

Kirbytown Monument Honors Community Past

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As the years go by it's easy to let the past slip away from us, the memory of days gone fading with time like an old black and white photograph. But for those residing in the Kirbytown Community the past is now something they can celebrate everyday, thanks to a monument dedicated in memory of those who called it home during the 1940's.

Inscribed with the names of those Kirbytown Community families that endured the Great Depression and World War II, the monument was purchased by William King, whose parents are also listed on the marble face of the 6-foot tall memorial.

King's neighbor, Frank Swindle, generously donated the land for the monument to be displayed and many of those who grew up in the Kirbytown Community feel grateful for the opportunity to visit the past of the area.

Also listed on the monument, are the names of those Kirbytown sons who fought in World War II, one of which was killed in combat.

At the foot of the monument, a framed document shows an illustration of the old Kirby Grove Schoolhouse, where eight grades were taught by one teacher, and many community social events were held. The schoolhouse once stood within a half-mile of where the monument is located.

A drawing of Kirby's Store & Mill, which was once located approximately 300 yards from where the memorial stands, is also available to visitors. The store was once a staple of the community, providing a marble yard for entertainment in the summer and home to the first refrigerator in the area, powered by kerosene, which kept Double Cola and Big Orange drinks cold for those who could afford them.

Keeping the memory of the era alive, the framed document tells of the importance of the monument:

“This memorial is erected with the intent of prolonging the memory of a community and its inhabitants,” it reads. “. . . A hard working, God fearing people who took from the earth rewards earned by the sweat of their brows . . . Indeed this was an era of innocence as it relates to the busy world around us today. A time when ‘Love thy neighbor’ was practiced for survival and had a place in the community.”

Ray Kenneth Smalling has lived in the Kirbytown community for the past 78 years and, since the monument was erected three weeks ago, he has frequently visited the memorial where his parent’s names are inscribed.

“This monument shows the names of people who lived here years ago,” he said. “People who live in the northern states have come out here to find the names of Kirbytown residents they knew and it just means a lot to us.”

All of the 1940’s families listed on the monument once lived within a 30-mile radius of the new monument and for Ray Kenneth, and all of those who grew up in the area, those names are a constant reminder of the past.

“The names and the monument itself keeps their memory alive in our community,” he said as he outlined the letters of his father’s name. “It’s just beautiful.”

Written at the foot of the memorial, a Bible verse repeats that message of remembrance, reading:

For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Ecclesiastes 9:5