

Centertown in the olden days

By Jerry Long
c.2026



**Kentucky Place Names, Robert M. Rennick (Lexington,
KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1984) p.54:**

Centertown (Ohio): This 6th class city with post office on KY 85 and 69, 4 ½ miles southwest of Hartford, is in the midst of what has been an important coal producing area. It may have been called Centerville as early as 1860 for its location midway between Hartford and the Green River shipping port of Point Pleasant, but the post office was established as Centre Town on Feb 1, 1866, with Charles H. Dillingham, postmaster, and later became Centertown. The town was incorporated in 1890. [Sources: 905 – Musker L. Heavrin, “Place Names of Ohio County”, manuscript sent to William G. Steel, March 20, 1925, U.S. Board on Geographic Names, Reston, Va.; 1245 – James Calloway, Bowling Green, Ky., November 5, 1977; 1400 – Harry D. Tinsley, No Creek, Ky., August 25, 1978.]



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 3 February 1875, p.3:

CENTERTOWN ITEMS
CENTERTOWN, KY., Feb. 1.

It seem that a great many communities are seeking a favorable introduction to the public through the columns of your highly appreciated paper. CENTERTOWN has caught the contagion and begs to let herself be known to her neighbors. Our little village is situated on the Hartford and South Carrollton road, about six miles from your town. We have a Methodist Church, at which Bro. Corbin breaks to us the "bread of life" once a month; a blacksmithshop, where Sam Morton wields the hammer; a store, where Mr. R. C. Duncan is well fortified behind his counter with a yard-stick in one hand and a four pound weight in the other, and Dr. G. R. Sanders distributes pills, powders, drops, and a great many other good things, with satisfaction to u8 and credit to himself.

POST OFFICE.

We have a post office also, and get our mail once a week.

THE PRETTIEST MAN.

Mr. Duncan, our merchant, is decidedly the best looking man in town (so the ladies think), and, as he is a newcomer, perhaps we should give him more than merely a passing notice. He has

been here but a short time, but, short as it is, he seems to have gained great popularity, and a liberal share of patronage. He is not only a good business man, but a gentleman also. We would advise any one in need of dry goods or groceries to give him a call. He has not an "oily tongue" in the usual acceptation of the term, but he is sociable and treats everybody in a gentlemanly manner.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 26 April 1876, p.2:

FROM CENTERTOWN.

Centertown, April 24, '76.

DEAR HERALD – Mr. S. W. Anderson, of Ceralvo, is going to start a dry goods store in Centertown, in about a week, with George M. Rowe, behind the counter. Mr. Rowe, has been very successful as teacher, and I expect him to succeed in his new line of business.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 17 December 1884, p.1:

Centertown, Ohio County.

Centertown is a live little place of nearly one hundred inhabitants; two dry goods stores and one drug store; one collar and harness shop. conducted by Rone Bros., formerly of Russellville; one blacksmith shop, a saw and corn mill, which is now out of repair. It is surrounded by a fertile section of country with some as nice and well improved farms as are to be found in the Green river country; with good churches and school- houses and an intelligent and enterprising set of people.

Tobacco and hay are the staple crops raised in this part of the county, though corn and wheat are raised in sufficient quantities to supply the demand.

Coal abounds in great profusion. Cattle, hogs and mules comprise the principle kinds of stock raised for market. The saw log and stone trade are among the leading branches of business in the Green river country. It would be hard to give an estimate of the number of rafts, which go out of Green and Rough rivers annually.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 1 June 1892, p.2:

Centertown, Ky.

Again our little town has been visited by the death angel, and we are called to mourn the loss of one of our most estimable citizens in the person of Miss Amanda Rowe. She suffered untold agonies for some weeks past, despite all that could be done by medical skill. Drs. Pendleton and King exhausted every resource to restore her to health, but it became apparent that a very dangerous surgical operation was the only chance, that a mere shadow of a chance. It was performed on the 22nd and she survived it little more than a day. She was the first to be interred

at what will probably be known as Centertown cemetery. The bereaved have sincere sympathy of the community. On the day following, the remains of the mother and father of the deceased, together with the remains of Geo. Rowe, Sr., D. Rowe's child and L. C. Morton's infant were exhumed, removed from the Warden graveyard and re-interred in the Centertown graveyard. The caskets were opened and the remains examined that there might be no possibility of a mistake and by one means or another all were recognized. The periods of interment ranged from eighteen years to only a few months. The remains were in some instances so remarkably well preserved, though the period of interment is about two years, that from the features alone the identity could be established.

CYMBELINE.



The Kentucky Gleaner, Beaver Dam, KY, 5 January 1899, p.7:

Centertown

This little city is situated in the heart of some of the best country in Ohio County, about six miles north-west of Beaver Dam, and about that distance from Ceralvo, which place is on Green River and is her principal shipping point. During the last two years this town has made some wonderful strides for prosperity. All her men are wide-awake business men, strictly up-to-date, and never leave an opportunity unused to better their village. It has been said that there are more goods sold here than any other town in the county, and some of our best business men corroborate this statement. This of course, to a great extent, is due to the cheap goods – not shoddy stuff – but good cheap – goods at city prices. Men and women will go for miles, and all day the streets are thronged with customers, so much so, that a stranger and one who is not acquainted with the town, can scarcely believe the statement. The town is not old — comparatively new, and has, we judge, about two hundred and fifty inhabitants, and possibly three hundred. This improvement too, is due to a great extent, to the enterprising farmers surrounding the town, which will always make a village or a city feel prosperity in proportion to the success of these sturdy farmers.

Freight here can be had cheaper in many instances, than it can on the rail road, owing to the always sharp competition of boat and rail.

Centertown would be a first-class point for manufactories of various kinds, and we believe we speak the truth when we say every one of the citizens would give them great encouragement.

Her people are sober, upright and strictly honest, being industrious and always willing to lend a helping hand to any laudable enterprise. To say the least, Centertown fills an important place in the make-up of Ohio County, and her people are always the first to subscribe to any move that is looking forward to the betterment of this county in any particular.

The present outlook for Centertown is certainly flattering. It has under it rich beds of coal and iron, the finest in the world. This can all be easily mined, and is only a question of short time when it will. A rail road from Hardinsburg will soon be constructed through Hartford and on to this place. It is in two miles of Rough River, down which stream great logs of the finest timber of the land can be floated.

It has two churches, one Masonic lodge, and other religious institutions. As to the industries they have spoken for themselves in this paper, and have spoken loud. Read them.

[Note – The preceding article was also published in the Ohio County Messenger, Beaver Dam, KY, 19 November 1954, section 6, p.1 and 3 March 2004, p.2; the reprints mistakenly rearranged the order of the original.]

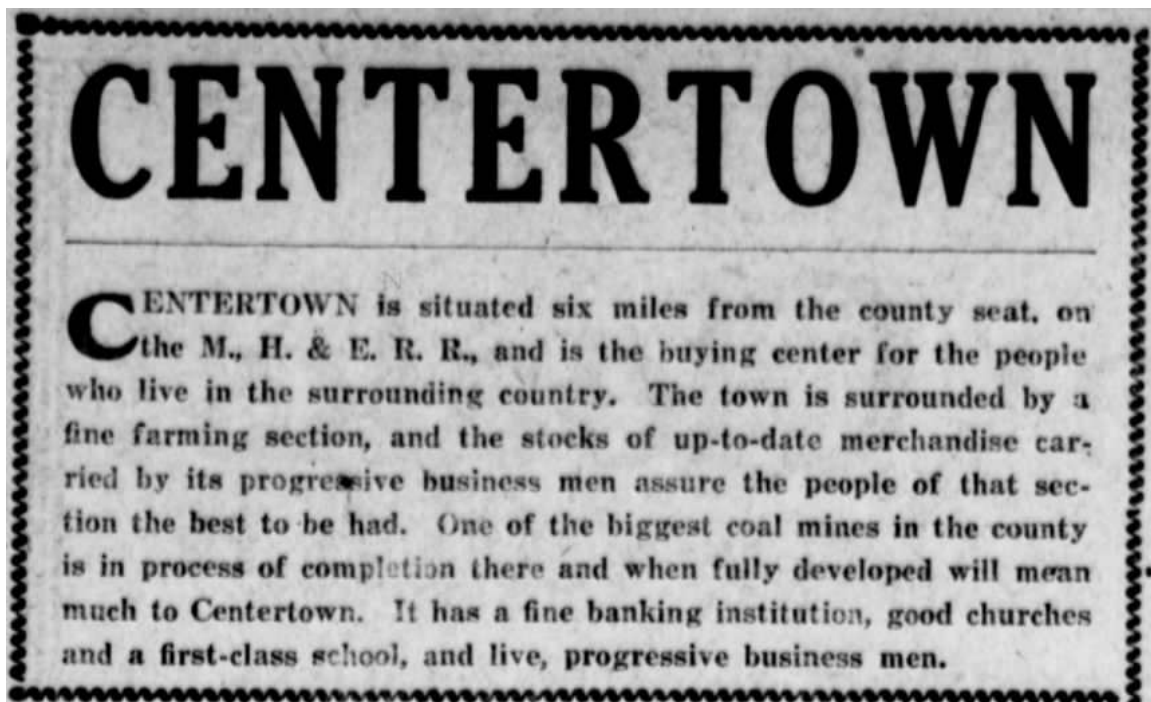


Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 2 June 1909, p.5:

McHenry, May 31 – Quite a number of our young people attended the dedication of the Baptist church at Centertown last Sunday.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 21 November 1917, p.7:



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 24 October 2002:

History of Centertown and early settlers

By Olliva Doyal

October 10, 1810 Jessie Ashby and his wife, Tammer, sold to W.C. Greenwood and his wife, Mary, a tract of land consisting of 83 1/2 acres for \$150.00. Part of this land was sold in lots

for \$20.00 each. In 1861 Mansfield Greenwood and his wife bought the tract of ground and reserved five lots at \$20.00 each for the town of Centerville.

Barnett C. Warden was born July 28, 1828 near Centerville now (Centertown, Kentucky, Ohio County) where he grew to manhood. He was the son of Evan Warden, born 1798. Evan came from Nelson County, Virginia. Barnett Warden was constable for 10 years and Department Sheriff for one term. He owned 100 acres of land and he laid out the town of Centerville (Centertown).

A Mr. Rowe opened the first store, which sold coal oil, sugar and coffee. There is no record of this store's location.

Centerville was incorporated sometime between 1880 and 1889 and at that time the name was changed from Centerville to Centertown. Centertown had several log cabins, the Everett Tichenor house was part log, the Bosket house and Sam Rowe house were built of logs. The log part of Everett Tichenor house was the home of Dr. Sanders.

Across the street was Rowe & Morton Store. Mr. Cass Morton and Alvin Rowe sold it to Mr. Plummer and his son, Arlis. They built a big frame store and stocked ready made clothes. A milliner came from St. Louis to make ladies hats for the store. Mrs. Belle Smith and her niece, Mrs. Blanch Lewis, had their milliner shop in their home.

There were two churches in the early days at Centertown, the Methodist and Baptist churches. The Methodist Church was built around April 12, 1869. The land was given by Samuel James and wife Elizabeth and L. M. Patterson and his brother. Usel Condit was one of the first trustees.

The Baptist Church was chartered in August 1908. The Baptist Church had services in the morning and the Methodist Church had services in the afternoon. Each congregation would attend the other's services. Centertown was a very God-fearing community.

A one room school was built and Usel Condit was the teacher. Mr. Condit was my Mother (Edna Tichenor Chapman) and Father's (Walter B. Chapman) first teacher. As the town grew, an addition was built, making the schoolhouse eight grades and a two-year high school. Mrs. Alice Bosket taught the first graders and Mr. Jake Jackson taught the older students. The school was located on the hill near the brick kiln.

Businesses flourished in Centertown. Krug Igleheart ran the shoe shop. George Rowe had a mercantile and sold lamp chimneys, lamp oil, sugar and coffee. Mr. A.B. Rowe had the wagon factory on Mill Street.

The house south on Mill Street was built by Pete Swain, the last house on that street was the Ellen Iller house. On Main Street, next to the A.B. Rowe family, was a tobacco factory. The tobacco factory east of the cemetery burned. The post office was located east of the tobacco factory.

At the south end of Mill Street, my grandfather, Dr. George F. Chapman, had a brick kiln and burned bricks to build a three story building. The bank was located in the west end of the building. The Cumberland telephone exchange was on the second floor over the bank. Fred Chapman, Pearl Tichenor and Louis Wade worked in the exchange. In the other part of the building was a dry goods store, a drug store and grocery store.

Other items for sale on the second floor were coffins, harnesses for horses and many other items that the residents might need. The third floor was used for Lodges, the Masonic, Redmen, Oddfellows, The Eastern Star and Rebecca Lodges. The men's lodges met in the evening and the women's lodges met in the afternoon. There was a bell installed on the roof that would ring when the lodge was supposed to meet.

Mr. Cass Morton built a drug store and Mr. Lewis Goodall built a store. Mr. John Dexter also had a store at the end of Church Street. Mr. Ernie Morton was the druggist. A few log cabins were on Main Street. Mr. Frank Allen built a livery stable where Lawson's store is presently located. Another livery stable was built near the Noli Ward house. There was a blacksmith shop where they made wagons. Centertown had one restaurant and ice cream parlor.

A hotel was run by Mrs. Kitten Morton and Mrs. Emma Smith. The hotel stood on the hill where Roy Whitehead's house is now located.

The two livery stables and blacksmith shop were owned by Frank Allen. Oscar and Cola James had a two-horse wagon with a top and black curtains called a hack. They would meet the train, haul mail and people to and from town.

The railroad was very important to Centertown. The post office became a busy place for the two mail deliveries each day by rail. There were two passenger trains per day. A person could go to Owensboro and return in one day. Fresh baked bread came from Madisonville each morning by train.

During this era one could order groceries from the grocery stores and have them delivered to his or her door in a short time.

In November 1910 Dr. Chapman bought homestead tickets for his family and chartered box cars and moved his horses and hunting dogs to Beardin, Arkansas. His son, Claude Chapman, Mike Bishop, Forrest Hardin, Winnie Rowe and Leonard Bishop rode horses and took log wagons and mules.

When they got near Memphis, Tennessee the back water became so high they loaded the horses and wagons onto cattle cars and proceeded by rail the rest of the way. Dr. Chapman homesteaded 1400 acres of land covered with timber. Due to ill health, he moved his family back to Centertown, Kentucky in March or April of 1911.

In 1920, Centertown was a boom town. There was a shaft mine employing many men. There were two mining camps (Tichenor and Bishop) near the Tucker Mine. There was a strip mine below Centertown with many houses and a three story hotel for the workers to board. Many of the workers came from Alabama.

The mine belonged to Haulsy McIsic. Everyone who wanted public work could find it with good wages. This particular mines was located behind June Haynes' home. L&N Railroad built a spur line into the mines to ship the coal. R. A. Bridges also had an underground mine which employed many men.

Centertown had a movie theater with three movies each week. The town had its own power plant. There were two doctors in town who made house calls, two drug stores, telephone exchange, three grocery stores, a hardware store and a very up-to-date department store. Life was good and no one felt the need to lock their doors. The streets were safe to walk without fear.

Centertown affords many pleasant memories for many people. A gentle, less hurried time in which to live. My mother's words – "Everyone loved each other and in the time of trouble or sorrow there was always plenty of help and care given neighbors were real neighbors then."

Compiled from notes of Olliva Doyal by her daughter, Susan P. James.

