a three-year-old son from a previous marriage.<sup>20</sup> Two years later they bought a 49.26-acre home farm less than two miles southeast of the future diamond field. They also owned a scenic

**PLATE 1.** Area immediately southeast of Murfreesboro, by the Little Missouri River. Section 28 (one square mile) is boxed and divided into quarter sections (160 acres each); Sec. 21 is divided into standard one-sixteenth units (40 acres). The diamond-bearing formation is the boot-shaped figure with the public road running through it (zoom for details). Prairie Creek joins the river at the bend and runs north along the edge of Murfreesboro. Map by John T. Fuller, 1908, based upon Branner's earlier map of the formation (Plate 2, below).<sup>21</sup> Murfreesboro locator added.





14.5 acres between the south boundary of the 243-acre tract and the north bank of the Little Missouri, and had at least twenty acres about a half-mile eastward. They sold the small riverfront property in 1890 to help meet the needs of their growing family. In 1900, they sold the twenty acres after buying a more functional forty acres nearby from John's parents.<sup>22</sup>

Those modest transactions reflected the economic limitations of John and Sarah Huddleston at the turn of the century. While the couple had accumulated cattle, pigs, mules, and other assets, they never managed to save much cash for real-estate investment. In 1900, five daughters ranging from ten months to twelve years of age still lived at home, along with Sarah's sixteen-year-old son. Another daughter, their second-born, had died in 1895 at almost six years of age.<sup>23</sup> Although John was about thirty-eight years old and Sarah forty-four, they had managed to rise only to about the medium economic level of Pike County.<sup>24</sup>

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**John and Sarah Huddleston and daughters after the discovery, c. 1908. Crater archive.**

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Nearby Murfreesboro, however, was the dynamic seat of county government, and that virtually assured steadily rising property values, especially after the homestead frontier began closing out in the late 1800s.<sup>25</sup> As their expenses rose at the turn of the century, John and Sarah Huddleston met them not only by farming and other work, but also by selling appreciating pieces of land or using the rising value of their farm to secure

occasional loans from a patient, well-to-do landowner of the area.<sup>26</sup> Although parents and other relatives were there if needed, along with other kinds of support in the close-knit rural community, the couple essentially remained self-reliant and determined to make a better life for their family. That meant acquiring more and better farmland, raising more pigs and cattle, and accruing additional wealth through appreciation and the rental of excess land.<sup>27</sup>

## An Irresistible Property

John Huddleston was especially interested in those 243 acres just outside of town, property he undoubtedly had explored long before he and Sarah decided to buy it. The big tract was not only close to some of their other land, it was also remarkably accessible: the main public road running southeast from Murfreesboro cut through the center of the future diamond field. The route was later described as one of the “oldest and most heavily traveled roads in that portion of the state.”<sup>28</sup> (See Plates 1, above, and 2, next page.)

The unusual tract of land might have seemed almost useless to farmers accustomed to richer bottomlands elsewhere, but not to men such as John Huddleston. Offering wooded hills as well as rock outcrops and gullies, the west side of the property was an outdoorsman’s dream. The fields eastward and down toward the Little Missouri, generally rocky and thick with brush and grasses, were suitable mostly for hog farming and grazing horses and cattle.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, John Huddleston was one of the many farmer-prospectors of the era and had noticed unusual green and rust-colored ground among some of the hills overlooking the river plain. He was also curious about hard, dark rock in that area. Seeing all that variety, it was natural for him to think the property might hold copper, iron, or lead. Living in a part of Arkansas swept regularly by rumors of gold strikes, he of course remained alert to that possibility, too.<sup>30</sup>

In a rare interview later, Huddleston said he had become interested in minerals as a youngster. “An old prospector by the name of Jackman, who used to stop at my father’s house 50 years ago, I reckon, was responsible for this interest. Every time Jackman rode up to my father’s place, he brought his saddlebags filled with new ore samples, and would always tell me big yarns about the great wealth in the earth, to be had for the finding. I began to prospect then at odd times and have been at it off and on ever since. Sometimes I change the program, and hunt for pearls in the mussel shells of the Little Missouri River, and find them, too. I always feel good when I find a pearl or something with mineral value.”<sup>31</sup>

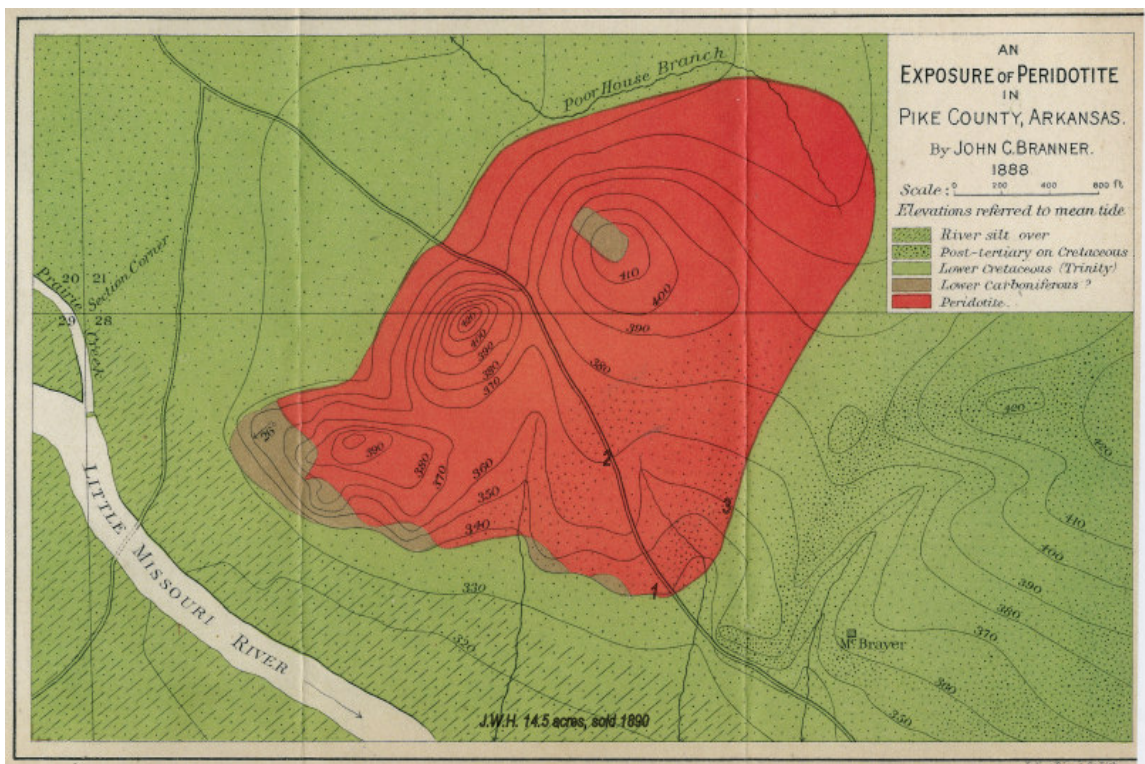
According to old tales, Huddleston’s curiosity about the big tract had been aroused earlier when a geologist, John C. Branner, visited the property and carefully crawled around an outcropping on the upper west side. In one version, Branner’s inspection occurred in the late 1880s while he was State Geologist; in another, he appeared again in early 1906. He supposedly used Huddleston as an aide or guide in both instances, and the observant outdoorsman noticed how the stranger kept examining small stones and crystals. After Branner left, frustrated, Huddleston found diamonds.<sup>32</sup>

The story about Branner’s visiting in 1906 then added a dramatic twist by asserting that Huddleston found the diamonds before buying the property. Therefore, “shrewdly keeping his discovery a secret,” he got an option on 160 acres around the search area, with the purchase price set at \$1,000.<sup>33</sup>

As most folk tales about Huddleston, these were woven around a kernel of truth. Geologists had known about the volcanic deposit near Murfreesboro since the early 1840s; Branner had surveyed and mapped the formation in 1888, and recognized it as

material similar to that of diamond-bearing “pipes” in South Africa. After hours of crawling about, however, he found no diamonds; nor did he reveal his suspicion the formation might hold those elusive gems.<sup>34</sup> Colorful tales notwithstanding, there is no evidence John Huddleston accompanied Branner or suspected the property might hold diamonds. Clearly, the State Geologist needed no guide during the visit—as his map illustrated, the formation lay just outside of Murfreesboro alongside that main public road.<sup>35</sup>

**PLATE 2. First survey map of the Pike County formation, by State Geologist John C. Branner, 1888. A main road to Murfreesboro cut through the future diamond field, which lay about one-quarter mile north of a small riverside property John Huddleston owned before 1890. John and Sarah Huddleston’s home farm, bought in 1889, was down the road by the river. Numbers 1-3 have been added to indicate where Huddleston found the first three diamonds in 1906. Basic map, *Geological Survey of Arkansas, Annual Report for 1890, II, Map VI*; colored copy from the Library, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.**



The Huddlestons finally felt bold enough to acquire the 243 acres not because they knew it contained diamonds, but because their economic conditions had improved in recent years. After buying the extra forty acres from John’s parents in 1900, they added two horses to their holdings, along with six more cattle, ten more hogs, and other items.

The total valuation of their personal property increased from \$178 to \$381, placing them above average for Pike County.<sup>36</sup>

According to the standard tale, John Huddleston “made a deal for 160 acres for \$1,000. He didn’t have the \$100 the owners wanted for a down payment, so he offered a mule and they took it.” But the contract with the landowners in July 1905 referred to \$300 “cash in hand paid by J. W. Huddleston, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged.”<sup>37</sup> As for a mule, the Huddlestons owned only a \$40 specimen in 1904, and a year later, perhaps because of the additional 243 acres, they had upgraded to a good one valued at \$85.<sup>38</sup> In any case, they put \$300 down and contracted to pay the balance in four annual installments at 10% interest. The first payment of \$425 was scheduled for December 15, 1906. No longer needing the forty acres, lying just east of the new farm, they sold or traded it five months later for a stated price of \$400—to one of the men holding a lien on the 243 acres.<sup>39</sup>

As the first payment loomed in late 1906, John and Sarah Huddleston had only the little farm left to sell or use for backing loans. Then suddenly, on September 12, 1906, the nearby *Nashville* (Arkansas) *News* announced, “John Huddleston has located a diamond mine on his land situated three miles south of Murfreesboro.”<sup>40</sup>

Actually, the tall rawboned farmer had only picked up two diamonds from the surface of his 243-acre farm, the largest 2⅝ carats.<sup>41</sup>



## Discovery and Good Fortune

Although the date remains questionable, the earliest and most reliable accounts indicate Huddleston noticed the first crystal on or about August 1, 1906, while looking along the edge of a high slope for traces of copper, iron, or lead.<sup>42</sup> The lustrous white stone lay among pebbles by the public road running down the center of the slope. Because of rains and muddy spots, the roadway had shifted about; wagon wheels and horse hooves had torn away vegetation and worn ruts through a wide area, exposing the rocky soil.<sup>43</sup>

That same afternoon, “while riding on horseback into Murfreesboro and carefully scrutinizing the ground,” Huddleston noticed a similar crystal “lying in the ruts of the road, about 500 feet north of the first . . .” Afterward, Huddleston and his family searched the area carefully but found no more of the crystals “until September 8,” when he picked up a half-carat yellow stone about 400 feet northeast of the spot where the first turned up.<sup>44</sup>

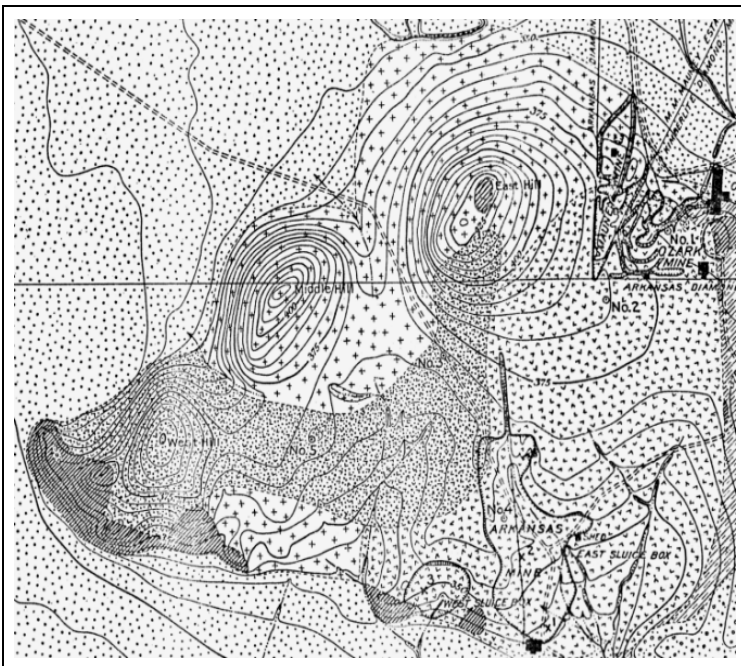
The experienced farmer-pro prospector knew the crystals differed from the common quartz of the area, but evidently had no idea they were diamonds.<sup>45</sup> Puzzled, he took the first

two into town and showed them to the cashier at the bank, Jess Riley, who reportedly offended Huddleston by offering him 50¢ for the pair.<sup>46</sup> Then he showed the remarkable stones to the county's leading lawyer, Joseph C. (J. C.) Pinnix. When Pinnix suggested sending them to the region's most reputable jeweler, Charles S. Stiff of Little Rock, Huddleston entrusted the mailing to him. Stiff tested the gems and reported their weights as 2 5/8 □ carats and 1 3/5 carats.<sup>47</sup>

While wary of a possible hoax, Stiff and his son-in-law, Albert D. Cohn, a leading Little Rock merchant, quietly visited Murfreesboro in late August or early September to inspect Huddleston's property. Stiff was an experienced real-estate negotiator as well as a jeweler, but his and Cohn's offer to take an option on the farm or join Huddleston in an exploratory partnership proved unpersuasive.<sup>48</sup>

Undeterred, the two returned to Little Rock and formed a partnership with Samuel W. (Sam) Reyburn, a lawyer and founder-president of the Union Trust Company. The tall, thirty-five-year-old Reyburn, a native Arkansan with an affable, down-to-earth style, headed the venture as trustee. Getting an advantage over potential competitors, Reyburn's group also included an agent in Murfreesboro who had considerable influence with Huddleston and other land owners—J. C. Pinnix.<sup>49</sup>

The Huddleston's apparently were not impressed when Reyburn and associates initially offered to pay a few hundred dollars for an option on the 243 acres, with a purchase price of \$36,000 only if the group exercised the option.<sup>50</sup> No doubt Pinnix played a key role in changing their minds; and on September 19, 1906, before the required witnesses, John and Sarah Huddleston put their Xs on a contract for an extendible six-month option on the 243 acres. They received \$360 cash, and would get \$36,000 if a diamond-bearing deposit turned up.<sup>51</sup> Although no one knew at the time, the property included over two-thirds of the eighty-acre volcanic formation and all the diamond-bearing east half except six acres at the northeast corner.



**Plate 3. U. S. Geological Survey's map of the volcanic "pipe" (basic map completed 1916; features updated to 1921).<sup>52</sup> Zoom in for details.**

**Huddleston's property lay below the section line. All commercial operations were on the east side within the diamond-bearing breccia (area with tiny winged symbols). The x1 at the bottom edge of the pipe marked Huddleston's first find.**

Later, John Huddleston offered an explanation for the price received for the 243 acres. While differing from emerging folk tales, the statement was consistent with his and Sarah's longstanding interest in accumulating property: "Good farm land always appealed to me as an investment. . . . I figured up in dollars and cents what I would have to pay for the amount of land I wanted. It came to \$36,000. I asked this for the diamond pipe I found, and got it."<sup>53</sup>

Huddleston's diamond hunting did not end with the option. "We further agree, as may suit our convenience, to continue the prospecting of said land, agreeing to turn over to said Sam W. Reyburn, as Trustee, any and all minerals or stones of whatever nature we may find, to be held in trust to go to him in case he exercises the option or to be returned to us in case the said Sam W. Reyburn fails to exercise said option," the initial contract stated.<sup>54</sup> Among other benefits, Huddleston's continuing presence would help generate publicity for all concerned.

Indeed, the *Nashville News* kept a running tally of his finds into early 1907, when geologists finally determined he had discovered a real diamond-bearing volcanic pipe. "J. W. Huddleston, on whose land the diamonds were first found, has found a total of fifteen to date, many of them being splendid stones," the paper reported on January 9. A week later he added two more while still "surface mining for the syndicate to whom he sold an option on his land." After that, the *News* failed to clarify Huddleston's personal total; but no doubt he contributed all except a few of the thirty-three diamonds collected from the property by March 9, 1907.<sup>55</sup>

In the end, John and Sara Huddleston received much more than \$36,000 for their 243 acres. New agreements with Reyburn's group kept extending the final payment, and the Huddlestons drew interest on the balance almost the entire time. On August 14, 1907, they signed a deed contract and received \$7,000 cash, with a schedule of monthly interest payments at a 6% annual rate. Another contract in March 1908 produced \$1,000 cash and 8% interest paid monthly; then, three months later, a warranty deed yielded \$6,000 cash and a commitment for the balance of \$22,000 by January 1, 1909, at 8% annually. Further extensions delayed the final settlement until 1916.<sup>56</sup>

## Investments and a Fresh Start

Consistent with earlier practice, the Huddlestons immediately began putting the bulk of available cash into rural properties and town lots in both Pike County and adjoining Clark County.<sup>57</sup> In 1907, while still at the little farm, they also allowed themselves a good carriage and two expensive horses, and apparently the oldest daughters got watches and considerable jewelry. The tax list for that year included almost \$500 for extra personal items.<sup>58</sup>

The horse-drawn carriage was not merely for local display. It allowed the Huddlestons to make faster trips to the nearest railroad access for visits to Clark County and its leading city, Arkadelphia, about forty-five miles east of Murfreesboro.<sup>59</sup> With a population of some 2,700, Arkadelphia had become a transportation hub and educational center as well as the county seat—it was a place filled with opportunities for the Huddlestons' daughters. On August 23, 1907, John and Sarah bought a home on almost three and a half acres at the edge of that city, close to some of their other land. On September 12, the weekly *Clark County Southern Standard* announced the previous owner had vacated and “the diamond King from Pike” had assumed ownership. “We are glad indeed to welcome Mr. Huddleston and family to our city,” said the editors, extending the brief greeting usually accorded newcomers.<sup>60</sup>

All five daughters accompanied their parents to Arkadelphia. The two oldest, Mary and Delia, were already mature enough to start families of their own: Mary had reached the ripe old age of about twenty and Delia was seventeen. Eunice and Willie, fifteen and twelve, had more time to just take advantage of the schools and other benefits of the new setting without thinking about marriage. As for eight-year-old Joe May, that bright-eyed youngster had an entirely new life now opening before her.<sup>61</sup>

While allowing themselves a bit more luxury, the Huddlestons kept putting their money into real estate, especially several hundred acres of land in and around the two county seats, where development and appreciation yielded the best returns. The speculative investments no doubt benefited from the advice of experienced friends and associates such as J. C. Pinnix, soon to become Pike County's leading banker as well as its outstanding lawyer.<sup>62</sup> John Huddleston, however, had more-familiar plans for some of the rural purchases: “I had been raised on the land and knew how to till the soil. I also knew the rental value of good farm lands.”<sup>63</sup> Living at the edge of Arkadelphia, he began raising cotton and livestock on at least one of the working farms near the city, and for a time even had a small flock of sheep.<sup>64</sup> He became—to the extent personal limitations allowed—a gentleman farmer, landlord, and land speculator.

Contrary to later folk tales, the Huddlestons usually bought properties “cash in hand,” getting clear deeds. And they met their obligations when making partial payments and signing short-term notes for balances due.<sup>65</sup> As funds from Reyburn's group came in after mid August 1907, they eventually had over \$40,000 of principal and interest to establish themselves in both farming and the business of buying and selling real estate.



An additional \$2,300, plus considerable interest, derived from the sale of their little home farm southeast of Murfreesboro in 1911.<sup>66</sup>

When fully invested and short of cash at times, the Huddlestons followed standard rural procedures: they either mortgaged properties to secure short-term loans from individuals and banks or sold some of their appreciated holdings.<sup>67</sup> Now and then, they also sold properties when it became clear they had made bad investments—as in the case of the new Town of Kimberly, a spectacular land-development venture between the diamond field and Murfreesboro. That grand project collapsed as the speculative fever stoked by his discovery began cooling after 1909.<sup>68</sup>

### Adjusting to the Good Life in Arkadelphia

These were exciting and prosperous times for the Huddlestons. As the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* reported in early 1909, the family settled into “a life of ease and luxury,” conditions they would enjoy throughout most of their stay in Clark County.<sup>69</sup> Of course for “Diamond John,” there were notable challenges during the first few years, as he learned a few unpleasant lessons about life outside the relatively simple, close-knit community left behind. Yet, considering his total illiteracy and extensive activities, the mishaps on record were surprisingly few.

The lessons began in early 1908, about as soon as the family completed the move to Arkadelphia. In following years, the first incident became a mainstay of gossip around Murfreesboro, and eventually it emerged as one of the tales popularized through the imaginative writings of the former Midwesterner who spent some sixty years as an aspiring diamond miner in Pike County. Howard A. Millar’s final memoir told of an agitated John Huddleston who stood on the passenger platform at Arkadelphia’s railway depot trying to flag a nonstop train speeding toward Little Rock. Supposedly, Huddleston had just bought a ticket to the state capital and was told a fast mail train from Dallas was about due but would not stop. His response, as described by Millar:

‘It’ll stop for me, I’m the “Diamond King!” John replied. He walked down the platform to the hook on which the mail sacks were attached for a non-stop pick up by the oncoming train. As the train approached, John waved both arms and shouted, ‘Stop! I’m the “Diamond King!” The engineer ignored him. John was struck by mail sacks thrown from the train as it raced by. . . . he ended up in the hospital with four broken ribs.’<sup>70</sup>

Available documents provide a more accurate account. Standing on the passenger platform of the railroad depot on March 21, 1908, John W. Huddleston was struck by mailbags thrown from a nonstop train belonging to the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railway Company. He sued, complaining the company “through its negligence and the negligence of its servants, permitted and allowed said mail pouch or bag to be ejected from said North bound passenger and mail train . . . while running at a high rate of speed, and at such a place on said platform that it struck said plaintiff on the face and body knocking him to the ground, breaking and fracturing two ribs and scarring and disfiguring his face and head.” Emphasizing his lawful presence on the platform, he sought \$2,000 in damages.<sup>71</sup> The regular Clark County Circuit judge, J. M. Carter, heard the case September 8-9, 1908.

According to further testimony, Huddleston had gone to the depot about noon to take the first train to Little Rock. “He did not know the times of the arrival and departure of trains.” The ticket office was closed. After some fifteen minutes he went to a nearby lunch stand, “and while eating heard a train coming, and ran out and onto the track and flagged it with his hat, and then walked on to the platform and stood near the door of the waiting room for white passengers, and while there a train passed, moving very rapidly, and a mail agent threw a sack therefrom while it was in rapid motion, . . . and the train moved on without checking its speed.”<sup>72</sup>

In those days, railroads caused deaths and injuries regularly, especially in urban areas. Arkadelphia’s weekly *Southern Standard* provided constant news of the most tragic local incidents, and usually of the lawsuits that followed.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, public safety remained secondary to the value of railroads as indispensable engines of growth and development. In the incident on March 21<sup>st</sup>, even literacy would have left John Huddleston uninformed and vulnerable: there were no warning signs posted on the passenger platform and no section designated for mail drops.<sup>74</sup>

The two clerks on the company’s mail car testified about the haphazard method of delivering bags from the moving train. The chief clerk was especially graphic:

. . . we were running late that day, going at a pretty fast rate; takes quick work to make the catch [to snag incoming mail from a “crane” beside the track] and throw off the mail; asked Craig to make the delivery while I made the catch; I was to pick out the place [to throw the mailbag]; I looked down the track, there was people all along in north of the depot and I told him to hold it until we passed the depot and about the time we got to the north end of the depot I told him to throw it, and about this time I saw a man close — just did see a man on the ground make efforts like he wanted to get on[,] and here the pouch and sacks both hit him; the first I saw of this man he was right at the side of the train; just about the time I gave the orders to throw; looked forward and saw this was the only place unless we carried it [mail] above the [water] tank.<sup>75</sup>

The company, on the other hand, denied Huddleston was injured by carelessness, negligence, or improper conduct on either its part or the part of its agents. The company denied “that plaintiff had gone to defendant’s depot for the purpose of becoming a passenger on the train from which the mail sacks were thrown.” If the plaintiff suffered any injury at all, it resulted from “his own acts of carelessness and contributory negligence in this; that he ran across the track in front of defendants fast mail train . . . which did not stop, nor was scheduled to stop . . . and while crossing said track attempted to flag said train at a time and place he had no right to be.” The company alleged, without proof, “That plaintiff was drunk and acted recklessly,” that he appeared on the platform suddenly after the mail clerks had released the sacks.<sup>76</sup>

The Circuit judge hardly concealed his sympathy for the railroad. His instructions to the jury repeated basic points requested by the defendant and ignored those submitted by the plaintiff. Plaintiff’s objections were overruled. The jury found in favor of the defendant. After the judge overruled a motion for new trial, plaintiff Huddleston appealed to the Supreme Court of Arkansas.<sup>77</sup>

In a long opinion on May 10, 1909, the higher court firmly supported John Huddleston’s position and remanded the case for a new trial. At the same time, however, the court’s thorough finding of facts made it clear—repetitiously—that any retrial would have to favor plaintiff Huddleston. “Under the evidence in this case it was the duty of appellee, the Railway Company, to have used ordinary care to protect persons lawfully

upon its platform against injuries by mail sacks thrown from its trains,” the opinion said at one point. “It could have done so by requiring the sacks to be thrown at a certain place and by notices, posted in a conspicuous place, warning persons who should come on the platform . . .”<sup>78</sup>

In criticizing the Circuit judge’s instructions to the jury, the Supreme Court concluded its opinion with a clear statement about one item that Huddleston’s lawyers had challenged. “Instruction numbered 9 . . . should not have been given. There was no evidence that appellant’s injury was caused by his flagging the train or having gone upon the railroad track [en route to the platform].”<sup>79</sup>

The case continued in Circuit Court, and on January 10, 1910, John Huddleston accepted an award of \$325 plus all costs of litigation. In the future, plaintiffs in similar lawsuits would cite his case to win much larger damage awards from railroads.<sup>80</sup>

Almost six months after the accident at the depot, Huddleston found himself in another legal dispute—this time as the defendant. Officials of Henderson College, located just outside Arkadelphia by some of his property, believed their new neighbor had “detained” one of the school’s calves. They wanted \$25 compensation plus \$10, and a small-claims court (Justice of the Peace) ruled in their favor. When Huddleston appealed to Circuit Court, he ended up paying \$50. It is not clear if justice was done, but the newcomer no doubt began understanding how non-influential and vulnerable he had become outside of Pike County.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, the victory over the railroad company in May 1909, in the Arkansas Supreme Court, demonstrated that the legal system and competent lawyers could also offer protection, and only a few months later this lesson was reinforced by a lawsuit over a farm the Huddlestons had bought more than a year earlier. That 133-acre tract bordered on the Ouachita River about a mile and a half southeast of Arkadelphia. The former owners had signed a standard deed indicating the full price of \$2,200 had been “paid by J. W. Huddleston.” There was no mention of a mortgage, lien or note. Filed the day it was signed, the deed bore the standard certification that the owners had executed it “for the consideration and purposes therein mentioned and set forth.” Yet, over a year later, one of the owners filed in Circuit Court, alleging Huddleston had made only a partial payment and still owed \$900.35 plus interest. Evidently, the complaint was dismissed.<sup>82</sup>

After that, there were no recorded incidents until two final legal cases in February-March 1912. In the first, Huddleston demonstrated that he now intended to defend even his relatively trivial interests: he filed in a small-claims court (Justice of the Peace), asking for \$6.90 he felt was still due on a cotton sale, and received an award of \$4.60.<sup>83</sup> A month later, he lost a much larger sum when sued in Clark County Circuit Court by a real-estate agency, the Arkansas Land Company. It remains unclear if justice finally prevailed in this unusual case or if, this time, someone managed to exploit his illiteracy.<sup>84</sup>

Aside from those incidents, the Huddlestons did settle into a good life in Clark County. Their declared personal property in 1908 had a taxable value of \$1,045, extremely high for families in the area. Their working farm was stocked with thirteen cattle and twenty-four hogs, much more livestock than the average. Home furnishings included a high-priced piano (“pianoforte”), and at hand were two extraordinarily expensive wagons/carriages, a high-priced horse, and two good mules. Although real-estate investments left very little in savings in late 1908, the family had monthly interest and

other payments coming in: at the end of the next tax year, 1909, an extra \$5,000 of funds raised the total personal-property valuation to \$6,795. That year, they apparently put \$250 into farm equipment while spending about \$400 on more mules and \$100 on two more wagons/carriages. Temporarily, they had a flock of at least fifteen sheep, animals with a taxable value of less than \$1 each in those days. The ladies also seem to have gained about \$100 worth of jewelry in 1909.<sup>85</sup>

Exercising an adventuresome side, John Huddleston indulged his taste for the newest mode of transportation. “He recently purchased an automobile,” reported the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* in March 1909, “and his car has become a familiar sight on the rough country roads near his old home [in Pike County]. His latest exploit was a trapping expedition—hunting coon skins through the woods of Southern Arkansas in his motor car.”<sup>86</sup>

The trips back to Murfreesboro allowed Huddleston to enjoy the fame and recognition lacking among the strangers of Clark County. In those days, newspapers and magazines seldom carried photographs or sketches of newsworthy individuals, and Clark County’s publication, the weekly *Southern Standard* of Arkadelphia, completely ignored the Huddlestons after the customary welcome. His new neighbors might recognize him only if they happened to see his face on one of the picture post cards honoring the “Discoverer of Diamonds.”<sup>87</sup>



Post card c. 1912(?). Crater.

The couple kept their original little farm near the diamond field until August 1911, and perhaps stayed there while Diamond John visited friends and occasionally appeared as a special guest at local events. On the weekend of January 22-23, 1909, for instance, he joined prominent land developers at an opening ceremony launching the new Town of Kimberly, the ambitious project near Murfreesboro. Bands from nearby Nashville and Delight provided music as potential buyers of business and residential lots munched on free barbecue. Helping publicize the venture, Huddleston purchased Lot Number 1 for a token \$70, and then without publicity paid \$200 for another lot.<sup>88</sup>

Three years after moving to Arkadelphia, John and Sarah Huddleston began accomplishing one of their special goals. The oldest daughter, Mary, now twenty-two years old, married W. W. Wallace of Clark County on May 14, 1911. Then Willie, only six months past her sixteenth birthday, married Cleve Manley of Clark County on March 10, 1912. Nineteen-year-old Eunice followed four months later, on July 7, marrying G. T. Gentry of Clark County.<sup>89</sup> Only Delia and little Joe May were left at home.

After ten years in Arkadelphia, however, John Huddleston experienced a double tragedy that altered the course of his life. Sarah died December 19, 1917. Then, two months later, the front page of the *Southern Standard* carried a poignant report about the death of young Joe May.<sup>90</sup>

Mrs. John Huddleston died at her home in this city yesterday morning of heart trouble. Mrs. Huddleston moved here with her husband and children several years ago from Murfreesboro after Mr. Huddleston had discovered the diamond mines and sold same for \$40,000.

#### Miss Joe Huddleston Died

The death angel again visited the home of John Huddleston in this city on Tuesday night and removed from the family circle Mr. Huddleston's youngest daughter, Miss Joe. She was a young lady just building into womanhood. The remains were carried to Murfreesboro yesterday for interment.

## Adjusting in Murfreesboro, 1918-1921

Selling the house in Arkadelphia, Huddleston returned to Murfreesboro in March 1918 with Delia and settled into a well-equipped home. He occupied himself with grandchildren, cars, and real-estate. In less than two years, he sold almost all the remaining assets in Clark County and invested over \$12,000 cash in more properties around Murfreesboro, particularly on the expanding north and south sides of town.<sup>91</sup> When a writer for the *Arkansas Gazette* visited in late 1920, he found the Discoverer still “a wealthy man, as wealth goes in this remote region,” a man who had “fared better than anyone else engaged in the [diamond-mining] enterprise.”<sup>92</sup>

Of course, the John Huddleston who returned to Pike County in early 1918 differed considerably from the person who departed a decade earlier. While as illiterate and unsmiling as ever, he was active and businesslike—better prepared to assume the role of Diamond John. Helping compensate for personal limitations, J. C. Pinnix and other advisors were still available, and now Pinnix’ Pike County Bank could oversee his financial affairs more closely. Huddleston facilitated the process by remaining, in the words of those who knew him best, “reliable and honest” and “always” prompt in paying his bills.<sup>93</sup>

During the first four years in Murfreesboro, Diamond John engaged in only three lawsuits, none of which related to the buying or selling of real estate. Two of these, however, were long battles providing additional insight into the man’s abilities as well as his character.

The first episode began in October 1918 when Huddleston ordered a large quantity of roof coating and paint to redo one of his rental houses. After an agent of the Republic Paint & Lead Works of Cleveland, Ohio, filled out a contract, Huddleston scratched his X and promptly received a half-barrel of coating and twenty gallons of outside paint at the railroad depot. The bill: \$99.50. Believing he had ordered only \$89 worth, he refused delivery and asked the company to correct the charge. Republic’s credit department made the mistake of implying he was acting dishonestly. He, on the other hand, began suspecting someone had taken advantage of his illiteracy and altered the contract.<sup>94</sup>

Subsequently, Republic Paint & Lead offered to compromise but found Diamond John unyielding. On August 31, 1920, the company finally filed in a Pike County small-claims court (Justice of the Peace), which quickly dismissed the suit. Filing in Circuit Court, the company introduced a contract bearing Huddleston’s mark; the salesman testified the total of \$99.50 was correct. Huddleston’s lawyers, including J. C. Pinnix, invoked the state law requiring that contracts bear the signature of a witness beside the mark of any illiterate principal. Huddleston testified “that he could not read or write, and that he had no recollection of having signed an order; that if the order introduced in evidence covered the materials to the amount of \$99.50, it had been changed and was not the order given by him.” Furthermore, the person renting the house supported Huddleston’s argument.<sup>95</sup>

The Circuit judge, however, ignored all other issues and instructed the jury to deliberate only one question: did John Huddleston owe \$89 or more than that amount? To Judge James S. Steel, the mere fact the material had been delivered to the railroad and shipped to Murfreesboro meant the company was due payment.<sup>96</sup>

Appealing to the state Supreme Court, Huddleston easily won a reversal of the Circuit decision. The high court's terse Opinion in March 1921 pointed out that no one had witnessed the mark on the contract and that a purchaser was not obligated to accept "goods of substantially different value from those ordered by him." The court ruled the jury should have decided not merely an amount due, but also if Huddleston owed anything at all. It remanded the cause for a new trial.<sup>97</sup>

In September 1921, a Circuit jury again followed instructions and found Huddleston owed the paint company \$84.20 plus \$13.45 interest. He also had to pay all costs of litigation. As determined as ever, Diamond John moved for a new trial and, when overruled, gained permission for another appeal to the Supreme Court. This evidently inspired a settlement out of court.<sup>98</sup>

Before that case terminated, Huddleston had gotten into a different sort of legal battle—a sensational affair that somehow escaped the attention of the mythmakers. The unusual adventure originated during the Democratic primaries of 1920, when Huddleston publicly disparaged one of the candidates for Pike County Sheriff, R. M. Steuart. According to Steuart's later testimony, "Huddleston, in order to secure votes against him, told some of the voters that he, Steuart, had killed his father and had cursed his mother on her deathbed. He [Steuart] had done nothing to his parents to give rise to such a report, and he suffered great humiliation and anguish of mind when he was informed of the language used about him by Huddleston." Huddleston, denying slanderous intent, testified he merely had asked someone if there was any truth in local rumors about Steuart's mistreatment of his parents. Huddleston presented evidence "tending to show that Steuart about twenty years before had had a row with his father; that he had struck his father with his fist; that his father became sick in a few days and died in about a week thereafter from pneumonia. There was also introduced the evidence of a physician to the effect that pneumonia is sometimes caused by a blow."<sup>99</sup>

Whatever the exact circumstances, Steuart had followed Huddleston into a local store, confronted him, and struck him at least once with a fist, knocking him down. Then, in April 1921, Steuart sued Huddleston for slander, requesting a total of \$15,000 for compensatory and exemplary damages. When Huddleston countersued for what he described as an unprovoked and severe beating, asking for \$1,000 damages, Steuart pleaded self-defense: during an argument in the store, he said, Huddleston tried to draw his gun, intending to shoot him.<sup>100</sup>

After hearing witnesses and arguments, Circuit Judge James S. Steel instructed the jury to first consider Steuart's suit and, if the law and the evidence warranted, determine the amount of damages he should receive. Essentially, jurors were told to disregard any local rumors about Steuart's character and simply decide if Huddleston's public comment constituted slander. Addressing the countersuit and Steuart's claim of self-defense, the judge placed Huddleston in an even weaker position:

The court instructs the jury that the plaintiff [Steuart] was entitled to act upon appearances, and, if the language and conduct of Huddleston was such as to induce in the mind of a reasonable man, under all the circumstances then existing and viewed from the standpoint of Steuart, a fear that death or great bodily

harm was about to be inflicted by Huddleston upon him, it does not matter if such danger was real or only apparent, and, if Steuart acted in necessary self-defense from real and honest conviction as to the character of the danger, if any, your verdict should be for Steuart on the cross-complaint, even though he was mistaken as to the extent of danger.<sup>101</sup>

In September 1921, the jury awarded Steuart \$1,700 damages and all costs of litigation. John Huddleston received nothing—although Judge Steel’s instruction suggested the trial had raised serious doubt about any intent to shoot Steuart.<sup>102</sup>

Upon appeal, the Arkansas Supreme Court found no error in the finding of slander, but it agreed with Huddleston’s challenge of the key instruction on self-defense. In April 1922, the high court reversed the Circuit decision and remanded the cause for a new trial.<sup>103</sup> Private negotiations evidently produced an undisclosed settlement the following year; the court merely adjudged that Steuart was due \$280 in costs. Reflecting his current financial problems, Huddleston was allowed six months to pay that amount.<sup>104</sup>



## Surviving a More Costly Encounter

As an isolated event, the Steuart affair would have had little impact on Diamond John's fame or fortune. As the journalist said in late 1920, he was still financially secure at the time, and no doubt could have remained so under normal conditions. He had settled into a simple lifestyle soon after returning from Arkadelphia: personal property reported in 1920 included little more than a few livestock, a piano, and a car valued at \$350. Recently, he had bought four properties in Murfreesboro by trading in a 1920 Maxwell automobile priced at \$1,095.<sup>105</sup> While the heavy investing in real estate still left only a moderate amount of cash on hand, he owned rental properties, and the rising value of real estate in the post-war era put him in good position to raise more money when needed. The revival of major commercial testing at the diamond field in 1919 also worked in his favor by spurring local optimism and real-estate promotion, especially on the northern periphery of Murfreesboro where he finally accumulated over 170 acres of land.<sup>106</sup>

John Huddleston had ample reason to begin the year 1921 confidently. In April, he bought fifty-five acres immediately north of Murfreesboro for only \$100 cash down and the balance of \$2,100 due in two short-term payments. In November, he added forty more acres for a stated \$1 down and a balance of \$499 due within a year.<sup>107</sup>

Then, at the height of success, the elderly widower made the greatest mistake of his life by marrying a young woman about one-third his age: Lizzie Curtis of nearby Pike City, allegedly a "blonde carnival girl he met in Arkadelphia."<sup>108</sup> The unlikely couple got their marriage license December 28, 1921, and wed the next day.<sup>109</sup>

STATE OF ARKANSAS, County of Pike.		MARRIAGE LICENSE	
TO ANY PERSON AUTHORIZED BY LAW TO SOLEMNIZE MARRIAGE—Greeting:			
YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to solemnize the Rite and publish the Banns of Matrimony between			
Mr. <i>John W. Huddleston</i>	in the County of <i>Pike</i>	and State of <i>Arkansas</i>	aged <i>59</i> years,
and <i>Lizzie Curtis</i>	in the County of <i>Pike</i>	and State of <i>Arkansas</i>	aged <i>19</i> years,
according to law, and do you officially sign and return this License to the parties herein named.			
Witness my hand and seal, this <i>28</i> day of <i>Dec</i> 19 <i>21</i>		<i>J. L. Barnett</i> County Clerk.	
(Seal)		By <i>J. L. Barnett</i> Deputy Clerk.	
STATE OF ARKANSAS, County of Pike.		CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE	
<i>A Minister of the Gospel</i>		do hereby certify, that	
on the <i>29th</i> day of <i>December</i> 19 <i>21</i>		I did duly and according to law, as commanded in the foregoing	
License, solemnize the Rite and publish the Banns of Matrimony between the parties therein named.		Witness my hand, this <i>30th</i> day of <i>December</i> 19 <i>21</i>	
<i>Saline</i>		<i>m. o. Barnett</i>	
My Credentials are recorded in <i>Saline</i> County, Arkansas, Book <i>C</i> Page <i>383</i>			
STATE OF ARKANSAS, County of Pike.		CERTIFICATE OF RECORD	
<i>John W. Huddleston</i> Clerk of the County Court of said County, certify that the above License for, and Certificate of Marriage		of <i>John W. Huddleston</i> and <i>Miss Lizzie Curtis</i>	

Contrary to the folk tales, however, romance did not entirely blind John Huddleston to certain hazards of that venture, for he knew marriage would bestow common-law rights of dower and homestead upon the new wife, effectively giving her joint control of all properties during his lifetime as well as a share of the estate afterwards.<sup>110</sup> Before the wedding, he demonstrated some of the “practical sense” one journalist noticed later and began deeding choice properties in Murfreesboro and the new additions to his daughters and his sister Harriet’s husband, Lee J. Wagner.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps Huddleston’s daughters helped him decide the course of action—all four were considerably older than the nineteen-year-old prospective stepmother. In any case, it is clear he intended to retain control of several of the properties conveyed to the daughters, while at the same time safeguarding them from a risky marriage.<sup>112</sup>

The eventual annulment decree, obtained by John Huddleston in June 1924, left no doubt about basic details of that mismatch. The couple had lived together only eleven days before young Lizzie “deserted the plaintiff and left his home and remained away for eleven months.” Returning December 5, 1922, she stayed almost eight months and then departed for good, reportedly settling somewhere outside of Arkansas. Furthermore, during the marriage Lizzie Huddleston “committed the crime of adultery,” the judge concluded, and on that basis the court declared the union “annuled [sic], cancelled, set aside” and the plaintiff “restored to all the rights, privileges and immunities of an unmarried man.” Lizzie never contested the petition or the ruling.<sup>113</sup>

With the decree, John Huddleston regained not only sole ownership and control of his properties, but also sole responsibility for any related obligations, because the annulment had stripped Lizzie of both her rights of dower and homestead and any responsibility for contracts signed jointly during the marriage.<sup>114</sup>

All together, Huddleston was left holding notes for three short-term loans the couple had gotten a few months after Lizzie returned from the first absence. The restless young bride evidently liked to spend money, in contrast with her aging spouse, whose investments left very little cash on hand; and after she came back in late 1922, he tried to keep her satisfied. At the same time, he had to cope with the costs of the Steuart affair and several other debts he had neglected during that disconcerting period of marriage and separation: these obligations, incurred earlier by Huddleston himself, totaled at least \$1,744.<sup>115</sup> So, in late February 1923, the reunited couple used some large parcels of land around Murfreesboro to secure a loan of \$2,500 from a private estate, at 8% interest. Then two weeks later they signed a promissory note to a private individual for \$1,050 at 10%, and used several lots in Murfreesboro for collateral. That was followed a week later by a private loan of \$400 at 10%, backed by three smaller parcels.<sup>116</sup>

This seems to have been the limits of Diamond John’s effort to reconcile with Lizzie and pay off the creditors. It remains questionable whether the restless young woman finally fled in August 1923 with a significant amount of cash and a “Model T Ford coupe,” as a vague folk tale declares. It is also uncertain whether her permanent exit left the beleaguered spouse feeling distraught or relieved.<sup>117</sup>

Clearly, the John Huddleston of 1922-1923 was essentially the disorganized, irresponsible Diamond John depicted in old folk tales. In 1922, while absorbed in domestic problems, he had failed to respond when several creditors asked for payment of

overdue real-estate notes and a small bill at the general store, leaving them no choice except law suits. When summoned to court, he failed to respond. Judgments followed, including the sale of the real-estate at public auction.<sup>118</sup>

Huddleston's behavior from late 1923 into 1925 also seemed to reflect the same sort of distraction and withdrawal. In February 1924, probably after deciding to divorce Lizzie and start over, his interest revived enough that he placed the highest bid for one of the properties he had let slip into public auction; but then he quickly defaulted after signing a standard three-month note for the purchase.<sup>119</sup> Soon he allowed creditors and the Pike County Chancery Court to arrange the public auction of many of his mortgaged properties, particularly those he and Lizzie used to secure loans in early 1923.<sup>120</sup> The besieged divorcee had paid nothing on those loans, and now chose not to respond to any of the court petitions.

Instead of reflecting confusion and indifference, however, these actions were part of a strategy designed to resolve his overall financial problems. The legal maneuvering evidently was directed by the wealthy and influential old friend who had remained close to John Wesley Huddleston since the discovery in 1906. When one of the public auctions was executed in June 1925, Pike County's leading lawyer and banker, J. C. Pinnix, salvaged Huddleston's best properties, those used to secure the \$2,500 loan. Pinnix bid high enough to cover the court judgment and related expenses, and then worked out an agreement allowing Huddleston to keep the land.<sup>121</sup>

That same month, a subdued John Huddleston transferred 6.6 acres in the Murfreesboro Heights Addition to daughter Willie and confined himself to managing the remaining properties. In 1930 that still included about 170 acres immediately north and northeast of Murfreesboro.<sup>122</sup>

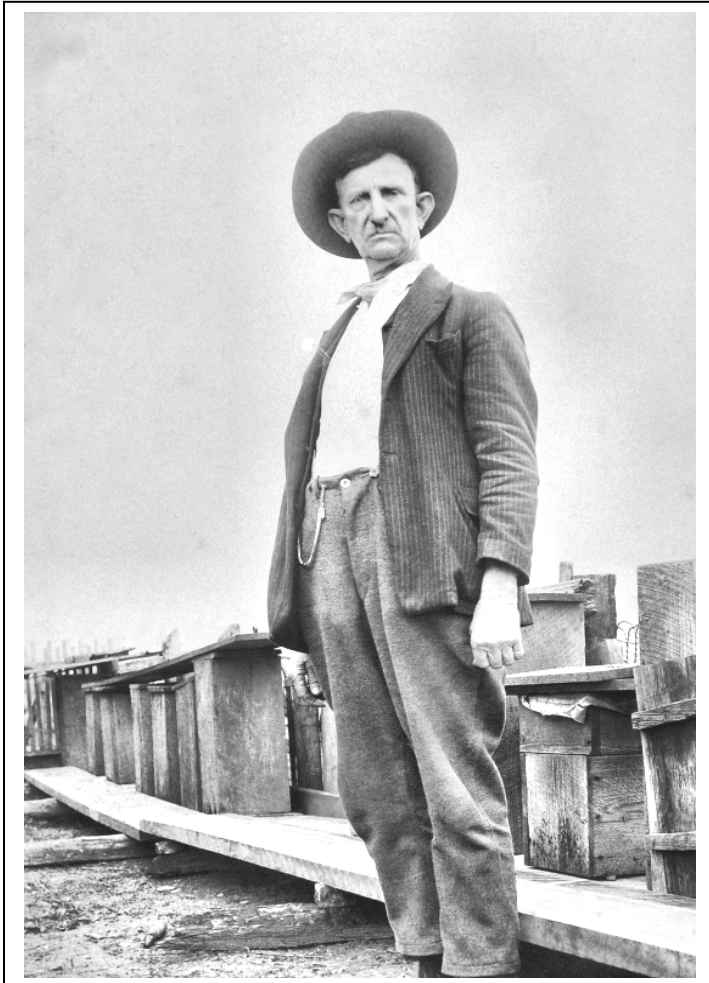
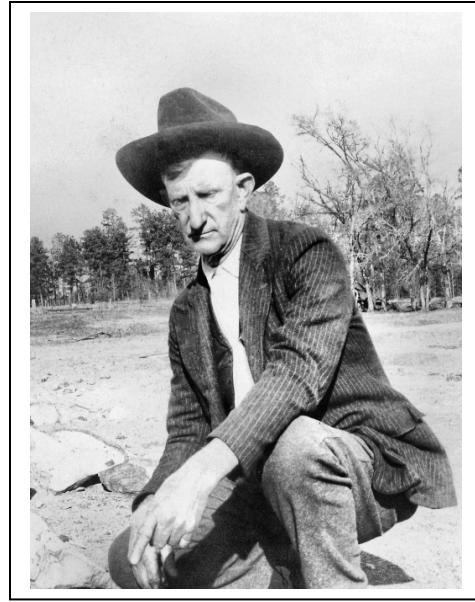
### Single, Older, and Still Resourceful

While embarrassing and initially devastating, the failed marriage hardly forced Huddleston into social withdrawal. Emerging clean-shaven and mellowed by age and experience, he was receptive and talkative when approached soon afterward by journalist Tom Shiras, editor-publisher of the reputable *Baxter (County) Bulletin*, published in distant Mountain Home, Arkansas. "I went to Murfreesboro especially for this interview," Shiras wrote later. "Walter Mauney of Murfreesboro, who has been associated with diamond mining in the Arkansas field since it started, went with me up to John's white cottage that morning. There was a comfortable bench before the big fireplace, and we all sat down and lighted our pipes and started to talk. I caught a true picture of John Huddleston that day."<sup>123</sup>

Shiras was interested in Huddleston's background and character as well as the discovery in 1906. "The Ozarks [mountains] have developed the same type of hardy prospectors who first discovered most of the big mines in the West. John Huddleston was of this type. He was not an educated man, but had plenty of practical sense and a determination to do what he thought should be done." As for the old outdoorsman's renown for marksmanship, "his eyes were still sharp. At 25 yards he could put six bullets from an automatic revolver into the small heart of a pine log, and at 50 yards could with a rifle still 'bust' a squirrel's eye."<sup>124</sup>

That sharp vision was just as evident during an afternoon spent at the diamond field. John Huddleston's "keen, gray eyes" constantly detected shiny little objects that might be diamonds, "but he found none that day." When his brother-in-law Lee Wagner joined them, he and Huddleston located "the exact spot" where the first diamond was picked up, and Shiras took the famous photograph of the well-dressed discoverer kneeling and pointing at the ground.<sup>125</sup>

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**Left, a second photograph by Shiras during his visit, c. late 1924(?) Huddleston's harelip appeared as a shadowed line (zoom in). Crater.**

After the divorce, Huddleston no doubt made regular visits to the diamond field, where Wagner worked as property overseer. The renewed commercial testing of the early 1920s proved as disappointing as earlier efforts, resulting in the closing of the field in mid 1925; but Lee Wagner kept his job. Although small-scale testing occurred at times between 1928 and 1932, Huddleston and his affable brother-in-law were free to walk over the grounds reminiscing and chatting with Walter Mauney and others who happened by.<sup>126</sup>

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**Below, three of several photographs made during a visit to the diamond field c. 1930. Top left, Wagner and Huddleston. Right, joined by Walter Mauney of Murfreesboro. Bottom center, unidentified visitor. Crater.**



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After a time, Huddleston participated in at least one of the many events of that era designed to advertise Pike County's diamonds and other natural resources and thereby attract tourists and new residents. In July 1931, amid growing signs of economic



depression, public officials used a Hot Springs radio station to invite listeners to order samples of material from the diamond field—small bags of it certified by the Arkansas Commissioner of Mines and Agriculture. “The rock and dirt . . . were selected by John W. Huddleston, the first discoverer of the diamond fields in America,” the *Pike County Courier* reported. “Tourists were invited to stop at the Pike County Bank at Murfreesboro and inspect the first two diamonds ever found at the diamond fields here.”<sup>127</sup>

### The 1930s: Hard Times for All

To men such as John Huddleston, land had always been the ultimate source of wealth and wellbeing. Over the decades it had remained the most trustworthy of investments. Then came the Great Depression and drought, and suddenly unproductive land became a tax burden more than an asset. By the end of 1932, State seizures and tax auctions began soaring.<sup>128</sup> The elderly Huddleston, still responsible for a number of properties, finally gave up. In May 1933, he signed a quitclaim deed giving J. C. Pinnix clear title to all his remaining real estate except a large lot in Kelly Addition and his home place nearby on Kelly Street, several blocks north of the courthouse.<sup>129</sup> The quitclaim included some land not involved in the public auction of 1925. Apparently, that was either sold to Pinnix or transferred to settle unrecorded obligations.

At the time, John Huddleston also held legal claim to two other large lots in Kelly Addition and forty acres three miles southwest of town, properties he had sold in the early 1920s with balances due. He had not moved to recover those when the buyers failed to make payments, and during the Depression he allowed them to cover only the taxes until final settlements in late 1938 and 1940.<sup>130</sup>

While no longer prosperous, the old Discoverer fared better than many Arkansans after 1933. The initial state-county relief programs of the early ‘30s provided very limited support for the needy, and the new federal Social Security program provided minimal aid for most retirees when it began. John Huddleston’s federal Old Age Pension, which started October 1, 1936, was \$10 a month.<sup>131</sup> Still resourceful, however, he made extra money by operating a little business in his yard. “John’s place had lots of stuff around it,” said an old-timer who grew up near Huddleston’s home on Kelly Street. “He was always dragging stuff in, buying and selling.”<sup>132</sup> In addition, there was still good Huddleston farmland available for raising meat and vegetables.<sup>133</sup>

In 1936, *Literary Digest*, a leading national magazine, described the once-famous Arkansan as a seventy-six-year-old “part-time junkman, part-time farmer.” The writer echoed a story heard in Murfreesboro: “John Huddleston received \$36,000 for his tract. For more than twenty-odd years he lived well on this money. . . . Then, through unfortunate speculation, he lost his fortune.”<sup>134</sup> Perhaps John Huddleston had offered that simple explanation instead of trying to clarify all the property transfers and the events following the second wedding.

Regardless of age, the Discoverer remained an imposing figure as he walked the streets of Murfreesboro. Tall and still unsmiling, he made an indelible impression on imaginative youngsters such as Bobby Joe Flaherty, only nine years old in 1936. “He was mean-looking and scared us kids to death,” said Flaherty. “With that big old hat and

those big hands and long arms, he reminded us of the desperados we saw in the movies. I can't remember if he wore a gun or not.”<sup>135</sup>

Some say Huddleston grew fond of alcohol in his last years—as did many contemporaries after the repeal of national prohibition in 1933. In earlier times, there had been very few references to his drinking, and those instances were hardly remarkable.<sup>136</sup> Now, he especially enjoyed beer. The late Alton Terrell, whose mother was John Huddleston's cousin, told of a group of younger men who often got together at the courthouse square in Murfreesboro and went over to a popular drinking spot for discounted leftovers. “If John Huddleston was around,” he said, “his ears always perked up when someone said something about going over there. He liked that stale beer.”<sup>137</sup> According to a more typical folk tale, the old Arkansan also accumulated “truck loads” of empty beer and whisky bottles in his home, leaving quite a mess to be cleaned up after his death. That was one of several old stories exaggerating Huddleston's physical abilities.<sup>138</sup>

## Ending and New Beginning

Diamond John Huddleston of the folk tales supposedly died in 1936. John Wesley Huddleston of Murfreesboro, Pike County, Arkansas, lived until November 12, 1941, when he died at home after a short illness. At the time he reportedly was still “trying to manage a small farm and conduct a junk yard on the side.”<sup>139</sup> Family members buried him among other relatives in little Japany Cemetery, between the diamond field and his and Sarah’s original farm, with only a plain river stone marking the gravesite. A few yards away stood the small inscribed headstone he and Sarah had gotten for their second-born, Ellen, after her death in 1895. The graves of Sarah and Miss Joe, still without identifying markers, no doubt lay close by.<sup>140</sup>

The former hero was not entirely forgotten by the time of his passing, certainly not around Murfreesboro, where tales still flourished. Even *Time* magazine had mentioned the Discoverer a few months earlier in an article about diamond mining.<sup>141</sup> Still, outside of Pike County he had almost faded into obscurity after the mid 1920s.

John Huddleston would have been pleased by the broader recognition and fame that followed his death, even though some of it remained less than complimentary. By late 1941, federal spending and the war in Europe had begun reviving the economy and stirring new interest in the Pike County field as a possible source of industrial diamonds, a trend *Time* reflected earlier that year. Likely, this reawakening helped spur the *Arkansas Gazette* into publishing the first full-length feature about the “Diamond Discoverer” two months after he died.<sup>142</sup> Then, further testing at the field generated more national publicity, including substantial coverage in *Nation’s Business* in March 1949. The writer of that article introduced readers to some of the current tales about “John Wesley Huddleston, who now ranks in local tradition with the legendary Paul Bunyan of lumber camps.”<sup>143</sup>

Facilitated by Howard A. Millar, a master story teller and public relations man, the legend spread quickly after tourist operations began at the diamond field in 1951. Millar and his father, both mining engineers, had bought a small part of the diamond field decades earlier, and had remained through the Great Depression. While still trying to promote commercial mining, Howard Millar became the driving force behind the development of a permanent tourist industry centering upon recreational diamond hunting. He and his wife, Modean, opened their “Crater of Diamonds” tourist attraction in 1952, and for the next sixteen years he applied his considerable talents as writer and promoter. Drawing the attention of national magazines, newspapers, and popular new television programs, he generated more publicity for the Arkansas diamond field and its Discoverer than any person ever had.<sup>144</sup> Through his published accounts, Millar also facilitated the John Huddleston Day celebration now held annually at Crater of Diamonds State Park.<sup>145</sup>

Eventually, in 1995, a few relatives and other concerned citizens gathered at the grave in Japany Cemetery for a special ceremony. A craftsman among them had replaced the river stone with a small headstone made of native rocks—a more fitting marker for an old



Arkansan who loved the outdoors and prospecting. It bore a simple identification beside an image of a sparkling gem: “‘Diamond’ John Huddleston, 1860-1936.” Later, that modest structure was replaced with a more impressive memorial consisting of rockwork and an accompanying granite slab with the same inscription.<sup>146</sup>

The well-maintained cemetery lies atop a gentle slope beside Japany Methodist Church, on Highway 301 four miles southeast of Murfreesboro. A relative, Etta Huddleston, deeded the site to trustees when the church organized several years after John Huddleston’s death.<sup>147</sup> Crater of Diamonds State Park is only about two miles back up the road toward town.



**The final memorial. Relatives and the local history society intend to correct the dates. (Additional photographs follow.)**





**Above, daughter Ellen's headstone in foreground. Below, Japany Cemetery, 2007.**



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Banks, *Arkansas Diamonds: Dreams, Myths, and Reality* (© 1994, 1997; online edition available at <http://www.pcahs.com/>, Pike County Archives and History Society); summarized as "Diamond Mining," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (2006), online at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2146>. In the summer of 1908, the online book will be expanded and titled *Crater of Diamonds: Dreams, Myths and Reality*.

<sup>2</sup> When Huddleston died, his nephew Jefferson D. (Jeff) Riley served informally as administrator of his estate. Upon Jeff Riley's death, his daughters Rita and Clarene became custodians of Huddleston's belongings. Rita (Mrs. James Arnold) lives in Nashville, Arkansas, about fifteen miles southwest of Murfreesboro; Clarene (Mrs. Richard Musgrave) lives nearby. Huddleston's small collection of photographs evidently became part of the records collection of his brother-in-law Lee J. Wagner, and later was donated to the Crater of Diamonds archive (see Bibliographic Note 1, below).

<sup>3</sup> Pike County, Deed Record L, 340, Warranty Deed with Lien, H. M. and M. J. Ross, W. G. and Mattie McBrayer, F. E. and Nellie McBrayer, and Florence McBrayer to J. W. Huddleston, July 15, 1905 (land described as East of the River, Northwest quarter of Section 28 of Township 8 South of Base Line, Range 25 West of 5<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian, 112.06 acres [abbreviated form: Section 28, Township 8, Range 25 W, or 28-8-25], and part of the NE ¼ of Section 28, Township 8, Range 25, 131.50 acres); "Background of Discovery," Banks, *Arkansas Diamonds*.

Property usually was deeded to husbands, and sometimes to wives and single women in their own right. Under State law, however, marriage bestowed the right of "dower and homestead" upon wives and "curtesy interest" upon husbands, giving them legally defined, lifelong interest in a spouse's properties. The law required their signature on deeds, mortgages, or other related documents. In case of illiteracy, State law required that a witness certify the seller's "mark" (typically an X).

In recent decades, Huddleston has received credit for discovering the first diamond "pipe" in North America; but in the early days virtually all leading geologists and mining engineers agreed the event was much more significant. The basic sources:

George F. Kunz and Henry S. Washington, "Note on the Forms of Arkansas Diamonds," *American Journal of Science*, 4<sup>th</sup> Series, 24 (1907), 275: evidence "seems conclusive" that diamonds are coming from the peridotite [the basic volcanic rock], and "if so, this is evidently the first occurrence of diamonds in place on either the North or South American Continent." (At the time, the only significant diamond-mining known outside Africa was in South America; and that, as all activity outside Africa, was recognized as alluvial ["placer"] mining.) The point was further clarified in Kunz and Washington, "Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas," *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1906* (1907), 1250: "As this is the only place outside of South Africa where diamonds have been found in peridotite . . ."

John T. Fuller, "Diamond Mine in Pike County, Arkansas," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 87, No. 3 (January 16, 1909), 154: the Arkansas diamond field is the first "original matrix" discovered in the Western Hemisphere.

Hugh D. Miser and Clarence S. Ross [U.S. Geological Survey], "Diamond-Bearing Peridotite in Pike County, Arkansas," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institute for 1923* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925), 261-262: clearly stated that the only original diamond-bearing formations



were in South Africa and Arkansas, while deposits in Brazil and elsewhere were placer. Also, for example, Robert S. Lanier, "Has Arkansas a Diamond Field," *American Review of Reviews*, 36 (September 1907), 301-303.

In the popular press, an exceptionally clear statement appeared in a well-researched article in a Sunday edition of *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee. According to experts, it said, the big Pike County pipe was "the only spot in the Western Hemisphere where the diamond has been found in the original matrix, or, in plain English, in the solid rock from which the diamonds are supposed to have been derived. South Africa is the only other locality up to the present time in which the diamond has been found in the matrix. Previous to 1870, when the South African fields were discovered, all the diamonds found since the beginning of history had been recovered from river beds or alluvial deposits, to which the stones had apparently been carried from their original resting place." ("Status of Diamond Fields of Pike County, Arkansas," *Commercial Appeal*, March 21, 1909, page unclear on available microfilm copies.)

At first, editors of the *New York Times* adopted the cautious statement used often by non-professional publications: "The Pike County diamond field is the first to be discovered in the United States." ("The Diamonds of Arkansas," August 4, 1907, p. 6.) Later, the *Times* followed Kunz's lead, referring to "what geologists believe to be the only native diamond bearing matrix in the United States and the only known geological counterpart of the South African diamond area." ("Diamond Mines are Busy in Arkansas," June 14, 1931, Sec. 8, p. 7.)

John C. Branner, another prominent expert and a former Arkansas State Geologist, might have raised some temporary doubt in 1909, after one of his field trips to South America. In the *Engineering and Mining Journal*, he challenged John Fuller's recent statement in that publication "to the effect that 'diamonds have never been found in South America in the true matrix.'" Not true, said Branner: "Certain washings near Diamantina in the state of Minas Geraes took their material entirely from itacolumite decomposed in place. This locality I have visited and I make this statement from personal observations. The late James E. Mills stated to me that he had seen a diamond in place in the itacolumite. Recently Prof. O. A. Derby, the director of the Geological Survey of Brazil, has seen a diamond from Bahia in the original quartzite." ("Some Facts and Corrections Regarding the Diamond Region of Arkansas," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 87 [February 13, 1909], 372; reprinted as "Didn't Overlook Diamond Rock," *Arkansas Gazette*, February 27, 1909, 12.)

Branner neglected to attach dates to these events. In any case, the suspected sites evidently turned out to be unusual sedimentary deposits. For early background on Brazilian diamond mining: <http://www.minelinks.com/alluvial/diamondGeology9.html>.

After the Great Depression of the 1930s, writers tended to revert to the "first in North America" theme. A feature article in 1947, however, demonstrated that the real significance of Huddleston's discovery had not been forgotten. Repeating points made earlier in the *Commercial Appeal*, the author reminded readers: "Therefore, the priceless dramatic facts of the Pike county [sic] diamond mines are that (1) there is only one other world phenomenon like it—the one in South Africa—and (2) . . ." (Glenn A. Green, "May Re-establish Field Day for Diamond Hunters," *Arkansas Democrat*, Sunday Magazine, April 6, 1947, pp. 6-7.) Green mentioned he had read Miser's report published by the Smithsonian (6).

As discussed later, the volcanic formation had been surveyed and mapped by State Geologist John C. Branner in 1888. Prior to that, at least three geologists wrote reports about it (see the comment in Banks, *Diamonds*, "Background").

<sup>4</sup> Publicity between the discovery and Huddleston's death is summarized later in this study, especially in Bibliographic Notes 3a and 4.

**Bibliographic Note 1. Huddleston photographs.** The available photographic record for John Huddleston and family is limited but invaluable. Almost all of the small collection in the Crater of Diamonds archive was originally with the records of Lee J. Wagner, Huddleston's brother-in-law. Although a few items probably came from John Huddleston's personal belongings upon his death, Wagner worked with the group that bought the diamond field in late 1906, and he collected photographs until finally leaving his job as property custodian in the early 1940s. In any case, Wagner's records included copies of two key images taken by journalist Tom Shiras in the 1920s (Wagner accompanied Shiras and Huddleston during a visit to the diamond field, as described in "Single, Older, and Still Resourceful" and in Bibliographic Note 4, below).

Currently, the following are in the Wagner Collection, Photographs, Crater of Diamonds State Park archive (no Huddleston prints or negatives were found in the extensive vertical files of the Department of Parks and Tourism, Little Rock, "Crater of Diamonds"): Files 23.3, 23.56, 23.66, all three of an elderly and clean-shaven Huddleston, visiting with Wagner and others at the diamond field; 23.80, Shiras' excellent shot of a well-dressed Huddleston, clean-shaven, kneeling and pointing to the spot where he found the first diamond; 23.83, distant shot of Huddleston and others at the field beside a small test plant; 23.100 (Shiras), Huddleston standing in the field, slight harelip visible; 23.101, faint image of Huddleston and others at the field, beside a big cut left by a mining company in 1920-1922; 23.108, good picture post card of the middle-aged Discoverer, still with mustache, c. 1915(?); 23.110, excellent family portrait, c. 1908, Huddleston with mustache; and 23.112, Huddleston and Sam Reyburn of Little Rock, who headed the group taking an option on the property in September 1906.

Another copy of 23.80 turned up in the Millar Collection, Photographs, unnumbered file, Crater archive.

<sup>5</sup> "Discoverer of Diamonds in Arkansas Dies," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 13, 1941, p. 2; "Discoverer of Diamond Field Buried Today," *Arkansas Democrat*, November 13, 1941, p. 14; "John W. Huddleston," *Pike County Courier*, November 14, 1941, p. 1; "John W. Huddleston," *Nashville News*, November 14, p. 1. Although the writer of the obituary declared Huddleston 84 years of age, the best evidence indicates he was born in early 1862. The disruption of the Civil War apparently obscured his exact birthdate: his father, David Fielding Huddleston, joined the Confederate army in 1862 and the family did not reappear in the regular federal census of Pike County until the survey taken June 14, 1880, when his parents declared John Wesley's age as 17. (Original census sheets, 1880, Pike County, Thompson Township, Sheet No. 12, Dwelling-Family 77/77, census p. 419B.) The survey sheet of June 18, 1860 included only David F., his wife America, and two sons, James D. (age 5) and Louis J. (2). (Thompson, 4, 28/28, 436.)

John Huddleston, himself, usually varied his age after reaching adulthood; but generally his statements and other data indicate birth in early 1862. His sister Harriett's firm birthday—April 4, 1863—helps pinpoint the time. The day and month of his birth never appeared in the records reviewed for this study, and the census of 1900 entered "Un" [unknown] for the month. For highlights see the Census, 1900, Thompson Township, Sheet No. 4, Dwelling-Family 60/60, census p. 93B (age "40"—the first time he suggested a birth-date of 1860, which later became the standard for family genealogists and others); Census, 1910, Clark County, Caddo Township, 16/18, census p. 128 (age 50); Census, 1920, Pike, Thompson, Sheet 1-B, 15/15 (age 55); Census, 1930, Thompson, Sheet 2-B, 44/48, (age 67); Marriage License, John W. Huddleston and Lizzie Curtis, December 28, 1921, Pike County, Marriage Record F, p. 311 (age 59). The ages given in 1900 and 1910 might have been adjusted because of the disparity between John and his wife Sarah, who evidently was born about 1856 (Census, 1870, Thompson, 58/58, p. 235, family of William M. and Lucinda Keys, including Sarah A., age 14; Census, 1900, Sarah A. Huddleston, born October 1853, age 46; Census, 1910, Clark County, age 51). After becoming wealthy, the Huddlestons moved to Arkadelphia, where Sarah might have been inclined to shed a few years.

The most detailed and reliable family genealogy initially used 1860 as John Huddleston's birth-date; but later the author changed the master copy to 1862 (Georgia Belle Huddleston Evans,

"Fielding Huddleston of Parson Co., N. C., and His Descendants," privately distributed [Nashville, Arkansas: 1990], p. 49, original typed manuscript, 138 pp., with slight revision and introduction added, Pike County Archives and History Society [PCHAHS], Murfreesboro, Arkansas; copy of original only, in File FHF 637, Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives [SARA], Washington, Arkansas). Another substantial but less reliable work used only 1860: Patsy Ruth Mackey Stewart, "History of the Keys Family," privately distributed, two volumes, 1986, p. 16 of largest volume, both now in the custody of Shirley Strawn, Murfreesboro.

Basic information from the census survey sheets for Pike County, 1860-1880 and 1900, is available at <http://www.pcahs.com/>, in the Online Records Library (*for 1880, the transcriber erroneously entered 7 for Huddleston's age instead of 17, as in the original census*).

**Bibliographic Note 1a.** The original census sheets for 1840-1880 and 1900-1930 are available on microfilm at many archives and libraries (a fire in Washington, D. C. destroyed or damaged much of the census of 1890 before it was released). The census of 1940 is scheduled for release on April 1, 2012 (federal law conceals the information in each census for seventy-two years). Slightly abbreviated versions of the census are printed and often posted online by history societies or other organizations; Pike County, 1840-1880 and 1900-1930 have been printed by the Pike County Archives and History Society (PCHAHS), Murfreesboro. As noted above, those prior to 1920 are online. The remainder will be posted in the future.

After Pike County was established in 1833, the census reflected the gradual division of the county into more than a dozen administrative townships as federal land surveys were completed and various areas were opened to public entry (these differed from the Township Plats, the standard federal survey maps discussed below). John Huddleston's forebears appeared first in Missouri Township (southeastern Pike County) and moved westward into Thompson Township (around Murfreesboro and the Little Missouri River) and other areas as they opened.

<sup>6</sup> Junius B. Wood, "America's 35 Acres of Diamonds," *Nation's Business*, 37 (March 1949), 63-64.

<sup>7</sup> The trend is reviewed in Bibliographic Notes 5 and 6. For full context, see Banks, *Diamonds*, available online at <http://www.pcahs.com/>.

<sup>8</sup> Howard A. Millar, *It Was Finders-Keepers at America's Only Diamond Mine* (New York: Carlton Press, 1976), 18-27. For a detailed account of Millar's involvement in Pike County, see Banks, *Diamonds*, "Northeast Slope" and following sections. A Midwestern mining engineer, Millar joined his father, Austin Q., in Murfreesboro in early 1914 and remained until retiring to Fayetteville in the late 1960s.

The memoir and Millar's general influence on Huddleston's image are treated in Bibliographic Notes 5 and 6. Other prominent examples of his effect: family genealogies (noted above); displays at Crater of Diamonds State Park and literature for the park's annual John Huddleston Day celebration. Among other interesting items, a long poem-song written in 1985 employed almost all of Millar's basic themes, including these about Huddleston's tragic fate:

He fell in love with a carnival girl,  
A blonde from Arkadelphia.  
John thought he was rich, indeed,  
But she was even wealthier.

She soon had all of his money,  
Was sure that it would take her far,  
And while John shopped in a general store,  
His bride ran away with his car.

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John Huddleston died in poverty  
And was buried near the vale  
Where millions of diamonds still remain  
In crumbly volcanic shale.

No headstone, no inscription marks  
His final resting place,  
Just an ordinary river rock  
With nothing on its face.

Chorus:  
John Huddleston, John Huddleston,  
Why did you ever sell your mine?  
You could have been the richest man  
Below the Mason-Dixon line. (Magdalene Collums,  
Hempstead County History Society, Washington,  
Arkansas, "John Huddleston and His Diamond  
Mine" [1985], File SF 269, Southwest Arkansas  
Regional Archives.)

<sup>9</sup> *Finders-Keepers*, 18ff. Millar began by calling Huddleston a "rather intelligent" person with outdoor skills. At another point he said they were good friends and "With all his faults, John was a likeable character and an entertaining conversationalist." (26.) In between, he proceeded to convey less flattering images of the rural Arkansan.

Millar said he first met Huddleston in 1914 and "came to know him well, and to feel great pity for him when his sudden wealth was gone and he fell upon hard times." (18.) Huddleston, however, lived in Arkadelphia from early 1908 to early 1918, and during that time was in Murfreesboro only for visits. Millar was away in military service when Huddleston moved back to Murfreesboro in March 1918, and was discharged in early 1919. Evidently, the two had no significant interaction until about 1920. The personal memories Millar referred to in the book take on some meaning only in the time-frame of the early '20s—not in the context of 1914-1920, when Huddleston clearly prospered. Largely, the kernels of truth in Millar's account apply to events following Huddleston's disastrous second marriage in late 1921 (discussed later).

To some extent, Millar's poorly organized treatment, particularly the lack of chronology, resulted from faulty recollection and failure to refresh his memory with records on hand. His introduction to *Finders-Keepers* cautioned readers: "Much of what I have written here is based on my memory. So many years have passed since the early days of diamond mining in Arkansas; however, I have done my best to tell what I know and to do so honestly and accurately. Any errors are mine, but they are unintentional." (11.)

Twice, Millar said he had gotten parts of his account from Huddleston directly, which raises the question: how much of the embellishment originated with Millar and how much with a likeable and entertaining John Huddleston? The same question applies to the more unflattering descriptions of Huddleston: how much from Millar—the often impatient Midwestern professional—and how much from local sources Millar accepted uncritically?

<sup>10</sup> *Finders-Keepers*, 20. While some folk tales made Huddleston dependent upon other benefactors, Millar cast himself as a source of loans. Yet, there is no evidence John Huddleston became the destitute figure portrayed in *Finders-Keepers*. Of course, he and a great many other Arkansans experienced harder times after the onset of the Great Depression. Millar, himself, had properties seized for public auction in the early '30s because he fell behind on tax payments (Banks, *Diamonds*, "The Millars and the Kimberlite Company").

<sup>11</sup> Deed records and census survey sheets verify that illiteracy affected many within the

Huddlestons' extended family, as it did many other rural adults in those days (the original U. S. Census sheets included sections for education and ability to read and write—a simple “yes” or “no” was entered for the latter). Consistent with census entries, John Huddleston's parents, David F. and Francis, put their Xs on legal documents (“made their mark”). Although the census indicated John Huddleston's wife Sarah could read and write, she was still Xing deeds shortly before her death. He, on the other hand, always answered “No” and “No” to those census questions and continued making his mark on legal documents throughout his life. Their five daughters, however, were literate. (For instance, see the *Federal Census, 1910*, Clark County, Caddo Township, family No. 16, p. 128, original survey sheets, and Clark County Deed Record 81, p. 169, Warranty Deed, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to G. Cook, October 31, 1917.)

Public education had become a major concern by the late 1800s, and the Huddlestons' daughters and most other youngsters in rural Arkansas attended school at least three months a year, basically learning the “Three Rs.” Under those conditions, some illiterate parents might have stretched the truth when census-takers asked if *they* could read and write.

<sup>12</sup> Millar's general description of Huddleston mirrored a photograph taken soon after Sam Reyburn's group optioned his property in September 1906, years before Millar and Huddleston got to know each other (*Finders-Keepers*, 18; Photographs, file 23.112, Crater of Diamonds).

Huddleston's slight-to-moderate harelip is noticeable in photographs taken in the 1920s and early '30s while he stood clean-shaven in the diamond field (above, Bibliographic Note 1). His daughter Delia had a prominent harelip that created problems for her and obvious concern on the part of her parents (see the family photograph, taken c. 1908, original in Wagner Collection, File 23.110, Crater archive). Whatever the exact effect on his speech, John Huddleston was comfortable enough with his blemish to remain clean-shaven once the mustache was gone. Millar overstated the case by merely telling readers Huddleston's face “was disfigured by a hairlip [sic]” and his speech “was impaired.”

Similarly, Millar's comment about an unfriendly attitude needs qualifying. That description might have applied as Huddleston's second marriage began souring in January 1922; but prior to that, the Discoverer was around a great many strangers, none of whom indicated he was unfriendly. By the mid 1920s, after his young wife's scandalous behavior, John Huddleston probably just preferred to be let alone; but even then, he remained open to inquiring journalists such as Tom Shiras of the *Baxter Bulletin* (below, Bibliographic Note 4).

As for Millar's brief reference to the “hard expression” of Huddleston's eyes, that feature also softened considerably with aging and a clean-shaven face. But the deaths of both his first wife, Sarah, and his youngest daughter, Miss Joe, undoubtedly helped maintain the serious demeanor (details later in “Good Life in Arkadelphia”). The disastrous second marriage hardly improved his self-confidence and sociability (“Costly Encounter”).

<sup>13</sup> See Bibliographic Note 1, above. This image of Huddleston was cropped from the photograph in File 23.112 (Huddleston and Sam Reyburn of Little Rock, c. late 1906).

<sup>14</sup> *Finders-Keepers*, 18, 26; interview of Huddleston c. 1924, in Tom Shiras, “Arkansas Diamond Discoverer,” *Arkansas Gazette*, Magazine Section, January 4, 1942, pp. 1, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Evans, “Fielding Huddleston and Descendants,” pp. 49-50; Stewart, “History of the Keys Family,” p. 16 of largest volume. For another example of the family's lack of information, see Lisa Gentry, letter to the Pike County Archives and History Society, in PCAHS, *Gems*, 16, No. 2 (Murfreesboro: Spring 2005), 62. Gentry's grandfather was Robert Gentry, grandson of John Wesley Huddleston. “He always wanted to try and know the truth beyond rumors about his maternal grandfather,” she wrote. “He was only able to meet him once as a child. . . . [He] thought it very important that John Wesley be looked upon in good taste, despite his personal



mistakes. . . . Remember, John Wesley was not just the 'Diamond King': he was also our family." Lisa Gentry mentioned that her grandfather finally had gotten some information through the PCAHS; however, his stated concern about personal mistakes and the image of the Diamond King suggests Millar's account was the basic source.

<sup>16</sup> Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer," p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> William, oldest of the three, evidently was installed as County Coroner for two terms, in 1852 and 1862. For early acknowledgments, see the comment and lists of officeholders in Fay Hempstead, *A Pictorial History of Arkansas, From Earliest Times to the Year 1890* (St. Louis: N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1890), 999-1001, and Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1890), 307-308. Hempstead listed eleven terms for County Judge; Goodspeed mentioned ten, but omitted 1864-1866 (Goodspeed also included David Huddleston, erroneously, among those living in Pike County "prior to 1830"). The lists were reprinted in Pike County Heritage Club, *Early History of Pike County, Arkansas* (Murfreesboro, Arkansas: Pike County Archives and History Society, 1978), 20-21. Lewis' public service is also documented in the annual Sheriff's certification at the end of each county tax record (State Tax List, below, 1843-1852 [William Gilmer filled the vacancy after Huddleston's death and began signing as Sheriff on June 4, 1853]). The county sheriff served as tax collector and signed for the annual assessment at about mid-year, certifying he had received it from the county clerk.

In the available public records, David Huddleston was identified as "Judge" only once—on the census sheet filled out shortly before his death in October 1880. Previously, he always told the census-taker his occupation was "Farmer." (Compare the census in 1840-1870 with 1880, Arkansas, Pike County, Thompson Township, p. 419, Dwelling/Family 79/79.)

<sup>18</sup> For land descriptions and other details about the Huddlestons, see the State Tax Lists, federal cash patents, genealogies, and other records reviewed below in Bibliographic Notes 2-3. The following summary reflects those sources, the federal censuses, and entries in the family Bible of patriarch David Huddleston.

Howard Millar's *Finders-Keepers* implied that John Wesley Huddleston descended from simple, struggling farmers; but the records fail to support that image. His grandfather David Huddleston, the son of Fielding Huddleston, was born in North Carolina in 1800 and evidently moved his young family to Pike County in the summer of 1835. John Wesley's father, David Fielding (D. F.) Huddleston, was about three years old when the family arrived. Soon afterward, they were joined by David's brothers, William and Lewis. (David Huddleston's name appeared initially in the Pike County tax assessment for 1836, which was completed by early summer of that year; he paid only a \$1 poll tax, suggesting recent arrival. Adding further perspective, David's family Bible indicated his third son, Lewis A., was born in Arkansas September 27, 1835, and nothing suggests the family settled elsewhere in the state before reaching Pike County, a frontier of settlement [entries in the Bible, which recorded exact birth dates for 1800-1852, are online at <http://www.pcahs.com/>, "Online Records Library"]. Moreover, the Sheriff-Collector's certification on the tax assessment for 1835, which did not list David Huddleston, was dated July 1835, which leaves about a two-month gap for Huddleston's arrival that year [deed and tax records below]. The census of 1840, a very limited questionnaire, recorded only the name of the head of household and the age distribution of other family members, along with David's identity as a farmer, his location in Missouri Township, and his status as non-slaveholder [original Census sheet, 1840, Pike County, Missouri Township, p. 69B]. Beginning in 1850, a more detailed census recorded that David Fielding was born in Alabama and Lewis A. in Arkansas.)

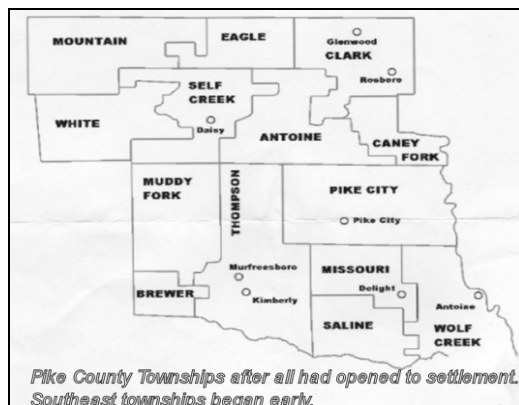
In 1850, seventeen-year-old David Fielding still lived at home with parents and siblings. The federal census of that year identified both him and his father as "farmer." That same year, 1850,

David Huddleston appeared on the Pike County tax assessment as owner of 196 acres of land by the Little Missouri River southeast of Murfreesboro, prime land he had purchased from private owners. He also filed for a patent on a small federal tract of 58.9 acres nearby, paying cash for it. In the Census of 1850, the enterprising patriarch was among the residents of Pike County who could declare they already had acquired property valued at \$1,000. (Census, Missouri Township, household 231-231; annual tax assessments, below.) If grandson John Wesley was born in 1862, as the most reliable sources indicate, David Huddleston owned 307 acres by then and David Fielding had 150 of his own.

David Huddleston died in October 1880, at 79 years of age. According to the federal census that year, taken in June, he was living with his fourth wife, Mary, 40 years of age. Four minor children lived at home: Edda and Mary Huddleston, 18 and 16, listed as daughters, and the couple's daughter and son, Martha A. and Richard, 9 and 7. At the time, David and family lived close to his son "D. F."—David Fielding Huddleston. (Census 1880, Thompson Township, sheet No. 12, census p. 419B, Dwelling/Family 79/79; D. F. and family, Dwelling/Family 77/77.) Having outlived three wives, the old patriarch chose young Mary when he was over seventy years of age, and perhaps influenced John Wesley's even bolder venture several decades later.

The Huddlestons' earliest years in Pike County might seem to indicate the possibility of tenant farming, a subject Howard Millar referred to cryptically (*Finders-Keepers*, 18: "Little was known about his family background, although he was the son of a sharecropper . . ."). But the family's behavior in those pioneering years must be examined in full context, including David and Lewis' prominence as County Judge and Sheriff after late 1840.

At first, David Huddleston and other newcomers lived in one of the first three administrative divisions established in the county: Missouri Township, located immediately east of Thompson Township (in which the county seat, Murfreesboro, had been located in October 1834). The smaller Brewer Township lay at the southwest corner of Thompson. (Township map below, zoom in for details.) When David Huddleston arrived in 1835, Thompson and Brewer Townships had not been surveyed and officially opened to public entry under the federal Act of 1820; although Missouri Township had been opened, only six taxed landholders lived in all of Pike County at the time. After the federal survey began around Murfreesboro and the Little Missouri River, in 1837, the Huddlestons began buying expensive horses, cattle, and a few mules; but they apparently did as many other settlers and temporarily rented land in Missouri Township, although federal tracts were available for 50¢-\$1.25 an acre and private, improved land for up to about \$3. The Tax List showed no land after David's name when he began serving as County Judge in late 1840. Only after the more fertile river-bottom tracts of Thompson and Brewer opened for public entry in the early '40s did that pattern change. Lewis, youngest of the three brothers, finally bought 102 acres from a private owner in 1844, about two miles south of Murfreesboro. According to the official tax record, David bought his first land in Pike County from private owners in 1849—the 196 acres southeast of Murfreesboro. (State Tax Lists and federal patents, below).



Bibliographic Note 2. Although fires destroyed the Pike County Courthouse in 1855 and 1895, the census records, annual Arkansas State tax records, federal and state land records, and available county records provide adequate details about the Huddleston family group and their migration and property ownership after 1835. For the basic genealogy, see Georgia Belle Huddleston Evans' thorough survey, "Fielding Huddleston of Parson Co., N. C., and His Descendants," privately distributed (Nashville, Arkansas: 1990), 138 pp.; and Evans, compiler, "Huddleston Family Group Sheets," originals in Pike County Archive and History Society (PCAHS), Murfreesboro and copy in Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives (SARA), Washington State Park, Washington, Arkansas (between the cities of Hope and Nashville, Arkansas). Also useful, but less reliable as well as less available: Patsy Ruth Mackey Stewart, "History of the Keys Family," 2 vols. [1986], originals now in possession of Shirley Strawn, Murfreesboro. Information posted on the PCAHS website includes the entries in David Huddleston's family Bible, as well as a few related probate records and basic details from the federal census (above, Bibliographic Note 1a). Although many Huddleston genealogies are posted on the internet, very few of those relate directly to John Wesley's lineage, and the details are not always reliable. As a supplement to the census and Evans, the family entries in Cynthia Scott and Morris Meyers, "An Arkansas Connection," are helpful: <http://www.pcahs.com/pcaolr/database/acdpcd-p/i60.htm#268>. Whatever source is used, expect at least a few errors, especially in family sheets. Even Georgia Evans referred to John and Sarah Huddleston's youngest daughter, Joe M. (Joe May, or "Miss Joe"), as a male.

For initial orientation, also see the original Township Plats of Pike County (federal survey maps representing areas of approximately thirty-six square miles each—the standard unit of federal land management). Except for land grants to States and Counties, each square-mile "section" (containing about 640 acres) was initially divided into quarters (160 acres), with major landmarks, early settlement, roads, and other features indicated. Townships were formally opened to public entry as surveys were completed in Territories or new States. To counteract speculative land monopolies and promote settlement by average Americans, quarter-sections were further divided into basic units of approximately forty acres (legally expressed as  $\frac{1}{4}$  of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a section).

For the Huddlestons, the basic plats involved were those for Township 8 South of Base Line, Range 25 West of the 5<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian and Township 8 South, Range 26 West. Completed and approved in 1839, those two survey maps included the area around Murfreesboro and the Little Missouri River.

The original Township Plats and a map of survey base lines and meridians can now be viewed at the website of the federal Bureau of Land Management: <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>. The BLM is gradually posting the related surveyors' field notes. The full set of federal land records is also available on CDs (plat maps; surveyor notes; and the original records of land patents and grants, known as "Tract Books"). A book of original Township Plats is available in the Circuit Clerk's Office, Pike County Courthouse, Murfreesboro, along with survey notes; and the PCAHS has a full set of CDs. Microfilm of the Plat Book for Pike County is also available at the Arkansas History Commission (FHL #1010612, Roll #13).

Territorial-State "Tax List." Among early documents, the annual Territorial-State tax record for Pike County is the most informative. It began with the establishment of the county in 1834, and consisted of reports the county sheriff transmitted to auditors at the capital. Each report included a copy of the county tax-assessment ledger covering the previous year. Listing all white male adults in the counties alphabetically, that record soon began specifying not only their taxable real-estate, but also all other significant properties—slaves, horses, cattle, pigs, saw mills, distilleries, and other items, including home furnishings and pocket watches. Poll-Tax payers were duly noted (white adult males only). Adding extra value for future researchers, the

record sometimes identified the previous owner of land when a purchaser began paying taxes on it. From 1839 on, the "Tax List" submitted to the State almost mirrored the double-page ledger entries that the county used into the 1900s.

The preserved tax lists are in the archives of the Arkansas History Commission (AHC), Little Rock, and are partially available on microfilm: AHC, Pike County, Tax Records, roll 10 (copy also available at PCAHS). The roll covers 1834-1836 (Territory) and 1837-1867 (State). A second roll of microfilm, No. 11, is mislabeled and actually covers Pike County real-estate records for the late 1800s (described in note 9, below). Among various indexes of the Tax List, two volumes are outstanding, although of limited range: Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, *Arkansas Tax Lists, 1819-1829* and *1830-1839* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Ambassador Press, 1978). Typed, abbreviated indexes for the early decades are available at PCAHS.

Although the ledger used for the early State Tax List had few page numbers, annual entries for the Pike County Huddlestons and other residents are easily located because of the alphabetical arrangement of names. The pattern of settlement in the early decades:

1834. There were only 7 taxed landowners in Pike County, out of 100 taxpayers in all; officially, settlement was still limited to the southeastern part of the county.

1836. The ledger shows only the poll tax and total taxes of David Huddleston and other settlers; no descriptions of properties.

1837. David Huddleston's personal property totaled \$10 in value; no real-estate listed. "J. W." Huddleston's personal property totaled \$80; no real-estate listed (later entered as "John W.," this Huddleston is not identified in available records; but the census of 1840 and 1850 has a young "Wesley Huddleston," with six slaves, living in the same area as David; moreover, in 1842 David named his newborn son "John Wesley").

1839. A more detailed two-page ledger was used for the tax assessment, with real-estate description. Now, there were twenty-five taxed landowners in the county, many of them accumulating several tracts of land. David and "W." (the first John Wesley) Huddleston were acquiring cattle only. Officially, settlement remained in Township 8, Ranges 23-24, and Township 9, Range 23, east and south-southeast of Murfreesboro).

1840. A few settlers had moved into Township 8, Range 25, around Murfreesboro; some individuals in Pike County owned as many as ten tracts of land. David and J. W. Huddleston were both acquiring horses as well as cattle, but no land although the best federal tracts cost only \$1.25 an acre (David's two horses, valued at \$90, and seven cattle, \$93, placed him in the upper range of property valuations in Pike County).

1841. Settlement now was moving into Township 8, Ranges 26-27, west and southwest of Murfreesboro. The Huddlestons were still adding cattle (David, total property value of \$155, with no slaves).

1842. Still, only David and "Jno. W." Huddleston appeared in the tax assessment (David added two mules).

1843. Now the list included David, "John W.," David L. (thirty-nine years of age in the census of 1850; born in Tennessee; had a young family), and "Huddleston & Elliot." Only H & L had land, sixty-two acres.

1844. Lewis Huddleston finally appeared as a taxpayer, although he was elected Pike County Sheriff in late 1842 and married Mariah Holliday about that time. W. L. Huddleston, young and born in Tennessee, had moved to the county (details in census of 1850). Both David and "D.L." (David L.) still appear.

1845. David and Lewis were listed, with Lewis now taxed on 102 acres in Section 29, Township 8, Range 25, by the river south of Murfreesboro (bought from W. Ruder, valued at \$300). Also listed: D. L., W. L., and "D. C. K." Huddleston, all born in Tennessee, all with young families, and all clustered southwest of Murfreesboro (Census, 1850).

1850. David now paid taxes on 196 acres in Section 34-8-25, by the river southeast of town (bought from private owners and valued at \$600). William Huddleston, age 54, was living with

Lewis and family, but did not appear yet on the tax list (Census, 1850, Brewer Township, Dwelling/Family 92-92). Six young Huddleston families were in the county at the time, including those of both "Wesley" and "John" (Census, Thompson and White townships).

1861. David owned 307 acres, including one federal patent for 58.91 acres (see "Federal cash patents" and "Veteran's Bounty Lands" below, for patents to William, Lewis, Mariah, and David F. Huddleston).

Federal Land Records. The BLM's website indexes the land patents granted in each Township, including names of recipients, dates, legal descriptions of tracts, and patent location numbers. Original patents can be view online, and copied for download. Certified copies of patents may be ordered online. Original township plats can be viewed online and fairly useful copies can be downloaded; but here online copying has limitations (unlike the low-resolution image appearing on computer screens, the Land Office's files are extremely high resolution).

As the BLM's "Frequently Asked Questions" points out, *the patent certificates show only the date they were finally signed and issued, not the date an individual applied and paid the required cash or filing fee at a local land office.* With applicants flooding the agency during the 1800s, settlers often waited well over a year for that large, impressive sheet of paper bearing a signature of the President of the United States of America. In any case, applicants usually secured their properties when filing and paying at a land office in their area.

For the details, see the original patent records, the Tract Books, Arkansas, Pike County (Washington, D. C.: Department of Interior, BLM). These double-page ledgers included all the basic information: description of the tract; total acreage; cost per acre; total paid; name of purchaser; date of sale; number of receipt; number of certificate of purchase; to whom patented; date of patent; and where it was recorded. Entries were updated into the 1900s in cases where later actions affected the original certificates. Although many entries are difficult to read, they are recorded by Range and Township, which facilitates research. The BLM provides two rolls of microfilm for Tract Books, Arkansas, Township South, Range West: Roll 1 covers Vols. 45-47 (beginning with the earliest Township-Ranges); the second, Vols. 48-50. The Huddlestons' band of settlement in Township 8 of Ranges 25 and 26 are in Vol. 48, pp. 127ff., and Vol. 49, pp. 85ff.

In addition to the BLM's website, there are various indexes to these records. Desmond Wells Allen and Bobbie Jones McLane, *Index to Land Patents, Pike County, Granted Through 30 June 1908* (Conway, Arkansas: Arkansas Research, Inc, c. 1999) is the most detailed; David Kelley's online listing of patents includes basic information (PCAHS website: <http://www.pcahs.com/>). Using a more visual approach, Gregory A. Boyd, an ambitious professional in Norman, Oklahoma, recently began publishing a series of books based on the federal township plats and patent records (Boyd, *Family Maps of Pike County, Arkansas*, Deluxe Edition [Norman, Oklahoma: Arphax Publishing Co., 2006] applies in this case). Boyd mapped individual patent holders on blanks of the township plats and provided some of the basic information. Although he added separate maps indicating waterways and other outstanding features, the patent maps would have gained precision and meaning if streams, roads, and other landmarks had been shown there, as in the originals (e.g., compare these maps with the original Township Plats and the official patent descriptions for David Huddleston and David F. Huddleston, below). Nevertheless, *Family Maps* adds to the toolbox of genealogists and other researchers.

Settlers in the expanding American West received several kinds of federal patents. Beginning in 1820, tracts as small as about 40 acres were sold for a minimum of \$1.25 per acre, cash. In 1862, the federal Homestead Act provided 160 acres to American citizens or citizens-to-be who paid a small filing fee, settled on the property for five years, and met guidelines for improvements. Following acts allowed even greater accumulation of timber lands and other non-agricultural acreage. Federal land grants to railroad companies—a major spur to development in much of the West—had very limited impact in Arkansas. Among other federal land policies were those allowing veterans to obtain patents as a bonus for service in wartime. For early

generations of Arkansans, this involved Congressional Acts of 1850 and 1855 covering the War of 1812 and the Indian Wars that followed, particularly the Seminole War of 1818.

*Federal cash patents* gave some of the Huddlestons solid footing in Pike County before the Civil War. David Huddleston bought only one tract from the public domain, in August 1855 at 75¢ an acre, and he received the patent on that 58.91 acres the following year (the East ½ of the Fractional Southwest ¼ of Section 27, North side of the Little Missouri River, in Township 8 South, Range 25 West). The surveyed tract appears on the original Township Plat, which was approved for public entry four years after David Huddleston arrived in Pike County. Located about three miles southeast of Murfreesboro, the purchase no doubt influenced much of his extended family to establish home farms in that area instead of in the more flood-prone river plain upstream. (Tract Book, vol. 48, p. 133, David Huddleston; original patent certificate, BLM website.)

At first, however, other Huddleston patentees concentrated their farming either along that fertile river-bottom land beginning about three and one-half miles west of David's purchase or on higher ground a few miles beyond. William Huddleston and Mariah Huddleston (wife of Lewis) chose land just west of the river plain in January 1854, for \$1.25 an acre, and received the cash patents in March 1855 (William, NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 20, Township 8, Range 26, 40 acres; Mariah, SE ¼ of the SE ¼ of 20–8–26, 40 acres [both in Tract Book, Vol. 49, p. 89; website]). Other patents among the early arrivals: Lewis Huddleston, bought land January 17, 1859 for 75¢ an acre, patent received in 1860 (NE ¼ of SE ¼ of Section 26–8–26, 40 acres [Vol. 49, p. 90; website]); Lewis A. Huddleston [misspelled "Hudleston" on BLM site and patent certificate, son of David, bought January 23, 1860 [no price indicated], received "Final Certificate" June 1, 1875 (SE ¼ of SW ¼ of 25-8-26, 40 acres [for all L. A. entries, see the Tract Book, Vol. 49, p. 90, and the BLM website; evidently he withdrew his previous application of August 1855, for 40 acres in SW ¼ of SW ¼ Section 25-8-26]); Louis A., bought November 13, 1860, received patents May 1861 (two patents: NE ¼ of SW ¼ of Section 25–8–26, 40 acres at \$1.25 each; NW fractional ¼ of SE ¼ of 25–8–26, 39.86 acres at 50¢ each); David Fielding Huddleston, son of David, received on May 10, 1861 (West side of the Little Missouri River, NE fractional 1/4 of Section 25–8–26, 150.82 acres at 50¢ each).

*The bounty land acts* of 1850 and 1855 affected many Arkansans, but very few Pike County Huddlestons. William, David Huddleston's older brother, served in the War of 1812 as a musician, and applied under both Acts. For some reason, he failed to get a patent—perhaps because he was only about sixteen when the war began. (See Tract Books, vol. 49, p. 89, and the basic reference work, which has no entries for Pike County: Katheren Christensen, compiler, *Arkansas Military Bounty Grants (War of 1812)* [Hot Springs, Arkansas: Arkansas Ancestors, 1971]; also David Kelley, "Land Records–Pike County, Arkansas, Bounty Land Applications List 1851-1858," and "Military Records," both online at PCAHS website). Kelley's sources included Dorothy E. Payne, *Arkansas Pensioners 1818-1900* (Greenville: Southern Historical Press, 1985), 68 (after William's death in July 1871, his surviving widow, Mary Corbell Huddleston, applied for his veteran's pension).

There were no bounty lands for Confederate veterans of the Civil War, which included David Fielding Huddleston and his younger brother John W. Both served 1862-1865. Later, however, they and their spouses could apply for the State of Arkansas' Confederate veterans and widows pension, enacted in April 1891 (\$25 annually until raised to \$100 annually in 1915). For this perspective, see the basic reference works: Frances Ingmire, *Arkansas Confederate Veterans and Widows Pension Applications* (St. Louis, Missouri: Ingmire Publications, 1985); Desmond Walls Allen, *Arkansas Confederate Pension Applications from Clark, Garland, Hot Spring, Montgomery and Pike Counties* (Conway, Arkansas: Arkansas Research, c. 1991). Extracts from state records are available at <http://www.pcahs.com/>.

*Swamp-Land Patents.* Considerable federal land was transferred to territorial-state ownership



over the years, much of it to promote public education. In 1850, an act of Congress allowed states to "reclaim" swamp lands and "overflowed" lands still in the public domain; many Arkansans received state patents under that program. The basic four-volume reference is Desmond Walls Allen, compiler, *Arkansas Swamp Land Sales, 1855-1868; 1868-1879; 1879-1921; 1921-2001* (Conway, Arkansas: Arkansas Research, Inc., 2001). Allen's alphabetical lists of applicants include application numbers, patent numbers, location in State records, and the Section–Township–Range of properties. The original state land records are in the archives of the Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock. The AHC is gradually placing an index of the records online: [http://www.ark-ives.com/documenting/land\\_records.asp](http://www.ark-ives.com/documenting/land_records.asp). Copies of documents may be ordered online.

Among the Huddlestons of Pike County, none received a swamp-land patent until 1879 (James D. Huddleston, following note).

Pike County Records, 1855-1890. The burning of the courthouse in 1855 left no original deed records or county tax books to help document purchases of land up to that time; but some records escaped the fire of 1895. The Real Estate Assessment for 1883 and the Record of Tax Receipts for 1893 serve as clear reference points for land ownership those years (the two are described below, Bibliographic Note 3).

In addition, a private abstract firm had spent considerable time at the courthouse in 1890 copying a great many of the deed records and related court records and other legal documents produced after the first fire—including many deeds re-filed after the courthouse burned the first time (property owners had the originals). Items were copied onto a regular, blank deed record—the double-page format. After the fire of 1895, additional entries extended the abstract until about 1912, duplicating many deed records that are available at the courthouse today. Often referred to as the "Burned Records, 1855-1890," the original of that 320-page "Abstract of Title Book Prior to 1890" is still privately owned; but the Arkansas History Commission was allowed to microfilm it. The AHC did an excellent job with the old handwritten entries (only a few are too faded to read). Copies of the microfilm are available at the AHC ("Pike County Burned Records," Roll #14), the PCAHS, and SARA.

A general index at the beginning of the Abstract indicates initial pages for deeds (arranged by range-township-section), Equity Court Proceedings, "Powers, Agreements, etc.," Indefinite Instruments, Probate Court, Wills, Circuit Court, and Mining Claims. However, not all subject entries are neatly consolidated within consecutive pages: some categories are scattered, especially the latest deeds. At the end of pages, watch for a message indicating where the topic is continued (later pages will have "continued from page . . .").

Generally, entries in the Abstract apply to the decades after the Civil War (see the next endnote). Entries for the earlier settlers are relatively few; yet they offer details lacking in the annual State Tax List, above (original records copied onto the Abstract usually included buyers and sellers, type of deed or other instrument, dates signed and filed, prices, and any special contract provisions). For entries applying to "Huddleston," 1852-1865, see the following:

Abstract of Title Book, Deeds. David Huddleston, p. 107, line 10 (purchase from Sarah Blevin, widow of Hugh A. Blevin, in 1860; \$45 for 49.6 acres, N. of River in N. ½ of SW ¼ of Section 27-8-25); Lewis Huddleston Estate, 105, line 1 (sale of two tracts of his land to Elijah Davis in 1852; \$410 for partial E ½ of SE ¼ of Sec. 18-8-25); Lewis, Estate, 108, 3 (David Huddleston, Administrator; sale with mortgage to Rice Stringer in 1855 [paid off in 1858], SW ¼ of NW ¼ and Partial SW ¼ of Sec. 30-8-25; entry includes a brief history of the Swamp Act of 1850); Lewis, Estate, 108, 5 (Mariah Huddleston, widow, Adm.; sale of two tracts to Dickinson Duncan in 1855, \$277 for Partial NE ¼ and NE ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec. 29-8-25); Mariah Huddleston Estate, 149, 13 (David Huddleston, Adm.; sale to Wilson D. Reed in 1858, \$310 for SW ¼ of NE ¼, Partial SE ¼ of SE ¼, and NW ¼ of SE ¼ of Section 20-8-26, total 120 acres); William Huddleston, 149, 3 (sale to Wm. N. Preston in 1854, \$117.62 for NE ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 20-8-

26).

*Probate Court Proceedings.* Lewis Huddleston Estate, opposite p. 302 (double-page ledger), items 1.18ff. (L. H. died testate c. March 12, 1853; David H. appointed administrator April 23, 1855; inventory of holdings filed); Mariah Huddleston Estate, op. p. 302, items 1.162ff. (M. H., wife of Lewis, died testate in 1857; David H. appointed administrator; description of her three properties, sold in 1858 [tracts listed above with Deeds]; David Huddleston, Adm., p. 305, B304 (Estate of Joel Clark, 1866).

Probate records usually included considerable detail about families and real-estate practices. After Mariah died, for instance, the administrator tried to rent out her property, but current economic conditions were unfavorable. The administrator obtained a court order to sell her 120 acres; Wilson D. Reed submitted the winning bid. For an exceptionally informative probate record, see following entries for David Huddleston's Estate.

<sup>19</sup> A thorough survey of family members involved in Pike County from the end of the Civil War (1865) into the 1900s can be compiled from a number of sources: the Federal Census (the survey in 1870 has limited value because of Civil-War dislocations; the records for 1890, Pike County, were accidentally destroyed before their release); Evans, "Fielding Huddleston and His Descendants" (a virtually exhaustive index of names, as well as a source of some personal data); federal land records (original Tract Books and BLM website); Pike County, Abstract of Title Book Prior to 1890, including the "Equity Court Proceedings," pp. 290, 299 (David Huddleston's Estate, details about family members); Pike County Deed Records, 1895-; and tax records.

Bibliographic Note 3. *Tax records.* As was the practice in those days, Pike County maintained detailed records of taxes due and taxes paid. Separate books were kept for personal property and for real estate. As noted previously, one annual tax record survived the burning of the courthouse in 1895: the Real Estate Assessment for 1883, now stored in the Pike County Archives and History Society (PCAHS), Murfreesboro. In addition to that book, the Sheriff-Collector's Record of Tax Receipts for 1893 is in the PCAHS.

Basic tax records in the PCAHS include an annual three-part series extending from 1894 to 1913: Personal [Property] Assessment; Personal Tax ("Taxes Extended [paid] Against Personal Property"), and Record of Tax Receipts. Personal items are listed in both the Assessment and the Personal Tax books, but Personal Tax is more informative (it includes the date of payment and the page of the entry in the Record of Tax Receipts, as well as details about taxed items, the total tax valuation, total taxes paid, and a detailed breakdown of tax distribution—school district, State, and County). The Record of Tax Receipts lists real-estate holdings, including rural tracts and lots-blocks in towns, but does not repeat personal property.

The Personal Tax record and the Record of Tax Receipts in PCAHS continue after 1913. The Personal Tax for 1923 and 1925-1929 were missing from the collection during this study.

The basic annual series covering real estate is in the records room of the Circuit Clerk's office, in the Courthouse: the Real Estate Tax Book, 1894-. In that ledger, rural tracts are entered first; town lots-blocks follow. *Although the Tax Book has no index, rural tracts and owners are listed by Range, Township, and Section, which minimizes the researcher's work if a range number is known beforehand. Virtually all Pike County entries involved in this study are listed under Range 25, Township 8 (Range 25 West of Base Line, Township 8 South of the 5<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian) and Range 26, Township 8).*

These early records present a special challenge for researchers: well into the 1900s, men usually went by their initials, and public records reflected the practice. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between family members having different given names but the same initials. The Huddleston family group in Pike County, for instance, included two "J. W." Huddlestons and two "W. Ds": John Wesley; Jasper Wooten. (John's cousin, the son of Woodson Jasper Huddleston); William Dudley (Bill) Huddleston (John's much younger cousin, the brother of Jasper W. and son



of Woodson J.); and William D. (Bill) Huddleston (John's close cousin, the son of Louis A.). Fortunately, the two brothers—W. D. and J. W.—almost always acted jointly in buying or deeding property and paying taxes, which helps distinguish Jasper W. from John W. Literacy also helps separate the two: unlike John Wesley, Jasper signed his name instead of “making his mark”—Xing documents (for instances, compare John W. Huddleston's Xs in deeds cited throughout this study with Jasper's entries in Deed Record N, 352, Contract to Sell, W. J., W. D., and J. W. Huddleston, to Walter Mauney, August 14, 1907, and Mortgage Record 19, p. 317, J. W., W. D., and Etta Huddleston [wife of W. D.], to Pike County Bank, March 3, 1928). According to their marriage license, the older W. D. (Bill) Huddleston was thirty-five when he wed Mittie Steen, nineteen, on September 11, 1898 (Pike County, Marriage Record A, 205). The younger W. D. was forty-eight when he married Etta Watson, thirty, on July 28, 1923 (Marriage Record F, 470).

While male Huddlestons are relatively easy to trace through all these sources, married females require much more effort (Evans helps identify this extensive but less obvious part of the Huddleston network—the Gentrys, Hutsons, Fugitts, Hoovers, Stuearts, Stewarts, Wagners, Rileys, and others). The following summarize only entries found for *Huddleston*, c. 1865-1900.

*Federal Land Patents:* James D. Huddleston, son of David, filed under the Homestead Act twice, in November 1878 and December 189 [5?], patents in 1884 and 1900 (W ½ of NE ¼ and NW ¼ of SE ¼ of Section 26-8-26, total 120 acres; Tract Book, Vol. 49, p. 90 and BLM website); Andrew J. Huddleston, son of David Fielding, filed for homestead in October 1899, patent in 1905 (SW ¼ of NW ¼ of Section 14-8-26 and SE ¼ of NE ¼ and NE ¼ of SE ¼ of Section 15-8-26, total 120 acres; Vol. 49, p. 88 and website); and Louis F. Huddleston, son of Lewis A., filed for homestead in February 1900 (\$5 “purchase money”), patent in 1915 (SW ¼ of SW ¼ of Section 25-8-26, 40 acres; Vol. 49, p. 90 and website).

*Swamp-Land Patents (State).* In Pike County, James D. Huddleston (son of David Fielding) received a patent in 1879 for 2.59 acres immediately across the river from his father's property in Township 8, Range 26 (Allen, *Arkansas Swamp Land Sales*, 53; and original Township Plat). The plat located the 2.59 acres at the northeast corner of Section 25, by the Little Missouri River (legal description: North of River, fractional NE ¼ of NE ¼ of Section 25-8-26).

*The Pike County Real Estate Assessment for 1883* serves as a benchmark for the growing settlement south and southeast of Murfreesboro. This record and a few others were salvaged from the courthouse fire of 1895. Evidently, the county clerk also saved an unused real-estate assessment book left from 1880, and used that double-page ledger to re-record the Assessment and a few other damaged but salvageable items. On the first few pages of the main section—the “List of Real Estate Assessed for Taxation”—the clerk changed the printed 1880 to a handwritten 1883; other sections have updated entries ranging from 1880 to 1898. The first section of the book covers rural real estate, 1883; the second, real estate in towns, 1883 (Murfreesboro only); the third, “16<sup>th</sup> Section Notes” (op. p. 96 to op. p. 99; a record of debts owed in the 16<sup>th</sup> section of the various Townships-Ranges, with payments or credits running to August 1892); the fourth, “Statement to Land Commissioner” (details about the 16<sup>th</sup> Section and the School Fund, February 1886-March 1898); the fifth, a brief “Church Properties” (op. 125); the sixth, Pike County businesses and owners (op. 120-121). The original ledger and a microfilmed copy are in the PCAHS; microfilm is available at the AHC (County Records, Pike, Roll 11, labeled “1880-1894, 1893”). There are several entries for *Huddleston*:

D. Huddleston Estate, opposite p. 58, p. 59 (David's Estate more than two years after his death in October 1880); three properties in Sec. 27 and one in Sec. 34, Township 8, Range 25, total of 225 acres (North of River, E ½ and W ½ of SW ¼ of Sec. 27, 58.91 acres and 49.60 acres; South of River, fractional S part of SW ¼ of Sec. 27, 36.28 acres; N ½ of NW ¼ of Sec. 34, 80 acres).

W. J. Huddleston, 58, op. 59 (Woodson Jasper., one of David's youngest and most industrious sons; married to Margaret Keys), three properties in Sec. 28-8-25 and one in Sec. 33-8-25 adjacent to David's, total of 309 acres (W of River, fractional NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28, 29.50 acres; S of River, fractional SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28, 127.77 acres; S of River, fractional SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28, 72 acres; E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 33, 80 acres).

D. F. Huddleston, 58 (David Fielding, John Wesley's father and one of David's oldest sons), one property in Sec. 28-8-25 immediately across the Little Missouri River from W. J.'s (North of River, fractional SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , 66.97 acres).

L. A. Huddleston, op. 79, 79, op. 81 (Lewis A., one of David's oldest sons), one property in Sec. 24-8-26, two in Sec. 25-8-26, and one in Sec. 36-8-26, total of 222.5 acres (E of River, fractional SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 24, 66 acres; E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 25, 80 acres; fractional NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 25, 39 acres; NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 36, 37.50 acres).

Jas. D. Huddleston, op. 79 (son of David F.), one small property by L. A. in Sec. 25-8-26 (fractional NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , 2.59 acres).

*The Abstract of Title Book* allows a substantial overview of land ownership in Pike County from the end of the Civil War into the 1900s. The following are entries for *Huddleston* up to 1895:

*Abstract, Deeds.* W. J. and Margaret Huddleston, p. 107, line 31 (Woodson J. and wife, sale to L. A. Huddleston in 1885; \$150 for 29.5 acres and 10 acres next to the river, west side, Sec. 28-8-25 (see the Plat, Township 8 S., Range 25 W); W. J. Huddleston, 107, 32 (purchase from Rebecca Dickson in 1873; \$125 for fractional SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-8-25, S of River [72 acres]); Woodson J., 107, 54 (purchase from Chas. E. Welle and [M. A.] Holland, Commissioner in Partition, 1885; \$150 for partial E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 27-8-25, 29.5 acres N of Spring Slew and next to the river); W. J. Huddleston, 107, 57 (Mortgage Deed, to M. A. Holland in 1887; \$300 for fractional SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-8-25, [127.77 acres]), W. J. "William J." [should be Woodson J.\*] and Margaret Huddleston, pp. 107 (lines 61, 71), 109 (75, 93), 158, 43 (Trust Deeds to Albert A. Shattuck and British-American Mortgage Co., Ltd. in 1888, 1890, 1901; \$870.15 loan, lien initially on Partial SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-8-25, south of river, and E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 33-8-25; gradual release of mortgage, with final discharge in 1901); Woodson J., 109, 25 (purchase from B. and Elizabeth G. Davis in 1876; \$275 [??] for E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 33-8-25 [80 acres]); W. J. Huddleston, 109, 63 (Trust Deed to M. M. Mauney, Admin. of Estate of J. N. Conway, February 1885; \$203.55 loan, for E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 33-8-25 [satisfied Feb. 1887]); W. J. Huddleston, 109, 69 (Mortgage Deed, to M. A. Holland in February 1887; \$300 loan [satisfied in full March 1888], for E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 33-8-25); Margaret Huddleston, 109, lines 93 and 101 (from Estate of Wm. Keys, Deed to M. H., April 1889; \$225 for NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 34-8-25, 40 acres [partition involved Hoover, Mitchell and other Keys, as well as Margaret Keys Huddleston]).

David F. Huddleston, 107, 42 (David Fielding, purchase from John A. and A. L. Kelley in 1879; \$220 for [North of River, fractional] SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-8-25, 66 acres "more or less"); David F., 151, 29 (sale with lien, to Thomas S. Neall in 1872; \$165 for [fractional] NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 25-8-26); David F. and Francis Huddleston, 151, 31 (sale with lien, to William F. Cary in 1879 [lien paid in full 1881]; \$400 for Fractional NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 25-8-26).

L. A. Huddleston, 107, 52 (Lewis A., purchase from N. B. Thomasson, Commissioner for estate sale in 1884 [David Huddleston Estate, below]; \$150 for Fractional NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 25-8-25; L. A. and Jane Huddleston, 107, 69 (sale to S. W. and S. E. Bryant in 1890; \$360 for Partial NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-8-25 [the two properties bought from W. J. and Margaret in 1885, above]); Lewis A., 148, 74 (purchase with mortgage, from Laura Evans in 1881 [paid in full 1883]; \$115.40 for Fractional SW [?]  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 13-8-26).

J. W. and S. A. Huddleston, 107, 63 (John W. and Sarah A., sale to J. A. Wolff in 1890; \$187.02 for Partial NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-8-25, N side of river, 14.5 acres, [see Plat]); J. W. Huddleston, 109, line 117 (purchase from H. J. and A. C. Thomasson, Dec. 1889; \$100 for Fractional SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 34-8-25, S side of River, 49.26 acres).

James D. Huddleston, 108, line 101 (purchase from Peter and Mary Gosnell in 1884; \$100 for Partial NW ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 30-8-25, "all that part lying West of Sandy Slough, 10 a. in NW corner of the 40").

Lewis Huddleston, 153, 27 (purchase from Louisa Tuttle in 1871; \$70 for Fractional N[?] ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 36-8-26, 37.5 acres.

\*The given names of Woodson Jasper Huddleson and family evidently created a bit of confusion in those days. Eventually, Woodson was known as "Jasper" and his son Jasper as "Woot." Their gravestones bore those simple inscriptions (Japany Cemetery, southeast of Murfreesboro).

*Abstract, Equity Court Proceedings.* W. J. Huddleston, op. p. 285, April 1884 term, entry B214 (W. J. was plaintiff in a suit over a loan of \$150 to Booker D. Brock in January 1881, with Brock's land as collateral; court awarded W. J. \$150 plus \$48.78 interest and ordered the land sold to satisfy that amount; Commissioner W. B. Thomasson executed public sale to C. M. Reid for \$200); W. J. and Margaret Keys Huddleston, op. p. 285, July 1887 term, B290 ("Petition for Partition" of lands in the Keys Estate; lands were sold and the money was divided among heirs).

David Huddleston Estate, p. 299: April 1884 term, B199 and B212 (related to entry below under "Powers, Agreements"; provided further information about the October 1884 term, B220, and April 1885 term, B241). Repeated the decision to sell the properties, with W. J. Huddleston the administrator. Stated that David had twelve children involved, and listed them. Gave additional family history, including names of the deceased and their heirs. Described lands in Sec. 27 and 34 of Township 8 S, Range 25 W, and the sale to L. A. Huddleston [below]. Described another sale under the October 1884 term: N. B. Thomasson paid \$430 for fractional S ½ of SW ¼ of Sec. 27-8-25, S of River, 36.25 acres, and "NW Sec. 34" [NW ¼ of 34-8-25; cf entry under Assessment of 1883, above—N ½ of NW ¼ of Sec. 34, 80 acres]. Noted that in the April 1885 term, L. A. Huddleston's deed was assigned to Woodson J. (directly from the estate); no price indicated.

*Abstract, "Powers, Agreements, etc."* David Huddleston Estate, p. 290, October 1884 term, entry J394. Court approved partition of property and then approved sale if an equitable division not possible; properties sold June 14, 1884, and deeds completed April 15, 1885. This long, detailed entry covered the legal process, in which Woodson J. Huddleston was both a party and the administrator of the estate, as well as the guardian of Martha A. Huddleston, et al. Also involved: L. A., David F., "John," "J. W.," and \_[?]. J. Huddleston, along with Catherine Gentry, Adaline Bryant, Elizabeth Brown, and others. L. A. Huddleston [appears to be L. W.] paid \$150 for 58.91 acres in E ½ of SW ¼ and 49.6 acres in W ½ of SW ¼, both in Sec. 27-8-25, N of River.

*Abstract, Indefinite Instruments.* L. J. Huddleston, p. 300, entry D109. Purchase from Jas. W[?] Holland and R. J. Holland October 17, 1874: \$100 for fractional SE ¼ of Sec. 24-8-26, W of River.

*Pike County Deed Records, 1895-, refilings after the last fire.* Record W, page 615, L. A. Huddleston and J. D. Huddleston, Agreement setting property boundary between the two, November 8, 1886 (their lands "between the Sandy Creek and Little Missouri River"); Record B, 95, Warranty Deed, L. A. and Jane Huddleston to S. W. and W. C. Bryant, November 24, 1890 (\$360 for Fractional NW ¼ of Sec. 28-8-25, next to River, 29.5 acres, and all the land lying down Spring Slough to the River, 10 acres [property across the Little Missouri southeast of the future diamond field, shown on original Tract map of Township 8 S, Range 25 W]); Record 31, p. 71, Warranty Deed, D. F. and Francis Huddleston to Lee J. Wagner [husband of their daughter Harriett; brother-in-law of John Wesley], November 29, 1894 (\$20 cash for partial NW ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 27-8-25, 10 acres: "begin at the SW corner of NW ¼ of NW ¼, run "east ½ quarter mile thence north ½ quarter of a mile thence west ½ quarter of a mile to the section line, thence south" to the beginning corner).

In the records, *Harriett* Wagner sometimes appeared as *Harriette* or *Harriet*. In legal papers, it was usually "*H. D.*," but once appeared as *Harriet*: Deed Record 57, p. 508, WD, L. J. and Harriet Wagner to Ivie Keys, December 17, 1940; Lots 7-12, Block 3 of Goodlett Addition, Murfreesboro, part of the NE ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 17-8-25. The obituaries of John Huddleston misspelled her name "Harritt" (obituaries cited below). Evans, "Fielding Huddleston and Descendants," used "Harriett" (51).

*Pike, Record of Tax Receipts 1893* (kept by the Sheriff/Collector; no index; receipts arranged in numerical order). L. A. Huddleston, opposite p. 46, six tracts of land (E of River, fractional SE ¼ of Sec. 24-8-26, 66.71 acres; E ½ of 25-8-26, 80 acres; NW ¼ of SE ¼ of 25-8-26, 39.6 acres; fractional NW ¼ of NW ¼ of 36-8-26, 40 acres; SE ¼ of NW ¼ of 19-8-25, 40 acres; W ½ of SE ¼ of 19-8-25, 80 acres); L. F. Huddleston, op. p. 77 (no taxed land; \$344 personal property); W. D. Huddleston, p. 65 (W of River, fractional NE ¼ of 25-8-26, 150.82 acres); J. D. Huddleston, p. 78 (E of River, NE ¼ of NE ¼ of 25-8-26, 2.59 acres); W. J. Huddleston, op. 81 (no taxed land; \$355 personal property); J. W. Huddleston (Jasper W.), op. 83 (no land; \$40 personal); W. D. Huddleston, op. 83 (no land; \$60 personal); J. W. Huddleston (John W.), op. 85 (W of River, Fractional SE ¼ of 34-8-25, 49.26 acres); A. J.(?) Huddleston, op. 85 (\$43 personal); D. F. Huddleston, p. 85 (W ½ of NW ¼ of 27-8-25, 80 acres; W of River, SE ¼ of 28-8-25, 66.27 acres); J. R. Huddleston (no land; no personal tax; \$1 total taxes [poll tax?]).

<sup>20</sup> U. S. *Census, 1900*, Pike County, Arkansas, Thompson Township, p. 93B, Household/Family 61/61 (John W., age "40," and Sarah A., 46; married 13 years; oldest daughter, Mary A. E., born November 1887); Pike County, Arkansas, "Reconstructed Marriages 1834-1895," an alphabetical listing of information accumulated since the early 1990s, online at <http://www.pcahs.com/> (John Wesley Huddleston and Sarah A. Keys, married 1887). Family genealogists have accepted 1887 (e.g., Evans, "Fielding Huddleston and His Descendants").

<sup>21</sup> Map from Fuller, "Diamond Mine in Pike County, Arkansas," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 87, No. 3 (January 16, 1909), 154.

<sup>22</sup> Deed Record B, 582, Warranty Deed, H. J. Thomasson to J. W. Huddleston, December 21, 1889 (\$100 cash for 49.26 acres; south side of the Little Missouri River, fractional SE ¼ of Section 34, Township 8 S of Base Line, Range 25 W of 5<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian); Abstract of Title Book Prior to 1890, Trust Deed, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to J. A. Wolff, March 17, 1890 (\$187.02 for partial NE ¼ of SW ¼, north of River [14.5 acres], Section 28-8-25); Deed Record 31, p. 66, Warranty Deed, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to S. L. Smedley, November 19, 1900 (\$30 cash and lien note for \$30 at 10%, 20 acres, N ½ of NW ¼ of NW ¼, Section 27; deed filed April 14, 1915); Record 38, p. 121, Warranty Deed, D. F. and Francis Huddleston to J. W. Huddleston, May 16, 1900 (\$150 cash for 40 acres; SW ¼ of W ½ of NW ¼, Section 27; property description corrected later in Record P, 136, Quit Claim Deed, D. F. and Francis to J. W. Huddleston, November 6, 1907, for SW ¼ of NW ¼, Section 27). The original Township Plat, 8-25, defined the 14.5 acres on the river.

<sup>23</sup> *US Census, 1900*, Pike County, Arkansas, Thompson Township, p. 93B: John W. Huddleston, age "40," married 13 years; Sarah A., born "Oct 1853," 46; Mary A. E., born Nov. 1887, 12; Delia E., Aug. 1890, 9; Eunice F. V., Sept. 1892, 7; Willie M., daughter, Aug. 1895, 4; Joe M., daughter (Joe May; later called "Miss Joe"), July 1899, 10 mos.; John T. Keys, stepson (son of Sarah), July 1883, 16. The details of Sarah's first marriage remain unclear.

Although the Huddlestons of Pike County preferred to use plain native-rock markers instead of regular headstones, John and Sarah Huddleston evidently felt the grave of their second-born warranted a small white-granite tablet inscribed "ELLEN D. Daughter of J. W. and S. A.

Huddleston Born April 11, 1889 Died March 20, 1895.” The original Huddleston family burial site, called Japany Cemetery, is about four miles southeast of Murfreesboro beside Highway 301 (further comment and photographs below).

For details about livestock and other “personal property,” see the annual Personal Tax Assessment, PCAHS. Pike County tax records, 1894-, are described above, Bibliographic Note 3.

<sup>24</sup> Personal Tax Record for 1900, p. 43, original records in Pike County Archive and History Society, Murfreesboro; census records (above).

John and Sarah Huddleston’s taxable personal property in 1900: 5 cattle, total value of \$40; 2 mules, total of \$60; 23 hogs, total \$25; 1 carriage or wagon, value not indicated; 1 gold or silver watch (the listed value, \$3, fell under a category including watches and “Diamonds and Jewelry of every kind”); additional taxable personal property (unspecified), \$50; total value as equalized (total of valuations), \$178; and total taxes, \$2.74. This placed the family slightly above the average of the area (e.g., the forty-one taxpayers on page 43 averaged \$168.50 total valuation).

<sup>25</sup> A popular study of Pike County published before the turn of the century stated the point concisely:

The assessed value of county property, both real and personal, was, in 1889, \$756,177. In 1874 the total assessment was \$342,379; an increase, it will be seen, in fifteen years, of \$422,798. This healthy growth is simply the increased value of farm property, and may be counted on to increase, in even a more rapid proportion, in the future, as much land is being reduced to a state of cultivation by both the native citizens and immigrants, and of the home seekers in Arkansas, Pike County is receiving quite a liberal share. (“Pike County—Financial Showing,” in *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas* [Chicago: The Goodspeed Publ. Co., 1890], section available online at PCAHS, Online Records Library: <http://www.pcahs.com/>.)

<sup>26</sup> The records show only three secured loans for the Huddlestons before the discovery of diamonds in 1906, and those occurred at the turn of the century when they were raising five daughters and buying more land. Their 49.26-acre farm, bought in late 1889 for \$100, served as collateral (deed above). The lender, Owen B. Owens, evidently knew the Huddlestons well, and allowed extensions of notes at a high interest rate: Pike County Deed Record B, 221, Mortgage Deed, J. W. and Sarah A. Huddleston to Owen B. Owens, November 12, 1896 (\$100 loan, at 10% interest if not paid by November 1, 1897 [marginal notation: paid in full May 16, 1900]); D, 63, Mortgage Deed with Power of Sale, Huddlestons to Owens, May 16, 1900 (\$265 loan at 10%, due November 15, 1900 [paid in full February 26, 1915 (sic.)]); G, 51, Mortgage Deed, Huddlestons to Owens, August 2, 1902 (\$390 loan at 10%, due by December 1, 1902 [paid in full August 17, 1907]). Such mortgaging became a widespread practice after the Civil War and the settling of the homestead frontier, especially as farmers began using planted crops as collateral for loans in order to meet expenses before the harvest. As the study in 1890 said, both that crop-financing system and the general mortgaging of property declined steadily as the agricultural resources of Pike County brought more independence to farmers (“Financial Showing,” above). Yet, wealthy individuals in the Murfreesboro area remained a source of loans well into the 1900s (e.g., J. C. Pinnix and John Huddleston in the mid 1920s, discussed later).

Between 1890 and 1900, the Huddlestons sold only one small piece of property: Deed Record 31, p. 66, Warranty Deed, J. W. and Sarah A. Huddleston to S. L. Smedley, November 19, 1900, deed filed April 14, 1915 (20 acres for \$30 cash and \$30 lien note at 10%, for North ½ of NW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 27, Township 8 South, Range 25 West). About two years later, they sold 4.4 acres of the 49.26-acre farm for \$60: Record K, 21, Warranty Deed, Huddlestons to J. R. Fagan, et al., October 4, 1902 (\$30 cash and \$30 due by January 1, 1903). After the discovery of diamonds and their move to nearby Clark County, they sold the remainder of the farm for

\$2,300: Record 29, p. 629, Warranty Deed, Huddlestons to W. D. Fagan, et al., August 22, 1911 (\$500 cash down and balance in annual payments until January 1, 1915, at 8% [marginal note: paid in full February 19, 1917], for 44.85 acres in SE ¼ of Sec. 34-8-25, west of River).

<sup>27</sup> Lacking the promissory notes relating to deeds, there is no way to determine if David Fielding Huddleston backed his son directly. In any case, David F. and his brothers had land at their disposal, available to sell or transfer in case of any financial emergency, and they were a cohesive group. Approaching old age, the elders had already started deeding properties to their offspring and other relatives. John Huddleston's sister Harriett D. and her husband, Lee J. Wagner, for example, had gotten small tracts from family members, all by the future diamond field: Record 31, p. 71, Warranty Deed, D. F. and Francis Huddleston to Lee J. Wagner, November 29, 1894, deed filed April 14, 1915 (\$20 cash for ten acres in Section 27: begin at the SW corner of NW ¼ of NW ¼, run east ½ quarter mile, then north ½ quarter mile, then west ½ quarter mile to the section line, then south down to the point of beginning); Record 28, p. 515, Warranty Deed, D. F. and Francis Huddleston to Lee J. Wagner, March 14, 1898, deed filed April 14, 1915 (\$10 cash for ten acres: SE ¼ of NW ¼ of NW ¼, Section 27); Record N, p. 408, Warranty Deed, L. J. Huddleston [Lewis Jackson, brother of Harriet D. and John Wesley] and wife, R. L., to Lee J. Wagner, November 17, 1902 (\$225 for ten acres in SW ¼ of NE ¼, Section 28, as described further in the deed). Deed records show this became a broad pattern within the Huddleston clan around the turn of the century, just as it did within many other family groups. Some properties went first to widows and later to offspring. Sometimes, family estates were kept intact and sold at public auction after the death of an individual or a surviving spouse, with proceeds divided between heirs.

As other ambitious farmers of those days, John Huddleston "knew the rental value of good farm lands," and looked forward to becoming a landlord (quotation from his later statement, in Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer").

<sup>28</sup> "Status of Diamond Fields of Pike County, Arkansas," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, March 21, 1909, page unclear in microfilm copies available. As early as 1888, the road was shown on State Geologist John C. Branner's survey map of the volcanic formation and surrounding area (Branner and Richard N. Brackett, "The Peridotite of Pike County, Arkansas," *American Journal of Science*, 38 [July 1889], op. 56; map reproduced in J. F. Williams, "The Igneous Rocks of Arkansas," *Annual Report of the Geological Survey of Arkansas*, 2 [Little Rock: Woodruff Printing Co., 1891], op. 377). Although this branch of county road was rerouted after the discovery, the original path was still shown clearly in the U. S. Geological Survey Map of 1916 (surveying completed in 1916; map published later in Hugh D. Miser and A. H. Purdue, "Geology of the DeQueen and Caddo Gap Quadrangles, Arkansas," *USGS Bulletin 808* [USGS, 1929], Plate 10, and in other USGS *Bulletins* of 1922-1925). For further details about the map and USGS publications, see Banks, *Diamonds*, especially Bibliographic Note 1; online at <http://www.pcahs.com/>.

For another reference to the road running through the field, see George F. Kunz and Henry S. Washington, "Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas," *Mineral Resources of the United States*, 1906, Part 2 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 1249. Kunz and Washington are discussed below, Bibliographic Note 4.

<sup>29</sup> The US Geological Survey Map described the terrain of the west two-thirds of the tract, including the diamond-bearing formation. Today, it remains much the same except for loss of soil from the diamond field and deep fill along the southeast rim of the Crater and along the lower east edge where a big gully once ran.

References to John Huddleston as a hog farmer appeared regularly in publications after 1906,

and the personal-property tax records support the description. But he also had a considerable number of cattle before 1906 (notes above and below).

<sup>30</sup> The earliest and most reliable sources agreed that Huddleston's interest in the property derived to some extent from the possibility of mineral deposits and that apparent signs of copper, iron, and lead motivated him to search the ground in the summer of 1906. In publications after 1920, gold emerged as virtually the sole motivation—apparently because that precious metal fit the common, romantic imagery of prospecting (a detailed summary of sources follows in Bibliographic Note 4). By the early 1920s, even John Huddleston had begun using gold as the specific motivation (e.g., interview in Tom Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer," pp. 1, 10). Decades later, Howard Millar went so far as to depict Huddleston panning for gold when he found the first two diamonds (*Finders-Keepers*, 20-21). In his interview with Shiras, Huddleston reportedly said he had panned for gold initially, but had started creeping around the field examining the surface before he saw the first crystal.

After the great gold rush in California in the late 1840s and early '50s, rumor-inspired "excitements" swept through western Arkansas at various times. Huddleston's discovery of diamonds in late 1906 spurred a more limited gold-and-silver rush in and around Pike County. (Banks, *Diamonds*, "Background" and "Speculative Heyday," summarize these topics.)

<sup>31</sup> Shiras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer," p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Junius B. Wood, "America's 35 Acres of Diamonds," *Nation's Business*, 37 (March 1949), 63 (visit in 1906); Millar, *Finders-Keepers*, 21-22 (late '80s).

<sup>33</sup> Wood, 63.

<sup>34</sup> John C. Branner and Richard N. Brackett, "The Peridotite of Pike County, Arkansas," *American Journal of Science*, Series 3, 38 (1889), 50-59 (survey map opposite 56). For Branner's activities and the general setting, see Banks, *Diamonds*, "Background and Discovery." The tale about Huddleston and Branner seldom appeared in early folk tales, but became prominent after Huddleston's death in November 1941. Junius Wood's article was the first noticeable instance (details in Bibliographic Note 5, below).

Later, the *New York Times* erred in saying John Branner "called attention years ago," while State Geologist, to the similarity between the Pike County formation and mines in South Africa "and expressed the opinion that the presence of diamonds was indicated in that portion of Pike County, and yet this valuable opinion was absolutely ignored." ("Slow to Dig Diamonds," *Times*, August 5, 1907, p. 7.) The report of 1889 carefully refrained from mentioning such a possibility, to avoid stirring up the prospecting fever still afflicting Arkansans in the western part of the state.

<sup>35</sup> It is possible that some diamond hunter visited the property in the wake of publicity surrounding the Cullinan Diamond, the stunning specimen taken from the new Premier Mine of South Africa in January 1905. It weighed 3,024 + <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> carats after preliminary cleaning—more than three times as much as the previous world record. Branner, however, had left the state years before that event. Nothing in available records supports the tale about Huddleston accompanying a visitor.

<sup>36</sup> Personal Tax, 1904, p. 69; 1905, p. 73 (see comment above, Bibliographic Note 3). Taxable items, 1904: two horses (\$140 total value), eleven cattle (\$55), one mule (\$40), thirty-three hogs (\$33), one wagon or carriage (\$25), one gold or silver watch (\$8), total of "all other Property



required to be listed" (\$80), total valuation (\$381), tax (\$6.39); average total valuation for individuals on p. 69, \$190. Items for 1905 (evidently a market year for hogs): eleven cattle (\$55), one mule (\$85), three hogs (\$3), two wagons or carriages (\$60), one watch (\$8), other taxable (\$100), total valuation (\$311) tax (\$5.78); average for p. 73, \$244. The number of hogs rose to 26 in 1906 and were still valued at \$1 each, the standard price.

<sup>37</sup> Quotation from Millar, *Finders-Keepers*, 19; Pike County Deed Record L, 340-345, Contract to Sell, H. M. and M. J. Ross, W. G. and Mattie McBrayer, F. E. and Nellie McBrayer, and Florence McBrayer to J. W. Huddleston, July 15, 1905.

The long contract set a schedule of annual payments to each of the four co-owners of the 243 acres. Apparently, there were separate promissory notes involved, because no marginal notations appear on the contract. The document was properly notarized on July 15, 1905, but was not filed at the county courthouse until October 12, 1906, some three weeks after the Huddlestons sold diamond-mining interests an option to purchase the property (details below). For some reason, the Pike County Circuit Clerk re-verified the contract on June 2, 1906—two months before the date of discovery reported later.

<sup>38</sup> Personal Tax [for] 1905, p. 73. While gaining a good mule, Huddleston evidently sold or traded two horses to someone during the 1905 tax year. With the big tract to care for, along with the small farm, the horses probably were given up in order to buy a sturdy mule and gain a bit of cash.

<sup>39</sup> Deed Record N, 411, Warranty Deed, John W. and Sarah A. Huddleston to W. G. McBrayer, December 15, 1905 (\$400 for 40 acres: SW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 27, Township 8 S., Range 25 W). The Huddlestons bought the property from John's parents in 1900.

<sup>40</sup> "Diamonds in Pike," *Nashville* [Arkansas] *News*, September 12, 1906, p. 1. Nashville, a small commercial hub, lay about fifteen miles southwest of Murfreesboro, in Howard County.

<sup>41</sup> The reputable Little Rock jeweler who first examined the two diamonds, Charles S. Stiff, specified their weights: 2 5/8 carats and 1 3/5 carats (Stiff's long statement was quoted fully in "Diamonds Found in Pike County," *Arkansas Gazette*, September 21, 1906, p. 1; article expanded, with the same statement, as "Pike Diamond Lands—Have Been Sold to a Little Rock Syndicate," *Nashville News*, September 22, 1906, p. 1).

**Bibliographic Note 3a.** Although Stiff's weights were authoritative, other early sources differed. As a result, descriptions of the first diamonds have varied over the years. Huddleston likely contributed to the early confusion by showing visitors some diamonds found after he agreed to continue diamond hunting for Sam Reyburn's group when it got an option on the farm in September 1906 (discussed below). Such diamonds belonged to Reyburn, the group's Trustee, to be returned to the Huddlestons only if the group dropped the option; but undoubtedly the newly famous John Huddleston was allowed to keep "demonstration" diamonds while in the field, perhaps in the Bull Durham tobacco sack mentioned in a later tale.

Geologists George F. Kunz and Henry S. Washington, both of whom had ample opportunities to talk with Huddleston in the field, reported 4½ carats and 3 carats for the first two finds, and ½ carat for a third ((Kunz and Washington, "Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas," *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1906*, Part 2 [Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1907], 1247-1251). A professionally written article, "Genuine Diamonds Found to the Number of 140 in Pike County, Arkansas," *Arkansas Gazette*, August 4, 1907, p. 4, included a widely used list of diamonds collected up to about that time and identified Huddleston's first find as 2 7/16 + 1/64 carats and the second as 2 5/8 + 3/64. John T. Fuller, a mining engineer who worked at



the diamond field from mid-1908 into 1912, reported "Three stones, weighing 2 5/8+3/64 carats, 2 7/8 carats, and 1/2 carat, now in possession of Mr. Huddleston." (Fuller, "Report on Property of the Arkansas Diamond Company, November 11, 1908, p. 20, in Arkansas Diamond Company, prospectus, described in Banks, *Diamonds*, "Bibliographic Note 4"; Fuller, "Report on Property of the Arkansas Diamond Co.," January 1, 1909, in "Reports and Information," 26, Banks, *ibid.*; cf. Fuller, "Diamond Mine in Pike County, Arkansas," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 87, No. 3 [January 16, 1909], 152, which repeated Kunz and Washington's description of the first gem, "a white stone of 4 1/2 carats.") Later, apparently to simplify the matter, Dallas Tabor Herndon's popular state history settled on "about three carats each" for the first two (Herndon, *Highlights of Arkansas History* [Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, 1922], 152).

Compare those sources with Huddleston's comment during an interview in the mid 1920s, no doubt influenced by Stiff. "The first one I found turned out to be a steel blue gem weighing one and three-eighths carats. The second one . . . was the same type and weighed two and three-eighths carats. The third one was a yellow stone, heart-shaped, and it weighed one-half carat." (Interview by Tom Shiras, quoted in Tom Shiras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer," *Arkansas Gazette*, Magazine Section, January 4, 1942, pp. 1, 10.)

Although the initial report of the *Nashville News* mentioned only two diamonds, Huddleston picked up a third soon afterward, reportedly while Samuel Reyburn of Little Rock was at the property trying to secure an option ("Genuine Diamonds Found to the Number of 140 in Pike County, Arkansas," *Arkansas Gazette*, August 5, 1907, p. 4, reprinted as "Diamonds Genuine," *Nashville News*, August 10, 1907, p. 3). Charles S. Stiff, the Little Rock jeweler who examined the first two diamonds, also mentioned that a third reportedly had been found after he received those (sources above). Stiff's account is consistent with Shiras' quotation from his interview with Huddleston c. 1924: "In about two weeks [after sending the first two to Stiff] I received a letter from the Little Rock man, saying that if the stones were not something else—I forgot what he called it—they were diamonds. Then I found another one." ("Discoverer," p. 1.) Overall, however, there are too many contradictions in the data to establish a satisfactory timeline of events.

The *New York Times*, one of the most unreliable sources during the early era, evidently received erroneous information from its Little Rock correspondent: Huddleston sent the "first diamond" to Stiff; then "after two others were found," Stiff sent the diamonds to a New York firm ("Slow to Dig Diamonds," *Times*, August 5, 1907, p. 7).

A few of the early sources said Horace Bemis, a prominent lumberman from nearby Prescott, was the first to see Huddleston's two diamonds, and that he took one to St. Louis for identification (Miser and Ross, "Diamond-Bearing Peridotite in Pike County, Arkansas," USGS *Bulletin* 735-I, 285: ". . . suspecting they were diamonds, [Bemis] took one to the Mermond, Jaccard and King Jewelry Co., of St. Louis."). The reference to Bemis was cut from subsequent editions of Miser's report, but was quoted fully in Thomas, *Arkansas and Its People*, Vol. 2, 386. After World War II, this story was revived and embellished a great deal (see Bibliographic Notes 5 and 6, below, comments about Junius Wood's "America's 35 Acres of Diamonds" and Howard Millar's *Finders-Keepers*).

The involvement of Bemis in 1906 gains credibility from the fact that his hometown newspaper, Prescott's *Nevada County Picayune*, repeated the initial announcement appearing in the *Nashville News*: "Pike County Diamonds," *Picayune*, September 14, 1906, p. 1. Afterwards, the newspaper carried articles about the diamond field only occasionally (e.g., "Pike County Diamonds," January 18, 1907, p. 1 [from the *Nashville News*: Reyburn securing more options; Huddleston, working with Reyburn's group, has found seventeen diamonds]; "Big Diamond Company Formed," March 5, 1908, p. 1 [American Diamond Company, based in Texarkana]).

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In 1908, Bemis and his brothers became the mainstay of another mining group involved at the diamond field, the Ozark company (Banks, *Diamonds*, "Northeast Slope–Ozark," online at <http://www.pcahs.com/>).

What happened to Huddleston's first three diamonds? According to the initial report in the *Nashville News*, September 12, 1906, he had sold the first two for \$600 (one for \$400; the other, \$200). Other sources indicated, or at least implied, that the Discoverer kept his first three finds, and one source said they "were later cut by Tiffany in New York, being pronounced perfect gems, equal in purity to those of South Africa." (Jim G. Ferguson, *Minerals in Arkansas* [Little Rock: Arkansas Bureau of Mines, Manufactures and Agriculture, 1922], 56; restated in Herndon's *Highlights of Arkansas History* [1922], 152.) In Shiras' interview, c. 1924, Huddleston merely said he had sold the third find, a yellow heart-shaped gem weighing one-half carat, for \$100 ("Arkansas Diamond Discoverer," p. 1). In any case, the first two diamonds reportedly were still in Murfreesboro in July 1931, on display at the Pike County Bank ("Radio Broadcast on Diamond Mines," *Pike County Courier*, July 17, 1931, p. 1). Compare that report with a new tale that emerged briefly after Huddleston's death: A few years after selling the diamond property, the Discoverer was broke in New Orleans and "pawned the original diamonds for railroad fare back to his old hunting grounds. As a civic duty, the Pike County Bank eventually bought the stones to exhibit to visitors." (Wood, "America's 35 Acres of Diamonds," 64.)

John Huddleston's property tax for 1906 included only a \$5 watch under the general category of "Gold and Silver Watches, or watches of any other metal, Diamonds and Jewelry of every kind." The large, unexplained valuation for that category in 1907—\$305—might seem to suggest Huddleston declared one or two diamonds; but considering that the family had bought several watches and other unspecified personal items, that money probably reflected those purchases instead of diamonds found earlier. (Pike, Personal Tax Record 1906, p. 84; Record 1907, p. 91, Pike County Archive and History Society, Murfreesboro.)

<sup>42</sup> Kunz and Washington, and other sources, Bibliographic Note 4, below. Although a valid date of discovery probably will never be determined, August 1<sup>st</sup> is too early to fit into a timeline of events for August–September 1906. In an interview about fifteen years later, Huddleston evidently changed his story and said he was hunting for gold when he found the first diamond on "August 8, 1906," which fits the timeline a bit better (Shiras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer"). Everything considered, about the middle of August is more likely.

**Bibliographic Note 4.** The earliest information about Huddleston's discovery was provided by George F. Kunz of New York, considered the nation's leading geologist-gemologist, and Henry S. Washington, a prominent geologist-chemist with offices in New York and New Jersey. Jointly, the two published a detailed account after long visits to Huddleston's farm in late 1906 and early 1907, while Huddleston was still around: "Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas," *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1906*, Part 2 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 1247-1251. Their comment about the discovery lacked the drama of most other stories; primarily, the two geologists were interested in fundamentals such as establishing a date for the first find—August 1, 1906—and determining the spots where Huddleston picked up the three diamonds. Still, they recorded almost all the basic elements. Huddleston had bought the property (date and acreage not given) "largely on account of its peculiar character, as he suspected it contained some 'mineral.' Mr. Huddleston was searching, on his hands and knees, for indications of copper or lead ores and his attention was attracted by the luster of the stone . . . lying among the pebbles . . . near the southern edge of the igneous area where the decomposed Peridotite is much cut up by small gullies." Huddleston knew only that it differed from quartz. That afternoon, "while riding on horseback into Murfreesboro and carefully scrutinizing the ground, he saw a second diamond lying in the ruts of the road, about 500 feet north of the first and also within the igneous area." Afterward, Huddleston and his family

searched the area carefully but found no more of the crystals "until September 8," when he found a half-carat yellow stone about 400 feet northeast of the spot where the first turned up. Although Kunz and Washington evidently were misled about the weights of the first two diamonds, their information can be considered a reliable account of the discoverer's own story immediately after the event (Huddleston was still at the diamond field during their visits).

The next basic account, in 1907, included the first full version of the discovery and ensuing events—including Huddleston's interest in gold prospecting and the local bank clerk's disrespectful offer for one of the strange crystals when Huddleston took them to town ("Mr. Riley said he did not know what it was, but offered to risk 50 cents on it. Mr. Huddleston said he didn't know what it was either, but rather than take 50 cents for it he would pulverize it."). This well researched feature article, "Genuine Diamonds Found to the Number of 140 in Pike County, Arkansas," *Arkansas Gazette*, August 4, 1907, p. 4, evidently drew from Huddleston, Kunz, Stifft, and other central actors. Among newspaper articles of the early decades, it is the most credible. Cf. Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer," published later.

Another impressive feature article, "Status of Diamond Fields of Pike County, Arkansas," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, March 21, 1909 (page number unclear on microfilm copies), introduced more detail, including the erroneous statement about Huddleston's "160 acres." The writer agreed that John Huddleston knew nothing about diamonds, but said, "His wife was the first to suggest the possibility that the stone might be a diamond, and this suggestion was sufficient to make Huddleston determine to have the stone examined." As Kunz and Washington, the writer mentioned Huddleston's interest in the possibility that the property held important minerals, particularly "copper or iron" (corresponding to the greenish and rust-colored volcanic breccia); but there was no reference to gold. Alone among the sources, the article described the "road alongside which Huddleston picked up the first diamond," one of the "oldest and most heavily traveled roads in that portion of the state." (Branner's earlier survey map showed the road clearly, as did John Fuller's reproduction of Branner's map in 1909 [Plates 1-2]; the USGS map of 1916 [Plate 3] included the two public roads in the immediate area: one, closed after Huddleston's discovery, ran north-south through the Arkansas Diamond Company's southeast slope and turned eastward at the plant site.)

One of the most prominent and influential reports was published long after the discovery: Tom Shiras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer," *Arkansas Gazette*, Magazine Section, January 4, 1942, pp. 1, 10. Based upon a long interview with Huddleston, probably in late 1924, this is a rare instance when the discoverer was quoted directly. In the interview, Huddleston mentioned the "160 acres" and gold prospecting ("I had a hunch that there was gold on this diamond pipe when I bought it, but had no thought of ever finding a diamond. The soil was different from anything I had ever seen. Full of crystals and bits of mineral."). Upon finding the first unusual crystal, while crawling along, Huddleston "had a feeling that it was a diamond," but was not sure. He repeated the earlier story about the bank teller, Jess Riley, varying it only slightly ("Of course Jess didn't know a diamond from a crystal, and all he would offer me for them was 50 cents. If I hadn't had such a strong notion that they were something besides ordinary crystals I reckon I would have sold them.").

In the early era, Shiras was the highly reputable owner-editor of the *Baxter Bulletin*, Mountain Home, Arkansas. During the interview he took a well-dressed John Huddleston, then over sixty years old, out to the diamond field and took the famous photograph of the discoverer squatting where he found the first diamond ("Lee Wagoner, John Huddleston's brother-in-law, and a diamond hunter since the first work started, joined the party in the afternoon. We finally located the exact spot where Mr. Huddleston picked up the first diamond, and I took the photograph that illustrates this article, showing Mr. Huddleston pointing directly at it."). For an excellent copy of the photograph, see the Lee J. Wagner Collection, File 23-80, in "Photographs," Crater archive.

About the time it was taken, Miser and Ross published their initial USGS report, with the comprehensive survey map pinpointing the spot (marked x1).

According to Shiras, Huddleston was sixty-three years old at the time of the interview, which, *if correct*, suggests a date of late 1924 or early 1925 (on his marriage license in late 1921, Huddleston used fifty-nine years of age; but in the Census of 1920 and at other times he used other birthdates and ages). Shiras' comment about a warm fireplace at Huddleston's home and his photographs of their trip to the diamond field indicate late fall or early spring. Moreover, the long trip to Murfreesboro—his only trip on record—likely was prompted by news of the Uncle Sam Diamond, the record-setting 40.23-carat gem found in the summer of 1924.

Shiras initially used a brief summary of the interview in an article he published "a few years" after the trip to Murfreesboro (Shiras, "Ozark and Ouachita Mountains of Arkansas Contain Numerous Precious, Semi-Precious Stones," unidentified, undated clipping in IV.E.5, Crater of Diamonds archive). Content dates this article after late summer 1924, and the typeface and style suggest it was one of Shiras' early features in the *Arkansas Gazette*. Initial review of the *Baxter Bulletin* from 1920 to mid 1932 failed to locate the piece (an excellent microfilm of the *Bulletin* is available in the Arkansas History Commission Research Room, Little Rock).

In 1924, George N. Moreland published his long, colorful "Rambling in Arkansas," *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis, Tennessee), October 12, 1924, page number unclear [undated clipping also available in W. C. Rodgers Collection, Box 2.IV, File 26, Arkansas History Commission]. The article gave little attention to Huddleston directly while focusing on other features of Arkansas diamonds; yet it introduced another variation of the discoverer's experience. "On August 1, 1906, he went down to his 160-acre tract and sat down beneath a scrubby pine tree . . ." While sitting there, feeling poorly, "he picked up a pebble probably to toss at some bird which annoyed him because it twittered a song that was full of joy and sunshine. . . . It proved to be a perfect specimen of a blue white diamond which weighed nearly two carats."

Clearly, Moreland had gotten that story from John Huddleston's brother-in-law Lee J. Wagner, who later gave the full-blown, apparently tongue-in-cheek account to a leading newspaper of New York City: "Pike County Has Real Diamonds, He Says," *The World* (New York), August 14, 1927, Section E, page 12 (a clipping in IV.E.5, Crater archive, has incomplete identification and no page number, but is an excellent copy of the piece). Among other effects, this tale helped establish the image of a more knowledgeable John Wesley Huddleston. "He told Sarah, his wife, that he believed he had found a diamond," Wagner said, "but Sarah only laughed because John had brought rocks home before. Upon looking at the stone she saw it was different from the rest and suggested he take it to town and have it examined." (*The World* was a continuation of Pulitzer's *New York World*. Microfilm of the newspaper for the period 1906-1931 could be found only at the New York Historical Society, online address:

[https://www.nyhistory.org/web/default.php?section=library&page=reference\\_services](https://www.nyhistory.org/web/default.php?section=library&page=reference_services). Notice the Library of Congress's comment on the varying titles of the newspaper, at <http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/ndnp:137074/display.html>.

For further examples of the way the tales of discovery began varying soon after 1906, compare the sources above with these: "Diamond Mines of Arkansas—Supplement of the *Nashville* (Arkansas) *News*," [1912], p. 1, undated copy in "Misc." box, Crater archive (dated by content and by "Our Diamond Special," *News*, March 16, 1912, p. 1, which referred to it as an "enclosed Diamond Supplement"); and untitled article from the *Kansas City Star*, reprinted as "The Pike County Diamond Mines," *Pike County Courier*, September 24, 1920, p. 1 (microfilm in the Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock, provides almost complete coverage of the *Courier* after 1918); Fletcher Chenault, "Pike County Destined to Become a Great Golconda," *Arkansas Gazette*, October 4, 1920, p. 4. A brief article in the Supplement depicts Huddleston as a heroic figure who knew he had found diamonds and had to convince skeptical townsfolk. The detailed article in the *Star* followed the basic account: Huddleston had no idea what the crystals were

until Pinnix got them back from Stiff and went out to his farm to break the news: “They’re diamonds! Real diamonds . . . You’ve got the real thing. What’t you take for your farm?” Chenault repeated an earlier tale in which Huddleston saw the sparkling crystal while using a pick to explore for copper. Here again, Huddleston learned from others that he had found diamonds.

After the Great Depression, popular national magazines picked up the evolving tales—usually from Austin Q. Millar and son Howard, who had remained at the diamond field (sources are summarized below, Bibliographic Notes 5-6).

<sup>43</sup> [Bibliographic Note 4a](#). The area of the volcanic formation, including the road, was first surveyed and mapped by State Geologist John C. Branner in 1888 (see Plate 2 and notes above). The condition of the road was described in “Status of Diamond Fields of Pike County, Arkansas,” *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis, Tennessee), March 21, 1909, page unclear in microfilm copies available. George F. Kunz and Henry S. Washington, “Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas,” *Mineral Resources of the United States, 1906*, Part 2 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 1249, mentioned that Huddleston found the second diamond in the ruts of the road, north of where he picked up the first. The U. S. Geological Survey map of 1916 marked the spot where the first turned up (Plate 3, USGS map, symbol *x1*). The USGS map still showed the path of the public road that had cut through the diamond field (it was closed and rerouted when aspiring commercial miners bought the property). The USGS map, a refinement of Branner’s earlier survey, appeared as a plate in a series of publications by Hugh D. Miser and co-workers in the 1920s, including: Miser and Clarence S. Ross, “Diamond-Bearing Peridotite in Pike County, Arkansas,” *U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 735-I* (1923), 279-322, and Miser and A. H. Purdue, “Geology of the DeQueen and Caddo Gap Quadrangles, Arkansas—Igneous Rocks,” *USGS Bulletin 808* (1929), 99-117 (a copy of this *Bulletin* is in IV.D.3, Crater archive; that file and other material in the archive by early 1984 were included in the “Crater of Diamonds” microfilm series, copies in Crater archive and Arkansas History Commission Research Room [AHC], Little Rock).

<sup>44</sup> Kunz and Washington, “Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas.”

<sup>45</sup> Few sources indicate Huddleston though the crystals might be diamonds, and some of those are clearly imaginative tales (e.g., “Diamond Mines of Arkansas—Supplement of the *Nashville News*,” p. 1). For a basic survey of the issue, see sources in Bibliographic Note 4, above. Compare with Millar, *Finders-Keepers, 20-21*, an account reportedly gotten from Huddleston firsthand (Bibliographic Note 6, below).

<sup>46</sup> Reportedly, Huddleston started to town immediately after finding the first crystal and spotted the second one on the way. If Huddleston found the third diamond on September 9, as Kunz and Washington reported after their visit to the diamond field in late 1906 and early 1907, the trip to the bank probably occurred about mid August, 1906. In Huddleston’s interview with Shiras c. 1924, he said he received Stiff’s letter “about two weeks” after Pinnix sent the diamonds to Little Rock (“Arkansas Diamond Discoverer,” p. 1). The statements of Stiff, Reyburn, and Huddleston, cited above, indicate Stiff notified Huddleston about a week before going to Murfreesboro the first time. Huddleston picked up the third diamond after Stiff’s visit and reportedly while Samuel Reyburn of Little Rock was at the property trying to secure an option (“Genuine Diamonds Found to the Number of 140 in Pike County, Arkansas,” *Arkansas Gazette*, August 5, 1907, p. 4, reprinted as “Diamonds Genuine,” *Nashville News*, August 10, 1907, p. 3; Stiff’s statement in “Diamonds Found in Pike County”). Evidently, Reyburn’s first visit occurred just before the *Nashville News* broke the story on September 12, 1906.

Accounts of Huddleston’s visit to the bank in Murfreesboro and his talk with Pinnix vary in

some details, but agree generally. The discussion with Jess Riley at the bank appeared first in August 1907, in "Genuine Diamonds Found to the Number of 140 in Pike County, Arkansas." Some accounts, such as Millar's *Finders-Keepers* (22-23), added colorful dialogue—details Millar said he got from John Huddleston, himself. Compare that with Millar's similar story in "Diamond Mines of Arkansas—Supplement of the *Nashville News*," (1912). Compare those two sources with the substantial report in "The Pike County Diamond Mines," which indicated Huddleston rode horseback to town in order to talk only with Pinnix: "'I'll take these things up to Little Rock,' Judge Pinnix suggested, 'and show them to Mr. Stiff, the jeweler. He'll know if they are worth anything.'" Authors of the earliest and most authoritative account of the discovery were interested primarily in establishing the dates of Huddleston's finds and pinpointing the spots where they turned up, and therefore omitted details about the visit in town (Kunz and Washington, "Occurrence of Diamonds in Arkansas," 1248-1249).

<sup>47</sup> The early sources differed as to whether Pinnix prompted Huddleston to send the diamonds to Stiff or whether Pinnix himself sent them, or took them, to Little Rock. Huddleston's later statement to Shiras, however, seems credible, particularly in view of Huddleston's illiteracy: "He [Pinnix] said he would send them to a Little Rock jeweler for identification, and I let him do it." ("Arkansas Diamond Discoverer," p. 1.) Charles Stiff's initial public statement included only a brief comment about "a gentleman" who sent the diamonds by mail (statement quoted fully in "Diamonds Found in Pike County," *Arkansas Gazette*, September 21, 1906, p. 1; reprinted with additional comment as "Pike Diamond Lands—Have Been Sold to a Little Rock Syndicate," *Nashville News*, September 22, 1906, p. 1). That statement clarified the weights of the two gems.

<sup>48</sup> For details, see Banks, *Diamonds*, online at <http://www.pcahs.com/>. Decades later Sam Reyburn said of Stiff and Cohen, his friends and associates, "Finally they offered Huddleston a partnership, and he said he would let them know. When they didn't hear they came to see me." (Martin L. Gross, "The Incredible American Diamond Mine Mystery," *True* [September 1959], 55.)

The initial report in the *Nashville News*, on September 12, 1906, mentioned Stiff was among those visiting the Huddlestons' property; but that article evidently appeared a week or so later when Stiff returned with Sam Reyburn (following note).

<sup>49</sup> Banks, *Diamonds*, "Sam Reyburn and the ADC, 1906-1932." As indicated later in this study, J. C. Pinnix had a continuing role in John Huddleston's life. He was an influential friend, one whose help undoubtedly went well beyond the instances found in available documents. A former member of the Arkansas House of Representatives and Senate (elected President Pro Tem; once served as acting governor); member of the school board for four decades; a major real-estate investor in Pike County; the prosecuting attorney in 1909-1913; organizer and president of the Pike County Bank, 1910 until his death in July 1942—he certainly had the skills and resources to make a difference. For a brief background see "J. C. Pinnix Dies in Murfreesboro," *Arkansas Gazette*, July 27, 1942, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> The *Nashville News* implied Huddleston had been offered \$36,000 for an outright purchase, but that clearly was not the case ("Diamonds in Pike," September 12, 1906, p. 1).

<sup>51</sup> Deed Record L, 345, Option to Purchase, John W. and Sarah A. Huddleston to Sam W. Reyburn, Trustee, September 19, 1906 (cf. Record P, 326, Warranty Deed, June 15, 1908). "Pike Diamond Lands," *Nashville News*, September 22, 1906, p. 1, reported the basic details of the contract correctly.



Huddleston dressed up and posed with Reyburn for a photograph, apparently when the initial option was filed in Murfreesboro at the Pike County Courthouse ("Photographs," VIII, File 23.112, Crater archive). The photograph of Huddleston used in this study was cropped from 23.112.

<sup>52</sup> See comment in Bibliographic Note 4a, above.

<sup>53</sup> Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer," p. 10. Compare this with the version popularized later by Howard Millar: "Finally, \$36,000 was agreed upon and John explained his 'figuring' this way: he and his wife had four daughters, making six individuals in the family. He estimated that \$6,000 each would last them the rest of their lives. So, he wanted \$6,000 for each member of the family, and requested this to be paid in \$10 bills." (*Finders-Keepers*, 25.)

<sup>54</sup> Option to Purchase, September 19, 1906. Later, an option renewal allowed the Huddlestons more flexibility: "We hereby reserve the right to continue, as may suit our convenience, the prospecting of said land . . ." (Deed Record M, 99, Option, September 9, 1907). The *Nashville News*, a biweekly newspaper published in a small city about fifteen miles southwest of Murfreesboro, occasionally made it clear the discoverer was hunting diamonds for those holding the option: "The Fourth Diamond," October 6, 1906, p. 1; "More Options Taken," January 16, 1907, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> "Diamonds Plentiful," January 9, 1907, p. 1; "More Options Taken," January 16, 1907, p. 1; "Four More Diamonds," March 9, 1907, p. 1. Banks, *Diamonds*, "Reyburn—Caution to Overconfidence," provides the full context.

Evidently, Huddleston was allowed to carry his collection of diamonds while in the field, for "demonstration" purposes. Apparently he kept them in a pocket-size Bull Durham tobacco sack, and thereby inspired another future folk tale (see Bibliographic Note 6, below, for details).

<sup>56</sup> The basic contracts reflected the group's cautious maneuvering after September 1906—as a small crew probed the field to determine if the discovery was genuine or merely another salting scheme: Deed Record M, 99, John W. and Sarah A. Huddleston to Sam W. Reyburn, Trustee, December 31, 1906 (conditional option deed, with full payment by September 1907); N, 405, Huddlestons to Reyburn, Trustee, August 14, 1907 (a fee-simple deed, in effect an extension of the option and the final payment; but this time the Huddlestons' received \$7,000 cash and a schedule for interest payments on a balance of \$29,000); P, 49, Huddlestons to Reyburn, Trustee, March 4, 1908 (a new deed for \$1,000 cash, an extension of the balance at 8% interest, and the Trust's assumption of property taxes); P, 326, Warranty Deed, Huddlestons to Arkansas Diamond Mining Company. June 15, 1908 (two marginal notations are on the deed [others evidently were on the related promissory note]: "Receipt of \$60 . . . April 5, 1913, being payment of interest on the within mentioned note to March 28, 1913" [the balance had been \$22,000 in June 1908; this \$60 was the monthly interest on the remaining balance,]; and "Satisfied in full this October 6, 1916, for value received," certified by agent of Union Trust Co.); Deed Record 33, p. 208, Quit Claim Deed, J. W. Huddleston to Union Trust Company, October 6, 1916 (for \$1 and "other good and valuable consideration" [Reyburn's Union Trust Co., Little Rock, had assumed responsibility for the note on January 4, 1910]). For the full context see Banks, *Diamonds*, "ADC's Dilemmas."

According to the prevailing myth, John Huddleston not only bought the "160-acre" farm earlier in 1906 and sold it for \$36,000 cash, but also required payment in \$10 or \$20 bills.

<sup>57</sup> [Cross Reference 1](#). Huddleston began buying property in Clark County immediately after he and Sarah received the \$7,000 payment from Reyburn's group on August 14, 1907. The recorded purchases: Clark County, Deed Book 49, p. 369, Warranty Deed, W. W. and E. L.

Heard to J. W. Huddleston, August 23, 1907 (\$1,500 cash paid for 3.33 acres [Huddlestons' new home], a strip 35 yards by 20 chains [a surveyor's chain, sixty-six feet long] along the West side of the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 17, Township 7 S, Range 19 W); Deed Book 51, p. 236, Warranty Deed, E. F. and Louisa Wilson to John W. Huddleston, August 5, 1907 (\$3,500 cash for a large tract beginning at a street in Arkadelphia on the east side of the Heard property and running north about a mile, in the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 17, Township 7 S, Range 19 W, and in SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 8-7-19, exact acreage unstated and difficult to determine from the deed); Book 52, p. 92, WD, J. R. and Dovie Wood to J. W. Huddleston, June 6, 1908 (\$2,200 "paid by J. W. Huddleston" for 133 acres bordering on the Ouachita River, in SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-7-19 and Partial SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 28-7-19 [see comment on lawsuit, below]); 52, p. 102, WD, C. C. and Laura Henderson to John W. Huddleston, June 13, 1908 (\$50 cash stated, for a parcel 40 feet by 165 feet about one-quarter mile NNE of the Huddleston's home near downtown Arkadelphia, in NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19); 52, p. 108, WD, O. D. Wood to J. W. Huddleston, June 15, 1908 (SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-7-9); 52, p. 264, WD, M. E. McCabe to J. W. Huddleston, December 9, 1908 (Part of Lot 10, Block 37, Browning's Survey, Arkadelphia); 52, p. 331, WD, T. F. and J. H. Anderson to J. W. Huddleston, January 20, 1909 (\$500 price; \$20 cash with balance at 10% interest, note due by February 15, 1909 [marginal notation on deed: balance paid in full February 5, 1909]; purchase of a lot 26 feet by 200 feet in Block 37 of Browning's Survey, Arkadelphia); 52, p. 369, WD, Fred and Minnie Deaton to J. W. Huddleston, February 8, 1909 (\$2,500 dollars cash for 160 acres: NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 6-7-19 and NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5-7-19 [total of 80 acres two miles north of the home], and W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 32, Township 6 S, Range 19 W [80 acres about four miles southwest of the home]); Deed of Trust 50, p. 518, Deed of Trust, F. H. and Mary Morrical to B. F. Dooley, Trustee, with J. W. Huddleston a third party, April 17, 1909 (the Morricals borrowed \$1,000 from Huddleston and for collateral put up the one-half acre he had sold to them earlier, with easement [below, sales, 52, p. 459]; a few weeks later, Huddleston put his X on a certified marginal notation stating the \$1,000 had been paid in full; 81, p. 549, WD, Frank H. Morrical and wife to J. W. Huddleston, June 1, 1909, filed March 20, 1918, as Huddleston sold the home and moved to Murfreesboro (Partial SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19 [the one-half acre used for collateral April 17, 1909]); 52, p. 576, WD, Agnes and Catherine Stewart to J. W. Huddleston, July 12, 1909 (\$1,450 cash for the east side of Lot 8 and west side of Lot 9, Block 34, Browning's Svy., Arkadelphia); 52, p. 579, WD, C. and Altha Webb to John Huddleston, July 16, 1909 (\$1,250 cash for 32.5 acres in SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31-6-19, about four miles SSE of the home); 52, p. 580, WD, C. and Altha Webb to John Huddleston, July 16, 1909 (3 acres in SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5-7-19); 55, p. 176, WD, Bertha Adams to J. W. Huddleston, January 7, 1910 (W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Lot 12, Block 35, Browning's Svy.); 55, p. 252, WD, T. C. Dawson and wife to J. W. Huddleston, January 15, 1910 (Part of Sec. 17-7-19); 62, p. 299, WD, T. F. and J. H. Anderson to J. W. Huddleston, January 28, 1912 (\$500, with \$250 cash down and the balance by April 23, 1912 [marginal notation: paid in full February 3, 1912], for E part of Block 37, Browning's Svy.); Book 65, p. 75, WD, Robt. L. Johnson to John W. Huddleston, October 7, 1912 (\$600 cash for 40 acres, SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 6-7-19, about two miles NNW of the home); Book 73, p. 45, Quit Claim Deed, Abbie M. Crow to J. W. Huddleston, June 4, 1915 (SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-7-19, two miles SE of the home); 74, p. 14, Quit Claim, Fannie C. Gerig to J. W. Huddleston, July 13, 1915 (SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28-7-19); 78, p. 618, Mortgage Deed, G. J. Bennett, et al., to J. W. Huddleston, December 7, 1916 (N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 15-8-20); 81, p. 111, WD, E. Nowlin and wife, September 29, 1917 (N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-8-22); 110, p. 524, Assignment of Oil and Gas Rights, W. D. Hume to J. W. Huddleston, March 30, 1923 (30 acres in Sec. 33-5-23).

The Huddlestons' sales in Clark County: Book 52, p. 459, WD, John and S. A. Huddleston to Frank H. Morrical, July 1, 1908 (one-half acre off the W side of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19 [off Huddlestons' home place]; recovered later by Huddleston [; 52, 459, Easement, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to F. H. Morrical, April 13, 1909; 69, p. 589, Warranty Deed, J. W. and S. A.

Huddleston to J. C. Braswell, March 12, 1910 (\$1,300 cash for two parcels totaling six acres: beginning at the north edge of Arkadelphia, an irregular tract extending 1,200 feet north and 835.5 feet east, in SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19, and a strip 40 feet by 165 feet in NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 17-7-19); 67, p. 104, Quit Claim Deed to C. C. Henderson, July 19, 1910 (\$1 "and other good and valuable considerations" for the W part of S  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19); 73, p. 169, WD, Jno. W. Huddleston to Harsh Phillipp and wife, August 20, 1915 (SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Part of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and Part of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , all in Sec. 28-7-19); 75, p. 377 78, p. 386, WD to W. M. Moore, January 9, 1917 (\$4,400, with \$400 down and balance within one year [marginal: satisfied in full October 29, 1917], for 151.5 acres total in W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 32-6-19, NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5-7-19, and a tract in the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31-6-19); 82, p. 355, WD to J. A. Carr, September 29, 1917 (SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 8-7-19 and NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19; 100, p. 16, WD, J. W. H. to J. A. Carr, September 29, 1917, filed April 28, 1921 (\$3,816.65 for N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 15-8-20); 81, p. 169, WD to Gid Cook, October 31, 1917 (\$1,500 cash for NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 6-7-19 and Partial SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5-7-19); 100, p. 580, WD, J. W. Huddleston (now a widower) to George Harris, March 18, 1918 (N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-8-22 [see Release below, 105, p. 305]); 81, p. 591, WD, J. W. Huddleston, an unmarried man, to D. McMillan, March 19, 1918 (\$2,850 cash for part of the E side of Lots 8 and 20 and part of the W side of Lot 9, all in Block 34 of Browning's Survey of Arkadelphia); 81, p. 595, WD to D. and J. H. McMillan, March 19, 1918 (\$3,500 cash for W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Lot 12 in Block 35 of Browning's Survey, with twenty feet of frontage on Main Street, Arkadelphia); 85, p. 411, WD to John M. and Emma Riggan, March 26, 1918 (\$3,000 for Huddleston's home in Arkadelphia, with three acres: a strip one-half acre wide along the W side of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-7-19, excepting approximately 0.3 acre lying N of the middle of a creek-bed running across the N end of the strip); 106, p. 628, WD, J. W. Huddleston to E. W. Hamilton, January 24, 1919, filed May 24, 1923 (SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 6-9-19); 89, p. 297, WD to F. L. Williamson, September 16, 1919 (\$5,250 cash for a strip seventy-eight feet wide running along the south side of Lots 6-10 of Block 37 of Browning's Svy., Arkadelphia); 105, p. 305, Release, J. W. Huddleston to George Harris, March 14, 1922 (N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-8-22 [above, Deed Book 100, p. 580]).

The Huddlestons' real-estate transactions in Pike County began in April 1908, although Clark County remained the primary interest until the deaths of Sarah and their youngest daughter in December 1917 and February 1918 (notes below). The purchases before John Huddleston moved back to Murfreesboro in March 1918: Pike, Deed Record P, 101, Warranty Deed, J. D. Huddleston and wife, E. J., to John W. Huddleston, April 11, 1908 (\$800 cash for 40 acres, NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 26, Township 8 S., Range 26 W.); R, 44, Warranty Deed, M. M. and Bettie Mauney to John W. Huddleston, January 22, 1909 (\$70 cash paid for Lot 1, Block 13, Town of Kimberly [new land-development project immediately south of Murfreesboro]); R, 45, WD (\$200 cash paid for Lot 21, Block 28, Kimberly); R, 241, WD, A. W. and F. A. Parker to J. W. H., September 27, 1909 (\$500 "paid" for E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Lot 2, Block 4, original plat of Murfreesboro); R, 430, WD, J. F. and M. F. Stevens to J. W. H., September 27, 1909 (\$1,700, with \$500 cash down and balance at 8% due by January 10, 1910 [marginal notation: balance paid in full February 2, 1910], for Lot 1 in Block 4, original Murfreesboro); Record 28, p. 583, WD, A. W. and Mary Hamilton to J. W. H. March 25, 1914 (\$1,500 cash for Lots 7-12, Block 3 of Goodlett Addition, Murfreesboro, in NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 17-8-25 [south edge of town; see Pike County Map Book A, Goodlett Addition, pp. 2-3]); 30, p. 380, WD, J. M. and Minnie S. Goodlett to J. W. H., November 4, 1915 (\$1,000, with \$700 cash down and balance at 10% due by November 1, 1916 [satisfied in full that date: Record 36, p. 334, Release Deed, Goodletts to J. W. H., April 22, 1919], for Lots 2-3, Block 4 of Goodlett Addition, Murfreesboro, in NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 17-8-25); 34, p. 262, WD, J. W. and F. C. Chapel to J. W. H., October 18, 1917 (\$4,000 cash paid, for 40 acres, SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 9-8-25); 34, p. 329, WD, Geo. H. and Mary C. Grayson to Jno. Huddleston, November 6, 1917 (\$150 cash paid, for Lot 10 in Kelly Subdivision [no block

indicated; north edge of original Murfreesboro; see Pike County Map Book A, Kelly's Addition, p. 6], in W ½ of SE ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25); 35, p. 55, WD, H. A. and Rose Davis to J. W. H., January 19, 1916 (\$2,000, with \$850 down and balance at 10% due in two annual payments by January 1, 1918 [no marginal notation on deed, but personal note to Davis satisfied in full: J. W. H. held clear title to the property later], for the part of Lots 805 on Kelly St. and 806 on Conway St. lying south of 9<sup>th</sup> St., a strip 198.5' X 255' located in Kelly's Addition/Davis Survey, Murfreesboro, in E ½ of SW ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25); 35, p. 603, WD, C. A. and Laura Kelley to J. W. H., November 30, 1917 (\$1,100, with \$250 cash down and balance by December 1, 1918; for 11 acres along Prairie Creek (69 rods X 26 rods) in SE ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25); 36, p. 136, WD, J. J. Huddleston [John J., nephew of John Huddleston?] and wife, Arrie, to J. W.H., August 21, 1917 (a stated \$100 cash paid, for 18 acres in W ½ of SW ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 22).

The Huddlestons' sales in Pike County before 1918: Record 29, p. 629, Warranty Deed to W. D. Fagan, et al., August 22, 1911 (\$2,300, with \$500 cash down and balance at 8%, in annual payments until January 1, 1915 [marginal note: paid in full February 19, 1917]; for 44.85 acres in SE ¼ of Sec. 34-8-25, west of River [John and Sarah Huddleston's home farm]); Record X, 79, WD to Minerva R. Bickley, August 30, 1912 (\$1,250 cash for the W ½ of Lot 1 and the E ½ of Lot 2, in Block 4 of original Murfreesboro, 50' X 99' in all); 34, p. 409, WD, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to A. W. Hamilton, March 27, 1914 (\$220 cash for Lot 1 of Block 13 and Lot 21 of Block 28, Town of Kimberley [a failing land development project between Murfreesboro and the diamond field, by Prairie Creek; see Pike County Map Book A, Kimberly [sic], p. 50; original blueprint plat in Rodgers Collection, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock).

<sup>58</sup> Pike County, Personal Tax 1907, p. 91. Also listed: eight cows, no mules, twenty-three hogs, four watches; valuation of watches, diamonds and jewelry, \$305 total (the quantity of diamonds or jewelry is not specified), and \$150 total for "other" unspecified items, for a total valuation of \$728, far above the average in the area. Notice the clothing in the family portrait, above.

The \$305 valuation entered under the general category of watches, diamonds, and other jewelry could have included one or two of the small diamonds Huddleston found in August 1906. But considering the overall evidence, that seems improbable. More likely, Sarah and the oldest girls bought jewelry to go along with the watches.

<sup>59</sup> Murfreesboro had no rail service until the Memphis, Paris and Gulf Railroad Company extended its line across the Little Missouri River from the southwest in June 1909 (from Nashville, some fifteen miles away). One of the big lumber companies, however, had track running close to town from Prescott, to the southeast; local travelers often caught the log train to that city and took the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad on to Arkadelphia. At one point, Howard Millar mentioned the Prescott Northwest log train to Norvell, about twelve miles from Murfreesboro (*Finders-Keepers*, 25). A spur also ran from the east to within twenty miles of Murfreesboro.

<sup>60</sup> Clark County, Deed Book 49, p. 369, Warranty Deed, W. W. and E. L. Heard to J. W. Huddleston, August 23, 1907 (details in Clark County purchases, Cross Reference 1, above); community events page, Clark County *Southern Standard*, September 12, 1907, p. 3. The brief item in the newspaper—eight short sentences without headline—lay among numerous other notices. Afterwards, the editors virtually ignored Huddleston, although it began covering basic events at the diamond field after early 1907 (brief reports in the "News of Arkansas" column, p. 1; also titled "Arkansas State News"). The death notices for Sarah and "Miss Joe," cited below, suggest that at least the Huddleston's youngest daughter gained social standing.

<sup>61</sup> The family completed the move by early 1908, the year John Huddleston dropped from Pike County's Personal Tax Assessment and appeared in Clark County's (Clark, Personal Property Tax

Record [for] 1908, Caddo Township, p. 72).

The family photograph in the Lee Wagner Collection, File 23.110, Crater archive, probably was taken soon after the move to Arkadelphia: top left, Mary A. E., born Nov. 1887; top center, Delia E., Aug. 1890; top right, Eunice F. V., Sept. 1892; lower left, Willie M., Aug. 1895; bottom center, Joe May, July 1899. The sources agree the Huddlestons moved primarily for the daughters' benefit, especially to improve opportunities for education and marriage; but the outskirts of Arkadelphia also offered opportunities for sound investment. For the setting, see "Arkadelphia (Clark County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, online at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=848>. Details are available in Wendy Richter, editor, *Clark County: Past and Present* (Arkadelphia, Arkansas: Clark County Historical Association, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> John Huddleston and his extended family had broad expertise in rural properties, and he had dealt with prominent real-estate investors around Murfreesboro before finding the diamonds (one of these, O. B. Owens, provided the Huddlestons short-term loans when needed). But most likely, his concentration on town lots and subdivisions reflected the influence of Pinnix and others involved in that sort of investment, including N. A. Goodlett and son J. M. (in the early 1920s, J. M. Goodlett married Huddleston's daughter Willie).

In Pike County, the Huddlestons' basically took advantage of the development of new additions on the north and south sides of Murfreesboro—development and speculative sales spurred largely by the discovery of diamonds. The main land-development ventures: Murfreesboro Heights Addition and Kelly's Addition (north side), Goodlett Addition (south side), and Town of Kimberly (between the diamond field and Goodlett Addition). See Pike County Map Book A, pp. 2-3 (Goodlett), p. 5 (Heights), p. 6 (Kelly), and p. 50 (Kimberly). "Pike County Diamonds," *Nashville (Arkansas) News*, June 12, 1909, p. 5, and "Murfreesboro is Building," *Nashville News*, August 11, 1909, p. 4, illustrate the trend.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer," p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Fifteen sheep, with a total valuation of \$13, appeared only in the Personal Property Tax Record for 1909, p. 72, line 6, and obviously were out of place in Clark County, Arkansas. There, hogs prevailed, with most farmers raising fewer than a dozen. They usually kept from three to five cattle as well, along with one or two horses and one or two mules. In contrast, for 1908 the Huddlestons paid taxes on thirteen cattle, twenty-four hogs, one horse, and two mules (Record 1908, p. 72, line 35); for 1909, ten cattle, twenty-seven hogs, one horse, nine mules, and fifteen sheep. The number of hogs reached thirty-six in 1911, the high point (p. 83, line 18). The Huddlestons' rural purchases sometimes included a few livestock along with land (e.g. three mules and a wagon with the Wood place in June 1908, mentioned in Clark County Circuit Court, Civil, *J. W. Wood v. J. W. Huddleston*, August 3, 1909, Case No. 1252, file packet archived in Special Collections, Ouachita Baptist University Library, Arkadelphia).

Other law suits in 1908-1912 provide further perspective. One of the Huddlestons' farms, 150 acres within a mile of Arkadelphia, included a four-room house, barn, garden, and land in cultivation (Clark Circuit, Civil, *Arkansas Land Company v. J. W. Huddleston*, March 4, 1912, No. 1501, file in Ouachita Baptist University [OBU] library). Another case, *Henderson College v. John W. Huddleston*, offers a more colorful bit of information: the college alleged that one of its calves, worth \$25, had been "detained," penned up, by Huddleston (details below). Henderson College was then just outside the city by the Huddleston's property.

In those days, cotton was still the dominant row-crop across Arkansas. Huddleston and other growers in Clark County marketed it through Saunders Mercantile or other buyers (for one incident, see Circuit, Civil, *John Huddleston v. Saunders Mercantile*, February 6, 1912, No. 1490, file in OBU library. The Huddlestons' investments in farming equipment appeared initially in the

Personal Property Tax Record 1909, p. 72, under "Value of Materials and Manufactured Articles" (\$250 valuation), and again in 1910, p. 75 (\$150).

<sup>65</sup> Cross Reference 1 above, Huddleston purchases before 1918; Cross Reference 4 below, purchases 1918-1921.

<sup>66</sup> Pike, Deed Record 29, p. 629, Warranty Deed to W. D. Fagan, et al., August 22, 1911 (see Cross Reference 1 above, Huddlestons' Pike County sales before 1918).

<sup>67</sup> [Cross Reference 2](#). The recorded loans, 1907-1919: Pike County, Mortgage Record 2, p. 55, Mortgage with Power of Sale, Realty, John W. and Sarah A. Huddleston to Union Trust Co., Little Rock [J. C. Pinnix, attorney], January 17, 1907 (awaiting sale of their 243.56 acres to Samuel W. Reyburn's group, the couple took an advance of \$800 through Reyburn's Union Trust Co.; repayment annually for three years at 8%, with lien on the 243.56 acres); Clark County, Deed Book 57, p. 517, Deed of Trust (DT) to B. F. Dooley, Trustee, with Roy R. Golden the third party, October 25, 1913 (states that the Huddlestons borrowed \$2,000 from Golden at 10%, payment due by October 25, 1914 [marginal notation: satisfied in full September 7, 1915], with collateral of 234.5 acres in SW ¼ of SW ¼ of Sec. 5-7-19, NW ¼ of NW ¼ of 5-7-19, and the NE ¼ of NE ¼ and SW ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 6-7-19); Clark 75, p. 377, DT, J. W. Huddleston to Merchants and Planters Bank, November 13, 1916 (lien on NE ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 6-7-19, NW ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 5-17-19, SW ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 6-7-19, W ½ of SW ¼ and SE ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec. 31-6-19); Pike, Mortgage Record 11, Realty, p. 172, Mortgage with Power of Sale, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to Pike County Bank, October 22, 1917 (\$500 loan for three months at 10% [marginal by J. C. Pinnix, Secretary of PCB: satisfied in full December 6, 1917]; lien on 40 acres, SW ¼ of SW ¼ of Sec. 9-8-25); Clark Deed 87, p. 73, Deed of Trust, J. W. Huddleston to Ben Dooley, Trustee, with J. W. Bunch the third party, January 25, 1919 (according to the deed of trust, Huddleston borrowed \$2,000 from Bunch January 25th, with payment due within one year; for collateral, Huddleston put up part of Lots 6-10 along the S side of Block 37 of Browning's Survey of Arkadelphia, a strip 78 feet deep [marginal notation: lien satisfied in full as recorded in Book 79, p. 571]); 79, p. 571, Release, J. W. Bunch to J. W. Huddleston, September 16, 1919 (relating to the preceding Deed of Trust).

For occasional property sales, see following note and Cross References 1 and 4.

<sup>68</sup> Pike, Deed Record 34, p. 409, Warranty Deed, J. W. and S. A. Huddleston to A. W. Hamilton, March 27, 1914 (\$220 cash for Lot 1 of Block 13 and Lot 21 of Block 28, Town of Kimberly). Cf. purchases, Kimberly opening ceremonies, Cross Reference 3, below. By 1914, it was clear the nearby diamond-bearing "pipe" failed to justify the initial optimism and land speculation. The Kimberly project began failing in 1910. If the Huddlestons had sold later, they probably would have lost considerably more than the \$50. For context see Banks, *Diamonds*, "M. M. Mauney's Ill-fated 'Boomtown,'" online at <http://www.pcahs.com/>.

<sup>69</sup> "Status of Diamond Fields of Pike County, Arkansas," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, March 21, 1909, first page (page numbers unclear on available microfilm copies).

<sup>70</sup> *Finders-Keepers*, 26-27.

<sup>71</sup> Clark County Circuit Court, Civil, *J. W. Huddleston v. St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad Company*, "Complaint at Law," July 8, 1908, Case No. 1099, file packet in Special Collections, Ouachita Baptist University Library (OBU), Arkadelphia.



<sup>72</sup> Part of the finding of facts in Supreme Court of Arkansas, *Huddleston v. St. L., I. M. & S. Ry. Co.*, Opinion, May 10, 1909, Case No. 327, p. 2, in file packet for Circuit No. 1099, OBU; recorded as 90 Arkansas 378 1909 [vol. 90, p. 378 of the *Arkansas Reports*, published by the State of Arkansas] and 119 SW 280 1909 [*Southwest Reporter*, part of the West Regional Reporter System].

The file at OBU contains no affidavits or other record of testimony except as quoted or otherwise reflected in the Supreme Court Opinion. Summonses and subpoenas are in the file. Original case files for *terminal appeals* to the Supreme Court of Arkansas are archived at the Law Library of the University of Arkansas, Little Rock (The William H. Bowen School of Law); but Huddleston's appeal was upheld and remanded to Clark County Circuit for retrial, and the case file followed. Sets of the *Arkansas Reports* are usually available at county courthouses..

<sup>73</sup> Relatively minor injuries like Huddleston's seldom warranted attention from the newspaper, which focused upon the continual deaths, losses of limbs, and other severe injuries. While important for helping establish legal precedence, his case was ignored by the *Southern Standard* (brief reports on railway accidents appeared on the inside page devoted to community events, sometimes under the heading "Local Brevities"). For a convenient indicator of the problem along any railroad, check the index of Arkansas Supreme Court cases during this period. Arkadelphia's train service included the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad Company (one name). For accidents in individual counties with significant rail traffic, see the indices to the county circuit court civil record as well as the newspapers.

<sup>74</sup> The lack of signs or any kind of control was noted in Supreme Court Opinion, No. 327, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Postal Clerk Garrett, cited in Supreme Court Opinion, No. 327, p. 3. W. L. Craig's briefer statement acknowledged "the train was running pretty fast and . . . [Garrett] made the catch of the crane and picked out the place and when he gave me the word to throw it I threw; [we] always try to select [a] place where there are no passengers and where it will not injure any one; we select the place in front and try to throw the mail so as [to] strike in this place." ("Opinion," pp. 2-3).

<sup>76</sup> Clark Circuit Civil, "Answer," undated, No. 1099, OBU; Circuit Court Record Q, 269, Defendant's Answer, volumes in Special Collections, OBU Library.

<sup>77</sup> "Motion for New Trial," September 11, 1908; "Bill of Exceptions" (seven pages), November 19, 1908, No. 1099.

<sup>78</sup> Opinion, No. 327, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Opinion, p. 6. The standard form reversing the Circuit decision merely stated that "Said court erred in refusing to give instructions numbered 1, requested by appellant, and in giving instructions numbered 5 and 9 requested by the appellee." ("Reversed Law," with copy of original Opinion, in file packet for Circuit No. 1099, OBU.)

<sup>80</sup> Circuit Court Record Q, 477, "Continued by Consent," August 26, 1909; Q, 544, Judgment, January 10, 1910, No. 1099, volumes in OBU. In an almost identical case in Woodruff County, Arkansas, in 1933, a Circuit jury awarded the injured plaintiff \$2,200. Upholding the judgment, the Supreme Court cited the Huddleston case (*Missouri Pacific Railroad Company v. Angus*, 4-3223, Opinion, December 4, 1933, 188 Arkansas 300 1933). Here, again, the railroad had failed to designate a mail-drop zone or to post any warning; again, the Circuit judge's instructions to

the jury had favored the railroad (Opinion); but the jury found for the injured plaintiff.

<sup>81</sup> Clark Circuit, Civil, *Henderson College v. John W. Huddleston*, October 31, 1908, No. 1159, file packet, OBU.

<sup>82</sup> Clark, Deed Book 52, p. 92, WD, J. R. and Dovie Wood to J. W. Huddleston, June 6, 1908 (\$2,200 "paid by J. W. Huddleston" for 133 acres bordering on the Ouachita River, in SE ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 28-7-19 and Partial SE 1/4 of 28-7-19); Circuit Civil, *J. R. Wood v. J. W. Huddleston*, August 3, 1909, Case No. 1252, file packet, OBU. Only Wood's complaint is in the file packet.

<sup>83</sup> Circuit, Civil, *John Huddleston v. Saunders Mercantile*, February 6, 1912, No. 1490, packet, OBU.

<sup>84</sup> Clark Circuit, Civil, *Arkansas Land Co., firm of Joe Hardage & T. N. Wilson, v. J. W. Huddleston*, March 4, 1912, No. 1501, packet, OBU. The suit concerned a farm Huddleston allegedly put back on the market in November 1911—apparently the 133 acres involved in a previous case. According to the land company, Huddleston wanted \$3,650 for the property and agreed the agency could keep anything it got over that amount as a commission. It allegedly sold the place on February 29, 1912, for \$4,000, with one-third cash down and the balance payable within eighteen months at 8% interest.

On March 4, 1912, the land company sued for \$360, plus 6% interest. Huddleston denied the allegations. Acknowledging he was "illiterate and unable to read or write," he said fraud had been committed if his name appeared on a contract as stated by the plaintiff. When Huddleston's lawyers insisted upon seeing a signed contract, the land company submitted a copy of a document indicating Huddleston had approved it with his X. Sarah Huddleston's approval was missing. Nevertheless, the declared buyers evidently supported the allegation; the judge instructed the jury to find for the land company. Huddleston's motion for a new trial failed.

In this case, the court records on file appear incomplete. The sale described in court was never registered in Clark County. The Huddlestons sold at least part of the same property to another buyer later (the company stated it sold "the John Woods [sic] place" on February 29, 1912, to A. J. Vestal and B. F. Condroy; but compare this with Clark County Deed Book 73, p. 169, Huddlestons to Harsh Phillipp, August 20, 1915).

<sup>85</sup> Personal Property Tax Record for 1909, p. 72, line 6. Compare with Record for 1910, p. 75, line 23 (after more real-estate purchases, the total valuation fell to \$1,200 declared); for 1911, p. 83, line 18 (total valuation, \$1,720 declared; under a new tax category for "Firearms," Huddleston's entry is partially blocked by an overlying strip of paper); 1912, p. 80, 27 (total, \$1096 declared; firearm price is still blocked; farm stock remains consistent; wagons/carriages now consistent at two units; four mules); 1913, p. 80, 33 (total, \$1,000 declared; firearm, \$20; one wagon/carriage, \$250, probably reflecting the marriage of three daughters by 1913 [documents cited below]); 1914, p. 75, 35 (total, \$755 declared; Firearm, \$20; only two daughters at home); 1915 (skipped; evidently too damaged to microfilm); 1916, p. 80, 37 (total, \$647 declared; now five mules and two carriages, perhaps because the youngest daughter, Joe May ["Miss Joe"] had come of age); 1917, p. 87, line 38 (total, \$1,115 declared; now five horses, four cows, and 14 pigs; five mules, but no wagon/carriage, watch/jewelry, or piano listed; John's wife, Sarah, died in December 1917 [note below]). For the 1918 tax year, Huddleston's personal assessment shifted to Pike County, reflecting his return early that year.

<sup>86</sup> "Status of Diamond Fields of Pike County, Arkansas," *The Commercial Appeal*, p. 1. Folk tales as well as various documents underscore John Huddleston's attraction to automobiles. This

continuing facet of his life also was among the sharpest memories of the late Alton Terrell of Murfreesboro, a prominent old-timer born in 1914 (interviews, 1985-2002, notes in author's possession).

<sup>87</sup> As newspapers generally, the *Southern Standard* initially was wary of another possible diamond hoax such as those in recent decades, and at first the editors scarcely paid attention to the discovery in Pike County. Brief items about activities at the diamond field appeared occasionally after the find was validated in 1907, but without referring to John Huddleston ("News of Arkansas" column, p. 1; sometimes styled "Arkansas State News"). By late 1917, the family had gotten attention, perhaps mostly because of a popular "Miss Joe," the youngest daughter (death notice, below).

The popular picture post cards covered all sorts of subjects, providing a fairly comprehensive view of life in those times. At least one image of John Huddleston survived, an undated card showing a well dressed, middle-aged Discoverer sitting on a log ("Photographs," Lee J. Wagner collection, File 23-108, Crater archive).

<sup>88</sup> [Cross Reference 3](#). "Kimberley Opening," *Nashville News*, January 27, 1909, p. 4; Pike County, Deed Record R, 44, Warranty Deed, M. M. and Bettie Mauney to John W. Huddleston, January 22, 1909 (\$70 cash for Lot 1, Block 13); Record R, 45, WD (\$200 cash for Lot 21, Block 28).

The Huddlestons finally sold the remaining 44.85 acres of their home farm for \$2,300—a good return on the \$100 invested in 1889 (Pike, Deed Record 29, 629, Warranty Deed, to W. D. Fagan, et al., August 22, 1911; \$500 cash and balance in annual payments until January 1, 1915, at 8% interest [paid in full on February 19, 1917]). Before the discovery of diamonds, the Fagans paid \$60 for 4.4 acres of the farm (note above).

<sup>89</sup> Clark County Marriage Record Q, 37, Mary; Q, 298, Willie; Q, 379, Eunice. The marriage documents show Wallace's surname as "Wallis"; he signed "Wallace." Evans, p. 51, and other sources referred to him as "Will Wallace."

The *Southern Standard* mentioned only Eunice's marriage, including it in a brief listing ("Marriage Licenses," July 11, 1912, p. 1).

<sup>90</sup> "Local Brevities," *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, December 20, 1917, p. 5 ("Mrs. John Huddleston died at her home in this city yesterday morning of heart trouble."); "Miss Joe Huddleston Died," February 28, 1918, p. 1 (published on Thursday, indicating Joe May Huddleston died February 26 if "Tuesday night" was used precisely).

<sup>91</sup> [Cross Reference 4](#). Local Brevities, *Southern Standard*, March 14, 1918, p. 5 (Huddleston selling home to John Riggan; moving to Murfreesboro); Clark County, Deed Book 85, p. 411, WD, J. W. Huddleston to John M. and Emma Riggan, March 26, 1918 (the three acres); Pike County, Personal Tax Record 1918, p. 124, line 18 (entries included two wagons/carriages; a piano; \$75 in other household items [a high level for the area]; a firearm; \$500 in "monies, credits, and bank balances"; two horses; two mules; three cows; sixteen hogs; . . .; \$1,005 total valuations, very high for the area); Shiras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer" (comment about the home, where he interviewed Huddleston); Federal Census, 1920, Pike County, Thompson Township, household 15/15. The census-taker recorded three grandchildren living at the home: William Manley, 7; Myrtle Manley, 5; and Martha Manley, 4½. Delia, still with her father, evidently was mistaken for the mother of the children, and was listed as "Delia Manley, 24." Willie, then 24, was not listed (remarried soon after the census, to J. M. Goodlett, real-estate developer).

Sales of Clark County properties are listed in Cross Reference 1, above. In Pike County, a flurry of buying occurred in 1918-1919, with cash payments of over \$12,000 indicated by the

following deeds. Very few sales occurred in that period.

John Huddleston's Pike County purchases, 1918-1921 (between the return to Murfreesboro and his second marriage): Pike, Deed Record 30, p. 480, Warranty Deed, Z. A. and Amanda C. Copeland to J. W. H., October 24, 1918 (price of \$1,250, with \$800 cash paid and balance by January 1, 1919 [marginal notation: paid in full January 27, 1919], for total of 20 acres: 10 acres, S ½ of S ½ of NE ¼ of SW ¼ of Sec. 9-8-25, and 10 acres, S ½ of S ½ of NW ¼ of SE ¼ of 9-8-25); 34, p. 519, WD, G. T. and Eula Parker to J. W. Huddleston, June 3, 1918 (\$1,050 cash paid, for 40 acres, NW ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 16-8-25); 34, p. 537, WD, Chas. And Ina Parker to J. W. H., July 16, 1918 (\$300 cash paid, for a parcel 813' X 425' along Prairie Creek in NE ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 17-8-25); 34, p. 543, WD, Z. A. and Amanda Copeland to J. W. H., June 4, 1918 (\$4,000 cash paid, for total of 80 acres, SE ¼ of SW ¼ and NE ¼ of NW ¼ of Sec. 16-8-25); 34, p. 544, WD, Z. A. and Amanda C. Copeland to J. W. H., July 27, 1918 (\$1,346.20 cash paid, for 40 acres, SW ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec. 9-8-25); 37, p. 65, WD, J. E. and Mary Terrell to J. W. H., December 16, 1918 (\$370 cash paid, for 3.7 acres in NW ¼ of SW ¼ of Sec. 9-8-25); 37, p. 282, WD, R. N. and Ollie Alford to J. W. H., September 2, 1919 (\$400 cash paid, for Lots 901 and 903 on Washington St. and Lots 902 and 904 on School St., Kelly's Addition, Murfreesboro); 38, p. 105, WD, M. W. and Carrie Greeson to J. W. H., June 14, 1919 (\$700, with \$50 cash paid and balance in annual payments by January 1, 1925; for 6.7 acres, Tracts 24-26 of the Murfreesboro Heights Addition); 38, p. 219, Special Warranty Deed, R. W. and Ollie Alford to J. W. H., September 2, 1919 (\$2,000, with \$40 cash and the trade-in of a 1920 Maxwell automobile priced at \$1,095; a balance of \$865 due to Georgia State Savings Association, Savannah [Huddleston assumed a previous mortgage]; for Lot 805 on Conway St., Lot 806 on Washington St., and an adjacent 115' by 189' strip along the N sides of Lot 803 on Conway and Lot 804 on Washington); 39, 472, WD, J. R. and E. M. Johnson to J. W. H., March 27, 1919 (\$1,000 cash paid; for Lot 4, 46' X 54', in Block 18, original Murfreesboro); 47, p. 301, Warranty Deed with Lien, G. P. and M. E. Crawford to J. W. Huddleston, April 12, 1921 (\$2,200, with \$100 cash down, note for \$700 due by November 1, 1921, and note for \$1,400 by November 1, 1922; for 24.5 acres and 30.5 acres, W and E of Prairie Creek, partial SE ¼ of NE ¼ and partial NE ¼ of NE ¼, both in Sec. 8-8-25); 30, p. 595, WD, J. R. and E. M. Johnson to J. W. Huddleston, November 4, 1921 (\$500, with \$1 down, \$199 due in sixty days and the balance by November 1, 1922; for forty acres, SE ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 6-8-25).

Huddleston's Pike County Sales, 1918-1921: Deed Record 30, p. 481, WD, D. A. and I. A. Stell to J. W. H., November 8, 1918 (\$1,000, with \$20 cash paid and balance due by November 1, 1919 [marginal notation: full payment certified by Stell and County Clerk; no date indicated], for Lot 2, Block 5, original Murfreesboro); 30, p. 500, Warranty Deed, to W. O. Basham, March 31, 1919 (\$1,000, with \$250 cash down and \$250 annually on January 1 [marginal note: paid in full February 22, 1921]; Lots 2-3, Block 4 of Goodlett Addition, a part of NE ¼ of SW ¼ of Sec. 17-8-25); 30, p. 579, WD, to E. L. Dabney, April 4, 1921 (\$800, with \$600 cash down and \$100 annually for two years, due by April 4, 1923 [satisfied in full September 3, 1938]; 40 acres, NW ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 26-8-26); 30, p. 616, to Mary Wallace (Huddleston's daughter), December 28, 1921 (stated price of \$500, with \$165 cash down, 10% interest stated; for part of the E ½ of the SW ¼ of Section 8, a large lot on the north side of Murfreesboro); 43, p. 32, WD, to Lee J. Wagner (Huddleston's brother-in-law), May 26, 1921 (a stated price of \$1,500, with \$500 down and \$500 annually for two years; Lots 7-12, Block 3 of Goodlett Addition, Murfreesboro); 43, p. 45, WD, to Z. A.[E?] Copeland, November 3, 1921 ("not exceeding \$500," with \$5 cash "and exchange of other property" [unstated price was fully paid; exchanged property not specified]; Lot 10, Kelly Subdivision of Murfreesboro, a part of W ½ of SE ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25); 42, p. 469, Warranty Deed, to Delia Huddleston (his daughter), December 28, 1921 (stated price of \$500; large lot adjacent to that of Mary Wallace, above); 45, p. 505, WD, to Willie Goodlett (Huddleston's daughter), December 28, 1921 (stated \$500, with \$200 cash down and balance by January 1923, at 10%; for part of the E ½ of SW ¼ of Section 8, a large lot adjacent to that of Delia, above); "lost" deed, Huddleston to Eunice Gentry (Huddleston's daughter), "about"

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December 28, 1921, replacement by Record 55, p. 506, Quit Claim Deed, J. W. Huddleston to M. C. Barton, November 18, 1936 (no price stated, for Lots 805 and 806, Kelly Addition).

<sup>92</sup> Fletcher Chenault, "Pike County Destined to Become a Great Golconda," *Arkansas Gazette*, October 4, 1920, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> Quotation from confidential credit report by Pike County Bank, cited in Credit Department, Republic Paint & Lead Works, Cleveland, Ohio, letter to J. W. Huddleston, Murfreesboro, Arkansas, March 11, 1919, Plaintiff's Exhibit C, Pike County Circuit Court, Civil, *David Bernstein v. J. W. Huddleston*, August 31, 1920, No. 406, case packet in file drawer 129, third-floor storage room, Circuit Clerk's office, Pike County Courthouse.

As illustrated in this case and in others cited below, Pinnix remained one of Huddleston's principal lawyers as well as his chief financial manager.

<sup>94</sup> Credit Department to Huddleston, *Bernstein v. Huddleston*. The letter referred to an "Account of Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>."

<sup>95</sup> The case packet for *Bernstein v. Huddleston* contains affidavits and other relevant documents, beginning with the company's letters to Huddleston and his lawyers. The company's Complaint at Law filed in Circuit Court on September 11, 1920, included affidavits of the Justice of the Peace and others. Supreme Court of Arkansas, *Huddleston v. Bernstein*, Opinion, March 7, 1921, 148 Arkansas 1 1921 [Vol. 148, p. 1 of *Arkansas Reports*], provides a basic summary of previous actions, including the testimony of Huddleston and the renter.

<sup>96</sup> Supreme Court, Opinion; Circuit, Judgment, No. 406, case packet.

<sup>97</sup> Appeal from Circuit Court, October 9, 1920, case packet; Supreme Court, Opinion; Order for new trial, May 26, 1921, in case packet, No. 406. Huddleston's Motion for New Trial had listed eleven court errors (Circuit, September 25, 1920, case packet).

<sup>98</sup> Circuit Record, Civil, D, 41, *David Bernstein v. J. W. Huddleston*, Judgment, September 28, 1921, No. 406; D, 44, Motion and Granting of Appeal, September 29, 1921; full documentation, case packet. The case file ended with the granting of appeal.

<sup>99</sup> Quotations from Supreme Court of Arkansas, *Huddleston v. Steuart*, Opinion—Statement of Facts, April 24, 1922, 153 Arkansas 270 1922; also, Pike County Circuit Court, Civil, *R. M. Steuart v. John W. Huddleston*, Complaint, April 28, 1921, case No. 428, case packet in file drawer 130, Clerk's Office, third-floor storage, Pike County Courthouse; Answer and Cross Complaint, June 13, 1921; Answer to Cross, no date; Amendment to Answer, September 22, 1921; and other related filings, No. 428, case packet.

<sup>100</sup> *Steuart v. Huddleston*, Cross Complaint and Answer to Cross, No. 428. Many witnesses were summoned for the Circuit trial, but their court testimony is not reflected in the case packet. The basic Circuit proceedings, including testimonies of Steuart and Huddleston, are summarized in the Supreme Court's Opinion:

Huddleston's testimony: "Steuart followed him into Ballard's store . . . and tapped him on the back with his open hand and asked him why he had not spoken to him before he came into the store. Huddleston has passed Steuart just before he entered the store. Previous to that time Steuart had threatened to sue Huddleston for slander . . . They had some words about this in Ballard's store, and Huddleston told

Steuart not to get it into his head that he was afraid of him. Huddleston told Steuart, however, that he did not want any trouble with him, and then went back into the store and put both hands upon the counter. As he was standing there looking down towards the floor, Steuart hit him above the right eye with his right fist and knocked him senseless. Huddleston went down on his hands and knees and tried to get up. Steuart knocked Huddleston to his knees the second time and then kicked him in the left side. Huddleston was going on a trip to a distant part of the county when he encountered Steuart, and had a pistol. He did not at any time attempt to use the pistol on Steuart or to hurt him in any other way. Huddleston was badly hurt by the blow he received from Steuart. Huddleston was about 59 years old and weighed about 156 pounds. Steuart was 35 years old, and was a very stout able-bodied young man.” (Opinion, 271.)

Steuart’s testimony: “. . . he went into Ballard’s store to talk to Huddleston about the slander case he anticipated bringing against him. During the course of their conversation Steuart saw the pistol which Huddleston was carrying, and Huddleston became angry and attempted to draw his pistol and shoot Steuart. Steuart then struck him with his fist and knocked him down on a bench. He did not strike Huddleston except to keep him from shooting him. Steuart did not make any attempt to jump on Huddleston or to kick him. About twenty years before that time Steuart’s father had gotten drunk and tried to fight him. Steuart pushed his father away, and did not strike him at all.” (271-272.)

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Supreme Court, Opinion, 275.

<sup>102</sup> *Steuart v. Huddleston*, Judgment, September Term, 1921, No. 428.

<sup>103</sup> *Huddleston v. Steuart*, Opinion: “A specific objection was made to this instruction on the ground that the plaintiff [Steuart in Circuit Court] must have acted without fault or carelessness on his part before he could invoke the doctrine of self-defense. In this contention we think counsel are [sic] correct. It is true that the defendant’s standpoint is the proper one from which to view the imminency of the danger, but such belief on the part of the defendant [Steuart in the appeal] must be an honest belief, and not due to his own negligence. Mere honesty, however, is not in itself sufficient. The defendant must be free from fault or carelessness. If his belief is due to his own negligence, his honesty is not sufficient to justify the assault as having been done in self-defense.” (275-276.)

<sup>104</sup> Circuit Record, Civil, D, 85, *R. M. Steuart v. John W. Huddleston*, Motion of Defendant and Order of Continuance, September 21, 1922, No. 428; D, 85, Stay of Execution, May 21, 1923 (Surety Bond and agreement that Huddleston would pay \$280 plus interest to Steuart or to the court within six months, “being the costs adjudged against the defendant” in case No. 428).

In a third, minor case in Circuit Court, Huddleston was awarded \$22.50: Record, Civil, C, 538, *J. W. Huddleston v. S. R. Graham*, Order, March 18, 1920, case No. 311½. The case packet is missing and the court record failed to clarify details. Information in *Bernstein v. Huddleston* indicates Graham lived in a rental property that Huddleston owned.

<sup>105</sup> Pike County, Personal Assessment 1920, p. 102 (total valuation of personal property was \$665, a comfortable level for Pike County); Pike, Deed Record 38, p. 219, Special Warranty Deed, Huddleston to Alford, September 2, 1919 (see details in Pike County purchases, Cross Reference 4, above).

<sup>106</sup> Aside from one known diamond sale in February 1921, Huddleston depended upon savings, rent payments, and occasional property sales for income. A promoter from California, “Mr. Ziff,” reportedly purchased a one-carat diamond from him (“Purchase Diamond Mine from Riley Family,” *Pike County Courier*, February 4, 1921, p. 1). Personal property assessments usually reflected some savings after the return from Arkadelphia; e.g., Personal Tax Record, 1918, p.



124, (\$500 in the column for monies, credits, and bank balances) and Personal Assessment, 1921, p. 101 (\$600). Only the Personal Assessment Record is available for the years after 1918.

For the full context of rising optimism and speculation around Murfreesboro, 1919-1925, see Banks, Diamonds, "Arkansas Diamond Corporation." Real-estate appreciation in the Murfreesboro area had continued since the virtual exhaustion of public lands in the late 1800s. The Huddleston's had benefited from the trend before the discovery of diamonds in late 1906; and after that event, property values soared for several years. After the initial speculative mania ended about 1910, diamonds, timber, and various other valuable minerals maintained appreciation through the war period. The general post-war optimism was boosted considerably by a well-financed and highly-publicized major test of the main diamond field in 1919-1922; then continuing operations on a smaller scale helped maintain the attitude. Murfreesboro's position as county seat of course strengthened appreciation on the north and south sides of town, where new additions were promoted and where John Huddleston concentrated his investments.

<sup>107</sup> Deed Record 47, p. 301, Crawfords to Huddleston, April 12, 1921; 30, p. 595, Johnsons to Huddleston, November 4, 1921 (details in Pike County Purchases, Cross Reference 4, above).

<sup>108</sup> Millar, Finders-Keepers, 19 (quotation). Millar's brief story about an anonymous young bride is obviously flawed. To create a logical tale, he has Sarah dying before Huddleston and the daughters moved to Arkadelphia, where Huddleston supposedly met Lizzie, married her, and at some point took her back to Pike County.

<sup>109</sup> Pike County, Marriage Record F, 311. In his marriage affidavit, Huddleston declared he was fifty-nine. In those days it was common for men to marry women considerably younger or older than themselves (e.g., John's grandfather David Huddleston, noted above); but in this case the age gap was extreme by any standard. Whether Lizzie Curtis was a bit older or younger than her given age, 19, is not known. The census for Pike City, 1900-1920, offers no information about her.

<sup>110</sup> These spousal property rights, as defined by state law, lasted a lifetime unless signed away. Just as wives gained rights of dower and homestead, husbands gained "curtesy interest" in properties owned by their wives. In either case, the new spouse gained the right to sign deeds and mortgages or refuse to do so.

<sup>111</sup> [Cross Reference 5](#). Shiras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer" (comment on Huddleston's character); Pike, Deed Record 30, p. 616, J. W. Huddleston to Mary Wallace, December 28, 1921, filed June 1, 1923 (stated price of \$500, with \$165 cash down [marginal note: paid in full August 10, 1940]; for a lot on the north side of Murfreesboro, 195.8' X 73.75', part of the E ½ of the SW ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25 [in Kelly's Addition, plat in Pike County Map Book A, 6]); 42, p. 469, Warranty Deed, to Delia Huddleston, December 28, 1921, filed September 5, 1923 (stated price of \$500 cash; large lot adjacent to that of Mary Wallace, above); 43, p. 32, to Lee J. Wagner, Harriet's husband, May 26, 1921 (stated price of \$1,500, with \$500 cash down and \$500 annually for two years at 10%; for all of Lots 7-12, Block 3 of Goodlett Addition, south side of Murfreesboro [see Pike County Map Book A, 2-3]); 45, p. 505, WD, to Willie Goodlett, December 28, 1921, filed September 24, 1924 (stated \$500, with \$200 cash down and balance by January 1923, at 10%; for a large lot adjacent to that of Delia; part of the E ½ of SW ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25 [Kelly's Addition]); "Lost" deed, Huddleston to Eunice Gentry, "about" December 28, 1921, replaced by Record 55, p. 506, Quit Claim Deed, Huddleston to M. C. Barton, November 18, 1936 (no price stated; for Lots 805 and 806, Kelly Addition).

Although Lee Wagner was prospering in 1921 as a principal employee of the Arkansas

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Diamond Company, it is unlikely he and Harriett had to pay \$1,500 for the lots.

Other transfers from Huddleston to daughter Willie Goodlett occurred later: Record 42, p. 488, WD, September 23, 1924, filed the next day (\$400 cash, for Lots 901 and 903 on Washington St. and Lots 902 and 904 on School St., in Kelley Addition); 42, p. 495, WD, June 17, 1925, filed same day (stated \$700 cash price, for tracts 24-26 in Murfreesboro Heights Addition, north side of town, about 2.2 acres each, total 6.77 acres [see Pike County Map Book A, Heights Addition, p. 5]). Most of these properties were lost soon afterwards in law suits (Chancery Court cases below; also Record 1, p. 102, Notice of Les Pendens [notice filed on public records as a warning that the title to properties are in litigation and possibly subject to adverse judgment], *G. P. Crawford, et al. v. John W. Huddleston and Willie Goodlett*, relating to Deed Record 42, pp. 488, 495, and affecting Lots 902 and 904 on School St. in Kelly's Addition and tracts 24-26 [6.77 acres] in Murfreesboro Heights Addition; the plaintiff sued to take title from Goodlett or be awarded \$699.30).

Also see Record 45, p. 504, "Wife's Deed, with Lien," J. M. and Willie Goodlett to J. W. H., September 23, 1924 (a stated \$535, with \$400 cash paid and balance within one year; for the lot by Delia's, 195.8' X 73.75' in E ½ of SW ¼ of Sec. 8-8-25, Kelley's Addition); 56, p. 277, WD, J. W. Huddleston to S. J. Thomasson, December 3, 1937 (for a large lot formerly deeded to Willie Goodlett on September 23, 1924, and deeded back to Huddleston that same date "by Willie Goodlett, my daughter"); and 58, p. 330, WD, J. W. Huddleston and Mary Wallace McKinnon to J. L. Anderson, May 8, 1940. This final deed conveyed the lot that Huddleston previously transferred to daughter Mary Wallace on December 28, 1921. The deed said Mary had failed to pay off the note. Therefore, John Huddleston and Mary Wallace McKinnon (remarried to W. P. McKinnon) clarified the matter and both signed a deed to Anderson. Notice that the previous deed to Mary Wallace was not filed until June 1, 1923—when default suits against John Huddleston loomed (details follow). The "lost deed" to Eunice Gentry (above) was never filed.

<sup>112</sup> See Cross Reference 5, above, especially the last paragraph.

<sup>113</sup> Pike, Chancery Court Record E, 41, Decree, *John W. Huddleston vs. Lizzie Huddleston*, June 30, 1924, No. 1335. The plaintiff stated that Lizzie had left Arkansas. As required, the court appointed a local attorney to represent the defendant, who failed to respond to public notices.

In cases such as this, where virtually all the testimony came from the plaintiff and witnesses favorable to the plaintiff, there could have been a tendency to excoriate the defendant more harshly than deserved. Lizzie's side of the story, if ever told, might shift more responsibility to John Huddleston. Yet, the basic conclusions about this relationship appear valid.

<sup>114</sup> Lizzie's loss of financial responsibility was reaffirmed in lawsuits over various properties after the divorce (Chancery cases below).

<sup>115</sup> [Cross Reference 6](#). After his bride deserted the first time, Huddleston's business behavior changed dramatically. He became distracted and negligent. In May 1922, the owner of a general store, Eli Clevenger, finally lost patience and sued for an overdue balance of \$50.61. When Huddleston failed to answer the summons, the J. P. Court awarded Clevenger that amount plus costs of \$3.15, with 6% interest until paid. Then Huddleston appealed to Circuit Court, but later filed for dismissal, apparently after settling with Clevenger (Circuit, Civil, *Eli Clevenger v. J. W. Huddleston*, May 22, 1922, No. 425½, case packet in file drawer 136, third-floor storage room, Circuit Clerk's office, Pike County Courthouse; Circuit Record, Civil, D, 76, Order to continue case, *Clevenger v. Huddleston*, September 19, 1922, No. 425½; D, 95, "Dismissed in Vacation," by J. W. Huddleston).

Similarly, those holding overdue real-estate notes in 1922 had to file suit and force the

properties into public auction, and again Huddleston failed to respond to the complaints. The properties involved: Pike, Deed Record 38, p. 105, M. W. and Carrie Greeson; Record 30, p. 595, J. R. and E. M. Johnson; Record 47, p. 301, G. P. and M. E. Crawford (see the detailed entries in Huddleston's Pike County Purchases, Cross Reference 4, above). The following provide basic details about the law suits and judgments (for further coverage, see index *H* at the front of Chancery Court Records D and E, and other Chancery case packets on the third floor of the Pike County Courthouse):

Circuit, Civil, Complaint, *Geo. P. Crawford and J. M. Crawford v. John W. Huddleston*, April 24, 1922, No. 462; Judgment, March 24, 1923, case No. 462; Receipt (by court clerk for payment by J. W. Huddleston), February 26, 1923, No. 462, case packet in file drawer 132, third floor, Courthouse. Also, Circuit Record, Civil, D, 74, Judgment, September 19, 1922, No. 462. Initially, the court awarded the Crawfords \$800 plus costs, with 10% interest until paid. Huddleston paid the court clerk \$845.16.

Chancery Court Record D, 459, Decree, *James G. Clark v. J. W. Huddleston*, November 13, 1922, No. 1244. M. W. Greeson had transferred Huddleston's promissory notes to Clark, whose request for a judgment of \$573 was granted (the case packet for *Crawford v. Huddleston*, No. 462, above, includes a deposit slip from Pike County Bank to the Circuit Court Clerk, March 2, 1923, showing a total "Huddleston Judgment" of \$619.61 for Clark). The properties involved, Tracts 24-26 in the Heights Addition, Murfreesboro, were later sold at auction.

Chancery Record E, 25, "Order Approving Report and Confirming Sale of Commissioner," *J. R. Johnson vs. J. W. Huddleston*, November 13, 1924, No. 1281. A \$500 note, for 40 acres in Section 6-8-25, had been due November 1922; the Court appointed the Commissioner one year later, to handle the public auction.

<sup>116</sup> Pike, Mortgage Record 15, p. 542, Deed of Trust, J. W. and Lizzie Huddleston to Duncan McRae, Guardian for the Bemis Estate, February 26, 1923 (three tracts near Murfreesboro totaling about fifty-five acres, security for a \$2,500 loan at 8% interest, payment due October 26, 1924); Pike, Mortgage Record 14, p. 499, Mortgage, J. W. and Lizzie Huddleston to S. J. Jackson, March 12, 1923 (six lots in Kelly Addition, north Murfreesboro, security for \$1,050 loan at 10%); 14, p. 501, Mortgage, Huddlestons to L. E. Howard, March 19, 1923 (part of Lot 4, Block 18 in Murfreesboro and two parcels in Kelly Addition, security for \$400 loan at 10%, with payment within one year).

<sup>117</sup> According to a simple story the old-timers tell around Murfreesboro, Lizzie "got all of Huddleston's money" and took off at some point in an automobile, never to be seen again. Generally, they echo Howard Millar's brief version of the affair: Huddleston "bought her a Model T Ford coupe. She would drive it around the Murfreesboro square in the evenings, with John as a delighted passenger. The story was told later that on one of these evening tours John got out of the car to go buy a cigar. While on this errand, his wife headed the Model T westward out of town and kept going. She, however, wasn't the only person who picked him when he was ready for the harvesting." (*Finders-Keepers*, 19-20.)

Of course, Lizzie got only part of Huddleston's money—some of the cash available from loans and other sources was used to pay debts he incurred on his own. Settlement of court judgments in 1923 total \$1,744.77 if the award for Steuart's legal costs is included (compared with the total of \$3,950 the couple borrowed early that year), and the undisclosed settlement of the Huddleston-Steuart affair might have added considerably to the amount paid out. Still, the sequence of loans and debt payments, together with Huddleston's other cash reserves, indicates the incoming money was spent largely to placate a young wife: February 26, 1923, loan of \$2,500 from the Bemis Estate and payment of \$845.16 to Crawford; March 2, 1923, \$619.61 deposited to Clark; March 3, 1923, \$1,050 borrowed from Jackson; March 19, 1923, \$400 loan from Howard; and May 21, 1923, \$280 costs awarded to Steuart. When Lizzie Huddleston departed for good in early August 1923, she evidently left her husband with very little cash on hand (see additional court cases below).

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As for the story about the Model T, the personal-tax records indicate Huddleston owned one moderately priced vehicle both before the marriage and in 1922 and then two cheaper vehicles in 1924 (Pike, Personal Assessment 1920, p. 102 [one auto, \$350 valuation]; 1921, p. 101 [one, \$100]; 1922, p. 108 [one, \$200]; 1924, p. 109 [two, total of \$150].) The personal-property tax records for 1923 (and 1925-1929) are missing from the collection at PCAHS.

<sup>118</sup> See details in Cross Reference 6, above.

<sup>119</sup> Huddleston bought the 40 acres in Section 6-8-25 on February 9, 1924, for \$645.80, and defaulted before receiving title. In a second auction on April 30, 1924, Johnson bought the 40 acres for \$300, leaving Huddleston owing the balance of the original judgment (details in Chancery, Record E, 26, 27, Order . . ., *Johnson vs. Huddleston*, November 13, 1924, No. 1281).

<sup>120</sup> [Cross Reference 7](#). Chancery E, 75, Decree, *L. E. Howard vs. J. W. Huddleston*, November 11, 1924, case No. 1341 (seeking to recover the money he had loaned John and Lizzie Huddleston the previous year, Howard was awarded the \$400 plus \$65.76 interest from March 19, 1923; Huddleston chose not to contest the suit); E, 86-88, Decree, George W. Neal, Commissioner, *G. P. Crawford, and J. W. Crawford vs. John W. Huddleston, et al.*, November 11, 1924, No. 1342 (with five local men signing the standard surety bond, Huddleston had bid \$1,784.80 at public auction, buying tracts of 24½ acres and 6 acres by Prairie Creek immediately north of Murfreesboro in Section 8; he defaulted and chose not to contest the suit; plaintiffs were awarded \$2,049.39); E, 124, Report of Sale, March 5, 1925, and E, 131, Order Approving Sale, May 11, 1925, No. 1342 (the property was auctioned for \$1,000 on December 20, 1924, leaving defendants to pay the balance of the \$2,049.39 award); E, 142, Decree, *Thomas C. McRae, Guardian of Bemis Heirs, vs. John W. Huddleston, et al.*, May 11, 1925, No. 1377 (In May 1925 the Guardian for the Bemis Estate, Thomas C. McRae, filed against the Huddlestons and several men involved peripherally with the mortgaged properties, in order to collect the \$2,500 and interest; but the court excluded all except John Huddleston, who was given a week to pay an award of \$2,954.60 and avoid public auction [if the proceeds at auction were insufficient, Huddleston would have had to pay the difference]; he chose not to respond to the suit, and J. C. Pinnix bid \$3,056—enough to cover the judgment and related expenses); E, 155, “Order and Report of Sale” and Order Approving Sale, June 13, 1925, No. 1377 (concerning J. C. Pinnix’ payment of \$2,954.60 for 12½ acres in Section 8, 40 acres in Section 9, and a small parcel in Sections 16-17, all in growth areas around Murfreesboro); E, 232, 261, Decree, *H. L. Jackson for Heirs of S. E. Jackson vs. J. W. Huddleston, J. M. Crawford, and G. P. Crawford*, November 9, 1926, No. 1428 (on March 3, 1923, Huddleston signed a promissory note for \$1,050, at 10% interest, and gave a first mortgage on three lots and a small strip of land; the court awarded Jackson \$1,549.18; the Crawfords had already gotten a judgment against Huddleston on July 8, 1925, for defaulting on one of the lots and had bought that lot at public auction; the court ruled that the remaining three parcels were to be auctioned to satisfy plaintiff Jackson and that the Crawford’s lot would be auctioned only if needed to accomplish that goal); E, 277-279, Report of Sale, Order Approving Sale, Report of Sale, and Order Approving Sale, January 11, 1927, No. 1428 (H. L. and T. T. Jackson got the first lot for \$901.89 and Kenneth Lockeby and Pearl Brock paid \$705 for two parcels—enough to pay the judgment and fees, thereby leaving Huddleston with no debt in this case).

<sup>121</sup> [Cross Reference 8](#). See details in *Thomas C. McRae, Guardian of Bemis Heirs, vs. John W. Huddleston, et al.*, Cross Reference 7, above. It was not unusual for Pinnix to salvage someone’s property in this manner, but ordinarily the Pike County Bank financed the purchase and made an arrangement with the person involved (for example, see the Mauney case that began shortly before this one, in Banks, *Diamonds*, “Northeast Slope—Mauneys—1920s”). Although the

arrangement between Huddleston and Pinnix remains unclear, Pinnix filed his deed to the auctioned property and probably signed and notarized a deed to Huddleston but held it pending a settlement. Huddleston continued paying the property taxes (Pike County, Real Estate Tax Book, 1925-1933).

For perspective, compare John Huddleston's real-estate tax payments for 1927 and 1930 with the quit-claim deed to J. C. Pinnix below (Cross Reference 10). These are the entries for Township 8 S, Range 25 W in Pike County Real Estate Tax Book 1930, pp. 181-182: J. W. Huddleston, payment for 11 acres in SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 8-8-25; 50 acres in E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 9-8-25; 3.7 acres in NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 9; 40 acres, SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 9; 50 acres, Part of W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 9; 14 acres, Part of E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 17-8-25. Entries in Tax Book 1927, pp. 177, 180, match those of 1930 except for two additional properties Huddleston held in '27: 1.5 acres, Part of E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 8, at the northeast corner of Murfreesboro, and 40 acres, NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , "Section 14" (should be Sec. 16?). Tax Book 1927 lists virtually the same properties outside of original Murfreesboro as the Book for 1925, pp. 174-178, and 1926, pp. 182-187.

<sup>122</sup> [Cross Reference 9](#). Other cross-reference notes above and below include details about properties outside of original Murfreesboro. The transfer to Huddleston's daughter occurred immediately after Pinnix acted (Deed Record 42, 495, Warranty Deed, John W. Huddleston to Willie Goodlett, June 17, 1925). That land, however, was part of the properties contested in court, and she lost them in 1927 (Real Estate Tax Book 1927, p. 320). In 1926, Huddleston himself still paid taxes on six properties in town and in adjacent additions, but he lost three of those with the conclusion of *Jackson v. Huddleston* in January 1927 (court action, Cross Reference 7, above; Real Estate Tax Book 1926, "Lots," pp. 302, 304, 310-312). For this general trend involving properties in town, compare [Tax Book 1926](#), p. 304; [1927](#), pp. 302, 308 (now Huddleston had only two taxed lots: the home place at the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Lot 4, Block 18 of Survey/Addition 6 [Kelly's], and part of SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 8-8-25, in Survey/Addition 6); [1928](#), pp. 304, 310; [1929](#), p. 310, 316; [1930](#), p. 310 (now only an entry for the home place on Kelly Street, north of the courthouse). The Tax Books 1931-1940 reflect no further change before Huddleston's death (Book 1939-1940, "Town Lots," no page number, tax receipt 3387, listed the same SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Lot 4, Block 18, \$400 valuation).

<sup>123</sup> Shiras, "Diamond Discoverer" p. 1 (details in Bibliographic Note 4). Although Shiras failed to clarify the exact date of the visit, he said Huddleston was sixty-three years old at the time. The trip to the diamond field and the comment about the fireplace suggests he met Huddleston in late fall or early spring. Considering Huddleston's habit of using differing birthdates and ages, sixty-three is an unreliable indicator. Perhaps the visit was prompted by news of the Uncle Sam Diamond, a record-setting beauty (40.23 carats in the rough) found at the main diamond field in the summer of 1924. An initial article that Shiras published in the *Arkansas Gazette* "a few years" after the interview mentioned the 40-carat find while using only a few bits of the story gotten in Murfreesboro (Shiras, "Ozark and Ouachita Mountains").

<sup>124</sup> "Diamond Discoverer," p. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Shiras included the photograph in his later article about the interview ("Diamond Discoverer"). While at the diamond field he also took a photograph of Huddleston standing and looking solemnly into the camera (Lee J. Wagner Collection, Photographs, File 23.100, Crater archive). Lee Wagner's records also include a copy of the photograph of Huddleston kneeling and pointing (File 23.80). That copy was used for the illustration in Wood, "35 Acres of Diamonds," 62 (Wood credited the photo to Mrs. Solon W. House, Lee Wagner's daughter). Bibliographic Note 4, above, summarizes Huddleston's account of the discovery during the



interview.

Compare Shiras' comment about the photograph with the later statement of Howard A. Millar, who said "a newspaper" once asked him for an article and photograph about the finding of the first diamonds in Arkansas. He and Huddleston "went to his old farm," Millar said. "There he took me to a spot which he identified as the place . . . where he found the diamonds. I took his photograph, which I still have." (*Finders-Keepers*, pp. 20-21.) Millar's collection in the Crater of Diamonds archive has a copy of the photograph Shiras published with his earlier profile, showing Huddleston kneeling and pointing.

<sup>126</sup> An unidentified photographer produced a good record of one visit, apparently c. 1930: Wagner Collection, Photographs, Files 23.3, 23.56, 23.66, and 23.101, Crater archive (descriptions in Bibliographic Note 1, above). Banks, *Diamonds*, "ADC and the Arkansas Diamond Corporation," provides context.

<sup>127</sup> "Radio Broadcast on Diamond Mines," *Courier*, July 17, 1931, p. 1. According to a later tale, the Pike County Bank had redeemed the two diamonds after Huddleston pawned them (below, Bibliographic Note 5). It is more likely J. C. Pinnix, President of the bank, got them from Huddleston at some point—if indeed they were the original diamonds.

<sup>128</sup> For perspective, see the Indirect or Direct Index to deeds, entries for "State," "forfeited," and others involved. Tax records and the index in the Pike County Chancery Court Record are other convenient sources (in the Court Record, see especially "Commissioner's Report of Sale" and "Homeowner's Loan"). The annual delinquent-tax list in the *Pike County Courier* expanded considerably in 1931 ("Delinquent Real Estate List," June 5, 1931, oversize pages following p. 2). Compare with "Notice of Lands Delinquent for Non-Payment of Taxes," *Courier*, October 30, 1936, following p. 2.

Howard A. Millar and his father, Austin Q. Millar, were among those losing properties early in the '30s (Banks, *Diamonds*, "The Northeast Slope—The Millars"). Howard Millar, who later popularized the tales about Huddleston, managed to scrape up funds to recover their properties after the State auctions (original owners had two years to redeem auctioned real estate, by paying back-taxes, costs, penalties, and 10% interest).

<sup>129</sup> [Cross Reference 10](#). Deed Record 53, p. 381, Quit Claim Deed, J. W. Huddleston to J. C. Pinnix, May 29, 1933, filed February 19, 1934 ("\$1" for eight tracts totaling 250.5 acres: 12.5 acres by Prairie Creek in the E ½ of the SE ¼ of Section 8-8-25, immediately north of original Murfreesboro; 80 acres, S ½ of SW ¼ of Sec. 9-8-25, immediately north-northeast of Murfreesboro; 40 acres, SW ¼ of SE ¼ of 9-8-25; 10 acres in S ½ of S ½ of NW ¼ of SE ¼ of 9-8-25; 10 acres in S ½ of S ½ of NE ¼ of SW ¼ of 9-8-25; 4 acres in NW ¼ of SW ¼; 80 acres by Prairie Creek, in N ½ of NW ¼ of Sec. 16-8-25, immediately east-northeast of Murfreesboro; and 14 acres by Prairie Creek in NE ¼ of NE ¼ of Sec. 17-8-25, at the north edge of Murfreesboro); Real Estate Tax Book, 1934, Town Lots, p. 305.

Compare this summary with the few properties Pinnix bought at public auction in 1925: *Thomas C. McRae, Guardian of Bemis Heirs, vs. John W. Huddleston, et al.*, May 11, 1925, Cross Reference 7, above. The disparity is not explained by available records. Pinnix and Huddleston's private arrangement clouded those details.

Huddleston also held the deed to a large lot formerly deeded to daughter Willie Goodlett on September 23, 1924, and deeded back to him that same date, as explained in Deed Record 56, p. 277, WD, J. W. Huddleston to S. J. Thomasson, December 3, 1937. Evidently, she kept paying the taxes during the Depression—after 1929, Huddleston paid only for his home on Kelly Street (SE ¼ of Lot 4, Block 18, Kelly's Addition).



<sup>130</sup> [Cross Reference 11](#). Huddleston to Dabney, April 4, 1921 (Pike County sales, Cross Reference 4, above; a marginal notation indicates payment in full September 3, 1938); Deed Record 58, p. 330, WD, J. W. Huddleston and Mary Wallace McKinnon to J. L. Anderson, May 8, 1940. This final deed conveyed the lot that Huddleston previously transferred to daughter Mary Wallace on December 28, 1921. The deed acknowledged Mary had never pay off the note. Therefore, John Huddleston and Mary Wallace McKinnon (remarried to W. P. McKinnon) clarified the matter and both signed a deed to Anderson.

According to tax records, Sam Davis paid the taxes on Dabney's forty acres in the 1920s and '30s (e.g., Real Estate Tax Book 1926, p. 252; 1938, p. 256).

<sup>131</sup> Pike County, Mortgage Record 25, 446c, "Order of Approval and Old Age Pension Certificate," No. 8423, to John Wesley Huddleston, \$10 monthly beginning October 1, 1936 (for some reason, the forms were placed in the mortgage records, towards the end of the volume).

<sup>132</sup> Interviews of Homer Davis, Murfreesboro, 1988-2003, notes in author's possession; quote from February 1, 1903. Davis, born in 1927, lived close to Huddleston's house on Kelly Street. Alton Terrell and other old-timers also recalled John Huddleston in those days.

<sup>133</sup> The Personal Tax record for 1936, p. 77, lists one J. W. Huddleston (one horse, 20 cattle, 2 hogs, \$10 in household items; total valuation, \$155). This was for John Wesley Huddleston, not his cousin Jasper Wooten (above, Bibliographic Note 3). Unlike real-estate taxes, unpaid personal-property tax assessments often were ignored during the Great Depression, and the record for J. W. Huddleston fit that pattern, especially in the late '30s. (Personal Assessment Tax Book 1937-1941, PCAHS).

North of Murfreesboro, where thin rocky soil replaces the bottomland of the Little Missouri River, farmers had a difficult time scratching out a living, as did those in the hills southeast of town. Settled along the river plain, the Huddleston family group could maintain at least subsistence farming. Both those living thorough the Depression and those remembering stories about their parents' experience still draw this distinction.

<sup>134</sup> *Literary Digest*, November 14, 1936, p. 10.

<sup>135</sup> Conversations with Flaherty, 1988-2006, notes in author's possession; quote from re-phrasing on January 18, 1906. Flaherty was born March 28, 1927.

<sup>136</sup> See the allusion to a hangover in Moreland, "Rambling in Arkansas," a story based upon a tale by Huddleston's brother-in-law Lee Wagner (Bibliographic Note 4, above). The only clear reference to drinking or drunkenness was the unsupported allegation by the railroad company in *Huddleston v. St. Louis, Iron Mountain, & Southern Railway Co.*, 1909 (case discussed above).

<sup>137</sup> Alton Terrell's phrasing during one his last recorded conversations with the author, September 4, 2002, notes in author's possession. Alton Terrell's father, Alma P. (A. P.) Terrell, married a daughter of Lewis Fielding (L. F.) Huddleston, Rosina. L. F. was the son of the pioneer Lewis Huddleston, the brother of David. David's son David Fielding (D. F.) Huddleston—the father of Diamond John—was Rosina's uncle.

The relationship between the Huddlestons and the Terrells extended back to 1853. Upon Sheriff Lewis Huddleston's untimely death in March of that year, reportedly by poisoning, his young children were taken in by families in Murfreesboro. Lewis Fielding was raised by Dr. G. R. Mauney, whose great-granddaughter Alice married Alton Terrell (Census, 1860, Pike County, Thompson Township, Dwelling/Family 54/54; Alton Terrell; Evans, "Fielding Huddleston and

Descendants," Introduction).

<sup>138</sup> The story as told by Harold Fugitt, Murfreesboro, conversations with the author, 1986-2006, notes in author's possession. Compare with anecdotes below, in Domer Howard, "Diamond Mines of Arkansas"; Millar, *Finders-Keepers*, 27; and Siras, "Discoverer."

<sup>139</sup> H. E. Wheeler, "Diamonds in Arkansas," *Hobbies, The Magazine for Collectors*, 51 (May 1946), 118 (quotation), reprinted from "a recent article in the official organ of the Arkansas Mineralogical Society"; obituaries below. Wheeler said he knew the "unlettered but inquiring native who . . . sold his rocky acres for \$36,000, enabling him to pay off his mortgages and insure an easy-going life at least for a few years."

<sup>140</sup> "Discoverer of Diamonds in Arkansas Dies," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 13, 1941, p. 2; "Discoverer of Diamond Field Buried Today," *Arkansas Democrat*, November 13, 1941, p. 14; "John W. Huddleston," *Pike County Courier*, November 14, 1941, p. 1; "John W. Huddleston," *Nashville News*, November 14, 1941, p. 1.

Huddleston's survivors included four daughters: Delia A. Harrison of Murfreesboro, Mary McKinnon and Willie Goodlett of Corpus Christi, Texas, and Eunice Gentry of El Dorado, Arkansas. Also a brother, Drew Huddleston of Murfreesboro (Highland); a sister, Harriett Wagner; and half-sisters Markia Harris of Murfreesboro and Mollie Hatch of El Dorado. (Obituary.) Although the writer of the obituary declared Huddleston 84 years of age, the evidence indicates he was born in 1862. John Huddleston, himself, usually misstated his age; but this is the greatest overstatement in the records.

The scarcity of regular headstones at the original Huddleston site in Japany Cemetery remains unexplained—it cannot be attributed to poverty or merely to the time and place of death. With this study as background, it is interesting to read Georgia Evans' detailed genealogy, "Fielding Huddleston and Descendants," and then visit the gravesite. Even Sarah and Joe May Huddleston's burial places are uncertain, although a small flat stone is embedded in the ground beside John Huddleston's grave, and there are other spaces around it.

Huddleston's old friend and benefactor J. C. Pinnix outlived him by eight and one-half months ("J. C. Pinnix Dies at Murfreesboro," *Arkansas Gazette*, July 27, 1942, p. 5). Pinnix was 79, about the same age as Huddleston when he died.

<sup>141</sup> "Domestic Diamonds," *Time* (July 21, 1941), 71.

<sup>142</sup> Siras, "Arkansas Diamond Discoverer" (details in Bibliographic Note 4, above).

<sup>143</sup> Junius B. Wood, "America's 35 Acres of Diamonds," *Nation's Business*, 37 (March 1949), 63-64.

[Bibliographic Note 5.](#) During his visit to Arkansas, Wood found a new, inventive twist in the tale about Huddleston and John C. Branner. In 1906, he reported, Branner revisited the Pike County formation he had surveyed almost two decades earlier as State Geologist. Hiring Huddleston as an aide, he again crawled around probing rocks and soil, examining shiny pebbles and other objects, and finally left empty-handed after three weeks. Thus inspired, Huddleston, "an inveterate, though frustrated gold mine hunter," found two "'dee-mints.'" But then, Wood said, the prospector faced a problem: someone else owned the land. Therefore, "shrewdly keeping his discovery a secret," John Huddleston got an option on 160 acres around the search area, agreeing to pay a purchase price of \$1,000. Having no cash, he gave a mule as a down payment.

Wood also learned a new version of an old tale about a leading lumberman of the area, Horace Bemis, who reportedly got involved with Huddleston and Sam Reyburn of Little Rock in September 1906. In this story, Reyburn was on the way to negotiate the option on Huddleston's land when he ran into Bemis in Prescott, a railroad town southeast of Murfreesboro. Learning of Reyburn's destination, Bemis provided transportation to Huddleston's place and then went off looking for diamonds while the two discussed business.

In Wood's version, Huddleston promptly asked Reyburn for a total of \$36,000, explaining the property was worth \$6,000 apiece for himself, his wife, and four daughters. When Reyburn reacted to the sum, he was told: "If you don't want it, Mr. Bemis will buy it." Intimidated, Reyburn grabbed the deal. Offered a check, Huddleston refused it. "I want real money," he said. "Don't understand that writing on paper."

The tale concluded with other fresh details. Huddleston used some of the cash to buy a store and several farms and some of it for modest dowries for his daughters. "A few years later, broke in New Orleans, he pawned the original diamonds for railroad fare back to his old hunting grounds. As a civic duty, the Pike County Bank eventually bought the stones to exhibit to visitors."

<sup>144</sup> Banks, *Diamonds*, "Transition to Recreational Mining," provides context. Aside from dates, Millar's *Finders-Keepers* is generally reliable for the tourist era.

**Bibliographic Note 6.** Providing further insight into the evolution of folk tales and mythology, another writer talked with "old timers" in Murfreesboro while Howard Millar was absent: Domer L. Howard, "Diamond Mines of Arkansas," *Lapidary Journal*, 5, No. 4 (October 1951), 50. This substantial article not only reflected current variations in the stories, but also demonstrated how easily themes still got muddled when Millar was not there to focus the writer's attention. Now, "a few weeks prior to August 8, 1906, an Englishman appeared at the Huddleston farm and requested permission to prospect the property for diamonds." The man, who said he had long experience in South Africa, searched for "several weeks" before quitting in disgust. Huddleston, alerted, watched for any glistening objects as he worked around the farm, and "not long thereafter" saw something while plowing. Hoping it was a diamond, he mounted a horse and started to town . . ." (Cf. Beaumont, below, and Hugh Leiper, "Diamonds for the Finding" *Lapidary Journal* [April 1957], 6: ". . . a red-necked Arkansas farmer turned over the first crystal with his plow.")

In town, Howard continued, "a friend hitched his team of horses to a surrey . . . and took Huddleston 12 mi. to Delight, where he caught a train for Little Rock." There, a jeweler sent the stones on to St. Louis for identification . . .

As almost all postwar accounts, Domer Howard's depicted John Huddleston as a man addicted to gold prospecting. Even after selling to the Little Rock group, "he procured some divining rods and continued to search for gold in other nearby places. Local raconteurs assert that he recovered a large quantity of gold from an old Indian mound and that he also located some buried treasure in the town of Arkadelphia." (Cf. Millar, *Finders-Keepers*, 19, which adds a tale about Comanche gold, probably the treasure in Arkadelphia referred to here.)

Huddleston "became the victim of real estate sharks, get-rich-quick schemes and phoney [sic] oil stock promoters and died a pauper and was buried in an unmarked grave," Howard reported. Adding a new bit of information, he revealed that friends referred to Huddleston as both "Uncle John" and "Diamond John." They described him as a man whose bare fist could with one blow "shatter" a 1x6" board or "knock the bark off a tree." They insisted he sometimes would grab his .45 revolver and shoot wasps found on a window pane in his house—and show no concern about the shattered glass (cf. Millar's comments on the .45 and a shotgun, *Finders-Keepers*, 27).

The article also included a current version of Huddleston's encounter with the mail-train, but staged it in Murfreesboro instead of Arkadelphia. "Vowing to make the local train stop at his whim, he drove his steam buggy on the railroad tracks, stopped, leaped out and stood defiantly

awaiting the arrival of the approaching train. To his chagrin and financial loss, the train did not stop!"

On the other hand, Howard apparently chose not to repeat another prominent tale, one offered by most old-timers this writer talked with in Murfreesboro. Huddleston, the story goes, had never seen a "moving picture" before settling in Arkadelphia (Murfreesboro had no theatre until about 1920). When he saw his first Western movie, he was carrying his own pistol, as some men did in those days. Having daughters of his own, he naturally got excited when the fragile young heroine faced danger (from either a desperado or a vicious bull out in a field, depending upon whoever told the story). What else could John Huddleston do except jump up shouting "I'll save you!"—and proceed to empty his six-shooter into the screen.

Of course, that incident would have gotten attention in a court of justice as well as in Arkadelphia's newspaper. But no evidence of such behavior turned up in any record or publication reviewed for this study, including criminal and civil court proceedings and Arkadelphia's weekly *Southern Standard*. Nor did it appear in Pike County records or the *Pike County Courier*.

In many respects, these local versions were already out of the new mainstream by the 1950s. Only weeks before Domer Howard's piece appeared, an article in a leading national magazine demonstrated how Howard Millar had become an overpowering magnet for inquirers: Booten Herndon, "America's Only Diamond Mine," *Collier's*, August 25, 1951, p. 62. At the time, Millar was involved in the first tourist operation to embrace the entire diamond field, the Diamond Preserve of the United States. About six months later he opened a reorganized tourist attraction (soon renamed the "Crater of Diamonds") and began generating phenomenal national publicity for Arkansas' unique asset.

The article in *Collier's* was essentially a long interview with Millar in Little Rock, and it underscored that mining engineer's continuing frustration over perceived obstacles to commercial success at the diamond field (see Millar's acknowledgment of the interview, *Finders-Keepers*, 73). As a result, the writer's tales about the diamond field focused on its perceived richness. As for John Huddleston, the former hero was briefly described as a "local redneck" who sold his "160 acres" for \$36,000, went on a spree, and "a few years later" was "stone broke" and reduced to beggarity. "The merchants of the town got up a fund," said the writer, introducing a fresh theme, "and Huddleston, until the day he died, 10 years ago, stopped by the bank each morning to draw his daily allowance of one dollar." The article offered no details about the discovery in 1906, only general comment about the trip to the bank, where Huddleston tried to sell "what he said were two di-mints."

A more thorough review of local tales appeared a year later in the *Arkansas Democrat*: Gerald Beaumont's feature article, "Are Arkansas Diamonds Real?" *Democrat Sunday Magazine*, August 3, 1952, pp. 3, 12. Basically, this dramatized account reflected conversations with Howard Millar during the writer's visit to the reorganized Diamond Preserve tourist attraction, which Millar and his wife managed for a while.

Now, John W. Huddleston emerged as "a local character" who owned "an isolated farm near Murfreesboro." He was "as strong as an ox. His neck was long, his hands unusually large, and so expert was John with a shotgun he shot wasps on the fly for practice. This isolated farm was acquired when he gave an old mule as down payment in the trade." While plowing a site "for turnip greens," Huddleston turned up a glistening stone that "excited every emotion in the stolid farmer." Why? "Once he had heard a stranger ranting about diamonds . . . bushels of them . . . hidden in the unusual soil of the scraggly field. But a search of the ground had failed to reveal any kind of treasure. The stranger with the peculiar accent left one night as mysteriously as he had appeared; and this had deepened John's frustration . . . as well as the curiosity of his neighbors, which had been built up to the exploding point. The stranger happened to be Dr. John C. Branner, the state's first geologist."

As almost all writers, Beaumont repeated the story of the second diamond find and the visit to the bank, where the clerk offered 50¢. "Them is dimints!" said John, emphatically, . . . Why, them rocks glitter and shine. I've turned then around and around in the light and I ain't seen any rocks like these here before."

When "the banker" took the stones to Little Rock, "Charles Stifft, the astonished jeweler, dropped his loupe through excitement for he was certain they were valuable gems." He sent them to go George F. Kunz, "noted gemalogist [sic] of Tiffany & Company, New York, who identified them as diamonds of fine quality, 1.35 and 2.75 carats." (1.)

Beaumont included a reworded version of the story about Horace Bemis and Reyburn visiting Huddleston's place, where the "shrewd and suspicious" farmer demanded \$6,000, "all in greenbacks," for each member of his household—himself, his wife, and four daughters. Here, again, Huddleston used Bemis for leverage: "And Mr. Reyburn, if you don't want to buy it [the farm] you don't need to. Mr. Bemis here will."

The article used several more short paragraphs to revisit other central tales. Huddleston, now "the Diamond King," understood "that kings gave their daughters a dowry, and so he proposed to give a thousand dollars as a dowry when each of his girls married, and he gave each her dowry when she married." The encounter with mailbags in Arkadelphia also received attention, with Beaumont using virtually the same tale Millar later incorporated into his memoir. Eager to go to Little Rock, Huddleston learned the next train would not stop in Arkadelphia. "'I'm the Dimint King,' he said. 'I'll stop it!'" As he stood on the platform waving, "the train whizzed by and poor John was knocked down by the mail bags. Several ribs were broken, and he was weeks recuperating." After that Huddleston bought a car, which broke down between Arkadelphia and Murfreesboro. "John walked off and left it and never did go back for the undependable conveyance again." Then, after his wife died, "he married a high-toned girl who had followed a carnival. She wanted one of those new late model closed-in cars, and John bought one for her. One sad day she got in the new car and drove away."

Thus, said Beaumont, John Huddleston's fortune dissipated, leaving him "dead broke." During his last year, his eyesight was bad; "but as long as he lived he looked for the blonde girl of the carnival who married him for an automobile." When someone was standing nearby, he would ask, "Who is that woman across the street. . . . Is that my wife?" (12.)

After 1952, versions of Millar's stories began appearing not only in the interviews given to newspaper and magazine writers, but also in news releases and other promotional literature produced for his tourist attraction, now called the "Crater of Diamonds" (see especially items in "Writings," V, Crater archive; e.g., V.A.7-8, 11). The basic tales were well refined by the mid 1950s; yet the entire body of writings and interviews reflected a story in progress.

By the late 1960s, a basic version of Huddleston's discovery and character emerged under Millar's tutelage. Its fictional qualities reached full bloom in a few pieces such as Robert S. McCord's article in the *Arkansas Democrat* in 1956 ("In Murfreesboro, More Frustrations Than Gems So Far," *Democrat Sunday Magazine*, August 5, 1956, pp. 7-8). Occasionally, old-timers around Murfreesboro still added a bit of variety; but basic components of the story were set, including Huddleston's immediate recognition of diamonds in August 1906 and his visit to Pike County Bank. For an overview of the trend, compare McCord with Martin L. Gross, "The Incredible American Diamond Mine Mystery," *True, The Man's Magazine*, September 1959, p. 55, and Ernie Deane, "Memories of Arkansas's Famous Crater of Diamonds," *Arkansas Gazette*, July 6, 1969, p. 4E. Compare Gross with the typed draft of a fictionalized article in Howard Millar's collection, "Writings," V.A.11, Crater archive (content suggests the piece was written in the mid-to-late 1950s). The continuing influence of Millar's basic version is evident in various items produced in the 1970s and '80s, including other adventure magazines (e.g., Jerry D. Wilcox, "Diamonds in Arkansas," *True West*, December 1981, 24-25).

While inspiring other writers, Howard Millar gradually put together his own memoir, a thin

book eventually published as *It was Finders-Keepers at America's Only Diamond Mine* (New York: Carlton Press, 1976). In it he crystallized the story of John Huddleston that would be accepted virtually without challenge for a half century. He had this section of the book well in hand before selling his tourist operation in 1968 and retiring to Fayetteville, Arkansas (see the comment in Deane, "Memories," 4E). After Millar's death, his wife, Modean, managed the final publishing of *Finders-Keepers* (notice that the back cover refers to the late Howard A. Millar).

Although Millar had an extensive collection of personal papers and other records to draw from, his introduction in the memoir cautioned readers: "Much of what I have written here is based on my memory. So many years have passed since the early days of diamond mining in Arkansas; however, I have done my best to tell what I know and to do so honestly and accurately. Any errors are mine, but they are unintentional." (11.)

Generally, the story in *Finders-Keepers* modified the basic themes of Wood's article, a copy of which Millar had kept in his files. Now, Huddleston first got interested in the area where he found the diamonds because he had watched as State Geologist John C. Branner inspected it in the late 1880s, not in 1906. "It is said that John Huddleston accompanied Dr. Branner while he so carefully searched the eroded washes on the crater," Millar wrote. "John was curious by nature and this experience must have certainly stimulated his curiosity." (21-22.)

Similarly, the story of the purchase was modified slightly. Huddleston "made a deal for 160 acres for \$1,000," but he did so "early" in 1906, only months before the discovery. "He didn't have the \$100 the owners wanted for a down payment, so he offered a mule and they took it." Why did he want the property? Now, Millar suggested Huddleston bought the place "perhaps because he had a wife and four daughters and decided to settle down." It also was possible, he said, that Huddleston thought the unusual green dirt on the farm indicated copper deposits. (19.) The comment about settling down alluded to the writer's general characterization of Huddleston as a shiftless, irresponsible hog farmer and outdoorsman.

Millar told readers he got the basic story of the discovery directly from John Huddleston after meeting him for the first time in 1914. Some newspaper requested an article on the subject, Millar said, and he prodded Huddleston into telling him precisely how he found the first two diamonds. Afterward, he took the old prospector out to the diamond field and helped him find the place where the first one turned up (at first Huddleston couldn't remember where he found it). Millar photographed Huddleston pointing to the spot, as the newspaper had requested. (20.) Millar said he still had the photograph (a copy in his collection, "Photographs," unnumbered file, Crater archive, is identical to the photograph taken by Shiras, copy in the Lee Wagner Collection, File 23.80, Crater). The newspaper article has never surfaced (it is interesting to speculate about a possible connection between this reported episode and Shiras' *Baxter Bulletin* (comment in Bibliographic Note 4, above).

The John Huddleston in *Finders Keepers* was to some extent the same perceptive outdoorsman portrayed in one of the early tales. He soon understood he had found diamonds; and, as in the older story, he had to convince skeptical townspeople the little gems were real. (22.) But unlike the experienced prospector of that tale, he was neither creeping along the ground nor recognizing mica flakes when he encountered them. Now, he was putting out rock salt for his hogs on August 8, 1906, when he noticed "small flakes of a gold-colored mineral ... too small to pick up." So he took a pan-full of material down to a nearby creek and washed it. Although the golden flakes (mica) floated, he found two "pretty crystals" in the pan that looked different from the common quartz of the area. (21.)

Puzzled, Huddleston tested the crystals against his corundum grinding wheel, which quickly suffered damage. "The clerk had told me it was made from material that was so hard it would cut anything but a diamond," Huddleston reportedly told Millar, "so I was sure these two strange little crystals were diamonds." The next morning, he rode a mule to the Pike County Bank in Murfreesboro and tried to determine the value of the stones by asking the cashier, Jess Riley, what he would give for them. Riley's indifferent offer of fifty cents drew a sharp reaction: "Hell no, Jess, these are deemints and I got a whole field of `em!" At that point the president of the



bank, J. C. Pinnix, intervened and sent the crystals to his friend Charles Stiff in Little Rock. (22-23.)

In *Finders-Keepers*, Millar revisited the colorful story of Horace Bemis that had appeared earlier in *Nation's Business*. Again, Sam Reyburn of Little Rock chanced upon Bemis, the lumber baron, in Prescott and "confessed his mission." But this time "Bemis told him he was on his way to Murfreesboro also, to buy a diamond from John Huddleston." The gracious Bemis offered a ride, and then "soon left" after arriving at Huddleston's home.

In this expanded and more dramatic version, Huddleston still used Bemis to intimidate Reyburn into meeting certain demands. "Reyburn, noting the lanky farmer's obvious lack of education and his poverty, apparently assumed that the right price would be a low one, so he offered \$12,000." Flatly refusing, Huddleston said he probably could get \$100,000, but would take \$36,000 cash—\$6,000 for each member of his family. He asked for payment in \$10 bills. "If Reyburn wouldn't pay it, John commented he was sure Mr. Bemis would." Millar said Huddleston loved to tell how he had "worked" Reyburn into giving him the \$36,000. (25-26.)

Although John Huddleston might have contributed to this account, Millar's depiction of Reyburn was consistent with his longstanding assault on the Little Rock banker, whom Millar blamed for his own commercial failure. (*Finders-Keepers*, 38ff.; cf. details in Banks, *Diamonds*, passim [in the online edition, search "conspiracy" and "syndicate" especially].)

Some parts of Millar's story have no evident roots in the tales circulating before Huddleston's death. While promoting tourism in the 1950s, for instance, Millar had introduced the colorful tobacco-sack story, which asserted that Huddleston accumulated "a 'BULL DURAM' sack full of sparkling rough diamonds" soon after finding the first two. "It is said that John had several large stones among those in that sack that weighted up to 15 or 16 carats each," gems so beautiful that they made the eyes of visiting scientists "'bug out' with surprise." In another piece of promotional literature, the sack was only half full and the diamonds averaged only "the size of a big pea, to use Huddleston's words." (Millar, "The Occurrence of Diamonds in Pike County Arkansas," p. 1, typed and undated, in Writings, V.A.7, Crater archive; "Outline of the Arkansas Mine (Present Wilkerson Property)," typed on Crater of Diamonds letterhead stationery, undated, V.A.8, Crater.)

By August 1956, Millar had settled on a short version of the tale. Before selling his property, Huddleston "had picked up a tobacco-sack full of diamonds. He sold these for \$40,000." (McCord, "Frustrations," p. 9.) Finally, the memoir elaborated a bit more: "Between the time Huddleston found his first diamonds and sold out to the Little Rock buyers, he found at least twenty-one more stones and possibly more. He told me in later years that he sold a tobacco sack full of diamonds for \$40,000. Whether he was paid for these in 'twenties,' I don't know." (*Finders-Keepers*, 26.) "Twenties" alluded to another comment in the memoir—the assertion that when Huddleston sold his property to Reyburn's group, he demanded and received \$36,000 in \$10 bills (25-26). In an earlier version about the sale, Millar used \$20 bills instead (Deane, "Memories," 4E).

"Diamond John" Huddleston no doubt had contributed to the tobacco-sack story at some point. But it was inspired by diamonds found after he agreed to continue diamond hunting for Sam Reyburn's group when it got an option on the farm in September 1906. Such diamonds belonged to Reyburn, the group's trustee, to be returned to the Huddlestons only if the group dropped the option; but evidently the newly famous John Huddleston was allowed to keep "demonstration" diamonds while in the field. A small Bull Durham tobacco sack would have served him well.

Other stories in *Finders-Keepers* include the incident at the railway station in Arkadelphia, discussed above at length. As other writers, Millar ignored the tale about the movie (comment above, with Howard, "Diamond Mines of Arkansas").

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<sup>145</sup> Millar's influence is most noticeable in the literature distributed for John Huddleston Day. His account of the discovery, taken from *Finders-Keepers*, has greeted park visitors for many years. Similarly, permanent displays at the park have been based upon his version of history, including erroneous dates. The Park Superintendent understands the problem and intends to correct errors.

<sup>146</sup> Tommy Fugitt of Murfreesboro, the son of Harold Fugitt, did the initial rockwork. The author was in Murfreesboro at the time.

<sup>147</sup> Pike, Deed Record 42, p. 389, Warranty Deed, October 21, 1947. The property lies in the East ½ of the SW ¼ of Section 27, Township 8 S, Range 25 W. The cemetery is unfenced and quite accessible.