

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Limaburg, Kentucky, Through the Century

Mr. William Fitzgerald

c. 1958

www.nkyviews.com

WILLIAM FITZGERALD
86 DORTHA AVENUE
FLORENCE, KY.

BOONE COUNTY
Limaburg, Kentucky - History
Local History

Limaburg, Kentucky, through the century

As we leave Florence and travel through the beautiful rolling country-side on Route 18 we are unmindful of the ghosts of a century ago who pause in their labor of carving a civilization from the wilderness to shake their heads sorrowfully as we dash madly from here to there. Every tree or stump we pass could tell us of the broken bodies and hearts with which the road is paved. We pass Hangman's Tree without giving a thought to the rough and ready justice that seemed necessary to those men who sought to make and to preserve a community in which their families could dwell in peace and safety. We pass Hopeful Lane without pausing to offer a prayer of gratitude to those sturdy people who believed that religion and progress must go hand-in-hand and that the eyes and hands that used the rifle and axe must also be willing to turn the pages and to spell out the words of the scriptures. As our tires hum over the paved road we forget that it was once mud and rocks and stumps and that the trip we make in a few minutes was to our stout-hearted ancestors a long, tedious, and painful one. We, who often begrudge the few minutes required to cast our ballot in an election, forget the determined pioneer who braved the dangers of the forest to travel to the voting place to have his voice in determining the destiny and government of his country.

We are suddenly conscious of a winding hill, a narrow bridge, a ^{turn} turn in the road that checks us in our mad flight to the county-seat, and we are irritably conscious of some quaint old buildings, a saw mill, a pond, and then another winding climb as we leave the valley and continue our trip to Burlington. As our automobile easily climbs the grade that has in past years broken the heart of many a faithful beast of burden one of the phantom patriarchs who watch us from among the long forgotten trees reaches out and lays a hand on our shoulder. Some powerful and unseen force causes us to stop and to look about. We leave the car on the side of the road and slowly walk back down the hill in ^{to} the valley we have just left. We look at the pond, the buildings and on the pretense of making a purchase we enter the store.

Inside we find other customers who wish to buy from the stock of merchandise, the variety of which one seldom sees in a store today. Suddenly we are in conversation with the men and women who are coming in and out of the store. Our cautious inquiries soon bring a realization that these are the descendants of the people from Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Virginia, who traveled by foot, horse, and ox-cart to Kentucky at the turn of the century to find a new home for their families. They are proud of their heritage and are glad to tell us about their community and of the days that are no more.

We ask about the mill. At first it was a grist mill operated by Jeremiah Beeson. He built the mill about 1849 and used the

Limaburg, page 3

waters of Gunpowder Creek to turn the stones. Somehow, we failed to find how the creek got its name, but we expect to visit the community again. About the time of the Civil War a saw mill was added to the grist mill and a partnership was formed between Mr. Beemon and Israel and Robert House for operation of the combined industries. One of the considerations of this transaction was that Mr. Beemon was to receive two loads of saw dust each year and the grist mill must operate each Tuesday. The mill had, we learned, changed hands only three times since that time and is now operated by William Waters. It furnished lumber for barns to house the fine tobacco raised in the country-side nearby.

We learned of John Welsh, who had come from Ireland with his family and who had lived on the creek near the mill. He was as "kind a man as ever lived!" The house he built lasted until 1916.

Every community must have a black-smith and on the northeast bank of Gunpowder Creek George Baker set up his forge and anvil and with the help of his son served the needs of his neighbors for many years. One of the first public improvements was a road development and, to pay its cost, toll was demanded of all who used the road. The toll-house was first occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Morgan C. Crigler and is at present the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Waters. On the north side of the road and in the very center of the town was general store operated by Mr. and

Limaburg, page 4

Mrs. J. W. Rouse, Dr. W. O. Rouse and Mrs. Ora Tanner are their children.

The school house was located on a hill overlooking the village. It served as school, church, and meeting place for any community gathering. A short distance from the school house was the resting place of those who died of cholera when that disease threatened to destroy the town in 1849.

During the Civil War the town suffered the fate of so many of the border line communities and the residents were divided in their sympathies. But it survived and in 1870 had grown to such extent that a larger store was needed. A two story building was erected and a general store operated by J. W. and S. J. Rouse. These two merchants were also successful farmers.

We asked about the name of the town. Well; it happened this way. Mail was delivered to Florence and to Burlington. Each of these towns were several miles away and often the roads were impassable. In 1884 an application was made for a post office and when a government representative came to establish the office in the store he stated that the town must have a name. The name Needsore had been used and most people called the town Florence Crossroads. These did not seem suitable and the town was thrown into a dither in an effort to select a name that would satisfy the Post Office Department and the residents. Someone suggested Lima, but there was a Lima, Ohio, not too far away and the similarity would cause confusion. The Postal

Limaburg, page 5

representative suggested Limaburg and on the 17th day of February, 1885, the U. S. Postal Department issued a cancellation stamp and named Silas J. Rouse the first Postmaster of Limaburg. About this time factory made articles were becoming popular and many home made articles were no longer produced. Yard goods, boots, flour, spices, dried fruits, green coffee, sugar, crackers by the barrel, candies, oils, turpentine and many other articles were found in the general store. The Rouse family cared for the store themselves and never hired a clerk. Store hours were from before sun-up to way after dark. The store was the center of friendly and unfriendly discussions and many weighty problems were aired and decided around its stove.

Limaburg had its quota of musicians and many home-made instruments were tried out with varying degrees of success in the moonlight in front of the general store and in other appropriate places. In 1891 W.O. Rouse, ~~son of the Post-master~~ entered medical school in Cincinnati and upon his graduation on April 4, 1895, opened his office in the old store building across the road. After several years he found that he could better serve the country-side by moving his office to Burlington. Upon his retirement many years later he moved to North Carolina. In 1901, Silas Rouse passed away and the following year his partner, J. F. Rouse sold the general store to J. W. Quigley and Clark Beamon. Mr. Rouse then retired to his farm.

Limaburg, page 6

The firm of Quigley and Beemon modernized their business by establishing a delivery service offering merchandise to farmers wives and often bartering for eggs, butter, lard, chickens, and other items the family might wish to exchange for "store Bought" merchandise. Hardware and farming implements were sold by the general store. Calico was 5¢ a yard, outing 6 to 10¢, wire fencing, fertilizer, paint, and feed were sold by the new merchants. Mr. J. W. Quigley had married Miss Eva Beemon, his partner's daughter.

In 1907 the Post Office Department instituted rural free delivery and abolished the Limaburg Post Office. James P. Tanner was appointed the first rural mail carrier and mail boxes appeared on the roadside. The J. R. Utz gateway boasted a whole colony of boxes ^{for} of people who lived on side roads. Along side of the mail box was the hitching post and horse block. Hitching rails lined both sides of Limaburg's street.

In bad weather the store was the gathering place. It was the social gathering place and people went there to get news as well as to buy needed articles. Every phase of life was discussed there. At Christmas time fresh fruits, fancy candies, toys, bright handkerchiefs, new bolts of yard goods, nuts, and other festive items appeared on the store counters. Miss Ada Aylor who now lives in Florence introduced home-made ice-cream to Limaburg.

Limaburg, page 7

The school house was a center for parties, plays, and other forms of entertainment. Debates were popular. One subject debated long and loudly was "which is the most destructive: fire or water?" Supporting one side of this argument was a flood which nearly destroyed the town. The bridge was washed out and the cellar of the store was filled with water. The blacksmith shop owned by Mrs. Mary E. Crigler was washed away and was never rebuilt. George Baker built a new shop on his own land. The mill was washed away. Water covered the floor of the Welsh house in which James Utz was living. At another time snow was so deep that the road through town was impassable. Limaburg is called the coldest place in winter and the coolest one in summer.

In 1916 the log house of Mr. Utz was torn down and a small frame house was erected on the site by Mr. James Pettit. It was later sold to Mrs. Pettit's uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Utz who were then residing in Erlanger.

The Limaburg School house was originally on land adjoining the store at the top of the hill on the Hebron road. About 1894 it was moved to one acre of land on the G. J. House property. About 1923 it was consolidated with the Burlington School. Wm. L. Aylor, Dr. W. O. Rouse, A. M. Yealey, Miss Sadie ~~Beeson~~ Beeson, ~~and~~ who became Mrs. Chester L. Tanner, were teachers in the Limaburg School.

Limaburg, page 8

World War I brought sadness and confusion to Limaburg. High prices, and sadness in homes brought back memories of the dark days in the sixties. Motor vehicles were replacing horses, and price of farm lands rose to phenomenal levels. Mrs. Quigley passed away and the firm of Quigley and Beemon was dissolved. Shortly after Mr. Beemon died and Mr. Quigley entered another business.

In February, 1920 the Limaburg Store was purchased by J. P. Brothers, of Newport, Kentucky, and H. R. Leidey, of Ludlow, Kentucky. Mr. Brothers was a veteran of World War I. During the depression that followed Mr. Brothers bought out his partner, Mr. Leidey. Mr. Brothers then married and established his home over the store.

Electricity came to Limaburg in 1922 and the Brothers store became agent for Stewart & Warner radio receivers. A smoke house was added to the store and in years to come it was to be famous for its smoked hams. Automobile tires and accessories were added to the stock and two gasoline pumps appeared out front. Business was good in Limaburg until the depression in 1929. Eggs then sold for 8¢ a dozen, jowl bacon for 10¢ a pound, creamery butter for 22¢, country butter for 20^c, chickens for 4¢ a pound, flour was 35¢ for 25 pounds, stock feed 75¢ for 100 pounds.

The years between 1936 and 1941 brought better times. Roads

Limaburg, page 9

were built, many new homes were constructed, farm machinery and motor cars made life easier and standards of living were raised. During this time the store cured and sold about 750 hams a year. The green meat was rubbed with a mixture of salt, brown sugar, black pepper, and salt petre. The hams lay in this for 28 days when they were hung and smoked with sweet hickory wood. They then hung and cured for nearly a year. Meat rationing during the ^{war} interrupted this business. The Limaburg hams have been shipped to many parts of the country, from New York to California, and from Florida to Illinois. The first tract of land secured for the Boone County Airport was the Scott Walton farm 1½ miles from Limaburg. A total of 835 acres was included in the airport property. The air port, new roads, the prospective bridge, all indicate future development for the Limaburg community.

When on a cold and rainy Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Limaburg again felt the pinch of war restrictions and more than ever before experienced separation and bereavement. The general store became the center of distribution of rationed goods and the problem of observing regulations and preparing reports was no small one. Methods of living were changed and for many life can never be the same again.

with the coming of peace Limaburg has seen its most bountiful years. New homes have been built, automobiles have become a necessity, farm machinery has largely replaced manual labor, rural electrification has made living better in many ways, improved agricultural methods and better schools indicate better life in the years to come.

We suddenly realized that we had been listening to these people tell us of the life they had been living in the little village of Limaburg for the past hundred years. We realized, too that time was passing and that the Court House at the County seat would close before long. So, with reluctance, we said good-bye to the friendly, happy people and slowly walked up the hill to our waiting automobile.