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Dayton Historical Society & Old School Museum

The Dayton History News is produced and distributed by the Dayton Historical Society and the Dayton Old School Museum.

The Society meets in Parker Hall at 6 P.M. the last Monday of each month for a historical program presented by guest speakers. The program is preceded by a Society business/project status meeting and followed by refreshments.

The Old School Museum is located next to Parker Hall at 111 West Houston St. in Dayton and is open Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

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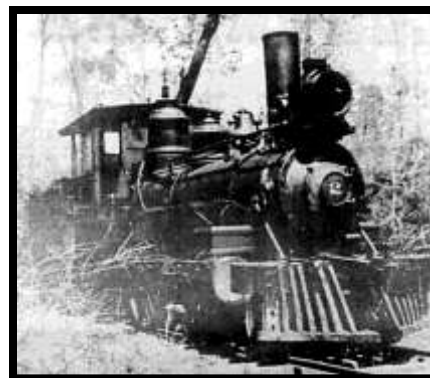
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Dayton History News

Railways & Lumber



Railroads found their way into America in the late 1820s and changed the mode of long distant transportation for people and products.

Widespread adoption for timber operations was delayed due to the challenges of creating railways through steep, rugged countryside where logging took place.

It wasn't until railroad innovations of the 1880s became available that construction of logging railways became commonplace.

This spurred establishing lumber mills in communities where workers were readily available.

Previously, logs were simply dumped into rivers to float downstream to saw mills. Boats risked collisions with log jams.

Dayton has been a railroad center since the year 1860 but reached its height between 1904 and 1930.

The Beaumont, Sour Lake and Western Railway built in 1904 which traversed through Kenefick spurred building several sawmills there.

The huge Dayton Lumber Company pine mill was also built in 1904 at Ladd, Texas (a now defunct town on the west edge of present Dayton).

Dayton Lumber also built its own private 13 mile railway which ran north to Lum and Macedonia on the southern edge of Tarkington Prairie.

The track was named the Trinity Valley & Northern Railway (TV&N) and ran between Dayton and Cleveland.

Dayton Lumber also purchased four locomotive engines including the one shown in the upper left image.

The railway serviced the spine of a network of logging tracks laid into the heavy woodlands of western Liberty County.

A lateral spur was laid about every mile, running a half-mile to each side. The logging engines moved down these simple tracks to pick up the logs for the Dayton lumber mill.

The timing of these developments correlates with the North Dayton Oilfield discovery and founding of Dayton State Bank by Ross Sterling.

Unfortunately, the 1930s Great Depression devastated families and businesses. The Texas oil boom and the need for lumber to build oil derricks filled the gap, that is, until the transition to steel derricks.

Pioneer Pruetts Profile

Dayton's pioneer Beasley Pruett was born in 1740 in Virginia, the son of Uriah and Elizabeth Pruett.

While living in Virginia, he married Eleanor Humphreys and had 7 children. They moved to Mississippi in 1783 and then to Louisiana in 1803 where Eleanor died in 1805.

Beasley then married Lucy Sims Rogers in 1808 and had 3 children – Cynthia Riley in 1812, Beasley Jr. in 1816 and Edmond in 1819.

The family moved to the Atascocita District (i.e., West Liberty / Dayton) in 1824 when Beasley was age 84. They settled on the west side of the Trinity River – now Kenefick.

Seven years later in 1831, Beasley finally received a Mexican grant for their land. By this time, he was 91 years old.

He died in 1839 at age 99 and was buried on his land – which is now the French Cemetery (formerly Pruett Cemetery) and Dayton's City Park.

His daughter Cynthia (1812-1871) married William Everett in 1828. They had 2 girls. After William died, Cynthia married Benjamin Green in 1832 with whom she had 8 children. Cynthia and Benjamin are buried in the French Cemetery.

Beasley's eldest son Beasley Jr. (1816-1874) married Eulalie Dugat, the daughter of West Liberty pioneers Joseph and Celina Dugat, of Louisiana.

Beasley Jr. and Eulalie had 1 child, Amanda Melvina, before Eulalie passed away in 1844.



In 1845, Jr. married Rebecca Linney. They had 10 children together. Rebecca was the daughter of Michael and Elizabeth Linney.

Beasley Jr. prospered in the cattle business and owned many acres of ranch and farm land. He died in 1874 at the age of 58 and was buried in the French Cemetery.

Beasley's youngest son Edmond (1819-1845) was prosperous – the owner of 4,428 acres, 19 slaves, 350 cattle and 22 horses as of 1840.

Edmond married Martha Munson; however, he died in 1845 at age 26. His widow Martha then married William Orr about 1850.

After William died in 1854, Martha married Isaiah Day in 1855. Isaiah became Dayton's namesake.

Note: Beasley Sr.'s sons, Beasley Jr. and Edmond, fought in the Texas Revolution including the Battle of San Jacinto of 1836 and served in the Texas Militia with Capt. Reason Green's Company in 1842.

Dayton-Goose Creek Railway Company

After the discovery of oil at Goose Creek in 1916, Ross S. Sterling filed an incorporation charter on July 24, 1917 to establish the Dayton-Goose Creek Railway (DGCR) Company.

At that time, Sterling was President of Humble Oil & Refining Company and later became Texas Governor. He was also an officer for Dayton Mills – the successor to the Dayton Lumber Company. Dayton Mills already owned the Trinity Valley & Northern Railway (TV&N).

The 22.9 miles of rail from Dayton to Goose Creek was completed in 1918. The 2.5 miles from Goose Creek to Baytown was completed in 1919.

The destination in Baytown was the site of the mammoth Humble Oil refinery under construction.

The Dayton-Goose Creek Railway connected with both the Southern Pacific line and the TV&N short-line which served the Dayton Mills facility in Dayton. The TV&N rail also connected to the Beaumont, Sour Lake & Western in Fullerton.

The DGCR was sold to Southern Pacific in 1926 which transferred it to Texas & New Orleans in 1934. The disposition of 4 locomotives (photo below) owned by DGCR is unknown.



Dayton Lumber Co. Operations

Dayton Lumber Company began operations in July 1906.

The company's timber holdings in Liberty County were about 23,000 acres of shortleaf yellow pine with a scattering of white and red oak, ash, hickory and gum – located on the west side of the Trinity River.

Logging operations were carried out at a camp 12 miles north of the lumber mill using 90 oxen and a few mules.

A railway log loader (photo below) hoisted the cut trees onto 35 Marshall skeleton logging cars that were pulled by a single 60-ton rod engine locomotive via the 13 mile Trinity Valley & Northern railway to the Dayton Lumber mill's rail yard.



At the saw mill, logs were moved from the logging cars to a log deck without being placed in a pond.

The mill consisted of a saw mill which produced about 85,000 feet of lumber per day; a planing mill with a tram, loading platform and six machines; two deep water wells (380' & 650'); and three 18'x90' dry kilns with a cooling shed.

South of the plant were eighty cottages and a hotel for use by the 200 to 225 employees.