Roane County Celebrated 107th Birthday in March 1963

History

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While West Virginia is this year celebrating her 100th birthday, Roane County has the distinction of already passing that milestone. The county of Roane was created by an act of the Virginia General Assembly on March 11, 1856, seven years before West Virginia became a state. But long before 1856, probably 1814, the first families were living in what is now Roane County. Parts of this county had been surveyed as early as 1785; had been visited by Jesse Hughes, the great scout and Indian fighter, as early a 1774, and a party of soldiers from Fort Pitt, (Pittsburgh) had passed through in 1765.

The county was named for Judge Roane of the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia, whose wife was Anne, the daughter of Patrick Henry. The county seat was named for Capt. John Spencer, a native of Roane County. In her early days the city of Spencer was known as Tanner's Crossroads, the first settler here having been Samuel Tanner who made his first home under a rock cliff and near a 'cold spring,' hence the name of the steam flowing through the town, Spring Creek. The Spencer High School is now situated on the top of the historic cliff, with the high school athletic field immediately in front. Later, it was known as Cassville, and for a time was called New California: A family who lived in the same section had decided to move on, saying there were headed for California; but when they got as far as Spencer, probably a distance of 10 or 15 miles, decided to stay and forget about going any further.

The first settlers in the vicinity of Reedy came there in 1816 and the first post office in the county was established at Reedy in 1853.

The greatest asset of any land is the people and Roane County may well be unique, the progressive people who have lived here have proved this over and over again. Drilling for oil and gas began in the county as early as 1868 and over the years Roane County has produced many millions of cubic feet of natural gas. The city of Spencer began using natural gas for light and heat in 1897. The nation's largest underground gas storage system is located here. With industry and manufacturing becoming greater, still Roane Countians look to the land; if not for a livelihood, then for a way of life, this being a region of many small farms and good homes.

Roane County has much of which to be proud: first of all, the land, which supports some of the finest cattle in the nation . Spencer Manufacturing Co., founded in 1948, employs several hundred people and produces fine knitwear. The Spencer Livestock Exchange is one of the largest markets in the eastern United States. The greatly expanded Monarch Rubber Co., is the result of the experiments of a former dentist of the town. Located about eight miles from Spencer is the 1,000-acre Methodist Education Center. Not nearly complete as yet, the West Virginia Conference will use this center for workshops, conferences and official meetings and for camping. Roane County and Spencer is proud of the splendid new armory, home of the 150th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the West Virginia National Guard. Spencer State Hospital was opened here in 1893.

Inaugurated in 1955, the Roane County Black Walnut Festival is one of the highlights of the year. A Black Walnut Queen is chosen from one of the counties comprising the Little Kanawha Regional Council. This county ships more walnuts than any other in West Virginia.

The years that have elapsed since Roane was formed from parts of Gilmer, Jackson, and Kanawha counties have brought many changes. The city of Spencer was chartered in 1858; four-fifths of the town was destroyed by fire in 1887. The railroad came in 1890. We have a modern system of highways, the county being crossed by United States routes 119 and 33. Living is good in Roane County.

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