

ESTILL COUNTY'S CEDAR GROVE - A Kentucky Community and Its People

The following is the fourth in a series of articles about the community of Cedar Grove and the west-central part of Estill County that have been compiled by Jerry G. Rose and are from information included in his book, "ESTILL COUNTY'S CEDAR GROVE - A Kentucky Community and Its People"

by JERRY G. ROSE

Employment Opportunities

The residents of Cedar Grove had a wide variety of job opportunities. Many of these were associated with either the L&N Railroad or Carhartt Manufacturing. Several other types of employment were available.

The Riney-B, L&A, and L&N Railroads -- The Riney-B Railroad built the railroad line from Richmond to Irvine in the early 1890s, with train service connecting West Irvine and Richmond in late 1891. The line was continued across the river to Irvine in early 1892. Although the railroad passed through Cedar Grove, the closest stations were at West Irvine and Rice Station, both about one to two miles distance.

However, it was not until about 1915 that the railroad became a major source of employment. The L&N Railroad bought the Louisville & Atlantic Railroad (successor to the Riney-B) in 1909. Soon plans were developed for the newly established town of Ravenna, adjacent to the east side of Irvine, to become a Division Headquarters and the site for a large Terminal consisting of locomotive and car Shops and servicing Facilities and a large switching and classification Yard. The Terminal was built to primarily serve Coal Trains originating in the coal fields along the Kentucky River Watershed in Eastern Kentucky bound for the industrialized mid-western and eastern portions of the country.

The Terminal employed upwards of 1000 people for much of the mid-19teens through the late 1940s. Numerous Cedar Grove residents were employed by the L&N Railroad. However, the demise of the steam locomotives in favor of the diesel electric locomotives in the late 1940s and early 1950s, other mechanization and computerization advanc-

es, and changes in the rail traffic, reduced the need for employees at Ravenna. During the last half of the 1900s employment opportunities continued to decline. The number of railroad jobs for Cedar Grove residents declined significantly. The Terminal basically closed in 2000, after 85 years.



The L&N Railroad's Ravenna Terminal, Mechanical Shops, Classification Yard and Division Office began operations around 1913 and grew steadily during the early years providing employment for numerous Cedar Grove residents until the late 1900s. The jobs were particularly important as Cedar Grove developed into a community during the very early 1900s as numerous houses were built along KY 52 and side streets. The development of the L&N's operations in Ravenna coincided with the growth of the population of Cedar Grove.

A second major employer for Cedar Grove residents was perhaps the Carhartt Factory located in Irvine. The company was established in 1889 in Michigan and was known for developing rugged apparel for workers on and off the job. After talking with a railroad engineer, the company's founder, Hamilton Carhartt, created an overall garment specifically for railroad workers that had never been made before. The legendary fabric - slightly nubby, strong and able to withstand any work day - has come to symbolize working men and women. Hamilton Carhartt's philosophy for the family-owned business was -- "my business was not started to do the gainful thing alone, but the just and honest thing, gainful if possible."

Plans to attract Carhartt to Irvine began in the great depression. The Irvine-Ravenna Kiwanis Club became the catalyst to bring the Carhartt factory to Irvine. A Board of Commerce was established to oversee the project

in the fall of 1930. Stock subscriptions were used to raise the capital money. The site selection process was finalized in June 1931. Construction of the original building on the old Richmond-Irvine Road, near the railroad tracks and within sight of West Irvine and Cedar Grove, began immediately.

Carhartt's Manufacturing Administrative offices still remain in the original building, although a few years ago the manufacturing activities moved to a larger and more modern facility in a nearby industrial park. Thousands of Estill Countians have been employed at the "Carhartt Overall Factory" during its over eighty years of operations, including a sizeable number of Cedar Grove residents. Without question, Carhartt had a very positive impact on many of Cedar Grove's residents and all of Estill County.

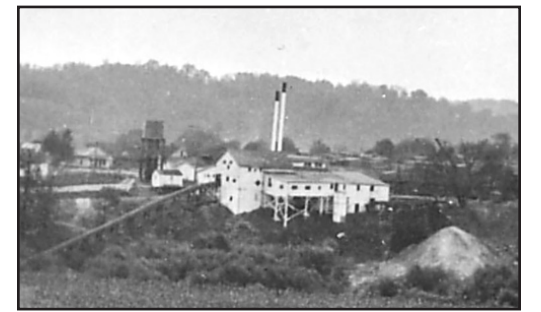


Early View of Hamilton-Carhartt Overall Factory in Irvine on Old Richmond-Irvine Road.

The Mowbray & Robinson Lumber Mill in West Irvine provided employment for residents of the area. Actually the major portion of the community of West Irvine was primarily established in the late 1800s/very early 1900s to provide housing for the mill's employees.

Around 1900 the Noble-Hyden Lumber Company established a large saw mill at nearby West Irvine on the banks of the Kentucky River and the Riney-B Railroad. Logs from Lee and Breathitt Counties were initially floated down the river to the saw mill. Later the railroad was utilized.

The Mowbray and Robinson Company purchased the saw mill in 1926. The mill continued to operate until 1940 when it closed as the majority of its large stands of timber in Eastern Kentucky had been extracted.



Mowbray and Robinson Lumber Company/Saw Mill was located on the banks of the Kentucky River at West Irvine. The approach for the Railroad Bridge is shown at the right.

The development of the Oil Well Industry and the Pryse Refinery in the eastern part of the county during the early 1900s provided employment for a limited number of Cedar Grove residents. The oil fields of Estill and Lee Counties became the most productive oil producers in the state during the 19teens. Employment opportunities soon peaked and gradually decreased throughout the 1900s.



Pryse Oil Refinery, 1929.

Several small factories and the Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond and nearby Madison County provided employment for Cedar Grove residents wishing to commute the 20 miles or so. The facility was established in 1941 and began operations in 1942 as an Ammunition and General Supply Storage Depot, commonly called the Blue Grass Ordnance Depot.



Ammunition Bunker at Blue Grass Ordnance. To Be Continued

Fiscal court sets property tax rates

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Fire Chief Derrick Muncie stated the department has been busy this month.

There have been 18 structure fires this year, but Muncie said three occurred in three days and other fires were back to back.

Muncie added that Estill County has also provided mutual aid to some fires in Powell County.

Tyler Hensley addressed the fiscal court about Mt. Springs Road.

"I'm here on behalf of everybody who wants to use the road," he stated.

He presented the fiscal court with a timeline of events on the road for the past year.

"When are we going to start holding these people accountable?" he stated.

County Attorney Rodney Davis clarified a contempt of court motion the fiscal court had filed on July 7 against property owners, Kevin and Rebecca Moes.

Davis said that Judge Michael Dean ordered the Moeses to remove obstacles blocking the road.

Davis added that Judge Dean wants the fiscal court to have the road surveyed to show its location.

The fiscal court will be using County Surveyor Justin Rogers to complete a survey of the road.

Davis said the case is back on the docket Sept. 7, but he

isn't sure a survey will be completed at that time.

He advised residents owning property beyond the Moes' property to go to court and have the road declared a public passway.

They can either file their own motion or join the county's lawsuit against the Moes' couple.

At least two residents told the fiscal court of using the public passway for over 60 years.

Although county maintenance ends, the road continues as a public passway and goes into Powell County.

Rebecca Moes said when they bought the property in two separate tracts, one tract mentioned the county road. She said three lawyers said there was no road through the second tract. The undeclared public passway divides the second tract into two parts.

Moes talked about a vehicle hitting and killing one of her horses. She also mentioned the vandalism caused on their property.

One person present suggested the Moes couple put a cattle crossing guard on the road which would keep their horses in and allow travelers to pass through.

"We need closure. I'm tired of listening to it," stated Magistrate Darrell Johnson.

Judge Taylor congratulated a 911 dispatcher, Jennifer Helton, for completing the dispatcher academy in Rich-

mond.

She finished distinguished in her class and on her portfolio.

"We have another well trained dispatcher," Taylor stated.

Later in the meeting, a resident told the fiscal court about calling 911 from her vacation in Georgia because someone was breaking into an Estill County home. She said the dispatcher said there was no one she could send.

The woman said a relative from Rockcastle County was called to go to the home where the intruders had been



Tyler Hensley addressed the fiscal court about Mt. Springs Road being blocked.

living for several days and had things packed up.

Charges are pending in this case.

Taylor said the jail's transport van was not yet ready and a contract with Powell County Jail is still pending.

He stated the opening of the new wing at Powell County has been pushed back to mid September.

Davis said that two people had pled guilty on the Rocket Docket Monday and seven had entered pleas last week. The Rocket Docket is expected to cut down on jail expenses.



Lonna Newman used a welder's hat and her phone to take photos of Monday's eclipse.



Deputy Jailer Peggy Frazier looked at the eclipse through a homemade pinhole camera. The pinhole reflected to paper on the car.

WI to get new parking lot

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Hinkle Contracting will begin work on adding a new parking lot at West Irvine. Mr. Saylor said that the construction company is donating a lot of their time and materials to build the new parking lot but are asking the school system for \$3,000 for fuel.

He added that they had looked at the cost of expanding the parking area at West Irvine before school started and it would cost

anywhere between 20 and 30 thousand dollars for the new parking lot.

The addition to the lot would add approximately 80-100 parking spaces and that they would have to make some adjustments to the pick-up procedures but he felt like it would eliminate a lot of the traffic congestion at the school.

With the first week of school completed, Mr. Saylor reported that enrollment is down around 25 kids from

last year. He said that would definitely play a part in the amount of SEEK funds that the district will get next year but they have been enrolling students each day.


There are 143 Kindergarten students this year and with the declining enrollment he doesn't think the addition of classrooms would be a good idea at this time.

Mr. Saylor explained about the decision to cancel school on August 21st due

to the solar eclipse. He said that they weighed several different options such as letting out a half day and then possibly staying late but both of those options would be hard on the parents.

Saylor went on to say that after much consideration he felt like it was best to close school for the day and allow students to spend the day with their families. The day will be utilized as a work day for staff.

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



*Like birds hovering overhead,
the Lord Almighty
will shield Jerusalem;
He will shield it and deliver it,
He will pass over it
and will rescue it.*

ISAIAH 31:5

Detail of woodblock print
by Sawa Sekkyo, circa 1800-1810

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