**Dyer in the 1800s**

In the beginning when God was creating the earth, He nestled a lovely spot of land at the foot of the Ozark mountain which in years to come would be known as Dyer, Arkansas. It is situated in Crawford County, near the Oklahoma line with the. city of Alma on the West and the City of Mulberry on the East, the Arkansas River is the South boundary, and the Ozark mountains as the North boundary line. Within the city limits lies three bodies of water. The Heard Branch run North and South on the West side of town, and the Morse Branch lies on the East side. These branches were named for early settlers across whose land they flowed. The Dyer Lake once located in the South bottoms where years ago the Fourth of July picnics were held and usually there was a fish fry. After crops were laid by, there would be a big Community get together. The mountains had caves that many a Dyer boy explored hunting for the gold that someone had told that the Indians hid there when they roamed these acres but no ever found the gold that was in "them thar hills." On the west side of the mountain was the water falls up above Uncle Mack Dyer's place which holds memories of hikes, sunrise breakfast, and "Picture Taking".

**Our Town's beginning**. The earliest data that I have found is an abstract in 1838 when James Heard purchased 122 acres of land from the Government, and Martin Van Buren signed the purchase. From reading census records we find that some of the early settlers from 1840-1880 were: Annis Heard; Spencer Heard; Peter Kurkendall; James Heard; Joel Dyer; James Goad; Preserved Morse; Hester and Martin Bunch; John Fisher; Thomas Wells, Nat Lipscomb; Rich K. Pounds; Thomas Cottrell; Frank Hayes; W. C. Sullivent; John William Moss; J. H. Manuel; W. M. Whittington; Robert N. Anderson; Floyd Loomis; Aubrey Lawson; John Jordon. These came to a wilderness teeming with wild game: wolves, bear, panthers, and wild hogs. Most of the settlers raised a log house, daubed the crevices with mud and a split log floor with perhaps a lean-to room for a cook room until they could clear the land and plant crops.

Joel Dyer built a large double log house on the old Wire Road, that goes to the Dyer Cemetery, and this house, until a few years ago, was still on the property where Susie Bennett built her home after Mr. Morset Bennett died about 1918. The stage Coach brought in the mail for Dyer so it was called the Dyer Station and retained this title until about 16 June 1889 when the town was incorporated and officially given the name of Dyer.

The first store was Stephen Dyer's located where Mack Dyer's home is today. Post Office was in this store and a son of Stephen, Walter A. Dyer was in charge of the Postal Office, so he was the first Post Master in 1885. Other Post Masters have been: John William Moss, Tilgham Layton; R. V. Anderson; J. S. Chastain; Terrell Rhodes; Morset Bennett; William C. Creekmore; Lucille Moss; Bill James; and Clay Cottrell.

A drawing by an older citizen who was born in Dyer shows three stores on Railroad Street facing South. Merchants were Stephen Dyer; W. N. Brasher; John Nelson; and Richardson. These stores burned in 1909. James Patton had a store on East side of street and John William Moss and Willis Mason had stores on South side of Railroad. After the fire a bank and three stores replaced the stores that were burned. W. N. Brasher had these stores built about 1912.

Some of our merchants have been: Meisenhammer; Seth and Virgil Davidson; J. M. Oxford; John Smith; T. J. James; Morset Bennett; Henry Burrough had the only furniture store here; Joe Chitwood; Jake Wells; Thomas William Moss (second time); Tom Wells; Mr Casey; Mr. Hines; Shelton Chastain; George Crow; W. P. Butler; Haskell Harris; Virgle Rhodes; F. P. Nichols; Louden Bennett; Oliver Thomas; C. C. Fines; Fred Wagner; Hays Hurd; Dick Wells; and many others.

The railroad built through here about 1875 and until 1887 this was a flag stop and have been told at about that time Floyd Loomis built the first one room Depot on the West crossing with the lumber being donated by the Dyers and John Moss. This Depot burned and then the Company built with a larger one at the same location. It was later moved to the East crossing. The first agents was Cyrus and Charlie Dyer. Others have been Thomas William Moss; Mr Harroway; Matt Hopper; Sebe Phillips; Charlie Jean; Mr. Riddle; Bill McNeely.

The Bank of Dyer was established in 1909 with R. L. Lester as president and Henry Burrough as cashier. Only had two more cashiers: Walter Patton and Ervin Morse and the bank closed its doors in 1926 and later was used for a canning kitchen, and in 1934 there were 6,203 cans of meat, fruit, and vegetables canned at the Center.

And we once had a Confectionary store on South side of town. Willis Mason started this and Tom Wells also ran it awhile. There have been three millinery shops ran by Lou Earl Burkhead, Bonnie Anderson, and Sula Hunter.

There were four school houses where the children of Dyer have learned the three R'S. Old Valley School, a one room log house situated on Perserved Morse's farm which would be what we now know as the Dave Morse's place. It was reported that one had to be very careful how they sat down on the split log benches or they would get pinched. Equipment was a Blue-Back Speller, a "hickory Stick," a bucket of water in the corner, and a fireplace that burned wood.

The second school was down in Dyer located near the Baptist Church. This was in 1885 and also a one room building with a stove to heat the room with more windows and a bell to call the children to class.

The third school was built in 1902 a little farther South than the first one but still on land that Steve Dyer had donated for this purpose.

Then in 1917 the brick school was erected East of where the other schools had been on land that the School Board purchased from H. A. Bennett. On May 1930 it became necessary for our school to consolidate with the Alma School but the lower grades were retained in school in Dyer until later when all grades were riding the bus and attending school at Alma and the school building was finally condemned and sold in 1971. Alma put the land up for auction and Frank Rhodes bid it in for Dyer, and the Council bought it from him to be used for a recreation and park area. The Gym is still here.

Church services were held as a Community project in the school buildings until 1893 when Floyd Loomis built the Methodist Church on South side of Railroad, then in 1894 he built a church for the Baptist on North Washington Street where the first school building had been.

Shelton Chastain donated the land for the Methodist Church and Steve Dyer donated land for the Baptist Church. The church buildings were just alike with exception of a belfry on front of Methodist Church and inside the pulpit for Methodist was in the west end and the Baptist pulpit was in the East end of church and you certainly didn't want to be late for you walked by the pulpit but it did keep people from craning their necks to see who entered the Sanctuary. Both of these churches have been replaced with rock buildings.

The first Barber Shop was located in the back of John W. Moss's store with Ed Osborn as the Barber selling it to Monroe Nelson in 1909. Monroe built a frame shop which burned when Mr Oxford's store burned. This was replaced with a brick building which later Terrell Rhodes attached the Post Office on to the Barber Shop which both buildings are still standing and the Post Office is now the housing for the Dora Moss Library.

Once Doctors lived in our town and they tell me that the first doctor was Dr. Livingston and lived here until his death and is buried in Dyer Cemetery. Others were Dr. Layton, Murphy, Westbrook, Ayres who resided here the longest and reared his family of three sons and died during the Flu epidemic and buried in Dyer cemetery. Then we had Dr's Haney, Hunt, Baker, Bradley, Reeves was from Alma and Dr Kirksey from Mulberry.

And once there was a telephone exchange on corner of Washington and Alma Streets. Some of the Blacksmiths were Jake and Joe Wells; Lee Meadors; T. J. Spencer; and Jack Beckham.

Steve Dyer had the first saw mill and Grist mill, then Mr. Hester ran these two mills. Steve Dyer had the first cotton gin. Mack Dyer had the first Filling Station located in the fork of the roads where the Wire road met the Dyer road going into Alma. In 1884 the Press Argus stated that "Dyer had only two stores, a sawmill, Gin, blacksmith shop."

It was about this time that George Dyer and John Moss laid out the town in lots and named some of the streets and put a notice in the Press Argus saying that lots would be given away on a certain date to encourage settlers.

In 1886 Mr. Loomis built a Hotel for John Moss. Teachers and "Drummers who had to come into town one day and leave the next needed a place to stay.

Many of the old houses have been razed or burned down. A few who have interesting histories are the Old Sexton House which was a landmark once sat on the North side of town, located down West of the crossing but was later moved to the South side of town on Main Street and was lost in a fire in 1970. John Jordon built his log house with a "Log Raising" when all the neighbors came in and helped him, and these were usually turned into a social with perhaps a dance that night after house was finished. There was not a nail in this house and today sits on the old homeplace of H. A. Bennett which they bought and moved for a barn.

**1885**: Herbert Cravens bought the old school house, the one built in 1885 and built a home which most of us know as the Tom James home in 1902.

The yellow two story house on North Alma Street and Washington Street was built by Vilas Manuel with materials from the school that was built in 1902.

E. D. Chastain built the two story house where Sam Stephen lived on South Main and after his death Bertha had the top floor removed and remodeled it.

About 1906 there was a haunted house. This was the Sullivent house upon the Heard Branch on North side of town.

The oldest house in town is the Lipscomb-Nelson house down the railroad on East side of River Road and now owned by Mary Chastain.

I have been told that the two East rooms on the Renfroe house were the original rooms that Steve Dyer built back in the late 1800s.

When the Town of Dyer was incorporated back in 1889 the first Mayor was Rev. W. J. Davis, a teacher and Methodist Minister who lived here. As far as I know, the other Mayors were: Terrell Rhodes; Tom Carter; A. L. Johnson; J. C. O'Kelley; W. F. Selby; W. D. Patton; T .J .James; Wiley Chitwood; Bill McNeely; Ben Rhodes; J. H. Warrick; W.H .Burrough; A.N. Jean; Frank Porter; Orel Rhodes; S. B. Johnson; Avery Morse; L. D. Porter; B. C. Burt; Fayette Peevy; Morris Herring; Irl Scott Lancaster; Ernest Cottrell; Fayette Peevy.

The population increased in this century by births which was said that after a overflow there would be a "Good Crop" of babies, and then people moved out from Riverside on the River banks and moved into Dyer.

During these days the people of Dyer worshipped in two churches. The children received their education in two different school buildings, and we walked on board walks until 1915 when concrete walks were poured on Washington and Main Streets. We had seven stores: Bank of Dyer, Post Office, Seed House, and a shipping shed which was a very busy place during Strawberry and Peach harvest, Depot, Five passenger trains through Dyer every day, a Lodge Hall and in 1916 the Town Fathers had a jail built which was used more as a storm cellar than for law breakers.

**1917** found Dyer with electricity, and **1925** our bank closed its doors forever. **1927** Highway 64 was opened about two blocks from center of town. **1949** Gas was piped in and we were cooking with gas. **1956** the streets were black topped, and dial telephone were installed in **1955** and last but not least water was piped into town in **1967**.

During wars from Civil War to date, Dyer has done their fair share in sending the boys to war to help protect our freedom, and in World War I all boys returned home but we were not so lucky in some of other wars.

Several names have been given to me concerning who had the first car in Dyer so I won't try to say who. But I am sure many of us remember the sign that was at City Limits, "Close your cut- out and lower speed limit to 10 miles an hour"

The last twenty years have seen some nice homes built to replace some of the older structures..

**DYER'S NAME ONCE WAS DYERSBURGH**

On March 9, 1885, a letter from the Post Office Department said this: "Before the Postmaster General decides upon the application for the establishment of a Post Office at DYERSBURGH, Crawford County, Arkansas, to answer these questions addressed to Walter A. Dyer, care of Post Office of Alma."

Statement: The proposed office to be called Dyer to be situated in the SE ¼ of Section 36, Twp10, Range 30.

It will be near route Little Rock to Fort Smith on which the mail is now carried daily. The nearest office is Alma, four and ¼ miles West. The nearest now is Bellmont, seven miles to North.

Nearest railroad is Little Rock into Fort Smith