

OCTOBER 2020

ALL ABOARD: FEATURING THE "BIG ROCK"

Georgetown / Scott County Museum



THE ORIGIN STORY

Where is it from?

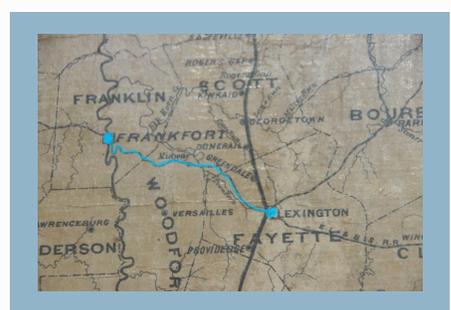
In order to find out more about the story of this "big rock", we contacted Jim Smith. Smith was the one to donate the rock and give us the information that we are presenting to you today.

The official name for the rock is a Sill Rock. It came from a farm in Frankfort owned by Bruce Irvin, Smith's neighbor at the time. Irvin had 20 to 30 sill rocks on his property. Smith became very interested in the rocks. Irvin explained that these rocks were used in the railroad that went from Frankfort to Lexington.

INITIATE THE RAILROADS

How was it used?

This type of rock and its placement had originated in England. It transferred to Kentucky in the 1840's when they started using railroads. "The rocks were a primitive way to initiate the railroads," says Smith. These rocks were placed end to end about 4' 8 1/2" apart. Before trains, a horse would run down the middle of it and travel from Frankfort to Lexington. Smith states, "The rocks were buried a little in the ground to stabilize them and keep them from moving any further." However, they weren't very stable. There were multiple derailments from the rock moving from underneath the train. Furthermore, there were incidents where rails got loose and came up in the passenger cars and decapitated a few passengers. So in turn, the rocks were not the best option. They soon went to wooden ties, which is what is used today.



"Rather than see it go in a landfill and be buried, I figured I'd get it down to the museum and have them display it." - Jim Smith

CALLING ALL RAILROAD ENTHUSIASTS

What is its importance?

For this rock to be from the first railroad in Kentucky, Smith knew that it was worth preserving. "This rock is a piece of history for Kentucky that I felt ought to be preserved because I'm a railroad enthusiast," explains Smith. Smith has had a major collection of railroad items, so he knew the rock was valuable when he saw it. He grabbed the rock in fear of it being buried or destroyed.

Though, it was a hassle to get the rock to the museum. Thanks to J. R. Brandenburg and the Scott County Road Department, people can now view this massive rock.

"Rather than see it go in a landfill and be buried, I figured I'd get it down to the museum and have them display it," claimed Smith.

As of now, the rock sits right outside our front doors. Who would've thought that many years ago, this rock helped industrialize and improve life and commerce as we know it?

A special thanks to Jim Smith for participating in the interview and donating the rock. To find out more, visit the Georgetown / Scott County Museum!

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