

Kentucky

\$5

Fall 2023
Kentucky Humanities

humanities



88.9
WEKUU.org



FOR CENTRAL AND
EASTERN KENTUCKY

Proud to Partner with Kentucky Humanities on *Think History*,
weekdays at 8:31 a.m. and 7:19 p.m. on 88.9 FM and weku.org.

Kentucky

Fall 2023

humanities



Board of Directors

Chair:
Brian Clardy, Ph.D.
Murray

Vice Chair:
Jennifer Cramer, Ph.D.
Lexington

Secretary/Treasurer:
Clarence E. Glover
Louisville

Chelsea Brislin, Ph.D.
Lexington

Selena Sanderfer Doss, Ph.D.
Bowling Green

Ben Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.
Morehead

Catha Hannah
Louisville

Sara Hemingway
Owensboro

Lois Mateus
Harrodsburg

Keith McCutchen, D.M.A.
Frankfort

Thomas Owen, Ph.D.
Louisville

Jordan Parker
Lexington

Libby Parkinson
Louisville

Penelope Peavler
Louisville

Lou Anna Red Corn, JD
Lexington

Andrew Reed
Pikeville

Judy Rhoads, Ed.D.
Owensboro

Ron Sheffer, JD
Louisville

Hope Wilden, CPFA
Lexington

Bobbie Ann Wrinkle
Paducah

Wayne G. Yates
Princeton

Staff

Bill Goodman
Executive Director

Kathleen Pool
Associate Director

Marianne Stoess
Assistant Director

Katerina Stoykova
Kentucky Book Festival Director

Zoe Kaylor
Kentucky Chautauqua Coordinator

Derek Beaven
Program & Administrative
Assistant



Photo courtesy of The McGraw Library Archives at Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, KY



Photo courtesy of UK Special Collections



8 **Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers**
Reviewed by Susan Reigler

10 **Alice Lloyd College**
A Legacy
By Dr. Jacqueline Hamilton

15 **Bloodied But Unbowed**
By Dr. James M. Gifford

20 **Washington Comes to the Cumberlands**
Harry M. Caudill and the Cause of Appalachia
By Matthew Smith

24 **A Lot of Bang for Your Book**
Children's Bookstores in Kentucky
By Rebecca Brothers

31 **Exploring Kentucky's National Votes for Women Trail**
By Linda Elisabeth LaPinta

36 **A Forgotten Chapter**
In 1850 a Kentucky Regiment Invaded Cuba
By David McCormick

41 **Living Well in a Disappearing World**
By Ken Wolf

42 **A Kentucky Kind of Story**
By Georgia Green Stamper

Celebrating the Commonwealth

Kentucky's unique history and culture is littered with prolific writers, inventors, scholars, military service members, chefs, musicians, artists, and activists. Some of them are well known across the country while others are well known in their community. In this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* magazine, we are celebrating some of these visionaries and their contributions to our Commonwealth's history.

Quilting has long been a celebrated art form in Kentucky. Quilts are often family heirlooms passed down from generation to generation. Linda LaPinta delves deep into the history of quilting in Kentucky in her new book published by the University Press of Kentucky. Susan Reigler gives us a review of LaPinta's *Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers: Three Centuries of Creativity, Community, and Commerce* on page 8.

Tucked away in the heart of Appalachia, Alice Lloyd College has a unique and fascinating history! Beginning on page 10, Dr. Jacqueline Hamilton shares the story of the remarkable woman who started it all and the legacy she left behind as the college celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2023.

Turn to page 15 to hear the story of Jesse Stuart's 1938 return to Greenup County following a stint in Scotland. Dr. James Gifford recounts the changes in Greenup County during Stuart's absence and his return to the community.

Historian Harry M. Caudill's 1963 book *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* brought national attention to the poverty in Appalachia and is often cited for making the region a prominent focus of the United States government's "war on poverty." On page 20, Matthew Smith tells us how Caudill's book brought America's leaders to Appalachia.

Kentucky Humanities is invested in sharing books and the love of reading with children across the Commonwealth. Author Rebecca Brothers shares this passion and provides us with a look at some of the fantastic children's bookstores located throughout the Commonwealth. Her story highlighting the importance of these bookstores to young readers and to the communities they serve is on page 24.

The National Collaborative for Women's History Sites is now honoring Kentuckians who fought for equal rights for women with the growing effort known as The National Votes for Women Trail (NVWT). Beginning on page 31, Linda LaPinta tells us about the trail and some of those it honors.

Dave McCormick tells us about an often forgotten or unknown chapter in Kentucky history. Read McCormick's telling of the 1850 invasion of Cuba by a Kentucky regiment on page 36.

Dr. Ken Wolf is a retired professor from Murray State University. His essay, *Living Well in a Disappearing World*, provides a critical look at the world today and what it might mean for the future. His essay appears on page 41.

And last but certainly not least, Georgia Green Stamper shares with us the story of her grandparents, her memories of their home, and the life they built in eastern Kentucky. Her story is on page 42.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* and that you will share it with your friends. We are always eager to hear your Kentucky stories as well. If you have a story to share, please contact our editor, Marianne Stoess, Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu.



Bill Goodman
Executive Director
Kentucky Humanities

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Goodman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

wmmt 88.7

**SUPPORT
RURAL
COMMUNITY
RADIO**



*Listen online, sign up for our newsletters,
and get to know the best little station in
the W-H-I-R-L-E-D a little better at*

WMMT.ORG



Two New Kentucky Chautauqua® Dramas Available



Two new Kentucky Chautauqua presenters have joined our lineup! Forrest Loeffler portrays a young Abraham Lincoln before he became President of the United States and Dr. Simonetta Cochis portrays Charlotte Victoire “Madame” Mentelle, who established her own school in Lexington 1820, Mentelle’s School for Young Ladies.

Our Kentucky Chautauqua lineup now includes 25 figures from Kentucky’s rich and colorful history.

Kentucky Chautauqua performers travel to schools and community organizations throughout the state delivering historically accurate dramatizations of Kentuckians who made valuable contributions. Visit kyhumanities.org to learn more or to book your Kentucky Chautauqua program!



Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Webinars



Kentucky Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities, in partnership with the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response, the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation, Performing Arts Readiness, the Kentucky Historical Society, the Kentucky Arts Council, and the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, hosted a series of free online workshops on Disaster Preparedness and Recovery in August and September.

Each workshop focused on a different aspect of the disaster preparation and recovery process:

- Disaster Readiness: Emergency Preparedness 101
- Disaster Response: The First 48 Hours
- Disaster Recovery: Getting Back in Business!
- Disaster Resilience & Mitigation: Preparing for Next Time

Workshops featured experts from across the country, as well as firsthand accounts from those impacted by natural disasters across the Commonwealth.

All sessions were recorded and are available for those who were unable to join the presentations.

Visit kyhumanities.org to watch the videos and for more information.





2023 Kentucky Book Festival®

Join us Saturday, October 21st at Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Lexington for the 42nd edition of the Kentucky Book Festival, a program of Kentucky Humanities. Every lover of literature can find a book to enjoy and shake the hand that wrote it. This beloved celebration connects book lovers and authors in a one-of-a-kind community experience.

We hope you enjoy browsing the author's gallery, attending main stage events and writer's room sessions, and visiting the children's tent with fun activities for the next generation of readers. Thanks to our sponsors, for a second year, hundreds of children 12 and under can receive a voucher for a free book of their choice.

This festival would not be possible without the generous support from numerous organizations and individuals. Our volunteers' dedication and enthusiasm are also greatly appreciated.

The Kentucky Book Festival is a celebration of reading, writing, and publishing. Festival events connect book lovers and authors, spark lively conversations, and empower readers by providing access to new books and re-introducing them to old favorites.

For more information, including the lineup of authors attending and the schedule of events, visit kybookfestival.org.



Our Sponsors

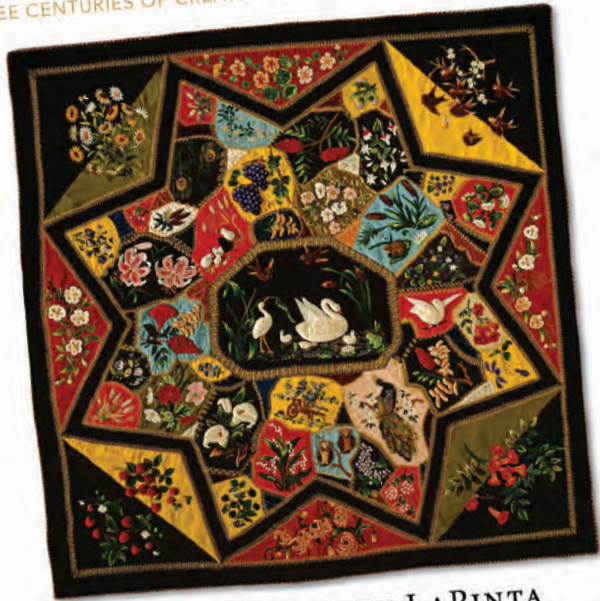


Our Partners



KENTUCKY QUILTS and QUILTMAKERS

THREE CENTURIES OF CREATIVITY, COMMUNITY, AND COMMERCE



LINDA ELISABETH LAPINTA

from 1800 and the 1850s. They included one quilt sewn in Logan County in 1805 that wound up in George Washington's home, Mount Vernon, until the 1960s when it was returned to Kentucky and added to the collection of the Kentucky History Museum at Western Kentucky University.

LaPinta's book is no mere catalog of objects. She draws upon an abundance of quilt scholarship to put the coverings in a wider context. For example, she quotes Laurel Horton, a former president of the American Quilt Study Group:

"Made during a time when women had no public voice, white quilts and counterpanes – called whitework – survive as material records of both personal identity and collective political expression ... The women were expressing support of patriotic efforts to reduce dependence on imported British textiles..."

That was not the only social subtext to whitework. LaPinta cites Horton again:

"... during the antebellum period [from the end of the War of 1812 to until the beginning of the US Civil War in 1861], the movement toward whiteness emphasized and intensified the disparity marked by race. The clothing worn by enslaved people was typically dyed blue or brown. White and Black people may have lived in proximity, but the colors they wore served as a constant reminder of difference in status."

Reviewed by Susan Reigler

I have a distant memory of two quilts that at different times covered my bed when I was a small child. One featured dark blue and white squares depicting alternating silhouettes of what I presumed to be a little Dutch girl and a little Dutch boy, given their headgear and pointed clogs. I think my mother told me that my grandmother had made it. The other quilt seemed less conventional to my very young mind and somewhat boring. It was all white but had an intricate raised pattern of swirls that seems like Braille or bas relief. (Neither term I knew at the time, of course.) While there were no interesting colors, I do recall tracing my small finger between the bumps, hoping for a maze-like puzzle.

Thank to Linda La Pinta's authoritative new book about Kentucky quilts, I now know that the second covering is what's known as a whitework quilt. She writes that, "... Often reserved for celebratory occasions, whitework quilts consisted of white cloth padded with sufficient cotton batting to shape high-relief motifs..." La Pinta describes the provenance of several whitework quilts found in collections around the state, dating

That is a lot of meaning attached to a seemingly commonplace household object and LaPinta reveals more of interest about some 150 quilts made over more than 300 years and ranging from utilitarian to artistic. Choosing to focus on Kentucky was not parochial. Quiltmaking has such a rich tradition in the state that it is the home to the National Quilt Museum in Paducah, had the first statewide quilt documentation project, and has a history of spawning quilt organizations and exhibits.

Many of the pieces in the book are almost staggeringly complex in color and pattern. And while, again, this is not a quilt catalog, it would have been good to have had many of the more intricate ones given full page illustrations. Nevertheless, for anyone serious about the history and social context of quilts, this is an essential reference.

About the Reviewer

Susan Reigler is a recognized authority on another Kentucky cultural heritage—bourbon whiskey. Among her many books on that subject are *Kentucky Bourbon County: The Essential Travel Guide* and *Which Fork Do I Use with My Bourbon?* She also teaches a course about beer, bourbon, and spirits for the Global Hospitality and Tourism program at Eastern Kentucky University.

A strong community makes all the difference.

A community that's united is a community that's moving forward. That's why we're proud to support the organizations and people who are committed to making our community an even better, stronger place to call home.

Yajaira West

yajaira.west@pnc.com

www.pnc.com



©2023 The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. All rights reserved. PNC Bank, National Association.
Member FDIC

CON PDF 1221-018-1951005

The top half of the page features the Alice Lloyd College (ALC) logo in a large, blue, serif font. Below the logo, the words "alice lloyd college" are written in a smaller, lowercase, blue, serif font. Below that, the word "LEGACY" is written in a large, blue, serif font. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a winter scene in Pippa Passes, Kentucky. The scene shows a snow-covered road leading to a building on the left and a sign on the right. The sign reads "WELCOME TO Alice Lloyd College" and "CANEY CREEK COMMUNITY CENTER". The background is a dense forest of bare trees on a hillside.

ALC

alice lloyd college

LEGACY

Located in Pippa Passes, Kentucky—a town named by Alice Lloyd—Alice Lloyd College is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2023.

Photo courtesy of The McGraw Library Archives at Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, KY

By Dr. Jacqueline Hamilton

Alice Lloyd counted the last 45 years of life as the most important. That's when, in 1916 at age 40, she moved to the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Kentucky. Alice had but one mission when she arrived: to do good. Instead, she was greeted with distrust and suspicion. Few people called her by name, choosing to address her as "Stranger." Alice refused to give in to the loneliness she felt—or the discouragement when people further called her "Spy" towards the end of World War I.

Gradually, Alice realized why efforts by other groups to improve this Appalachian area had failed. Instead of trying to fix people, she recognized that the residents, who had lived in the isolation and poverty of the mountains, needed to be recognized for their abilities and educated towards their aptitudes. Alice began using a phrase again and again that still rings through the area: *The Leaders Are Here*.

In 2023, the junior college she cofounded in the mountains of Kentucky is celebrating its 100th year anniversary. Now a four-

year institution, Alice Lloyd College (ALC) has two impressive rankings from the national *U.S. News and World Report's 2022 Edition of Best Colleges*: #1 among all college and universities for selectivity with an acceptance rate of 7 percent; and #3 for alumni giving rate. Their teacher to student ratio is 16.5 to 1. All students complete courses in leadership before graduating. All full-time students work a minimum of 10 hours a week on campus to offset college costs. ALC and Berea College are the only two work-study colleges in the Commonwealth.

Located in Knott County, the campus of ALC is spread down a mile-long ravine in the town of Pippa Passes. Alice named the town after one of her favorite poems—a long dramatic work by British author Robert Browning. The most famous line from *Pippa Passes* is "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world." ALC continues to embrace various aspects of their heritage. The name of the one and only main road is Purpose Road—also from Alice. Names of side streets reflect the character qualities she constantly emphasized: Conscience, Duty, and Courage.

In the college's early days, students attended mandatory Sunday evening meetings. Here they memorized character tenets that Alice and her college cofounder June Buchanan had visually diagrammed and called "The Purpose Road Philosophy." Alice and June had embraced these ideas of world service from work originally developed by Dr. George Palmer, a Harvard University professor. The Purpose Road Philosophy diagram can be found on the school's website, and is still taught in philosophy courses at ALC.

As for Alice's first 40 years, they began outside of Boston where she was born in 1876 as Alice Spencer Geddes. She was raised an only child by her grandmother Alice. Her parents lived and worked in England where her father was a representative for St. Jacob's Oil—a patented medicine using chloroform and described as a liniment for muscular pains and aches due to exertion or exposure. Alice's grandmother taught her the principle of *noblesse oblige*, a French term that translates to nobility obligates, and means that with great wealth comes the responsibility to give back to the less fortunate. One year Alice's parents sent her a new winter coat. Her grandmother reminded Alice that her old winter coat still fit well and was in good condition. Alice chose to give her new coat to a less fortunate child.

Unfortunately, few other personal details from Alice's early life are known. She did attend Radcliffe College, a women's liberal arts college in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She also studied with eagerness the crusading work of women such as Jane Addams and her Hull House Movement in Chicago.



Photo courtesy of The McGraw Library Archives at Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, KY



KENTUCKY STATE
POETRY SOCIETY

2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OCTOBER

28-29

Virtual



KEYNOTE
Kristen Renee Miller
Poet and translator, Executive Director and Editor-in-Chief at Sarabande Books

WORKSHOPS
PANELS
READINGS

tinyurl.com/kspconf

Funding provided, in part, by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts

Alice started a successful career as a journalist. Her stories often focused on the problems caused by poor education, a lack of healthcare, and limited housing. Her personal writings, in the form of a woman's column, also were well received. She wrote about the beautiful possibilities of restoring an old house instead of demolition—long before that concept was in vogue. Alice caught the attention of both women and men with a humorous column covering the 1912 baseball World Series between the Boston Red Sox and New York Giants.

Early in her newspaper career, Alice and two other female partners bought a small newspaper, *The Cambridge Press*, with hopes of publishing "frank and free criticism" of local news. This publication became America's first newspaper with an all-female staff, but financial woes forced the publication to shut down a year later.

At age 38, Alice married for the first time. Arthur Lloyd worked in newspaper advertising, and they seemed united in their desire to change the world. They moved for a short while to New Hampshire. As a new bride, Alice set up a free library in their home to help educate children in the community. Many stories abound of why the Lloyds left the Granite State for Kentucky—warmer climate

Although she arrived in Caney Creek two years after Alice, Dr. June Buchanan (left) fell in love with Alice Lloyd's (right) mission and the people she met in her initial visit to Appalachia. June returned after that first visit and is the cofounder of Alice Lloyd College.

for health reasons, financial problems, or, perhaps, the urge to find a place where their social endeavors would be more appreciated.

They travelled to the Bluegrass in 1916 by horse and wagon with Alice's widowed mother Ella Geddes and Alice's prized possession—an Oliver No. 9 typewriter. Alice instinctively knew her ability to write stories and appeal letters would influence any work they tackled. They settled in a building abandoned by a Presbyterian mission in Ivis, in Knott County. Their initial work focused on establishing improved practices in healthcare and agriculture and setting up educational initiatives such as a library.

Around 1917, a man named Abisha Johnson visited Alice, claiming he had a vision of a woman who would come to the nearby Caney Creek area and educate his children. He believed Alice was that woman and offered to build her a shack and give her some property. That shack still sits intact with much of its original furnishings in the middle of the ALC campus near a life-sized bronze statue of Alice. The statue was commissioned and paid for by Jim Morrissey, former Louisville *Courier-Journal* reporter and feature writer. He met Alice and June in the early 1960s. Morrissey said the courage, fortitude, and boldness of

ALICE LLOYD: STAY ON STRANGER

By Dr. Jacqueline Hamilton

Why Alice Lloyd? People often ask that question after learning I have portrayed her for 10 years as a member of Kentucky Humanities' Kentucky Chautauqua® program. My answer is straightforward and personal since we share some similar interests. We both started our careers in newspaper reporting, both had a tremendous fondness for our mothers, and both spent our later life in higher education in Kentucky. But it is two of our shared character choices that truly made Alice a part of me. These character choices certainly are not unique to us and have been claimed by countless others: we rely on our wits and our work ethic. In fact, one of my favorite lines in my Alice presentation is a direct quote from her: "Have faith as firm as a rock and aspirations as high as the mountains."

Kentucky Chautauqua dramatists have the choice to either work with a scriptwriter or research and write their own character monologue as I have done. With either path, the race

is on. Performers have one year from the time of their audition selection to be ready to share their character before an audience.

We need every day. Writing a one-person monologue is not organizing a biographical timeline. We cannot sound like a walking Wikipedia. How dull to face an eager audience and start out "I was born November 13, 1876, in Athol, Massachusetts. I lived with my grandmother Alice, and I learned . . ."

In order to fully shape a character, one must first determine the precise—and best—moment in time for our character to tell their story. The writer must set up a truthful environment that warmly beckons the audience to enter into the character's story and be part of a living performance. While I had won the judge's hearts with my five-minute audition monologue, I had no idea of when Alice's story should be set. Ultimately, all decisions for our Kentucky Chautauqua performances must be signed off by an historical expert, a costume expert, and a drama coach for accuracy and professionalism.

My first step in historical research was to go where Alice spent most of her Kentucky life. I contacted Alice Lloyd College for a time to search through their archival material. They were excited about their namesake traveling across Kentucky as a Kentucky Chautauqua character, and warmly welcomed me and my husband George on the campus. I spent the first day there scouring records at the library and talking to local Alice Lloyd graduates. I also spent time just being in the moment: I rocked for an hour in a chair outside her still standing office known as The Eagle's Nest. I sat by her grave on top of the hill above her office. I poked around her



Alice should have a permanent memorial to constantly remind students, alumni, and visitors of her grand purpose.

Arthur would not continue to share Alice's enthusiasm for the mission work in Kentucky and move back East. One researched account by P. David Searles, a former deputy chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, stated that Arthur fell in love with another woman. The Lloyds divorced and Alice never remarried. She turned all her passion into the work. After working all day in the community, Alice spent countless nights by the light of an oil lamp writing individual letters to friends and strangers about the need

for donations to the area. Alice identified an urgency for teachers and wrote appeal letters to schools that targeted new graduates in education. Many of her letters ended up on bulletin boards. One woman was in graduate school at Wellesley College, a private women's liberal arts college, when she learned about Alice's mission. June Buchanan was intrigued by Alice's work of educating children in Kentucky's Appalachian region. She came for a volunteer term but stayed her entire life. The mountain people drew June like a magnet.

Alice's mother, Ella Geddes, also played an integral role in the Kentucky mountain work for many years until her death in 1944.

original one-room shack that is now sitting outside Gunga Din, the campus dining hall. Alice had named the college town Pippa Passes after a poem by Robert Browning, and the campus dining hall after a poem by Rudyard Kipling.

From old photos, I realized that my costume would not have the complications of other characters from the past. Once Alice started the college, she wore the same outfit every day: the uniform all female students wore of white skirt, white blouse, and red scarf. The college loaned me a uniform from their archives and a seamstress duplicated the outfit for me. My gray wig would be custom made from a photograph since Alice wore her hair in a bun. I also would wear a white bandage on the tip of my left-hand pointer finger—a usual feature for Alice. The bandage protected her finger from a protruding wire on the letter E of her typewriter.

During my second day on campus, I found the treasures that would direct me to set my Alice presentation in late December 1955. I read with amazement the actual typed television script notebook used in *This Is Your Life*, a program that featured Alice as a guest on December 7, 1955. Alice did not realize the implications in the moment, but this appearance would raise enough funds to save the college from certain bankruptcy. Next, I gently sifted through a large handmade woven basket that contained newsletters Alice had written and printed for fundraising efforts. In the pile was a very small brown pamphlet dated March 1955 that reviewed the book *Stay On, Stranger*. The author of the book, William Dutton, had originally visited Alice with the sole intention of writing an article for the *Readers Digest*. Instead, Dutton wrote a book, which would then be condensed as a major article for the January 1954 issue of *Reader's Digest*.

Alice's own copy of *Stay On, Stranger*, complete with her signature inside the cover, was at the bottom of the basket. Imagine my delight when the college agreed to loan me both the very small brown pamphlet and the book to use in my presentation as part of the artifacts sitting on Alice's desk. I later found another important Alice artifact for the presentation on eBay: an Oliver No. 9 typewriter. The original Oliver No. 9 typewriter that Alice used appropriately sits in the President's

Office at the college. At any presentation with students, they are eager to come after the show and type on Oliver No. 9—amazed at how different a typewriter feels and looks from a keyboard.

Back at home, I continued to read books and articles. I found particularly helpful a thoroughly researched book by P. David Searles published by the University Press of Kentucky called *A College for Appalachia: Alice Lloyd on Caney Creek*. Literally armed with mountains of material, I began the process of capturing the spirit of Alice. I also wanted to tell a story within a story. Yes, I would be the determined Alice who experienced hardships to bring education to the mountain people she loved, but I also wanted to be the worried and waiting Alice, the woman desperate for the college to survive. Who knew that articles from the Louisville *Courier-Journal* from that time period about record-setting snows would provide the factual material I needed for the surprise ending of my presentation?

I have shared Alice countless times during the past 10 years. The audiences have varied from large groups of students with the Governor's Scholars Program to folks attending homecoming events at Alice Lloyd College. I have equally enjoyed presenting Alice to smaller audiences at libraries, historical societies, homemaker's groups, schools, and even a surprise birthday party for an Alice Lloyd graduate. The questions after each presentation have been different, but the sentiment has been the same: amazement for the unbridled spirit of Alice Lloyd.

As the years have passed being Alice, I have considered what would Alice do today if she was trying to garner support for her college. A rap song? An emoji? Alice merch? I have added in these fun features for younger audience after I have finished the historically accurate presentation. Call this one more chance to inspire the next generation to love our all-important Kentucky history.

Undoubtedly of all the many wonderful activities I have done in my life, I can truly say that few have been as rewarding as the privilege to travel throughout our wonderful Commonwealth and tell this slice of Appalachian history. Alice Lloyd, here's to celebrating your 100-year anniversary of the college in 2023, and to hopefully 10 more years of being you!



Alice Lloyd's home was built by Abisha Johnson. The home still stands in the center of the Alice Lloyd campus with many of its original furnishings. In this photo, the women wear the uniform of Alice Lloyd College students, which was also worn each day by Alice.

Photo courtesy of The McGraw Library Archives at Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, KY

During one of their first years in Knott County, Ella and Alice realized that many children had never seen a Christmas tree. They had a tree cut down and decorated with ribbons that held gloves, socks, dolls, and balls. When the children saw the tree, they were amazed and kept repeating—“It’s so pretty.” Alice and Ella took this endearing comment and started an annual project called the Christmas Pretties. The program still distributes gifts to Kentucky children in the region during the holidays.

Alice rarely talked about the partial paralysis of her right side—and a precise diagnosis has not surfaced in records. Despite her handicap, Alice was able, with June’s literal right-hand help, to start more than 100 elementary schools in the mountains. However, their real shared vision was starting a college in the mountains. In 1923, they opened the doors of Caney Junior College offering rigorous courses for the mountain students. Today, June’s contribution is recognized on the campus of ALC with The June Buchanan School, a small, private, Christian-based, K-12 college preparatory school. They require all students in grades 6-12 to complete 15 hours of community service each school year.

Donations and a rigorous work-study program provided all Caney Junior College students a free education, including tuition, room and board, books, and uniforms. Alice never took a salary for her work. She limited the funds spent on buildings. She had strict rules of conduct and earned the nickname of Eagle Eyes. She watched from her office, The Eagle’s Nest, for any students who broke the written rule on campus of no physical contact between the opposite sex. June served as her feet on the ground to enforce the rules. Alice was determined to curb the number of teenage pregnancies, giving female students an opportunity to first finish their education.

Alice and June also encouraged students to pursue additional degrees at the University of Kentucky. Caney Junior College paid UK tuition bills for their students and provided free housing and utilities in a building they owned near the campus called Caney Cottage. All college graduates understood that Alice expected them to return to the mountains and live and work there as

leaders. ALC still provides support of their graduates who seek further education. They continue to own an apartment complex near UK for graduate students to live rent free.

One of the most entertaining reads about Alice and her work came from William S. Dutton’s biography on Alice titled, *Stay On, Stranger* (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1954). One chapter revealed the story of Alice receiving a letter from the college accreditation board about an upcoming inspection. The letter detailed the requirement of a separate science building—a building Caney Junior College did not have. Alice called together the men of the community, and with the timber and stone provided by the mountains, they started the building.

Weather delayed completion of the building. When the accreditation committee arrived for inspection, they found the walls, the doors, and the windows all complete—but the roof was missing. The committee saw orderly classrooms with teachers and students hard at work—and ignoring snowflakes. Blankets were set up tent-like to guard the new scientific equipment. When the committee questioned the lack of a roof, they were told “The sky serves as a roof for a few months. A man-made version will be along shortly.” Alice received her accreditation approval.

People wanted to rename the college after Alice while she was still alive. She was adamant and said that if someone changed the school’s name to Alice Lloyd College, she would change her name to Caney Creek. She died peacefully in her office on September 4, 1962, at the age of 85. After her death, the school was renamed in her honor.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Jacqueline Hamilton is the executive director of a non-profit, Why We Write Inc., that encourages students to love the processes of writing and listening. She also teaches English at Eastern Kentucky University. Hamilton has studied in London, England, on a Rotary Foundation fellowship in journalism, and received a Jesse Stuart fellowship during graduate school. She has taught creative writing and dramatic expression for the Governors Scholar Program. Hamilton also portrays Sue Grafton for Kentucky Chautauqua.

Bloodied But Unbowed

By Dr. James M. Gifford

COPIES ONLY
ASSOCIATED NEWS
Photographic Service, Inc.
20 WEST 57th STREET
NEW YORK CITY

In July 1938, Jesse Stuart returned to Greenup after spending a year in Scotland on a Guggenheim Fellowship. A large delegation of friends and family met him at the train station and inquired about his plans. Stuart told them he expected to rest up and return to his teaching position at Greenup High School. However, that evening, his friends Oscar and Ann Sammons filled him in on some local news, which wasn't good. While Stuart had been away, Democratic County Clerk Joe Bates had been elected to the U.S. Congress. Bates and his cohorts controlled the *Greenup News* and repressed most Republican voices of dissent. Bates represented the majority of county officials, who were backed by the school board and newly appointed superintendent, Democrat Tongs West. After West took over the board, he fired many veteran teachers and refused to honor Stuart's formal leave of absence, which had already been approved before his trip to Scotland.

Angry and unemployed, Stuart took a job teaching remedial English at Portsmouth (Ohio) High School and became the unpaid editor of the *Greenup County Citizen* so he could wage war against West and Bates. He considered both to be outsiders who did not understand the needs of Greenup citizens. Stuart's enemies at the *Greenup News* retaliated in print, ridiculing him as a "globetrotter" whose "power of imagination is really more noticeable in his Editorials than in his poetry." They consistently referred to him as "the pouting poet of W-Hollow." He responded by comparing Bates to the fascists who had come to power in Europe. In the *Citizen*, Stuart wrote that while Italy had Benito Mussolini, Russia had Joseph Stalin, and Germany had Adolph Hitler, Greenup County had "her small dictator, Joe Bates."¹

The day after Stuart's editorial appeared, he and his brother, Jim, were at Leslie's Drug Store. Jesse was approached by Amos Allen, a constable from Argillite, a small community west of Greenup. "Why did you write up poor old Joe in that paper?" Allen inquired in moderate tones.

"Amos, it's a free country," Stuart replied. "I've a right to voice my opinion." He added that Joe Bates owned his own newspaper in Greenup County and could certainly express his side of the story.

"He ain't done nothing to you," Allen retorted.

"What about the schools?" Stuart responded, voicing a community-wide concern.

A crowd gathered around them, anxious to hear Allen's reply. He said nothing. As Stuart turned to pay store owner Sam Leslie, the constable delivered three powerful blows to the back of his head

with a blackjack filled with lead. Blood spurted everywhere. Stuart, stunned with blood-soaked eyes, closed with his assailant to defend his own life. Fortunately, spectators pulled them apart just as Stuart began to strangle Allen. "I had his tongue chocked [sic] out, in my addled condition," Stuart wrote later, describing the incident with relish. "If we had been left alone I would have whipped Amos Allen. This is the price I had to pay for writing an editorial about Dictator Joe Bates—the Dictator of Greenup County."

Stuart was rushed to a hospital in nearby Ironton, Ohio, suffering from "six severe scalp wounds," which would leave him with three jagged scars the rest of his life. He claimed to have "poured the blood out of [his] shoes at the hospital." Meanwhile, Allen was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill. Both were charged with breach of the peace, but those charges were later dismissed. The next Friday, October 7, a retaliatory 1,400-word editorial appeared in the *Greenup County Citizen*, in which Stuart pledged "to write 10,000 words" for each drop of blood he had shed and to fight to the death, if necessary.² He railed:

*Would you citizens who read the Greenup County Citizen doubt now that Greenup County doesn't have a dictator? Would you say that a citizen who voices an opinion is safe anywhere in Greenup County? Yes, I couldn't write an editorial about Dictator Joe Bates without getting slugged in the head, in one of the most unfair methods ever used on a man. It was premeditated murder of the first degree. Without boasting, by using fists and skill and without weapons of any sort, I can whip Amos Allen on less street space in Greenup than the length of his body. He knows that, too!*³

Stuart's assault and Allen's resulting trial became a national cause célèbre. *Time* magazine carried a two-page article on the incident, and papers everywhere covered the story and speculated on Stuart's future in Greenup County.⁴ Friends from around the country invited him to visit or, at the least, advised him "to stay out of Greenup." Gordon Kinzer begged him to "let the whole thing go to hell" and "settle down to serious writing" in New York or California.⁵ Similarly, August Derleth told Stuart to "give 'em hell, but don't risk your skin too much. We can't afford to lose you in American letters. . . ." Although Derleth understood Stuart's desire "to fight those bastards," his final words were "to get away from there" before something worse happened. "Go to New York or some other quiet place in the country and write and write. . . ."⁶

¹ *Greenup News*, October 13, 1938; *Greenup County Citizen*, September 30, 1938.

² See *Thread*, Part VI; Jesse Stuart, "Takes More Blows to Halt Jesse Stuart," *Greenup County Citizen*, October 7, 1938, 14; Jesse Stuart to Mary Washington Clarke, March 13, 1967; undated newspaper fragment, probably from the *Portsmouth Times*, Jesse Stuart Foundation Archive material.

³ Jesse Stuart, "Takes More Blows to Halt Jesse Stuart," *Greenup County Citizen*, October 7, 1938, 14.

⁴ "Greenup Poet," *Time*, November 7, 1938, 62-63.

⁵ Gordon Kinzer to Jesse Stuart, air mail letter from Los Angeles, California, November 7, 1938.

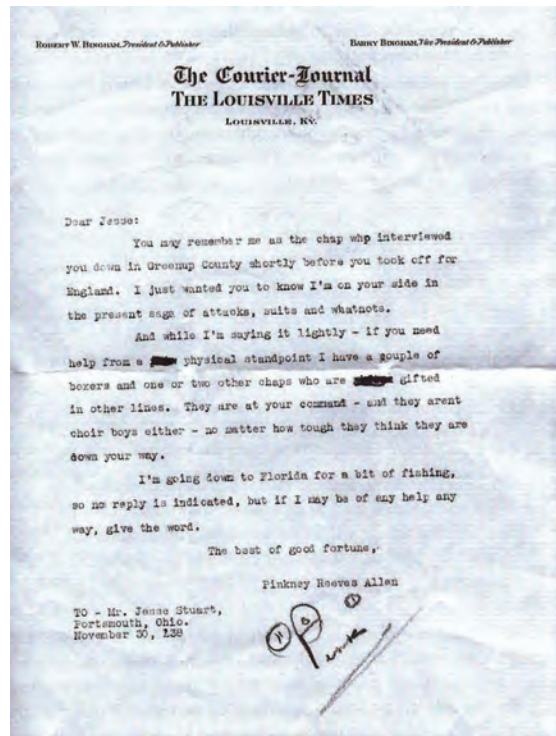
⁶ August Derleth to Jesse Stuart, November 3, 1938, and December 11, 1938.

In a December 26, 1938, response to *Time*, Stuart declared he would not easily “get over” what Allen had done, nor would he leave Kentucky until he was “good and ready to go.” “Petty politicians and constables with blackjacks,” Stuart promised, “are not running me out either.” In response to the story, many people offered their services to be Stuart’s personal bodyguard. Pinkney Reeves Allen, a Louisville reporter, had “a couple of boxers and one or two other chaps who are gifted in other lines. They are at your command—and they aren’t choir boys. . . .”⁷ Read Bain, a sociologist at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, warned Stuart to be careful when he got “ready to sock Amos Allen. . . . I want him to get the hell beaten out of him, but I don’t want you to get shot or cut.” Less violently, Bain suggested that Stuart “should collect a right smart of damages for assault and battery.”⁸

Stuart’s girlfriends were concerned, too. One wondered why his brother “didn’t . . . sock the guy” while Stuart was down. “Not that I approve of socking people myself,” she rushed to explain, “but if he’s always fighting someone anyhow, he might as well help you out.” A former student began a letter to Stuart with a profession of love for him and noted that she wished she could have been there to help. “You may laugh, but then it would not have been the first time I helped you in a jam, would it?”⁹

Stuart was “living more dangerously than any poet has a right to live,” and everyone from casual acquaintances to complete strangers tossed condolences and counsel into the epistolary ring. Writing from Georgia State Women’s College in Valdosta, Mrs. Gertrude Gilmer Odum offered to help “settle the fight between Democrats and the Republicans.” From the Sudan came regrets that Stuart “got slugged by a tough,” even though the letter writer “couldn’t quite make out what it was all about. . . .” A. M. Kieten reported to Stuart from Shanghai that, “before going interior, I read about your little fracas in Leslie’s Drugstore as reported in *Time* magazine. That picture of you looks like somebody is being told off!” From Edinburgh, Scotland, Robert Handleman wrote to say that he had read about Stuart’s political troubles in *Time*. “Do let me know the story and whether you have fixed the S.O.B.s. Stick to your beliefs, Jesse, my fine fellow.” Writing from New Jersey in hopes of locating a teaching job in Kentucky—a sad comment on the Great Depression’s severity—Constant J. DeCoteis counseled, “Insidious politicians may strike and hurt but little do they know that a democratic and liberty loving soul cannot be destroyed.”¹⁰

Finally, in late January 1939, Allen was found guilty of assault and



Courtesy of Dr. James M. Gifford

Pickney Reeves Allen sent a letter to Jesse Stuart expressing his support and offering assistance.

battery. He paid a \$200 fine but received no prison sentence. It was only a small victory, but it brought closure to this violent episode. Almost 70 years later, however, a mystery remains. In rural communities at the time, violent political clashes were common, but Amos Allen’s attack on Stuart was extraordinarily ruthless. Could it have been provoked by something more than Stuart’s editorials in the *Greenup County Citizen*?

On November 27, 1937, in the middle of his Guggenheim Fellowship, Stuart had penned a lengthy letter to “J. Edgar Hoover, Esq.” from his residence in Edinburgh, Scotland, denouncing the Greenup County Democrats. The ungraceful quality of his prose likely had been influenced more by Scotch than Scotland. Stuart began his letter to the FBI director by reciting his bona fides as a writer, teacher, and scholar. He then got to the heart of the matter:

We have not been able to get justice in [Greenup] county. I do not know whether such as this covers your jurisdictions [or] not. But I’m telling you as an American citizen—and not a crank—but a man of thirty—and I’d like to see your squad of workers clean up [this] place.

⁷ Pinkney Reeves Allen to Jesse Stuart, November 30, 1938.

⁸ Read Bain to Jesse Stuart, October 3, 1938, and October 17, 1938. Bain had met Stuart before, and as inducements for a return visit, offered a football game, a dance, a date, his “wife’s famous good cooking . . . and a snifter of [his] imported Highland Scotch,” which was much better than Stuart’s “smoky-peat-tasting Lowland Scotch.”

⁹ Charlotte Susan Salmon to Jesse Stuart, October 20, 1938; Virginia [last name unknown, from Berea College] to Jesse Stuart, October 11, 1938.

¹⁰ Edward [no last name] to Jesse Stuart, London, November 2, 1938; Mrs. John B. Odums to Jesse Stuart, October 13, 1938; James Chatterton to Jesse Stuart, Kosti, Sudan, March 24, 1939; Arnold Kieten to Jesse Stuart, January 31, 1939; David Handleman to Jesse Stuart, Edinburgh, Scotland, March 18, 1939; Constant J. DeCoteis to Jesse Stuart, October 3, 1938. Kieten ran a dry cleaner near Trevecca College in the early 1930s and knew Stuart because he had taken in dry cleaning, through Stuart, from Wesley Hall students.



Jesse Stuart married Naomi Deane Norris in the winter of 1939.

He claimed that the Democrats who controlled the county broke the law in all sorts of obvious ways: taking bribes from local bootleggers who operated “within a rifle shot from the [McKell] schoolhouse”; ignoring their responsibility to protect average citizens at basketball games and other public places; and engaging in mass voter fraud. “Mr. Hoover, it’s coming down to Fascism. . . . I think the government should make inquiries into that situation.”

Finally, Stuart begged Hoover: “. . . and for my safety, please do not disclose my name. Please keep this a secret.” He advised that any G-Men sent into Greenup would have to “play careful there” because killings in the county of 30,000 people had “averaged one a month.” It is entirely possible that this letter had filtered down to the state level by that winter. By spring, it might have been leaked to county leaders, who retaliated by inciting Allen’s actions.¹¹

Yet another question remains: Why Amos Allen? Why would a lowly constable from a tiny farming community attack Jesse Stuart? Most people, like Stuart, believed Allen had been manipulated by Joe Bates. Allegedly, Allen was romantically interested in or involved with Bates’ wife. Allen may have accepted the full brunt of the blame in an effort to woo her.¹² After he “said he’d never do any more mean things [and that] he regretted what he had done,” he was released from police custody and subsequently sued the *Greenup County Citizen*, the *Russell Times* and its publishing company, and Jesse Stuart for libel. He did not win.¹³

Stuart moved on with his life, devoting his energies to his students at Portsmouth High School and his blossoming romance with Naomi Deane Norris. While abroad, Stuart had told his former professor, Dr. Alfred Leland Crabb, that he considered the Scots a “sturdy and wonderful group of people,” but as for the



In 1940, Jesse and Naomi moved into the home where Jesse had grown up following a renovation and expansion. It would be their forever home.

¹¹ Jesse Stuart to J. Edgar Hoover, November 27, 1937.

¹² In a March 16, 1972, article in the *Inman Times* entitled “Jesse Stuart,” Harrison Elliott gives a different version of this incident altogether: “. . . I read in a morning paper that Jesse had been badly pistol-whipped in a Greenup drug store by a town policeman whose reason for the beating was, ‘Stuart has been using me and some of my folks as characters in his stories!’” In all other accounts of this incident, Stuart was blackjacked, not pistol-whipped, and the attack was provoked by an editorial, not a short story. This discrepancy can be explained in one of three ways: (1) Elliott simply misremembered or deliberately skewed the facts (his preceding paragraphs were about Stuart “subconsciously and unknowingly” using local people as characters); (2) in recounting the story to Elliott, Stuart omitted the inflammatory editorial to make himself seem more like a victim; or (3) Allen had already accumulated so many grievances against Stuart—especially the disparaging remarks about his boss, Joe Bates, and his possible lover, Mrs. Bates—that being “written up” and mocked were the last straws. It should be noted that Elliott’s article misstates other facts as well. For example, he says that Stuart taught and lived in Ohio for “some years” after the Amos Allen attack; in reality, Stuart was at Portsmouth High School for only one school term.

¹³ Perry, 196; “Amos Allen Charges Statements in *Times and Citizen* False,” *Greenup News*, December 1, 1938.

Scottish lassies, he teased, “That’s my secret!”¹⁴ Stuart had also written to many people back home in Greenup County about the girls he was meeting but had not told Norris. In November 1937, concerned that she might have “heard something,” he asked her to “pay no attention” to the rumor mills.¹⁵ Two months earlier, he had concluded a four-page letter to her by announcing that he had two pictures on his mantel—hers and Bobbie Burns’—and offered a “goodnight kiss to you so far away—to you so reserved, so tall and handsome and wonderful.”¹⁶

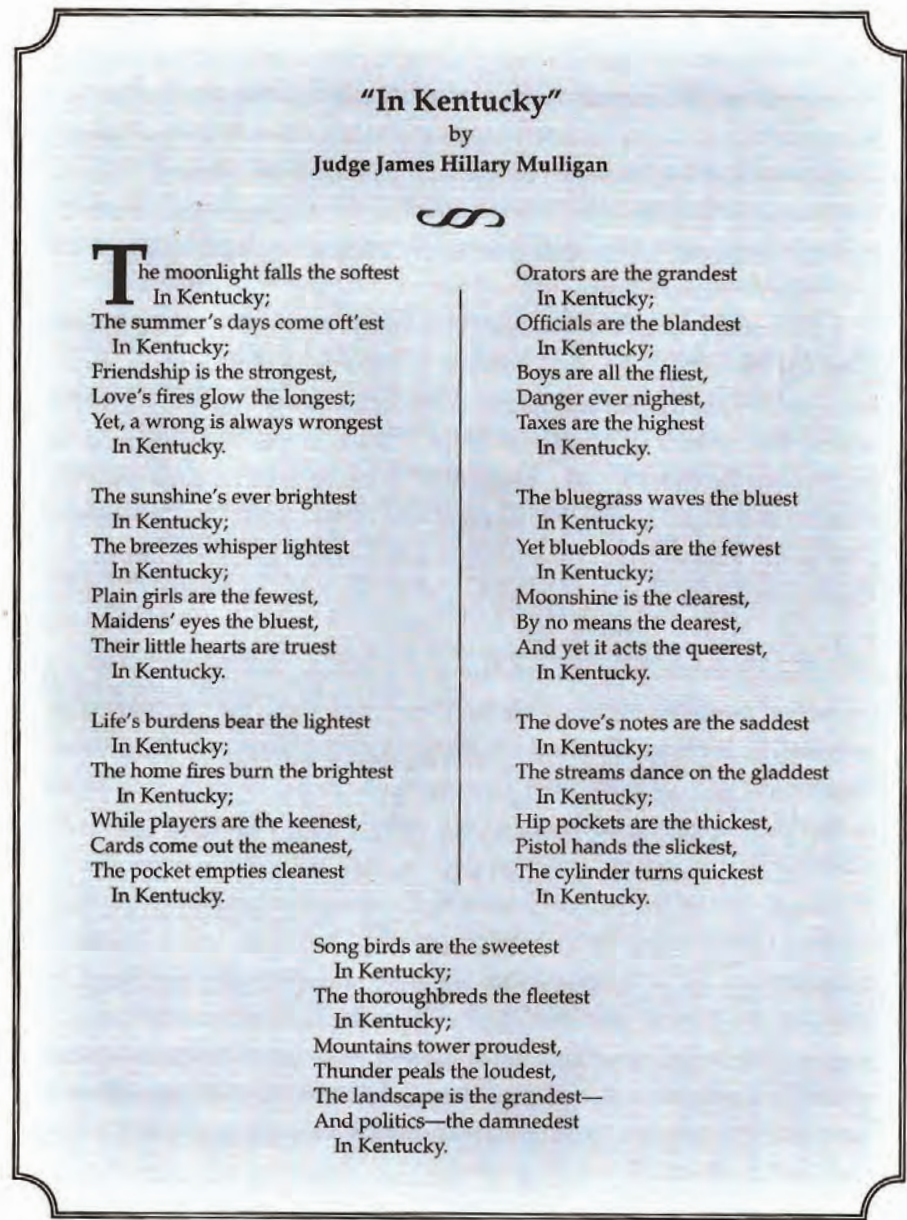
Throughout 1938, their romance intensified. He thought she was a “splendid woman . . . and very, very handsome.” By winter 1939,

they were married and living with her parents. For almost a year, workmen in W-Hollow would renovate and expand a log house where Stuart had lived as a boy. In November 1940, the Stuarts moved into that house, which would be their lifelong home.

More than 30 years later, Stuart was still angry over the attack and the lack of punishment meted out to Allen.¹⁷

About the Author

James M. Gifford is a widely-published author who has served as the CEO & Senior Editor of the Jesse Stuart Foundation, a regional publishing house, for the last 36 years.



“In Kentucky,” by Judge James Hillary Mulligan, is one of the best known and most popular poems about Kentucky. Judge Mulligan first recited it at a banquet for the Kentucky legislature in February 1902.

Courtesy of Dr. James M. Gifford

¹⁴ Jesse Stuart to Alfred Leland Crabb, September 4, 1937, University of Louisville Archives.

¹⁵ Jesse Stuart to Naomi Deane Norris, November 4, 1937, University of Louisville Archives.

¹⁶ Jesse Stuart to Naomi Deane Norris, September 27, 1937, University of Louisville Archives.

¹⁷ Perry, 196.



Above: In the summer of 1964, while touring eastern Kentucky, President Lyndon Johnson met Tom Fletcher, an unemployed sawmill operator and father of eight.

Washington Comes to the Cumberlands

Harry M. Caudill and the Cause of Appalachia

By Matthew Smith

On November 29, 1990, plagued by depression and Parkinson's disease, the lawyer, writer, and activist Harry Monroe Caudill drew a pistol at his home overlooking Pine Mountain, Kentucky, and shot himself in the head. It was, a friend recounted, "in typical Harry style . . . to go outside and be near the mountains."

The bare bones of Caudill's 68 years do scant justice to his decades-long fight against Big Coal, which ravaged his beloved Appalachia. Tall, courtly, and bespectacled, Caudill was an unlikely rebel. A U.S. Army infantryman in World War II, he fought in the deserts of North Africa and the hills of southern Italy. A left foot wounded by a sniper's bullet dogged him to his dying day. Enrolling at the University of Kentucky under the GI Bill, Caudill married his wife Anne in 1946 and earned his law degree in 1948. Returning to his hometown of Whitesburg in Letcher County, he practiced law from a small office on Main Street, contesting the "broad form deeds" by means of which coal companies justified scything through farmlands, polluting waterways, and damaging property to access mineral rights.

His reputation as a champion of downtrodden Letcher Countians won him election to Kentucky's state legislature the 1950s and early 1960s. But Caudill was most celebrated as a writer of 10 books, alongside many newspaper pieces and magazine articles. His byline was familiar to readers of the Whitesburg *Mountain Eagle*, under the masthead: "It Screams!" Caudill introduced Appalachia to readers of *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Magazine*, and other national publications. His masterpiece was *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (1963). This clarion call against despoilation became the most-read book about Appalachia of its day. It ensured Caudill's notoriety, influencing two U.S. presidents—John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson—as well as White House contender Robert Kennedy. Through such influence, Caudill helped center Appalachia in the nation's domestic agenda, with far-reaching and sometimes unintended consequences.

Though Caudill's influence extended beyond his native hollows, his loyalty never strayed. "My grandfather's grandfather, James Caudill," he noted, "was the first white man to call what is now Letcher County his home." Once towering like the Himalayas, the coal-rich elevations of eastern Kentucky were among the oldest mountains in the world, though 350 million years of glaciation and erosion had ground them down to more modest dimensions. Their recession at the Cumberland Gap marked the spot in 1769 where Daniel Boone first beheld "from the top of an eminence . . . the beautiful level of Kentucky." In Boone's day, the slopes loomed with stands of American chestnut, poplar, and white oak, but avaricious timber barons leveled this old growth by the turn of the 20th century. Following this logging bonanza, wrote Caudill, "coal came to its throne." Appalachian coal boomed in the 19th century, but this heyday would not last. In Caudill's lifetime, the deep shafts punctuating the Cumberland Plateau bottomed out. By the 1950s, mechanized strip mining ravaged the mineral wealth of the region, as mountaintop removal further diminished a once-majestic landscape.

"Coal," Caudill lamented, "has always cursed the land in which it lies. When men begin to wrest it from the earth it leaves a legacy of foul streams, hideous slag heaps and polluted air. It peoples this transformed land with blind and crippled men and with widows and orphans. It is an extractive industry which takes all away and restores nothing. It mars but never beautifies. It corrupts but never purifies." Though Caudill chose the profession of the law over the toil of the coalmine, coal's "crown of sorrows" was no abstraction. His own father—eventually county clerk of courts—was maimed in a mining accident. A New Deal Democrat in Republican Letcher County, Cro Carr Caudill was a canny politician. "He only had one arm," recalled one Whitesburg resident, "but he'd give you a good hug with it—especially when he was lookin' for a vote."

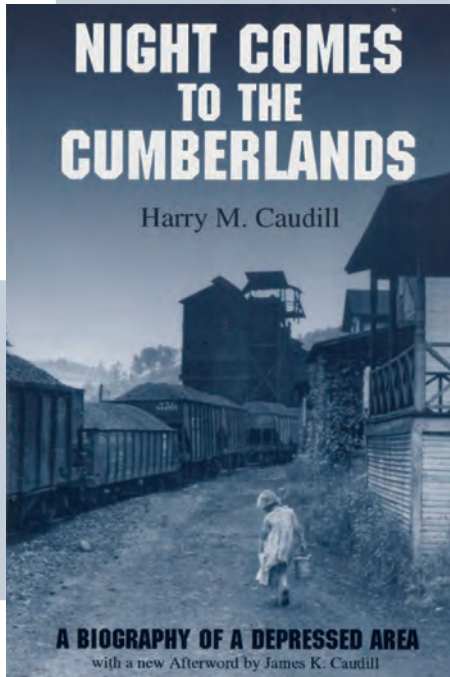
The perseverance of men like his father shaped Caudill's portrayal of eastern Kentucky in *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*. He described this checkered history in four distinct phases. First came the agrarian frontier, shaped by pioneers such as James Caudill. Following the Civil War, coal transformed landscape

and loyalties. Farmers subsisting on the land became miners paid in scrip, housed in company towns. Labor unionism marked a third phase in the 20th century, as miners banded together in an often-bloody struggle for decent pay and better conditions. The final, tragic phase was welfarism. As mechanization eroded labor, government handouts supplanted industry paternalism and union solidarity. Caudill decried this new dependency: "Nothing in the history of the mountain people," he wrote, "had conditioned them to receive such grants with gratitude or to use them with restraint."

Like FDR, whom he revered, Caudill tempered faith in the power of government with a healthy dose of pragmatism. Appalachians needed public works, not public assistance. To this end, Caudill concluded *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* with a plea for a "Southern Mountain Authority" funded by Congress and modeled after the Tennessee Valley Authority. "Thirty years ago," he argued, "the Valley of the Tennessee was as grim and forbidding an expanse of real estate as could be found on this continent." The TVA "achieved genuine miracles in a startlingly short space of time." Ironically, Caudill critiqued the environmental record of the TVA, coal-powered generation having supplanted hydroelectricity as its principal source of electricity by the 1950s. But with the prospect of abundant mineral wealth remaining within the bounds of the Commonwealth, a TVA-style solution to "the politics of despair" might yet revive Kentucky's ailing fortunes.

Inspired by *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, politicians, writers, and journalists heralded Caudill as a solitary prophet in the wilderness—a conceit Caudill indulged while downplaying the considerable editorial labors of his wife. Among those admirers flocking to Letcher County, historian David McCullough described his encounter with Caudill in a December 1969 *American Heritage* story, "The Lonely War of a Good Angry Man." Caudill impressed McCullough, but the landscape appalled him. "I grew up in Pennsylvania," confessed McCullough, "where I lived near strip mining much of my life, but I have never seen anything like the strip mining in eastern Kentucky. It is beyond belief, and sickening." McCullough saw "gaping yellow wounds slashed sideways along the steep wooded slopes." This spoiled, subsided, toxic vista "might have been the set for *All Quiet on the Western Front*." Caudill, by contrast, struck McCullough as "a sort of Kentucky-style combination of John Muir, Mark Twain, and Don Quixote." Visitors often described Caudill speaking "in the same cadences as the book, as though he were speaking from a prepared script," McCullough noted the opposite was true, Caudill having dictated *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* in its entirety.

Admittedly, Caudill's reputation owed much to political good fortune, in particular John F. Kennedy's championing of Appalachia. During the 1960 Democratic Primaries, JFK campaigned tirelessly in West Virginia, an unpromising arena for a Harvard-educated Roman Catholic, despite its relative proximity to Washington, D.C. Still, Kennedy spent several weeks barnstorming coalmining communities, heeding countless tales of tribulation. Kennedy's



Above: Harry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* became the most-read book about Appalachia of its day. It even influenced two presidents—John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Above Right: In February 1968, Harry Caudill showed U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy parts of eastern Kentucky during Kennedy's tour of Appalachia.



detractors doubted he could carry a state where just 5 percent of the population shared his faith, where anti-Catholicism was rife, and where he trailed party rival Hubert Humphrey by 20 points. JFK proved them wrong. Dispelling the myth of immovable Appalachian prejudice, Kennedy won 61 percent of the West Virginia primary vote that May, before winning the White House that November. Revisiting the Mountain State for its 1963 centennial, Kennedy remarked: “I would not be where I now am, I would not have some of the responsibilities which I now bear, if it had not been for the people of West Virginia.” Although failing to replicate his West Virginia coup in neighboring Kentucky—Kentuckians backed Nixon in 1960—he demonstrated that Appalachia was no mere political backwater, but a bellwether for the nation.

Publication of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* coincided with social and environmental bestsellers such as Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Tellingly, Kennedy insisted every member of his cabinet read Caudill's book. Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall even penned the foreword to the first edition, further imprinting the Camelot seal of approval. Contrasting Kentucky's “dark and bloody ground” with the adjacent improvements of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Udall compared *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* with such classics as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*—works which “speak eloquently to the American conscience,” and which inspired government action. “This book is the story of what happens when men betray their responsibilities as land stewards,” Udall concluded. “The price we pay for wanton spoliation is sure and certain ... conservation of the land is the conservation of human life.”

JFK's November 1963 assassination left Caudill bereft at the loss of an admired president, but Kennedy's legacy—and Caudill's influence—persisted. Kennedy was scheduled to visit eastern Kentucky that December. Months before, he established the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC) a federal-state commission due to report back to the Oval Office in January 1964. Although JFK died before his Appalachian legacy could be realized, his successor Lyndon Johnson wasted no time in making his own stamp. The keystone of the PARC recommendations was the creation of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), enacted March 9, 1965. A centerpiece of LBJ's Great Society, the ARC oversaw development across eleven states and 360 counties, establishing a federal footprint which has only since expanded. Outwardly,

the ARC resembled Caudill's Southern Mountain Authority, but extended beyond the heartlands of West Virginia and Kentucky. Encompassing territory from southern New York to northern Alabama and Mississippi, the ARC defined a "New Appalachia," shaped less by geography, history, and culture than by the War on Poverty. Ironically, Caudill became the ARC's bitterest critic.

Appalachia was as central to Johnson's legacy as Civil Rights or Vietnam. Like Kennedy, LBJ prized Appalachia as an arena of political reform and as a backdrop of political theater. Having declared "unconditional war on poverty," Johnson undertook a series of "poverty tours" through urban and rural America. Among many impoverished Americans so encountered was Tom Fletcher, an unemployed sawmill operator and father of eight from eastern Kentucky. In summer 1964, America's press corps descended before Fletcher's dilapidated cabin. LBJ's photo opportunity on Fletcher's porch became an iconic image, Johnson squatting in a dark suit among Fletcher's bewildered children. The Secret Service apprised the Fletchers of their guest mere hours before the presidential helicopter touched down. "Wasn't much we could do to fix up for him, but we were real pleased to have him," Fletcher's wife Nora told the *New York Times*.

In December 1964, Caudill returned the compliment of LBJ's excursion. Visiting the White House at Johnson's invitation, he presented the president with a frontier-style long rifle from fellow eastern Kentuckians together with a personal memorandum, which in typical Caudill fashion reiterated his manifesto. Key points included federal aid for school construction and teacher salaries. Above all, Caudill repeated his call for a public-private agency modeled after the TVA, combining "mine-mouth electric power" and hydroelectricity to create cheap, dependable power and encourage regional development. Caudill later lamented Johnson's failures to address the plight of Appalachia, amid civil unrest at home and the mounting body count in southeast Asia.

Years later, as Robert F. Kennedy eyed the White House, he too assumed his late brother's Appalachian legacy, wresting initiative from the struggling LBJ. In February 1968, the former Attorney General chaired a congressional field hearing on rural poverty at a school gymnasium in Neon, Kentucky, arriving at Caudill's invitation. The lead witness, Caudill flattered the Senator who bore "the magic, the charismatic, the rallying name of these troubled times," but spelled out the failures of the ARC. Caudill noted that "hunger still lurks within the southern mountains" alongside gross inequality. "Today the poorest people and the most prosperous corporations in the United States are found right here." Twenty of the poorest thirty counties in the nation were in eastern Kentucky. A quarter of the adult white population was functionally illiterate. Caudill urged action, including "a federal severance tax" on "all minerals extracted from the earth," providing funding for land reclamation as well as statewide investment in elementary, secondary, and higher education, libraries, and public health.

Despite the promise of the ARC, Caudill lamented its lack of unifying vision. In a 1965 *Atlantic Monthly* article, he urged "a plan of development based on the total environment of Appalachia, a plan that indexes and utilizes all its resources of people, soil, water, timber, and minerals." Disillusioned, Caudill hoped Robert Kennedy might yet fulfill his brother's vision. RFK, for his part, welcomed Caudill's support. On Kennedy's 1968 visit, Caudill accompanied the Senator with an entourage of reporters and activists on a flying visit to the aptly named Yellow Creek strip mine, an acidic eyesore evoking *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*: "Decay spreads across a land ruined by the abrasion of deluge." Though Kennedy got a good lay of the landscape, a heavy security presence obstructed his progress. "KENNEDY IS BLOCKED ON STRIP MINE TOUR," announced the *New York Times* next day.

Caudill's widow Anne later recalled how Robert Kennedy addressed her husband in February 1968 before boarding his departing flight from eastern Kentucky. "Mr. Caudill, we're going to do something about this," the Senator pledged. "I'll be back." Kennedy announced his White House bid the following month. He was assassinated June 6 that year, on the campaign trail.

Caudill's legacy is complex. A New Deal liberal, he dreamed of revitalization, but deplored the failures of the ARC to address absentee landlordism, decaying infrastructure, and economic despair. Over time, Caudill's writing grew bleaker. In one polemic, he bemoaned: "Today's Kentucky mountain people are a pathetic remnant of the race that inhabited the hills four decades ago. The massive outflow of virile people has sapped and vitiated the human stock." Caudill still influenced scholars and activists, teaching in the history department of the University of Kentucky through the early 1980s. But his star faded alongside the political optimism of the 1960s. An unsavory dalliance with eugenics—later minimized by his widow and close friends—further tarnished Caudill's legacy. But for all Caudill's declension, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* still reads prophetically. As the War on Poverty lifted millions out of misery, Appalachia remained deadlocked. Tom Fletcher, for one, sounded weary, interviewed on the 30th anniversary of LBJ's visit. Languishing in his old cabin on a monthly disability allowance of \$284, Fletcher was fed up with reporters knocking at his door. "I'm getting tired of it," he complained. "After all this time, I think they would be letting it go."

About the Author

Matthew Smith teaches American history at Miami University, where he serves as director of public programming at Miami's Hamilton and Middletown, Ohio, campuses. A previous contributor to *Kentucky Humanities* magazine, his Ph.D. dissertation, "In the Land of Canaan," explored religious camp meetings in frontier Kentucky. His new book *The Spires Still Point to Heaven: Cincinnati's Religious Landscape, 1788-1873* was published in 2023 by Temple University Press.

A Lot of Bang for Your Book:

Children's Bookstores in Kentucky

By Rebecca Brothers

George Ella Lyon stole a book.

In a recent interview, she laughed a little as she told me the scandalous story. Someone in the lunchroom of her elementary school had been throwing tomatoes, and George Ella was certain her third grade teacher was mad at her. George Ella hadn't thrown anything; she didn't even have tomatoes in her lunchbox that day. But after the little food fight, her teacher must have thrown enough of her own disappointment around the room that little George Ella felt guilty by association.

So, she was too afraid to ask if she could borrow *King and the Princess*, a picture book about a dog with a flowing red coat and a black cat. She was certain her teacher would say no.

Eight-year-old George Ella, the future poet laureate of Kentucky, went to the back of the classroom. She pulled the book from the shelf and took it home. Lyon recalled, "I felt I couldn't get through the summer if I didn't have that book... Because there was something about that story that was an emotional anchor for me. It was important enough to me, that I did something that I knew I should not do."

Little George Ella was wracked with guilt: "My conscience was such that I couldn't have the book anyway, because it wasn't mine. So, what a huge difference it would have made if I could have just saved my allowance to buy my own copy."

But Harlan didn't have a bookstore in the 1950s. The closest place to buy books was Miller's Department Store in Knoxville, according to Lyon, a place her family might have visited only once a year. Her elementary school didn't have its own library. The public library in town was far enough from home that Lyon's family didn't visit often.

"Sometimes you just want to have a book close to you." Lyon said. "You want it on your bedside table. I've known kids to sleep with books. So, when it's yours, that story is always at hand. Books are containers. Even when you're not reading them, those stories become in some way the architecture of your story, books that touch you that deeply."

As she spoke, I wondered if she was picturing King and the Princess in her head. The longing for that story was still in her voice.

Recent studies support Lyon's assessment. University of Nevada sociology Professor Mariah Evans found children with books at home stay in school longer and have more positive attitudes towards school and learning than their peers who grow up in bookless homes. In a *Science Daily* interview, Evans said of her 20-year study, "... getting some books into their homes is an inexpensive way that we can help these children succeed... You get a lot of bang for your book."

Of course, access to books makes the difference between homes with full bookshelves and those without. And while



Plaid Elephant Books



Plaid Elephant Books

online retailers can provide those books, they cannot provide the much-needed guidance most parents and children want when choosing their next great read. You can't easily browse for books online unless you already know what you're looking for. The algorithm can try to predict books you'll enjoy, but there's no human interaction there. As anyone who has ordered something with a five-star rating on Amazon can tell you, there's almost no way to know if the opinions you read there are sincere or commercially motivated. And the joy of shopping as a pastime, as a bonding experience between parents and children, is short-lived when you're finished in three clicks.

And yes, those books need to be physical, print books. Researchers at the University of Michigan found that the quality of child-parent interactions was greatly increased when reading time involved physical, print books versus electronic reading formats. Parents spent more time correcting child behavior on electronic devices, like asking them to stop touching the screen or fiddling with the controls, than reading the story. With print books, researchers observed more positive dialogue that focused on the plot, characters, and illustrations, and very few behavioral corrections. Lead researcher Tiffany G. Munzer, MD, behavioral developmental pediatrician at the University of Michigan Health C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, said in an interview about her study, "Tablets and mobile devices are prominent fixtures in modern family life, but they aren't as educational or valuable to children's development as traditional books. Parent-child interactions through shared reading promote language development and literacy and may also benefit friendships, school success and other child development outcomes later in life."

This highlights the critical role of Kentucky's brick and mortar bookstores for our youngest readers.

George Ella Lyon reflected on her early days of literary larceny: "If there had just been a bookstore where I could have gone, what

a huge difference that would have made. I would have saved my allowance [to buy that book] . . . The fact that there is a bookstore just for children, it says you matter, and your books matter, and these books are for you. It's a threshold for all those possibilities, for all those stories. And I think that's a real step in making lifelong readers."

Kentuckians can now access several independent children's bookstores close to home. We don't have them in every county, but that could be changing. In an article from July 2022, the *New York Times* reported that more than 300 new bookstores opened in the nation during the pandemic. People are flocking back to small retailers, especially bookstores. We can count a few of those pandemic bookstores right here in our state.

Founder of Danville's Plaid Elephant Books, Kate Snyder, had her community's needs in mind when she decided to open her shop in 2021: "The store was a pandemic project for me. Honestly, it was as much about community as it was about books. I was working remotely for a year, and we'd lost all our connections with people. There was nothing to do with the kids. So, I started asking my community what they needed. They wanted a bookstore. And what could have been a better vehicle for the sense of community that I was looking for than books?"

And the community has jumped at the chance to return to retail spaces. "I'll get three kids here on a weekend that are all going to the same birthday party," Snyder reported. "I know these kids, and they'll say, 'I'm shopping for Ellie. What does she like?' And I can go back and say, 'Well, let's see. She's on book seven of this series.' I guarantee you before I opened this shop there weren't a lot of kids getting books as birthday presents. Maybe the adults were buying them books, but their peers weren't able to shop for books for them in this way."

Snyder makes sure shopping is a pleasure for her youngest



Red Spotted Newt

patrons in lots of other ways, too. She has a lovely, innovative display called The Tiny Zoo—something many of her young customers beeline for as soon as they hit the door. Snyder said, “I was thinking about interactive things to do. A friend mentioned he’d built a dollhouse for his daughter that fit under a table, and I thought that would be perfect. It wouldn’t take up retail space, really, and I could put books on top. But I didn’t want a dollhouse. That felt too gendered. I thought about our mascot, Penelope the Elephant, and thought, well, it will be a little zoo, and each room will be a different biome.”

Gender is important in a bookstore. A 2016 survey conducted by Scholastic showed that only 52 percent of boys aged 6-17 read books over their summer break while 72 percent of girls said they did. This results in lower reading achievement for boys. Snyder’s efforts to include books, toys, and other merchandise that appeal to all kids offers the opportunity to change this trend.

She also has a large room dedicated to middle grade books intended for children between the ages of 8 and 12. Snyder explained, “That’s the age where you really get them. Kids get a little spark there, when readers really just fall in love because the stories get so much more complex and rich. It’s such a great age.” That understanding of kids, books, and reading is what makes Plaid Elephant shine.

Snyder also serves on the committee that brought Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library to Boyle County. Parton’s organization mails free books to kids from birth until their fifth birthday straight to their homes. Snyder said of that partnership, “Kids get a free book from Dolly, learn they love that author, and come to the local library just down the street to look for more of their work. Parents will walk down the street and say to me, ‘We’ve checked this out ten times. We need our own copy.’ It’s never about competition, only collaboration.”

Snyder reaches beyond Danville to help out, too. When she saw the devastating images from eastern Kentucky of flood damage to schools, libraries, and homes, she wanted to help. She immediately boosted another new local independent

bookstore, Read Spotted Newt, in Hazard, on Plaid Elephant’s social media. Snyder reminded her followers that once the cleanup in eastern Kentucky is nearing completion and new shelves are built, anyone who wants to help can order books online through bookshop.org and designate Read Spotted Newt as their choice to receive proceeds from the sale. When the library is full and kids can also shop at Read Spotted Newt to restock their shelves at home, the whole community will be made stronger.

When Mandi Fugate Sheffel opened Read Spotted Newt in 2020, her local community was immediately supportive. Hazard residents

were thrilled to see local authors like Robert Gipe and Silas House displayed prominently on the shelves.

Sheffel said, “My dream for Read Spotted Newt was to create a space where readers and writers could come together and share their love of books. I hoped that by providing a space, a literary community would form on its own organically, like ‘if you build it, they will come.’ And I think I have seen that happen. My passion is Appalachian literature and that’s evident when you come into the bookstore. Most of my customers appreciate the fact I have a large selection of local authors because these are the books you can’t pick up at Walmart. My highest selling sections are Appalachian lit and children’s books. I think this speaks volumes about the clientele in this region. I wanted young readers to find books at Read Spotted Newt with characters that they could see themselves in. Or maybe even writers that they know personally. I fully believe you have to see to be it and that’s what I hope for young readers, especially for those who are aspiring writers.”

Carmichael’s Kids bookstore in Louisville also fosters this “see it to be it” mentality through their many in-person author events, something online retailers cannot provide. Manager Michelle Shaver reports that local authors have been wonderful for the store, including Louisville authors Amanda Driscoll (*Wally Does Not Want a Haircut*), Alex Willan (*Dragons Are the Worst!*), and Kelly Leigh Miller (*Stella, Star Explorer*). “There’s just something magical about these author events, where kids can meet someone, maybe even someone from Kentucky who has written a story they can now hold in their hands,” Shaver said. “It’s just a way to show kids that being an author, an illustrator, an artist, is really possible.”

Shaver described the store’s partnership with the Louisville Free Public library system: “We started really working with the library in 2015 and these events have just been growing ever since. We all understand the differences in what we bring to the community. There’s no ‘it should be ours or us.’ There’s just this collaboration to bring these things to Louisville. Because the library has branches in every neighborhood of Louisville, it allows us to make sure we’re able to bring opportunities to everyone. The larger events are at



More than just radio.

Trustworthy News.



Music Discovery.



Community.



Award-winning Podcast.

Middle of Everywhere

Season 3 out now! This season we're focusing on women's access to healthcare in rural communities.



See the headlines, stream music, and find the podcast at wkms.org!



Carmichael's Kids

the Main location downtown. Its central location means we're able to reach a larger audience than just what's in the Highlands neighborhood [where the store is located]."

Those author events spill over into the local schools as well. Carmichael's Kids collaborates with local school librarians and teachers to bring authors right to the classroom. And teachers get a 20 percent discount every day on all books, not just books for their classrooms. They see this as a way to show appreciation for teachers for everything that they do.

It's not hard to be loyal to a place like Carmichael's Kids, where the shelves provide much-needed access to books kids might not be able to find in the schools or local libraries. Shaver said, "We've always celebrated banned book week in September. But when I started working here in 2015, that meant I could surprise customers by telling them some of their favorite books were challenged."

But the stakes are much higher now, in the current atmosphere of book banning and censorship in public schools and libraries. Shaver said, "Carmichael's Kids wants our community to know that we intentionally stock the books all kids need so they can find their stories on the shelf. We are inclusive and want to reflect the diversity of the community we see outside our doors. Finding yourself in a story or finding your neighbor in a story is how you create compassionate, empathetic people. We are here for you."

Carmichael's Kids is there for the Louisville community in other ways, too. They maintain wish lists for community organizations that need book donations and offer a discount on these purchases. Kentucky Refugee Ministries and the

Louisville Youth Group (a non-profit supporting QTBIPOC/LGBTQIA youth) are two of the wish list organizations featured on the store's website.

But nothing beats an in-person visit, both for the children who need the books and the authors who create the stories.

George Ella Lyon highlighted the role bookstores have played in her own career, especially Blue Marble Books in Fort Thomas, Kentucky. In fact, all of the Kentucky children's book authors I interviewed mentioned this bookstore by name.

For Lyon, Blue Marble Books was a nurturing home for her stories and her soul as a young writer. She had her earliest readings there for her first picture books. Lyon says she even spent the night once when a snowstorm shut down Interstate 75. Lyon said, "They had a little bed and breakfast for visiting authors upstairs. It was like a dream—who could sleep in a bookstore?"

Heather Henson, Danville native and author of the young adult novel *Wrecked*, also had fond memories of Blue Marble: "The owners, Tina and Peter, lived above the store and would host wonderful potluck dinners for authors and illustrators and book lovers traveling through."

Louisville writer Gail Nall (*Breaking the Ice* and *Best. Night. Ever.*) had this to say: "Local children's bookstores like Blue Marble provide such incredible services to their communities. Because of their size, they're able to connect readers and authors in a way that's hard to find anywhere else. And the staff members are such a treasure—ready to recommend books and share a love for reading with every kid who walks through the door!"

The founder of Blue Marble, Tina Moore, was a pioneer in children's literature. Current General Manager Caroline Stine



Blue Marble Books

LOST RIVER SESSIONS



FALL 2023 SEASON

BE A PART OF A RECORDING!

Live!

September 21

HANCOCK & SHOUSE

WITH LOGAN MURRELL

The Capitol | Bowling Green, KY

October 19

THE BANDITOS

WITH BOWLING GREEN ROCKBAND ACADEMY

The Capitol | Bowling Green, KY

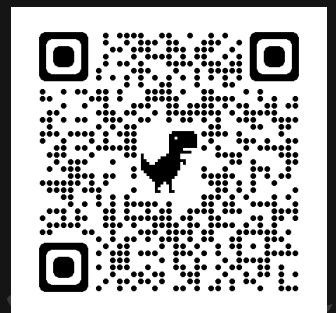
November 16

TINA ADAIR

WITH THE RAGLAND HILL BAND

The Capitol | Bowling Green, KY

Scan for more
info and tickets!



Lost River Sessions is a television, concert, and radio series launched by WKU Public Media out of Bowling Green, KY. The series explores the music scene from the roots up by featuring musical talents in the Folk, Bluegrass, and Americana genres.



Blue Marble Books

described Moore's pioneering spirit: "When Tina started the bookstore, there really was no such thing as children's bookstores... there were maybe two others in the whole nation. People in the industry thought it was ridiculous that you would start a bookstore just for kids."

But Tina Moore's vision was clear.

She made certain her shelves reflected every child, no matter their race or religion. Stine said Moore wanted her bookshop to be a place "where every child could walk inside and find themselves and their voice here." And she invited students to come see her "Goodnight, Moon" room that has made the bookstore famous among its youngest patrons.

My daughter and husband got to experience the joys of that room firsthand. My husband read the familiar first pages of Margaret Wise Brown's iconic story aloud while my daughter explored: "In the great green room . . . there was a telephone, And a red balloon, and..." The hypnotic words are made large as life. The room contains every object from the story, including the little old lady in her rocking chair (a larger-than-life stuffed rabbit), the brush, and as my daughter announced, "They even have the bowlful of mush!"

Stine explained, "Tina took one look at the two windows next to the fireplace and thought, 'This has to become the *Goodnight, Moon* room.' It was Tina's favorite because it was the first book written specifically for children, with sight words children can read on their own." The windows are hung with green and yellow striped curtains. A little mouse explores the tiny dollhouse on the floor. A paper fire fills the hearth. And the (paper) moon itself clings to the ceiling. The effect is enchanting. Kids scramble to touch and feel every surface and delight in the idea of a familiar story made real.

That delight was Moore's goal (she passed away in 2016). Her husband Peter Moore still owns the shop. And Stine has great visions for its future.

The walls are lined with outward facing books. Stine explained, "Book covers are just so gorgeous now. This is how kids discover books they love. And we encourage that connection between the cover art and reading. Graphic novels are a gateway drug into chapter books. If you can keep kids reading after age 12, they'll read forever." She talked about helping customers navigate book choices: "If a kid comes in and they're 10 years old and they fall in love with a picture book, you don't want to discourage that."

In all these shops, all over Kentucky, children are pulling picture books off the shelves and asking their parents to read to them. Teens are finding stories to help them through the growing pains of school and fitting in. Children are finding comfort and escape and love between the pages of physical books that belong to them. And being able to bring those stories home, as George Ella Lyon tells us, makes all the difference.

About the Author

After 20 years of teaching, Rebecca Brothers now writes essays, poems, short stories, and novels for adults and children. She incorporates the history and folklore of her native Kentucky in her work for a contemporary audience. She is passionate about children's literature and ensuring all kids have access to great books.

Works Cited

Alter, Alexandra, and Elizabeth A. Harris. "Some Surprising Good News: Bookstores Are Booming and Becoming More Diverse." *The New York Times*, 10 July 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/books/bookstores-diversity-pandemic.html>.

"Books in Home as Important as Parents' Education in Determining Children's Education Level." *ScienceDaily*, 21 May 2010, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100520213116.htm>.

Mostafavi, Beata. "Reading Print Books to Toddlers Is Better than e-Books." *Health News*, Medical Breakthroughs & Research for Health Professionals, Michigan Health Lab, 3 Dec. 2021, <https://labblog.uofmhealth.org/lab-notes/reading-print-books-to-toddlers-better-than-e-books>.

Munzer, Tiffany G., et al. "Parent Verbalizations and Toddler Responses with Touchscreen Tablet Nursery Rhyme Apps." *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 1 Dec. 2021, <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/6/e2021049964/183434/Parent-Verbalizations-and-Toddler-Responses-With?autologincheck=redirected>.

Schwanenflugel, Paula J, and Nancy Flanagan Knapp. "What Is It with Boys and Reading?" *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 31 Mar. 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/reading-minds/201803/what-is-it-boys-and-reading>.

Exploring Kentucky's National Votes for Women Trail



Photo courtesy of Marsha Weinstein

DR. MARY E. BRITTON
PHYSICIAN & TEACHER SPOKE
HERE AT 1887 STATE ASSOC. OF
COLORED TEACHERS MEETING
ADVOCATING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.
SPEECH IN NATIONAL NEWSPAPER.

WILLIAM G. POMEROY FOUNDATION 2018

4

By Linda Elisabeth LaPinta

*O*n July 7, 1887, Dr. Mary E. Britton, a Lexington, Kentucky, woman of color whose roles as a journalist, civil rights activist, and educator enhanced instead of eclipsed her mission to secure the vote for all women, delivered a fiery and persuasive speech in which she argued that given the right to vote, women would prove a positive moral influence on politics. She also stressed to her Danville audience, attendees of the Kentucky Colored Teachers Association Convention, that Black, as well as White, women paid taxes and thus had earned the right to cast their ballots. In addition, in 1902, Britton, who had served as president of the Lexington Woman's Improvement Club, and who had signed on as a charter member of the Ladies Orphan Society, the organization that launched Lexington's Colored Orphan Industrial Home, became Lexington's first licensed woman physician.

Late in the last decade of the 19th century and about 75 miles west of Lexington, Ida B. Wells, the nationally famous Black suffragist, delivered her “Lynching in America” speech to a Louisville, Kentucky, audience of which Georgia Nugent may have proved the impassioned investigative journalist’s most attentive listener. Based on Wells’s compelling argument regarding women’s rights, educator and nascent civic leader Georgia Nugent, together with like-minded women, founded Louisville’s Woman’s Improvement Club (WIC), which lobbied for Black women’s voting rights. Georgia began her WIC service as the organization’s secretary. Two years later, she became WIC’s president, a role she held until her death in 1940.

Like her sister Georgia with whom she lived at 845 South 6th Street, Alice Nugent taught school and championed civic causes, primarily for Black women’s rights, health, and education. In 1903 the Nugent sisters also established the Kentucky Chapter of the State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs.

And then there was Mollie, the eldest and, perhaps, quietest Nugent sister who, while working as a seamstress, listened closely and adopted her sisters’ passions. She joined and eventually chaired the executive board of the Kentucky Association of Colored Women and served on the board of managers of the Baptist Women’s Educational Convention.

Indeed, the list of Georgia, Alice, and Mollie’s achievements and affiliations evidences their extraordinary energy and lifelong commitment to social justice. Also significant to the Nugents’ story is the fact that they shared their home (added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2020) with family members, a few boarders, and distinguished leaders of the suffragist and civil rights movements. Among those luminaries stood Mary McLeod Bethune, whom Alice occasionally accompanied as Bethune executed her duties as director of Negro Affairs for the National Youth Administration.

What these four Kentucky women, whose powerful advocacy commanded positive change, have in common is this: equally determined contemporary women’s rights advocates in the Commonwealth have taken action with colleagues across the country to ensure that Britton, the Nugent sisters, and additional Kentuckians who advocated for equal rights for women are now honored by the components of a growing, evolving effort called the National Votes for Women Trail (NVWT), sponsored by the National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites (NCWHS). The NVWT website, which can be accessed at nvt.org, will take readers to the map where they can select “view map” to see the listings by state of the women and men who fought for women’s voting rights. A parallel initiative at the heart of NVWT efforts has recently erected roadside markers in many states that relate the tales of a few standout suffrage advocates, such as Britton and the Nugent sisters, in the communities in which they inspired change.

In Kentucky as well as nationally, Louisvillian Marsha Weinstein stands front and center as the champion of the suffragists’ cause. Her credentials as a former executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Women, as vice president of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Trust, Inc., as president of the NCWHS, and as the former chair of the NVWT, coupled with her contagious enthusiasm for women’s history and social justice, have secured her local and national platforms as a primary mover and shaker bent on bringing renewed attention to the triumphs of almost-forgotten suffragists.

One Weinstein admirer and colleague is former NVWT chair, Elizabeth Cady Stanton Hometown Association incorporator, and NCWHS board member Nancy Brown of Johnstown, New York, the town that was also home to Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She notes that Hillary Clinton first conceived and articulated the need for a National Votes for Women Trail, and she adds that it was Clinton who proposed the notion to Congress. “Everyone thought the trail was a great idea,” says Brown, “The bill passed, but no money was appropriated to fund it.” She adds, “However, the Collaborative continued to think this effort important. We looked at the tradition of the suffragists, unpaid workers who didn’t let anything deter them, and we forged ahead.”

Weinstein notes that she, Brown, and others created the NVWT in 2020 in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, the amendment that granted many, but not all, women the right to vote,



Mary Ellen Britton

Photo courtesy of Berea Special Collections and Archives



ROAD TO THE

19TH AMENDMENT

NUGENT SISTERS
AFRICAN AMERICAN SUFFRAGISTS
AND COMMUNITY LEADERS,
ADVOCATED FOR VOTING RIGHTS ON
LOCAL, STATE & NATIONAL LEVELS.
LIVED HERE 1919-1971.

WILLIAM G. POMEROY FOUNDATION 2022 202

Photo courtesy of Marsha Weinstein

as Native American and Asian women were still not considered US citizens. She states, “Because women’s history is rarely taught in schools or included in textbooks, we created this trail to tell the rest of the story. What has been so rewarding is learning the impact that women have had on communities and seeing how government and voting have evolved since this nation’s founding.”

Through the Collaborative, NVWT members built a network of state coordinators to identify sites across the country significant to suffrage. Their original map identified 12 sites. Today, the ever-burgeoning database of sites contains 2,419 locations.

As the number of sites grew, Coline Jenkins, Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s great-great-granddaughter, connected NVWT leaders, including Weinstein and Brown, to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation in Syracuse, New York. A Pomeroy Foundation mission, based on the founder’s childhood love of reading such signage while accompanying his father on road trips, centers on funding historical markers. Pomeroy offered the NVWT as many as 250 markers at no cost to recognize women whose involvement in the suffragette movement helped forge change.

“We relied a lot on history professors to determine what sites were selected,” Weinstein says. “Dr. Randolph Hollingsworth, an academician-turned-independent historian who, until recently, lived in Kentucky, is a suffrage expert, so we asked her to select our first women to honor. One thing that was a big priority in choosing which women to recognize was our determination to show the diversity of the Women’s Movement. We specified that one-third of the markers should represent non-White women. We wanted to know the contributions of Latinx, Black, Native

American, and Asian women as well. It has been so rewarding to see in local communities how these advocates, who had been totally neglected, are now recognized for their achievements.”

To ensure the accuracy and integrity of each historic marker, the William G. Pomeroy Foundation required NVWT marker applicants to complete a written request for each marker, which the Foundation’s own personnel then vetted.

The first roadside marker erected by the Pomeroy Foundation for the NVWT stands in Louisville. The marker recognizes the contributions of Susan Look Avery, an abolitionist, Unionist, temperance advocate, and champion of numerous social justice and financial reforms who founded the Louisville Woman’s Suffrage Association in 1889 and the Woman’s Club of Louisville in 1890. As did the Nugents, Avery opened her home to such like-minded activists and intellectuals as Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. Following her husband’s death, Avery’s activism increased when she began publishing articles in such national magazines as *Harper’s Weekly* and *The Woman’s Journal*. Avery’s advocacy for Black, as well as White, women receiving the right to vote distinguished her suffragist voice in the South.

In Richmond, Kentucky, an NVWT marker to honor abolitionist and politician Cassius Marcellus Clay’s eldest daughter, Mary Barr Clay, stands at Whitehall, the estate on which Clay and her siblings grew up. When Clay’s parents divorced in 1878, Clay’s anger and devastation at the injustice of her mother’s finding herself homeless after having overseen the family estate for 45 years, motivated her to join the women’s rights movement and impelled her to encourage her sisters to do the same.



Josephine Henry

The first Kentucky women to champion women's rights publicly, Clay became the Kentucky delegate to, and then served as the vice president of, the American Woman Suffrage Association, a position that makes her the first Kentuckian to lead a national woman's organization. She also established the Fayette County Equal Suffrage Association in 1879, the year before she created the Madison County Equal Rights Association. Her correspondence and friendships with such nationally prominent suffragettes as Alice Stone Blackwell, Lucy Stone, and Susan B. Anthony led her to bring the latter to speak in Richmond.

North of Richmond, in Covington, Kentucky, Eugenia B. Farmer, who with Mary Barr Clay's youngest sister, Laura, founded the Fayette County Equal Rights Association in Lexington, also received an NVWT marker for her tireless efforts toward, and tremendous successes in, boosting those she viewed as disenfranchised, especially women. Prior to living in Covington, Farmer spent her early years in Cincinnati and later attended Oberlin College. She married, had a son, and travelled with her career railroad husband wherever his job led him. While Eugenia and her family lived in St. Louis, the couple's son died. Her physician's succinct prescription to manage her grief proved the advice she adopted: Help others.

She did. Farmer helped found and became president of the Kenton County Equal Rights Association, and she, too, befriended Susan B. Anthony, with whom she attended 12 National Suffrage Conventions. And just as Farmer aligned herself with Laura Clay,

she also worked with Josephine Henry, another Kentucky NVWT marker recipient, to extend property rights to women.

Versailles, Kentucky, is the Bluegrass town in which Josephine Henry's marker notes the Newport, Kentucky, native and long-time Versailles resident's efforts to grant married women property rights. Indeed, Henry also worked with Laura Clay to found the Kentucky Equal Rights Association, an organization conceived to energize and expand women's suffrage in the Commonwealth. Henry's vocation, teaching at the Versailles Academy for Ladies, vied with her avocation as a prolific writer of newspaper and magazine articles and editorials, as well as of speeches.

A final Kentucky marker dedication at Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, in Lexington, causes Weinstein to reflect. "All I could feel," she states, "was excitement when seeing that young people at the event were dazzled to learn about the life of Madeline McDowell Breckinridge, a Lexingtonian who served as a prominent leader of the suffrage movement in Kentucky." Breckinridge's efforts extended from her focus on gaining women the right to vote to eliminating child labor to advocating for educational reforms to funding the creation of organizations to treat illnesses (particularly tuberculosis, from which she suffered), to developing training programs and more.

Now, in the fall of 2023, the William G. Pomeroy Foundation has provided the NVWT with its final markers. However, Weinstein, Brown, and their colleagues are planning to honor additional suffragists in Kentucky and throughout the



Laura Clay

nation with further NVWT projects. In addition to creating educational material for use in schools, organization members are collaborating on podcasts, and a book about the markers and the women they honor may be a future endeavor.

Weinstein's vision to honor Kentucky women and women worldwide who have fought to have their voices heard remains the impetus for her efforts. She concludes, "The importance of the NVWT today, more than 100 years after women won the right to vote, is that the stories of the women who worked to obtain that right reveal how hard they fought. People who read our NVWT markers are reminded to cherish and make use of their citizenship and voting rights. Everybody is responsible for the quality of our government. If more people realize how difficult it was to obtain some rights, they might value them more."

About the Author

Dr. Linda Elisabeth LaPinta has authored hundreds of magazine articles and book reviews, as well as five books published by the University Press of Kentucky. Her most recent book published in fall 2023 is *Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers: Three Centuries of Creativity, Community, and Commerce*. She lives in Louisville with her husband, Dominic, and their rough collie, Skye.



Madeline McDowell
Breckinridge

Photos courtesy of University of Kentucky Special Collections

Where there's a will, there's a way!

The future begins with you.



Write your legally valid will and create a lasting legacy with this free resource from Kentucky Humanities.

Visit

FreeWill.com/KentuckyHumanities to get started on your will today.

FREEWILL



KENTUCKY
HUMANITIES





A Forgotten Chapter



Photo courtesy of <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/filibuster-monument.htm>

In 1850 a Kentucky Regiment Invaded Cuba

By David McCormick

As the Kentucky Regiment entered Quintayros Plaza, a Spanish sentinel called out three challenges. Hearing no response from the oncoming Kentucky militiamen, he fired his weapon. This alerted the 15 soldiers defending the jail to respond with a deadly barrage that wounded a few of the Kentuckians, including their commanding officer, Colonel Theodore O’Hara, who suffered a wound to his thigh.

The Kentucky Regiment, known as the Kentucky Filibusters, was a diverse mix incorporating members from all social strata: unemployed laborers, tradesmen, store clerks, lawyers, and physicians. This was a group of hale and hearty Americans, not a ragtag bunch.

Above: A Filibuster Monument can be found at Shively City Hall, in Louisville, Kentucky. The inscription reads, “As a tribute to the valiant Kentuckians who fought for the liberation of Cuba in 1850.” This bust of Cuban independence leader José Martí (1853-95) once graced Shively Park in Louisville. No longer standing, it honored the Kentucky Regiment led by Colonel Theodore O’Hara that captured Cardenas, Cuba, in a failed 1850 attempt by General Narciso Lopez to overthrow Spanish colonial rule.



Photo courtesy of the Kansas Historical Society

Photo courtesy of Antonio de la Cova

Colonel Theodore O’Hara, then a 30-year-old newspaper editor from Frankfort, led the Kentucky Regiment in Lopez’s attempt to over-throw Spanish colonial rule in Cuba.

Colonel Theodore O’Hara’s grave is located in the Frankfort Cemetery. It was placed by the Kentucky Historical Society in 1913 and stands near the graves of Kentuckians killed in the Mexican War, whom O’Hara’s elegy, “Bivouac of the Dead,” was written to commemorate.



Of other fighting units, American and Cuban, the Kentuckians were the first to land on the shores of Cuba and performed as the van of the operation. They were the first to shed blood in in battle; their casualty rate represented one-third of the total casualty count. And these Kentuckians came close to altering the future of Cuba.

A Veteran of the Fourth Regiment, Kentucky Foot Volunteers, who served in the Mexican War, Lieutenant Colonel William Preston was approached by Cristobal Madan, a pro-independence Cuban on the matter of a Cuban invasion. Preston was tapped to form a force of between two and four thousand soldiers ready to storm Cuban shores. When Preston declined, Madan approached Colonel John Williams, Preston’s regimental commander during the Mexican-American War with the same proposition. Williams possessed the fighting credentials needed. As a member of a volunteer company from Clark County, Kentucky, he took part in both the assault on Veracruz and the fight at Cerro Gordo. Williams accepted Mandan’s proposal with one of his own; he would need \$8 million to amass a force of 4,000 filibusters. On November 13, with the deal set, Williams was named Major General of the proposed military corps. But this arrangement was short-lived. With President Taylor’s staunch support of the 1818 Neutrality Act, Mandan informed Williams the invasion of Cuba was deferred until President Taylor left office in 1853. But within days General Narciso Lopez advanced the idea of his organization’s independent invasion strategy of its own.

Three Kentuckians, who had served as officers during the Mexican conflict in 1847, the earlier mentioned Colonel Theodore O’Hara, along with Colonel Pickett, and Major Hawkins, avowed their facilities and readiness to raise a contingent of Kentuckians to aid General Lopez in his efforts to see an independent Cuba or

possibly a Cuba annexed by the United States. And what’s more these Kentucky gentlemen would foot the bill themselves. On February 28, 1850, Lopez’s second in command, General Ambrosio José Gonzalez, agreed to the proposal with O’Hara leading the van. More than 200 Kentuckians, and a number of Louisianians and Mississippians, equaled a total American force over 600 strong.

On March 12, writing from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Colonel O’Hara contacted militia Captain William Hardy, directing him to “recruit a number of men to aid in revolutionizing the Island of Cuba.” Hardy, a former sergeant in Company B, Second Regiment, of the Kentucky Foot Volunteers, had seen the elephant during the assault on Veracruz where he suffered a wound to his face. Hardy’s was a tall order: “raise a contingent of five hundred men in northern Kentucky and southwestern Ohio; procure one hundred thousand dollars, one thousand muskets, five hundred uniforms,

Note

To Americans of the 1840s and ’50s, the term filibusters referred to irregular armies of U.S. “adventurers” and the individuals who comprised them. Such bands often claimed to be acting on behalf of U.S. interests. But in most cases, filibusters acted without U.S. government authorization and sought conflicts with nations with which the United States was at peace.



one hundred swords, and one hundred kegs of gunpowder.”

Hardy employed a creative deception in order to sidestep the Neutrality Act. Lecturing in Covington, he let it be known he was assembling a company to prospect for gold in California. Hardy let it be known that time was of the essence, as the party would soon quit Kentucky for New Orleans.

Although the Kentucky contingent was to fight alongside Cuba, Separatists’ nativism reared its ugly head as O’Hara directed Hardy: “We want the best quality of young, adventurous Americans. No Dutch or foreigners of any kind, and as many Kentuckians as possible. Men who can be relied on in all emergencies.”

At the same time, O’Hara guaranteed Hardy the rank of Major. Hardy’s brother, Richardson, joined the filibuster regiment as a lieutenant. Richardson would later write a 94-page narrative of the Cuban expedition entitled, *The History and Adventures of the Cuban Expedition*.

The volunteers of Kentucky Filibuster Regiment were generally from the Blue Grass state’s northern counties: Jefferson, Shelby, Franklin, Scott, Boone, Kenton, and Campbell. These seven

counties were interconnected via rough roadways that offered egress to the Ohio River port cities of Louisville and Covington.

Aside from Colonel Theodore O’Hara, Lieutenant Colonel John Thomas Pickett, Majors Thomas Theodore Hawkins and William Hardy, others rounded out the expedition’s officer corps; they included Adjutant Henry Theodore Titus, Quartermaster Thomas P. Hoy, Surgeon Dr. Samuel S. Scott, and Chaplain Reverend John McFarland McCann. In all, six companies made up the Kentucky Regiment. The six companies were all led by captains: John Allen of Shelbyville, Company A; W. T. Knight of Shelbyville, Company B; John Allen Logan of Shelbyville, Company C; Albert W. Johnson, of Scott County, Company D; Henry H. Robinson of Covington, Company E; and Fielding C. Wilson, of Louisville, Company F. Twenty lieutenants completed the Kentucky officers.

The steamer *Martha Washington* departed after dark on April 4, 1850, from Cincinnati, enroute for New Orleans. The *Martha Washington* set in at Covington, just long enough to board 50 Kentucky volunteers. Next stop Louisville, where about 40 filibusters from that area came aboard.

When the *Martha Washington* reached Evansville, Indiana, Major Hardy encountered Colonel O’Hara with his small Frankfort contingent aboard the steamer *Saladin*. Both ships steamed south. The *Martha Washington* reached Freeport, Louisiana, just three miles to the north of New Orleans on April 11th. The filibusters went ashore and secured lodgings. The following day the *Saladin* reached New Orleans, after setting in at Henderson, Kentucky, to pick up a pair of filibusters.

On April 13th with all the filibusters amassed at New Orleans, General Lopez convened with the filibuster officers to ensure all would be set for the invasion of Cuba. The April 14, 1850, edition of the New Orleans *Picayune* ran the following: “some sort of an expedition is about to start against Cuba,” But delays in sailing from New Orleans caused dissent among the Kentuckians. Most of the 200-plus Kentuckians marched in protest to St. Charles Hotel, the officers’ headquarters. The men simmered down upon Major Hardy’s word that they were leaving soon for California. A few disheartened Kentucky filibusters returned home. This seemed an odd statement, seeing that it was the talk of the town, and of several newspapers regarding the expedition to Cuba. At 9 p.m. on April 25th, the Kentucky filibusters left aboard the barque *Georgiana* under the loud huzzahs of well-wishers. During the darkness of 2 a.m. on the 26th, a fishing boat emerged beside the *Georgiana*. Climbing on board were Kentucky filibuster officers, Major Hawkins and Lieutenant Albert W. Johnson. Secreted aboard the *Georgiana* were 250 muskets along with ten thousand ball cartridges. It’s hard to fathom that despite all the talk in New Orleans environs regarding an expedition to Cuba, 17 filibusters who had fallen for Hardy’s ruse of manning picks and shovels in the gold fields of California, not wielding muskets in Cuba,



This cartoon from the English humor magazine *Punch* expressed the dim view Europeans held of American filibustering expeditions such as General Lopez’s failed 1850 campaign.



were not happy. Colonel O’Hara faced the complainants, “the expedition was going to Cuba to engage in a revolution.” Those loath to continue to Cuba could go back to New Orleans via the tug that would carry the *Georgiana* out to open waters. This proved a hollow statement because the tug moved on so swiftly after towing the *Georgiana*, that “no opportunity was given them to get on board the tug to return home.”

On May 14th, the brigantine *Susan Loud* with 170 Louisiana Regiment filibusters, the Creole with the Mississippi Regiment of 170 men, and 20 or so tailings from Kentucky and Louisiana, and the *Georgiana* with well north of a 200-man Kentucky contingent, assembled on the leeward side of Contoy Island. It was while at Contoy that General L pez issued the following statement, those who “did not wish to go to Cuba could now have permission to return to the United States in the *Georgiana*.” The 17 who had balked had grown to 38 who boarded the *Georgiana*, but of that number only two were from Kentucky. Those returning home were treated to derogatory tongue-lashing by Captain W. T. Knight from the Creole’s deck.

The total contingent of filibusters now at about 610 (several newspapers erroneously reported the numbers well into the thousands) were packed aboard the *Creole*. An hour past midnight on May 17th, the vessel left the confines of Contoy Island for Cuba. There were things to be sorted; uniform shirts of red flannel, along with a black cloth cap with a lone-star cockade, were distributed among the volunteers. As the ship cut through the water under moonlight, weapons were distributed among the men. The 50 54-caliber “Mississippi” rifles, the best of the arms, went to the Kentucky riflemen. The Louisiana Regiment was armed with antiquated flintlock muskets, while all the officers were armed with sabers and equipped with the Jennings’ Patent Rifles, that fired lead cartridges at the staggering rate of 15 shells per minute. The majority of the enlistees fastened Bowie knives and pistols in their waist bands.

On May 19th once again, under the cover of 2 a.m. darkness, the *Creole* steamed into Cardenas Harbor. It had been slow sailing due to the poor quality of coal to feed the boilers. The filibusters were also vexed by a delay in going ashore; of all things this was due to a narrow plank that ate up over an hour of valuable time, for the entire 600-plus filibusters to alight from the *Creole*. Colonel O’Hara’s and his Kentucky Regiment were the first contingent ashore. The invasion was on! Lieutenant Colonel Pickett and two companies double-timed the mile-and-a-half trek to railroad yard to secure the locomotives. This foray was followed by Colonel O’Hara, with the remaining four companies of Kentucky filibusters, under orders of General Lopez,

to rush directly into town and seize the infantry barracks. This would prove a trying task. A mad scrambling ensued as O’Hara’s lack of direction had him marching his men in circles, that is until he ran into General Lopez who pointed out the way. O’Hara’s band had advanced two blocks towards the garrison’s barracks when “Halta! Qui vive! Que vive! was uttered by the aforementioned sentinel. O’Hara, replied, “Friends and Lopez.” Apparently not the response the Spanish sentinels wanted. This alerted the 15 Spanish soldiers to respond with a deadly barrage that let loose a violent volley with one of the rounds inflicting O’Hara’s wound to the thigh. With O’Hara down, Major Hawkins took over command of the Kentucky filibusters.

What followed was a flurry of action so intense that it was impossible to give a clear account of the battle for Cardenas. Frenzied fighting with rifle, pistol, saber, and bowie knife, was going on, on all fronts: the center square, the Governor’s mansion, the army barracks, and from roofs of buildings on the plaza. The Spanish firing from barred windows exacted a toll on the filibusters, wounding several, and the whirling lancers on horseback, only heightened the chaos. The Spanish put up a fierce resistance. But by 8 a.m. the Spanish put down their weapons in surrender. A number of those who surrendered joined Lopez’s contingent, but the Cubans would not, as they feared a Spanish retaliation against such a small American force. The filibusters set up quarters in the plaza. As they had not rested and had nothing to eat in 24 hours, their main concern now was finding food and catching a catnap. But first it was time to bury the dead; the Kentucky Regiment reported eight, killed and wounded. That toll would rise.

But their repose was short-lived. At 4 p.m. word arrived of Spanish soldiers braced with artillery on their way to Cardenas.



An 1850 drawing of the Invasion of C rdenas by Victor Patricio landaluz.

Courtesy of Brown University.



Photo courtesy of Antonio de la Cova



The present-day monument and flagpole where the filibusters landed in Cardenas, Cuba.

Fearing the enemies' larger numbers, General Lopez thought it best to remove his men to the Vuelta Abajo region of western Pinar del Rio. There "he would find a force organized and ready to support him." Lopez informed Major Hawkins of the large Spanish force advancing on Cardenas and gave orders for the Kentuckians to remain in Cardenas's Quintayos Plaza to serve as a rear guard. But there was no time for that. The Spanish had already arrived and had skulked into the Plaza unnoticed. They opened a barrage of deadly gunfire. John McCann, the Kentucky Chaplain suffered a wound to the chest. But that was not the worst of it; the Spaniards fell upon McCann with bayonets and lances. Enraged, Captain Albert Johnson ordered "fire" and Johnson noted, "all five [Spaniards] fell upon the body of McCann..." At another area of the Plaza, a contingent Spanish Lancers charged the Kentucky filibusters, and fired into their lines. At a gallop, they drove into Captain Logan's Company. Logan caught the brunt of the onslaught. He was "terrible mangled" being "shot through the calves of both legs" and was transported by his men to the Creole. Less than half the number of lancers that charged Logan's position managed to reach Captain Allen's company. Seven were killed and their commander paid dearly, "riddled with more than fifty balls."

It was a trying day for the filibusters, suffering 26 killed along with another 60 wounded. The Kentucky contingent lost an additional three officers and five enlistees and suffered another 19 wounded. Logan moved from the wounded legions, adding a number to the fatality's column, as he passed away at midnight. Hours later "his remains were sowed up in a blanket, with 30 pounds of lead at the foot, and consigned to the Florida Straits."

Heading home in defeat, the *Creole* found itself in a cat-and-mouse game on the 21st of June, with the Spanish warship, the *Pizarro*. The filibusters arrived at Key West, just 100 yards out front of the *Pizarro*.

There was a lot of blame to go around for the failure of the Cuban Expedition. One of the Kentuckians voiced that "the fatal error [was] landing at Cardenas, instead of going to Mantua in the first place..." Colonel O'Hara faulted, "the fatal consequence of an indiscriminate enlistment of men," especially the "riffraff" and "blackguard rowdies" who joined the Louisiana Regiment. Cristobal Madan queried how O'Hara "embarked in a movement having only Gen. Lopez for a leader," rather than a more capable American officer. But in the end, none of that speculation mattered. On June 30, 1850, the expedition leaders were indicted for violating the Neutrality Act. Of the Kentuckians, O'Hara, Pickett, and Hawkins were charged for their actions. Brought to trial in New Orleans three times, producing three hung juries. The Federal Government gave up and dropped the charges.

Had the expedition proved successful the men were to receive the same pay as they would if serving in the US Army. At the end of one year, or at the success of the expedition, the men would receive \$4,000 USD, or the same value of land in Cuba. Hardy explained these high inducements were offered, due to the level of danger involved. But, Howard Jones, in his work *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913*, takes issue with those numbers. He states the rewards were \$1,000 and 160 acres of land and all [the filibusters] could pillage.

About the Author

With a master's degree in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts, David McCormick was employed by the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, for several years. Now retired, he works as a freelance writer. His articles have appeared in, *Army Magazine*, *Michigan History*, *Naval History*, and *Pennsylvania Heritage*, among others.

Living Well in a Disappearing World

“Sometimes people don’t want to hear the truth because they don’t want their illusions destroyed.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche

By Ken Wolf

Sometimes it is hard to tell when we are entertaining illusions. Some of us are prone to be depressed about the sad and scary happenings in today’s world, while others of us greet each new day with joy and hope. After all, we don’t have to dwell on the war in Ukraine or mass shootings. We can focus instead on the joy of children playing or on the flowers that bloom after a rain.

But there is a third choice, one called “tragic optimism” by cognitive scientist and psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman. A tragic optimist sees “the inevitable tragedies of human existence” while trying not to be overwhelmed by them or replace them with a false positivity.

I recently read an article (*New Yorker*, July 3, 2023) by science writer Elizabeth Kolbert. This piece, entitled “A Trillion Little Pieces: How Plastics are Poisoning Us,” challenges the commitment of even the staunchest tragic optimist, which is the kind of person I try to be.

Kolbert describes how we all breathe in tiny particles of microplastics or microfibers that move from our lungs into our blood stream. We don’t yet know the full consequences of this ingestion, but it exists everywhere. Several years ago, according to Kolbert, researchers in Germany and Austria even found microplastics in a newborn baby’s first poop. Think about what this means for the future.

The problem with plastic poisoning is worldwide. Microplastics have been found in the Mariana Trench, 36 thousand feet below sea level. And we have heard of “The Great Pacific Garbage Patch,” floating debris that covers 600,000 square miles between California and Hawaii.

Our inability so far to address this problem is troubling. We try to recycle some of the plastics we encounter but we cannot be sure that some of them are not treated as garbage and buried, shredded, or burned, creating even more toxins on the planet.

To complicate this picture even further, we know that plastics are only part of our problem. When we add the effects of climate change—the fires, floods, melting ice as well as the more frequent and less predictable natural disasters—it is easy to see that the world we live in is disappearing.

Only within the last several years have we heard TV

meteorologists actually use the words “climate change” to explain the causes of some of our weather disasters. It is still rare for commercial TV to schedule shows that make climate change their chief concern. Perhaps some of the first responders shows could be replaced by dramas that put environmental problems front and center.

Given all this, what are we tragic optimists to do? International efforts to slow carbon emissions have largely failed, and each year we warm a bit more than in previous years. While we lament the fact that our grandchildren will live on a very different planet, Americans spend far more time worrying about Donald Trump and Joe Biden than they do trying to avert a possible extinction of the human race within the next few centuries.

We cannot change human nature and suddenly become less short-sighted, less selfish and expect a sudden planet-wide human response to the dangerous direction in which we are headed. However, we are perhaps at the point where the problem of climate change has finally become less abstract and therefore more urgent.

Kolbert ends her *New Yorker* article by calmly noting that, since we “are poisoning our kids, ourselves and our ecosystem, contemporary life may need to be rethought. The question is what matters to us, and whether we’re willing to ask ourselves that question.”

I am confident that we will ask that question, but only do so when global warming forces us to dramatically change how we live. It is probably when our grandchildren or great-grandchildren are in charge that this will happen.

Their job will be more difficult because we have not acted sooner and let the problem get so bad.

But they will respond! That is why I am a tragic optimist.

About the Author

Dr. Ken Wolf spent 40 years teaching European and world history at Murray State University, retiring in 2008. During his career he also served as a dean in the Kentucky Governor’s Scholars Program and was a founder of the Commonwealth Honors Academy at Murray State. He lives with his wife Deanna in Murray; they have three adult children. He now spends his time writing short essays on politics and religion/spirituality in an attempt to make “good trouble.”

A Kentucky Kind of Story



Photo courtesy of Georgia Green Stamper

By Georgia Green Stamper

Like the fellow in the old John Denver song, I too slept in a high, wide feather bed at my grandmother's house. Stuffed with the wings of angels, four, maybe more, feather beds filled her barracks-like extra room tucked under the low rafters. Up there so near the roof, even a child might touch heaven, and so maybe this *was* a cloud, I thought, as I settled into the bed's celestial softness. It would billow up around me—bundling me—and carry me through the night.

The soft comfort of those beds, however, was the only hint of luxury I remember in her hardscrabble home. Yet, she loved that old house where they had raised their children—the monument to her and my grandfather's hope and perseverance, to their

successful ascent into the home and landowning middle class. I tell their story here, not because it is unusual but because it is not. It is a quintessential Kentucky story re-told by thousands of other voices throughout the rural history of the state.

Born in Owen County in 1877 and 1879 respectively, Frank Green and Rushia Noel married in 1903. He was tall, fair, and red-headed. She was petite with an olive complexion and waist-

Above: Author Georgia Green Stamper's paternal grandparents, Rushia and Frank Green, and their seven children, circa 1925.

length dark hair that she pulled up into a tidy bun. He was a storyteller with a keen sense of humor. She was quiet but laughed easily and often. He was a Baptist, she a Campbellite.

Rushia was a one-room schoolteacher. Frank, bright as a new penny, had dropped out of school after the third grade to work and help his widowed mother feed the family. Some think Rushia taught Frank how to read. Regardless of when he learned, he would read the Louisville *Courier-Journal* word for word every day of his life until he died at the age of 93 and a half.

Both descended from great-grandfathers who had fought in the American Revolution and then migrated into the Kentucky wilderness in the 1780s. By the 1860s, however, their families reflected Kentucky's fractured political landscape. In the state that gave America both Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln, Frank's father had fought for the Confederacy, and Rushia's people sided with the Union.

But in 1903, at the dawn of the 20th century, the young couple looked only toward the future. They began their marriage with hope and a feather bed. Both Frank and Rushia had been plunged into near destitution—he at age 8, she at 13—by the untimely deaths of their fathers. Smart and hardworking, they aimed to climb out of poverty together and give their children more opportunities than they themselves had been given.

Within three years, however, they would bury their beautiful two-year-old Laurel. Had the boy eaten poison pokeberries—Rushia never stopped questioning and blaming herself. And stoic Frank would carry flowers to his son's grave every Decoration Day for the next 64 years. They would bring seven more children into the world, but they never got over losing Laurel.

And for the first 15 years of their marriage, they lived with his mother in her tiny house on Brushy Creek, raising tobacco on someone else's land, sharing the modest profit the burley leaf yielded with the farm owner. They were frugal, though, and by 1918, they were finally able to make a down payment on a good Owen County farm at the top of the Sparta hill.

The sellers had agreed to vacate the farm's house by March first but, offering one excuse and then another, didn't leave. Frank came in one day in May, and said, "Rushia, pack up. We're moving in whether they go or not." I don't know how smoothly that went, but no one was shot, and from that day forward, Frank and Rushia lived in a home they owned.

By the time my memory begins, the story-and-a-half house was over one hundred years old. Built of logs that had been covered with weatherboard, it was an example of what historians call the Double Pen Floor Plan common in early Kentucky. It consisted of two over-sized rooms plus an upstairs attic area reached by steep steps wedged into a corner.

At some point in time, a one-story extension had been added across the front. This created an entry porch and a third downstairs room that became the kitchen. There, for the better part of four decades, Rushia cooked three meals a day on a wood-burning

cookstove and served them on her long, oil-cloth-covered table.

On my mother's first visit to her future in-laws', she watched Rushia scramble up a tree near the house to pick apples for the pie she'd bake for supper. That image defines their "farm to table" way of life. While tobacco was ever the cash crop, Frank and Rushia mostly fed their family with food they produced off the land. Buying only staples from the Sparta grocery, they grew all their own vegetables and fruit, canning and preserving them. Their cows provided milk, their hens eggs. Poultry and pigs raised on the farm completed their diet.

By my time, the house's rough floors were covered with flowered linoleum and its fireplaces replaced by coal-hungry stoves that squatted in each of the two large rooms downstairs. Except for special occasions, however, the parlor was closed off; frugality allowed heat only in the "all-purpose" room adjacent to the kitchen.

This early version of a modern family room was furnished with a casual sofa and chairs, the radio, and by the 1950s, a television. But it also doubled as Frank and Rushia's bedroom—a common arrangement in that time and place. They shoved their bed into a corner so Frank could tend the fire throughout the night. The seven children slept in the low hung space upstairs which was marginally heated by a register cut in the floor directly over the downstairs stove.

The Green youngsters were bright, and Frank and Rushia pushed education to them as the way upward in life. And so, one by one, the children graduated from high school—no small achievement during the Great Depression. Several went on to college, all went to work and led productive lives with nary a black sheep in the family.

Frank became a member of the school board and was an election poll officer. Rushia joined the new Sparta Women's Club. They paid off the mortgage on the farm and boxed in a side porch to install a bathroom. Frank bought Rushia an electric range for the kitchen.

And then one day in 1955, Rushia laid down and never got up again. Frank would live on, alone, for another fifteen years, mowing his own yard until the end.

Now, the house is gone, too, and only a handful are left who remember ever sleeping in its old feather beds. Yet, I believe that the reach of my grandparents' home—their hope for themselves and their children and the future—continues to carry and intangibly support their now hundreds of living descendants. These include lawyers, doctors, nurses, scientists, teachers, farmers, business executives, policemen, ministers, artists, secretaries, even a writer—seed that may endure until the end of time.

About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a Kentucky writer whose published works include *Butter in the Morning* and *You Can Go Anywhere*. Her newest book, *Small Acreages*, is now available from Shadeland-house Modern Press. She is a graduate of Transylvania University.



KENTUCKY HUMANITIES
 206 East Maxwell Street
 University of Kentucky
 Lexington, KY 40506-0315
 859.257.5932
 kyhumanities.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 PERMIT NO. 51
 LEXINGTON, KY

SPARK!

PLACES *of*
 INNOVATION

Touring Kentucky

September 9 - October 14, 2023

Boyle County Public Library
 Danville

October 21 - November 25, 2023

Owensboro Museum of Science & History
 Owensboro

December 2 - January 13, 2024

Capital City Museum
 Frankfort

January 20 - February 24, 2024

Gateway Regional Arts Center
 Mt. Sterling

March 2 - March 30, 2024

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill
 Harrodsburg



KENTUCKY
 HUMANITIES



Smithsonian

With thanks to



The exhibit has already made stops at the Boone County Public Library and the Bluegrass Heritage Museum.

kyhumanities.org