

December 2, 2009

## In the 1880s, La Grange was a growing trade center

The following is taken from an article in "*The New Idea*," a short-lived newspaper published in LaGrange. This appeared in the Vol. 1, No. 1 edition, May 28, 1886, and recounts the splendor of LaGrange as an attraction for tourists as well as people looking for a good place to live. It was written by A.T. Ladd, who had recently graduated from the Louisville Law School and recently moved to LaGrange:

LaGrange is the county seat of Oldham County, a town of about 1,000 inhabitants situated on the line of the L.C. & L. branch of the L.&N. Railroad and the C.&O. Railroad. The junction of the L.C.&L. is situated about midway of the eastern portion of the town. These roads, as well known, follow the oak ridge, extending from a point about five miles east of Louisville to a point three miles west of Eminence and LaGrange is the highest point on the line between Louisville and Frankfort, the center of the town being 375 feet above the mitre sill of the Louisville and Portland Canal.



The Bank of Oldham County interior at 101 W. Main Street. Left to right: Mary Butler, Estelle Overstreet, Eva Smith, Peyton Samuel Head and J. Wood Yager (Oldham County History Center Archives)

Situated thus the residents are not bothered with malaria or diseases tending from that cause. Coupled with this is the splendid drainage afforded the town, and the good, cool, pure water supplied by the wells. We do not make an idle boast when we say it is the healthiest town on the planet, and this statement is emphasized when we state, as a fact, that since the first day of June, 1876, there has been but one case of pneumonia in the town, but one case of typhoid fever, and that there has been but three deaths from acute causes since the date mentioned; and there has been but twenty deaths, in all that time, among the white population, nine of which were from consumption.

The Anita Springs, situated just west of town, the property of Dr. J.T. Berry, are famous as containing all the salt found to abound in the Waukesha water, in more abundant quantities. The water is absolutely pure. A neat hotel for the accommodation of guests is now open, and will soon be full, as last summer the house was filled and the additional rooms built recently are about all engaged.

The "Anita" is under the personal care of Dr. Berry, and here the busy merchant from the city comes

to rest, and is not worried with the giddy pleasures of the modern "water place."

The importance of LaGrange as a trade center is attracting notice. This season about half a million pounds of wool was purchased by resident buyers. Taking the past three years as an average, 300 car loads of cattle, 275 car loads of sheep and lambs, and 200 car loads of hogs were shipped from here each year. The last season some 1,000 turkeys were shipped from this place.

LaGrange is not fully up in manufacturing, but the LaGrange Woolen Mills are now in full operation, employing about twenty hands.

The farms surrounding the town are generally small and with fair seasons the crops embrace corn, wheat, orchard-grass, hay, tobacco; in vegetables, potatoes, cabbage, turnips; in fruits, apples, peaches, strawberries, blackberries, grapes, etc. The accessibility to market for all these products, together with butter, eggs, fowls, etc., draw hither a steady stream of money.

Funk Seminary, the oldest, as well as one of the best educational institutions of this state, is located here. For five years it has been under the charge of Prof. J.T. English, who is ably assisted by his wife, a graduate of the Louisville Female High School, a most competent teacher. The public school is taught in the same building, employing three teachers ten months in the year. Those of our readers who desire to fit their children with a thorough academic education should address Prof. English at this place.

The school will open the first Monday in September, 1886, and continue for forty weeks. Term of tuition, \$1 per week, payable quarterly. No reduction made for illness unless student is absent four weeks or more. Board can be obtained in the best families of the town, or the immediate neighborhood, at a very reasonable rate.

The Oldham Bank, two years old, is a thriving monetary institution, located in its own quarters, supplied with all the safes, etc., to secure, guard a village bank and with officers whose characters are established and recognized as the best. The institution is launching out within close proximity to neighboring banks, and securing their custom. J.T. Wilson is the cashier, while Peyton Samuel Head and "Tatie" McMahon are around to help.

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