

Tom Firor  
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- 19:13 Pendleton County came into existence in 1788. Formed out of Augusta County, perhaps Hardy County, but mainly out of Augusta County. The original County Commissioners met in Ruddle and formed the county, and they had several offers, offer for the county seat. They chose Franklin because it was centrally located. There was a big spring and a good deal of flat land.
- 20:00 Town was located on 160 acres that Frances and George Evick had patented in 1769 and once designated Frances who owned this part of the grant laid out ½ acre lots for the town, also laid out the site for the court house and set aside 2 ½ acres just above back street for a school house, a church and a burying ground. And you can see that as you go up Walnut Street the second block is Mt. Hiser up on the little hill there.
- 21:00 The old Union Church site is at the foot of it and when you go around the road to the Grade School, you can see the Cemetery up there and the Grade School, much expanded, is on this site too where the original school, there has always been a school on that site ever since Frances dedicated it for those purposes. Yes, yes and Frances Evick too. James Boggs is buried in that graveyard and so is Frances Evick. The town has been, had a pretty tranquil
- 22:00 life, it's a lovely town and it has been a community that has thrived on agricultural and forestry products. The woods around here have a large supply of Chestnut Oak and the bark of Chestnut Oak is particularly high in tannic acid and that gave rise to a number of tanneries here and that was a prominent local industry. In fact there was a tannery right on this site of the Presbyterian Church during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And they claim that the Union troops when they were here dismantled it to use its bricks for making stoves for that they could cook on because they were here for several months.
- 23:00 The tranquility of Franklin has been interrupted four times. The first was when the Civil War came to its doorsteps. General Freeman and his troops came through here on their way to McDowell in 1862. They were defeated by Stonewall Jackson and retreated to Franklin for the, until they got further orders to move out and they were here for about 2 months. General Freeman was had his office and headquarters in the McCoy building which is very prominent still on Main Street.
- 24:00 It is right opposite the Court House. The McCoy building was built in 1848 in Federal style by slave labor and in fact there's a small building just outside behind it that is known locally as the slave house and it does reflect those times. It was built I believe by the nephew of General William McCoy. He was extremely prominent official locally and nationally. He served in the House of Representatives from 19 1811 to 1833 and was Speaker of the House of Representatives along in that period.
- 25:00 He was a close friend of Andrew Jackson and cut quite a swath in his day, comparable perhaps to Senator Robert Byrd of today, an extremely prominent local, then Virginian of course which is WV today. General William McCoy, yes was so prominent. And there have been 5 William McCoy's associated with that,

- with this community. The immigrant, they don't go father, son and grandson. I think you have to find them. There was the immigrant, there was the General, there was the nephew, and then there was senior and junior. And you got to speak to Jr. the other day.
- 26:00 The McCoy's and Andersons, one or the other have always lived in that house. And that's, I might say a word about the Court House since we're in this end of town. The present Court House is the fourth one on the site. The first two were log structures that were built right after the town was designated as the county seat. And in 1889 the second log structure was replaced with a brick structure and that was the building that burned in the Franklin fire of 18, of April 17 1924.
- 27:00 And it was rebuilt and reopened in 1928 or 1926 and it was renovated for a million dollars in 1995 and is a very useful facility. Interestingly when the court house burned the neighboring building, the jail, survived the fire and it is now where the gravel parking lot is. It was torn down within the past year. I had been talking about the calamities that have beset Franklin. The first being the Civil War the second that has been referred to
- 28:00 was the influenza epidemic that in 1918 that devastated so many families and it was particularly hard in a community like this where everyone was so close and knew each other and every death was felt widely in the community and it reached out into the lumber camps. I remember talking to an old timer, Russ Calhoun, who had been working in Laurel Fork at the time and of course they knew nothing to do about it and they just had the railroad car pull onto a siding there and when you came down with the symptoms they sent you over to that car and you had to sit there and either live or die. Russ, he was a joking fellow, and he was
- 29:00 always full of stories and jokes and he said he was in there and the man in front of him started saying, "Oh Lord, Oh Lord, our Lord" and he started carrying on and it just struck Russ funny and he started laughing and from that point he started getting better. The third disaster to hit Franklin was the Franklin fire of April 17 1924. It started in the Times, Pendleton Times office. I have heard various stories. There was a cigarette in paper litter on the floor, or a spark from one of the machines that caught the paper on fire but the fire spread rapidly. Many of the building were frame with shingle roofs
- 30:00 and it had been extremely dry at that period. To further complicate the problem there was a wind that fanned the fire and the town reservoir was dry. It is located up on the hill above town and. There were a couple stories, one that it had been drained for cleaning and had not been refilled. The other story coming from the black community here is that there was a Klue Klux Klan activity in the town in 1921 and they set off a large charge of dynamite in a white oak tree nearby and that had cracked the reservoir and it had not been repaired. But for whatever reason there was not a water supply to help fight the fire
- 31:00 Everything was against it and it went very fast. They finally did form a bucket brigade from the South Branch and used it to wet down houses after it had spread about three blocks that devastated Main Street there. Did Shorty Cougar speak about that? He was out on Friends Run when that happened. There was not public electricity here at the time but many homes and businesses had their own electric generator, Delco system and when the fire reached. And of course they

- had 55 gallon barrels of kerosene to run the generators with and when the fire got to one
- 32:00 of them they would explode and he could see the tops of these 55 gallon barrels in the air above Entry Mountain. The explosions were so dramatic. But it really devastated things here as many people can attest to much better than I.
- 32:45 And the fourth major impact here I think everyone would agree was the 1985 flood.
- 39:20 Presbyterian Church here is built on the sight of the early tannery as I mentioned before and it was started around, well. Its construction stalled in 1918, they had the frame of the building up but they did not have interior finished. They still continued to worship in the much smaller church immediately across the street at the corner.
- 40:00 When the Court House burned the county commission bought the old Presbyterian Church and set up temporary county offices there until the new court house could be built. And with that money the Presbyterians were able to complete furnishing this building which is modeled, is a direct replica of a church in London. The two houses that you immediately come to at the intersection of Walnut Street and High Street are those that have a very long history. The one on the right currently occupied by Rebecca Rowdy is the
- 41:00 John and Rebecca McClure house and I believe it was built in 1794 as a log structure. And up in the indene, up above the doorway you can a date, 1881, and that was when it was greatly expanded to its present size. And just across from it is the Andy Dyer House. Both Andy Dyer and John McClure married sisters, Skidmore women, and their father was a saddle maker and had a tavern just a few doors up the street.
- 42:00 The McClure's came out of the Civil War with money when everyone else in the county was devastated. There were no horses or cattle. Everything had been taken as the war moved back and forth across the county and a lot of gorilla activity had taken place and people were just devastated but the McClure's had money and were able to buy land at 25 cents and 50 cents an acre and established large holdings in the Sinks which is a lovely high elevation in the western part of the county. There are cattle taken there in the summer and bought back in the winter. And they bought large farms on South Fork and considerably land here in Franklin.
- 43:00 And that has been the basis for the families wealth ever since. I might mention just one other house. The Anderson Hill house, the one that everyone sees when they come into town. That was built in 1900 by William Anderson. It took two years to build and he built it with lumber taken off his own property and fire the bricks on the sight for it. He built it for his bride, Kitty Dyer who had been raised by John and Rebecca McClure. He was 40 and she was 20
- 44:00 and he went all out with this house which is done in Queen Anne style and is very spectacular. It has intricate woodwork around the porches and a turret with cast iron top to it. Just really a signature property, it commands everyone's attention when they come into town.

48:30 They saved all the records. We have all the records that have been recorded since Pendleton County was formed. All the deeds and wills are currently in the Court House. There are 5 books of the original surveyors records but you are also right too. There are some deeds that go back to the 1770s and 80s that would be recorded in the Augusta County courthouse.