

# History of Trenton

by Martha R. Ware

Trenton is a small town in the southwestern corner of Todd County. A typically southern atmosphere prevails here with gracious people, pretty homes and well kept lawns. There is an abundance of civic pride that helps enhance the beauty of the town.

The first recorded date of settlement was 1796 when Brewer and Martha Reeves came here from Virginia and settled near the site of Trenton. At that time, Todd County was in Christian County.

Lewis Leavell came in 1819 and it was he who laid out the town in 59 lots around what is now the intersection of Clarksville Street and Hopkinsville Street. In 1867, after the coming of the railroad, there was an addition of 30 lots made by Lawson and Colwell. These lots were to the north and east of the original 59. The legislature of 1883-84 increased the corporate limits by about half.

Mr. Leavell at first named the town for himself, calling it Lewisville, but had to change it because there was already a post office in Kentucky by that name. This is when the name Trenton was chosen. History does not record why he chose the name Trenton.

Mr. Leavell was one of the largest real estate owners in the county and it was his desire that Trenton be the county seat. Maj. John Gray of Elkton had the same desire for his town. Col. Elijah G. Sebree, on behalf of Leavell and Maj. Gray debated the matter. A bitter battle ensued which almost erupted into a duel. The central location of Elkton may have influenced the outcome.

There were many distinguished pioneer settlers who settled in or near Trenton. Maj. Sam Moore settled prior to 1809, and soon became one of the larger land-owners in the county. At one time he owned nearly all of the Trenton District. The tale is told that a Mr. Kennedy came to this

community and Maj. Moore offered to sell him 200 acres of land in exchange for his saddle-horse and all the land he wanted for fifty cents an acre. Mr. Kennedy declined his offer because he thought the land too barren for him to make a living. Maj. Moore lived here for many years and was one of the leading men of the county.

Col. Beverly Stubblefield settled three miles southwest of Trenton where Tarleton Averitt now lives. He is buried on that farm.

In 1810 Elijah Garth came to Trenton from Albemarle Co. Virginia. Many of his descendants still live here.

Robert Coleman, a lawyer, was Todd County's first candidate for the House of Representatives, (defeated). John S. Anderson became the first Representative. Mr. Coleman Built the Les Radford House. Ed and Shirley's son Leslie lives there now. Mr. Coleman is buried on that farm.

In 1810 Fendal Sebree came to Trenton from Virginia. He bought land and settled about two miles south of Trenton on land now owned by S. B. Carter. His son Col. E. G. Sebree was born here in 1817 and was a leader in the community for most of his adult life. Descendants of Col. Sebree reside in Trenton and still own Sebree land.

John McFadden was a colorful personality, better know for his fighting ability and many a brush with the Indians.

So many of the families who settled here came from Virginia. Many had family members who had fought in the American Revolution, the War of 1812 or even the Civil War.

Many of the family names of the early settlers are still familiar in this community. To mention a few: Gilliam Smith Lawson White Mimms Ware Moore Anderson Wood Williams Dickinson Watts Waller McElwain Chesnut Maynard Tutt Young Adams Gower Henderson Harrell Ramsey Payne Taylor Crutchfield Patterson. These people left a proud heritage to their heirs.

Trenton has survived many disastrous fires, the worst in 1932 when seven buildings were destroyed at a loss of \$50,000. R. O. Glascock's store, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church and the Post Office were all burned twice with a period of years.

Race paths now called racetracks were established around Trenton in the early 1800's. The races became a traditional event which drew large crowds of men.

Van Carter began horse breeding in 1947. He has bred and trained a number of fine horses since that time on his regulation half-mile track. He is actively involved in the training of harness racers at this time.

The Trenton Post Office was established in 1819. The first Post Offices were often in a General Store and this may have been the case in Trenton. Post Masters have included Arch Dickinson, E.C. Stockwell, Charles Balee, Frank Mimms, Richard Sadler and Rhonda Powell.

Doctors who have practiced in Trenton since 1900 are:

- *Dr Robert Frey*
- *Dr Edgar Riley*
- *Dr Charles M. Gower*
- *Dr J.C. Woodall*
- *Dr. John F. Standard*
- *Dr. Fred Rawlings*
- *Dr. Christine Asher*
- *Dr Mark Campbell*

Pharmacists in Trenton Since 1900:

- *C.W. Royster*
- *Homer Harold Hurst*
- *Max Cross*
- *Henry Maynard*
- *Ted Frazier Jr.*
- *Gary Aussenbaugh*

Before the days of modern transportation and communication Trenton was a rather lively and self reliant little town. There were two banks and many stores and shops that served the people well. Since 1920 many have disappeared and today only a few remain. The following were in operation between 1920 and the late 1980's:

Glascock's Grocery (60 years at four different locations)

Joiner's Grocery

C.C. Patterson's Grocery

Overton & Son Grocery

R.A. Williams Grocery & Dry Goods

J.B. Williams Grocery & Dry Goods

Dalton Dickonson's Grocery

J.F. Kirkman Dry Goods

Machesney & Thompson Hardware

Cole & Finney Hardware

Trenton Sweet Feed Mill

Standard Station

Gulf Station

Ramsey Furniture & Undertaking

McAlister Shoe Shop Carousel Shop

Hunter's Garage

G.E. Garth Real Estate

Dixie Bee Line Garage

F.H. Adams Barber Shop

Cottrell's Barber Shop

Carter & Thompson Grocery

Ray's Food Center

Carol & Wade Food Center

Dorothy Payne's Beauty Shop

Allen's Specialty

Chesnut & Orr Mill

Trenton Stockyard

Talles Allen Barber Shop

Current Businesses include:

Trover Clinic  
G& J Service  
United Southern Bank  
W.F. Ware & Company  
Beatty's Food Center  
Davenport's Grocery  
Trenton Beauty Salon  
Sandy's Beauty Shop  
Trenton Post Office  
Simmon's Flea Market  
Hyams Repair Shop  
Cox Trucking  
Sears Trucking

In 1874 the Bank of Trenton was organized. Original stockholders were Mrs. Stigger, Perkins, Simms, Col. Sebree and Charles Day. This bank closed in 1881.

Planters Bank of Trenton was opened in 1922 later became Planters Bank of Todd County. Today it is United Southern Bank and currently serves the people of this community well.

Mr. & Mrs. S.L. Steger deeded to Trenton 5 1/4 acres of land in Sept. 1891. The deed said it was to be used as a cemetery and called "Edgewood". The first person to be buried was the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. J.J. Carr in Dec. 1891.

The Trenton Town Board is responsible for the maintenance. The Trenton Garden Club is responsible for the beautification. The Dillard Payne family donated an irrigation system and in 1990 2 3/4 acres of land to enlarge the original plot.

The Trenton churches and the schools have been the fiber that has held this community together over the years. The schools are a thing of the past but the churches have stood the tests of time and are the backbone of the community today.

Lebanon Baptist Church was organized in 1823 near Trenton and the

Trenton Baptist Church was an outgrowth of that. In 1860 a church was completed on land given by Lewis Leavell and at the second business meeting the Lebanon Church book was presented to Trenton Baptist Church and with this gesture Lebanon ended and Trenton began.

In 1933 the building was destroyed by fire for the second time, only the front wall was left standing. Volunteer firemen saved the pews, the piano and the Chancel furniture. The building was rebuilt and the salvaged pieces are in use today. The Rev. J.H. Maddox was minister at this time.

In 1949 the educational building was added, in 1956 during the pastorate of the Rev. Northern a new pastorium was built.

The Rev. Ronnie Grace is the current minister and acting board: Malcome Sadler-Chairman, R.T. Averitt, Stewart Bland, Willis Camp, Warren Claytor, Richard Dickenson Jr., Charles Leavell, Ed Radford and Clyde Woods.

In 1865 members from "Old Corinth" Church came into Trenton and built the first brick church in town, the Christian Church. The land for the church was given by Mrs. E.G. Sebree, the same lot that the church stands on today. The present building was built in 1900. Some of the bricks from the first church were used in the construction.

The Trenton Christian Church has had many prominent ministers; to mention a few the Reverends A.M Machesney (31 yrs), Bell (father of Parker Bell) Patterson, Edward Coffman and the last minister the Rev. Charlie Sparenberg. The last active board; Stanley Luttrell-Chairman, William Earl Luttrell, Dick Bates, Pete Waldrop, Al Ware and Bob Lawson. This beautiful little church closed its doors for the last time in 1974, due to decline in membership. It is currently used as a private dwelling.

Trenton Presbyterian Church was organized at the home of Mrs. C.E. Burge in 1900 as a Cumberland Presbyterian Church by the Reverends J.M. Gill and B.F. Watson. Elders chosen were J.T. Harrell, S.D. Chesnut, C.E. Burge and one deacon J.W. Chesnut.

The gothic, stone church was built on a lot given by Mrs. Martha Chesnut Burge. Handsome memorial windows were gifts of the Chesnut family.

Through a generous bequest in the will of a beloved charter member, Miss Carrie Harrell, it was possible in 1960 to build an educational building, the "Carrie Harrell Memorial".

Carolyn Ryals has been church organist for 60 years. The last thirty she played an organ given by her brother Dillard Payne, in memory of their parents Mr. & Mrs. F.D. Payne.

The Trenton Presbyterian Church is a member of Western Kentucky Presbytery. Current minister and board: the Rev. Carl Rogers, Charles Nabb, Frank Cox, Tom Cain, Edward Cox, Russell Frederick and Lou Dudley Camp-clerk. Lorraine Chesnut is church treasurer.

On May 31, 1874 the first Methodist Church in Trenton was dedicated. It was a frame building and on the lot where the Methodist Church now stands. It was a member of the Russellville District. In 1906 it was put in the Hopkinsville District where it remains today. That same year the frame church was torn down and the materials and church bell were sold to Mr. Stack who built a Granary that still stands on the Glen Hughs farm today.

A new church built of brick was dedicated in 1909. This church was used until it was destroyed by fire in 1932. In 1933 under the leadership of the Rev. Ashby a basement was dug that became the home of the church for about 9 years.

The Rev. J.P. Booker became minister in 1938 and during the six years he was here a new church of native limestone was built. The dedication was in May of 1942. Then on a sub-zero morning in 1958 this church also was destroyed by fire. Plans were made immediately for a new church. The present brick church bell was returned to the church, a gift from Mrs. Garland Harris, and can be heard on Sunday morning. The current minister is the Rev. Robert Dunlop. 1994 board; Herbert Adams, Barbara

Crouch, J.C. Woodall, Margaret Lawson, D.T. Turner and Sammy Gilliam.

The Queen Ann Baptist Church was founded in 1856 by the Rev. Peter Bronough. The first meeting house was a frame structure on the land across the road from the Edgewood Cemetery. This land is not the site of the Trenton Community Cemetery.

The present concrete block church is located at 4<sup>th</sup> and Railroad St. in Trenton. This building was dedicated in 1944. The Rev. Jesse Ladd was the pastor.

In Jan of 1993 Queen Ann Baptist Church celebrated its 137<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A lot of hard work, many sacrifices, many prayers and much dedication, on the part of the members has made this possible.

The current minister is the Rev. Robert L. Jones and the trustees; Sisters Lena Moody, Bessie Cross, Brothers A.D. Dudley, Frank Walker and Pealo Russell. The deacons; Brothers Jefferson, Meriweather Dudley, Cross and Walker.

The first Methodist Church (CME) was built on a section of land across from Edgewood Cemetery. In 1881 Col. E.G. Sebree contributed the land upon which the present church was built. Thus the name 'Sebree's Chapel CME Church.' The Rev. J.W. McClure was pastor when the present log building was constructed. In 1945 under the leadership of the Rev. J.E. Alfred the first extensive remodeling was done. Then in 1950 a new pastorium was built under the direction of the Rev. Jordon Davis. During the 1970's improvements were made on the interior of the building.

This church has through the years had outstanding Junior and Senior Choirs. The current minister and board; the Rev. Billy Jo Liggon, Lisa Lewis, Susie Cager, Anita Leavell, Louise Lewis, and one man Donnie Dickerson. Organist Lisa Lewis.

Many years ago a wooden sign which proclaimed the inscription "Best Little Town on Earth" hung over the entrance to the old Post Office. This

proclamation made a indelible impression upon the minds of many people and across the years they have evidenced their emotions about this town in numerous ways. The fourth of July week-end in 1991, saw over 600 former students of old Trenton School gather for a Grand Reunion to renew old acquaintances and to rekindle their affection for the “Best Little Town on Earth.”