

By DON CLASEN

(Argus Staff Writer)

CORDOVA — Although a passerby might think this northern Rock Island County village is a sleepy river town, realistically Cordova could be dubbed one of the biggest little communities in Illinois.

Certainly, the settlement on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi has a rosy future.

Currently the village has a population of about 500, but the community first settled in 1836 by Herman East, is quite renowned throughout the Quad-City region. Cordova apparently was named for the large provincial capital of the same name in Spain.

Sudden fame came to Cordova this spring with the announcement of plans to develop a huge industrial tract immediately north of the village.

But, even earlier the village was noted not only for its quarry and building products, but for its fine small boat harbor, the Cordova Saddle Club, a popular dining place; and the nationally famous Quad-City Dragway, which is located a few miles north of the community along Route 80.

Also, many former Quad-Citians reside in lavish homes along the river, which offers a sandy beach and delightful residential and playground area north of Cordova.

2,000 Acre Tract

Located in an area abundant

with highway, railroad, and river transportation, the 2,000-acre industrial tract site is being considered by several firms.

Earlier this year, the development site was surveyed and found suitable for industry. To pave the way for further expansion, the land has been reconced, and negotiations between developers and prospective tenants are currently in progress.

One of the firms that has already expressed interest in establishing a plant in the industrial complex, is a potential supplier of hydrocarbons to the area.

Since the development area, which is bounded by a barge terminal and an area where Quad-City sand and gravel firms obtain materials north of Cordova, is level, the industrial region could also provide an air strip.

With the development assuring a bright future for Cordova, considerable attention will continue to focus on the locale, as plans for the gigantic World Series of Drag Racing, slated for the Dragway, Aug. 24 through 27, are formulated.

According to Robert "Bob" Bartel, a Moliner who is co-owner and president of the drag racer's group, upwards of 25,000 racing enthusiasts are expected this year at the annual event.

At the time of the World Series, an overnight tent "city" will spring up on the grounds of the Dragway as entrants from across the nation assemble.

Then, the event comes to life as powerful, sleek autos of both stock and improvised race design begin to dart down the 3,300-foot long blacktopped strip.

And, while thousands cheer, the approximately 500 participants will vie for about \$12,000 in prizes during this year's event.

While many Quad-Citians will be making the nearly 20-mile trip to the Cordova area for the drag racing program, others from the area will gather at the Cordova riverfront to enjoy the fine boating facilities.

Along the waterfront near the main Mississippi River channel is a sand bar that appears during periods of low water. Once the sandy mid-river spot protrudes, it becomes a mecca for bathers and boaters.

Frequently, the waterfront, is the site for boat races. The bluffs that form the picturesque hillside rise abruptly from the water's edge.

But, on all pleasant summer days, boaters gather to take their craft for a river trip from the modern mooring site near the recently remodeled Cordova American Legion Club rooms.

The popular Legion post several years ago took over the structure formerly maintained by a Modern Woodman of America unit.

Presently, the Cordova Boat Club has about 90 members. Members come from a wide area, including the Quad-Cities,

to enjoy the benefits.

Many Old Homes

For the most part, Cordovans live in spacious, mansionly old homes that dot the hillside extending up from the river. However, in contrast to the many vine-covered ancient structures, a few newer residents reside in bright new structures.

Cordova offers uncrowded, residential tracts both in the village itself and along the river to the north, where the newer, resort-type homes have sprung up in recent years.

A few grocery stores, garages and other businesses exist in the community. Cordova also has a church — the Cordova Baptist Church — which is one of Rock Island County's oldest congregations.

The nearly 200 members of the congregation already have celebrated the 115th anniversary.

Alongside the old brick edifice, currently served by the Rev. Richard E. Barcus, is a modern parsonage, completed recently.

Although a short distance off Route 80, Cordova is served by the Milwaukee Railroad, which provides freight service.

The community also is the site of the administration building of the Riverdale Community School District. The district offices are maintained in the old Cordova High School building. The village also has a grade school.

Lime Quarry Established

After the earlier mentioned Herman East, built the first log cabin in Cordova in 1836, histories report that Amazi R. Rathburn, and Theodore and John Butcher were other prominent early settlers.

John Marshall and Dr. Thomas Baker laid out Cordova in 1838, and lime kilns were established and for some time Cordova furnished road materials for a wide area.

Today, the Cordova Quarry still exists between the village and Port Byron to the south. In the quarry area are remains of the old kilns.

to have taught classes in his own house.

In 1863 the first school building was built and classes held under the common schools laws of the state.

In 1839, John Marshall became the first postmaster. Later, Marshall kept the first hotel and along with another area pioneer erected a grist mill in 1853.

On March 16, 1867 a petition for village organization was filed. But, voters rejected the measure until in 1877 the subject was again submitted to the voters. This time, citizens voted in the affirmative, and on April 23, 1877 the village became officially organized.

Cordova of 1961 is on the brink of its brightest day. Perhaps, as industrial plans progress in subsequent years, upwards of several thousands will be employed by industrial firms here. Of course, many of these persons will make their homes in and around Cordova.

Cordova is certainly ready for expansion. Not only does the area afford residential and industrial building sites, but also excellent recreational facilities.

As a result, it would seem difficult for Cordova to miss future greatness.