

Longview

By Glenda Dyer

A fire that destroyed the old general store building at Longview on Christmas 2004 erased the last sign of a trade center that was established in the late 1800s in this short-lived Bedford County town.

Longview, which is located on the Versailles Pike about 12 miles north and a little west of Shelbyville, was incorporated in 1891 so the community could get a school.

The move for the school began after the Versailles Turnpike was constructed through Longview in the 1880s, and John Tarpley built his general store along it. But the county would not initially approve a school in Longview because one already existed at Center Grove just a mile to the east.

Longview neighbors learned, however, that they could get the school they wanted by forming a town. Following a campaign led by the influential Tarpley family and others, the state Legislature passed an act on March 11, 1891, to incorporate the neighborhood as the town of Longview. After that, Longview got its school.

The school lasted 44 years longer than the town. In April 1911, the state Legislature passed an act repealing the one that incorporated Longview just 20 years earlier. It appears Longview quit functioning as a town much earlier, though, and remained incorporated in name only.

The town and its trade center lasted long enough, though, to have an impact on Center Grove, which once had a school, store, blacksmith shop, cotton gin and post office. The school closed after Longview School opened, and the businesses in Center Grove ended up moving to Longview where the new road was.

The blacksmith shop in the new town of Longview was located about 300 feet west of Tarpley's store and the cotton gin was about 400 feet west of the blacksmith shop, according to lifetime Longview resident John M. Kimmins. John's father, Will Kimmins, and his uncle, John Frank Kimmins, ran the cotton gin in Longview in the 1890s.

The Longview store stayed in business until 1977. Before the old wooden building burned in 2004, it was the site of Longview Gas Co.

The first operator of the store was John Tarpley's son, Joe Tarpley. The house built for Joe Tarpley to live in when he operated the store still stands across the road from the store site and is now occupied by Joe Neal.

After Joe Tarpley left, Robert Stem ran the Longview store for about a year, and the next operator was Ed Brown. Brown operated the store for 27 years until 1945 when his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Faris, took it over. The Faris family closed the store in early 1977.

In the early days, the Longview store had a set of wagon scales and a small place for weighing, loading and keeping livestock for a short time. The stock pen sat between the store and blacksmith shop, John Kimmins said.

Also, John Tarpley had a cold-weather hog slaughtering operation on his place, which was on a hill west of the Longview store. The Tarpleys would slaughter large numbers of hogs and take the meat to Nashville to market it.

Longview had a post office from 1890 until 1905, according to D.R. Frazier's "Tennessee Postoffices and Postmaster Appointments." Thomas M. Tarpley served as Longview's first postmaster from 1890 until 1895. Following him was J.C. Tarpley who was postmaster until the Longview Post Office was discontinued in 1905.

Center Grove or Centre Grove as it was spelled then had a post office from 1871 to 1903.

The history of Longview centers on the Tarpley family, who owned much of the land in the area. In the 1820s, Edward Tarpley and his family settled on a farm about a half mile north of where the Longview Baptist Church now stands.

He built a two-pen, story and a half log house on what was originally Tarpley Church Road but is now known as Kimmins Road.

Edward Tarpley also built and operated the first store in the community in the 1820s or 1830s. The store sat on the north east corner of his yard. He also built a Methodist church on his land about a half mile east of his home and a school house nearby the church.

The church, which was served by a circuit rider preacher, was attended by not only the Tarpley family but by others in the community as well.

Edward Tarpley operated his farm with the help of his four sons, Thomas Davis Tarpley, James H. Tarpley, John A. Tarpley and Edward Dudley Tarpley, and a number of slaves.

Edward and his wife, Margaret Davis Tarpley, also had six girls. The couple and seven of their children are buried in the Tarpley Cemetery located on what is now the John Kimmins farm.

Edward Tarpley was born in Charlotte County, Va., in February 1794 and died in December 1876. His wife was born in Nash County, N.C., in May 1794 and died in June 1875.

Among the other early families in the Longview community were the Browns, Jones, Coopers, Liles, Culverhouses, Wheelhouses, Stems, Kimmins, Jacksons, Taylors, Lambs, Batts, Mortons, Hoskins, Westbrooks and McLains.

After Longview quit functioning as a town, the area within the city limits reverted back to just being a part of Bedford County, and the old businesses faded away over the years. Today, few reminders of the trade center remain.

The old school that sparked the town was torn down sometime after it closed in 1955, but a part that was added on still stands and is used as a clubhouse. The addition, which once served as the nearby Coopertown School building, was moved behind Longview School and connected by a walkway sometime after 1947. The addition was used as a lunchroom for Longview School.

Today, the Longview Clubhouse is used for a voting location, community picnics and other activities.

The Longview Baptist Church, completed in about 1916, is the oldest building surviving in the community besides some old homes, including a few surviving Tarpley homes. After the Tarpley Methodist Church was torn down, some of the lumber was used to build the Longview Baptist Church. The Longview Baptist Church remains active with Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday night services. The Rev. Willis Pope serves as pastor.

Even though several housing additions have been built, the Longview community still retains its rural atmosphere with its long vistas that gave the community its name. The old settlers have passed on but many of their descendants still live in the area and farm the land their ancestors farmed.

The local farmers now raise cattle, corn, wheat, soybeans and other row crops. And this year, cotton was grown again on some of the former Tarpley land. Unlike in the early days, though, the cotton cannot be ginned locally. Cotton grown in the area is now taken to gins near Fayetteville or just south of the Alabama line.



Edward Tarpley
1794 - 1876