

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Lusby's Mill And Community

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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF LUSBY'S MILL

(By Mrs. Oren Cobb)

About 150 years ago the place now known as Lusby Mill community was a virgin forest untouched by civilization. Giant oak, walnut, poplar and cherry trees grew on the hills and sycamore and willows crowded the valleys down to the clear cool water of Eagle Creek, which seldom flooded because the deep coarse soil of the forest absorbed most of the rainfall while springs and small streams fed the creek. Many schools of choice fish swam the stream, deers raced through the woods, and there were plenty of wild turkeys and small game. Eagles built their nests high above the stream of the same name and found an abundance of food for their young. The sounds in the wilderness would cause the average person to tremble with fear. There were the cries of wild animals, hooting of the owls, the screams of foxes, the jabber of the Indians who hunted for food or perhaps the chant of the Indian war dance, and the squeaking of the trees as they bent in the wind. But, there must have been some pleasanter sounds of the songs of the birds and the gurgling of water over the mossy rocky shoals.

It has been a very long time since the Indians, perhaps the Miamis and the Shawnee, used this territory but according to the accounts of the oldest white residents there was an Indian camp near Breck, and two Indian burying grounds; one is located on the R. N. Greene farm and the other about two miles down Eagle Creek near the Holiday ford. There is evidence that Indians roamed the entire section as most every farmer has plowed up flint rocks. A tommy hawk was found on the Julian Stamper farm and another one on the R. N. Greene farm. Bits of colorful pottery have also been picked up by local people. Simon Girdy, a renegade, and Black Kettle used the Indian trails along Eagle Creek when they attacked Ruddles Fort (old Georgetown). The first white settlers were four families from South Carolina who took up 100 acre claims in the year of 1795. They settled near a big spring on the banks of Eagle Creek, now owned by Lewis Mason and located back of the Mussel Shoals Church. The families were Samuel Cobb, a Clifton, Perkins and an Osborne. Samuel Cobb fought in the Revolutionary War and his wife and two daughters were scalped by the Indians in South Carolina. However, he married again in Charleston, South Carolina, and brought his wife and seven children with him to the new settlement. A short time later the eighth child was born, named Assac, and it is believed that he was the first white child born in Owen County.

A few years later people began to move down stream to deeper water for power to run mills for sawing logs and grinding grain. It seems that a

Negro from Virginia was the first man to work at the mill but Billy Lusby operated it for many years. Still later a Cobb ran the mill and the village was called Cobb's Mill. However, a John Lusby purchased it from Cobb and since that time the village has been called Lusby's Mill, Lusby, or just "The Mill."

The first house in Lusby's Mill was built of logs by a grandfather of Ross and the late Sonk Kinmon. The house has been remodeled many times so it does not appear to be more than a hundred years old. It is now owned by R. H. Cobb. Another of the very old houses was built by Carter Kinmon and was called the "Gunboat House." It was built near the creek and seemed to follow its outline. According to legend it got its name during the Civil War. It seems that small boats traveled up and down the creek at night and often tied up to the porch to deliver supplies. However, we do not know that it was used as a dwelling house and at one time served as a school house before the school was built on the hill. Mrs. Mann Sidebottom attended school in the "Gunboat House" while Miss Ida Brissey was teacher.

Lusby's Mill was incorporated. The town limits extended from the place where Rance Plunkett's store now stands to the top of the hill on the Sweet Owen and Lusby's Mill road and to the top of the hill where the Elk Ridge road joined the Lusby's Mill and Breck roads. The main street was forty feet wide. The one side street ran north until it reached the creek.

Some of the officers were A. J. McGibney, Asa Cobb, Jim Epperson, Bob Kinmon, and Jim Reed. They held court in the blacksmith's shop near the mill. One day when Asa Cobb was squire a woman ran to him and begged him to put her husband in jail for beating her but he refused to do it. He said that he had already put this man in jail seven times for beating his wife and each time she had pleaded for him to be released. So, Mr. Cobb said that if he ever put the man in jail again it would be for something worse than wife beating.

Some of the very early doctors were Franks, Dawson, Perkins, Sparks, Denny and Taylor. The last doctor was Marvin Ransdell. I remember him as being a very jolly person who visited with the families of his patients after he had administered the necessary medicine. He often played lively fiddle tunes which in all probability helped some patients as much as the best medicine ever concealed in sugar coated pills.

The families of the village felt that they needed a church closer than Mussel Shoals. So the Baptist church, a two-story structure, was built on the same plot of land where the new building now stands. The upper floor was used by the Masonic Lodge. It was not until 1913 that the Junior Lodge was organized. The Methodist church was erected a few years later.

So many people had difficulty in getting drinking water, they decided to dig a public well. Joel Cobb was asked to find the vein of water, which he did with the aid of a peach tree limb. The well was dug and walled by Riley Stamper and Granville Perkins. Their wages were 50¢ a day.

The farmers cleared the land to grow, corn, small grain and other food products. The crops were very good and somebody decided that much money could be made out of the grain if it were converted into distilled spirits. So a distillery was built about a mile from the village and it was said to have produced a fine quality of pure old copper distilled whiskey. It was hauled from the distillery to a storage house, named the Bond House, where it had the stamp of approval placed on it. According to folklore there was another product called moonshine, because it was made at night. It seems that it was made at various places and at many different times but it was stored in ravines and sink holes. From the two sources the Lusby's Mill bar rooms were always well stocked. The moonshine was cheaper but I have no doubt that the moonshine and bottled-in-bond whiskey had the same effect upon the bodies, minds and souls of the individuals who drank it. And that effect was far from the good results that would have been attained had that grain been used for food.

Some of the first outspoken people in favor of prohibition were Alfred Cobb, Mrs. Harrison Bennett and a woman known as "Aunt Milly." However, prohibition was not declared until after World War I but the old distillery closed in 1897.

Few newspapers were received at Lusby's Mill and consequently when the Civil War started hardly anybody knew what it was all about save some shouting about states' rights. In 1861 Brig. General Humphrey Marshall opened a recruiting camp on the hill just above The Mill on the farm now owned by Goebel Ayres, and the drinking water for the soldiers was hauled from a big spring on the farm now owned by John Hughes. A number of men enlisted because they thought it their duty to be prepared to protect their own homes, but in only a short time these men were sent to various parts of Kentucky and Tennessee.

The people lived in constant fear of runaway slaves, invading armies and bushwhackers. Perhaps the worst fear was suffered the day that a man raced his horse into the village and reported that a girl at Beech Branch had seen the Negroes coming. In only a very short time people were racing to The Mill from every direction. The story expanded as rapidly as the people rushed to and fro seeking protection. One man estimated the army of Negroes at 500 million. A scouting party was organized and sent to Beech Branch while the men armed themselves with axes and rifles, and an old man led the women and children, armed with butcherknives, to the woods. Someone suggested that they pray but many of them felt that it was too late to do any good. However, the scouts came back and reported that the girl had seen only one dark skinned white man carrying an umbrella. She thought that he was a Negro armed with a gun and went to a neighbor's house crying as she told her story. The people were greatly relieved when they heard the truth but many of them had difficulty in regaining their goods that they had so freely given to their neighbors only a short time before they fled into the woods. In a few hours the people were settled in their homes but it took several days to get the message to the military companies that their services were not needed.

But this was only the beginning of excitement! Morgan's raiders passed through this section and on one occasion Union soldiers rode through Lusby's Mill with a Confederate soldier tied on a horse. Then, one day John Nash, a school teacher, came to The Mill to visit friends but he stayed at the grocery bar until after dark. He mounted his horse and had started home when he met Union soldiers near the spot where R. N. Greene's house now stands. They commanded him to halt and when he failed to obey their order, they shot him off his horse. The Lingenfelter brothers while serving as spies in the Confederate Army were captured by the soldiers and taken to Williamstown for court-martial. They were told to turn their backs but they refused to turn and were shot down, face forward. They are buried on the farm now owned by Jesse Simpson. (This information also appears in history of the Howard family in this book.)

Bushwhackers went to the home of Isaac Ingram to prepare their dinner; then, they took all of Mr. Ingram's money and his two horses.

After the Civil War one Confederate soldier said he would not have voted to keep Negroes in slavery and if he could recall the time, he certainly would not have fought for that purpose.

For many years there were only bridle paths and wagon roads through the wilderness but finally turnpike companies were organized for the purpose of building good roads. The Elk Ridge turnpike was built by George Chandler in 1878. Bill Booth paved the Breck-Elk Ridge turnpike and A. J. McGibney built the road from Lusby Mill bridge to Lish Smith's shop. Toll gates were placed at decided distances for the purpose of collecting money to pay for the roads. The toll was from one to three cents per mile depending upon the kind of vehicle. However, roads in Lusby Mill community were purchased by the county 1897-98 and each man in the community was required to work six days a year to keep them in good condition. This plan worked well until farmers started driving Model-T Fords. Then, it was necessary for the county to collect tax for the purpose of buying machinery to maintain the county roads. In 1935 the Hallam-Corinth road number 330 was constructed by the State Highway Department and completed in 1947. Other roads are now under the rural highway system.

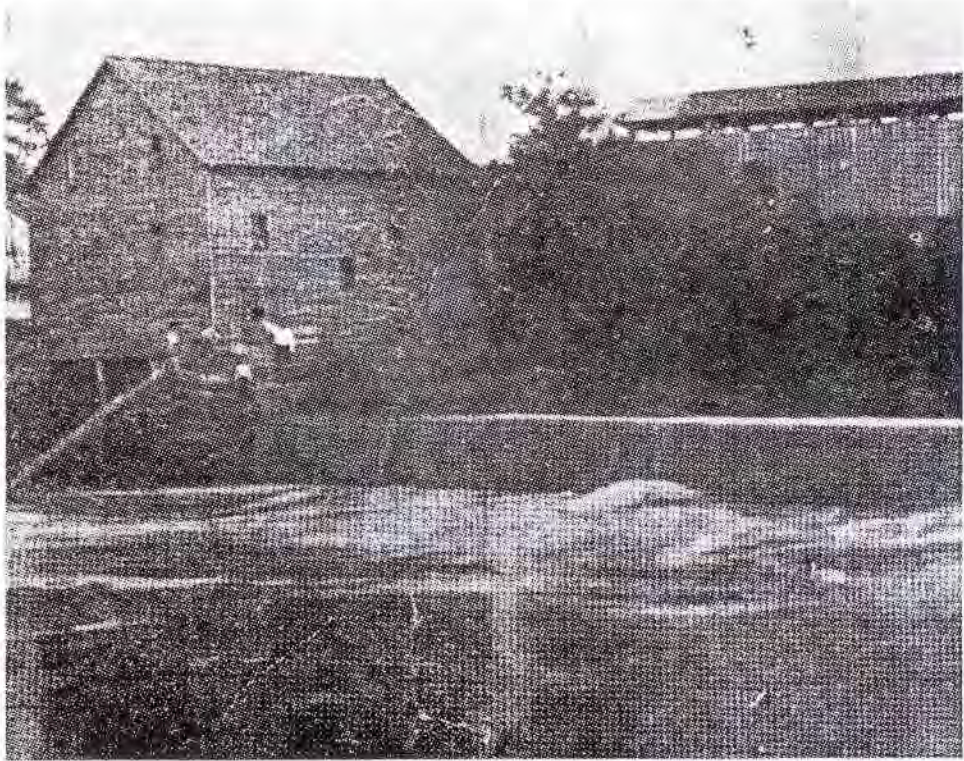
The mail routed to the Lusby Mill post office was very light except for the Sears-Roebuck catalogues. Jesse Smith, one of the toll gate keepers, car-

ried the mail to and from Corinth three times a week, and Bulger Jones was carrier between Hallam and Lusby's Mill offices. The first daily mail route started about 1900 when June Gayle was Congressman. Tom Clarke was the first carrier. Then, L. E. Doane succeeded him and continued in this capacity until his death in May, 1946. Onnie Jones and Chester Coleman have served as carriers on rural Route 1 since that date.

Modern conveniences came slowly to Lusby's Mill. For many years the only telephone was in the store building of Charlie Gaines. Coal oil lamps and little Delco sets were the only means of artificial light until electricity was made available through R.E.A.

It may be that our community has great wealth stored under the earth. About 65 years ago mica was found on the Sidebottom farm and a white rock formation containing a little lead has been discovered near Eagle Creek. A gas vein was struck on the John Smither farm during the years of the depression and a strange smoke or mist appears and disappears over the woods owned by R. N. Greene and Lewis Mason.

Lusby's Mill has two voting precincts and is over-whelmingly Democratic. The largest vote, almost 400, was polled just after the 19th Amendment was added to the Constitution. In speaking of politics, I am reminded of a joke on Sam Bennett: When Mr. Bennett was a little barefoot boy his mother



OLD MILL AND COVERED BRIDGE

sent him to The Mill to buy coffee. A preacher overtook him down the road and let him ride in his buggy. "Sammy", the preacher queried, "How many churches are there in The Mill?" "Two", the boy replied. "What denomination?" asked the preacher. Sam hesitated a minute or so, then answered, "Democrat, I think." (Note: Mr. Bennett has been a loyal Republican for almost half a century.)

People from Lusby's Mill have entered almost every occupation and the majority of them have succeeded in their chosen work. However, many of the best people have remained in the village, devoting their life to tilling of

the soil and maintenance of real community homes.

The scene has changed so much within the 150 years that we hardly dare dream of what the future will bring, although most of us remember Lusby's Mill as it was before highway 330 and the new concrete bridge "marred" its natural charm. The best view of the little village was at the elbow turn in the Elk Ridge road at the top of the hill above the iron bridge. I have often stopped at the spot when the eastern horizon was still rosy and watched the gray mist vanish from the valley while coils of smoke rose from the chimneys of the white houses surrounded by dewey carpets of green on both sides of the wide, straight street. I have watched the farmers do their morning chores, the women feed their flocks of hens, while children ran, with books and lunches, to get on the school bus. The bus rattled over the plank floor of the bridge and roared as it cautiously pulled up the hill and the elbow turn near the bridge. Dogs could often be heard while chasing rabbits through the cornfields along rows that followed the contour of the creek. The view of this neat little village nestled in the horseshoe bend of Eagle Creek was enough to give anybody a sense of peace and security.

Then, as I sauntered down the hill, my eyes feasted on the beauty of God's creation. Huge old trees on either side of the narrow road overlapped branches, making a high green arch from the top to the bottom. The foliage was so thick that the sun filtered through in small patches only in the middle of the day. Wild flowers bloomed in the coarse black soil along the road. I have stood on the old bridge gazing at the rippling water, the limber willow limbs dancing in the breeze, and have watched the birds swoop down to get sips of water while in constant roar it poured over the remainder of the old mill dam.

I believe the author of the song, "The Old Mill Stream", must have received his inspiration in a similar setting, but doubt if I shall ever view a place which will favorably compare with my fond memories of Lusby's Mill.



An exile from home, splendor dazzles in vain;
O, give me my lowly thatched cottage again!
The birds singing gayly, that came at my call—
Give me them,—and the peace of mind, dearer than all!
Let others delight 'mid new pleasures to roam,
But give me, oh, give me the pleasures of home!

—"Home, Sweet Home", By John Howard Payne

