

History of Red Bank Community

In the mid-1800s, the Red Bank area was known as Pleasant Hill. When the community was given a federal post office in 1881, the community was notified that another name would have to be used, because a Pleasant Hill, Tenn., already existed. The postmaster's wife reportedly looked at the red soil along the bank of Stringer's branch and suggested the name Red Bank.

In 1955, the communities of Red Bank and White Oak incorporated into a town called Red Bank-White Oak. In late 1966, the community voted to call itself Red Bank beginning in 1967 for simplification purposes.

Originally, the meetings and city business were conducted in a downstairs room of the Masonic Building off Unaka Street. Later, City Hall was moved to a small wooden structure at 3005 Dayton Blvd. The city hall at 3117 Dayton Blvd. opened in 1971 and was later remodeled and enlarged.

Red Bank High School

Red Bank High School opened at 3715 Dayton Blvd. in 1937 as the new junior high in Red Bank, replacing one that had burned down near the old elementary school. The next year, Red Bank added a 10th grade and another grade each year until Red Bank High graduated its first class of 50 students in 1941. The first principal was Arthur Rankin. Red Bank High was enlarged several times and remained on Dayton Boulevard until 1983, when the junior high and high schools switched facilities because the junior high had more acreage for expansion.

Red Bank Junior High/Middle School

A junior high had been built on the Dayton Boulevard side of Red Bank Elementary about 1931, but it was destroyed by fire in March 1937. As a result, the students attended Red Bank United Methodist Church for the rest of the school year. The junior high on Morrison Springs Road, which later became the high school, opened in 1960 and has been enlarged over the years. In the 1991-92 school years, the school became known as Red Bank Middle School after sixth-graders began attending it. Ninth-graders had already been attending Red Bank High School for several years.

Red Bank Elementary

A new Red Bank Elementary opened at Dayton Boulevard and Morrison Springs Road in 1913, although a Red Bank school had existed earlier. A south end addition was completed in 1937, and a north end addition was begun in 1963. A new Red Bank Elementary opened off Mountain Creek Road in 1999, at which time the old property was vacated and torn down in early 2002.

White Oak Elementary

White Oak Elementary had opened in the 1920s and was later enlarged into a U-shaped structure. In February 1958, a fire during a time when school was canceled because of snow razed the structure. Students attended White Oak churches until a new structure was dedicated in September 1959.

Alpine Crest Elementary

Alpine Crest Elementary opened in 1957 and was later greatly enlarged. The principal for the first 22 years the school was open was Fred Jackson Jr.

Red Bank's Civil War History

Although no Civil War battles were fought in Red Bank, troops moved through the area on several occasions.

In early June 1862, Union Gen. James S. Negley led a force of some 6,000 troops from the west across the Southern portion of Red Bank. From there, they positioned their artillery on Stringer's Ridge and bombarded Chattanooga, damaging churches, homes and businesses.

In late August 1862, Confederate Gen. William Hardee's men crossed the southern end of Red Bank and Mountain Creek while heading across Waldens Ridge and toward Kentucky with Gen. Braxton Bragg's army.

On Aug. 21, 1863, Union Capt. Eli Lilly, who in 1876 would start the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company, marched his Indiana battery down historic Poe Road through the heart of what is now Red Bank toward

Stringer's Ridge. There, his men set up gun emplacements and fired rifled cannon shells upon the city of Chattanooga for 19 days.

In the area around the Memorial Drive duck pond, Gen. William T. Sherman and his men hid out in November 1863. The move had resulted after Gen. U.S. Grant took command of the Union forces in the West and ordered his old friend, Gen. Sherman, to move the Army of the Tennessee from Mississippi to Chattanooga quickly.

Department of the Cumberland Chief Engineer William F. Smith, who planned Gen. Sherman's movement, had noticed during a previous reconnaissance that Gen. Braxton Bragg's Confederate troops would not notice Sherman's troops once they crossed the Tennessee River at Brown's Ferry. As a result, they could move behind the hills on the north side of the river.

The Confederates would also not know if the Union troops had gone to Knoxville or were waiting for future operations in Chattanooga. So, from Nov. 20 to 22, 1863, thousands of Sherman's men moved into temporary camps among the hills in the southern Red Bank area. While there, they prepared for battle. When they moved toward Missionary Ridge for the attack beginning on Nov. 23, they left the concealed camps and some of their supplies behind.

Geological History of Red Bank

Red Bank is located within a long valley, which is bounded by ridges. After ancient continental collision buckled the rocks of the region, the current valley was a ridge and the bounding ridges were valleys. Millions of years of erosion wore the early ridge down to its current valley state. The erosion was more rapid in the fractured limestone, which are exposed at Red Bank, than the chert beds that cap the adjoining ridges.

The rock layers of the area are exposed at the south end of Godsey Ridge across the entrance to Baylor School. Here, a distinct black zone separates gray rocks, and all decline toward Chattanooga. The top gray rock is early Mississippian (360-340 million years old) in age, and contains nodules and layers of chert, which are very resistant to weathering and cap the ridge. Below the Mississippian, the black zone is the latest. Devonian Chattanooga Shale, (358 to 360 million years old), which is an oil shale and contains traces of uranium. Below that is the Silurian rock (438 to 421 million years old), which contains red beds, some of which were mined for iron. In Alabama, miners who extracted iron from Silurian strata in that region established the city of Birmingham.

Remarkably, the outcrop at Godsey Ridge makes visible three geological periods at one site. Moreover, the contact between the black shale and the underlying Silurian rocks is what geologists call an unconformity, here representing 60 million years of missing record. The father of modern geology, James Hutton, was the first to identify and describe an unconformity based on a study of the Scottish rocks at Siccar Point, which are similar in age to those at Godsey Ridge.

Park Site History

This land was opened as a landfill not long after Red Bank-White Oak incorporated as a city in 1955. It served in that capacity until being closed in 1976.

In 1997, some contaminated water was found leaking out of the landfill, and a decision was made to cap the site using several layers of clay, a preventative cover, and surface dirt and grass.

In October 2002, after the capping had been completed, the Ben Miller Parkway through the land was dedicated, and groundbreaking ceremonies for the park were held.