

INTERSTATE MAY BE BOON

County is Beautiful, But Poor

By WILLIAM M. SHAW
AND JOHN S. MASON

Star Staff Reporters

English, Ind. — Beauty and poverty abound in almost equal measure in the timber country of Crawford County.

Visually, it is one of the state's most beautiful counties, with sheer cliffs, caves, lush forests and the scenic Ohio River shoreline.

Statistically, it is the state's poorest county, riddled with a soaring unemployment rate twice the state's average and a per capita income less than two-thirds of the state average.

Only about 500 people live in this town, the smallest county seat in the state, and automobile traffic down Main Street is so minimal that a traffic light is not even needed.

THE COUNTY population of 8,700 is predicted to decline to 7,800 by 1980 and drop to 7,500 by the year 2000.

The county also has the highest percentage of persons over 65 of any county in the state.

Despite these gloomy statistics, residents are hopeful that the recent completion of Interstate 64 across southern Crawford County and the 1979 opening of Patoka Lake in the north will boost the sagging economy.

The final section of I-64 opened Sept. 15, and while there are three interchanges in Crawford County, it appears that highway-related economic development is still a dream.

The 124-mile stretch of highway through 10 Southern Indiana counties links Louisville and St. Louis and is hailed by state officials as an economic breakthrough for the region.

"TODAY we have opened the door of opportunity to new and different lifestyles, to new jobs and new business enterprises," Lieutenant-Governor Robert D. Orr said on the day the highway opened.

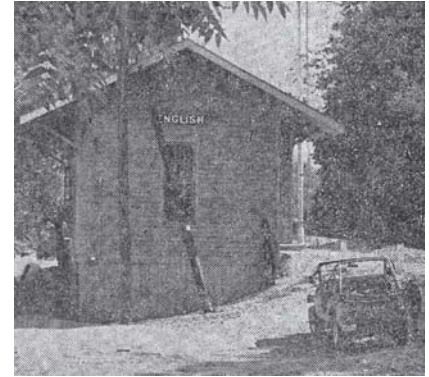
"About all it's done so far is get people through the county quicker," noted political legend and lifetime English resident Seth Denbo.

Denbo, whose family ties in the county date back three generations, describes himself as "just a hillbilly at heart."

He also has dined in the White House and he persuaded Richard M. Nixon to kick off his 1968 presidential campaign in Washington, Ind.

DENBO HAS ruled Indiana's Eighth Congressional District as Republican chairman for 20 years, so when he speaks of Crawford County and its troubles, people listen.

He says the full potential of I-64 will not be realized until the 8,800-acre



THE OLD DEPOT AT ENGLISH

Patoka Lake recreation area opens.

"The new road will help people get to the reservoir from the south and that should create new business around here, like restaurants, gas stations and such," the chairman explained.

The \$30 million Patoka project, a Federally funded flood control, water resources and recreational area, will touch part of Crawford, Orange and Dubois counties and will nearly match the state's largest reservoir, Lake Monroe, in size.

DESPITE HIS guarded optimism, Denbo said it will take more than a new road and a new lake to keep the young people from fleeing the area when they are graduated from high school.

"The youngsters have to leave; there is no industry and really nothing for them to do," he explained while conducting a tour of English.

"About all we've got is old people like myself. You won't find a higher percentage anywhere in Indiana."

Sixty years ago when industries dotted the Ohio River, Crawford County boasted 12,000 people. With the advent of air transportation and improved ground transportation, the river traffic slowed and people began to drift away from the area.

THEY NEVER quit drifting, and today only about 2,500 people have jobs.

Most of the working people in the county are timbermen or farmers.



MAIN STREET OF ENGLISH—BEAUTY AND POVERTY

MORE On Back

Possible tour of county discussed by historical society

A record number of persons attended the March 24 meeting of the Crawford County Historical Society. The meeting was held at Crawford County Junior-Senior High School near Marengo.

David Turner of Paducah, KY and an Evansville associate, Mark Cambridge discussed the publication of a county history.

Marly Thevenot presented a letter from James Ridenour, director of the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources. The correspondence was addressed to Thevenot and Ninth District Congressman Lee Hamilton.

The status of Rothrock's Mill was discussed.

Elaine Stephenson presented a letter from Crawford County Historian Jack Stephenson, who was unable to attend. The historical society will be given 30 days to review any records from the Crawford County Courthouse that are marked for disposal. A list will be submitted after a hearing. The hearing is set for April 1 at 2 p.m.

Doris Leistner distributed a list of the county's veterans and graves. Anyone may purchase the list from Leistner for \$4.

Several historical points of interest were discussed which bear nomarkers. Some information will be gathered for the Crawford County Chamber of Commerce. Areas needing identification include: the Salt and Pepper Geological Formation near Sulphur, a natural bridge, Hemlock Cliffs, native rare trees, the old Sulphur Springs Resort, Professor Johnson's Marengo Academy,

Bogard Church, the Shoe Tree, Speed Quarry, old lime kilns, Stephenson's Store and grave markers for early settlers and town founders. A brochure for a county-wide tour of historical points was also discussed.

Among those attending were: Richard and Mary Clipp, Sharon Byerly, David Wilkins, Doris Leistner, Everett and Wilma Davis, Elaine Stephenson, Mr. and Mrs. Homer Summers, Charles H. Young, Bill Rainbolt, Marly Thevenot, Robert and Mary Ann Wolf, Stanley Trinkle, Richard Eastridge, Sharon Morris, Carl and E. K. Chanley, Roger Gleitz.

The next meeting is tentatively set for 7 p.m. (fast time) Tuesday, May 27 at the school's media center.

Submitted by Ruth Terry

Page 1 Continued

"We don't have too much around here," Denbo said, "but I remember a preacher who said, 'How do these boys make it around here?'"

'A church member told him, 'I don't know how they do, but they just do.'

"Poor folks have poor ways, but they always seem to get by," Denbo said.

They do get by in Crawford County, in a countryside of almost endless beauty.

Submitted by Ruth Terry.

The Crawford County Historical & Genealogical Society meets on the Second Monday of each Month at the Media Center of the Crawford County Junior-Senior High School at 6:30 P.M. Call or e-mail for further details.



THIS SCENE from the early 1900s during a flood of the Ohio River at Leavenworth is an example of the material which would be preserved by a Crawford County Historical Society, which will have an organizational meeting on April 1. The photo belongs to Norman Beals.