

Spelter Townsite

During the last year of Grover Cleveland's Second Administration (1897), Du Pont Powder Company located a Black Powder Mill on the hill. It operated until an explosion closed the mill down in 1901. The land remained as a farm until the year 1910 during which time it was known as Powder Hill.

Four houses presently occupied by John Walsh, Mrs. Lasure, Fred Hickman and ^{Bill Weaver} Umberto Raschella, were constructed before the turn of the century by the Du Pont Powder Company.

The Fairmont and Clarksburg Traction Company operated an inter-urban line between the two cities starting in early 1907.

During 1910 the Grasselli Chemical Company started construction for the town of Spelter and the Zinc Smelter Plant. By 1911, 80 houses had been completed and by 1915 the Townsite consisted of 175 houses and had a population of approximately 1500.

A swinging bridge across the West Fork River leading to the inter-urban line was constructed in 1910. The inter-urban station was known as Zeising, named for Richard Zeising, the Manager of the Zinc Division of the Grasselli Chemical Company. The official name of the Townsite has always been Spelter, as a plat is recorded in the office of the County Clerk of Harrison County showing the Townsite of Spelter.

During the early days, life was quite simple. One little schoolhouse on top of the hill, no church, no post office, no wagon bridge across the river, no automobiles, and but little money.

The early settlers of this town consisted of the following names:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Eugenio Alvarez | Joe Alvarez |
| F.M. Swisher | Ralph Herrer |
| Antone Fernandez | Tony Fernandez |
| George Hill | George Carpenter |
| Guy McDaniel | Kinsey Greene |
| Diago Vasquez | Jo Ovies |
| Angelo Ferri | M. Ovies |
| R. Blanco | Joe Medina |
| R. Cueto | Joe Huerta |
| Ed Frack | Joe Menendez |
| Tony Vastro | Jake Shingleton |
| Steve Shanto | Dewitt Shingleton |
| John Foppa | Antonio Loria |
| Mary Bitenti | J.R. Palmer |
| Kate Lepon | George Corbin |

Eugene Alvarez was one early settler, he moved here in 1911 and he and his wife Mary have occupied the same house for the past 53 years. There were many of them who have passed away at this time.

During the years 1911 to 1913 the three stores were Hill Store Company, F.J. Fessler and Sam Billoti.

The present School Building was constructed during the year 1913 and additional rooms have been added later. The Wagen Bridge across the West Fork River was constructed during the year 1914. The Post Office was established at Spelter on March 20, 1928.

The inter-urban line ran cars from 6:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night on an hourly schedule. There were three passenger trains daily in both directions.

The cottages in the Townsite rented for \$11.00 per month and gas was 10¢ per 1000/cu.ft. The larger homes rented for a little more. The occupants were provided with free water, garbage disposal and major repairs such as painting of their houses.

The Townsite has always consisted of a fine group of people and the steady employment has made the people of the community just a little more secure than some of their neighbors in other communities. The people of the Townsite have had almost as many employers at the plant as the state of Texas has had flags.

The Grasselli Chemical Company owned the Townsite and operated the plant from 1910-11 to October 31, 1928. E.I. Du Pont De Nemours & Co., Inc., owned the Townsite and operated the plant from November 1, 1928, to August 31, 1950. Since September 1, 1950, Matthiessen & Hegeler Zinc Company operated the plant. *to June 1970. This did not start from JAN 1972 to*

Du Pont sold the Townsite to John J. Mochetti on September 1, 1950, who immediately sold the houses and the renters became owners and since that time have made many improvements to their homes. The residents of the Townsite at the present time have a good school, two churches and a fine Volunteer Fire Department which is second to none.

A.B. Morrison
April 20, 1964