

## *Upcoming Events*

- November 8, 2013    Annual Membership Meeting, Superior Brewery & Distillery, 329 Central Avenue, Hot Springs  
6:00 - 8:00 pm
- January 10, 2014    Arkansas Preservation Awards, Arkansas Governor's Mansion, 180 Center Street, Little Rock  
6:00 - 9:00 pm

## *About the Alliance*

The Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas is the only statewide nonprofit organization focused on preserving Arkansas's architectural and cultural resources. By presenting educational programs, advocating for preservation legislation at the federal, state, and local level and assisting historic property owners with the means and expertise to preserve and restore their structures, the Alliance has been a statewide voice for communities for 30 years.

Your membership will help us continue to advocate for the protection of valuable heritage resources throughout our great state.

### **Advocacy**

- Built constituency to pass the 2009 Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which provides a 25% tax credit for certified rehabilitations
- Helped pass the Real Estate Transfer Tax, a critical public funding source for historic properties
- Annual Arkansas Preservation Awards

### **Education**

- Annual Most Endangered Historic Places List
- Arkansas Preservation Conference
- Continuing Education Credits for Arkansas architects, interior designers, real estate agents, & others
- Quarterly newsletter, *Arkansas Preservation Digest*
- "Rambles" and tours of historic sites
- Educational programs about Arkansas's historic places and the benefits of preserving them

### **Assistance**

- Assists local governments and individuals in preserving their historic resources
- Partners with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Parks and Tourism, and the federal Preserve America program to promote preservation and heritage tourism as economic development tools

Visit [PreserveArkansas.org](http://PreserveArkansas.org) for more information



Historic  
Preservation  
Alliance of  
Arkansas

Fall 2013 Ramble

# *The Vines that Bind: Cultivation, Community & Tradition in Arkansas*

A tour of enduring historic communities

*October 19, 2013 • PreserveArkansas.org*

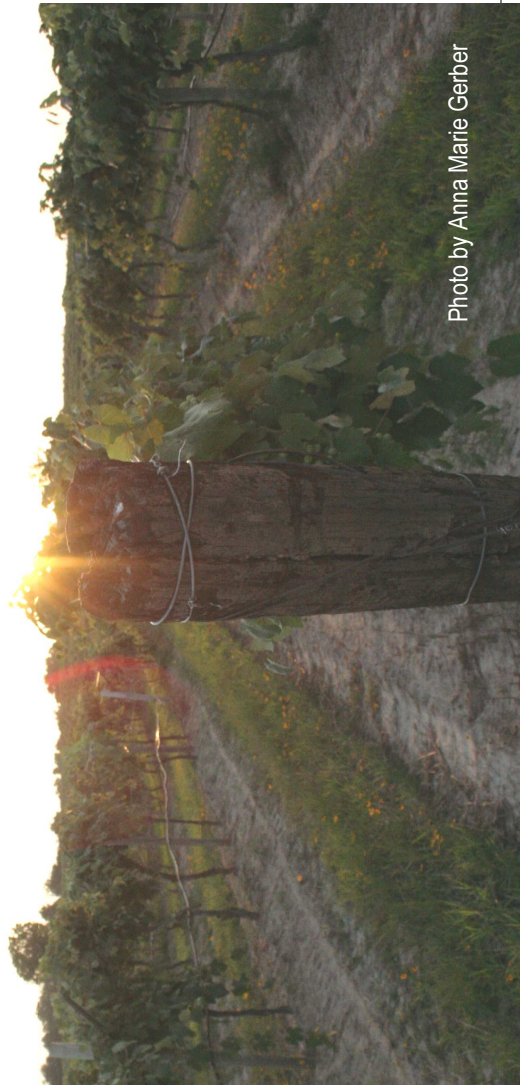


Photo by Anna Marie Gerber



### *Little Italy, Cont.*

Despite a population of less than 100, the town was home to four bonded wineries, with several thousands of gallons of port and claret wine bottled annually. The wineries included the Segalla Winery (located in dry Perry County), the Balsam Winery, the Solda and Vaccari Winery, and the Ghidotti Winery. In addition to the four wineries, Little Italy also attracted non-Italian locals by sporting two "beer joints" and a dance hall, each outfitted with a bocce court. Because of this heavy concentration of alcohol, the town gained a reputation as a volatile area due to numerous brawls and similar criminal actions.

By the 1950s, the wine industry dwindled due to diseased grape vines and the subsequent lack of profit, which forced the younger generation to seek jobs elsewhere. The rich Italian heritage that once characterized Little Italy has long since faded. The wineries no longer exist, nor do other agricultural or commercial ventures. Many descendants of the original families still live within the community, and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church remains the focal point of the community. Aside from the familial descendants, the town is now a residential area for people looking to live outside of Little Rock, located sixteen miles away.

### *Sponsors:*

National Park Service, Preserve America Grant

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### *Special thanks to:*

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

Ian Beard, Stone's Throw Brewing

Robert Cowie

Father Richard Davis

Christopher Dorer

Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Anna Marie Gerber

Old South Restaurant

Father Aaron Pirrera, OSB

Rhea Roberts, Quapaw Quarter Association

### *Ramble Committee:*

Chris Allen

Laura Gilson

David Ware

Blake Wintory

Amara Yancey

# The Vines that Bind: Cultivation, Community & Tradition in Arkansas

A tour of enduring historic communities

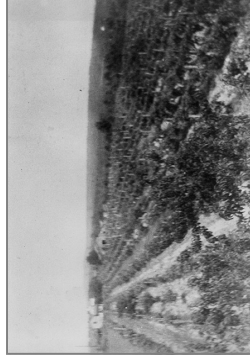
The 2013 Fall Ramble consists of an all-day bus tour through the Arkansas River Valley to explore historic sites associated with 19th and early 20th Century immigrant communities. Highlights include brunch at a historic diner; tour of Subiaco Abbey, tour and tasting at the Cowie Wine Cellars and Vineyards and Arkansas Wine Museum in Paris; tour of the 1906 St. Boniface Church in Bigelow; and a special evening event with a traditional spaghetti supper in Little Italy and program on the history of this enduring community.

## Itinerary October 19, 2013

- 9:30 am SHARP** Depart from Little Rock Visitor Information Center at Curran Hall, 615 East Capitol Avenue
- Overview of German immigrant history in MacArthur Park Historic District with Ian Beard
- 11:00 am - 12:30 pm** Brunch in Russellville at Old South Restaurant and talk on prohibition by David Ware, Capitol Historian
- 1:30 - 2:45 pm** Tour Subiaco Abbey and grounds with Father Aaron Pirrera, OSB
- 3:00 - 4:00 pm** Tour of Arkansas Wine Museum and Cowie Wine Cellars & Vineyards. Includes wine tasting and snacks.
- 6:00 - 6:30 pm** Tour St. Boniface Catholic Church, Bigelow
- 7:00 - 9:00 pm** Traditional Spaghetti Supper and talk by Chris Dorer at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Little Italy
- Aprox. 10:00 pm** Arrive in Little Rock

## Little Italy, Pulaski & Perry Counties

Excerpt from Encyclopedia of Arkansas entry, "Little Italy (Pulaski & Perry Counties)," by Chris Dorer, Little Rock Central High School



Little Italy's prominence in Arkansas history is attributed to its role in European immigration to Arkansas and, more importantly, its wine industry. The area boasted four wineries within a mile of one another and produced thousands of gallons of alcohol yearly. The wine-making Italians of Little Italy provided central Arkansans with a clean, reliable source of alcohol during Prohibition. Due to the town's central location, it gained much attention as a place where alcohol could be purchased. The area also gained notoriety for the rough atmosphere the clientele who frequented its wineries afforded.

Little Italy was founded in 1915 by a group of Italian immigrants who had originally settled in Chicago and Upper Peninsula Michigan at the turn of the twentieth century. The five original families sought to better their chances for success in America by moving from their cramped tenements and dangerous factory jobs to a more agricultural setting. In addition, this move offered a break from the crime-ridden, over-populated cities of the Midwest and allowed the Italians to establish vineyards in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains, which were reminiscent of their native mountainous villages in northern Italy. They named the town Alta Villa and slowly began to clear the rocky soil to enable the establishment of the local wine industry. Within the next decade, ten more families joined the village, bringing the number of families to fifteen. It was around this time that the name was changed to Little Italy to accommodate the growing town as it strived to become more Americanized. Soon, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church was founded with the permission of Bishop John B. Morris and the Diocese of Little Rock to serve as the community's focal point and perpetuate the Italians' intense Catholic faith.

Prohibition in 1919 hampered the early attempts by the Italians to make their vineyards profitable. Throughout Prohibition, many inhabitants continued to make wine, as well as bootleg whiskey from the hulls of pressed grapes. Local anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic attitudes were quelled during this time due to the willingness of the Italians to provide the non-Italian locals with illegal liquor. At the same time, others turned to legal methods of moneymaking and sold their grape harvest by the basket to stores in Little Rock and other regional areas via locomotive. By the end of Prohibition in 1933, hundreds of acres of vineyards were in full, mature production.



## *St. Boniface Catholic Church, Bigelow, cont.*

It stood 100 feet high plus the five foot gold plated cross. It was designed with many elements of early Gothic Revival, a sub-type known as Carpenter Gothic. The lumber to build the church was cut on church property by the Fouché River Lumber Company. It was built by its parishioners. Father Othmar remained pastor for another fifteen years. During this time, there was a rise of anti-foreigner and anti-Catholic sentiment in Arkansas, as was the case throughout the United States. With the beginning of the first World War, the became worse. But in the isolated town of New Dixie, there were few problems.

Before the 1960s, New Dixie was an isolated community; cut off by poor gravel roads and only a ferry crossed the river to Conway. In the 1960s, a bridge was built across the Arkansas River and the roads were all paved. Combined with better, faster cars, the closing of New Dixie's only grocer, and no post office, New Dixie soon lost most of its community identity. The only institution that preserved its identity as a community was St. Boniface. The church often held dances that were visited by Catholics as well as Protestants. It was also the center of the community for such other events as weddings, funerals, and organizational meetings.

In the early 1970s, metal siding was added to the church building. Even a building as well constructed as this church can still be ravaged by time. This is why the church members held a heated debate in the late 1970s on whether to repair the church, or to demolish it and rebuild. The church had dry rot and a problem with wasp nests infesting its timbers. Eventually, the members decided to repair the existing building.

Since that time, an effort has been made to fix its structural problems and add some modern amenities that would be sympathetic with its original form. For example, at some unspecified date, electrical fluorescent lighting was added. The new lighting system was attached to the walls and the original lanterns that hung from the ceiling were removed. In the last five years, electric light chandeliers replaced the side lights in an attempt to copy the original style of "hanging lights." Other changes include the refurbishment of the main altar, the installation of central heat and air, the removal of the old wood stove, the addition of wall mounted fans and ceiling fans for the choir loft, the placement of a metal ladder on the bell tower, and the installation of new carpet for the altar area.

St. Boniface Catholic Church is a small mission church that has not only served the religious needs of a small community, but also has served as the symbolic center of the community in all respects, and this is why St. Boniface is significant. This original community gradually oriented itself around this church, whereas it was originally some two and one half miles away. If St. Boniface is not New Dixie, it certainly is its focus.

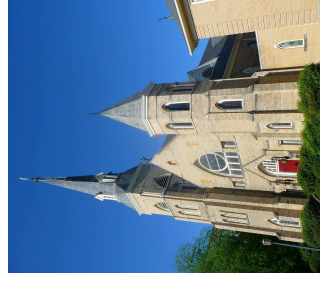
## *Curran Hall, Little Rock Visitors Center*



The home was built in 1842 by Col. Ebenezer Walters. In 1849 James Moore Curran, bought the home for his wife, Sophie Fulton, who was the daughter of Arkansas's last territorial governor and first United States Senator, William Savin Fulton. Curran Hall was vacated by Sophia and second husband during the Civil War and Federal occupation of Little Rock. Curran Hall sat abandoned for many years until a campaign to save the building from demolition in 1996 which lead to a plan for the building's future involving the City of Little Rock and the Little Rock Advertising and Promotion Commission. The Little Rock Visitor Information Center Foundation led the way in renovating it. After six years and \$1.4 million, the house was formally opened to the public as the Little Rock Visitor Information Center in 2002. The Quapaw Quarter Association now operates from Curran Hall. Visit [Quapaw.com](http://Quapaw.com) for more information.

## *MacArthur Park Historic District, Little Rock*

*Excerpts from MacArthur Park Historic District National Register Listing*



In 1821 Little Rock was made the Arkansas territorial capital; a decade later the small town was incorporated. In 1838, two years after Little Rock became the capital of the State of Arkansas, a United States Arsenal was built on the thirty acres that now comprise MacArthur Park. One of the original arsenal buildings, the Tower Building, still stands and is the oldest structure in the MacArthur Park Historic District. The Tower Building is a two-story, Federal style structure, which in 1880 was the birth site of General Douglas MacArthur. The United States government relinquished the arsenal for perpetual use as a city park in 1893, and today MacArthur Park forms the nucleus and sets the atmosphere of Little Rock's most historic residential district.

Early settlement in Little Rock took place along the Arkansas River, giving the town an east-west orientation. However, by 1840 Little Rock was one of the largest towns west of the Mississippi (population 1,531) and was expanding south from the river into the space included within the boundaries of the MacArthur Park Historic District. By the early 1880's the entire area enclosed within

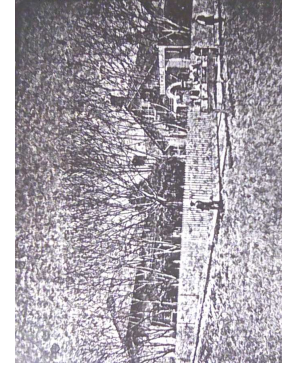
## *MacArthur Park Historic District, cont.*

the boundaries of the MacArthur Park Historic District (except the arsenal grounds) was a formal grid of streets along which were clustered closely-packed Victorian homes. The scene has changed little over the last 130 years. A passage from *The Commercial and Statistical Review of Little Rock Arkansas* (1883) provides an atmospheric if somewhat flowery description of residential neighborhoods in the city:

"The streets are broad and are bordered on either side with handsome shade trees, while lovely cottages and splendid residences greet the eye on every hand. The cottages are...nestled each among the trees and flowering plants...with pretty verandas and tastefully comiced gables, smiling through the leaves in bright clean dress... The more stately residences and their private park surroundings express the highest development of art and culture."

This quote not only provides an attractive description of the city's residential neighborhoods, but also makes a fundamental statement about the social patterns which existed in those neighborhoods -- in this instance, the MacArthur Park Historic District. Simply put, the city was still rural and informal enough to accept the people of different classes living within the confines of one neighborhood.

The scale of houses in the MacArthur Park Historic District ranges from huge two-storey Queen Anne mansions to small Victorian and vernacular cottages. Occupationally, banker and baker could be found on the same block, and socially, descendants of the town's founding fathers would live next to German immigrants and ex-Union men. Although Cumberland and Scott Streets could be said to have formed an elite district, the MacArthur Park Historic District, as a whole, formed a neighborhood that represented a variety of occupational and social classes.



*Papa Geyer's, Biergarten, c. 1898*  
The new home of Stone's Throw Brewing, a brewery and tasting room, was once a bakery.

MacArthur Park Historic District is also rich in historic community institutions and businesses. Churches like St. Edwards Catholic Church and First Lutheran are still extant and active congregations. The neighborhood was home to many businesses including Papa Geyer's Biergarten served, which served "Beer, Wine and Liquor" in a garden setting at 10th and Rock Streets during the late 19th Century. Other nearby extant commercial buildings housed butchers and bakers that served the neighborhood.

## *St. Boniface Catholic Church, Bigelow*

Excerpt from the Arkansas Register of Historic Places



Although there was settlement in Perry County dating to the 1840s, some twenty-five families of mostly German descent moved to the area surrounding New Dixie in 1879 and 1880. The Vicar General of Bishop Edward Fitzgerald, a man by the name of Father Hennemann, soon visited the settlement and decided to found a parish here. Father Hennemann soon arranged for a Benedictine monk by the name of Father Felix Rumph to be sent to the parish.

During the next two decades, the community of New Dixie grew with the addition of new settlers. By 1900, it could boast of a family of Irish immigrants and several Swiss families. However, it was still primarily a German community.

During these years, a succession of Benedictine monks acted as pastors for the young parish. These monks served on a rotating schedule between the different catholic communities up and down the Arkansas River basin between Little Rock and Fort Smith. In 1883, Father Matthew Seattle supervised the construction of a personage and convent for nuns who were to become teachers for the community.

In 1901, Father Matthew Seattle built the first church, St. Boniface, for this community after the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf Railroad, now called the Rock Island Railroad, gave some forty acres that were two and a half miles southeast of the original settlement. Father Matthew Seattle became famous for his dedication to the expansion of the Roman Catholic Church. He is now sometimes called, "Arkansas's Greatest Catholic Missionary."

During a mass in January of 1906, a fire started in the convent connecting the church. By canon law, once a mass has started, it cannot be ended prematurely, though this was not to say that the entire congregation had to stay in the church. However, it did make it difficult to save either the church or its artifacts. The only object saved was the high altar that had been imported from Germany. The church itself was a total loss.

Though they had lost their church, the parishioners were far from defeated. They soon began the construction of their second church, the structure that stands today.

This church was designed by Oswald Miller, the local coffin maker.



## *Cowie Cellars & Vineyards and Arkansas Wine Museum, Paris*

Excerpt from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas entry "Cowie Wine Cellars," by Robert G. Cowie



On August 17, 1967, Cowie Wine Cellars was established as a federal and state bonded winery in Paris, fulfilling the lifelong passion of founder Robert Cowie, who had begun making wine as a hobby at age fifteen. Cowie Wine Cellars remains, by choice of its founder, the smallest winery in the state, though it has won a number of state and national awards, in particular for its Cynthiana and Robert's Port.

Robert Cowie built his winery, originally a small metal building, on the former property of St. Ann's School, just west of Paris at Carbon City, in 1969. Three years later, his family was able to build a house on the property and move to the winery site, and in 1973, they began construction on the current winery building. Also located on the premises of the winery are the Arkansas Historic Wine Museum, which is the only museum in the United States dedicated to preserving the wine culture of an entire state, and a two-unit bed and breakfast.

In 1979, Cowie Wine Cellars held the first annual Arkansas Championship Grape Stomp and Cowie Wine Fest, which occurs each fall. A regional interest in home winemaking, for which the winery sells supplies, spurred the creation of the Cowie International Amateur Wine Competition in 1984. This event offers an ounce of gold and twenty-four ounces of silver, along with certificates, as awards to amateur winemakers. Professional wine judges from across the state rate the entries. The 2004 competition featured 255 entries from sixteen states.

In 1982, the winery entered its first competition, the Eastern Wine Competition in New York, winning the top honors for Cynthiana, a grape native to Arkansas. The winery has won many awards in several state, regional, and national competitions. In the 2004 Arkansas State Fair Wine Competition, for example, Cowie Wine Cellars won five of the ten "Best of Show" awards, out of the five state wineries competing.

The winery is known for Cynthiana and Robert's Port but offers many other wines. The selection runs from dry to sweet, along with several fruit varieties. The winery grows some of the grapes but also purchases grapes and fruits for its winemaking. The Cowie family practices a "hands on" approach to the art of winemaking, bottling and labeling the wine by hand.

## *Old South Restaurant, Russellville*

Excerpt from the National Register of Historic Places



The Old South Restaurant is listed in the National Register of Historic Places with statewide significance as the only surviving example of a post World War II modular, Art Moderne diner. Constructed in 1947, the Old South Restaurant was the business brainchild of William E. Stell, owner of the National Glass and Manufacturing Company of Fort Smith, Arkansas. Born in Hugo,

Oklahoma, in 1894, William Stell moved to Dallas, Texas, in 1914. In 1929 at the start of the Great Depression he moved to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and started the National Glass and Manufacturing Company, which produced fixtures, furniture, and metalwork for restaurants and department stores. Always a forward thinking entrepreneur, Stell began developing a modular diner system in the 1940s. Utilizing the resources of the National Glass and Manufacturing Company, the talents of the company architect, Glenn Pendergrass, and the company's experience in restaurant design and construction for El Chico restaurants in Dallas, Texas, Stell developed a modular design for diners that could be produced by the National Glass and Manufacturing Company and offered for sale in a turnkey operation.

Mr. Stell constructed the prototype Old South Restaurant in Fort Smith in the mid-1940s as an experiment. To manage the diner and develop the menu, he brought in R. C. Strub from Schwab's in New York City. This restaurant remained a popular dining spot until it was demolished in the late 1970s.

Although it isn't known how many Old South Restaurant packages were sold, only one other was ever constructed in Arkansas. In 1947 Mr. Woody Mays, owner of Woody's Classic Inn and Coffee Shop in Russellville, ordered an Old South Restaurant package. In true turnkey fashion Mr. Stell had the diner set up and operational - including the menu - in six days. The Russellville Old South Restaurant opened its doors on April 4, 1947, and has been in continual operation since that time.

When it was constructed, the Old South Restaurant was located on the outskirts of Russellville on an undeveloped stretch of Arkansas Highway #64, at that time the main travel route from Tennessee to Oklahoma. By virtue of its location and the fact that it was open twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, the Old South quickly became a popular dining spot for travelers including such famous entertainers as Ernest Tubb, B. B. King, and the King himself, Elvis Presley. Even after the construction of Interstate 40 in the 1960s which by-passed the Old South Restaurant, it remained a popular spot for travelers and locals.

## *Subiaco Abbey & Academy, Subiaco*

*Excerpt from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas entry "Subiaco Abbey & Academy" by Jamie Mettraller, Arkansas History Commission*



Subiaco Abbey and Academy, a Benedictine monastery and college-prep boarding school, began as St. Benedict's Colony, established in 1877. St. Benedict's Colony provided for the settlement of German-speaking immigrants in western Arkansas and laid the groundwork for the Subiaco Academy and Subiaco Abbey, both founded in 1891. The academy and abbey evolved over the last 100 years into the present Subiaco Abbey and Academy, located on extensive farmland in Logan County.

By 1877, Abbot Martin Marty of St. Meinrad's Abbey in southern Indiana was pursuing his dream of establishing a Benedictine mission on the western frontier. After hearing of the desire for a German Catholic colony in Arkansas, Marty contacted the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad in order to obtain the lands required for such a colony. Advertisements for the colony ran as early as November 1877, yet the actual land for the colony was not located until December 1877, when Father Isidor Hobi of St. Meinrad's found a suitable site near Paris (Logan County) for what became St. Benedict's Colony.

In many instances, settlers arrived to Logan County before the Benedictine order that advertised the colony. By late January 1878, nearly thirty families had arrived to St. Benedict's Colony. In the spring of 1878, Father Wolfgang Schlumpf, Brother Casper Hildesheim, and Brother Hilairin Benetz left St. Meinrad's in a mule-drawn wagon headed for Arkansas. The party arrived at its destination and celebrated the first recorded mass in Logan County on March 19. As the colony grew, the small community was designated St. Benedict's Priory in the fall of 1878, remaining dependent on St. Meinrad's Abbey in Indiana. By the end of 1878, nearly 150 families had settled in the colony, with a few additional families arriving in the early 1880s.

The limited funds and personnel from St. Meinrad's were soon supplemented with help from the Abbey Maria-Einsiedeln in Switzerland. The Abbey Maria-Einsiedeln continued to supply St. Benedict's Priory with Swiss monks throughout its formative years. In 1887, Father Gall D'Aujourd'hui and eight novices from Switzerland, called the "Eight Beatitudes," arrived in Logan County to ensure the Benedictine mission in Arkansas's success. In the same year, St. Benedict's College opened as the forerunner of the Subiaco Academy.

## *Subiaco Abbey & Academy, cont.*

In the summer of 1891, Pope Leo XIII raised the status of St. Benedict's Priory to the rank of abbey. Starting in 1892, Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald sent seminarians from the Diocese of Little Rock to be trained at the abbey. The training of seminarians at the Subiaco Abbey lasted until 1911.

In December 1901, the first monastery was completely destroyed by fire; fortunately, a new monastery was near completion at the time of this disaster. This new monastery was located on a hilltop and is the present site of the abbey. With the move to its hilltop location, the abbey opened a high school for boys in 1902 and was no longer strictly a seminary.

The town of Subiaco (Logan County) was born when the settlement around Subiaco Abbey and Academy acquired its own post office in about 1910. In the 1920s, Subiaco began to lose many of its German characteristics. Few seminarians were from Germany and Switzerland, and English was spoken more than German. In 1925, Father Edward Burgert, a native Arkansan, succeeded Father Ignatius Conrad, a Swiss-German monk who was elected the first Benedictine abbot in Arkansas in 1892.

Subiaco Abbey again burned in 1927, but this time it suffered a much slower recovery. This fire, compounded by effects of the Great Depression, did not allow Subiaco to recover fully until after World War II. By the 1950s and 1960s, the academy and monastery had recovered, as is evident by its building and expansion. In 1963, Subiaco Abbey opened the Coury House Retreat Center as a retreat ministry for visitors from across the nation. In 1978, Subiaco Abbey and Academy celebrated its centennial.

With 173 students in 2007, Subiaco Academy announced its plans to re-admit eighth graders to the school. Subiaco had admitted eighth graders in the 1940s and 1950s but stopped the practice in 1957. During the twenty-first century, Subiaco boasted an extremely high college placement rate and a diverse student body representing fifteen states and countries such as South Korea, China, and Mexico. Though the majority of students boarded at the school during this time, some day students also attended. Of the nearly thirty-nine staff and faculty members at Subiaco Academy, almost a quarter are Benedictines.

Subiaco Abbey provides residence to over fifty monks from diverse backgrounds. In addition to teaching at the academy, some monks also serve as pastors for surrounding communities. On the extensive farmlands surrounding the abbey, other monks raise Black Angus cattle, keep the vineyards, operate the sawmill, and grow the produce necessary to make their own Monk Sauce, a habanero pepper sauce. Since 1941, the Benedictine monks of Subiaco Abbey have operated Camp Subiaco for boys aged nine to thirteen.