

Marquand Historical Survey

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THE HISTORY OF MARQUAND

Through the Smoke of the Iron Mountain Railroad

By K. J. H. Cochran

Jane Whitener was among the first passengers who made the trip through the tunnel after it was completed just south of Marquand. She remembered the details of the journey to tell her family and friends and years afterwards enjoyed recounting the story.

Thomas Allen, president of the railroad after the Civil War, had agreed to extend the line to the border between Arkansas and Missouri. The first extension was from Bismarck east through Marquand, Charleston and Belmont, and therefore called the Belmont Branch. At the time, 1868, and immediately afterwards, Allen deemed it more profitable to build the line in that direction because there was a vast supply of lumber to be transported, and the land seemed more productive than that of the hill country in the Ozarks, south of Ironton. The tunnel had been a problem, however, and blasting through the hill near Marquand had taken not only money but skill.

Everyone in the vicinity had been excited about the tunnel. It went straight through the hill, and was a quarter of a mile long. Looking through the opening at one end, the far side seemed like a small dot until someone explained that the intense darkness inside the hill made the opening look smaller than it really was.

The morning the first passenger train carried the local residents on the trial run over the track was a memorable occasion. The engineer used all of the steam he could generate in the boiler

to make the trip as fast as possible, without running any danger of having the cars jump the track. The smoke from the engine filled the train and everyone was cautioned to hold their breath or to put a handkerchief over their faces.

When the train emerged on the other end of the tunnel, the world seemed unusually bright and everyone on board took deep breaths of the clear country air. As they brushed the cinders from their clothes, the prevailing question was, "Is my face streaked with soot?"

When you entered Marquand on the train from either direction, the long row of buildings and houses along the main street of the town was an interesting sight. They were constructed of wood because making brick was not necessary when lumber was almost free for the taking. The chimneys were usually made of river rock which was also plentiful, the source being the creek that meandered through the center of the village, or Castor River on the south boundary.

Passengers who alighted at the station were conscious of the spicy odor of sourwood that emanated from the cribs of freshly stacked ties and boards near the station. John Q. D. Whitener had a sawmill not far from Marquand as did Gross and James, John Stackey, and later in 1890, Ellwood & Teasdale. The ties came from the Ellwood & Teasdale Mills.

When the railroad first began to lay the track, the ties were cut and shaped by hand with a broad ax. But when the steam engine was introduced for power, the ties were cut with a blade.

Although the buildings along the railroad concourse have

changed during the years that have elapsed since the first passenger train carried the excited residents on that initial trip, some of the distinguishing features that were characteristic of Marquand then still remain. Many of the large hospitable homes still stand along the shaded streets; the creek and river has not changed its course; the hills are densely covered with timber, because in recent years reforestation has been practiced, and the air is laden with the scent of sourwood from the tie cribs stacked along the south side of the tracks. Today the aroma of creosote mingles with the smell of the wood.

Such residents as Jim Reagan, Will Venable, Charles Wallace and Sandlin Redford will explain Marquand's history in this vein: "It was called the Whitener Settlement until the name was changed to honor Henry G. Marquand, an official of the Iron Mountain Railroad, who made a generous donation of \$1000 to start a church in the town. The most important business was lumber and the manufacture of railroad ties. The mills were kept busy and most of them sold to T. J. Moss from St. Louis. At first Mr. Moss shipped all of his ties over the Missouri Pacific Railroad, but before his death in 1889, he favored the Houck Lines. He and Louis Houck became good friends.

"The ties were taken by rail to Cape Girardeau where they were loaded on barges and transported north on the Mississippi to St. Louis. After Mr. Moss' death the company was reorganized. Not too long ago a new corporation was formed, called the Moss American Corporation. It is a composite of 8 or 10 companies, including the T. J. Moss Company, American Creosote Company, Potosi Lumber

and Tie Company, Hobbs Wester, etc. The new organization is a subsidiary of Kerr McGee. Roy Denman is their local representative in Marquand. The corporation is the largest company dealing in ties in the country.

"Other buyers come into Marquand several times a month representing Koppers Company of Pittsburg, an affiliate of the Andrew J. Mellon interests, the Jennison & Wright Company, etc. The sawmills are located all through the countryside. Some of them are: Everett McComrick, 6 miles south on Highway B; the Lord brothers, and their father, who own individual mills, three miles north on Highway A, and Bert Tucker whose mill is one mile out of town. There are three or four other mills."

R. W. Smith is the president of the Bank of Marquand since his father, R. A. Smith's death in March 1967. The bank is located next door to the old Reagan Hotel. It is a small modern building in contrast to the late Victorian structures on the block. The other officers are Ellouise Smith, Jerry Smith and Valleta Robinson. The directors are W. R. Myers, R. W. Smith, J. B. Schnapp and L. O. Keathley. Marquand's first bank was instituted by Ed. Homan, an old resident who was a station agent, a merchant, and later a bank president. N. B. Watts was his cashier. Later Lester Whitener was president and E. E. Moyers was cashier. Later Lester Whitener was president and E. E. Moyers was cashier. When L. D. Whitener moved to Fredericktown in 1934 he sold the bank to C. J. Whitener, who in turn sold it to R. A. Smith in 1952.

The residents have been in favor of a sound monetary policy

since the town was established. They thought it wiser to put their money in a bank than a cache in a log in the wall of the house, or bury it in the ground.

One of the last station agents in Marquand was Sandlin Redford. He retired August 31, 1959, after serving the Missouri Pacific for more than fifty years. He began to work for the railroad June 4, 1909, at the age of 17, and became agent at Riverside, just south of St. Louis where he remained until he was transferred to Marquand. He resides in a large two-story frame house in the John Starkey subdivision south of the tracks. The house was built in about 1888 by Dr. Lafayette Hull and his wife, Sarah. Other physicians in Marquand were Dr. George Gale, Dr. Charles Carr, Dr. Charles Farrar, who developed a cure for skin cancer, and Dr. John M. Finney.

The Hull-Redford House is a typical Southern home, with wide center halls, upstairs and downstairs; a winding staircase; many rooms located on either side of the halls, and a porticoed two-story front porch across the entire north side of the house. The porch is supplied with comfortable rocking chairs and two friendly beagles guard the entrance. The yard contains fruit and nut trees and many flowering shrubs and plants and is enclosed with an iron fence. The house is a hospitable home, like others in the town.

South of the house are three important manufacturing plants: Angelica Uniform Company, St. Louis, Factory No. 8; M. & B. Brush and Crayon Company, St. Louis, Plant No. 2, and the Screw Products Company, locally owned.

D. J. Spane; president of the local Chamber of Commerce, will list at least 14 retail firms who occupy Main Street sites or are in the business district. Sheriff Harold Myers tabulated 300 residents in Marquand, when he took the census recently in connection with the installation of a new water system. An equal number come into the town daily to work in the plants and retail stores.

Black River Electric Company furnishes power for the city and residential needs. The post office is headed by E. A. Homan, Jr. and Mrs. Thomas Brotherton is assistant and clerk.

The high school-grade complex is located at the summit of Pike's Peak Hill and is under the supervision of L. J. DesPres the new principal, who followed James Vineyard after the latter served the Marquand school as principal from 1954 to '67. The large gymnasium is constructed of river rock and was built by W. P. A. in ~~1934~~. 1932-33

In an old issue of Thomas I. Estes "Marquand Echo", interesting facts about the town as it was in 1889 may be learned. Today the town is classified as a fourth class city. An electric Diesel No. 421 or No. 422, pulls the Missouri Pacific Freight through the concourse and the smell of coal smoke from the stack of the old Iron Mountain engine has been forgotten...like most of the facts of yesteryears.

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