

ROLLA: A YANKEE "RALEIGH"

(This article prepared with the assistance of the Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce.)

Rolla's past starts around 1818 when settlers first came to the area building along the river and farming. Rich deposits of iron-ore brought in the first industry, the Maramec Iron Works. The development of this industry brought in the demand for railroad facilities in the 1820s and by 1845, the first reconnaissance survey was made. By 1860, the first train of the southwest railroad was run to Rolla.

Phelps County was created by the Missouri legislature from portions of three surrounding counties, including Pulaski County, in 1857 with Rolla designated as the county seat.

During the Civil War, the presence of the railroad and the Iron Works made Rolla an important military post. As many as 20,000 union troops were stationed at "Camp Rolla" at one time and several battles were fought in the area.

People living on the farms just west of the current Rolla City Limits still find cannonballs and bullets in the

soil. Some bullets are droppers, which were simply dropped by soldiers and never fired.

With the enactment of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act by Congress in 1862, the Missouri legislature accepted all conditions of the land grant and made immediate the opportunity to set up a new type of higher education within the state. The possibility of establishing a school of mineral industries in the Ozark region became a reality when a committee appointed by the board of Curators of the University of Missouri selected the site of the present University of Missouri at Rolla.

There are several different stories as to where Rolla got its name. When the town was laid out, the residents came from North Carolina. Some wanted to name the new town after the capital city of North Carolina which is Raleigh. However, as the story goes, none of them could exactly remember how to spell it and the name became Rolla. As in the state today... some people pronounce Missouri

as "Mizzoura" so why couldn't the old settlers go from Raleigh to Rolla.

Another story has it that the town was named for a dog. Early settlers were in disagreement as to the exact location of their new town so

the majority let the minority select a name. They were disgusted and decided to name the town for one of the mangiest old "houn' dawgs" that roamed the countryside. The dog's name was Rollo, but the name was changed to

Rolla because town names are usually feminine.

The final story has it that Rolla was named for a character in a play. Sheridan's "Pizzaro" is subtitled "The Death of Rolla." The leading character is a

swashbuckling hero named Rolla.

Predicting The Future

Thirty-two years ago seems like a long time — doesn't it? On June 24th of 1953, the Rolla Lions Club was listening to the new Commanding General of Fort Leonard Wood, Major General A.W. Pence.

Major General Pence said to the gathered Lions that he saw little chance that Fort Wood would be closed. He declared that it was the Army's plan, thirty-two years ago, to close Fort Belvoir, Virginia, engineer training site for many years, and that when that post is closed, it would leave Fort Wood as the chief engineer training camp.

Of course, we learned in 1984, some thirty-one years after Major General Pence's speech, that Fort Wood would become the military's central engineer training school. The surrounding area is thrilled that the long-awaited move is going to take place and that Major General Pence was finally proven right!



OAKWOOD OIL CO.

St. Robert, Missouri
314-336-4123

YOUR AREA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS DEALER



Oakwood Shell Service Station

Open 24 Hours A Day -- 7 Days A Week
Located in St. Robert, Missouri
Phone 336-9104 For Service

- WRECKER SERVICE
- FRONT END ALIGNMENT
- GOODYEAR TIRES
- COMPUTER TIRE BALANCE
- MINOR OR MAJOR MECHANICAL REPAIRS TO CARS, PICK-UPS AND HEAVY DUTY TRUCKS
- STATE INSPECTION STATION
- FULL SERVICE SHELL STATION
- EMERGENCY SERVICE 24 HOUR • PHONE 336-9104



We Fix It Right At Oakwood Shell