ANALYSIS OF FLOYD COUNTY
(with Emphasis on Housing)

by
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In partial requirement of Home Economics
Course No. 351—Housing
Floyd County, at the date of its formation in 1799, comprised the whole Big Sandy Valley and some adjacent territory. This wilderness, sparsely inhabited and teeming with wild life, was named for Col. John Floyd, early pioneer and Indian fighter. Floyd, the fortieth County to be formed, was made up of parts of three other counties.

The Organic Act, establishing Floyd County, was passed by the Kentucky Legislature, approved on December 15, 1799. The vast territory of Floyd County was later broken up into several counties. Pike was formed from parts of Floyd in 1821; Lawrence County in 1821 from parts of Floyd and Greenup; Johnson County in 1843, from parts of Floyd, Lawrence and Morgan; Martin County, in 1870, from parts of Johnson, Pike and Floyd.

Floyd County is situated in the east portion of the state and is one of the larger counties, comprising 399 square miles. The population according to the 1950 census is 5,200.

The terrain is mountainous and abounds in rich coal seams and productive deposits of oil and gas. The exposed section of the coal measures in this district exhibits about eight seams, of which the following: (1) Van Lear (2) Wayland (3) Lower Elkton, and (4) Fire Clay coals are of commercial importance.

The main drainage of the county is the Levisa Fork, named by Dr. Thomas Walker on his journey to the Big Sandy, into which flow the tributaries of Abbott Creek and Middly Creek, Beaver Creek, Bub Creek and Johns Creek. The elevation ranges from 641 feet above sea level at Prestonsburg to 2,130 feet on some of the higher peaks. The chief industries are the mining of bituminous coal and the production of oil and gas. Farming will never be of much significance due to the
mountainous surface of the land.

Floyd County passed through the usual stages of development of a new territory. First, the hunter and trapper, then the surveyor, next the pioneer settler. These early pioneers found the forests filled with all kinds of game during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Bear, deer, wild turkeys were killed in great numbers. Supplies were brought in to the settlement at Prestonsburg by pack mules and by push boats, and in 1837 a steamboat ascended the Big Sandy to Prestonsburg.

All journeys were made either by horseback or on foot. The dense forests and absence of roads would have made any other type of transportation virtually impossible.

Prestonsburg, the county seat, is the oldest town on the Big Sandy Valley. The survey was made on May 3, 1797, while the Big Sandy Valley was a part of Mason County.

During the Civil War General Garfield maintained headquarters at Prestonsburg, he had his soldiers to pitch their camp some few hundred years north of the house now occupied by Claude P. Stephens, the present (1950) United States District Attorney, and which was at that time headquarters. The town of Prestonsburg has since overgrown the bottom where the Union troops encamped, and it is now within the city limits. Today this development is known as the Garfield Addition, and it contains some of the finer homes of Prestonsburg.

The Old Garfield place, as it is now called, was fortunate in falling into the hands of Stephens, who, having a sense of historical values, have sought to preserve it as a treasured monument to an eventful past. It is a place of wide note, and to it have come famous visitors, men such as the Hon. James R. Garfield of Cleveland, son of the president, who visited it in 1932. While there he examined
an old Civil War pistol which had been found in the walls of the house, and expressed the view that it was probably his father's, as the general had preference for this particular type of gun.

The Floyd County court in 1830, ordered the construction of a road from Prestonsburg, via Paintsville to the Little Sandy Salt Works.

Here ended any farther extended effort to expand or improve the road system, and it remained a country of wagon-rutted trails until about 1920. The Mayo Trail, completed and surfaced in the early '20's broke completely the century and half of isolation.

In looking back at the old county seat, Prestonsburg had but two or three streets, twenty or thirty buildings, including the courthouse and jail, in 1850.

Daniel Boone, in the company of William Hill, spent the winter of 1767-68 hunting and exploring on the upper waters of the Big Sandy River. They were forced to make a camp near the Left Fork of Middle Creek during the severe winter months. Close by was a salt lick which flowed from a spring and game was so plentiful that the two hunters had only to wait for the deer and the other animals to come to lick the salt, thus their scanty supply of food and ammunition was conserved and the salt lick had been credited with saving the lives of these woodsmen.

Another famous American, the great orator and statesman, Henry Clay, in partnership with John G. Breckinridge were the first owners of a great boundary of this land. They sold the area surrounding the salt lick for a very small sum to men who, realizing the commercial importance of the salt lick, began exploiting it in 1795. From then on until after the Civil War salt was made and sold at a reported price of as high as five dollars a pound. Some of the residents would bring their families and camp near the spring while making salt
enough to last them for as long as a year. Shortly after the war the salt lick was abandoned but the legend of Daniel Boone lives on.

At the present time on this same site is a community of five hundred people whose livelihood is derived from coal which is being produced from the hills surrounding the spring. However, more than 600 men are presently employed in this operation. A monument has been erected and dedicated to the memory of the great frontiersman, Daniel Boone by the David Ky. Boy Scout Troop 143. The monument now stands in the churchyard only a few yards from the spring which Boone, himself a great Kentucky Scout, located so many years ago. This site is the present location of Princess Elkhorn Coal Company, David, Kentucky.

Prestonsburg at present is made up of many stores, seven churches, three theaters, one a drive-in, two banks, a hospital, a high school and grade school and many other places of business.