SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

Relyance Bank, N.A. v. Steve Pharr and Simmons Bank

2026 Ark. 55 · No. CV-23-8 · Decided March 19, 2026

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Arkansas held that Relyance Bank substantially complied with the appellate rule requiring abandonment of unresolved claims, making the summary-judgment orders final and appealable. On the merits, the court affirmed summary judgment for Steve Pharr and Simmons Bank, concluding that equitable estoppel barred Relyance from enforcing its mortgage lien after its agent represented that the mortgage would be released and the appellees relied on that representation. The court affirmed the circuit court and vacated the court of appeals' opinion.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Arkansas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per curiam
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Arkansas
DECIDED	March 19, 2026
DOCKET	CV-23-8
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Relyance appealed circuit-court orders granting summary judgment to Steve Pharr and Simmons Bank on equitable-estoppel grounds. The Arkansas Court of Appeals dismissed for lack of a final order, the Supreme Court of Arkansas granted review, treated the matter as initially filed in that court, reached the merits, and affirmed while vacating the Court of Appeals' opinion.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is reviewed under the rule that it is proper when the pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories, responses to requests for admission, and affidavits show no genuine issue of material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Once the movant establishes a prima facie entitlement to summary judgment, the nonmovant must meet proof with proof and demonstrate a material issue of fact.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published and precedential opinion of the Supreme Court of Arkansas
PARTIES	Relyance Bank, N.A. v. Steve Pharr, Simmons Bank

TOPICS

summary judgment | appellate procedure | civil procedure | title disputes | bankruptcy

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure | appellate procedure | real estate | bankruptcy | commercial litigation | remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Relyance substantially complied with Arkansas Rule of Appellate Procedure–Civil 3(e)(vi) by abandoning unresolved claims only to the extent required by the rule, thereby making the circuit-court orders final and appealable.
2. Whether the automatic bankruptcy stay prevented Relyance from dismissing its tort claims against the debtor Caldwell by operation of law.
3. Whether summary judgment was proper because undisputed facts established equitable estoppel against Relyance's attempt to enforce its mortgage lien against Pharr and Simmons Bank.
4. Whether Stone's authority and the reasonableness of Pharr's and Simmons Bank's reliance presented genuine issues of material fact.
5. Whether the statute of frauds barred the equitable-estoppel defense.

HOLDINGS

1. Relyance substantially complied with Rule 3(e)(vi) by stating that it abandoned pending unresolved claims "but only to the extent required by" the rule. The unresolved tort claims were therefore dismissed with prejudice by operation of law, leaving no pending claims and making the summary-judgment orders final and appealable.
2. The automatic stay did not prevent the nonbankruptcy court from authorizing dismissal by operation of law of Relyance's tort claims against Caldwell because the dismissal imposed no additional cost or risk on Caldwell or his creditors.
3. Summary judgment for Pharr and Simmons Bank was proper because undisputed material facts established all four elements of equitable estoppel and barred Relyance from enforcing its lien after representing that it would release the mortgage.
4. The statute of frauds did not preclude the equitable-estoppel defense because reliance, an element of estoppel, can defeat the statute of frauds.

KEY QUOTATIONS

> *"We hold that Relyance substantially complied with Rule 3(e)(vi) when it abandoned its pending claims "but only to the extent required by" the rule."* (3)

> *"Relyance cannot say it will release a lien and then five years later try to enforce the lien against parties who relied on that representation."* (8)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In 2015, Caldwell borrowed $1.9 million from Relyance and mortgaged 757 acres. Caldwell later sold 220 acres to Steve Pharr, who financed the purchase with a Simmons Bank loan and mortgage. During the closing, Relyance vice president and agricultural loan officer Vince Stone told the title company that Relyance would release its mortgage, and the sale proceeds were deposited into Caldwell's overdrawn business account at Relyance rather than applied to the mortgage. Years later, Relyance attempted to enforce its lien against Pharr and Simmons Bank despite their reliance on Stone's representation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Relyance sued Caldwell, Pharr, and Simmons Bank concerning a mortgage and lien priority. After Caldwell filed Chapter 7 bankruptcy, the bankruptcy court lifted the automatic stay for in rem and contract-related relief but not tort claims; Relyance later obtained a default judgment against Caldwell on the contract claim. Pharr and Simmons Bank obtained summary judgment against Relyance based on equitable estoppel. The Court of Appeals dismissed the appeal as nonfinal, but the Supreme Court held that Relyance substantially complied with Arkansas Rule of Appellate Procedure–Civil 3(e)(vi) by abandoning unresolved claims, making the orders final and appealable, and then decided the merits.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Relyance Bank, N.A. v. Pharr, 2025 Ark. App. 397
- Kellensworth v. State, 2021 Ark. 5, at 4, 614 S.W.3d 804, 807
- Mann v. Pierce, 2016 Ark. 418, at 4, 505 S.W.3d 150, 153
- Dennis v. A.H. Robins Co., 860 F.2d 871, 872 (8th Cir. 1988) (per curiam)
- Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A. v. Celotex Corp., 852 F. Supp. 226, 228 (S.D.N.Y. 1994)
- Havner v. Ne. Ark. Elec. Coop., 2016 Ark. 382, at 3
- Kelly v. Kelly, 2016 Ark. 72, at 3, 483 S.W.3d 296, 298
- Miracle Kids Success Acad., Inc. v. Maurras, 2019 Ark. 146, at 3-4, 573 S.W.3d 533, 535
- Gates v. Walther, 2023 Ark. 74, at 3-4, 665 S.W.3d 217, 219
- Miller Cnty. v. Opportunities, Inc., 334 Ark. 88, 96, 971 S.W.2d 781, 786 (1998)
- Merchants' & Planters' Bank v. Citizens' Bank of Grady, 175 Ark. 417, 418, 299 S.W. 753, 754 (1927)
- Found. Telecomms., Inc. v. Moe Studio, Inc., 341 Ark. 231, 239, 16 S.W.3d 531, 536 (2000)
- Stone v. Washington Reg'l Med. Ctr., 2017 Ark. 90, at 5, 515 S.W.3d 104, 108
- Tilley v. Malvern Nat'l Bank, 2025 Ark. 29, at 10, 709 S.W.3d 31, 40
- Van Dyke v. Glover, 326 Ark. 736, 745, 934 S.W.2d 204, 209 (1996)