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Cayce-yost Co. gone but not forgotten!

A partial history by D.D.Cayce, III

Youngest grandson of the founder

The county seat usually was the center of trade when the horse and buggy were the principal modes of transportation in Christian County.. The trade centered around the country store which usually was at the cross roads that crisscrossed the county. The Yost family came to Christian County from Illinois to ply their trade of trunks and harness making . We find them first located on Court Street(now 6<sup>th</sup> Street) as is seen on the 1878 county map of this area. From there the F A Yost Co located on west 9<sup>th</sup> for a few years and then to a location, around the corner, on the west side of Main Street either in or next to what we knew as Shanklings Shoe store. Here F.A. Yost and two of his sons, the brothers, George and Harry Yost were the principals making harness for the area as well as selling saddles . They bought leather by the rolls to make britchen, reins, and harness for the working of horse and mules..F.A. Yost died in 1902 thus the brothers felt the need for reorganization of the business *o.*

There was a tenant farmer in the Beverly neighborhood, Delbert D. Cayce, Sr., who moved to Hopkinsville in 1901 with his family to a residence on west 15<sup>th</sup> street. He began working for the old Planters Hardware Company that occupied most of the block where Ferrells Snappy Service Hamburger stand now is located. The Planters~~g~~ sold hardware and harness, as well as McCormick Deering farm machinery. They even had a railroad siding, which came down 10<sup>th</sup> street to furnish their needs of receiving and shipping goods. The Planters was owned principally by John Thurmond , who was a respected farmer from the Gracey area. Mr. Thurmond even lived on the second floor of the business. Here Delbert Cayce worked for five years gaining a big following of the farmer trade. He had farmed on the Upper

Owsley place in the Beverly neighborhood. He was the youngest boy of Tom and Sarah Cayce. His brothers all were farmers as was his sisters husband, Col.Edwin Dennis Jones, a confederate veteran of the late war.. . Delbert was now 40 years old with a family of five children, three boys and two girls. He had previously married a school teacher who was born in neighboring Muhlenburg County on the Green River in the Nelson Creek neighborhood, Rebecca Dillman.He had a great personality and his popularity grew from his honest dealings with the farmers.

In the latter days of 1906, the estate of F.A. Yost being settled, He died in 1902 intestate so there was a change in the business arrangement. Mr. J. E. McPherson President of the Bank of Hopkinsville conferred with Delbert D Cayce about going in business with the Yost boys, .. George and Harry. The incorporators being D.D.Cayce President, with Harry Yost as Secretary Treasurer, and George as supervisor in the Harness Shop. They moved the business across the street to the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> street in the location where J. H. Kuegler from Philadelphia ran a Racket Store. Mr . Kuegler was moving to South Carolina to open a business there. This building was owned by J.H. Anderson, who had other interest in Hopkinsville. The building was for sale but the incorporators of the new business could not afford to buy it. After a few years in this location business prospered .It was rumored that Planters Hardware was interested in buying the building to put F.A. Yost Co.at a disadvantage. Mr. J. E. McPherson of the Bank of Hopkinsville was told of this impending conspiracy. He bought the building and told D.D. Cayce he could stay there as long as he wanted ..This newly organized firm was in a good location as it was nestled along side the two large business in Hopkinsville that sold wagons, buggies and farm goods.. This three story building was quite adequate to compete for the trade shared by Forbes Brothers Hardware and Manufacturing Co on one corner of 10<sup>th</sup> street and Planters Hardware cater-cornered across the street. The initial stockholders

were D.D.Cayce 25%, Harry and George Yost 50% R. J. Caurthers 20% and J.E. McPherson 5%

This partnership was a good one, as the business grew, and within three months they realized that they should have more merchandise to offer than harness , Buggies and wagons. So they purchased a thousand dollars of hardware from the E.C.Simmons wholesale Hardware distributor in St. Louis, Missouri. Their Keen Kutter brand was soon to be a by- word for people of the county.

It became quite a competitive business as it was the custom for the three merchants to roll buggies out on the curb as they sold them. All could see who was selling the buggies oIn 1909, Kenneth O Cayce, Sr. came into the business . It was the custom in those days to ride into the country seeking out customers to buy farm machinery as other goods. On his first day on the job, he and his father took a buggy and went down the Cox Mill Road and there met on the road Mr. W.A. Adcock. After visiting a bit, Mr. Adcock said that he needed a part for his wheat drill and was not able to get it from the people where he bought the drill. Kenneth, eager to make a sale, told him that he could get the part.. They went on down the road and stopped at Ed Jones farm and spent the night. Next morning, they worked the farmers in the area and returned home. The store in those days opened at 6:00 AM and closed at 9:00 pm every day but Sunday. When 19 year old Kenneth got back to town, he went to the store and ordered the part and Mr. Adcock got it with in days. Thus Mr Adcock was a friend and customer for life. Before Kenneth died in 1977, he had served five generations of that family, thus showing the customer loyalty of those that were served with the goods they wanted. I heard my father, Kenneth O.Cayce, Sr tell about many trips into the country selling goods as well as collecting o staying all night, where ever night caught him. On one occasion a man who owed them money for

sometime when approached about his debt said he would pay soon, but being persistent Kenneth said that he would stay at his house until he paid. This was productive for the bill was paid in full the next morning..

The business prospered and grew and the favor of Delbert D. Cayce, Sr was such that in 1917, the name of the firm was changed to Cayce-Yost Co..and the capitalization was increased to \$50,000. The announcement ad stated, January 1<sup>st</sup> the name will be changed iThe business began in 1907 has steadily increased by giving our customers reliable merchandise at reasonable prices and giving everyone a fair dealj. In the early 20gs radio became a necessity or a toy o.Cayce -Yost began selling these, with Dave Russell being the department head. Each morning people would congregate and brag as to how far they reached out the night before bringing in far away stations. Back then you may remember KDA Pittsburgh, WHO De Moines, WSB Atlanta, WWL New Orleans, WLS Chicago, were the stations of the time. Then WLW Cincinatti increased their power to 100,000 watts and came in clear. Ads told readers of the New Era to listen for foreign stations from as far away as Germany, Checkoslovakia, Buenos Aires and Lima, Peru. Dave Russell came up with the idea if we had a local station we could sell more radios. They reached out to a local flour miller, Billy Anderson, who had the capital to do so, and he did get a license for a clear channel WFIW over on Campbell Street by the Acme Mills, millers of Veri Best and Blue Wing Flours .The letters meaning Whitest Flour In the World. This name from a Swedish patent that Anderson obtained that made flour whiter, by name of Nova. The station went on the air March 1927. An ad in the New Era said, iHundreds of Hopkinsville people got news of the Florida Hurricane last night over radios from Cayce-Yost, and an notice in the paper that WFIW would broadcast the Dempsy-Sharkey fight. Another ad stated, iIf

your wife is a Republican and you are a Democrat, keep a radio in every roomj..

In the early days the store sold automobiles though never had a shop for the repair of them. They would have a franchise and order the cars as they were sold. I remember tell of going to Cincinnati to get a Chambers automobile and driving it back to Hopkinsville. The cobblestone road the other side of Bowling Green gave the driver a shake to be remembered.. Others cars sold were Maxwell and Studebaker . The automotive business was turned over to businesses that specialized in cars sales. We did have over the years franchise of Firestone and Goodyear tires and this was dropped as they wanted the company to put in a gasoline service station. Other lines were in the warehouse behind the main store where we sold Purina feeds and a full line of John Deere, and New Idea farm implements.

In March of 1927 the Yost interest was bought, as they wanted to live in Oklahoma as the climate was drier and health was a problem. The name was to be changed to reflect the Cayce interest, but D.D.Cayce, who had been in ill health for three years, died April 6<sup>th</sup>. Thus the name was never changed. The officers then were President, Kenneth O. Cayce,n Sr. with Durwood Cayce as Vice President and J. Almond Browning as Secretary-Treasurer. Our father decided to remodel the store front from the standard Cincinnati Iron Works front to the front that is seen today at the former location of Guiseppes. One day as my father was viewing the work done, a colored lady came in and saw what was going on, saidj My, my, the old folks makes it and the young folks spend itj.

Gordon Cayce came into the business in the early 20<sup>gs</sup> and opened a china and glass ware business in the recently dug basement at the tenth and main location. This grew as well but a spring was tapped when they dug this basement. In rainy weather the water would rise in the basement so we had

to be careful with what was merchandized in the basement. We had some great paint sales as the labels were washed away, but on the top of the can was a code, so we knew what color was as well as the type of paint product. It was hard to explain this to a customer. The China and glass ware department was moved to the second floor and the department was expanded with the extra room. o.this remained here until moved to the location now occupied by Tom C Jones Insurance. In 1951 this business then known as Gordon Cayce Co., moved to 14<sup>th</sup> and Main to the Steamboat house, and became Gordon Cayce Co. Uncle Gordon made periodic trips to Europe to purchase furniture, of French, English and Italian origin. His first trip was in 1937 and I still have the coins that he brought me from the various countries he visited in the interest of his department.

Frank Cayce, my oldest brother came into the business in 1937 to put his innovative ideas to work, one being a perpetual stock inventory. He was sidetracked on this in the summer of 1938 as he went to a sporting goods show in Evansville where he bought some sport clothes and opened in a display case in a front corner of the store. The Sport Shop o at first he sold athletic goods with the sport clothes and this soon moved to the balcony o with the coming of WWII he went to serve his country oinducted as Yeoman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class and went to North Carolina where he wrote speeches for the Admirals on special occasions. It was then that John Starnes came to work in his place during the war years and eventually this business was moved north on main a few doors next to Higgins Drug Store at 904 South Main. And became Frank Cayce Co. thus another spin off.

Some of the memorable people to work for Cayce Yost in my memory were, Marshall Owen who left in 1936 to help his daddy lay brick for the coming of a new hamburger stand, Ferrells Snappy Service , Terry Ricks from Trigg County, Earl Moseley from Lafayette, Dabney Barbour from Cerulean and Lander Meacham from Gracey oLander Meacham came from the Planters

Hardware as in the fall of 1927 that firm had a disastrous fire destroying the whole block and thus the business. This is one of my earliest memories of going to town with daddy and my two brothers . Daddy went in to the safe of the store to get the valuable papers in case the fire leaped across the street and caught our store. He gave these papers to Frank which at that early age of three, I realized was a mistake othough nothing disastrous happened. My father always made the right decisions oThat afternoon the wind shifted to the south destroying the Pennyroyal building on the southwest corner of Main eleventh..

I can remember promotional days when balloons were given to children and once we even had a mechanical man in the window that would lead people up to the appliance department. When REA came into the county my father bought a trailer and hitched it behind a Chevrolet coupe. Harlan Thomas who had been driving a bread truck for Waldengs Bakery selling Honey Krust bread came to drive the trailer loaded with all of the latest electric appliances to the part of the county where the electric lines would come through The farm people could thus pick out a Frigidaire refrigerator or Easy spindrier washing machine or an electric powered radio. At this time we began collecting REA electric bills in the appliance department thus exposing our line of appliances to customers oWe were large purchasers of batteries for radios in those days and sold Burgess and Eveready batteries as many of he country people did not hook up to the electric lines right away or had to wait until the lines reached them.

Every year we looked forward to the World Series. Parking in front of the store was halted to place benches for the local followers of baseball to sit, and listen to a radio that blared the ball game o .while the show window was marked off with a grid to record the score of the game as it progressed. This made for a community atmosphere and enjoyable afternoon for all who wanted to participate.

At Christmas time we always had a fireworks counter where we sold Zebra firecrackers, roman candles and sky rockets. This was the big time for these and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we would sell a few that we had left over from Christmas. It was a tradition that we would sell paper shell pecans when the Georgia crop came in. W.R. Brumfield ran a produce truck down south and would bring us these nuts and we would bag them in five and one pound bags to delight our customers.

The drummers would come to call and sell us goods, Belknap hardware of Louisville, Stratton and Tersegge also of Louisville and Warren Stratton of Memphis and several in Nashville like Kieth Simmons, Phillips and Burtoff among a few. We had an arrangement with a brokerage company in New York, R.K. Carter thus we could get merchandise to sell from a number of sources which kept us competitive. I can remember in 1934 going with my Daddy to Louisville to Belknap Hardware a big wholesaler back then. oDaddy did not walk into the front office but first to the shipping department to talk to the men there and see what they were shipping othus when he got to the main office he had an idea as to what was selling. In 1924 the area tried its hand at raising cotton as there was a Cotton Gin out on the Belt Line Railroad. Cayce-Yost advertised Heavy Duty Cotton picking sacks. There was a cotton gin out Virginia Street on the Belt Line railroad to handle the crop, cotton raising did not last long in the area.

In 1930 on Halloween eve Frank Garrott started up a seed cleaner to process the new crop of the county Korean Lespedeza othis grew til in 1933 we had over three million pounds of cleaned seed to ship to the markets of the country..This business my father called his collection agency. We would buy the seed that the farmers produced and sell them what we had ooften giving a quarter of a cent a pound more in trade for the seed. This business grew until a new processing plant was built for the purpose of processing or conditioning locally grown field seeds with modern machinery and holding

bins to keep the various lots of seed separate. This became Cayce Yost Seed Company and was sold in 1979 and is still operating today as a seed business under the name of Kentucky American Seed Company.

Lander Meacham as I said came from Gracey. One of the several tunes that he mused was, i Amazing Gracey how sweet the sound to save a wretch like mej. His father was a farmer as well as a Baptist minister. He worked on the farm and according to him was saved by going to work in a General store in Gracey thus the meaning to him of this song, iAmazing Graceyj.. I have seen him wait on three people at once and keep them all happy., as he was a most popular salesman. He knew how to talk to people well that is the men I suppose othey would come in and not want to talk to anyone but Uncle Lander or Uncle Mitch as he was called. o. he entertained us as well as the customers oin those days we had a coal burning stove in the back of the store and the customers would loaf and gather in chairs around this stove oHe held court around the stove with stories and all would have a great time, but when it came time for them to buy seed and supplies for the farm they gave him the business. Lander Meacham came to us after the Planters Hardware fire in the fall of 1927. He had worked for Mr Harned there and promised Mr. Harned that if they went back in business that he would come back. Kenneth Cayce told him, iDo you see that nail up there on the wall?. If you ever want to come back just come in and hang your hat and coat on that nail and go to work. After a few months when Mr, Cayce came back from lunch he noticed a hat and coat on that nail. Uncle Mitch continued with us until he died in the 1970s

The whole country supported the war effort and endured many shortages. Gas rationing as well as sugar, shoes, tires, and Manila rope was a thing of the past. Realizing that many things would be hard to get particularly in the metal goods lines, our buyers were told to stock up so we would have goods to sell during these war years. The representative for Keith Simmons

hardware came in on his regular day and Al Miller the hardware buyer was giving him a big order for tricycles (velocopedes they were called in the catalog) and bicycles. My father came up and saw what was happening and told the salesman who was nervously writing one of his largest orders to just double that order. We promoted clothes from the new department that Frank started as we could get clothing. An ad for Easter Suits and ties, as well as sport suits since many stayed home during these days we advertised games such as monopoly, rook, battleship and many card games.

There were many changes in personnel at the store as World War II came on, many went to serve their country and for the first time a woman was employed for the hardware floor. This continued well into the '1990s when the store was closed in 1993.

With the coming of Ft. Campbell business increased as an ad June 5, 1942 stated, iFor the convenience of workers at Camp Campbell we will be open on Tuesday and Thursday until 9:00 pm. Saturday night as usualj. Plant a Victory Garden, grow your own vitamins. I was surprised to find this ad, iBicycles can now be sold. See your local rationing board. If one is engaged in a lawful occupation that contributes to the war effort or public interest, he is eligible for a bicycle. See your local board and get a certificate and bring it to Cayce-yost o.get an Ace or Victory Bikej. In August of 1942 this ad stated, iFree cigarettes for son, brother, father, sweetheart in the U.S. armed service overseas---give us his name before Saturday, and we will mail him a free carton of Chesterfield cigarettes with our complements. Another ad promoted the farm bureau, stated Farmers are helping to win the war, and then on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1945 an ad, iMay our victory in Europe be a prelude to Peacej.

After the war Frank came back in 1945 and Kenneth Jr. in May of 1946 to become manager of the hardware department φ. We were still primarily domiciled at 10<sup>th</sup> and Main and the McPherson heirs still owned the building

but at this time it was in an estate with the First National Bank in Louisville. The real estate department wanted to negotiate a new lease with the specifications of a net, net lease, to put simply we were to pay taxes and insurance and if the building fell down we had to put it back. My father told the agent who came down to break this news that we had a building just south of this location on the opposite corner and we would not sign that kind of lease, that we would move to this new location. This we did in 1951 with a new store, departmentized into a Hardware, Paint, sporting Goods, full; year around toy department, Appliance, furniture, and repair department at that location. At this same time we sold the Implement business which was over on Liberty Street to the departmental manager Marvin Henderson. The opening of this store marked an ad, where we gave away orchids flown from Hawaii. iOrchids in Decemberj was the theme which was a great way to inaugurate the Christmas season. We went out to Buzzards Ballyard in adjoining Todd County and got a truck load of holly and decorated the store with garlands of real holly with small decorative balls to give more color. At this time we were operating a warehouse over on Bethel Streets where we sold farm supplies and fertilizer as well as field seeds and a seed processing plant over on Cleveland Avenue where we had four 29-D A.T. Ferrell air and screen machines, plus length graders and gravity and spiral machines to process the seeds grown in the local area.

In April 1974 we bought the building at 1100 South Main Street from Washington Manufacturing Co., one of Guy Comers enterprises and provided space for other retailers on the 1st floor with the second floor tying in the furniture department accessible with a passenger elevator. The third floor housed a fabulous Ethan Allan Gallery and home decorating assistants. Cayce Yost never did go out in the shopping centers but during its life did have stores in Pembroke and Elkton. In May of 1993 it was decided to close the doors which we did thus a great legacy that sold iAll of The Things that

you want the Most in Hopkinsville its Cayce-Yostj. Alas, Forbes, Planters and now Cayce-Yost was history and the only remnant of this business is found at Kentucky American Seed Company with younger management who make use of the seed processing plant. They contract propriety variety seeds to ship to their dealers.

We were active in various trade associations, as K.O. Cayce, Sr. was elected for two terms as President of the Kentucky Retail Hardware Association, and later President of the Kentucky Seedsmeng Association. Kenneth, Jr. followed as President of the Kentucky Hardware Association and then a director and President of the National Hardware Association. He was also a director of Cotter & Co our major supplier of hardware and small appliances. D.D., III became President of Kentucky Seedsmengs Association, and long time secretary-treasurer of this association.

We employed close to a hundred people at one time and I must ad that we had some of the finest employees that could be found. I am proud to have been a part of this business and I hear daily that a former customer will say, iI sure miss Cayce-Yost.<sup>e</sup> So you must know how much Kenneth and myself miss it for when we need something we have to think where can we go and get it othe only thing in this world that is constant is change thus it was with the passing of an era.