

# Kentucky

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## Kentucky Grave Houses

Page 10

**INSIDE:** Margaret Mitchell's Leading Man | 14



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# Kentucky

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# 22

## Louisville's Festival of Faiths

Unique interfaith festival sets a high standard for others to follow.



# 26

## Black Market Spy

Young Joseph Woodson Oglesby did his best to support America's war effort.



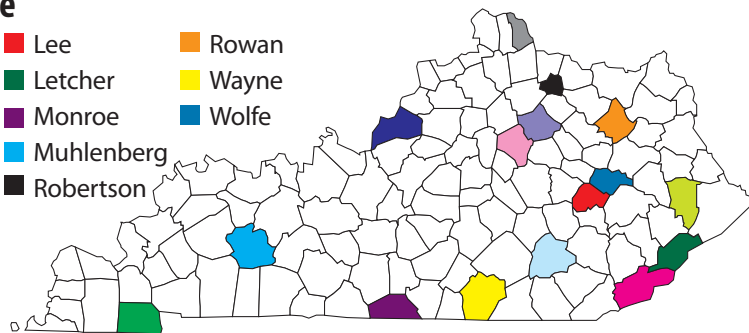
# 30

## Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History

An overview of the recently published book portraying the history of African Americans in Louisville.

### In this issue

- |             |              |             |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| ■ Bourbon   | ■ Lee        | ■ Rowan     |
| ■ Calloway  | ■ Letcher    | ■ Wayne     |
| ■ Campbell  | ■ Monroe     | ■ Wolfe     |
| ■ Fayette   | ■ Muhlenberg | ■ Robertson |
| ■ Floyd     |              |             |
| ■ Harlan    |              |             |
| ■ Jefferson |              |             |
| ■ Laurel    |              |             |



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On the cover: Photo by Jonathan Jeffrey — Stone grave houses for Guerneta Williams (1815-1898) and David Williams (1812-1896) located near the Rough Creek Baptist Church outside of London in Laurel County.

# Marking Milestones

**W**e are approaching a very important milestone in Kentucky's history, as next year marks the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. America's Second War for Independence is an often overlooked but important part of American history. Kentucky played a crucial role in **that** war, answering Governor Isaac Shelby's call to arms with more than 25,000 Kentucky men serving as regulars, militia, and volunteers.

Beginning this fall and throughout the coming year, many events will recognize those who contributed to America's victory in the War of 1812. State Representatives Addia Wuchner and Steve Riggs recently hosted one such event with a dedication ceremony for the placement of a historical marker at the site of the Col. Frederick Geiger home, Linden Hill, in Louisville's historic Butchertown. Butchertown's original landowners were Whig Party loyalists. We hope you will take the opportunity to find out more about historic Butchertown and its connection to Whig Party leader Henry Clay's role in our young nation's expansion. And for an up-close encounter with the War of 1812, we invite you to enjoy one of Kentucky Chautauqua's newest programs, "Private William Greathouse," portrayed by Harry Smith.

Two hundred years also frame the recent collaboration of J. Blaine Hudson, Mervin Aubespain, and Kenneth Clay, *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History*. We're grateful to Dr. Hudson for providing an overview of this comprehensive and unique look at the history of African Americans in Louisville. The images are captivating!

Most of our readers would agree with Kentucky author and poet Jim Wayne Miller's description of Kentucky as a "writerly state," but what does that have to do with Maysville and *Gone with the Wind*? Now, seventy-five years since Margaret Mitchell introduced us to Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler in her iconic Civil War novel, Henderson author Marianne Walker tells the tumultuous tale of how *Gone with the Wind* was completed, introducing us to the Kentucky native to whom the book is dedicated. Her article begins on page 14.



**Virginia G. Carter**  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Humanities Council

Always looking for untold stories, we turned to an expert — Kentucky Library and Museum's archivist and scholar Jonathan Jeffrey. If you are interested in vernacular architecture, and perhaps even if you aren't, we think you'll enjoy Jeffrey's tour of grave houses found in the Commonwealth. It's a fascinating look at this unique architectural tradition and the cemeteries that feature them.

Finally, please don't overlook David Hawpe's article on the Festival of Faiths. We hope you'll consider attending this community-wide cultural and ecumenical educational opportunity in Louisville or in another community inspired by Louisville's example.

You'll find these and more Kentucky stories in this issue of *Kentucky Humanities*, which we encourage you to share with your fellow Kentuckians in print or online at [www.kyhumanities.org](http://www.kyhumanities.org). We want to share your Kentucky stories as well. Let us hear from you. Just contact our editor, Marianne Stoess, [Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu](mailto:Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Virginia G. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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**Kentucky Chautauqua® at Linden Hill**

On September 17th State Representative Addia Wuchner and Kentucky War of 1812 Bicentennial Commissioner Representative Steve Riggs held a dedication ceremony for the placement of a historical marker at the site of Linden Hill, the home of Col. Frederick Geiger.

The event marked the 200th anniversary of the call for volunteers and honored the contributions of Col. Frederick Geiger and the brave Kentucky Mounted Riflemen who played a crucial role in America's Second War for Independence.

Kentucky Chautauqua's Harry Smith participated in the ceremony, portraying Private William Greathouse.

Like many members of the Kentucky militia, Private William Greathouse was just a teenager when he answered Kentucky Governor Isaac Shelby's call to arms. He mustered in on August 24, 1813, in Nelson County, under the command of Captain Martin H. Wickliffe



in Colonel Renick's 5th Kentucky Regiment.

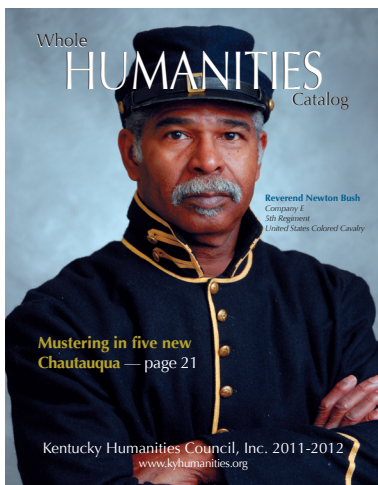
Private Greathouse was an active participant of the Thames Campaign, marching into Canada with the mission to drive out the British forces, who were assisted by Chief Tecumseh. Greathouse fought in every phase of the Thames Campaign, including the Battle of the Thames.

Kentuckians played a vital role in the War of 1812. Nearly sixty-seven percent of Kentucky's white men who were qualified to fight by age and health volunteered to do so. Kentucky soldiers made up just under five percent of all American soldiers, yet sixty-four percent of the Americans killed in the War of 1812 were from Kentucky.



Photos by Virginia G. Carter

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For a complete description of the 24 Kentucky Chautauqua dramas, including Private William Greathouse, and the new lineup of speakers sponsored by the Kentucky Humanities Council visit us at [www.kyhumanities.org](http://www.kyhumanities.org) or call 859.257.5932 to request a catalog.

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## Journey Stories

*Smithsonian traveling exhibit touring the Commonwealth*

The Kentucky Humanities Council selected six Kentucky museums to host the *Journey Stories* exhibit from May 2011 through March 2012 as part of the Museum on Main Street project — a national/state/local partnership to bring exhibitions and programs to rural cultural organizations. Museum on Main Street is a partnership of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, the Federation of State Humanities Councils and state humanities councils nationwide. The United States Congress and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet provide support to the Museum on Main Street project. The exhibit has already made stops at museums in Winchester, Cynthiana, and Somerset.

Journey stories are a central element of our personal heritage. From Native Americans to new American citizens and regardless of our ethnic or racial background, everyone has a story to tell. Our history is filled with stories of people leaving behind everything — families and possessions — to reach a new life in another state, across the continent, or even across an ocean. Many chose to move, searching for something better in a new land. Others had no choice, like enslaved Africans captured and relocated to a strange land and bravely asserting their own cultures, or like Native Americans already here, who were often pushed aside by newcomers.

Curated by William Withuhn, curator of transportation for the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, *Journey Stories* examines the intersection between modes of travel and Americans' desire to feel free to move. The story is diverse and focused on immigration, migration, innovation, and freedom.

The story of the intersection between transportation and American society is complicated, but it tells us much about who we are — people who see our societal mobility as a means for asserting our individual freedom. *Journey Stories* uses engaging images with audio and artifacts to tell individual stories that illustrate the critical roles travel and movement have played in building our diverse American society.

The exhibit will travel to three additional Kentucky locations:

**October 22, 2011 - December 3, 2011**

Kentucky Folk Art Center in Morehead

**December 10, 2011 - January 21, 2012**

Fort Thomas Military Museum in Fort Thomas

**January 28, 2012 - March 10, 2012**

Wrather West Kentucky Museum/  
Murray State University in Murray

JOURNEY  
Stories



For more information about *Journey Stories* and other Museum on Main Street exhibitions, visit [www.museumonmainstreet.org](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org).

*Journey Stories* is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc.





# Yes, they too were Kentuckians

*A look at some well-known, and not-so-well-known, people in Kentucky history*

## Garrett A. Morgan

1877-1963 • Paris, Kentucky

By James C. Claypool

**G**arrett Augustus Morgan, who grew up on his family's farm near Paris, Kentucky, would develop a range of creative talents that transformed him from a farm laborer into one of America's foremost inventors. Garrett was the seventh of eleven children born to former slaves, Sydney Morgan and Elizabeth Reed Morgan. Up until age fourteen, Garrett worked on the farm with his brothers and sisters, but in 1891 he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, to work as a handyman for a rich landowner. Only able to complete a portion of his elementary education before moving to Cincinnati, Morgan resolved to continue his studies, saved enough money to hire a private tutor and subsequently studied English grammar.

Morgan moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1895. There he took a job as a sewing machine repairman for a clothing manufacturer and soon earned a fast-spreading reputation for being a multi-talented tinker and someone capable of fixing all things mechanical. Eschewing several job offers from various manufacturing firms in the Cleveland area, Morgan opened his own sewing equipment and repair shop in that city in 1907. He eventually had thirty-two employees in this firm and used its success to finance several other business enterprises in Cleveland. The products his sewing shop produced — coats, suits, and dresses — were all fabricated by equipment that Morgan had made.

Morgan next entered into the newspaper business in Cleveland, establishing in 1920 the *Cleveland Call* (later renamed the *Call and Post*), a newspaper catering to the news and issues in that city's African American community. Even though he was a well-known and successful businessman, along with many of his associates and peers in Cleveland's African American community, he had to deal continually with the racial biases and *de facto* segregation of his times.

One of the first examples of this problem centered on a device Morgan invented in 1914, which he called the Morgan Safety Hood and Smoke Protector. Morgan had invented the device, which was later refined by the U.S. Army for use as a gas mask

during World War I, to allow firemen to enter a smoke-filled structure and breathe clean air. Morgan also planned to market his invention as a piece of equipment that might allow anyone working in dust or noxious fumes to don the device and breathe freely. For two years, Morgan demonstrated his invention at a number of equipment expositions held across America but there was little interest since it had not been tested in life-threatening conditions.

Then in 1916, the event Morgan had been waiting for, the opportunity to test his device during a real-life disaster, happened. On July 24, a tunnel being dug by the Cleveland Water Works beneath Lake Erie exploded, trapping thirty-two workers beneath. The tunnel quickly filled with dust, smoke, and noxious fumes and it seemed everyone below was doomed to die. Someone at the scene, however, knew about Morgan's safety hood and smoke protector and ran to the inventor's home, where Morgan was relaxing with his brother, Frank. The two brothers immediately rushed to the disaster scene, put on safety hoods and entered the tunnel. After several tension-packed minutes, Garrett emerged from the tunnel carrying a survivor on his back, as did his brother seconds later; and the crowd erupted with thunderous applause and cheers. Several more men were saved but not all. Nonetheless, word of the rescue soon spread nationwide and to England as well, and Morgan's company was bombarded with orders from fire and police departments for the device. But the prevailing ugly face of racism soon put an end to it all, and most of these orders were cancelled when it was discovered that the device's inventor was a black man.

Undaunted, Morgan continued to invent. Over the course of his life he created and patented a variety of inventions ranging from a sewing machine lubricant that straightened hair to a number of industrial lubricants and mechanical devices. His most noteworthy invention was the traffic device, an idea he came up with after witnessing an accident between a horse-drawn cart and an automobile in which the driver of the car was knocked unconscious and the horse had to be destroyed.

The dawn of the automobile age in an urban setting was a blending of chaos and confusion as animal-powered conveyances, bicycles, and gasoline-powered automobiles maneuvered willy-nilly through the streets of American cities. Cleveland was no exception. Morgan concluded that what was needed in cities was a piece of equipment that directed traffic automatically, ending the need for workers or policemen to stand on corners to do so. The device he created, the Morgan Traffic Signal, was a T-shaped pole unit featuring hand-cranked positions: stop, go, and all-directions stop. The third position, which halted all traffic, allowed pedestrians to cross streets more safely. Morgan sold his invention to the General Electric Corporation for \$40,000 and his invention was the forerunner of the modern three-colored traffic light that now governs traffic flow.

As one of Cleveland's most successful African American businessmen, Morgan usually was cast into the limelight any time matters of civil rights were at issue in his city. By nature he was quiet and unassuming, but he did believe in fighting on behalf of racial equality, and he devoted both time and money to achieving fair treatment for African Americans. He was treasurer of the Cleveland Association of Colored Men and remained actively involved in that organization from 1914 until it merged with the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People. Following the merger, he joined and remained an active member of the NAACP until his death in 1963.

It was said that Morgan "had walked with giants," for he numbered among his business acquaintances and friends the likes of financier J.P. Morgan (after whom Garrett Morgan named one of his sons) and business tycoon John D. Rockefeller. Morgan was honored both while he was alive and after his death for his many inventions and achievements. His inventions earned him several accolades and achievement medals throughout his life. His list of posthumous recognitions include Prince George's County's Garrett A. Morgan Boulevard, in Maryland; the Washington, D.C. Metro system's Morgan Boulevard Station; the Garrett Morgan (Water) Treatment Plant in Cleveland; and the Garrett A. Morgan Cleveland School of Science. Garrett Morgan is thus appropriately honored and memorialized for having had a lifetime filled with significant achievements.

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Adapted from James C. Claypool's book, *Our Fellow Kentuckians: Rascals, Heroes and Just Plain Uncommon Folk*, and the subject of a talk offered by Claypool through the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.

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*Augustine D. Neal (1861-1882) was buried in the Neal Cemetery at Fountain Run, Monroe County, Kentucky. Each corner post of this grave house has a metal pin in the bottom which fits into drilled holes in the limestone base.*

# Housing the Dead

By Jonathan Jeffrey

In James Still's *River of Earth*, a grieving mother insistently instructs her husband: "You ought to be nailing together a little covering for the baby's grave." Shortly afterward, "Father fetched walnut planks from the loft and built a grave house under the barn shed. It was five feet square with a chestnut shingle roof. During the first lull in the weather, we took it to the Point." Still recorded the grave house's construction as if it were a common folkway among mountaineers of the early twentieth century. In reality, the building of such structures was not an automatic reaction to death in Kentucky. These odd cultural vestiges are now quite rare, but examples can still be found across the Commonwealth. Although most common in the Upland South, grave houses can be found in a large swath of the United States from Maine south to Florida and then west through Tennessee and Kentucky to Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas and including all the Deep South. Other examples have been found in northern Michigan and Wisconsin as well as in Washington State and Alaska.

Grave houses are built directly over interred remains, whereas mausoleums are built to house human remains above the surface; crypts are rooms dug into the earth, generally on hillsides, for the same purpose. Grave houses have been known by a plethora of names: "spirit houses", "soul houses", "grave sheds", "decoration sheds", "lattice huts", and "grave huts." No matter the name, their origin is nebulous. Although antecedents exist in Britain, some anthropologists trace grave houses to Amerindian influence. Most, but not all, grave houses protect the grave, the tombstone, and other graveside mementoes, and on occasion even offer shelter for those paying their respects to the deceased. It should be noted here that the familiar boxed grave in Kentucky is not considered a grave house, but rather a grave cover.

Over the past decade, I have examined approximately one hundred grave houses in different sections of Kentucky, ranging from Calloway County eastward to Harlan County and as far north as Robertson County. The great majority of these architectural oddities are found in the Commonwealth's mountainous region,



starting in Wayne County and moving eastward. Most are of simple frame construction consisting of corner posts which sit on stone piers, connected by walls resembling a picket fence, although newer examples tend to use lattice work walls and occasionally hog wire or chain link fence. Grave houses with walls from the ground to half way up the corner posts are often referred to as open, and those with walls extending all the way to the roof are called closed. Open examples generally have an entryway, many times spanned with a gate which allows entry and exit; closed grave houses typically have a door and frequently include at least one window to light the interior. A few stone grave houses with stone roofs are found in the southeastern Kentucky, and they will undoubtedly outlast their frame counterparts. Heights of grave houses vary greatly; shorter varieties are more common, but there are examples in Floyd County and Harlan County that almost look like roofs built on stilts with no walls except approximately one foot of lattice work on the corner posts below the roof. All the grave houses in Kentucky feature pitched roofs, and all but three of these are gabled roofs. The three exceptions include a shed-roofed example in Muhlenberg County and pyramidal roofs in Wayne County and Letcher County.

Several reasons have been noted for erecting grave houses, the most common being to protect the grave from the elements and consequent erosion. Another practical rationale for the houses was to shield graves from free ranging livestock and/or burrowing animals. One such creature known as the “grave robber” was fictional, although many mountaineers guaranteed the veracity of its existence. It was said to resemble a cross between a slender weasel and an anteater that burrowed into graves and reportedly destroyed the body. Some anthropologists have noted the

possibility that grave houses also denoted a degree of status within a community.

It might border too much on the scientific to make the grave house a strictly practical affair and remove the structures from the sentimental mourning customs of the age in which they were built. One author aptly referred to the buildings as a “posthumous exhibition of affection.” Besides family, this concept could be lovingly expressed to a kind friend or a noble stranger with the Appalachian sentiment: “You ought to have a pretty grave house when you die.” Clearly grave houses are expressions of tender association, but they do not appear to possess any religious connotations, at least in the Upland South; the structures themselves are devoid of religious iconography and their east-west orientation only follows the region’s traditional burial practices.

The concept of “posthumous exhibition of affection” is easily discernible to the cultural historian who looks beyond the physical structure and inculcates the known stories of the people sheltered by the diminutive houses. It is particularly moving when one discovers that a number of the grave houses were constructed to cover children’s graves. In *The Kentucky*, Thomas D. Clark described in great detail a grave house found on the bank of the North Fork of the Kentucky River outside Hazard:

*The one [grave house] which shelters the grave of Everett Combs causes the visitor to pause in wonderment. A grief-stricken mother has spent many tender hours in decorating it. On the glass side of the house is pasted a long and mournful Appalachian highland ballad which pours out a tearful story of love and adoration. Within, the little shrine is decorated for childhood’s happiest experience — Christmas. There is an artificial evergreen tree, a Christmas wreath, paper flowers, a tiny*



*Three of the eight grave houses located in the Carter Cemetery in southern Wayne County.*

Photo by Jonathan Jeffrey



package on the doll table, two large pictures of the dead child, a lithograph of Christ on the mountain, and placards of "Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me" and "I Am the Resurrection and the Life." To a mother this is a tender remembrance of a child who has been a joy in a home, but to an indifferent world which passes the cemetery gate in a monotonous workaday procession it is a weird hand-over from another day.

The largest grave house in the Commonwealth was erected in northern Lee County for the four children of Moses L. and Sarah W. Cox: Woodrow, Grover, Edward, and Lula May who all died before reaching the age of 19. This house features plywood siding, a tin roof, green all-weather carpet inside, folding chairs for sitting and other mementoes left by family members. A framed group of notes written by Lula May's classmates is particularly touching. Another poignant example of a child's grave house can be found in Floyd County's Justice Cemetery near Endicott. There, Katherine Justice was laid to rest in February 1958 after tragically drowning in cold water with twenty-six other children in a school bus that plunged off a bluff into the Big Sandy River. The family built a closed grave house over her grave, because they purportedly "did not want her to ever be wet again." Interestingly, when her mother Gladys died four years later, the family extended a shed roof off the left side of the grave house so that her grave would also be protected from the elements.

Grave houses once more frequently peppered the cultural landscape of Kentucky's mountainous regions; their demise can be linked to several factors. As the structures deteriorated and as professional funeral homes became more commonplace, appearance-conscious kinfolk or cemetery caretakers often dismantled older grave houses. In addition municipal cemeteries and many cemetery associations classify the grave houses as obstructions and prohibit their erection. Constructing grave houses waned by the 1960s, but a new ones, some



The grave house for William (1845-1922) and Mary J. Brown (1848-1930) is one of two examples found in the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Sunnybrook, Wayne County. Both grave houses have recently been reroofed and covered with aluminum siding.

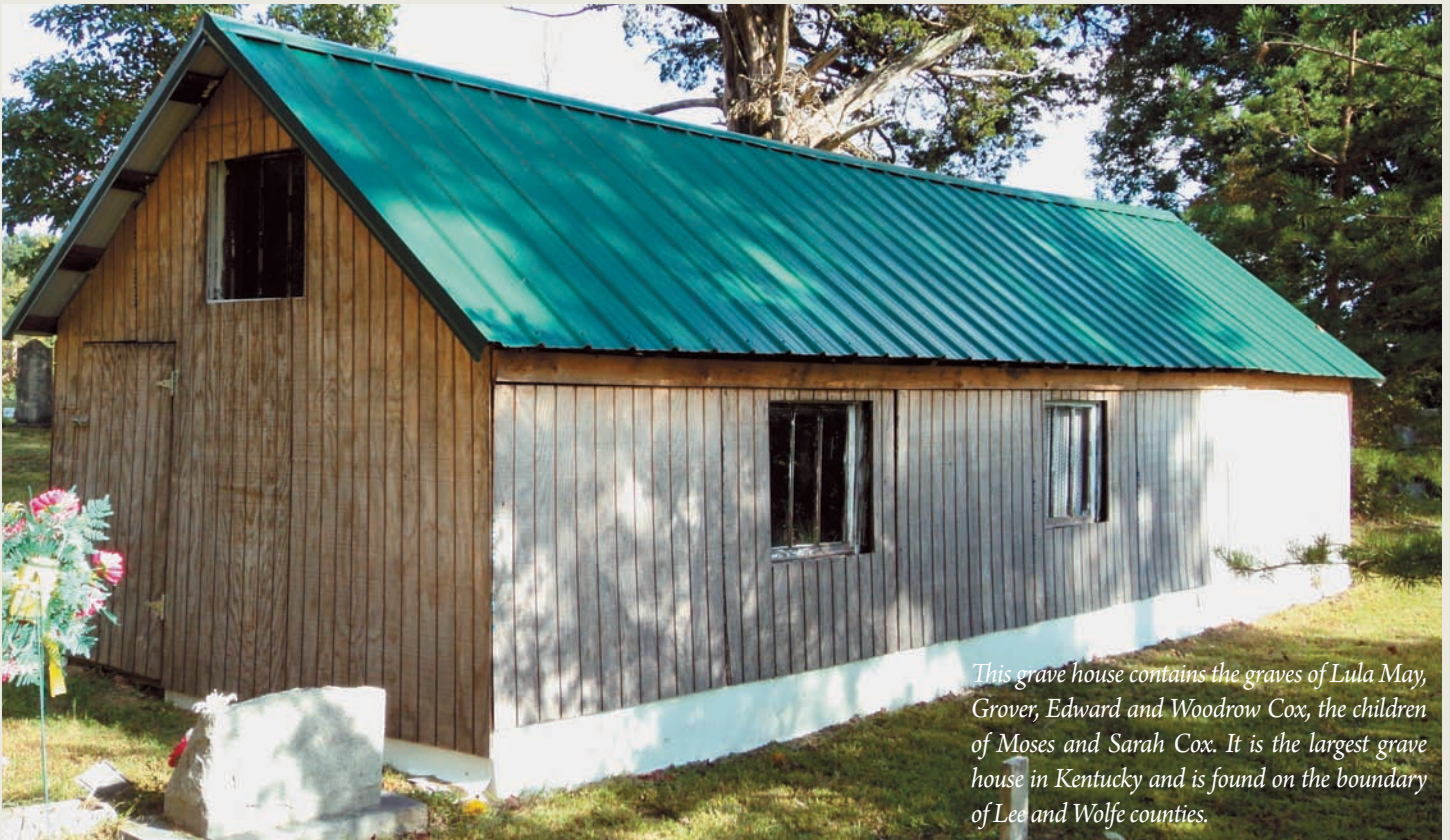
as recent as the 1990s, continue to be built. Occasionally a new grave house will be constructed to replace one that has deteriorated, but they do not generally take the same form or use the same materials as the original. Today there are only isolated examples of cemeteries that contain more than a single grave house. A rare exception is the Carter Cemetery in Wayne County that boasts eight of the unique buildings. Hopefully awareness of the scarcity of these once common structures will inspire families and cemetery associations to preserve remaining grave houses for posterity.



Located in the New Hebron Baptist Church Cemetery in southern Muhlenberg County, the Wood family grave house covers the interred remains of four family members and features an unusual shed roof.

Photos by Jonathan Jeffrey





This grave house contains the graves of Lula May, Grover, Edward and Woodrow Cox, the children of Moses and Sarah Cox. It is the largest grave house in Kentucky and is found on the boundary of Lee and Wolfe counties.

### About the Author

Jonathan Jeffrey, a native of Texas, has been at Western Kentucky University's Kentucky Library & Museum since 1990, where he is the Manuscripts & Folklife Archives coordinator. He received his bachelor's degree in history from the University of North Texas, a master's in history from Stephen Austin University, and a master's in library science from the University of Maryland.

Since coming to Bowling Green, Jeffrey has published numerous popular and scholarly articles and booklets related to local history, architecture, women's history, the Shakers, and the history of the Commonwealth's libraries. His most recent book is *Stock Car Racing in Bowling Green*. He has made more than 1,000 presentations before civic, literary, religious, and cultural groups on the same topics.

Jeffrey has served on a number of boards for Kentucky historical organizations, and his service to them was recognized in 1994 with the Historical Confederation of Kentucky's Award of Distinction. He received Western Kentucky University's Award for Outstanding Public Service in May 2002 and a Jefferson Award for Public Service in 2004.

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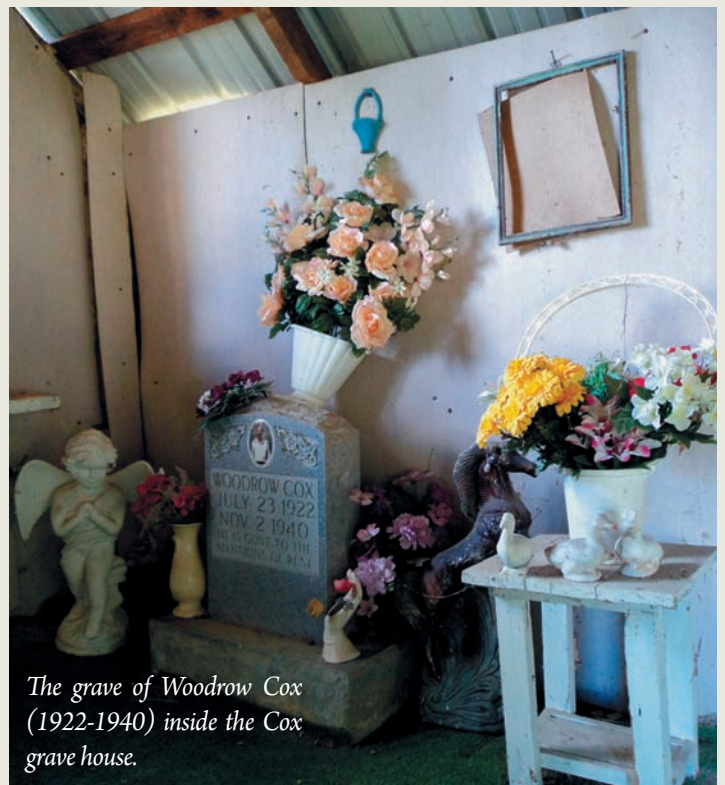
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The Grave Walkers [website], [www.thegravewalkers.com](http://www.thegravewalkers.com) This website documents many types of grave covers and monuments. Grave houses are found in the "Grave Shelters" section.

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The grave of Woodrow Cox (1922-1940) inside the Cox grave house.





Photo from the private collection of Mary Marsh Davis. Courtesy of Peachtree Publishers.

# Leading Man

Kentucky native John Marsh was more than Margaret Mitchell's husband. He also served as editor of *Gone with the Wind*.

By Marianne Walker

**O**n a tour of the South searching for new authors in the spring of 1935, Harold Latham, vice-president and editor of Macmillan Publishing Company, stopped in Atlanta. The writers and the would-be writers there were all excited about his visit. As a guest to a luncheon given at Rich's department store, Latham was seated next to Margaret Mitchell, ex-reporter for the *Atlanta Journal Magazine*. He had been told that Mitchell, a small, dark-haired young woman, was working on a novel and that it probably would be a very good one.

Latham found Mitchell intelligent, delightful company — as nearly everyone always did. When he asked her if he could read her manuscript, he was surprised when she, without any hesitation, answered “No!” Most unpublished writers would have jumped at that opportunity, but she had good reason to refuse it.

Her manuscript was unfinished, unorganized and, except for a couple of incomplete chapters, was poorly typed on yellow copy paper. This was long before Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, scanners, copiers, and internet. Manuscripts were either handwritten or typed, and carbon paper was used to make copies. The



copy she had was the *only copy*. Mitchell was not a very good typist, and each page was freckled with strikeouts, handwritten notes, and corrections. The manuscript had no title. The main character, a head-strong, selfish young woman, was named Pansy. The first chapter was missing entirely and the second and third, though neatly typed on white paper, were first drafts.

Each of the other chapters plus its notes and different versions, yes, there were multiple versions, was stuffed into a large manila envelope that was scribbled over. And there must have been at least thirty or more of these bloated envelopes. The story was basically finished by 1929, but the sequence of events was unclear because it depended on which drafts she finally settled on using. She said she had the whole book in her head before she started writing in 1926 and began by writing the ending first. By doing so she figured she could control the characters better. She had been working her way backward through the story ever since.

Looming large was her dreadful concern about not having checked “a single fact in that long manuscript.” She had written the novel from the memory of what she had read in old newspapers, journals, and diaries and from what she had been told by survivors of the Civil War — many of whom were in her own family. She had studied reference books and used information from them, but not with the idea that the novel would be published. The country between Atlanta and Dalton where the Sherman-Johnston campaign was waged she knew well, but she wrote about it from memory of what the old veterans of the campaign had told her. Now, the thought of not having documentation for all these nonfiction facts horrified her. In a letter to Julian Harris, April 21, 1936, she explained, “I didn’t want to get caught out on anything that any Confederate Vet could nail me on, or any historian either.” So much research was required to corroborate these oral history accounts that, naturally, she did not want any publisher to see her manuscript in its raw state.

The next day after attending a tea in Latham’s honor, Mitchell called her husband at work to tell him that the nice man had asked again to read her manuscript, what should she do? Her husband urged her to let him have it, saying that it could not do any harm and with his expert opinion she would know whether it was worth finishing or not. Knowing that Latham was leaving Atlanta that afternoon, Mitchell hurriedly gathered the envelopes and drove downtown to the hotel where he was staying. From the lobby, she telephoned him in his room. Here is his account of what followed:

*Miss Mitchell’s voice came over it [phone], informing me she was downstairs in the lounge and would like to see me. I went down, and I shall never forget the mental picture that I have of her at that time — a tiny woman sitting on a divan, with the biggest manuscript beside her that I have ever seen, towering in two stacks almost to her shoulders.*

These “towering stacks” were what was to become *Gone With the Wind* as we know it. Talking quickly lest she change

her mind, she explained the poor condition of the manuscript. Then she added that his comments about southern authors and southern books had aroused her interest, and she was curious to know what he thought of this one. “You can’t possibly be more surprised at being given it as I am at letting you take it.”

With limited luggage space, Latham had a bellboy rush out to purchase another suitcase in which he could pack the manuscript. On the train to New Orleans that night, he started reading and said he soon realized “here indeed was a significant novel of the South. . . . the mere untidiness of the script could not conceal the enchantment of the story.” A few weeks after reading the manuscript, Lois Cole, his associate editor, and Charles W. Everett, English professor at Columbia University who often advised Macmillan about manuscripts, heartily agreed with him. Everett wrote, “This book is really magnificent. Its human qualities would make it good against any background . . . . Furthermore, it has a high degree of literary finish. . . .By all means take the book. It can’t possibly turn out badly.”

Stunned after reading Latham’s letter telling her the good news, Mitchell wrote, “My head swells enormously under his words, and I spread my tail feathers like a peacock.” Her head swelled even more after she received a copy of Everett’s evaluation. Always embarrassed about not having a college degree, Mitchell cherished that “A+” from the Columbia University English professor and also the telegram from Lois Cole saying, “Macmillan terribly excited about your book. Company planning great things for the book. How soon can you finish?” On August 13, Latham returned the manuscript which was identified only as *A MS of the Old South*. Happy to have her “baby” (her name for it) home again, she was ready to work on it.

After signing a contract with Mitchell on August 6, 1935, Macmillan did not do what publishers in those days always did and a few may still do — that is assign one of their own editors to help the author get her manuscript ready for production. No need to do that, for by then Macmillan was well aware that Mitchell had her own editor, a good one too, who had been reading and talking to her about the manuscript from the time she started writing it nine years earlier. Until she gave it to Latham, this editor was the *only* person Mitchell had ever allowed to read it or even with whom she had discussed it. According to her own account, he had helped her formulate her ideas; he had kept track of the numerous characters and their various dialects; and he had made numerous notes on military actions, and other historical details. He had also corrected her spelling and punctuation. In addition to all of that, he coaxed her along when she lagged behind in her writing.

It is no secret that some of our greatest American authors were guided to their creative heights by great editors. Maxwell Perkins, at Charles Scribner’s Sons, discovered, improved, and published the first novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe. Called the “consummate editor,” Perkins also



helped many other twentieth century authors, such as Erskine Caldwell, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Ring Lardner, and H.L. Mencken to name just a few. Julia Child — perhaps the world’s most famous chef — owes a debt of gratitude to her editor Judith Jones for rescuing Child’s first manuscript of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* from the rejection pile.

Margaret Mitchell’s editor substantially contributed to her success, and she had the extra advantage of being married to him. She showed her appreciation by dedicating *Gone With the Wind* to her husband — John Robert Marsh. This simple dedication — “To J.R.M.” — is only a hint at the significance of their relationship and the influence it had on the origin and fruition of her great Civil War novel.

Marsh’s deep attachment to Mitchell was pivotal to her work and life. Without question, she had all the fiery imagination, passion for and knowledge of her subject that any writer needs to create an epic like hers. But she did not have all the technical skills, nor the confidence in herself, nor the self-discipline to transform her ideas into a completed manuscript of the quality of *Gone With the Wind*. Her insecurities hampered her in many ways. Marsh not only nurtured her imagination by providing an environment of creative stimulus, but he also gave her precisely the kind of editorial help she needed to do what she always had wanted to do — write a good book.



***Margaret Mitchell, known as Peggy, needed John Marsh to nurture her imagination and provide the discipline she lacked.***

Photo from the private collection of Mary Marsh Davis. Courtesy of Peachtree Publishers.

Their work on the revision began around the end of August 1935. Marsh’s long detailed letters to Macmillan during this period and later show that he, speaking for his wife always, was in charge. Better than anyone else, he and Mitchell knew the daunting amount of work that needed to be done to shape that “old mess of copy paper” into a book. It would be a full-time job, and he already had a full-time job as head of the public relations department at Georgia Power. Yet, there was no way she could do it all by herself. They knew that somehow they would manage it. They had to.

The kind of urgency required at that point was exactly the kind that challenged Marsh who was accustomed to deadlines, and he inspired his wife’s enthusiasm. In a letter to Latham on September 3, Mitchell wrote: *I am hard at work, and, for the first time in my life, working is comparatively easy. Here to fore, it has been the most anguished of struggles to get anything at all on paper . . . Things go more easily now . . . As John says there’s nothing like signing a contract, having a conscience about delivering the goods and burning your britches [sic] behind you . . . He has his two-week vacation in September and has promised to help me out with that damned first chapter and anything else I need.*

Believing they could have the finished form ready by Thanksgiving, they worked out a schedule. With the help of Rhoda Williams, Marsh’s personal secretary at Georgia Power, and a couple of other young female employees, the manuscript was typed and retyped in the evenings. Marsh would stay up most of the night, every night, reading new pages and notes Mitchell gave him and writing corrections so he would have new pages to give to the typists the next morning. He scoured the manuscript for errors in spelling and punctuation and for sentences that needed documentation or fixing. He searched for inconsistencies, anachronisms, and repetitions, and he shuffled scenes into chronological order. One huge task involved checking the time frames to see if the characters developed correctly chronologically and if babies came at the right time and far enough apart. The fact that Mitchell had not written the chapters consecutively made this search complicated. He also worked on getting the dialect of each character right.

The notebook Marsh started in 1927 on the characters and their different dialects was a valuable resource for them now. When Stephens, Mitchell’s only sibling, authorized Finis Farr in the 1960’s to write the first biography of his deceased sister, he showed Farr the notebook that Marsh, who was also deceased by then, had worked on throughout the years his wife was writing the novel. Farr wrote, “In his small neat handwriting John drew up a seventeen-page glossary of terms in negro and frontier country speech to help keep the various kinds of dialect consistent.” Perfecting the regional speech of the different characters required painstaking, time-consuming attention.

During the weekdays, Mitchell did her fact-checking. She researched in the courthouse records room and in the library.



She spent countless hours checking references and working on the documentation, in addition to completing the unfinished chapters, and “hitching up” loose ends. She reread the memoirs of Generals Johnston, Hood, and Sherman and studied the histories of the Reconstruction. She reread Cox’s *Atlanta Campaign*, and said “if there was even a sergeant who wrote a book about that retreat, I read it.” She explained that she “spent weeks and weeks in county court houses checking the names of my characters against tax books, from 1840 to 1873, against deed books, against militia muster rolls, against Confederate muster rolls, against lists of jurymen, against wills and titles.” She did not want to embarrass anyone’s family by using names of actual people living in and around Clayton County during the time frame used in the novel.

Her heroine’s name, “Pansy,” bothered her, so she changed it to Katie Scarlett because the latter was so often used in Irish literature. Also, she changed the heroine’s home from Fontenoy Hall to Tara in keeping with the Irishness of Katie Scarlett O’Hara. Although Macmillan was satisfied with naming the book “Tomorrow is Another Day,” Mitchell and Marsh were not. Mitchell sent Lois Cole a list of twenty-two titles she liked better and drew a star next to number seventeen and wrote “I’ll agree to any of these but I like this one the best.” Number seventeen was “Gone With the Wind.”

Thanksgiving came and went, and they still were not through although they had been working steadily day and night. During this stressful editing process, questions, problems, and misunderstandings arose between them and the publisher requiring Marsh to take time away from his editing to write long detailed letters clarifying their position. Starting early in 1936, telegrams were flying thick as snowflakes between New York and Atlanta. As they completed chapters, they sent them to Lois Cole who kept asking for more. The mental and physical strain from all this work made Mitchell ill. After Christmas, her physician prescribed bed rest for her, so Marsh plowed ahead alone.

On February 12, they received their first batch of galley sheets and stayed up late to read them. They were grateful to see that Susan Prink, the copy editor, had corrected a few contradictory sentences and a couple of errors in grammar. But, then, they were horrified to discover that she also changed dozens of other things that they wanted put back as they had them. Much to their dismay, Prink had deleted punctuation that Marsh had so carefully placed where Mitchell wanted it to indicate Scarlett’s thoughts and speech. And the worse thing for them was to discover that she had made every bit of the dialect speech consistent after Marsh had gone to so much trouble to make distinctions in it. He was so angry that he did not go to his office the next morning but stayed at home to write Lois Cole a nine-page letter explaining the corrections that Prink needed to make. This copyediting problem created tension between the Marshes and Lois Cole.



*John Marsh (right) enlisted in the Barrow Unit of the Armed Services at Lexington, Kentucky. In 1918 he spent seven months serving in England and later served in France.*

Photo courtesy of Gordon Renick Marsh and Peachtree Publishing.

Finally, on January 30, 1936, the Marshes and their helpers sighed with relief when Rhoda handed the envelope containing the last of the manuscript to the postal delivery boy. Later that same day, John entered the hospital because of his own health problems. From his hospital room, he wrote Lois Cole a seven-page, double-spaced letter this time. The first line set the tone: *I hope my telegram and the g d manuscript have reached you long ere this. The Marsh family was in a state of collapse when we finally got it into the mail Wednesday noon and we have just come up for air. Peggy is still sick.* He did not mention he was writing from a hospital bed.

Because of Marsh’s meticulous scrutiny of the manuscript and the proofs, along with the work of Miss Prink and the proofreaders and the typesetters, *Gone With the Wind* (1037 pages) was printed with fewer than a half-dozen typographical errors, no inconsistencies in dialect, and only one minor error in a character’s name. That error was pointed out by a fan immediately after the first edition was released and was corrected in the next printing.



On March 22, 1936, in a letter to his mother, the first one in several months, Marsh wrote about finishing the proofs without going blind and said that his part of the hard work was over. He described his role:

*I had been wondering what was wrong with the Old Man Marsh. I had been working on the book steadily since last September every night, all day Saturday, all day Sunday, took my vacation during December and worked practically 24 hours a day on the book, seven days a week — and the harder I worked the less progress I seemed to make. And I wasn't writing a book, I was just reading it, 'Copy-reading. . . I'd work myself blue in the face and then step out and take another look at the stack of MS and I hadn't even made a dent in it. So I thought it over and decided that the Old Man was slipping. I just couldn't put the stuff on the ball like I used to could. Didn't have the speed of my younger days. Old age was claiming me. Then the cheering news came in that the quantity of thing was like unto 'Anthony Adverse' and my spirits rose again. The job had been tremendously long but we had gotten out a tremendous lot of book.*

He went on to say that he was hoping now to restore some sort of normality to life and do all the things that he had not had time to do — like pay his income taxes. They were still getting from one to five telegrams a day, plus pounds of other mail and that Peggy was busy autographing, several hundred end pages Macmillan had sent her, plus five hundred books to be distributed to reviewers and booksellers. He wrote:

*You are to smile knowingly and not let on that you are on the inside of what Marsh-and-Mitchell consider nothing but a dirty Yankee trick. Macmillan is getting these copies signed so they can present them to 'key people' over the country with a sly smile and a wink, telling the recipient how they went to no end of trouble to get the great author to autograph the book 'just for you.' It's an idea of the Macmillan sales department and part of the special promotion they are putting behind the book. They say it will help to get it introduced and started off right, and perhaps it will, but it makes Peggy feel like all kinds of a fool. And it is quite a chore, especially when the list came in from the Chicago office and Peggy has to write 'To Marie Guttenschlager from Margaret Mitchell,' To Rudy Hippelhausen, etc.' and similar unearthly names.*

Adding that they deplored the fact that Macmillan had boosted the price of the book to \$3.00, they feared that the high price plus the length of the novel might kill the sale of it and Macmillan would lose money.

He added, "Poor Peggy, I'm afraid, won't be getting back toward a normal life for some time yet. The worst consequence of this book-writing business is still ahead of her." He was thinking about all the department stores and booksellers that were frantically trying to schedule her appearances for autograph parties and book

teas. Then, too, Macmillan's Atlanta office was planning public appearances for her around the state. John concluded his letter saying:

*Thank heaven, I will escape that. I shall lurk behind a potted plant and be sympathetic but unseen.*

## Who was this Modest Man?

Born on October 6, 1895 in Maysville, Kentucky, John Marsh was the third of five children born to Mary Douglas Toup and Millard Fillmore Marsh. His mother's people were Kerchevals, Troups, and Kennans from Virginia. His father's people were frontiersmen who in the early eighteenth century hacked their way across the mountains in Pennsylvania to Kentucky or came down the Ohio River in flatboats.

The scarlet fever John had when he was three damaged his hearing and left him with a mild form of epilepsy. Less robust than the other children, he seldom participated in outdoor games and watched from the sidelines or went with his father, the editor of the local newspaper, to his office and read. The townspeople called him "Little Squire" because he resembled his father in appearance and in temperament, and they figured, correctly so it turned out, that he would grow up to be a newspaper man too. The Marshes were admired and respected in their community. A close-knit family, their lives were happy until the early morning hours of December 30, 1904, when Millard, only 49 years old, died suddenly of a heart attack.

His father's untimely death had a profound influence on the family and changed their household drastically. Needing to support herself and five children, Mary, who had not worked outside her home before, began to teach at the First Ward School on West Second Street, down at the far end of Maysville. She had a three-mile walk there and back each day. Car fare would have been an extravagance for her. For some reason not known, Katharine, the oldest child at fourteen, was sent away to a nearby boarding academy for a while, and Henry, the next oldest at eleven, took various jobs after school to bring in some extra income. Eight-year-old, John was given the responsibility of helping his ailing grandmother look after five-year-old Gordon and three-year-old Frances. Because they were so young when their father died, they grew up regarding John as a father figure, protective and kind.

In a few years, Mary was promoted to principal at the Forest Avenue Fifth Ward School, which was near her home. She never remarried. At a time when most people rarely completed the eighth grade, she saw to it that all five of her children had a college education. Her three sons earned degrees from the University of Kentucky.

Once the children began to leave home for college, she started a "round robin" system of letter writing to keep her family together. These letters circulated in the family for nearly thirty years. After the children married, their spouses were included in the round robins, and Peggy often participated. These letters



were written to family to be read by the family only. At the time they were written it never occurred to any of the Marshes that their correspondence would be valuable to others. It was not until Peggy became famous that John urged his family to destroy the letters. Some letters were burned, but some survived.

In fall of 1912, John moved to Lexington to attend the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky. Needing to support himself, he got a job as a proofreader for the *Lexington Herald*, a morning newspaper. A little later on, he moved up to reporter for the *Lexington Leader*, the evening paper.

The Lexington newspapers started cub reporters on police beats, which required the cubs to achieve accuracy in securing details and to write in a clear, coherent style. Back then, newspapers relegated information about unsavory characters and their petty crimes to columns labeled Police Report. It was John's job to collect information and write this column.

While accompanying policemen occasionally on their night walks and calls, John, the cub reporter, got to know Fayette County and its underworld figures. One of them was Belle Brezing who operated what *Time Magazine* described as "a gilded mansion for men." In reporting Brezing's death in 1940, *Time Magazine* stated she operated the "most elegant" and "the most orderly of the disorderly houses" in the nation, but that is not to say that Brezing never had to have police assistance. A cub reporter and a policeman routinely covered her neighborhood. It was called "the tenderloin section" because of its bribes and handouts. They viewed their duty as a choice assignment because Belle's fine kitchen cordially beckoned them in often for nothing more than a delicious meal — quite a treat for a poor college student and a hard-working policeman. In exchange for her culinary offerings, Belle could depend on the policeman to restore order in case there were fights and to dispatch drunks. Also, she could count on the reporter to handle discreetly reports involving her clients who were well-known professionally.

After *Gone With the Wind* was released in June 1936, it became an immediate success throughout the nation. Practically everyone in the Lexington area, who was even remotely connected to John, or to his family, took pride in knowing him and his famous wife. Through his affiliations with the newspapers and with the University of Kentucky, many people in the Lexington and Frankfort area knew him personally. Conversations crackled with amusement as the locals talked about the remarkable similarities between *Gone With the Wind's* fictional character Belle Watling and Lexington's real-life Belle Brezing. As one elderly gentleman in Lexington chuckled, "Oh, yes, we had a good idea what the source for that Watling character was and where it came from."

In 1916, John graduated from the University of Kentucky with majors in English and journalism. He was accepted into graduate school and hired as a part-time English instructor for two sections of composition. He continued writing for the *Leader* and his articles, which now covered the political scene, carried his byline. In the late fall of 1917, he joined the Armed Services. He enlisted



**John attended the University of Kentucky, graduating with degrees in English and journalism. He went on to graduate school and worked as an English instructor.**

Photo from the private collection of Mary Marsh Davis. Courtesy of Peachtree Publishers.

in a hospital unit organized by Dr. David Barrow of Lexington, and his unit was called to duty in February 1918. According to a Frankfort, Kentucky newspaper article datelined February 26, 1917, John was paid the highest compliment by a rising vote of the Kentucky legislature commending his patriotism in joining the army. He was first sent to England to work in an office in a hospital and then to France. His letters home are descriptive, full of interesting details. Some of them, describing his location and work, were published in the *Lexington Leader*.

The editor and manager of the *Leader*, Mr. H. Giovannoli, wrote John asking him to return to the newspaper after his army stint was over. "Personally, I consider you a young newspaper man of unusual promise and I believe you have the personal character back of your talent to support any reasonable ambition which you may have in connection with your literary work."

Discharged as a sergeant, he returned to the States on June 30, 1919, and went back to Lexington to work for the *Leader*. But within a few months, he moved to Atlanta, an exciting newspaper town where he was hired as a reporter for the *Daily Georgian*, one of the Hearst papers. He wrote his brother Henry, "Working for Hearst. . . gives greater opportunity for and more encouragement to originality in writing."

He met Peggy in 1921 in a popular downtown Atlanta speakeasy, known as "the Rabbit Hole." It was a gathering place for aspiring, out-of-work writers, a few college students, young newspapermen, and charming young women known as flappers. They all had high expectations and great books in their heads. In the dimly-lit room, they would talk and sip their drinks —



bootleg gin or corn whiskey with Coca-Cola. In a letter to his mother in the late fall of 1921, John described them as “a sort of almost-intellectual society set, young revolutionaries after a fashion who actually have ideas, though some of them are far from certain as to what those ideas are.”

Twenty-one-year-old Mitchell, who by then wanted to be called Peggy, not Margaret, fit right into that crowd. Her mother had died in the Spanish influenza epidemic in 1919 while Peggy was away in her first semester at Smith College. She finished that second semester and returned home to live with her father and brother to manage the household for them. She wrote in a letter to a friend in 1921, before she met John, that she felt as if she were “a dynamo going to waste.” Although she had published nothing, she claimed writing was her profession.

Shortly after meeting her, John wrote to his sister Frances: “*An Atlanta girl is the only girl who interests me. She is one of last season’s debutants, lives in a beautiful house way out on Peachtree Street, is very small and is named Mitchell. She has beautiful long name, Margaret, which has been shortened to a pert ‘Peggy.’ To counteract the effect of that word ‘debutante,’ I have been to see her twice and both times have spent the entire evening in conversation, without any stimulation, erotic or otherwise. She is the first girl I have met in Atlanta with whom I have been able to enjoy sensible conversation.*”

A courtship soon developed but, according to family members, John was taking too long to propose. Peggy, still grieving over her mother’s death, wanted to be independent and escape her father’s and her grandmother’s domination. The only way to obtain that freedom was to get a job or to get married. Getting a job was far more difficult for a young woman in her class. She surprised everyone by marrying a known alcoholic gambler, Berrien Kinnard “Red” Upshaw. Her father and brother objected loudly and clearly, but the distressed John behaved like a gentleman. He was further distressed when she and Red asked him to be the best man in their wedding. Later she told a friend she knew on her wedding day she was making a big mistake.

John abruptly resigned from his job at the *Journal* and left Atlanta to avoid seeing the newlyweds after they returned from their honeymoon. He moved to Birmingham to do free lance publicity work for the University of Alabama. Mitchell made long-distance telephone calls (not cheap to do in those days) to him while she was on her honeymoon because she and Red were quarreling. On September 6, 1922, only four days after the wedding, John’s letter to his mother, who had been worried about her broken-hearted son, suggests the rumor that Peggy went to be with him in Birmingham was a fact. John wrote “It’s an odd sort of situation. Peggy and I are very close to each other, closer than any other man has been to her with the exception of Red.”

After the newlyweds returned to Atlanta, Red had no money to rent an apartment so they moved into her father’s home. The atmosphere there was thick with her father’s animosity for Red, and so their marital strife grew worse. Peggy reported

daily to John the sad state of her marriage and there are letters that show he was called to act as a mediator in some of her and Red’s arguments. The situation escalated to the point where Red physically abused her on one occasion and then left town for good. It was then she sought a divorce — the first in her family’s long history.

Continuing to live at home, Peggy wanted out — she wanted a job but had no experience, no education to speak of, and no previous publications. With his newspaper connections, John got her an interview for a good job writing features stories for the *Atlanta Sunday Journal Magazine*. The *Magazine* editor Angus Perkerson voiced his doubts about hiring “a society girl” and hired her on a temporary basis only. He recalled, “I remember very distinctly how she came down to see me one day. . . . She looked very tiny. She was wearing a suit and a beret.” Peggy was barely five feet tall and weighed about ninety pounds then, but she was shapely and pretty.

With her friendliness and warmth, she soon won an impressive following of friends at the *Journal*. But John knew if she was going to keep that job, he had to help her with her assignments, at least in the beginning. He was confident that she would quickly learn the technique. So, he went back to work for the *Journal*, and his role as editor of Peggy’s work began. On a few occasions at the start he accompanied her on her assignments. Although they were as discreet as possible, it was common knowledge at the newspaper office that they were in love even though she was still married but separated from Red.

The original drafts of her articles have long since disappeared, so there is no way of knowing how much work John did on them. However, his handwriting is on some of the galley proofs of her articles, saved in the University of Georgia Hargrett Library. Then, too, it is possible to distinguish two different styles in Peggy’s articles for the *Magazine*; one is an informal, energetic, loose style that sounds like Peggy’s speaking voice; and there is an objective, factual, straightforward style that suggests John’s.

The contrast between her first and her second article, “Plant Wizard Does Miracle Here,” (January 7, 1923), demonstrates obvious improvement. John was still in Alabama when she wrote the first piece but back in Atlanta for the second. The second feature gets to the point much more quickly, and it follows the fundamental principles of good newspaper writing. Years later, Perkerson remarked that Peggy “wrote like a man.”

John’s criticisms were not always negative. On one occasion he wrote in the margin of her draft, “You have an ability to make your people life like which is seldom an accomplishment of newspaper reporters. This is very well done.” Another time, he wrote, “I hope my pleasure over your ability to write so much more smoothly than you used to won’t have the effect of making you ‘flowery.’ That would be too bad. Oh my yes.” Because of their relationship, she learned her trade rapidly and her self-esteem grew immeasurably.

In a letter on June 11, 1923, he wrote his mother about his “two pupils” one of whom was his sister Frances, who was sending him her manuscripts for advice and the other was Peggy. About Peggy, he wrote she “*is making good progress and now in addition to her newspaper work she is writing the Great American novel. Knocks off a page or two at a time when she has a few minutes to spare.*” With eerie prescience, he added: “*There are places in it which show signs of being good stuff. We may have a famous friend some of these days.*”

John possessed all the virtues of a lover, a friend, and a doting father. His natural inclination was to be protective and, of course, that suited Peggy’s dependent personality perfectly. He offered her all the help and encouragement she needed to do what she wanted to do — write a good book. By early 1923, her dependence upon him was fixed permanently. She was looking prettier and happier than she had in a long time. Working for the *Magazine* gave her a sense of independence and success that she had never known. Her divorce was final in late fall of 1924.

On January 20, 1925, John wrote his mother, “*Having lost her once and now regained her, she is doubly attractive, and the troubles we have been through have given me an insight into her character which makes me respect and admire, as well as love, her more than any woman who has come into my life since I grew up. . . . I have been in love with Peggy for a long time, as I said, but it wasn’t nothing like this here.*”

On the evening of July 4, 1925, in a simple ceremony, they married in the Unitarian-Universalist Church on West Peachtree Street in Atlanta. Only a few close friends were present. From that time on, nothing or no one ever came between them or

threatened the deep bond they shared. They had no social life or interests away from each other, nor any separate aspirations.

The newlyweds settled into “The Dump” — Peggy’s pet name for their tiny three-room, ground-floor apartment on Crescent Avenue. Both had been seriously ill earlier that year and incurred medical bills that would take years to pay off. Peggy’s problem had been with her ankle. It became so painful that she could not walk and had to give up her job. Home all day alone, she read one book after another. Every evening after work, John would stop by the library to return the books she had read and pick up an arm-load of more books for her. Finally, one day instead of books, he brought home a typewriter and some copy paper and told her she needed to stop reading and start writing her own book.

Working on that book was entertainment for them during those lean years. They had no money to go to the theater or to the movies or to out to eat. Television did not exist, and they could not afford a radio. They settled into a comfortable routine. In the evenings after supper, they would sit and discuss what she had written that day and how she might proceed with the story.

As John explained in a 1949 interview:

“*As you know, talking things over sometimes makes an idea come clearer. In trying to write it out before hand, the mechanical labor may get between the writer and the idea. I was also more confident than she was that she could write a good book. She didn’t have enough confidence in her own ability.*”

The Marshes never had any children. The book was their “only child.” In fact, their newspaper friends at the *Journal* called them “The Mama and the Papa of *Gone With the Wind*.”



## About the Author

In 1985, Marianne Walker was asked to give a talk at the public library for a Kentucky Humanities Council reading program. Given a list of five war novels, she chose to discuss *Gone With the Wind*, although at that time she had never read the book. After reading and loving it, she learned that Margaret Mitchell’s husband John Marsh was from Maysville, Kentucky, not too far from where she lived. Hoping to find some new information to enhance her presentation, she decided to see if there were any traces of the couple left in Kentucky.

Walker’s search led her to Maysville, Lexington, and Clays Ferry, Kentucky, from there Washington, D.C., Delaware, and Virginia, and then to Atlanta and other places in Georgia. Beginning with Marsh’s 83-year-old sister-in-law Francesca Renick Marsh, she interviewed many people who were close to the couple and knew them well. She visited libraries and archives, found old newspaper clippings, personal scrapbooks, photographs, telegrams, and most importantly, 200 never-before-published letters from Mitchell and Marsh to John Marsh’s family. This book is the result of her research.

A native of Monroe, Louisiana, Marianne Walker has written for the *New York Times Book Review* and the *Louisville Courier-Journal Sunday Magazine*. She is also the author of *When Cuba Conquered Kentucky*. A retired professor of English and philosophy, she lives with her husband, an attorney, in Henderson, Kentucky, on the banks of the Ohio River.



# Louisville's Festival of Faiths

By David V. Hawpe



**T**rudging through the steel, glass, and concrete along Muhammad Ali Boulevard in downtown Louisville, you begin to sense the sweet smell of water. Wind rustles an urban oasis of trees, bushes, and flowers, misted by waterfall and fountain.

You are discreetly drawn into the George Garvin Brown Garden, where it's possible to rest and reflect, or eat a quiet brown bag lunch on a bench.

However, this peaceful little triumph of landscape design obscures an entrance to the Center for Interfaith Relations, where Christy Brown and a small staff work furiously to prepare for Louisville's 16th annual Festival of Faiths, November 2-7.

Those who show up for the events aren't likely to sit in circles, join hands, sing "Kumbaya" and exchange self-congratulatory glances about their own righteousness.

More than 6,000 folks are expected to participate, and they'll be working to expand their knowledge and appreciation of God's great gift — the planet on which we live. They'll be meeting kindred souls who care about the air we breathe. Most importantly, they'll be challenged to act.

The 2011 program includes more than thirty events and a host of exhibits focused on the theme "Sacred Air — Breath of Life." You can download the full schedule at [www.festivaloffaiths.org](http://www.festivaloffaiths.org). An action toolkit including the award-winning official film of the festival, "AIR: Search for One Clean Breath," is available for \$10.

Look for the 2011 festival to make news, with appearances by headliners such as Lisa Jackson (administrator of the E.P.A., the federal agency whose controversial environmental regulations have become hot political issues, including in the presidential campaign) and Bill McKibben (the author-activist who earlier this year helped orchestrate a protest in front of the White House and got himself arrested — along with more than fifty others, including seven Louisvillians).

Much of the energy that fuels the festival comes from Christina Brown, a matriarch in the family that controls the vast Brown-Forman wine and distilled spirits empire. She was widowed in September of this year when Owsley Brown died, after a short illness. In recent years she and her family not only have maintained their long-time position in Louisville's civic life but also have emerged as major players in local and national progressive politics. But it's the festival that makes her eyes flash.

Christy, as friends call her, is a stylish, silver-haired perpetual motion machine who enthusiastically pursues donations for charitable causes and political candidates. However, her special devotion is promoting a cleaner, safer planet and a more sustainable, more just world.

A couple of decades back, she took the lead in restoring the historic Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption in downtown Louisville, which was designed by William Keeley and built between 1849 and 1952. Her friend Father Ron Knott revitalized

the congregation with inspirational pastoring and exceptional homilies. Out of their work came a push by the Cathedral Heritage Foundation (now called the Center for Interfaith Relations) for more ecumenical emphasis.

What emerged, in 1996, was America's first-of-its-kind Festival of Faiths.

Its success has not gone unnoticed. The U.S. Senate said in 1998 that the Louisville project "should serve as a model for similar festivals in other communities throughout the United States." (Indeed that has happened, including in Kansas City.)

Over the years, festival planners have recruited an eclectic and provocative group of speakers, including physician-author Deepak Chopra, environmentalist Robert Kennedy Jr., Rabbi-writer Harold Kushner, Protestant historian Martin Marty, the Dalai Lama, the 102nd Archbishop of Canterbury, conservative commentator and film critic Michael Medved, Islamic scholar Shayk Hamza Yusuf, author-entrepreneur Dr. Masaru Emoto, Interfaith Youth Corps founder-president Eboo Patel, comparative religion scholar-author Karen Armstrong, The God Squad, and Kentucky's own Wendell Berry.

Recently they have been recruiting hundreds of local volunteers to help put on this year's events.

Louisville's reputation outside Kentucky rests, in part, on baseball bats, fried chicken, Muhammad Ali, and a horse race, but now one must add the Festival of Faiths to that list.

In a 2005 report (updated in 2009), the Harvard Pluralism Project called the festival "a premier example of interfaith work." The report mentions Martin Marty's lament that many people "develop a threshold of boredom for those (interfaith events) that confine themselves to joint worship, thinned-out theologizing, smiles and similar expressions of goodwill" But Marty declared Louisville's annual ecumenical get-together an exception.

Of course there were ecumenical efforts and interfaith groups in Louisville well before 1996. The city has a fascinating religious history that is as expansive as the theological space between its Presbyterian and Southern Baptist seminaries. However, Brown said, "We all thought this interfaith stuff might be better if you lumped it together." She recalled that Father Knott "thought we ought to have an international food festival."

In any event, she recalled, in the beginning "we just got out the *Yellow Pages* and made a list of possible faith partners and contacted them, and we got a huge response."

Looking back on the festival's history, she cites several moments that stand out:

"One was a Muslim professor from Harvard. We had his event at the Cathedral. He was standing in the pulpit, speechless. He seemed to have tears in his eyes. And he said it was one of the greatest gifts in his life, to talk, way before 9/11, about his faith in such a place. Another especially moving memory was listening to a choir of Israeli and Palestinian children. And we've engaged indigenous people since the beginning."

Last year a Community Soil Blessing included ritual provided by Momfeather Erickson and music by Sarah Elizabeth Burkey and Native American drummers. A year earlier, members of The International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers — women from traditional societies including Native Americans — who conducted a blessing of waters at Louisville's Waterfront Park.

"We did this interfaith work over the years," Brown says, "so when 9/11 happened there was a framework for others to have contact with each other. They knew Muslims, they knew Hindus, they knew Jewish people."

Brown also believes that framework of relationships has helped the community manage a very diverse immigration flow into Louisville, which has increased dramatically in recent years.

"What I'm most excited about is seeing our concept — many faiths, one heart, common action — actually happen," she added. I think the event is coming of age."

Louisville was not always so welcoming to the ecumenical spirit.

One of the city's most infamous moments was the August 6, 1855, rampage against Roman Catholics and foreigners by Know-Nothing mobs, which left at least twenty-two dead — mostly Irish and German citizens. The events came to be known as Bloody Monday.

On the other hand, as John Kleber recalls in the *Encyclopedia of Louisville*, all the city's major denominations were represented at an April 21, 1912, memorial service in the Armory, honoring those lost on the Titanic.

Out of neighborhood ministerial associations in the 1950s and 1960s came the Louisville Area Council of Churches. Interfaith cooperation in the Civil Rights movement and the anti-Vietnam-war period led to the creation of Louisville Area Interchurch Organization for Service. The famed Cistercian monk Thomas Merton held informal ecumenical meetings for many years at the Abbey of Gethsemani. The participants included students from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.



*Louisville's Festival of Faiths is a sustained series of annual events and programs, scheduled each year over the course of several consecutive days. The 2011 event takes place November 2-7.*



The Ketuckiana Interfaith Community (KIC) emerged in 1979.

From May 1952, WHAS radio broadcast *The Moral Side of the News* with a rabbi, a priest and a Protestant minister as panelists. The television era saw the Faith Channel launched in 1987, the product of cooperation among KIC, the Archdiocese of Louisville and Southern Seminary. Groups represented on *The Faith Channel* include Roman Catholics, Southern Baptists, Presbyterians, United Methodists, the General Association of Baptists, Jews, Disciples of Christ, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalians, Lutherans, the United Church of Christ and the Salvation Army.

Given the city's modern ecumenical history, the Festival of Faiths was a logical next step.

The festival has established links with other churches. For example, on November 2, the Rev. Dr. Kevin Cosby at St. Stephen Church in Louisville's West End will join a diverse group of other religious leaders in a unique "many faiths but one heart" celebration of Thanksgiving. There will be a light supper after a speech by Bill McKibben, all of which is free and open to the public.

Partnerships extend to other parts of Kentucky. For example, the Rev. Pete Jones of Pisgah Presbyterian near Versailles pointed out, "We publicize their events, and they publicize ours." At Pisgah's annual Academy Day in January, Festival of Faiths speaker Dr. Kyle T. Kramer, an organic farmer and director of lay degree programs at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, will make an appearance.

"Academy Day has been a tradition at our church for a long, long

time," Rev. Jones explained, "and as with the Louisville program, this year's topic is Sacred Air — Breath of Life." He added, "The goal is that everyone leave our event not only better informed but also prepared to act. We're both action groups."

Outside Festival of Faiths' headquarters, the air that rustles the leaves and ruffles the water in George Garvin Brown Garden is regularly compromised by Ohio Valley pollution. But Christy Brown is undeterred. For her, that's an action item.

## About the Author

David V. Hawpe spent forty years working in the newspaper industry. During his leadership the *Courier-Journal* won four Pulitzer Prizes.

Hawpe has taught college courses at Harvard University, the University of Louisville, the University of Kentucky, and Spalding University. His industry-wide work in journalism was devoted to fostering diversity in the media.

He has been named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame and the UK hall of Distinguished Alumni. Hawpe was awarded the James Madison Award for Service to the First Amendment from the Scripps Howard First Amendment Center and received the Distinguished Service Award by the Associated Press Managing Editors. He is also a member of the Kentucky Humanities Council's board of directors.

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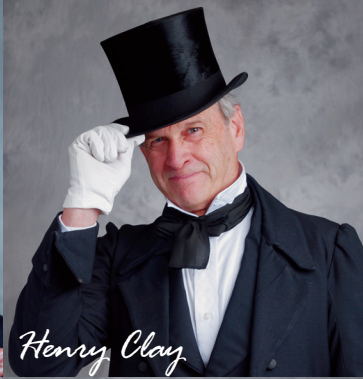


Q:

Who are these Kentuckians and what was their role in the Civil War?



*Rev. Newton Bush*



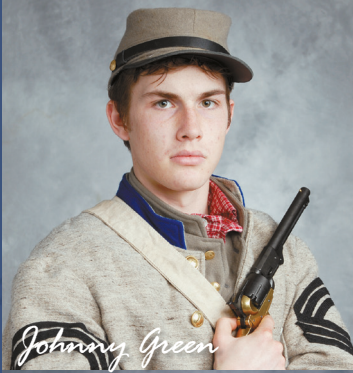
*Henry Clay*



*John G. Fee*



*Margaret Garner*



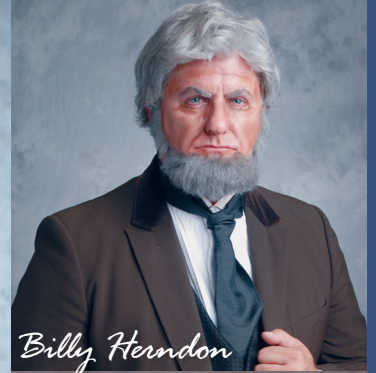
*Johnny Green*



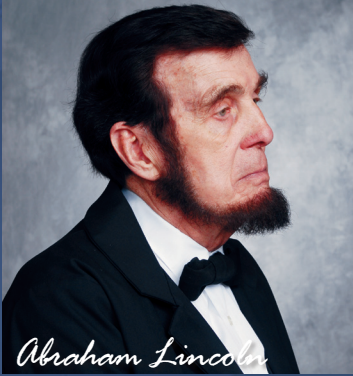
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# BLACK MARKET SPY

*Young Louisvillian takes part in America's war effort*

By Joseph Woodson Oglesby

# WAR!

I had seen the word often enough in smaller type in my U.S. history books as I read about the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War, but I had never seen the word in nearly foot-high letters on the front page of the local newspaper. The urgency and alarm in the newsboy's voice as he hawked the newspapers emphasized the deadly message: "Extra! Extra! Read all about it. Congress declares war on Japan!"

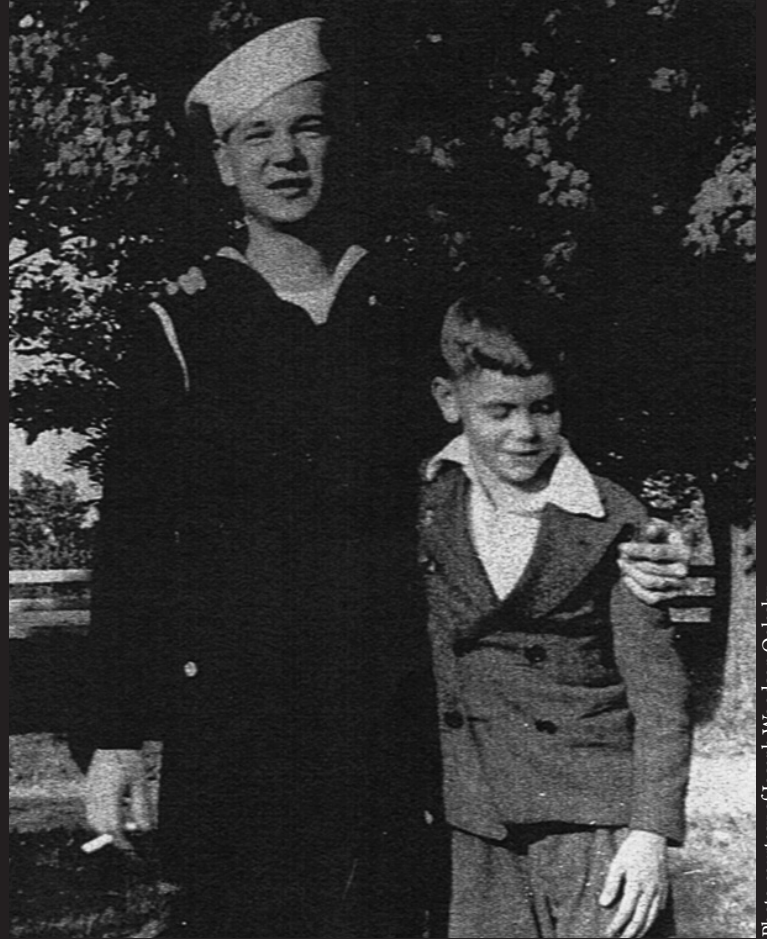


Photo courtesy of Joseph Woodson Oglesby

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*Photo above: On leave from the Navy, James Ray Wigginton (left) poses with his cousin, Joseph Woodson Oglesby. Wigginton was his younger cousin's hero and presented him with a Japanese flag after his tour of duty in the Pacific Theater of War.*

I was headed home from school the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor when I encountered the newsboy at the corner of First and Kentucky streets in Louisville. With the nickel I'd saved for a Baby Ruth candy bar, I bought one of the newspapers. I read every line on the front page before I reached home.

Sure, the whole neighborhood and the school were abuzz with war talk, and almost every family kept a radio tuned for further details. My teachers had devoted the whole day to the subject. But it wasn't until I saw that tall, black, Bodoni Bold headline WAR! that I fully understood the gravity and horror of it all. Those gigantic black letters made war official and final to me in a way no spoken words possibly could.

Everyone made sacrifices for the war effort. Mrs. Rosalee Speckter donated her ornate iron fence, the only one on the block with an iris design, to the government's scrap-iron drive, sure it would end up as a tank or airplane. My mother, deathly afraid of doctors and needles, gave a pint of blood each month to the Red Cross. Nobody complained about the rationing of gasoline, meat, sugar, butter, and other items because we all knew it helped the guys and gals in service.

My cousin James Ray signed up for the Navy. He had to have his father's consent because he was only seventeen. He came by our house and told us, and I thought that was really something. I just knew that he would be on a PT boat or a



Photo courtesy of Joseph Woodson Oglesby

*Mrs. Rosalee Speckter donated the iron fence that enclosed her property to the World War II scrap drive.*

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Photo courtesy of Joseph Woodson Oglesby

*James Ray Wigginton at boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center near Chicago, 1942.*

destroyer and drop mines on Japanese submarines or shoot Zeroes out of the sky.

After James Ray left for boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, near Chicago, everyone in the family became even more patriotic. Uncle Jim, James Ray's father, took a job at the Jeffersonville (Indiana) Boat & Machine Company, which made LSTs and other landing craft and warships for the Navy. Aunt Wheeler and Uncle Billy, who didn't have any children of their own, placed a star flag, usually displayed

by mothers of enlisted people, in their parlor window and planted a victory garden. My daddy bought defense bonds every week.

We had a Philco radio equipped with shortwave. By carefully adjusting its knobs, we sometimes picked up London at night and the crackling voice of the BBC with those bleak war-zone reports — RAF casualties, London afire from Nazi bombings. Then the first good news: the Allied air raids on Germany.

I wanted to do something for the war effort, too, so I joined the neighborhood Civil-Defense team, becoming a "messenger." I was so proud of my CD armband that I sometimes wore it to school, and I always took part in the practice air raids.

Our main concern on the CD team was to make sure that people in our neighborhood turned off their lights and pulled down their shades when the screeching siren atop a downtown building announced a practice air raid. The Caldwell-First Street CD warden, Joe Tarbis, emphasized to us the danger just one pinpoint of light in a blackout could cause, providing a target for enemy bombs.

This lesson was really driven home at a War-Bond and military show at Louisville's Du Pont Manual Stadium. As we entered the grounds, Uncle Jim and I and everyone else were issued a special large match and told its use would be explained later.

After parades of military vehicles, precision drills by Fort Knox soldiers, and War-Bond speeches by celebrities, the public-address announcer's voice boomed: "It's Civil-Defense Time! Lights out!"

Immediately, the stadium was plunged into darkness.

"Join me now as I begin the countdown from ten," the announcer said. "When I reach zero, light your match!"

Moments later, as thousands chanted "Zero!" the stadium came ablaze like a giant birthday cake, a vivid civil-defense demonstration.

James Ray's letters from boot camp were written on American Red Cross stationery. One of these thanked my mother for her package of candy bars, gum, and his favorite snack — a bag of Home Town potato chips. Later came the "Victory" letters on tissue-thin paper, envelopes with a red, white, and blue border. All of us read his letters again and again and prayed every night for his safe return from the war.

When he was serving in the Pacific Theater of war, James Ray wrote me, promising me a Japanese rifle. I went to bed every night thinking about the rifle — how I would shine it and where I would hang it in my room, how I would "show off" with it or play war games with it. It would be more fun than shooting the air rifle at Tojo's ugly mug at the Third Avenue Penny Arcade. I don't believe I ever stopped to wonder exactly how James Ray would acquire the Japanese rifle.

On Sundays, Uncle Jim came by for dinner. Every now and then he'd duck into the bathroom to take a nip of Sweet Lucy, his name for any number of cheap wines he favored. When his mood was sufficiently maudlin, he'd bend close to me, blowing wine fumes into my face, to make his request: "How about playing my song, Little Joe?" he'd say.

I'd seat myself at the piano and do a few practice exercises, with Uncle Jim standing patiently behind me. Then I breezed through my sheet music until I found "Bellbottom Trousers." As I banged it out on the piano, Uncle Jim would sing the lyrics, all the while thinking about James Ray. If he'd had too much drink, he broke out in tears before I finished the song, but usually he struggled through to the end. Then I'd leave him alone with a dreamy look in his eyes as he relaxed in a fat easy chair until Mother announced dinner.

At the time, Uncle Sam was cracking down on the Black Market in this country. At first, I didn't understand what the Black Market was. When I did, I became a zealot, hoping to uncover someone cheating on rationing coupons or paying double the cost of something to avoid having to shell out any coupons for it.

On Saturdays, I helped out as a bagger at my daddy's grocery store. If I was lucky, I figured I'd catch a customer trying to buy more meat or sugar or coffee or butter than he had coupons for. But the cashier, Anabelle, was very efficient, and if a customer didn't have enough coupons to match his order, she'd inform him of this in a nice way.

After a number of Saturdays trying and failing to catch a Black Market crook at my daddy's grocery, I was about to resign as a Black Market investigator. Then, one Sunday I went with my daddy to buy gasoline for our Chevrolet. After we pulled into the service station, Daddy began to act suspiciously. He seemed edgy. Straightening his tie, he got out of the car and walked toward its rear. I watched him in the rear-view mirror. When the station owner finished pumping gas

into the tank, I saw Daddy hand the man a five-dollar bill and *no coupons!* The man didn't bother to fish for change, either, although I knew the bill wasn't nearly that much, gasoline being only nineteen cents a gallon.

As we pulled out of the station, Daddy began acting like himself again, easy-going and friendly. I hadn't opened my mouth since we'd pulled out of the station, and I'd edged as close to the door as possible.

"What's wrong with you?" he suddenly asked.

"Nothin'," I said.

But for days I brooded. My own daddy was dealing in the Black Market.

I thought about turning him in but I couldn't. I loved him too much. Besides, I didn't even know where to turn in a Black Marketeer.

When James Ray returned home on leave, he didn't bring me a Japanese rifle but a Japanese flag, and I hung it in my room. I tried to pump war stories out of him, but he skirted the subject. Instead, he talked about movies. He seemed to know the name of every character actor in Hollywood and could go on about movies for hours. Once, he saw movies at seven different theaters in a single day.

One night, as we sat swinging on the front porch and drinking ice-cold cherry Kool-Aid, I told him about what Daddy had done. I'd never told another soul.

James Ray laughed.

"But the Black Market hurts the war effort," I said.

"We get everything we need," he said.

"Don't you think what Daddy did was wrong?"

"He probably needed extra gas so you and he and Aunt Mary Lee could visit your grandmother in La Grange. I don't see anything so wrong with that."

"I guess not," I said.

If James Ray thought it was okay, that was good enough for me.

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## About the Author

A novelist, playwright, and journalist, Joseph Woodson Oglesby has received two Pulitzer Prize nominations and an Eclipse nomination.

His writing credits include fourteen novels, a children's book, three plays, two screenplays, numerous articles in national and regional magazines, and his memoir, *Dinner with D.W. Griffith*, is a best-seller for Borgo Press.

Oglesby has been a crime reporter, city editor, and managing editor on daily newspapers in New York, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Indiana, as well as a book critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *The Courier-Journal*. Oglesby has had more than 300 articles published in national magazines and major newspapers.

## For Further Reading

*Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County*, by George H. Yater, The Filson Club, Louisville, 1987.

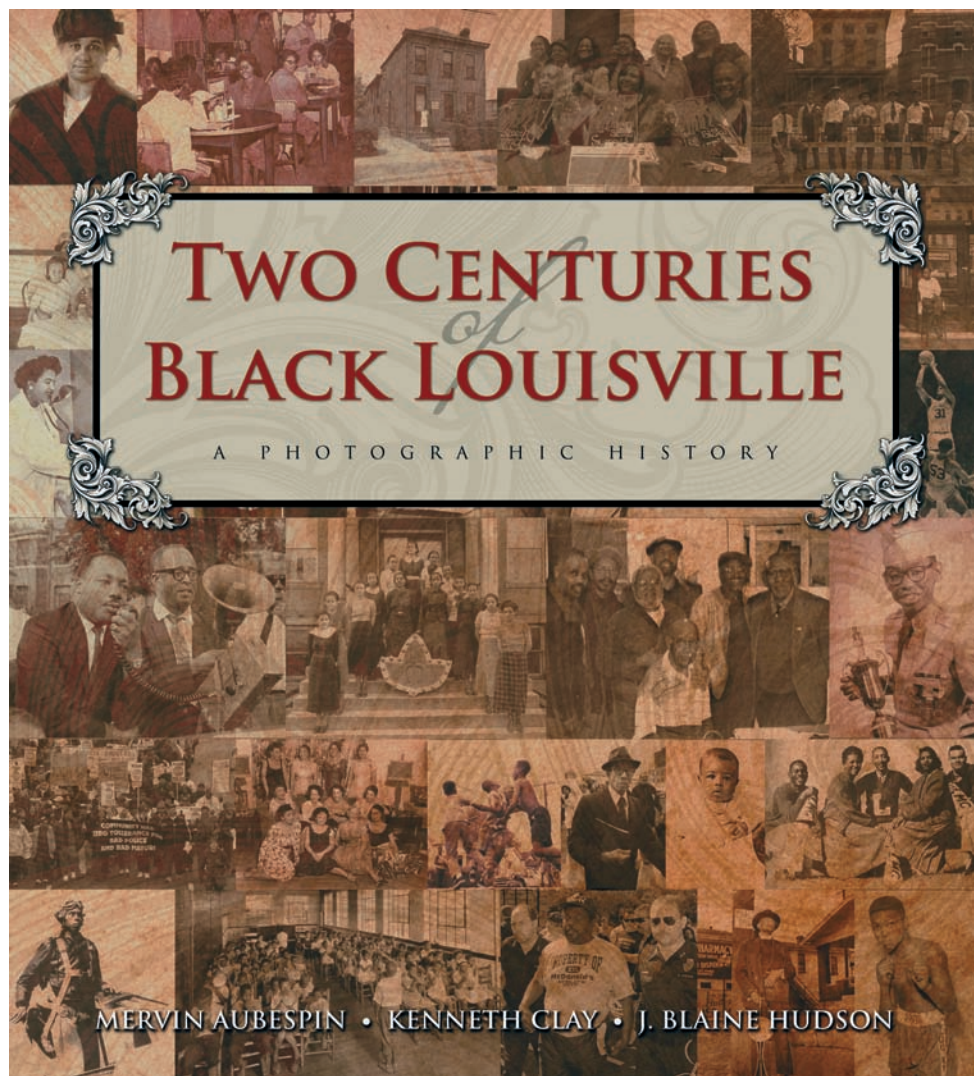
*The Home Front*, by David Hinshaw, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1943.

*When it was Our War: A Soldier's Wife on the Home Front*, by Stella Suberman, Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, 2003.



# Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History

An overview of the recently published book portraying  
the history of African Americans in Louisville



By Dr. J. Blaine Hudson

The purpose behind *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* was to tell "... the human side of the story of black Louisville — through the eyes and faces of those who were and are black Louisville" from the 1770s to the present.<sup>1</sup> This is a long, rich and often complex history. With 100,000 words, 450 photographs, eighteen data tables, five appendices, a time line and an extensive bibliography, the book speaks for itself and must be read to be appreciated fully. However, the epilogue, quoted at length below, provides a useful overview

of the finished tapestry woven together from the many threads of historical and photographic evidence presented in the book:

... Black Louisville has stood at many crossroads over the past two centuries and each represented a challenge that could not be avoided. These challenges were formidable indeed:

- the challenge of creating community itself in the midst of

1. Mervin Aubespain, Kenneth Clay, and J. Blaine Hudson, *Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History* (Louisville: Butler Books, 2011): 11.

slavery — for example, the creation of the free black community and its early institutional structure;

- the challenge of ending slavery — for example, the local Underground Railroad and black support for the Union during the Civil War;

- the challenge of expanding the limits of freedom and equality in the segregated society that followed and betrayed the promise of emancipation — for example, the struggle for black schools, higher education, the Western Branch Library, *Buchanan v. Warley*, and the formation of the Lincoln Independent Party;

- the challenge of creating meaning and culture — for example, through excellence in the arts, athletics, and culture (high and low);

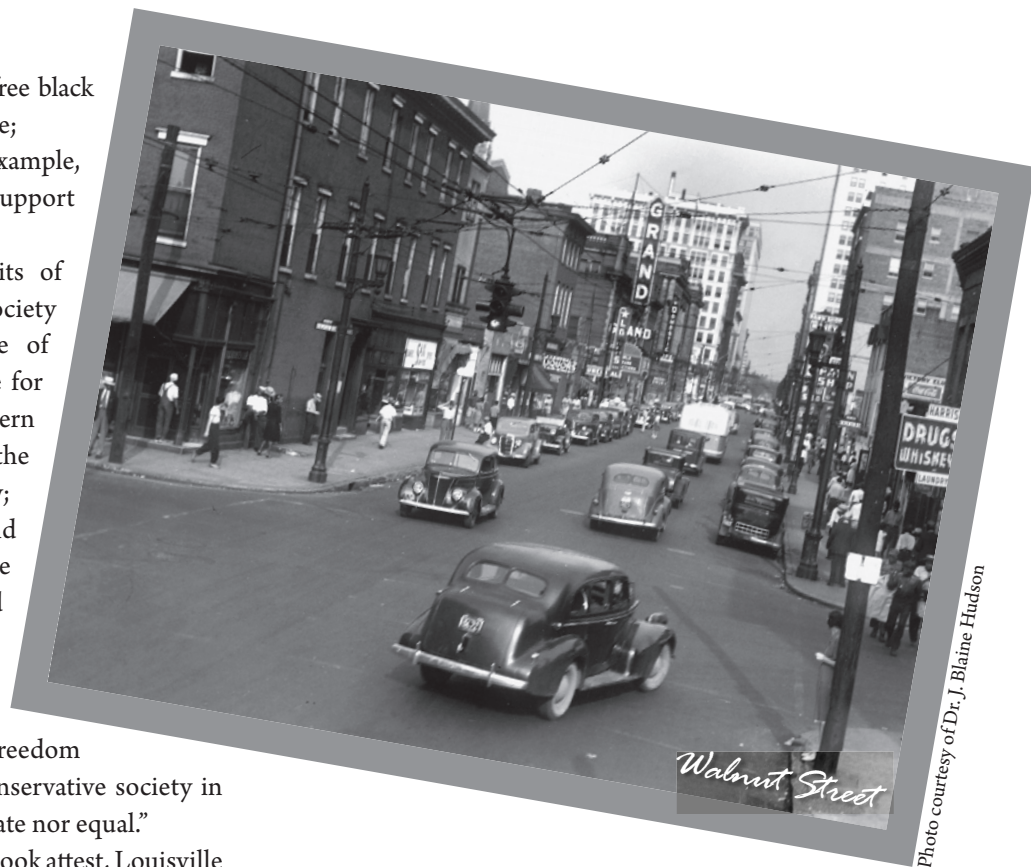
- the challenge of eliminating segregation — for example, the Civil Rights era; and

- the challenge of expanding the limits of freedom and achieving true equality in a deeply conservative society in which African Americans are “neither separate nor equal.”

As the words and images throughout the book attest, Louisville African Americans met the first five challenges and, in so doing, they forged a community and defined its identity and character. When most successful, they followed a practical and effective strategy that capitalized on their opportunities and assets, the most important of which derived from Louisville’s favorable location, the need for black labor and later from the right to vote.

The resulting economic and political capacity, when used astutely, could wrest concessions from white leaders that advanced the interests of the local African American community. But, even under the most favorable circumstances, success was never guaranteed and depended on wise leadership and wise “followership” — a high degree of community cohesiveness over many generations that made it difficult to divide the black community on important issues and made it possible to leverage this capacity. In other words, when the needs of the entire black community came first, everyone benefitted.

These challenges were not unlike those faced by African Americans in other early American cities in the “upper South” and “lower North,” such as Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Nashville, and St. Louis. African Americans in each of these cities had slightly different assets and liabilities — and each African American community founded in the early West, however similar to (and often competitive with) the others, was a unique product of people and circumstances. Louisville, standing on the “slave-side” of the Ohio River was, perhaps, the most unique and became one of the leading black communities in the United States for several generations. Black Louisvillians played their parts in the history of their people and their nation, sometimes as leaders, sometimes as followers, but always as



engaged participants in and contributors to the history of their time.<sup>2</sup>

*Two Centuries of Black Louisville* is unique because it is the first attempt to tell this story. Specifically:

... no comprehensive academic history of black Louisville has been written, to date. Instead, African Americans are often the focus of articles and books dealing with a few discrete time periods, e.g., Hudson’s work on the settlement and antebellum periods, Gibson’s and Weeden’s works on the second half of the 19th century, Wright’s work on the 1865-1930 period, recent work on the Civil Rights era (1945-1980) by K’Meyer, Fosl and a few others — or lurk as shadowy and often highly stereotyped figures in the standard general histories of the city. The researchers are different; the gaps are many. And, consequently, broad generalizations, even when free of bias, are often advanced on the basis of limited evidence — and the assumption that patterns germane to one time period can be generalized across the entire sweep of the history of African Americans in Louisville.<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that, while *Two Centuries of Black Louisville* is unique, it was not written to remain so indefinitely. One of the most daunting challenges was choosing the best balance between depth and breadth in the narrative, how to tell all of the story that, if told in too much detail, would require several books but, if told in too little, would not be a coherent and accurate whole. We recognized that we could not include everything and, at the same time, we recognized that nothing truly significant could be excluded from mention. The

2. *Ibid.*, 271.

3. *Ibid.*, 38-39.



solution was a broad and reasonably detailed historical sketch — supported by extensive references, images, and tables. We attempted to create a narrative that could serve as a reference to which readers could return for information and as a guide to dozens of topics that could legitimately become the subjects of articles and book-length studies. In other words, the book was not only written to be read and enjoyed, but to be used. It has layers of meaning and a deep structure that is not always readily discernible.

*Two Centuries of Black Louisville* also explores several fundamental contextual questions, particularly those related to the influence of several common and widely held racial myths on historical interpretation. In the pure sense, history is the factual record of the human past, a record that should be objective, value neutral, and free of bias. However, historians are human beings and products of a given time, place, and society — and rarely without bias, especially the invisible and unexamined assumptions that are seldom recognized as biases. For scholars, meeting this challenge is a question skill and intellectual

integrity — to report the facts accurately, even if one disagrees with the most reasonable interpretation of those facts. Similarly, the readers of history are also products of their time and what they “read into” and “read out” of historical narratives are often influenced by the prevailing biases and popular culture of their time. Their challenge is a question of being open to hearing/reading the facts, even when those facts conflict with their most cherished beliefs.

Not surprisingly, historical treatments of Native Americans and African Americans that are faithful to the available facts are often at odds with the “master narrative” of American history written primarily by white American and some people of color steeped in this master narrative. Such works can be found, but they are comparatively few — and one of the key tasks of this and the next generation of scholars is to re-write that master-narrative. *Two Centuries of Black Louisville* is an example of this type of historical research and writing.

It is important to understand black Louisville in this context. Louisville itself is and has been an anomaly in Kentucky since it became a major city in the decades before the Civil War — a city in a state of towns and hamlets, a mercantile and then an industrial center in an agricultural state, a racially and ethnically diverse community in an otherwise more racially homogeneous state. And, if Louisville is and has been an anomaly, the black community of Louisville has been as well, even more so — beginning with its origin as a community of free African Americans in a slave city in a slave state, the largest such community west of Baltimore on the slavery side of the great borderland between free and slave territory. In many respects, Louisville and, particularly, black Louisville belong more to the borderland, the lower mid-west and the Ohio valley than to the South. Consequently, one could argue that most historians of Kentucky, past and present, have labored mightily to pretend that Louisville either did not exist or that it simply represented a larger version of other Kentucky cities.

So, some questions that would seem wholly unimportant to ask in traditional historical works are crucially important to raise in books such as *Two Centuries of Black Louisville*. For example:

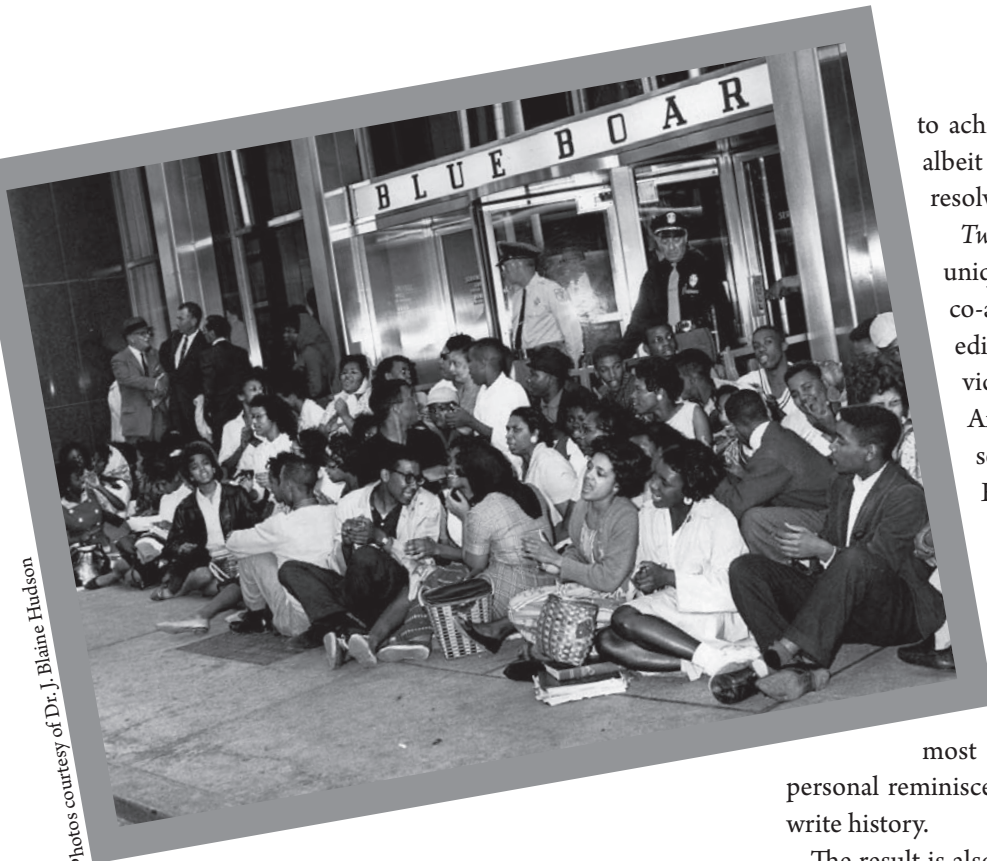
... To what extent does the history of black Louisville belong to black Louisvillians — did local African Americans make their own history or were they merely “bit players” in the grand drama of white Louisville? This question may seem preposterous. How could a group of people not “own” their own history — but its answer, at least as stated or implied over the years, is far from self-evident.

Through much of the history of Louisville, local African Americans achieved more than was possible for blacks in communities farther south and less than was possible for blacks in communities outside the former slave states. Although historians and other commentators have acknowledged this level of achievement, they have attributed it principally to the



Photo courtesy of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson

Photos courtesy of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson



“moderate” racial attitudes and tolerance of local whites, not to the choices and actions of Louisville’s African Americans.

... as one reviews the actual evidence, what emerges is the history of a vibrant, self-conscious community — in essentially hostile territory — a community shaped by the actions of local African Americans far more than by the charity, sense of noblesse oblige or the progressive ideals of local whites. In other words, *most popular and academic partial histories of black Louisville either deny the existence of or undervalue the power of black institutional capacity building and black agency, i.e., the ability of black Louisvillians to act effectively in their own interests — and over-value the importance of racial moderation, if it even existed, among local whites.* Although there would be an occasional white radical, the paternalism of most white friends of the local black community was reminiscent of the myth of the “kindly master” of antebellum days. Of course, the counterpart of this myth is the stereotype of the mindless but faithful “slave” who could do nothing on his or her own — without guidance from and regulation by whites. . .

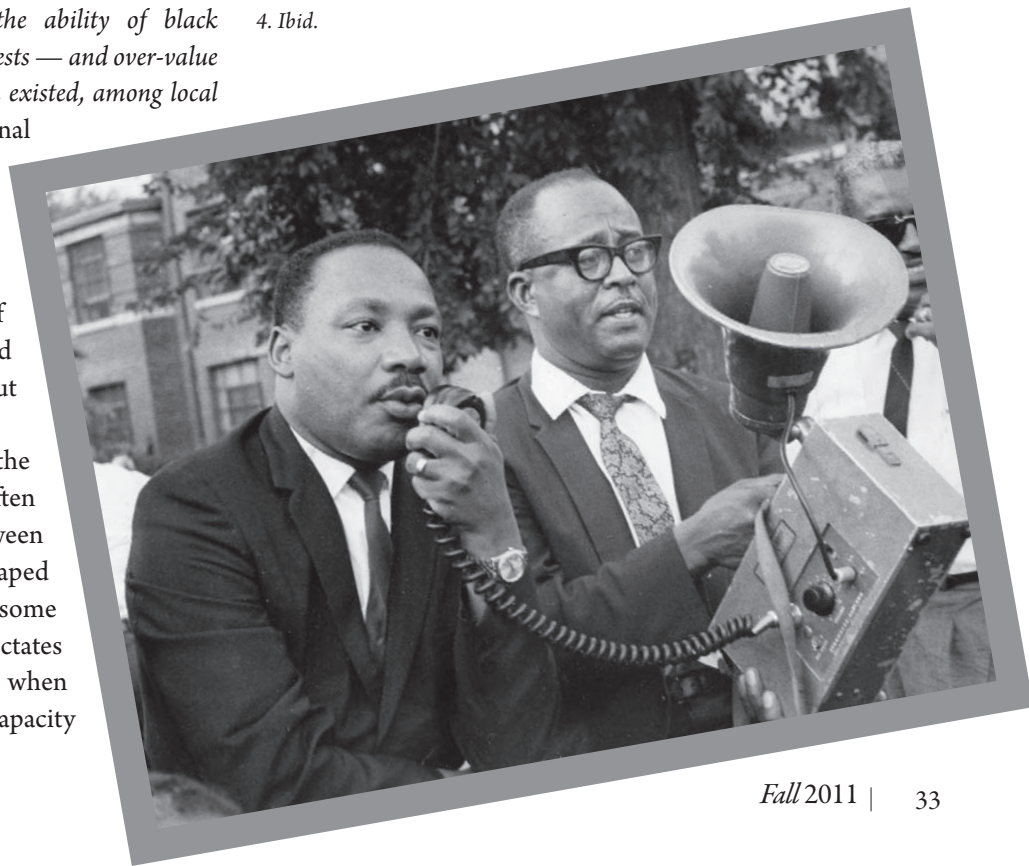
In this respect, it may be helpful to state the obvious, since the obvious has been so often ignored or misrepresented: Relations between black and white Louisvillians were shaped more by a long series of compromises — some predating the Civil War — than by the dictates of whites. And compromises result only when both parties have an agenda and some capacity

to achieve it, i.e., when both parties have leverage, albeit unequal in this case, and both have a stake in resolving their differences.<sup>4</sup>

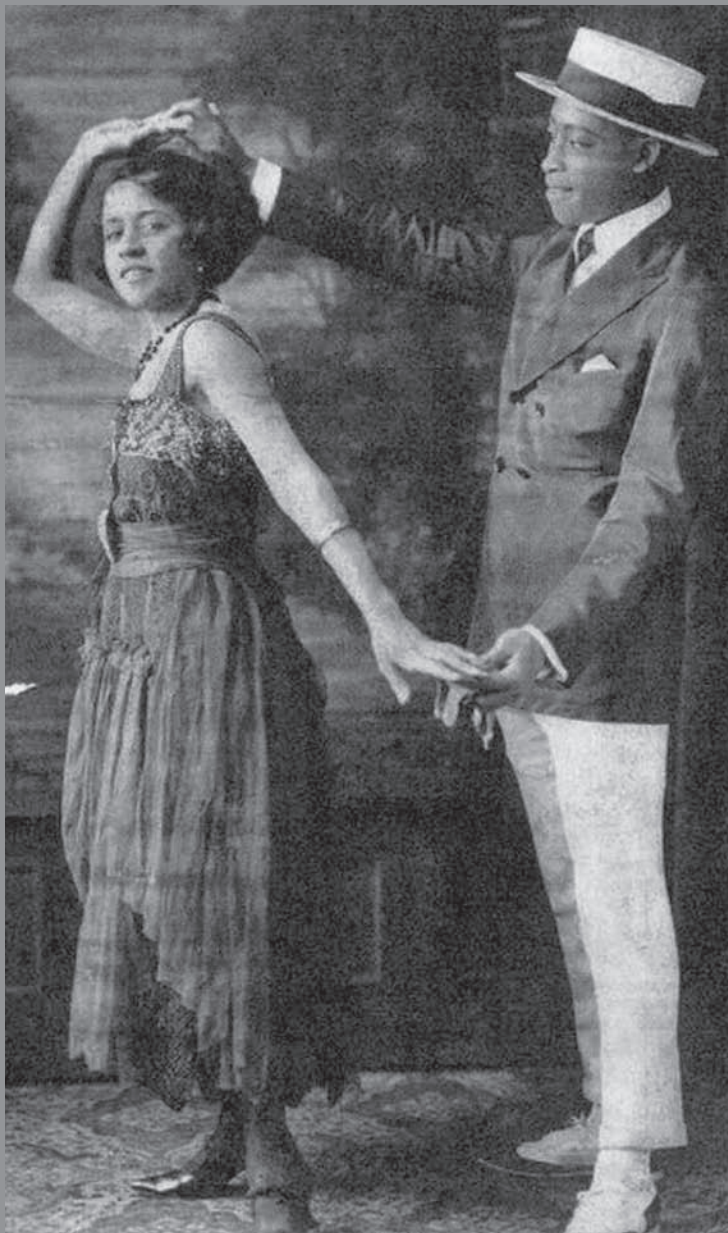
*Two Centuries of Black Louisville* offers readers a unique collaboration between three very different co-authors: Mervin Aubespain, former associate editor of a major newspaper, Ken Clay, former vice president of the Kentucky Center for the Arts, and myself, a professional historian now serving as a senior university administrator. Each of us brought a different skill set and reservoir of experiences to this project and, because of our long acquaintance with one another, we were able to create a final product that, we believe, is far greater than the sum of its parts. Our division of labor was simple: Mervin and Ken collected most of the photographs and added most of the personal reminiscences; I did what historians do, research and write history.

The result is also a book that combines two genres, narrative history and an extensive photograph collection, and it is critically important not to ignore the centrality of the book’s many images. The power and significance of artifacts is often overlooked in a field that depends so much on documents as primary evidence. However, artifacts can give us a sense of the time, person, or place under study and, of all artifacts, photographs are both the most recent and, perhaps, the most evocative. Photographs and artifacts are not necessarily worth a thousand words. In many cases, they tell us far less than words

4. *Ibid.*







could describe; in others, they can tell us much more. Whatever their other limitations, they give readers the ability to “see” actual historical figures as they were, at a moment frozen in time, and can provoke emotional responses that complement the conceptual framework of a book such as ours.

In *Two Centuries of Black Louisville*, we tell our story by using an abundance of both documentary and photographic evidence. However, much as the primary and secondary source evidence was analyzed, interpreted and woven into a coherent narrative, the photographic evidence required a degree of organization so that it paralleled and supported that narrative. In other words, the selection and location of photographs relative to one another and to the text required considerable creativity. Consequently, the book is one that, unlike most works of history, was not only researched and written to be savored intellectually, but was designed to be experienced visually as well.

Finally, my co-authors and I have lived in Louisville all or most of our lives. We have each lived and played some part in the recent chapters of the history we have written — and we understand all-too-well what Lyman Johnson meant when he stated that “living in Louisville was a challenge, but he liked it here” (quoted in Dr. John Kleber’s statement on the book jacket). To us, the many years spent collecting images and researching and writing this history were a fascinating and immensely fulfilling journey of discovery.

If *Two Centuries of Black Louisville* has lasting value, it will not be because of us. We only told the story. It is the history itself and the people — from the ordinary to the remarkable — who make the book special. We hope that our fellow Kentuckians will read, enjoy, and use the fruits of our labors.

## About the Author

Blaine Hudson is a lifelong Louisville resident. He is a graduate of Louisville Male High School, earned a B.S. and M.Ed. from the University of Louisville and an Ed.D. from the University of Kentucky.

Hudson joined the University of Louisville’s Department of Pan-African Studies on a full-time basis in 1992 and, along with his other faculty responsibilities, directed the Pan-African Studies Institute for Teachers until 1998. He served as chair of the Department from 1998 through 2003 and served as Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1999 through 2003. In 2003, Hudson was promoted to full professor and was appointed Associate Dean of the College. In 2004, he was appointed Acting Dean of the College and, after a national search, was appointed permanent Dean in 2005.

Hudson’s teaching and research focus on the histories and cultures of persons of African ancestry throughout the world, inter-cultural education, diversity, and the history and social psychology of race. He has contributed to the establishment of international programs in Barbados, Belize, Brazil, China, India, South Africa, and Trinidad.

Since 1992, Hudson has published two books, *Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland* (2002) and *The Encyclopedia of Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad* (2006). He also served as an historical consultant for the Farmington and Locust Grove historic homes, the Muhammad Ali Center, the Kentucky Center for African American Heritage, and on the Kentucky Humanities Council’s Board of Directors.



# Our First Vacation

By Georgia Green Stamper

**I**n August of 1956, Daddy observed that his tobacco crop needed another couple of weeks to yellow in the fields before cutting. If my mother and I wanted, he allowed as how he could slip away from the farm work for a few days, and we could join his sisters and their families on a short vacation trip to the Smokey Mountains.

Did we want to? I was eleven years old and I'd wanted to "SEE ROCK CITY" ever since I'd learned to read the signs plastered on every barn between home and Lexington. We'd never taken a vacation before unless you counted the dash we'd made to Illinois for Uncle Henry's funeral. That trip hadn't been a barrel of laughs, but still, I'd enjoyed seeing the Midwest's flat-as-a-pancake land for the first time in my life. Now we'd go the other direction, and I'd get to see real mountains.

The beauty of a road trip with a vague destination is that you can enjoy all the stops along the way. And when you've never been anywhere, everything is worth seeing. We stopped at the pull-over as we approached the Kentucky River palisades and marveled at this wonder so near our home. We gawked at the gaudy bedspreads hung out for sale on the side of the road though we decided we wouldn't have one if you gave it to us. We bought sticky candy at Stuckey's. We pulled off U.S. 25 at Dogpatch short of the Tennessee line and toured the small zoo. That's where the monkey reached out of his cage and pulled my hair. I didn't blame him. I'd be mad too if I'd ended up in a smelly cage at tacky Dogpatch, but still, I've never liked monkeys much since then.

And then we reached the Smokey Mountains, taller and grander than I'd even dared imagine. What I loved most, though, was the traveling, the hot wind rushing in the open car windows as we dashed along the curvy, two lane highways at a reckless fifty miles an hour. My cousin Judy and I — she was the same age as me — would scan the billboards to select our night's lodging. Motels were the latest, greatest thing in 1956. No antiquated hotels in small towns for us! We wanted to stay where we could pull our car right up to our bedroom door. We demanded air conditioning though neither of us had that luxury at home. And sliding, glass shower doors were a must. Judy and I played elevator half one night with those.

Eating all our meals in restaurants was fun too. I'd never seen crinkle cut French fries before, but the most exotic item was the jelly served each morning at breakfast in tiny plastic sealed containers. The waitresses were generous with the jellies — and so Judy and I squirreled away the extras collecting them in different colors much the way beachcombers search for variety in shells.

For safety's sake, we stashed our treasures on the wide back shelf under the rear window of Uncle Melvin's Buick. When we got tired of watching for Burma Shave jingles spiked in couplets on the highway's shoulder, we'd pull our jellies down, and count and sort them by flavor.

It was 95 degrees in the back seat and we were thirty minutes south of lunch somewhere in east Tennessee when Aunt Neb screamed.

"What's wrong?" Uncle Melvin asked. There was concern in his voice.

"I don't have my teeth," Aunt Neb managed to get out. She'd gotten false teeth a week before we'd left on our trip, and they'd put a crimp in her vacation fun. She was forever taking them out doing this and that with them. "I bet I left them back at that restaurant," she sobbed.

Uncle Melvin slammed on the brakes, and the Buick came to an abrupt stop on the side of the highway. "You've lost your teeth?" His voice was incredulous. "You've lost your teeth," he said again. His voice was getting irritated now.

The other car in our caravan screeched to a halt behind us. Like town criers, Judy and I shouted out our window in its direction, "AUNT NEB'S LOST HER TEETH."

Before he'd "backtrack to that restaurant," Uncle Melvin declared that the entire car would be emptied and searched. Surely, the missing teeth were in the car. "Out!" he said, so out we all climbed.

We stood silent in the weeds, in blue cornflowers and Queen Anne's lace, while Uncle Melvin pushed his hands into every crevice of the car's seats. Then, his face red with heat and disgust, his arm swept the rear shelf under the back window. He cleared it of everything in hopes the missing teeth would pop out of hiding.

All that popped however were our thirty-five boxes of melted jellies. They went flying upward toward Tennessee skies, and then fell, an apricot, grape, and strawberry rain, on the windshields of passing trucks.

Judy started to cry, "Our jellies," but I shushed her. I sensed it was not the moment to assert property rights. And then, oh then, I swear it's true — Aunt Neb whispered, "I've found my teeth."

We went on lots of other family trips after that. In time, I traveled to the other side of the world and back. But I've never topped those magic jelly days, so sweet and easy you could forget false teeth cradled in your mouth.

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## About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a seventh generation Kentuckian. A graduate of Transylvania University, Stamper is a former high school English and theater teacher and speech team coach. Her work has been published in the literary anthologies *New Growth*, *Tobacco*, *Daughters of the Land*, *Motif I & II*, and *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*. She writes a bi-weekly column, "Georgia: On My Mind," for *The Owenton News-Herald*. She is a regular commentator for NPR member station WUKY affiliated with the University of Kentucky and a popular member of the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.





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