

## CLARKSVILLE TODAY

*The village of Clarksville, founded in 1784 with such high hopes, had by 1850 become little more than a name and a memory. And as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century entered its second half it appeared that even the name might vanish as projects were launched for new towns in the area of old Clarksville.*

The 1850s were years of expansion and progress in the Falls Cities. New railroads, highways and business enterprises were planned. One of the first projects of the decade was the building of a plank road between New Albany and Jeffersonville in 1851. This road, which entered New Albany on Main Street, followed the route of the present Pennsylvania Railroad track between the two cities. As traffic over the railroad increased, an enterprising real estate man conceived the idea for what was probably the first suburban residential area in the Falls Cities . . . a subdivision called Andalusia.

This ambitious enterprise of 1853 attracted few, if any, residents. It was nearly 100 years ahead of its time. Andalusia today is the Greenacres area which during the past few years has been the area of Clarksville showing the most spectacular growth.

A year later an even more ambitious project was launched . . . the founding of an entire new town to be called Falls City. The promoters of Falls City were optimistic over the future of their projected town, which was to be located along the river in the general area of the present Pennsylvania Railroad bridge. Block after block of streets were surveyed; plans were made for railroads to run from the riverside wharfs to points on Lake Erie and far up into

Indiana. But, as with Andalusia, the project fell flat. No railroads were built, no busy factories erected . . . the Ohio River continued to flow beside quiet, willow-lined banks.

So matters rested until after the Civil War. Then the old plank road was converted to a railroad which became the route of the quaint "dinky" trains to Jeffersonville and New Albany and a huge industrial establishment was erected at the eastern edge of Clarksville to build railroad cars. These developments spurred interest in the town of Falls City which became known as Ohio Falls City and then as Ohio Falls.

It was incorporated in 1870 and soon workers at the railroad car plant began moving into the town. But Falls City had a brief career, for only seven years later the Indiana Supreme Court ruled that the town had no legal existence since it infringed on the town of Clarksville, even though Clarksville had no local government.

This historic decision was the making of modern Clarksville, for soon after local government was instituted and Clarksville came to life again. Housing developments sprang up along the railroad line, the best known being Howard Park in the area where the present Clarksville Optimist Boys Club is located.

A big shot in the arm came in 1903 with the building of the electric trolley line between New Albany and Jeffersonville. The traction company promoted Clarksville as a place to live because more residents meant more passengers.

Still Clarksville's growth was far from spectacular. It was the vision and energy of two Clarksville citizens in the late 1930s which paved the way for the rapid expansion of the past few years. Harry Loomis and Julius Obermiller wanted to see their community grow. The way to do it, they decided, was to make every resident a booster for the town. So the Clarksville Optimist Club came into being, the Clarksville Tribune was established, the Clarksville Little

Theatre was launched and direct bus service to Louisville was instituted. In short, Clarksville suddenly developed a community pride which attracted scores of new residents. And the growth is still continuing as Clarksville approaches next year the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its charter. And though its population continues to increase, Clarksville prefers to retain the town form of government over city form – perhaps so that it can continue the proud boast . . . “The oldest and largest town between the Ohio River and the Great Lakes.”

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