

Long before the white man came, the region was traversed by the Old Buffalo Trail, the route into the game-rich Blue Grass which Northern Indian hunters followed in their forays South of the Ohio River.

Robertson is in the Outer Blue Grass region with 85 per cent of its land in farms. Though a small county, it produces over 2.5 million pounds of burley tobacco annually, with its field crops supplemented by dairy products and livestock.

Legend says that one of the early villages in the county named Pinhook was where the tobacco term "pinhooker" originated. The name is still applied to small speculators who buy occasional crops in the hopes of turning a profit.

Robertson was made up of parts of Bracken, Harrison, Mason and Nicholas counties and was the 111th formed. It was named after George Robertson, Congressman, Court of Appeals Judge, Kentucky Legislator and law professor. He was known in Congress as the "Father" of the legislation which created the Territory of Arkansas before it became a state.

Three years after the establishment of the county, a brick courthouse was built at Mount Olivet, the county seat, which is still in use.

Robertson County is the location of one of Kentucky's most historical events — the Battle of Blue Lick, called the "Last Battle of the Revolution" because it was fought on August 19, 1782, nearly a year after the British surrender at Yorktown.

The battlesite is marked by a 100-acre Blue Licks Battlefield State Park, built in the 1930s. Landmarks are the ford where the Kentuckians crossed, the battleground where the 182 pioneers were ambushed, the graveyard, and the old Buffalo Trace still plainly visible. A large collection of pioneer weapons, implements and Indian artifacts is displayed in the excellent museum, and the Blue Licks story is graphically presented, from the Ice Age through the Last Battle of the Revolution.

The battle itself lasted only 15 minutes and when it was over 60 Kentuckians were dead and seven were taken prisoner. One of the dead was a son of Daniel Boone.

The British and Indians retreated North pursued by more Kentuckians and escaped across the Ohio. It was the last organized raid on Kentucky forts. The dead Kentuckians were buried on the field, and eventually the granite monument was erected in their memory.

Also memorialized in the Park Museum is Blue Lick Springs, a famous salt spring that furnished medicinal waters for many years. At the site of the spring bones of mastodon were unearthed in rich quantities for many museums.

Near Kentontown is the oldest stone house in the county, built by Gov. Thomas (Old Stone Hammer) Metcalf for his son. And, in Mt. Olivet is the oldest concrete block building in the county, the Baptist Church (1909). The blocks were produced locally in the first concrete factory in Kentucky.

Another landmark is the old Johnson Creek covered bridge. It was built in 1878 and is one of 16 covered bridges left in Kentucky.

ROCKCASTLE—

Gunpowder and country music perhaps seem like a strange combination, but they are the main claims to fame for Rockcastle County, which lies in the foothills of the Cumberlands, just Southeast of the Blue Grass region.

Great Saltpeter Cave near Renfro Valley extends through a mountain and has openings at each end.

It was especially active during the War of 1812. It was discovered in 1789.

A park museum gives the cave's history, telling of its periods of busiest activity when as many as 70 laborers were employed, working by torchlight. Vast rooms with passageway through the mountain, and a stream of water flowing through, permitted manufacturing operations inside the cave.

Renfro Valley also pioneered the country music movement, and was on radio long before Nashville became famous in this field. John Lair, the "Father" of Renfro Valley, has helped to preserve the traditions, customs and music of Eastern Kentucky. He instituted the Renfro Valley Barn Dance in the 1930s.

The name Renfro came from a family of pioneer settlers, and James Renfro, a tavern keeper, tollgate and ferry operator was one of the earliest promoters of improving the Wilderness Turnpike.

Nearly all Kentucky counties are named for famous people, but Rockcastle takes its name after a river, and the river in turn got its name from a great rock shaped like a castle. A pioneer hunter in 1767 observed the lonely sentinel rock. The tide of immigrants into Kentucky passed in sight of it on the Wilderness Road from 1775 to 1800.

Rockcastle County lay directly in the path of the pioneers — Daniel Boone's Wilderness Trail. Its main towns, Mt. Vernon, Broadhead and Livingston, are on the trail and the early national motor highway that pioneered Kentucky's "good roads" movement of Model-T times. It was back in the early 1920s that Col. Jim Maret, the "Boone-way Man," founded the idea in Mt. Vernon and saw modern paved roads in Eastern Kentucky become a reality.

Rockcastle County was set up in 1810 as the 52nd county, with territory taken from parts of Lincoln, Madison, Pulaski and Knox counties. Mt. Vernon first was called "The Mount," but the name was lengthened a few years later to Mt. Vernon, in honor of George Washington's home on the Potomac. Mt. Vernon was incorporated in 1817.

Mt. Vernon and the other towns and villages along the old trail watched the armies of both sides pass through during the Civil War. After the Battle of Perryville the Confederates of Gen. Braxton Bragg retreated through Mt. Vernon and Eastward through Cumberland Gap, with Union detachments pursuing.

ROWAN—

Rowan County is the Northern spear-point of the vast Daniel Boone National Forest of Eastern Kentucky, a border county between the mountains and the knobs.

Morehead, the county seat, is the home of Morehead State University, one of the state's fastest growing educational institutions. Founded in 1887 as a church school for mountain boys and girls, it received support for many years from the Kentucky Christian Mission Society. As public schools expanded and more teachers were needed, the state in 1922 took over and converted it into a regional teachers' college.

It was at Morehead in 1911 that a gifted mountain teacher, Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart started the "Moonlight Schools" which sparked an anti-illiteracy drive that spread all over Kentucky. The purpose was to teach deprived adults to read and write, and in two years of operation it was 100 per cent successful in Rowan County.

of weeks or months.

Today's Rowan County area didn't share in earliest pioneer settlement, but some explorers in the 1770s passed that way along the Licking River which skirts the Southern border of the county. The county was formed in 1856 and named for Judge John Rowan, the distinguished Jurist and U.S. Senator. Morehead was named for Gov. Charles S. Morehead.

The first courthouse at Morehead was burned by Civil War guerrillas in 1864, one of 22 Kentucky courthouses to meet that fate. Another courthouse was burned and all records were destroyed.

In other Civil War action, Confederate General Mergan's cavalrymen passed through Rowan County near Farmer, on their way to Virginia after their fourth raid into Kentucky.

The fire-clay industry in Rowan County was developed in the early 1900s, and today seven mines produce fire clay for brick and block. The county's extensive clay deposits are a part of a field that extends South and West from Scioto County, Ohio. Several types of clay are found, mostly the type used in brick, tile and terra cotta, but also some of the finer grades used in chemical making, paper making and production of rubber products.

RUSSELL—

The territory that is now Russell and its neighboring counties was invaded by explorers, hunters and trappers earlier than many other parts of the state. The timbered hilly region and its many streams afforded wild game in great abundance, and hunters penetrated the region but often left no permanent settlement.

Long before some of the other regions of Kentucky were settled there were pioneer industries flourishing in these parts. A short distance south of Jamestown, the Russell County seat on Greasy Creek, is the site of an industrial area that was in operation in 1785. It has a paper mill, grist mill, cotton and woolen mills, an iron furnace and forge.

There was a meat house owned and operated by Alex Dick and George Lewis and the Farmers Woolen Mill, owned and operated by Esco Reese. The Woolen Mill originally water-powered, was later converted to electricity. The original machinery is now housed in a building erected in 1940.

Another early development in Russell County was Creelsboro, a village laid out in 1809 and named for Elijah and Elza Creel, pioneers whose son, Reuben, served in the Mexican War. Reuben's son, Enrique, became Governor of one of the Mexican provinces, Chihuahua, and later Mexican Ambassador to the United States.

Creelsboro is the site of the only concrete, reinforced courthouse in Kentucky, built about 50 years ago. Also standing as landmarks at Creelsboro are the Creel brothers' house (built in the early 1800s), said to be the oldest house in Creelsboro, later used as a tavern and boarding house; Irvin's Store (1885), which has been operated by the same family as a drug store, general store, funeral home, post office and furniture store; and Rabon Drug Store (early 1900s), a drug store and post office, later a farm implement company.

Russell County was established in 1825 from parts of Adair, Wayne and Cumberland. It was named for Col. William Russell who served in the Revolution