

EARLY DEMOGRAPHIC

Frontenac was incorporated, as a City, in 1886. The population was almost entirely foreigners, or of foreign parentage.

Frontenac is located four miles from the Missouri state line, and a little south of the center of Crawford County on the Kansas City Southern and Santa Fee railroads. It had 2 street car lines, one passing through the west side of the city providing transportation from Pittsburg to Girard. The other car line was on the east side, starting from the business section of Frontenac, passing by the Mt. Carmel Hospital, and on through the business section of Pittsburg to Pittsburg State University, a distance of 5 miles. These cars left Frontenac every half hour, from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

The street car line running on the west side of the city, branched a little north of the city going northwest and passing through Dunkirk, Radley, and on to Girard, a distance of about 20 miles. The other branch went northeast passing through Franklin, Arma, and on to Mulberry, also about 20 miles.

The state census gave Frontenac a population of 3,338 in 1915 and the federal census of 1910 recorded 3,399 residents. In this census population there was 428 Americans having American parents; 1,397 Americans having foreign-born parents and 1,572 foreign born. Those having foreign-born parents were: 200 Austrian; 12 Syrians; 50 Belgians; 19 Canadians; 25 Danes; 20 Greeks; 75 French; 20 Hollanders; 10 Hungarians; 76 Irish; 1,580 Italians; 48 Mexicans; 20 Norwegians; 10 Russian; 140 Scotch; 10 Swedes; 14 South Americans and 10 Welsh. There was 21 different nationality in Frontenac. The 1990 census lists 2,700 residents.

There was an enormous amount of coal mined and shipped from Frontenac. There was more tonnage of freight shipped from Frontenac over the Santa Fee Railroad than at any other station on the line. During the year 1915, 45,600 car loads of bituminous coal was sent out from the Frontenac station. If the 45,600 cars were all coupled together would reach approximately 350 miles. The area miners average 6 or 7 carloads of coal per day and their cars held approximately 3/4 of a ton, earning an average of \$4.09 for 7 carloads; allowing for expenses, he earned \$3.09 per day.

Along with the coal industry, other occupations and industries were created to supply the miners. Three bakeries - 2 wholesale and one retail were started in Frontenac. The wholesale bakeries were located on the north side of the railroad tracks, in the Italian district and were owned by the Italians. The retail store was located on McKay Street, in the center of the business district. The wholesale stores ran several wagons to the surrounding camps.

A packing house was also located on the north side. The packing house was owned and operated by Anton Menghini, Sr. Mr. Menghini came to Frontenac from Italy in 1898 when he was 17 years old.

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EARLY DEMOGRAPHY

with \$53.00 and was unable to speak English. For the first two years that Mr. Menghini spent in Frontenac he dug coal. Mr. Menghini started a meat market on a small scale in the northeast part of town and did his own killing at first. In 1907, Nine years after his arrival in America, he was elected councilman and served four years. In 1911 he was elected Mayor and in 1913 he was re-elected, thus serving four years as mayor. The packing house business grew to such an extent that he employed 15 men, killed 3,000 head of cattle and 6,000 hogs yearly, grossing over \$300,000 a year. There was also an ice plant connected with the packing house which produced 12 tons of ice daily.

Besides the bakeries and packing plant there were 4 retail meat markets, 5 restaurants and 3 general merchandise stores, 2 of which were capitalized at \$50,000 each and 1 at \$15,000.

The two large stores were situated side by side on Main street in the business area. The other was located in the north part of town and owned by an Italian. One of the 2 stores capitalized at \$50,000 was known as the Jackson-Walker Coal Company Store and included a meat market, grocery, hardware, and a dry goods department. The store employed 12 people, with a payroll of \$1,500 per month.

The other store capitalized at \$50,000 was owned by a pioneer physician and the first mayor of Frontenac, Dr. Earl Patton. The store started as a drug store in 1889. It later added a meat market, grocery, hardware, dry goods, furniture, drug department, undertaking parlor, and a lumber yard. Their motto read "From the Cradle to the Grave". Dr. Patton's estate also included one of three strip mines in the area and the first successful coal loading shovel. 300 tons of coal was mined daily from this strip pit. The store and mine employed 75 persons and had a monthly payroll of \$6,000.

There were about 20 different fraternal organizations in the City. The different nationalities each had their own order and spoke their own tongue in the lodge room. The German lodge was the oldest, organized in 1889. The Austrians had 3 lodges, the first organized in 1892, the second in 1900 and the third in 1910. The Polish National Alliance was established in 1906 and the French's was established in Gambella in 1900. There were 3 Italian orders established, the La Vittoria in 1891, the Foristers of America Court of Pittsburg in 1896 and a society for young men, the Stella D'oriente in 1908. Other orders established included the Knights of Pythias in 1890; the Black Diamond Lodge in 1894; the Independent Order of United Workman in 1894; the Degree of Honor in 1894; the Sons & Daughters of Justice in 1911 and the Pythian Sisters in 1912. The last lodge organized was the Frontenac Eagles Aerie #2034 on March 6, 1915 and is still in existence. It celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1990.

* Information courtesy of Charles Cicero, former Mayor