

A historical account of the original downtown Leonard square lots

Written by By Ava Barlow, Staff Writer
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April 28, 2011 - On July 22, 1880 the town of Leonard came into existence with the sale of town lots at auction. The area had been platted for a town for the Solomon Langdon Leonard heirs with a lot in the middle for a city hall and a square of businesses around. The sale of lots was held on the public square, which had been donated to the town by the Leonard heirs.

To familiarize readers with the laying out of the town, the north side of the present square was numbered Block 13, the west side was numbered Block 18, the east side was Block 17 and the south side was Block 21. Within each block were 12, 25' x 150' lot designations.

The store lots on the north side were numbered from 7 to 18 with H. L. Parmele buying two lots, numbered 7 and 8, where K.D. Johnson, Inc. now occupies. W. A. Kuykendall or Kuyrkendall, bought three lots numbered 9, 10, and 18, now occupied by Kay and Associates, Rose Farhood and Greg Grooms, and the western half of Leonard Pharmacy. Burris-Pinnell bought two lots, numbered 11 and 12, where the West Leonard Water Supply is now located and the building next to it that previously housed Leonard Family Dentistry (owned by Cristina Molina). On the original day of the sale, lots numbered 13, 14 and 17 were not reported to have sold or the buyers have not been discovered as of yet. At present time, lot 13 is owned by Murphy Properties; lot 14 is where Summer House is located and owner Eddie Sudderth's tax bill shows he owns all of that lot as well as one foot of lot 13 and two feet of lot 15, which is where the LEAP store is located. Mable Hampton is shown to have purchased lot 15 on the original day of sale. John S. Saxon was the original owner of the land where the Leonard Community Center is located, lot 16. The Leonard Pharmacy now occupies lots numbered 17 and 18.

According to The History of Leonard, Volume II, the first business was a saloon. Mark Daniel bought the first lot sold at auction, (other than the one Parmele had bought before the auction as part of his agreement with the Leonard family to handle the sale of lots). In less than a week, he opened his saloon for business.

Parmele opened the second business in Leonard, a general mercantile store from which he supplied the railroad building crews. This store was located where K. D. Johnson, Inc. now stands.

In 1885, according to Carter's History of Fannin County, Leonard had a population of 350 people. The writing in this historical account says "there is in the town four stores that

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keep general merchandise, one drug store, four family groceries, three blacksmith shops with wood shops connected therewith, two church buildings, one of which is used for a school, two hotels, a good school, two practicing physicians, two lawyers, one steam gin and a grist mill".

Judge William A. Bramlette declared Leonard an incorporated town on Sept. 16, 1889, as the result of an election held on Sept. 14, 1889. The boundaries were set for one-half mile to the north, east, west, and south of the courthouse, located in the middle of the town square. The population was 400 people by 1889.

This is just a tip of the beginning of a historical account of the business section of Leonard, with Billy Grimes, Eddie Sudderth, Butch Henderson and others contributing. In talking to several of those 60 years and older around town, stories of fires, theatres, a skating rink, a washateria, banks in at least two locations, hardware stores and general mercantile stores in almost every block are told.

The definite details on what businesses were located where and when are still somewhat of a mystery, but The Graphic is going to attempt over the next several issues to give the history of the buildings in historic downtown Leonard.