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*Remembering African American Men
of Kentucky's Equine Industry*

Page 10

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10

Remembering African American Men of Kentucky's Equine Industry

By Yvonne Giles

17

The Mountain Missionary The Reverend Miles Saunders

By Stuart W. Sanders



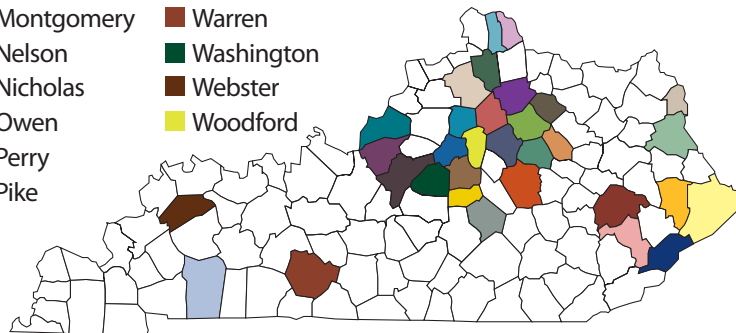
24

A Giant Love Story How the Tallest Couple in the World Met and Married

By Richard Crowe

In this issue

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
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Characters of the Commonwealth

The changing of seasons, brilliantly showcased by the abundant shades of autumn colors, is a perfect correlation to the cultural variety found in Kentucky.

As host of the 2015 Breeders' Cup, Kentucky has a unique opportunity to show why we are "the horse capital of the world." Hosting this prestigious event also allows the Commonwealth the chance to showcase more than our love of horses. With the horse racing world's eyes on Kentucky, they have the opportunity to discover our rich history while enjoying great music, our trademark beverages, Kentucky stories, and most importantly, Kentucky hospitality.

We all know of the huge crowds and enthusiasm that come with racing at Churchill Downs and Keeneland today, but how did Kentucky grow to become a destination for the world's finest thoroughbred racing? Who were some of the early contributors to the horse racing industry in Kentucky? Yvonne Giles shares with us the stories of some of the African American men involved in the early days of horse racing in the Commonwealth. These men became famous jockeys, trainers, grooms, and exercise riders, building the legacy of horse racing in Kentucky. Her article is on page 10.

Kentucky's own George Edward "Eddie" Arcaro was one of the most successful and colorful American jockeys of all time. Besides winning five Kentucky Derbies, Arcaro also holds the record for most Triple Crown riding wins. James Claypool shares the story of the intriguing Newport native on page 5.

Kentucky's colorful characters aren't limited to the equine industry. Born in 1837, Letcher County's Martin Van Buren Bates grew to be 7 feet 9 inches tall. After working as a teacher, fighting in the Civil War, and being the main attraction in the traveling circus, Bates married Anna Haning Swan, a 7 foot 11 inch woman from Nova Scotia. How did the world's tallest couple meet and fall in love? Find out in Richard Crowe's article on page 24.

And while few people are likely familiar with the Reverend Miles Saunders, the Mountain Missionary is definitely worth discovering. Stuart Sanders shares the story of the pastor of Springfield Presbyterian Church who was referred to by one writer as "one of the most prominent and gifted clergymen of the state of Kentucky." Read about Saunders and his ministry on page 17.

We invite you to enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* and the stories we tell both in print and online at kyhumanities.org. We want to hear your Kentucky stories as well. If you have a story to share, please contact our editor, Marianne Stoess, Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu.



Ben Chandler

Executive Director

Kentucky Humanities Council

Ben Chandler

Yes, they too were Kentuckians

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

Eddie Arcaro

By James C. Claypool

1916-1997 • Newport, Kentucky

George Edward “Eddie” Arcaro was one of the most colorful and successful American jockeys of all time. When competing in a race, he asked for and gave no quarter, a survival technique he developed while riding during the rough and tumble era of the 1930s. In those days, horse racing rules were lax and jockeys rode at their own peril. Arcaro not only survived, but was soon setting new standards for riders. He won his first Kentucky Derby in 1938 aboard Larwin and eventually four more, establishing the current Derby record of five riding victories, which he shares with jockey Bill Hartack. Arcaro also holds the record for the most Triple Crown riding victories (17) which includes his five Kentucky Derbies, six victories in the Preakness Stakes and six wins in the Belmont Stakes. “Fast Eddie,” as Arcaro was sometimes called, was fearless and fiery. In 1942, in an incident in which Arcaro knocked jockey Vincent Nordase over the racetrack’s inside rail, Arcaro was called before the stewards to explain what had happened. He could have gotten off with a light suspension, since Nordase had committed the first foul. But instead of apologizing, Arcaro responded, “What I really meant to do was kill that Cuban SOB.” Arcaro was suspended from riding for a year at the peak of his career.

Arcaro was raised in both Newport and Covington, Kentucky, as his father, an Italian immigrant, frequently changed jobs. Eventually, his family owned a bar in Erlanger, Kentucky. While the slender five-foot, three-inch Arcaro was caddying golf at Highland Country Club in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, a horseman suggested that he should try to become a jockey. Dropping out of school at age 13, Eddie began galloping horses at the original Latonia Racecourse in Covington, earning \$20 a month and receiving little encouragement from trainers. At age 15, he rode his first race, illegally, at Bainbridge Park near Cleveland, Ohio, and rode in a few other races at Latonia. Then he stowed away on a freight train headed to Agua Caliente Racecourse in Tijuana, Mexico, where there were few rules and a rider’s age did not matter.

Arcaro lost 45 races before riding his first winner, a claiming-level (lower-level) horse named Eagle Bird, at Agua Caliente on January 14, 1932. Now 16 years old and finally able to ride

legally, Eddie returned to the United States and quickly became the top apprentice at the Fair Grounds Racecourse in New Orleans. He moved to Chicago, where he was signed to his first racing contract by Warren Wright, owner of the powerful Calumet Farm racing stable. A contract rider for either Calumet or Greentree Stables throughout his career, Arcaro compiled an astounding riding record. In his 30-year career, from 1931 until his retirement in November 1961, Arcaro had 24,092 mounts and won 4,779 races, a winning clip of 19.8 percent. In addition to his 17 Triple Crown victories, he won 10 Jockey Club Gold Cups, four Metropolitan Handicaps and eight Suburban Handicaps.

The only two-time winner of American horse racing’s Triple Crown, first on Whirlaway in 1941 and then aboard Citation in 1948, Arcaro was the nation’s leading money winner six times, received the prestigious George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award in 1953, and retired with what was, at the time, record purse earnings of \$30,039,534. He was inducted into the Racing Hall of Fame in 1958.

There are many stories related to Arcaro’s riding career that reflect a set of standards of times gone by in horse racing. On one occasion, Arcaro was sitting in the jockey’s room at a racetrack in the Chicago area when a stranger approached and asked Eddie what he thought about his mount’s chances in the last race. Eddie told the stranger he would win, which he did. Afterward, the stranger handed Eddie \$500. This happened four more times, but when Eddie discovered that the stranger was Al Capone, he decided to stop giving out information. After his retirement, Arcaro frequently served as a race expert and commentator on television. He retired to Miami, Florida, and played golf daily, sometimes joining a foursome that included baseball great Joe DiMaggio. Arcaro, who died in 1997 of liver cancer, is still considered one of thoroughbred racing’s all-time greats — he certainly was one of the most colorful characters in the sport.

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



Kentucky Humanities Council partners with the Kentucky Book Fair

The Kentucky Book Fair is the Commonwealth's premier literary event and one of the largest of its kind in the nation. Each year the Kentucky Book Fair attracts writers of all genres and patrons of all walks of life in a celebration of shared passion and mutual interest — the importance and promotion of writing and reading.

The Kentucky Book Fair seeks to honor the profession of writing in the form of a one-day celebration, provide a format for authors to meet their reading public, and to raise money through the sale of books.

Each year more than 150 authors attend the Kentucky Book Fair, prepared to sign their latest books and meet the patrons. In addition to the selling of books, the informal atmosphere encourages discussion and conversation among all of those in attendance.

Net proceeds from the Kentucky Book Fair fund grants to Kentucky school and public libraries for local book purchasing and other literacy-related causes, a total that now exceeds \$375,000.

Operated by a nonprofit independent board of volunteers, the 34th Annual Kentucky Book Fair is sponsored by the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc., the *State Journal*, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, the University Press of Kentucky, and Joseph-Beth Booksellers.

In addition to Saturday's event, the Kentucky Book Fair will also host the 5th Annual Kids & Teen Day on Friday, November 13th.

Six Kentucky public schools received transportation grants from the Kentucky Book Fair, allowing their students to attend Kids & Teen Day. Grant funds are provided through a generous contribution by Graviss McDonald's Restaurants and proceeds from the 2014 Kentucky Book Fair.

Transportation grants were awarded to the following schools:

- Carr Creek Elementary School (Knott County)
- Carter County Public Library & West Carter Middle School
- Garrard County High School
- Olmstead Academy South (Jefferson County)
- Owen County High School
- Pleasure Ridge Park High School (Jefferson County)

Kentucky Book Fair Kids & Teen Day

Friday, November 13, 2015 • 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Frankfort Convention Center • Frankfort, KY



34th Annual Kentucky Book Fair

Saturday, November 14, 2015

9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Frankfort Convention Center
Frankfort, KY**

Happy 50th Anniversary NEH

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States.

Since 1965, the Endowment has opened new worlds of learning for the American public with noteworthy projects such as:

- 7,000 books, 16 of which have won Pulitzer Prizes, and 20 of which have received the Bancroft Prize
- *The Civil War*, the landmark documentary by Ken Burns viewed by 38 million Americans
- The Library of America editions of novels, essays, and poems celebrating America's literary heritage
- The United States Newspaper Project, which cataloged and microfilmed 63.3 million pages of historic newspapers, paved the way for the National Digital Newspaper Program and its digital repository, Chronicling America
- Annual support for 56 states and territories to help support some 56,000 lectures, discussions, exhibitions and other programs each year



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FIFTY YEARS

In Search of the Humanities

A Sense of Where You Are

By James Duane Bolin

There he stood. Under a basket at Princeton University's Dillon Gymnasium. In his basketball practice uniform. Still sweating from a demanding workout. Now he caught questions, not basketballs, passed to him by acclaimed writer John McPhee. On assignment for *The New Yorker*, McPhee interviewed the Princeton all-American for a lengthy piece centered on his senior year at Princeton, a year in which he led the nation in scoring and secured a Rhodes Scholarship to study history and political science for two years at Oxford University in England.

Bill Bradley fielded questions just as he played basketball, effortlessly and with grace. In the early 1960s, before Pistol Pete, before Dr. J, before Air Jordan, and long before John Wall and LeBron James, Bradley's style was decidedly straightforward and unexaggerated. "He dislikes flamboyance," McPhee wrote, "and, unlike some of basketball's greatest stars, has apparently never made a move merely to attract attention."

"Nonetheless," according to McPhee, "he does make something of a spectacle of himself when he moves in rapidly parallel to the baseline, glides through the air with his back to the basket, looks for a teammate he can pass to, and, finding none, tosses the ball into the basket over one shoulder, like a pinch of salt." McPhee concluded that the shot "has the essential characteristics of a wild accident, which is what many people stubbornly think they have witnessed until they see him do it for the third time in a row."



A graduate of Princeton, Bill Bradley went on to become a Rhodes Scholar, an Olympic gold medalist, a professional basketball player, a U.S. Senator, an author, and a candidate for President of the United States. In 1982, he was elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame.

The unorthodox, over-the-shoulder shot had no name. Bradley said that “he had never heard a name for it, but that he had seen Oscar Robertson, of the Cincinnati Royals, and Jerry West, of the Los Angeles Lakers, do it, and had worked it out for himself.” Yes, he had worked it out for himself. Now, of course, after hours and hours of practice, Karl-Anthony Towns, Willie Cauley-Stein, Terry Rozier, and Cameron Payne have all worked the shot out for themselves too.

On that day, however, while answering McPhee’s questions, Bradley insisted that the maneuver “is a much simpler shot than it appears to be, and, to illustrate, he tossed a ball over his shoulder and into the basket while he was talking and looking [McPhee] in the eye.” McPhee retrieved the ball and handed it back to the Princeton star.

“When you have played basketball for a while, you don’t need to look at the basket when you are in close like this,” Bradley explained as he flipped the ball over his shoulder again cleanly through the hoop. Eventually, he said, “You develop a sense of where you are.” *You develop a sense of where you are.*

Since my teenage years, playing basketball at Webster County High School in Kentucky’s Western Coal Fields and then at Belmont University in Nashville, I have respected and admired Bill Bradley, first for his exploits on the hardwood and now for everything that he has done since he laced up his high top Converse for the last time. After graduating from

Princeton, he turned down a lucrative contract with the New York Knickerbockers to study at Oxford. He returned from England to play for the New York Knickerbockers, winning an NBA championship and writing *Life on the Run*, a poignant memoir about the grueling, exotic life of an NBA star. Upon his retirement from professional basketball he ran successfully for a New Jersey Senate seat, and then in 2000, he ran unsuccessfully for the presidency of the United States. He has continued to write books about what it means to live a life in service to others.

As a teacher of history and as an enthusiastic supporter of the Kentucky Humanities Council, what I admire most about Bradley is that he continues to insist that the only way to develop “a sense of where we are” in the world, in the whole scheme of things, is to foster a deep appreciation of the humanities — the history, the literature, the philosophy, the cultural heritage — of what it means to be human and humane. How else can we make a difference in this world? What is our niche? How can we make our lives count for something beyond ourselves? Only by developing a keen “sense of where we are” in our communities, in our state, in our nation, in our world, are we worth anything as a basketball player or as a citizen of the Commonwealth.

James Duane Bolin no longer plays basketball, but he teaches history at Murray State University and is a member of the board of directors of the Kentucky Humanities Council.





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March 2017 - December 2018

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TELLING KENTUCKY'S STORY

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Image courtesy of Keeneland Library

Remembering African American Men of Kentucky's Equine Industry

By Yvonne Giles

“In current times, the idea of African Americans being involved in the equine industry is very farfetched. Many have a difficult time imagining that Blacks were essentially responsible in catapulting the sport to become the phenomenon it is today. The extraordinary lives of these amazing athletes are slowly being uncovered and revealing astonishing information.”

— Marisa Williams, 2011



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African Americans dominated as trainers, exercisers, groomsmen, and jockeys in the early days of the sport of flat racing. In his book, *The Great Black Jockeys*, Ed Hotaling made us more aware of how integral they were to the success of thoroughbred breeding and racing in the United States from mid-1600 to the early 1900s.

Pioneer settlers who emigrated into what would become Kentucky did not let the perils of establishing a town interfere with their favorite pastime — horse racing. In Lexington, as soon as the area had been cleared of cane, trees, and stumps they began racing their horses down the middle of Main Street. Town trustees finally banned such activity in 1787. At least three small public race courses were built in various locations in Lexington. Within 10 years, breeders formed a Jockey Club to “improve the breed of the horse.” The only way to showcase a superior thoroughbred was to race. In 1826, the newly formed Kentucky Association purchased 10 acres in east Lexington to build a larger more permanent racetrack. It remained open from 1828 until 1933, even during the years of the Civil War. The track, with all its stables and barns, eventually occupied 65 acres.

And who were the men who worked to breed, train, groom, exercise, and race the thoroughbreds? African Americans who were enslaved and unnamed.

It is known that Howard D. Williams, Willie Chambers, William Walker, Monroe Kelso, James Carter, M. Jones, William Henry, Raleigh Colston, Jr., Dick Jones, Peter Masterson, James Houston, Cornelius Stradford, and Oliver Lewis were the 13 African American jockeys riding in the inaugural Kentucky Derby in 1875. William Lakeland and Cyrus Holloway, both natives of England, were the two white jockeys.



Image courtesy of Keeneland Library

In 1875, jockey Oliver Lewis won the inaugural Kentucky Derby riding Aristides.



Image courtesy of Keeneland Library, Leach

In 1877, William Walker rode Baden-Baden to victory in the third Kentucky Derby.

From 1875 through 1902, African Americans won 16 of the Kentucky Derby’s first 28 races — a 57 percent win percentage. Kentuckians Oliver Lewis, James “Soup” Perkins, Isaac and Garrett Davis Lewis, Jimmy Winkfield, William Walker, Erksline Henderson, and Isaac Murphy are counted among the winners.

Oliver Lewis had the distinction of being the first winner, having guided the thoroughbred Aristides, owned by H. P. McGrath and trained by Ansel Williamson, an African American trainer, to the finish line. McGrath’s thoroughbred breeding farm was located on Newtown Pike, at the site of what is now the University of Kentucky’s Coldstream Research Campus.

Lewis was born in Fayette County to Elanora and Goodson Lewis around 1856. He married Lucy Wright of Athens, a community just outside Lexington. The family of 10 children remained in Lexington, living on what is now Ballard Avenue, until after 1880, when they moved to northern Kentucky. Eventually they moved from Covington to Cincinnati where Lewis became a bookie. When he died in 1924, his remains were returned to Lexington for burial in the family plot in African Cemetery No. 2. The monument identifies his mother and brother, William. Oliver’s name was not inscribed. In 2010, Lexington honored him by naming the extension of Newtown Pike across East Main Street, Oliver Lewis Way. As one of the events during the Breeder’s Cup this year, a sculpture will be dedicated at the bridge that links Oliver Lewis Way to Versailles Road.



**James “Soup” Perkins won the Kentucky Derby at age 15.
He rode Halma to victory in 1895.**

But what of the hundreds of other men who were jockeys, trainers, groomsmen, and eventually owners?

Research of those buried at African Cemetery No. 2 identified 80 men who were involved in the horse industry. University students researched the data base of death certificates to identify those employed in the racing industry. Archive panels were placed throughout the cemetery marking the grave sites of individuals who had done significant work in the horse racing industry. (A list can be found at africancemeteryno2.org.)

Most notable of the 15 trainers buried on site is Abraham Perry, who conditioned Joe Cotton for the 1885 Kentucky Derby, Tennessee Derby, and Coney Island Derby. Perry was born in Woodford County in 1842. He began his career with Frank Harper. At the time when he trained Joe Cotton, he was employed by Williams and Owings. Perry married Clara Taylor of Lexington and began housekeeping on what was then Vertner Avenue, now Eastern Avenue. His house still stands. Perry died in 1908.

In 1895, James “Soup” Perkins was one of the youngest, at the age of 15, to win the Kentucky Derby. His father, John Jacob, and brothers, Frank and William, were famous trainers. Living adjacent to the Kentucky Association track allowed James to return home every day for lunch. When his friends asked what he had eaten, he always replied “soup.” Affectionately, he became known as “Soup” Perkins.

In his first season, Perkins was a very successful jockey. He broke all previous records at the Kentucky Association track by

riding five winners in a single day. Records show in 1893, that he was mounted in 26 races — 16 of which he won, five he finished in second place and three he finished third. He was 13 years old at the time. Fleishmann Stables hired him at a base salary of \$4,000, which would be equivalent to \$89,400 today. With his winnings, he built a two-story brick home for his mother and siblings which still stands on North Upper Street in Lexington.

When James Perkins suddenly died while in Canada in 1911, his wife, “Frankie,” had his remains returned to Lexington for burial. The monument in the cemetery identifies his mother, sister, grandmother, and brother, Frank. Neither James’ nor his father’s names were engraved on the family monument.

Tommie Britton, another rising star, began riding when he was a teenager under the guidance of Eli Jordan, trainer for Williams and Owings stables. He, too, began his career at the Kentucky Association track in Lexington. Britton’s parents, Henry and Laura Britton, were free blacks who owned property on Mill Street in what is now Gratz Park. His father was a barber who had a shop at the Old Broadway Hotel and the Phoenix Hotel in downtown Lexington. Laura, his mother, was a seamstress. The parents moved the family of six children to Berea following the Civil War, so they could obtain an education. Older sisters Julia and Mary Britton were successful students but unfortunately the untimely deaths of their parents in 1874, cut short the sibling’s education. They returned to Lexington to once again live in the family home on Mill Street. While the sisters pursued careers in music and education, Tommie chose to pursue a career in the thoroughbred racing industry. He was the winning jockey in the Tennessee Derby in 1891 and 1892 and the 1891 Kentucky Oaks. He also won five races at Latonia in 1895.



**Isaac Murphy claimed victory at the Kentucky Derby
three times — 1884, 1890, and 1891.**



Image courtesy of Keeneland Library, Cook

Jimmie Winkfield won the Kentucky Derby in 1901 with His Eminence, and again in 1902 riding Alan-a-Dale.

In 1891, Britton married Pearl Spiller Jackson under a “floral horseshoe” at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Lexington. They were parents of one son, Tommie, Jr. who died at the age of three, in 1901. His grave site is marked in the cemetery, but that of his father, Tommie, Sr., who also died in 1901, and his mother, Pearl, who died in 1904, are not.

Two markers were constructed in 1909 by men working in the industry who wanted to pay tribute to the jockeys they had known. It is speculated that one of the markers was erected at the site of Tommie Britton’s burial location. The other at the site of Isaac Murphy’s burial.

Isaac Murphy was born in January 1861, in the central Bluegrass. Biographers have listed his birth in Clark, Franklin, or Fayette counties. In 1869, his mother, America Murphy Burns, gave deposition in support of request for a widow’s military pension benefit. She stated that Isaac had been born in Bourbon County, where she and Jerry Burns, aka Skillman, had married in December 1859. Her husband escaped slavery to join the United States Colored Troop in June 1864, mustering at Camp Nelson. Within 30 days, Jerry Burns had died at the camp hospital of “remittent fever” and was buried at the cemetery near the military camp. According to the 1870 census, America and her son were living in Lexington with her mother, Annie Murphy, and siblings, James and Annie. America was successful in her application, having received back benefits which she used to purchase a home.



Image courtesy of Keeneland Library

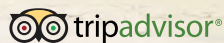
Isaac Murphy rode Salvator in the Great \$10,000 Match Race at Sheepshead Bay on June 25, 1890.

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Unfortunately, she died of colon cancer in August, 1879. She did not live to witness Isaac's marriage to Lucy Carr in 1883 or his purchase of a home on East Third Street in 1886. She missed seeing her son become a successful jockey and a gentleman who was well known for his honesty and integrity in an industry that was fraught with greed, manipulation, and racism.

Over the years, the Keeneland Library has become the repository of archive records that detail thoroughbred racing's history which includes the involvement of African Americans in the horse racing industry. In the 1960s, Frank Borries, a sports writer, spent many hours searching through records as he was trying to locate the grave site of Isaac Murphy. Murphy was famous for having won four of five American Derby races, five Latonia Derby races, and three Kentucky Derby races, two of which were won in consecutive years. Murphy kept his own records and is said to have won 44 percent of the races in which he competed, a record that most of the industry experts acknowledge and accept. In 1955, Murphy became the first Kentuckian and African American jockey to be inducted into thoroughbred racing's National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame.

Borries spent several years trying to locate Murphy's grave after a news article published in 1961 indicated that Murphy had been buried in Mobile, Alabama, upon his death in 1896. Borries finally connected with Eugene Webster, who located the grave site in Lexington in old No. 2 Cemetery, now known as African Cemetery No. 2. Borries took photographs of the location as well as the removal of Murphy's remains and grave marker in 1967. His remains were placed at the grave site/memorial to thoroughbred Man o' War on Huffman Mill Road. When the Kentucky Horse Park opened in 1976, both horse and jockey were reinterred. Murphy's grave marker was donated to the Kentucky Derby Museum at Churchill Downs, where it remains. Betty Earle Borries, Frank's widow, published his work in 1988 — *Isaac Murphy: Kentucky's Record Jockey*.

The International Museum of the Horse at the Kentucky Horse Park has always focused on educating the public about the thoroughbred industry. With their changing exhibits, visitors have enjoyed and been informed since they opened their doors in 1976. Their current gallery exhibit, "Treasures of the Bluegrass," highlights African Americans involved in the horse racing industry. Featured is a youthful photo of William Walker, winner of the 1877 Kentucky Derby, Jimmy Winkfield, winner of consecutive Kentucky Derby races in 1901 and 1902, and a painting of Isaac Murphy guiding Salvator to the finish line in the 1890 Suburban Handicap. The park also has a memorial erected to the only African American jockey buried on site — Isaac Murphy.

Even though Murphy and other African Americans are long gone from the thoroughbred racing industry, they have not been forgotten. People are curious and constantly inquire about the lives of the jockeys, trainers, groomsmen, and owners and wonder why blacks are not as involved in the racing industry today.

Celebrating Isaac Murphy

Dr. Pellom McDaniels, III, the newest biographer of Isaac Murphy, spent a number of years traveling from the Midwest to Kentucky researching Murphy's life and how it was impacted by the events of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow Legislation. *The Prince of Jockeys: The Life of Isaac Burns Murphy* was released in 2014 by the University Press of Kentucky. Dr. McDaniels, faculty curator of African American collections and assistant professor of African American studies at Emory University, received a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship to complete his studies.

In April 2015, the Keeneland Library hosted Dr. McDaniels' week-long visit to Lexington in promotion of his book. Becky Ryder, Keeneland Librarian, coordinated events and activities involving staff at the University of Kentucky, staff at the International Museum of the Horse, board members of African Cemetery No. 2, board members of the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden, Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, and the staff of the Lyric Theatre. Dr. McDaniels graciously talked to school groups, university students, and shared his knowledge.

After the visit in the spring, the organizations, with the addition of Race for Education, African American Genealogy Group of Kentucky, and Fayette County School coordinators, continued to meet and formulate plans to "Celebrate Isaac Murphy" in the week prior to the Breeder's Cup. Dr. McDaniels agreed to return to Lexington to continue sharing his knowledge about the "most dynamic jockey of his era," Isaac Burns Murphy.

An exhibit honoring the life of Isaac Murphy is currently on display in Lexington:

The Prince of Jockeys: The Life of Isaac Burns Murphy
Open to the public through December 11, 2015
Lyric Theatre Gallery, 300 East Third Street, Lexington
Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

About the Author

Yvonne Giles, a native of Lexington, became a board member of African Cemetery No. 2 in 2000. She also serves on the boards of other organizations whose mission is the preservation of our history. "Stilled Voices Yet Speak," a history of the cemetery was released in 2010. She has also appeared in documentaries — "Eight Acres of History: A History of African Cemetery No. 2" and "Davis Bottom: Rare History, Valuable Lives." Giles is the recipient of the Bluegrass Trust's Clay Lancaster Award, Kentucky Preservation's Ida Lee Willis Award, Central Kentucky Council of Peace's Lifetime of Waging Peace Award and a Kentucky Colonel. She holds two degrees from the University of Kentucky.



The Mountain Missionary: The Reverend Miles Saunders

By Stuart W. Sanders

The Reverend Miles Saunders devoted his life to ministry. Pastor of the Springfield Presbyterian Church for nearly four decades, Saunders spent his retirement as a missionary in Appalachia. His work was so successful that one writer called him “one of the most prominent and gifted clergymen of the state of Kentucky.” Another, lauding the minister’s work in the state’s eastern counties, simply called Saunders “the mountain missionary.”¹

¹ E. Polk Johnson, *A History of Kentucky and Kentuckians* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), 3: 1648; “Church Matters,” *Stanford Interior-Journal*, September 8, 1905.

Born in Decatur County, Illinois, on January 10, 1832, Saunders was the grandson of a Scotsman who immigrated to South Carolina before moving to Nicholas County, Kentucky. At age 19, Miles left his parents — James and Cynthia Hall Saunders — and moved to his brother’s house in Bloomfield in Nelson County. In 1855, Miles entered Centre College in nearby Danville. As a 22-year-old sophomore, he plunged in to Horace, Homer’s *Illiad*, trigonometry, astronomy, surveying, Greek, and geometry. Saunders joined the Beta Theta Pi fraternity and assumed leadership positions. In August 1858, for example, he attended the fraternity’s Second Biennial Convention in Berkley Springs, Virginia, where he served as the meeting’s vice president.²

When Saunders graduated from Centre in 1857, his class included 47 members. These men included at least 10 future ministers, nine lawyers, and an array of bankers, farmers, teachers, and businessmen. Several rose to prominence, including Joseph C. S. Blackburn, a U.S. senator, and James

B. McCreary, who became governor of Kentucky. During the graduation ceremony on September 17, 1857, a number of classmates gave orations, including Saunders, who spoke about “The Destiny of the Anglo Saxon.” In the short term, many of his classmates were destined to serve in the American Civil War. In addition to Blackburn and McCreary, both of whom became Confederate officers, other members of Saunders’ class included Horace Rice, colonel of the 29th Tennessee Infantry; William W. Humphreys, a brigadier general of South Carolina state troops; and Alfred Shelby Stewart, an officer with the 4th Kentucky Union Infantry Regiment.³

While Saunders was student at Centre, he initially thought of pursuing law. Instead, however, a religious conversion led to the reevaluation of his future. Upon graduation, Saunders enrolled in the Danville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, a school located less than a mile from Centre’s campus. Twenty-four students matriculated that year, with nine of

² Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648; *The Thirty-First Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Centre College, at Danville, Kentucky, for the Year Ending June 30, 1855* (Frankfort: Frankfort Commonwealth, 1855), 7, 9; *Beta Theta Pi Catalog*, 1917 (n.p., 1917), 104; William Raimond Baird, ed., *A Decade of Fraternity Reconstruction* (New York: The Beta Publishing Co., 1918), 39.

³ *The Eleventh Triennial and Thirty-Third Annual catalogue of the Officers and Students of Centre College at Danville, Kentucky, 1857* (Frankfort: Frankfort Commonwealth, 1857), 25-26; *Annual Commencement of Centre College, September 17, 1857* (Danville: Tribune Office, 1857), 2; *General Catalogue of the Centre College of Kentucky* (Danville: Kentucky Advocate, 1890), 59-63; Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648.



Image courtesy of UK Archives

In 1862, as the Civil War raged, Northern and Southern troops marched through Springfield. On October 8th, the two armies faced off in Perryville, 16 miles east of Springfield. More than 7,500 men were wounded or killed in the battle.

them being recent Centre graduates. Saunders finished there in 1860, and, once ordained, he immediately went to work 25 miles away at the Springfield Presbyterian Church. He was minister there until 1897, and it was his only church.⁴

The year 1862 proved to be one of great turmoil and happiness for Saunders. That summer, as the Civil War raged, multiple Confederate armies invaded Kentucky in order to draw Union troops away from the strategic railroad junction of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Both Northern and Southern troops marched and countermarched through Springfield, and, on October 8, the two armies clashed at Perryville, a small village about 16 miles east of Springfield. In the five-hour fight, more than 7,500 men were killed and wounded. Saunders — probably following his evangelical calling — shadowed the Union army to Perryville. There, he stumbled upon a makeshift field hospital where surgeons were amputating limbs. He knew one of the men working at the hospital, a civilian volunteer and member of Saunders' church in Springfield named E. L. Davison, whom Saunders found prepping a soldier with a knee wound. Saunders immediately jumped in to help with the operation. Davison later wrote, "The bone was sawed off and naturally flew up (it not being held tight enough) spinning blood over everything; Sanders [sic] fell over in a faint." For Saunders and other civilians who had never witnessed the horrors of warfare, the aftermath of the Battle of Perryville was a rude awakening. Furthermore, because of Springfield's proximity to Perryville, many of the homes, businesses, and public buildings became field hospitals for wounded and sick soldiers. Saunders' Presbyterian Church may have also housed patients after Kentucky's largest battle.⁵

Although contending with the ill and injured certainly caused turmoil for Saunders, he also found joy in 1862. That year he married Margaret Booker, whose father was a local circuit court judge. Their union became blessed with one son and three daughters.⁶

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Despite a growing family and burgeoning ministerial duties, Saunders was active in civic organizations. In 1867, Saunders was named a trustee for Centre College at a time when competing Presbyterian governing bodies — the church having been divided by the Civil War — fought for control of the college. The next year, Saunders was named a commissioner

⁴ Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Volume 15, A.D. 1857* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1858), 320.

⁵ E. L. Davison, *Autobiography of E. L. Davison* (1901): 46-47. For the aftermath of the Battle of Perryville, see Stuart W. Sanders, *Perryville Under Fire: The Aftermath of Kentucky's Largest Civil War Battle* (Charleston: The History Press, 2013).

⁶ Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648; *Stanford Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, November 26, 1896. Their children included J. N. Saunders, who lived in Stanford, Kentucky; Lettie, who married Charles McDowell of Danville; Mary, who died at an early age; and Louise, who married the Rev. Harvey Murdoch. Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648.



Miles Saunders entered Centre College in 1855. His graduating class of 47 members included ministers, lawyers, bankers, farmers, teachers, businessmen, future political leaders, and military officers.

for “The Springfield, Pleasant Run, and Mackville turnpike road company,” which was chartered by the state legislature to build a gravel road from Springfield to Mackville. The minister’s erstwhile surgical partner, E. L. Davison, was also a commissioner in the venture. Saunders was also an active Freemason and served as deputy master and a master mason in the Springfield lodge. He was a volunteer observer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Weather Bureau and was a member of the Scotch-Irish Society.⁷

In addition to these community ventures, Saunders was an active leader in the Presbyterian Church. In 1881, for example, he was a commissioner representing Kentucky at the Presbyterian General Assembly, which met in Staunton, Virginia. There, he was placed on a committee for theological

seminaries and was chairman of “a Special Committee on the Sabbath.” Although the divide between the Northern and Southern branches of the Presbyterian Church caused fractures in the administration of Centre College, Saunders preached in both churches. On a Sunday morning in Hopkinsville in August 1883, for example, Saunders took the pulpit of a Southern Presbyterian church. That evening, he preached to a Northern Presbyterian congregation. The next year, Hanover College honored Saunders and his brother, the Reverend J. N. Saunders of Bloomfield, with honorary doctorate of divinity degrees.⁸

Saunders also followed business pursuits and became a breeder of registered short-horn cattle. Two of his bulls, “Prince Airdrie” and “Wild Eyes Duke” were both noted in the 1887 edition of *The American Short-Horn Herd Book*. Both of the bulls were sold to a farmer in Iowa. Saunders contributed Washington County’s report to the state’s Bureau of Agriculture, Labor, and Statistics’ biennial report, which described the formation of the county, the area’s geological makeup, a description of local businesses, an overview of livestock and crops, and a notation of the county’s churches, schools, roads, and more.⁹

In February 1897, Saunders retired from the Springfield Presbyterian Church, having served there for more than 35 years. Although he had retired, Saunders did not quit working. He continued to preach as a visiting minister and to officiate at weddings across central Kentucky. That same year, Saunders connected with Edward O. Guerrant, another Centre graduate. Guerrant, a physician and former Confederate officer, had founded the Society of Soul Winners, a missionary organization that dovetailed evangelism with education. The society established several schools and churches in eastern Kentucky, and Saunders led efforts at Buckhorn in Perry County. There, he and his daughter, Louise, spent several summers preaching and teaching. Their first “church” was a tent, one historian wrote, “located on Laurel Point near the confluence of Squabble Creek and the Middle Fork River.” Saunders and other Society missionaries baptized residents, urged the establishment of schools, and built churches.

⁷ Richard H. Collins, *History of Kentucky* (Covington: Collins and Co., 1878), 1: 177; Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky [December 1867 session] (Frankfort: Kentucky Yeoman, 1868), 590; Proceedings of the grand Council of Royal and select Masters of the State of Kentucky, Annual Assembly, Held in Louisville, October 16, A.D. 1893, A. Dep. 2893 (Covington: L. D. Croninger, 1893), 25; Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, at a Grand Annual Communication Held in the City of Louisville, Commencing on the 19th Day of October, A.D. 1876, A.L. 5876 (Frankfort: James A. Hodges, 1877), 87; “List of voluntary observers of the Weather Bureau,” *Monthly Weather Review* (March 1899): ix; *The Scotch-Irish in America* (Nashville: Barbee and Smith, 1893), 332.

⁸ “The General Assembly,” *Staunton Spectator*, May 17, 1881; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Volume V, A.D. 1879* (Wilmington, NC: Jackson and Bell, 1879), 351, 378, 348; “Here and There,” *Hopkinsville South Kentuckian*, August 21, 1883; “Personal Notes and Comments,” *Frank Leslie’s Sunday Magazine* 16 (September 1884): 280.

⁹ *The American Short-Horn Herd Book, Containing Pedigrees of Short-Horn Cattle* (Chicago: American Short-Horn Breeders Association, 1887), 32: 271, 357; *Twelfth Biennial report of the Bureau of Agriculture, Labor, and Statistics of the State of Kentucky* (Louisville: George G. Fetter Printing Co., 1897), 225-227.

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Guerrant was immediately struck by Saunders' effectiveness, noting that "Few could preach as well, and fewer preach it under such difficulties and self-denial."¹⁰

Although the work near Buckhorn started in a tent, a church, named "Louise Chapel" (after his daughter), was constructed on Laurel Point. The Reverend Harvey Murdoch soon joined them there. Louise and Harvey eventually married, and the two built a school called "the Log College." Again, for these Presbyterians, education and religion went hand-in-glove. Several buildings were eventually constructed and as many as 300 students attended the Murdochs' school. After eight years of work in the region, Saunders and his family had built six churches and the Log College.¹¹

Unlike Guerrant, Saunders had no military experience. According to Guerrant, however, Saunders ran the students under his charge "in battalion drill." The former Confederate

wrote, "knowing the martial spirit of his people, he had organized a company of fifty boys and girls, uniformed them in red caps . . . and trained them in the manual of arms (and legs) and the Creed and catechism." Guerrant added, "'They marched and counter-marched up and down the creek, and into the church (his objective point), and sang 'When the Roll is Called Up Yonder,' so as to stir the spirit of an old soldier.'" In addition to being busy with the students, Saunders also attended to other ministerial duties. In one week, Guerrant noted, "Saunders conducted five funerals, at the church, of death from bloody flux." That same week he also baptized 34 souls.¹²

Saunders spent the next several years working on and off in eastern Kentucky. He and his wife did missionary work at Elkatawa in Breathitt County, where, Guerrant noted, Saunders lived in a "shanty" and preached in a schoolhouse

¹⁰ "Religious," *Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, February 2, 1897; *Maysville Daily Public Ledger*, January 29, 1897; J. Wayne Flynt, "Feeding the Hungry and Ministering to the Broken Hearted: The Presbyterian Church in the United States and the Social Gospel, 1900-1920," in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 94-95; "located on Laurel Point" from William B. Napier, "History of the Buckhorn Lake Area Church," accessed online from <constancesavery.com/blac/black/black.html> on December 15, 2013; "Work in Other Churches," *The Christian Advocate* (June 15, 1905): 954; Edward O. Guerrant, *The Galax Gatherers* (Richmond: Onward Press, 1910), 92.

¹¹ Guerrant, *Galax Gatherers*, 92, 93; Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1649. Louise Robinson Saunders married Rev. Harvey Short Murdoch at Danville's 1st Presbyterian Church on April 2, 1903. *Stanford Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, March 24, 1903.

¹² Guerrant, *Galax Gatherers*, 97, 101.

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because there was no local church. Once, several years later, Guerrant met Saunders on a train. Although Saunders had become visually impaired, he continued to work. “He is now past seventy,” Guerrant reported, “and entirely blind, yet he preached at Crockettville yesterday, and rode twenty miles through the mountains, on a led-horse, and expects to do the same on next Saturday, and preach next Sunday. How such a man shames the rest of us.” Saunders’ efforts were fruitful. *The Maysville Evening Bulletin* reported that “This strenuous work has not been without results. Dr. Miles Saunders writes from Elkatawa that fifty-four persons were enrolled for membership under these three weeks of orthodox preaching.”¹³

In fact, the work of the Society of Soul Winners found success. In 1904, for example, the organization “held 2,733 religious services, where 631 public confessions of faith were made, taught 115 Sabbath schools, with 4,549 pupils; visited 7,177 homes; distributed more than 19,000 tracts, Bibles, Testaments, etc.; taught 1,323 pupils in day schools, and collected \$266 toward the expenses of the schools.” Also that year, the Log College at Buckhorn, which Saunders’ daughter had helped establish and was “twenty-five miles from a railroad and twenty miles from any town” had completed its second session with five teachers and nearly 200 students.¹⁴

Although Saunders flourished as a missionary, his personal life faced challenges. In March 1890, the Kentucky River flooded, and, several newspapers reported, “a warehouse and storehouse belonging to Miles Saunders were swept down the river yesterday.” More seriously, in October 1896, a fire broke out in his house in Springfield that quickly spread throughout the neighborhood. The conflagration burned his house, those of two other families, “a stable with 12 horses and a number of cabins.” His son, J. N. Saunders of Stanford, told one local paper that “his father is rejoiced to have saved his fine library, even if he did lose his house and most of the

furniture.” A month later, Miles’s wife went to Louisville, fell ill, and died. At the time, Miles was in Iowa, possibly on cattle business. They had been married for 34 years.¹⁵

Although he mourned the loss of his wife, companionship beckoned. On March 4, 1899, Saunders married Emma Wilson of Bullitt County, who was his brother’s sister-in-law. With his house in Springfield having burned, he lived in various other communities for the next several years, including Danville and Shepherdsville. Saunders died in Bullitt County on November 24, 1910, “after a long illness.” He was 78 years old and was buried in Springfield. One who knew him wrote, “A more genial, generous, impulsive, enthusiastic, sympathetic nature, I have never known.” Saunders left his estate to schools and churches in eastern Kentucky.¹⁶

Although Saunders never sought recognition for his work in Appalachia, at least one poet inscribed stanzas to him. “Cotton” Noe, a Washington County native and English professor who became Kentucky’s first poet laureate, wrote the poem “Dr. Miles Saunders.” Replete with Masonic imagery, Noe’s verse notes that Saunders was “A tender minister in humble things” and “He had a royal mind, a priestly ken;/ But best of all he loved and helped young men.”¹⁷

Noe, the poet, understood that service and humility were the cords that bound Saunders to his work and ministry.

About the Author

Stuart W. Sanders is the author of three books, including *Perryville Under Fire: The Aftermath of Kentucky’s Largest Civil War Battle*, *The Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky*, and *Maney’s Confederate Brigade at the Battle of Perryville*. His latest publication is a long-form essay, *Lincoln’s Confederate Little Sister: Emilie Todd Helm*, now available on the Kindle and related platforms.

¹³ Guerrant, *Galax Gatherers*, 83-84, 68; Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1649; *Maysville Evening Bulletin*, September 12, 1902.

¹⁴ “Work in Other Churches,” *The Christian Advocate* (June 15, 1905): 954.

¹⁵ “Higher Than Ever Known,” *Belmont Chronicle* [Ohio], March 6, 1890; “The Flood Receding,” *St. Paul Daily Globe* [Minnesota], March 3, 1890; *Stanford Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, October 27, 1896, November 26, 1896; Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648.

¹⁶ Johnson, *History of Kentucky*, 3: 1648; Tate quoted, 3: 1649 “Matrimonial Matters,” *Stanford Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, March 14, 1899; *Richmond Climax*, January 30, 1901; “Personals,” *Stanford Interior-Journal*, July 23, 1907; “Servant of God,” *Stanford Interior-Journal*, November 29, 1910.

¹⁷ Cotton Noe, *The Loom of Life* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1912), 40. For Noe, see Wade Hall, ed., *The Kentucky Anthology: Two Hundred Years of Writing in The Bluegrass State* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 354.

A Giant Love Story

How the Tallest Couple in the World Met and Married

By Richard Crowe

Martin Van Buren Bates was born in 1837, in the mountains of Letcher County as far down against Virginia as the map allows. He was the last child born to John Willis and Sarah Waltrip Bates. John had migrated from North Carolina, and stood 6 feet 2 inches, which was tall for his day. Sarah was a second-generation Kentuckian, weighing 150 pounds and standing 5 feet tall. Together, John and Sarah worked a good sized farm that was bordered on the east by the North Fork of the Kentucky River and on the south by Boone Fork, a creek named for Daniel Boone who had explored there a generation earlier. The small delta formed by these two waterways gave the Bates family enough land to raise crops and plenty of animals to feed their growing clan.

Martin was born of normal size to parents and siblings of normal size. John Jr. was born first in 1813, followed by Margaret in 1815, and Martha in 1816. Eliza Agnes came next in 1819, then brothers Jesse in 1821, James in 1823, Robert in 1825,

and Uriah in 1828. Sarah Ann was born in 1830, followed by Henderson in 1832, and Mary Jane in 1836. Among the dozen children, several were lean and lanky in build, but none was considered large.

Across the nation at that time, came the Panic of 1837, which lasted seven years and featured high inflation, wild land speculation, hundreds of bank closings, and thousands of business failures. The panic resulted from the economic policies of U.S. President Andrew Jackson. “Old Hickory,” as the native Tennessean was known, had won the Battle of New Orleans, an empty victory in the War of 1812, coming as it did after the war had ended. His policy to remove the Cherokee nation from their ancestral home in the east, to what would later become the state of Oklahoma, was proven ill-advised. And his decision to close the Second Bank of the United States resulted in a disruptive, downward spiral in the U.S. economy. Those policies, while a disaster for most of the country, were seen as profitable for people living in the west — Kentucky and Tennessee at that time.

Besides farming, John Bates earned money by trading land. President Jackson's efforts allowed Bates to borrow money at terms favorable for buying and reselling land. Jackson was leaving office, but one of his major supporters would become the next President of the United States. To honor the elfish New York Dutchman, John christened his 12th child, Martin Van Buren Bates.

For young "Baby Bates," his first seven years of life were undramatic. Finally at age seven, the panic ended, but as the national economy improved, Martin's life became more complicated. John Bates died, leaving Sarah to manage the family farm. Also in 1844, the "baby" began to grow. By the time he was 11, Martin weighed 170 pounds. Two years later he was larger than most men, weighing 300 pounds and standing well over 6 feet in height. His glandular condition would rule his life for the next 21 years as he reached the height of 7 feet 9 inches and weighed 478 pounds. (Later in life his height would be reported at 7 feet 11 inches but Guinness lists him at 7 feet 9 inches.)

Sarah fretted about his growth and took him to see the only doctor she knew. Whitesburg, the county seat, was located about 10 miles north of the farm. When they arrived, Martin was wide eyed. For the first time in his life he saw a village made up of two churches, a courthouse, a jail, and a tavern. There were three or four stores selling household goods and a couple of mechanic shops where farmers had tools made or repaired. There was also a school, an attorney, and a doctor to serve the 50 or so residents.



A glandular condition caused Martin Van Buren Bates to stand more than 7 feet tall, weighing 478 pounds by the time he was 21 years old.



Image courtesy of UK Archives

John Bates named his youngest son after the eighth President of the United States, Martin Van Buren.

The doctor knew something about giants, although he had never seen one. He knew of no way to stifle Martin's growth. Martin's height and weight were proportional and he was as strong as most men. When they returned home, Sarah decided to be protective of her youngest child. So, at age seven, he was not allowed to exert himself at work or play. She was afraid he might 'pop' or explode, so his physical activity was limited. She remembered what a bright child he was. He had an almost photographic mind for names, places, and dates, so he became the family tutor. The youngest was soon studying the more advanced texts used by the older children in their classes. Over time, he gradually learned all the material studied by his older siblings.

Sarah was happy with this arrangement because she worried about Martin's future after she passed on. She learned of a fairly new Methodist College across Pine Mountain in Virginia. Emory and Henry's campus was about 85 miles away. Martin enrolled for one academic year at age 16, after which he returned to Whitesburg where he passed the school board's exam for new teachers and was then appointed the teacher at Kona's one-room schoolhouse. Martin loved teaching there. He knew the subjects well and his students were from his own family and other nearby farms. He found the place Sarah wanted for him — a place where he fit in and could be useful to society. Seven years of teaching passed quickly and Martin's happiness was soon to fade.

In 1860, voters from the east, north, and west elected a new American President. Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky, raised in Indiana, and became a successful attorney in Illinois. He was also a politician and, after representing the Whig Party for 20 years, helped form the new Republican Party. Lincoln was the Republican Party's



Many of the Civil War battles Martin Van Buren Bates participated in were part of the command of Lexington's General John Hunt Morgan.

nominee and won the national election. The question of slavery had been an issue for years, and Kentuckian Henry Clay was famous for his efforts to hold the nation together. His compromises in 1820 and 1850 had held both sides of the slavery question in check. But now the south felt a new threat from a new leader of a new party.

Within six months of Lincoln's election, 11 southern states seceded and, in April of 1861, they attacked Fort Sumter, a Union depot in Charleston Harbor. The Civil War had begun.

Sarah's poor farm owned no slaves. There were only 17 slaves among the 2,700 or so Letcher County residents of those days. Since her husband had died two decades earlier they no longer swapped land as an income source. The farm produced corn as their staple crop along with oats, wheat, rye, buckwheat, and potatoes. They also raised hogs and cattle, but they were not rich. The census listed all property owners with a value of \$600 to \$5,000 and the Bates' were not listed.

So, with no slaves or plantation lifestyle to protect, why did Martin and four of his brothers enlist in the Confederacy in 1861? Probably at the urging of Ben Caudill. Caudill was a well-known preacher before the War. He used his popularity to recruit more than 1,000 men for his 5th Kentucky Infantry. The Bates brothers signed on for one year, expecting the war to be short lived. But a year later, Martin left them to re-enlist in the Calvary. He joined French's Battalion of Virginia as a First Lieutenant in Company A. Bates much preferred riding a horse to marching on his feet. At his size, this always presented a problem for his unit. Whenever they could, they stole the largest draft horse they could find to keep Bates in action. One Union report said that he "was as big as five men but fought like 50." He had entered service as a private and had been promoted as he continued to prove himself. Now he was a lieutenant who could

read, write, do arithmetic, and lead others. Many of the skirmishes and battles Bates fought in were as part of the command of General John Hunt Morgan from Lexington. While Lee, Grant, and others were commanding troops in the thousands who would meet on a battlefield until one side or the other retreated or surrendered leaving thousands dead from their efforts, Morgan, the Rebel Raider, never had more than 2,500 troops under his command at any time. His mission was to disrupt Union gains in Kentucky. His men destroyed as many roads, tunnels, and railways as they could. He wanted to drive the Union troops out of the Commonwealth with the hope that Kentucky would then become a Rebel state. Kentucky entered the war as the second richest state in the South, trailing only Mississippi with all of its cotton plantations. As such, Kentucky would be a prize for whichever side it eventually joined.

Bates saw action in Virginia protecting the salt mines at Saltville, and the lead mines at Wytheville, as well as at Gladeville — now Wise. In Kentucky, he had been at Perryville in 1862 as part of Morgan's First Raid. Later he fought at Mount Sterling, Second Cynthiana, Middle Fork, and at Cumberland Gap, where he was wounded.

In 1863, Major French, who had been an attorney in Wise before the war, now wanted to set up a recruitment center near Pikeeton — now Pikeville — to enlist enough new soldiers to become a full regiment. Union officials learned of these efforts and sent Colonel John Dils, Commander of the 39th Kentucky Regiment to run the Rebels back into Virginia. Dils' troops consisted mostly of mountain men who knew the countryside from their hunting and trapping days. They decided to leave in the middle of the night and arrive before French's men were even out of bed. The plan worked so well that, after exchanging shots for an hour or so, French ran up a white flag because his men were out of ammunition. Dils, to his surprise, had captured Major French, 16 officers, 70 enlisted men and one giant. Dils had all Confederate supplies destroyed, then transported his captives back to Louisa, then on to Louisville, and finally to Camp Chase near Columbus, Ohio, where they would be held as prisoners of war. He got most of them on horseback, but there was no horse big enough to carry Bates. He quickly commandeered a flat boat located on the Big Sandy River and he, Major French, and the giant rode as others pushed their boat up river.

Dils enjoyed the company of French and Bates so much that, upon reaching their destination, he requested a prisoner exchange for both men. They were moved to Camp Chase, but 33 days later, on May 13, 1863, both were exchanged. While in Ohio, Bates met another prisoner of war named Colonel Clarence Prentice, who was the son of George Prentice, publisher of the *Louisville Courier*. George Prentice had used his considerable influence as publisher of the state's most-read newspaper to sway President Lincoln to also exchange his son for another prisoner. The terms of these exchanges were that each prisoner would be freed, would lay down their arms, and would return to their homes to fight no more. There probably was never a more hollow promise made for Bates, French, and Prentice, as all immediately returned to action. French was reassigned to the

63rd Virginia and Prentice was asked to take up French's old position leading the 65th Virginia — which included Bates.

Prentice and Bates soldiered on together until the end of the war. Bates' release was signed by Prentice who explained that he could no longer find a suitable mount for the giant. It was then signed by John Hunt Morgan.

Bates considered returning to Letcher County after his discharge, but knew that both sides had looted and commandeered the farm's assets for four years. He determined it would be years before the farm could be productive again and that it would be better for him to leave so there would be fewer mouths to feed.

Prentice had another idea. He had seen first-hand how Yankee troops feared, and yet, were in awe of the giant. Prentice offered to take Bates home with him to Louisville. In the River City Prentice would parade his friend from one saloon to another along 5th Street, extracting bets from as many patrons as he could. Prentice was sure the two could continue that way for a long time. And who knows how long that might have lasted but for Prentice's tragic end. He was crossing 5th Street while intoxicated and stepped in front of a large wagon pulled by a team of horses. The horses and wagon ran over him, killing him in the street.

Bates pondered Prentice's death and decided he could improve his life by joining the Wiggins and Bennoit Circus in Cincinnati. The circus billed him as the tallest man in the world, advertising him as being 7 foot 11 inches tall. Instead of being the target of scorn, the circus presented Bates as a learned man who had taught school and

fought in the war. Bates displayed his pistols which he had worn in holsters that crisscrossed his chest. Each gun was a .71 caliber made for him by the Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond, Virginia. He also showed audiences a sword that he had never used in the war. It was 55 inches long — 18 inches longer than standard issue. Audiences were encouraged to ask questions, which Bates enjoyed answering.

Besides the farm, teaching, and the war, Bates talked about various giant myths and tales. He also shared his sizes. He wore a size 20 boot that he filled with half a bushel of corn for effect. His shirts were made by the Catskill Company and were 74 inches long, 96 ½ inches at the waist, 63 inches at the middle of his back with a 25-inch neck and an 18-inch wristband. Each shirt took six yards of muslin 1 ¾ yards wide and cost \$2.50. He could afford plenty of shirts because the circus paid him \$100 a month. His popularity with the audiences grew regularly.

Long before radio, television, and movies this Kentuckian had become a superstar. As his fame grew so did interest from other circuses. Four years later, Bates moved on to the W. W. Coles Circus, Menagerie and Museum, where he was promised more travel and greater exposure. They paid him \$400 a month at a time when the average U.S. worker earned \$129 a year.

Meanwhile in Mill Brook, New Annan, Nova Scotia, Canada, a daughter had been born to two average-sized adults in 1846. Anna Haining Swan was born to a former Scotsman named Alexander Swan and Ann Graham Swan of Nova Scotia. Anna was one of a dozen children — all of normal size. She was also a product of glandular growth. She had been 18 inches long at birth but, by her fourth

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By the age of 17, Anna Swan stood nearly 8 feet tall.

birthday, she stood 4 feet 6 inches. Two years later, she stood 5 feet 2 inches — nearly as tall as her mother. On her 11th birthday, Anna was 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighed 212 pounds. Four years later, she was more than 7 feet tall. By her 17th birthday, she had reached her full height of 7 feet 11 inches.

When Anna was 16, her height had attracted the attention of P. T. Barnum, who operated a museum near Broadway in New York City. Barnum offered Anna and her mother \$23 a week in gold and covered all their expenses, for them to come to New York and appear on his stage. In addition, he paid for tutors three times a week, their trip home three times a year, and had an oversized carriage built for their travel around town. The carriage was pulled by two white horses, each standing 18 hands high. Of course, when people saw the giant outfit, many would follow it back to the museum where Mr. Barnum would sell them an admission ticket to her next show. Anna and her mother had an apartment on the third floor of the building that housed the museum. Their apartment featured private bedrooms, but they shared the kitchen and living room with other acts, including Tom Thumb and his wife Lavinia.

During their third year in New York, the museum caught fire on the main floor and all of the exits were blocked. The performers rushed upstairs where they were able to climb out of a third-floor window — all but Anna. She was too large to get through the window, so museum workers had to make the opening big enough for her. They found a block and tackle to hoist her through the opening and down three floors to safety. In all, it took 18 men to get her down to the ground. Anna and her mother took some time off from the show after the fearful bout with fire.

A couple of years later, the building again caught on fire and Barnum had to close the museum. He sent many of his acts out of town for appearances that would enable him to pay the bills, while he waited for construction to be completed in New York.

Judge H. P. Ingalls owned the contract of Martin Van Buren Bates and offered to hire Anna for a proposed tour through the United Kingdom. The giants would receive top billing and, by appearing

together, they would draw much larger audiences than appearing individually.

The contract was signed in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and their ship, the *City of Brussels*, set sail. Ten days later, on May 2, 1871, they landed, but something had changed. Martin and Anna had fallen in love. Besides their attraction based on size, they were both intelligent, witty, and would prove to be kind to each other. Martin did not like the fact that Anna was taller than him, so she agreed to always wear flats. Judge Ingalls had been a promoter all of his life and he recognized an opportunity when it was presented to him.

Ingalls immediately contacted the press upon their arrival. They were going to stay in Liverpool at the Washington Hotel for a week before moving on to London. Martin and Anna left on May 19th, and upon their arrival, gave a reception on King Street for both the press and the medical community. As physicians asked their questions, members of the press wrote stories for the next day's papers. Obviously, two giants planning to marry attracted much attention. Half of England was enthralled, claimed one newspaper. Among the British interested in the story was Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. On May 29th, Martin and Anna received an official invitation to appear at Buckingham Palace three days later. It was one of three invitations Martin and Anna would receive from the Queen. At their first meeting, they were warmly welcomed and Her Majesty surprised them with gifts and an offer to arrange their wedding. The ceremony was held on June 17, 1871, at Trafalgar Square in the Church of Saint Martin-in-the-Fields, one of England's most famous non-cathedral churches. The Queen arranged for one of Anna's countrymen to officiate. Reverend Rupert Cochran of Halifax read the vows while the church's vicar, Reverend Doctor Roberts, assisted.

Martin wore a black suit that displayed the large jeweled watch Her Majesty had given him at their first meeting. Each of them had received a watch said to have been the size of a saucer adorned with diamonds and other jewels and a 6-foot long gold chain attached. Each watch was valued at \$1,000.



Martin Van Buren Bates married Anna Swan on June 17, 1871.

Anna wore a wedding dress made for her by the Queen's staff. They used 100 yards of white satin, embossed with orange blossoms. Another 50 yards of silk was used to make the veil. She also wore a brooch and wedding ring made for her by the Queen's staff. The wedding ring was massive, made of seven diamonds in a cluster.

Judge Ingalls gave the bride away and the best man was the Honorable Henry Lee, scientific editor of *Land and Water*. A reception was held after the ceremony in the house they rented at 45 Craven Street. After the noon reception, the couple left for a brief honeymoon at the Star and Garter Hotel in Richmond. On June 21st, they were back in London being received by the Prince of Wales and his guests, the Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia, and Prince John of Luxembourg, among others.

Together the giants made four trips to Europe where they appeared before large crowds. On one of those trips, they appeared before Princess Christina of Denmark. When they returned to America, they continued to appear before ever-growing audiences that included Presidents James A. Garfield and William McKinley. At that time, they were both being paid \$400 a month for their presentations. Anna told stories, played the piano, and sang, while Martin was a glib storyteller. They were anything but circus freaks.

During their second year of marriage, Martin and Anna made medical history. Anna delivered a baby girl measuring 27-inches long and weighing 18 pounds. Although stillborn, she was the first baby born to a giant. Both parents mourned the loss and, perhaps recalling the fears their parents had when they were children, donated the body to a London hospital for scientific study.

After a few more years of hectic travel, the two were visiting friends in Ohio, where they found a 130-acre piece of land they both loved. It had fertile soil and was located about 60 miles south of Lake Erie and 22 miles west of Akron. They bought it and immediately began turning it into a farm for their pleasure. They had a house and barn built to their specifications. The walls of the buildings were 14 feet tall with doors that were 8 ½ feet high. The door knobs stood five feet off the floor. All of their furniture was custom made to fit their bodies. Their bed was 10 feet long. When visitors struggled to climb into chairs, the giants were amused.

Martin and Anna also kept pets in the house, including a giant boa constrictor that could appear anywhere as it crawled about the house, a large parrot that Martin had trained to say, "Get off my property," when provoked, and a monkey Anna named Buttons, who was kept on a chain outside so it could run around their yard. The farm was home to the finest animals they could find. Martin and Anna owned Norman draft horses and full-stock short horned cattle. Martin had a carriage built to fit them and was pulled by two Clydesdale horses standing 18 hands high.

In 1878, the giants decided to go back on tour because the cost of the farm had exceeded their initial expectations. They signed a three-year contract with W. W. Coles New Colossal Shows, which was following the newly laid railroads into the western frontier. This allowed Martin and Anna to see a great deal of an America unknown to most citizens. They wanted to be the first circus shows in places

such as Denver, Kansas City, and San Francisco. Larger crowds met them at each new location as local settlers attended the events for entertainment and to learn the news of the day.

In 1879, Anna delivered a second child. Her son lived only 11 hours, despite two doctors attending the delivery. He weighed 23 ¾ pounds and was 28 inches long. He was as large as a six-month old at birth but did not survive. This time they buried their baby next to Anna's sister, Maggie, at Mound Hill Cemetery, near Seville. Maggie had visited the Bates' farm in 1875, and while there, died of an unknown illness.

After the second birth, Anna never seemed to regain the strength she had exhibited previously. Nine years later, in 1888, Anna became ill and never recovered. On August 5, 1888, she was pronounced dead from tuberculosis — one day before her 42nd birthday. She had been a member of the local Baptist church where they had built a special pew for the giants. Anna taught Sunday School and occasionally played the piano when she and Martin were in town.

Martin ordered an 8-foot casket for Anna's burial. But, when it arrived from Cleveland, it was only normal size. The carpenter read his order and decided there had to be a mistake and changed the specifications. This delayed Anna's burial for several days. It infuriated Martin, but also forewarned him of what might happen upon his death. So, he had his own coffin built and stored in the barn rafters until it was needed. When Anna's made-to-order coffin arrived, it took 12 pallbearers to lift it. Martin had her buried near her sister and their second child at Mound Hill. Later, he ordered an 8-foot marble statue of her which was chiseled in Italy. When it arrived it was mounted atop a 10-foot pedestal. The 18-foot high memorial made to her likeness still stands there today. Across the bottom, he displayed Psalm 17:15 which reads, "As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Martin Van Buren Bates was born in Kentucky at the start of the Panic of 1837. He lived to see the end of World War I in 1919. During his 82 years of life, he learned to survive on a small farm without a father. He went away from that life long enough to become a teacher in a one-room school until the Civil War developed. He and four of his brothers enlisted to fight a war they did not understand. He was wounded, captured, and exchanged as a prisoner-of-war during that time. Searching for a way of life that used all of those experiences, he found his way to circus life. Long before radio, television, and movies, he was the Kentucky-born entertainer who became rich while traveling the globe.

But, in the final analysis, his life was not made complete and he did not know true happiness until he met and married Anna.

About the Author

Richard Crowe spent 40 years teaching economics and management at Morehead State, University of the Cumberlands, and Hazard Community College. He has done extensive study of three eastern Kentucky notables: author James Still, the giant Martin Van Buren Bates, and his uncle Bad John Wright. He is a former member of the Kentucky Humanities Council's board of directors.

Corinth, Basketball and the American Dream

By Georgia Green Stamper

If a girl who grew up on an Eagle Creek farm can have a hometown, I suppose mine would be Corinth. It was the closest place I could get to when I was a kid that had sidewalks and a movie theater. It was our postal address, too, although our mailbox on “Rural Route 2” stood in neighboring Owen County, not Grant.

As hometowns go, it fell into the tiny but ambitious category. If there had been a town square, Robert Browning’s words would have been engraved on a monument: *A man’s reach should exceed his grasp or what’s a heaven for?* People here — and in other small towns across the country — believed in the possibility of the American Dream. It was about trying hard enough they said. And so one day, the boys from Corinth dribbled a basketball into the headlines of America’s front page, and made the town famous, if only for a moment. Because they did, those of us who came along later, grew up believing that anything was possible if we stretched our reach.

Corinth started out as a stagecoach stop on the old Covington-to-Lexington Pike, and when the railroad came calling in 1876 — a magnificent line that linked Michigan to New Orleans — Corinth took off. Flushed with railroad traffic, it showed promise of becoming the region’s commercial center. But bad luck plagued Corinth. Fire wiped out its downtown more than once, and it was sandwiched between two bustling county seat towns, Georgetown to the south and Williamstown to the north. By 1920, Corinth’s population was only 185.

In the late 1920s, Corinth got another chance to boom. U.S. Route 25 was built straight through the middle of the town. The fabled “Dixie Highway” — a pulsating transportation artery that

linked Detroit to Augusta, Georgia — was in the vanguard of a new national highway network that would evolve into today’s interstate system.

Corinth got ready for the world to come calling via its new Main Street. It had all the essentials: a handful of grocery stores and barber shops, a couple of Mom and Pop restaurants, a bootlegger, several churches, two banks, a doctor or two, a hotel, and a new two-story brick high school with a gleaming gymnasium.

After U.S. 25 opened, Corinth’s population jumped to 265 — an increase of 43 percent. In the fall of 1929, however, the Great Depression hit the country like an atomic bomb. Even the optimistic Chamber of Commerce would not have dreamed the town would make headlines in the nation’s newspapers six months later. As can happen in Kentucky, it was basketball that brought fame to Corinth.

Baseball may have been the national pastime, but by the 1920s, more high schools had organized basketball teams than any other sport. Perhaps that was because it could be played inside or out, in all seasons, with only five players and little equipment.

However, its popularity was due in part to Amos Alonzo Stagg, the athletics director and coach at the University of Chicago. In 1917, Stagg organized the National Interscholastic Basketball Tournament (NIBT). By 1923, Stagg’s national tournament for public high school basketball teams had grown to include 40 schools from all sections of the country, and had become the darling of the media.

At a time when there were no college basketball playoffs, Stagg’s NIBT was the emotional equivalent of today’s NCAA

tournament. “Movie men” filmed portions of the games for flickering black and white newsreels. Newspapers from New York to Los Angeles shouted the names of winners and losers on their front pages in ink-bold headlines an inch high. And an exciting new phenomenon called radio broadcast all five days of the competition. On farms, in cities or small towns, Americans listened spellbound to the staccato voices of the broadcasters who brought the roundball drama into their living rooms.

By the spring of 1930, however, America was fighting for its economic life. It was expensive to send the high school teams to Chicago for such an event, and educators began to fume that the players were missing too much class time. The emerging NCAA also fretted about the possible recruiting violations on the part of college coaches who were everywhere at the school boys tournament. The 1930 NIBT would turn out to be the last.

Against this backdrop, Corinth made its national debut in April, 1930. By all accounts, Corinth was a team worthy of the NIBT’s larger-than-life stage. With an enrollment of only 74 students in grades 9-12, Corinth had become the smallest school to ever win the Kentucky State High School Basketball Tournament*.

Corinth had entered the state tournament as what one sports writer of the era called, “the darkest of dark horses.” Armed only with a jump shot, Corinth proceeded to slay one Goliath after another. First, it had to win the Class B championship for small schools where it faced Tolu in the final round. Tolu’s achievements had earned it the reputation of “another Carr Creek,” and it was expected to defeat Corinth easily. Corinth, however, held on for a one-point win, and emerged as the Class B Champion. Kavanaugh/Lawrenceburg had come out of a tough large school bracket, defeating an impressive Hazard team in the final game to become the Class A champion. The Kentucky state title game was then set between tiny Corinth, the Class B Champion, and Kavanaugh, the Class A winner.

The sports writers who had dismissed Corinth, and prematurely crowned Kavanaugh as Kentucky’s best, were in for a surprise. The 1930 title game is described in newspaper accounts as one of the most exciting ever played in the series. With the roar of the crowd lifting the roof of the gymnasium, Corinth made three perfect shots from mid-court in 30 seconds to win by two points at the buzzer. The entire population of Corinth — watching from the bleachers or listening at home on the radio — took a breath.

As the Kentucky state champion, Corinth then qualified to compete in the NIBT, but had to pay its own way to Chicago. News articles say only that local volunteers “raised the money.” I can imagine it coming in nickle and dime donations from farmers like my grandfather, Gran Hudson, who came to Corinth every Saturday afternoon to loaf. I can feel the spring rain on the women’s faces as they carried in homemade chocolate fudge and apple pies to the bake sales before the

exhibition games. The Corinth Deposit Bank surely would have donated a hundred dollars.

I can’t find out if the team traveled by Greyhound bus or by train to the Windy City. I only know who went: first-year coach Teddy Hornback, team captain Frank “Bear” Lawrence and his brother Dave, and the other starting players, Roscoe Rogers, Wilbur Odor, and William Jones; alternates John Groves, Dallas True, Eugene Ogden, Hugh McClintock; and principal E. B. Whalin.

When they got to Chicago they played their hearts out. Against the odds, they defeated four teams from Wisconsin, Montana, Wheeling, West Virginia, and Savannah, Georgia. They lost the fifth game, but won the sixth to capture THIRD PLACE bragging rights in the nation. Folks listening in Corinth hugged their radios and wept with pride.

Hornback was named National High School Coach of the Year, and would go on to have a distinguished coaching career as an assistant to the fabled Ed Diddle at Western Kentucky University. Later he became WKU’s long-time athletics director.

Dave Lawrence caught the eye of the newly hired young coach at the University of Kentucky. Lawrence would play on Adolph Rupp’s first teams — making Corinth folks UK fans for generations. He served as the Wildcats team captain and was all-Southeastern Conference first team.

Today, Corinth’s population holds steady at 181. Forty years ago, the new interstate veered to the west and now old Dixie Highway is as quiet as a country lane. The fine brick high school and its proud gymnasium have long since been torn down and the ground seeded in bluegrass. But people here remember.

** Corinth, with an enrollment of 74 in grades 9-12, was the smallest school to win the Kentucky boys basketball tournament up to 1930, according to newspaper reports of the era. Eight decades later, KHSAA does not have the necessary records to determine if Corinth remains the smallest championship school. However, my informal research indicates that only the 1992 champion, University Heights, a private school that was a three-year rather than a four-year high school, was smaller.*

About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a seventh generation Kentuckian. A graduate of Transylvania University, Stamper is a former high school English and theater teacher and speech team coach. Her published works include *Butter in the Morning* and *You Can Go Anywhere*. She also writes a bi-weekly column, “Georgia: On My Mind,” for *The Owenton News-Herald*. She has been a regular commentator for NPR member station WUKY affiliated with the University of Kentucky and a popular member of the Kentucky Humanities Council’s Speakers Bureau.



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