



Floyd County (Images of America)

Lisa Perry, Wheelwright Historical Society

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Floyd County, named for Kentucky pioneer John Floyd, was formed in 1799. Originally encompassing all of the Big Sandy River Valley and much of eastern Kentucky, the boundaries included portions of what are now Pike, Martin, Knott, Magoffin, and Johnson Counties. Because of its river access, Floyd County developed earlier than many counties in eastern Kentucky. Prestonsburg, the county seat, became a major river port and center of trade in the region. With the coming of the railroad in 1903 and the coal industry, which began booming in the early 20th century, the county rapidly grew. This growth included a rapid rise in population due to the migration of native-born whites from around the country, European immigrants, and African Americans from southern plantations and coalfields. What had been an agrarian, white population suddenly took on a whole new face, one more reflective of the nation. The railroads and coal industry permanently changed both the economy and culture of Floyd County.

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