



August 2007

Telling the Oak Ridge Story - Preserving Oak Ridge History

Raby to present update on the Kingston Demolition Range Project

In 1942, more than 1000 families were displaced from 56,000 acres in Roane and Anderson Counties. Photographs were taken by Corps of Engineers as the War Department took the property for demolition to build facilities that would become known as Oak Ridge. The original name of the project was the "Kingston Demolition Range."

Local Historian Donald Raby has spent years collecting and archiving the photographs of the original buildings of the Kingston Demolition Range. Mr. Raby will be our speaker for the monthly meeting of the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association. This month's meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday, August 9th.

Raby says all he started out to do was find out about his family history. In 1888 his family moved to the Scarboro Community, which was located near present day Y-12. When his grandfather died in 1922, the family moved to Knoxville and has lived in Fountain City since 1942. In the search for his family history, Raby met people who had some of the photographs that the Army Corps of Engineers had taken. They were numbered which made him wonder if there were others. Then he found a map of plats with numbers that matched the ones on the photos.

He got in touch with Arlene Royer, the archivist who's in charge of photographs and visited the National Archives in October 2000. There he found the federal court records relating to the "Taking of Property for the Manhattan Project" contained in 26 boxes of loose document files and 13 boxes of photographs.

Seeing these photographs encouraged him to find a way to make them available for others to see. Many of the displaced families had ancestry going back to the first land grant settlements in this area. Fortunately the photographs are very well indexed and organized. Each property had an inventory stating the appraisal and amount paid the owner for the improvement (buildings) to the property. The area, which was called Kingston Demolition Range and then Clinton Engineer Works by the army, was divided into geographic sections identified "A" thru "M".

Raby says that without the help of many local groups and volunteers this project would never have come about. Assistance and encouragement came from the Pellissippi Genealogical and Historical Society, the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, Ed Westcott, retired DOE photographer, and the Robertsville Reunion. Please join us for this wonderful presentation on August 9th at 7pm.

From the President

Well, it's official! The Oak Ridge Convention and Visitor's Bureau (ORCVB) and the Oak Ridge Visitor's Center will make the Midtown Community Center their new home beginning this Fall. As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, the ORCVB has been looking for a new "temporary" home since early this year. If any of you have visited their current location (next to AMSE), you know they are bursting at the seams. They began looking at several locations in Oak Ridge and finally decided on the Alexander Room of the Midtown Community Center. After several months of negotiations with the ORCVB board and the ORHPA board, an agreement was made and lease contracts signed. This past week, the ORHPA board unanimously approved the "deal" and construction of new offices began August 1st in the Alexander Room. Katy Brown and her crew from the CVB expect to move in by October 1st. The new ORCVB/Visitor's Center entrance will be at the end of the building, directly in front of the door to the Alexander Room. We expect them to occupy the space for several years while they try to get funding to build their own brand new location. The remodeling work on the Alexander



Room is being funded through the ORCVB. However, we have agreed to install the new floor (hardwood laminate) once the construction is complete. So if any of you know someone who can help with that, just let me know. How exciting! Won't it be great to have visitors to Oak Ridge come to our building as one of the first things they do in Oak Ridge? As a part of the preparation for the move, I have asked Margaret Allard (Oak Ridge Children's Museum exhibit designer extraordinaire) to put in a new exhibit in the small room at the end of the hallway. I'm sure Margaret is going to do something fantastic!

Be sure to attend this month's meeting (see article above). Don Raby has done some amazing things collecting and archiving photos from the early days of Oak Ridge.

At our September meeting on the 13th, we are going to have ORHPA Movie Night! The 4th Annual Secret City Film Festival is just around the corner (Oct. 5-7) and several of the films this year have historical or Oak Ridge themes. I am going to share some clips from those movies and talk a bit about what will be happening at the Secret City Film Festival this year.

- Dave and Heidi, how about some popcorn! -

Keith McDaniel
ORHPA President