



**DOWNTOWN VIEW**—This view of Tennessee Avenue in Cowan shows some of the improvements made by local merchants during the

town's cleanup project last year. Merchants, acting independently, beautified their buildings as part of the town's Bicentennial celebration.

# Cowan Commercial Club Began During Town's Infancy in 1922

The first Commercial Club in Cowan was established about the same time the town was incorporated in 1922.

Its main purpose was to work for the incorporation, industry and the present Cowan Public School.

According to Frank Pearson Sr., the only surviving member of the First Board of Mayor and Aldermen, the club was actually a forerunner of a Chamber of Commerce in the county.

Working within committees, club members traveled to various locales in and out of the state seeking industry and other benefits for the town.

Their efforts paid off and the old Spaide Shirt Company located in Cowan, only to go down the drain during the depression years.

The building constructed by the town for the concern was not wasted, however. General Shoe Corp. located in Cowan in 1938 and acquired the building. It has operated since that time and is the town's prime industry.

One of the proudest accomplishments of the early group was the paving of Tennessee Avenue, a street parallel to the railroad tracks and one heavily traveled by trucks, leaving the cement plant.

The street was paved through donations from other areas, with the balance being paid by Cowan businessmen without any cost to taxpayers.

The present Commercial Club was organized by Mr. Pearson in 1939. The late Glenn Hodges served as first president.

Other early presidents were George Thorogood Jr., J. H. Dalby, Julius Clark, G. W. Thorogood, B. B. Looney, Felix Gipson, J. L. Henderson, A. B. Rittenberry, Charles P. Gist Jr. and J. R. Lasater.

Charter members were Alfred Austell, R. G. Baker, W. C. Burbage, R. H. Brock, C. E. Bucher, J. W. Clark, G. O. Dotson, Felix Gipson, W. F. Greer, Glenn Hines Jr., Jack Hines, J. Roy Hickerson, Glenn C. Hodges, Ross Hawkins, W. R. Hoback, J. E. Kennedy, B. B. Looney, J. H. Lacy, Paul March, Creighton Miller, Fred Rainey;

John L. Ross, Blevins Rittenberry, Tom Sanders, Charles W. Smith, Charles C. Syler, Allen Shook, John F. Terry, Guy Thompson, G. M. Thorogood, Fred Thomas, Luther Williams, Jimmy Wells, A. P. Yearwood, Dr. J. H. Marable, Ellis Forgy, Geroge Forgy and Frank Pearson Sr.

The organization's first function was promoting a Boy Scout program for the community. Land was given by Mr. Dalby to build a permanent home for the Scouts, which is still in use.

The Commercial Club has been involved in promoting the annual Christmas parade, which has grown steadily since its inception in 1965.

Members worked directly with the Cowan Beautification Commission in the downtown renovation project and the city park. They are currently involved in the erection of new signs listing churches and civic groups on either side of the town.

The club is also assisting with the relocation of the old depot to turn it into a railroad museum.

A traditional project of many years standing is sponsorship of the Cowan Goodfellows, a benevolent organization that provides Christmas cheer for the underprivileged.

An earlier dream of building a road up to Lakeview Properties on the Cumberland Plateau has not yet

materialized.

The present membership roster includes about 25 men and women from the business community, who have assumed leadership of the former merchants' association.

Officers are Glenn Clark Hodges, president; Mrs. Kenneth Hatchett, vice president; Mrs. Leslie Vanderbilt, secretary, and Raymond Besheres, treasurer.

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or on the street,  
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looking neat!

