

# Railroad Causes Towns To Spring Up

When this publication began in 1983, the prime sources for historical material came from previously published articles, vintage news items, articles from local writers, and interviews. These are still the sources for content but in the intervening 21 years, the *Old Settlers Gazette* itself has become a source of historical information. With this issue, the *Gazette* will begin reprising articles from past issues. Following is an article from July 1983, Issue No. 1. It is reprinted for those who might be new to the area in the last two decades and for those of us whose memories may have slipped a little during that time.

In the eighteen-fifties the railroad fever burned high all over the country. As many as thirty roads were started in Missouri but none of them reached Pulaski County. Those that were built were ruthlessly destroyed during the Civil War.

The present railroad, St. Louis and San Francisco (The Frisco) is the only one completed through Pulaski County. It missed the only town in the County (Waynesville) by ten miles. The road was first surveyed by the Southern Pacific in 1861, which by 1866 was called the Atlantic and Pacific. This first route was through the south central part of the county but was abandoned because the terrain proved unfeasible. There is still evidence of some of the fruitless tunneling and grading. Then a new route was surveyed following the backbone of the Ozarks, where it was finally completed in 1869 and remains today.

And with the coming of the railroad came progress. It provided an outlet

for produce—livestock, poultry, wheat, corn, lumber, railroad ties, and in exchange brought in supplies and luxuries not produced in the Ozarks. Up to this time Pulaskians had raised what they ate and ate what they raised. They were a completely self-sufficient community, providing for their own needs and mixing little with the outside world. The railroad was a link to the world when it was finished in 1869.

## Railroad Towns

Pulaski County population was altogether rural until the year 1869 with the exception of the county seat, Waynesville, which was still only a little village. When the road was built more towns sprang up.

## Richland

A town was laid out on the western border of the county, surveyed by [Milton] Santee. It was first named for Gen. Lyon, but when they petitioned for a Post Office it was discovered that another Missouri already bore that name, so it was finally named Richland in honor of G.W. Rich, a director of the old Atlantic and Pacific Railroad.

One of the first buildings erected was built by Gibson and Warren which later became the H.E. Warren Store and which firm is still prominent today. Other early builders were Traw and Bradshaw, J.W. Robinson, Joseph Fiebelman and J.L. Tyree built a drugstore. All this building boom occurred in 1869. The next year many dwellings sprang up and the town grew. It became a shipping point for miles around. There was a fire in 1880

which destroyed several of the log and frame store buildings which were immediately replaced by brick structures. A stockyard was built and cattle, hogs and sheep were shipped daily. Other produce such as lumber, railroad ties, wheat, corn, dried fruit hides and furs, poultry and eggs, and game, yes, wild game, was shipped, too, then.

By 1890, Richland was a thriving business center with active stores, a newspaper, banks, lodges, churches, schools, and a town government.

## Dixon

The story of Dixon is very similar to that of Richland—the town surveyed and building started in 1869. With this difference—the Frisco located a division-end at Dixon and this added a roundhouse and made it the residence for several railroad crews. Because of the steep incline of the Dixon Hill, two engines were needed to make the ascent. Here at Dixon the extra engine was unhooked and sent back to Newburg. It has only been recently that the old switch has been removed. General stores, hotels, hardwares were built and the names of Tracey Brothers, John Daws, C.F. Walter, W.H. Harris, were prominent in these building activities.

A newspaper, The Dixon Headlight, was established in 1880 by J.C. Speer. In all the towns the Masonic Lodge was early organized as was also the I.O.O.F.

## Waynesville

The history of Waynesville is so inextricably interwoven with the history of the County that most of it has already been related. It is situated on the old "Kickapoo Trace" which was later called the Old Wire Road. This name was changed to the St. Louis-Springfield Express and was a stage coach route before the war. During the Civil War it became a very important means of transport, carrying supplies to the Army of the West and returning wounded soldiers to the hospital at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis.

The first newspaper in Waynesville as the *Pulaski County Signal*, about 1871. Several others followed—*The Gasconade Valley Plain Dealer*, edited by Speer and Bostick, *The Pulaski County Tribune*, operated by McGregor and Raney, the *Waynesville Messenger*, by C.H. Colley. *The Pulaski County News*, edited by Murphy and Reed, became

later *The Pulaski County Democrat*, under G.M. Reed and has been continuously published since.

## Crocker

Crocker came into being as a shipping point for a wide area after the railroad station was built in 1869. This area included several little places not on the railroad, as well as a large farming area—Waynesville, Iberia, Brumley, Toronto and Hawkeye. Patterson's dwelling came next and Fiebelman's Store was built in 1871.

## Swedeborg

Swedeborg is a unique town built almost altogether by a Swedish Company on land bought from the Railroad in 1878. These settlers brought with them their old world training in carpentry and farming to this community, adding good substantial buildings to a wide area. There was already a Baptist Church and the Swedes established a Lutheran Church.

## St. Robert

St. Robert is a very new town, superimposed upon an old country community, as a result of the building of Fort Leonard Wood. The early pioneers who settled this community were a religious sect known as Dunkards and were so religious that it became known as Gospel Ridge. When a public school district was organized it was called Gospel Ridge School. A church was built and Gospel Ridge was printed above the door. As the years passed the Dunkards either died out or moved away and the people who lived there were, for the most part, Baptist. But Gospel Ridge remained a rural community until 1941. With the construction of the big Army installations, numerous places of amusement mushroomed on the Ridge overnight and became famous from coast to coast.

## Devil's Elbow

A resort center on the Big Piney River near the old bridge—a lovely place today, popular for hunting and fishing. It got its unusual name during the era of lumber and tie rafting down the river to market. It was the abrupt bend in the river that caused so much trouble. Long rafts had to be cut in two in order to round the bend, hence the name Devil's Elbow.

