



THE POWER OF THE SUN

Solar energy is an exciting renewable energy source that we expect to increase in popularity over time. Some homeowners in West Tennessee already have photovoltaic panels on their roofs, supplying electricity back into the grid and reducing their utility bills.

“Despite solar’s rise in usage, we’ll always be here for our customers, providing safe and reliable electricity for the communities we serve,” said Ripley Power and Light President and CEO Mike Allmand. “We can work with you if you decide to install solar panels, so you should contact us before signing a contract with a solar developer.”

“A solar company has been aggressively targeting residential customers in our service area with misleading ads on Facebook that offer attractive rebates for installation,” Allmand explained. “They’re telling our customers not to talk to their local power company because we would attempt to talk them out of the deal. That’s just not true, and I caution you to beware of any company that says you don’t need to work with your electric provider.”

“We just ask that you contact us first so you can get all the information you need to make the best decision for your household.”



Mike Allmand,
President and CEO
Ripley Power and Light

Daylight Saving Time

When you spring your clocks forward on March 14, be sure to change the batteries in your smoke alarm.



Ripley POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY

Spring 2021



An abandoned school in west Lauderdale County was turned into a movie set in January. Crews film the TV movie, above.

Lauderdale County has a part in a TV movie

The isolated, former Ashport schoolhouse in west Lauderdale County is playing a role in an ABC-TV miniseries coming out later this year.

The film crew turned the schoolhouse into a grocery store in Money, Mississippi, a community where 14-year-old Emmett Till, a black teenager, was murdered in 1955. The crews created other store fronts next to the two-story, brick school building, including an old filling station.

Till’s murder, his mother’s decision to have an open casket and media coverage of the funeral in Chicago was a catalyzing event in the Civil Rights movement. The film, in fact, is about Mamie Till-Mobley who worked hard to keep what happened to her son in the news. The miniseries is called “Women of the Movement.” (Read more about it on the next pages.)

Though the old Ashport School has only a small role in the film, the activity of building the set and filming created a lot of interest in

an area of the county that is easily forgotten.

The school building is all that remains of several small communities along the banks of the Mississippi River. They had names like Gold Dust, Fulton and Ashport. Each was self-contained with its own schools and grocery stores because they were so isolated, explained Billie Morris, Lauderdale County historian.



The abandoned Ashport school became a grocery store for a movie about Emmett Till’s mother, Mamie Till-Mobley. The 14-year-old Emmett was murdered after he was accused of whistling at a white woman in the store.

In fact, she said, it was often easier to cross the Mississippi by boat to Arkansas to shop than to travel the long road to Ripley.

To get to the area from Ripley, turn west on U.S. 19 where it intersects U.S. 51. Then drive west to the Mississippi River.

The area, settled around 1838, was some of Tennessee’s richest farmland, fed by nutrients when the Mississippi backwaters rose across the land and then receded. In fact, the area started caving into the river in the early 1840s, and it wasn’t long that the originally

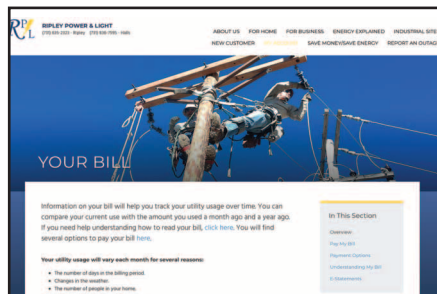
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Happy Easter!

Ripley Power and Light offices will be closed ...

- Friday, April 2, for Good Friday
- Monday, May 31, for Memorial Day



Pay your bill online and more ... at ripleypower.com

Office Hours & Locations

We are open 47 hours each week to serve you better!

7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Monday-Thursday

7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday

You can pay your utility bill at ...

- 150 S. Main St. in Ripley
- 409 S. Church St. in Halls

If you have not been receiving your bills, call our office immediately so we can verify your mailing address.



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Lauderdale County plays a part in a movie

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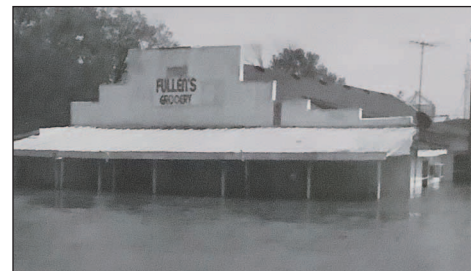
cleared land ended up in the river.

In one of her books, Morris says that Ashport was founded by John W. Campbell, Joseph Jones, General William Conner and Matthew Pickett. They jointly owned 5,000 acres of land. Two hundred of those acres were laid off in lots and sold in 1838.

One story about the Conner family is that a river boat, the Robert E. Lee, docked on the family's land and served refreshments during a lavish wedding celebration at their home. The wedding couple then boarded the boat for a trip to St. Louis, a gift from the Robert E. Lee's owners.

Jim Fullen, another well-known resident of the area, opened a grocery store in the river bottoms in 1928 when he was 21 years old. As land continued to cave into the river, the store was threatened, so Fullen moved it to Ashport in 1950. He built a gin and was the town's postmaster. The post office was in his store for more than 30 years; the zip code was 38001. After Fullen died in 1989, the store building eventually became headquarters for Fullen Farms.

Houses and other buildings were built on stilts because of the frequent



flooding. But the area continued to cave into the river and the backwaters continued to flood, wiping out barns, homes and other structures as the years went on. Soon the area was littered with abandoned buildings as people decided to stop fighting the water and moved away.

A big flood in 2011 washed away most every building that was

At top, people gather in William Webster's grocery store in 1948 in Ashport. Above, Fullen's grocery is flooded. At left, Ruth Yochum, Ona Chipman and Claire Yochum chop cotton.

Historical pictures are courtesy of Billie Morris, Lauderdale County historian.

left, except for the Ashport School, which was built in 1949. The school had closed in 1967, and for a few years, the building came alive as a honky-tonk.

Today, the land is still farmed for cotton, soybeans and other crops. The towns may be gone, but you can still see crops growing for miles in every direction on some of the richest farmland in Tennessee.



At far left, Effie and Ed Hill hold their child, Major Clark. The family lived on a houseboat barge on the Mississippi River at Gold Dust. At left, Ashport school children play in the school yard.



Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, above; Till-Mobley, at right, weeps at her son's open casket at his funeral in Chicago.



ABC-TV mini-series features 'Women of the Movement'

In late summer 1955, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago was murdered outside a small town in the Mississippi Delta. His story will be told in an upcoming ABC-TV miniseries that was filmed, in part, in Lauderdale County.

Emmett Till was visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi, when he was accused of flirting – though, to what degree is in dispute – with a white woman at a grocery store. A few nights later, that woman's husband and another man kidnapped Till and murdered him.

In 1956, with protection from the legal doctrine double jeopardy, the men admitted their crimes in a magazine interview.

The murder drew attention to the violence faced by African Americans at the hands of white people in the Jim Crow South – especially after Till's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, insisted on an open-casket funeral. The service was attended by more than 50,000 mourners, as well as the news media.

It was a watershed moment, and Till-Mobley would become a crusader for justice and civil rights.

Till-Mobley's life and her activism is the focus of an ABC-TV miniseries produced by Will Smith and Jay-Z that will include a remote spot off Highway 19 in Lauderdale County among its filming locations. Production began in late January in Memphis.

Till-Mobley will be played by Adrienne Warren, who was nominated for a Tony Award for her role in "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical." Emmy-winning actress Niecy Nash and Ray Fisher are also part of the cast.

The director of the first episode is Gina Prince-Bythewood, who directed "Love & Basketball" in 2000 and "The Old Guard," which premiered in 2020 on Netflix and starred Charlize Theron. The six-part miniseries was written and created by Marissa Jo Cerar, who is a producer and writer on Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale." Her writing credits also include "13 Reasons Why" and "The Fosters."



A 'Tennessee Waltz'

Ashport isn't new to the movie business. It was a setting in another movie, released in 1989 as "Black Water" and renamed "Tennessee Waltz." The thriller, directed by Nicolas Gessner, starred Julian Sands, Stacey Dash and Ed Lauter.

It's a story about a British lawyer, who is on an innocent fishing trip in the Tennessee wilderness and gets entangled in a murderous web. His first mistake is a torrid encounter with a woman who ends up dead. When he is stalked, he turns to the law for help only to find himself arrested.

Other actors in the movie include Ned Beatty, Denise Crosby, Brian McNamara, Johnny Cash, Rod Steiger, Wallace Wilkinson and Lew Hopson.