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The Story of Buckner: Station bears name of early settlers

This is from the Oldham County History Center's book: "History and Families: Oldham County, Kentucky," which is on sale at the Oldham County History Center museum gift shop.

Pioneers filtered over the Old Brownsboro Road (later Old Zaring Road) by horseback and wagon as early as 1800 to being settling in the Buckner area. From its earliest beginnings, the area was an agricultural settlement known as "La Fayetteville."

One of the earliest settlers was William P. Rodman, who sold 120 acres of land on the waters of Floyds Fork to Mitchell Overstreet. The land boundary started at the intersection of Highway 393 and Highway 146.



Klein House at Buckner, Ky. At this location the Klein family in the 1880-1890s operated a large vineyard and wine business. (Courtesy of Marian Klein Koehler)

Early court records show that Mitchell Overstreet was appointed overseer of the New Castle-Brownsville (Brownsboro) Road on April 20, 1824. The road ran between the crossroads at E. M. Taylor's (now La Grange) and Overstreet's Grocery, owned by Mitchell Overstreet on his land.

Later his son, Mitchell R. Overstreet Jr., laid out a town at the site of his father's house,

which was known as "La Fayetteville." This included the land where Buckner now stands.

In 1826 the small village of La Fayetteville had a blacksmith shop, general store, church and a tavern. There were around 10 houses. A water sawmill was erected in 1827 on nearby Floyds Fork.

Mitchell Overstreet Jr. sold 10 acres of land to the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in the late 1840s. By 1854, L&N Railroad was in full operation and the station that was established at La Fayetteville was called Buckner Station.

By 1880 Buckner Station became known just as Buckner, named for the Buckner family who were early settlers.

An 1874 survey from Frankfort Archives lists the following: Buckner, a station on the L&C short line, L&N Railroad, and a small village in Oldham County, four miles southwest of La Grange, the county seat, and 23 north of Louisville, which is the location of the nearest bank.

A steam sawmill, two distilleries, two churches and a seminary are sustained. Express. Adams. Telegraph, W. V. Population, 250. Mail, daily.

Wm. James, postmaster; Benjamin Callahan, distiller; A. W. Calender, blacksmith; Charoles Carrol, lawyer; R. B. Cassaday, physician; W. M. James, General Store; M. F. Johnson, hotel proprietor; S. F. Ray, prin. Seminary; John Russell, grain and livestock; John M. Shake, wagonmaker and grape grower; James n. Wilhite, distiller.

One of the principal crops of the area was grapes. John George Klein (1817-1901) came to America from the Rhine Valley grape-growing region in Germany to work for Nicholas Longworth of Cincinnati, where Longworth was conducting his wine-producing experiment.

Some years later after the experiment terminated, Klein, in the spring of 1886, bought 130 acres of land in the Buckner area from Julia McMakin. He planted a vineyard and established the first commercial winery in Oldham County.

The wine was produced and sold in 50-gallon-barrel lots. Wine was shipped to Louisville, Frankfort, Lexington and other areas. Along with the production of wine, he established one of the first nursery and florist businesses in Oldham County. The business terminated in 1900.

Another family extremely productive in the grape-growing industry was that of Otto and Henrietta Klostermann. They also sold wine to Louisville, and the demand was such that they leased land from other farmers to create additional vineyards.

In 1890 they built a 27-room house across from what is now SteveO's Italian Restaurant. Henrietta oversaw the entire vineyard and wine-making operation.

By 1887, petitions had been passed through many areas of the county to make the county dry. Uncle Marion Johnson, who was well remembered by the older residents of Buckner, was probably one of the last whiskey sellers outside of La Grange to go out of business. James W. Wilhite assisted in the operation of Marion Johnson's business.

The earliest traceable school sat on Cedar Point Road almost directly across from the Buckner Christian Church. Some time after the turn of the century, the Buckner area had outgrown the little school house and a two-story red brick school was built on the present location of the Oldham County High School girl's softball field.

The Louisville interurban train (electric trolley) began hourly service between Louisville and La Grange.

The depot stop at Buckner still stands and is a daycare center at the intersection of Old La Grange Road and Hwy. 146.
