

NEWS RELEASE: July 16, 2010

Leaky Roof Railroad Corridor named Historic Site Saturday

The Greene County Historic Sites Board will dedicate the Leaky Roof Railroad Corridor as a Historic Site Saturday, July 17, 2010, 9 a.m., on West Main Street in Ash Grove.

Leaky Roof was a nickname given to the Kansas City, Clinton & Springfield (KCC&S) Railroad, a once daily passenger and freight rail service that ran between Ash Grove and Olathe, (KS) 1885 to 1934. The railroad was developed to transport coal and clay tile from the Deepwater area north to connections near Kansas City and south to the Springfield area, as well as provide once-daily passenger service to these cities and points in between, including Ash Grove and Walnut Grove. The KCC&S also carried stone and marble from Phenix Quarry, in northwest Greene County, allowing it to be shipped and used in construction of public and private buildings all over the state and country, including the Greene County Courthouse, the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City, the Los Angeles City Hall, the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, and the Hartford, Conn., US Post Office and Federal Building.

The KCC&S was dubbed Leaky Roof because of the large amount of clay tile it hauled — up to 3,500 carloads a year. The product quickly banged up freight cars, but was not harmed by rain, so the railroad used its oldest, often leaky, freight cars to haul it. Legend has it that, one rainy day, the superintendent of the White Swan Flour Mill in Clinton had a large amount of flour to ship. When he saw the quality of cars available, he called his general manager, saying, “Don’t send out any flour today. We got another bunch of those leaky roofs.” The name stuck.

In 1901, the KCC&S line was acquired by the St. Louis–San Francisco Railway, commonly known as the Frisco, and the railroad corridor became closely associated with the Frisco Highline; passenger tickets for the two lines were interchangeable. Passenger travel reached its height from 1910-1919, averaging nearly 200,000 passengers a year, but began to fall off in the 1920s, with the advent of the car and bus service. The railroad continued to be an important outlet for shipping freight, agricultural products and livestock from Greene County, including Phenix Quarry, until the Great Depression. Service on the Leaky Roof railroad was discontinued in 1934.

The Greene County Historic Sites Board nominated a now-abandoned portion of the railroad corridor, spanning Ash Grove to Walnut Grove, as a Historic Site Aug. 10, 2009. The Greene County Commission approved the nomination, officially naming it a Historic Site, during its regular Commission Session Nov. 2, 2009.

Saturday’s dedication falls 10 days short of the 125th anniversary of the Leaky Roof’s first day of service from Olathe to Clinton: July 27, 1885. (Service extended to Ash Grove the following November.) The dedication ceremony takes place on a visible portion of the railroad corridor, and will include presentations by state and local elected officials, a history of the Leaky Roof, and photos of the railroad in use.

The Greene County Historic Sites board was established in 1979 as an advisory board for the identification, protection, retention and preservation of historic sites in the county. County Historic Site designation provides recognition to historic properties and serves as a gateway for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. County designation does not restrict an owner’s ability to alter, manage or dispose of the property.

For more information, call Ryan Zweerink, Greene County Historic Sites Board, at 417-818-6998, or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County Public Information Officer, at 417-829-6019 or 417-224-5510.

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