Kentucky humanities

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Spring 2018
Kentucky Humanities

INSIDE: 2017 Annual Report

Robert Penn Warren portrait by Alison Lyne, courtesy of Library Special Collections, WKU

In the spring of 1948...

Airmail parcel post is introduced to Paducah. The Jaycees ship the first package by sending **Kentucky 31 Fescue** grass to a similar club in Salzburg, Austria.

A record city of Paducah budget is introduced at $681,839, up $76,000 from the year before.

Kentucky Employment Services advertises for 16,000 people to harvest the **strawberry crop!** The job lasts for five weeks, and the crop is expected to beat the previous year's 484 train car loads which generated $1.2 million!

ROY ACUFF
and the Grand Ole Opry Gang performed in Paducah.

The first contract for construction of the West Kentucky Baptist Memorial Hospital is awarded to lay the foundation.

The Paducah Bus Company raised fares to
TEN CENTS!

The first full test run to install the flood wall gates took place.

IT TOOK
90 MEN
SIX HOURS.

Magnavox's first production line in Paducah goes live making radio speakers.

...and Paducah Bank opened on Broadway!

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70TH ANNIVERSARY
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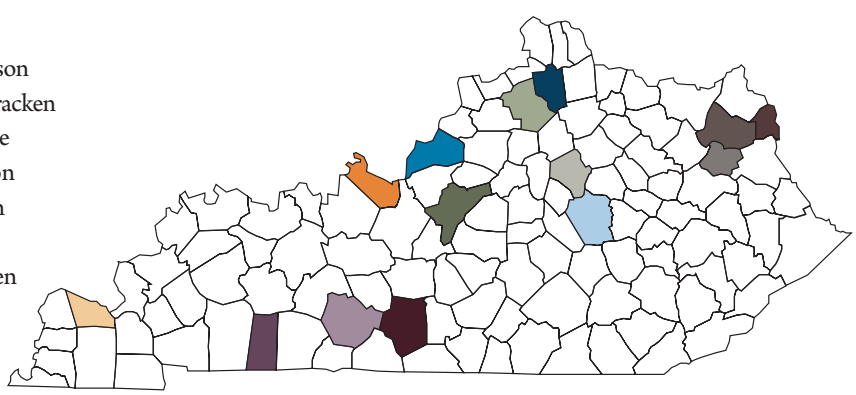
WOW!

Kentucky humanities

Spring 2018

In this issue:

- Barren
- Boyd
- Carter
- Elliott
- Fayette
- Grant
- Jefferson
- Madison
- McCracken
- Meade
- Nelson
- Owen
- Todd
- Warren



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Think Spring

Although it has seemed as if spring would never come to Kentucky, the change in season has brought exciting news for us to share!

On April 24th, Kentucky Writers' Day, we celebrated the birthday of Kentucky native and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and poet Robert Penn Warren at his birthplace, Guthrie, Kentucky. We painted the town of Guthrie "Red" (Warren's nickname given to him by a college friend at Vanderbilt, Kentucky native Allen Tate) and launched our new statewide literacy initiative, Kentucky Reads: *All the King's Men*. Read more about the numerous events planned throughout the state and how you can participate on pages 26-27.

Robert Penn Warren is one of a long line of noteworthy poets in Kentucky. Linda LaPinta shares her insight of the work of another great Kentucky poet on page 8. *The New and Collected Poems of Jane Gentry Vance*, edited by Julia Johnson, honors the former Kentucky Poet Laureate and her beautiful words. And, Kentucky poet Jeff Worley shares a charming piece with us on a subject we can all relate to — aging! You can find his work on page 16.

Later this year, the University Press of Kentucky will publish *Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men A Reader's Companion* by Northern Kentucky University Professor of English Jonathan S. Cullick. Enjoy an excerpt on page 21.

James Prichard gives us a look back at Kentucky during World War I. Prichard shares the stories of his grandfather, Uncle French, and the many young men of Carter County who fought for the Allied Forces and how the community honored their service and sacrifice after the War on page 10.

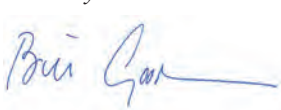
J. Alexander Chiles opened a law practice in Lexington in 1890, becoming the city's first African American Attorney. Read Stuart Sanders' article about the man likely born into slavery, who went on to challenge Kentucky's segregation laws on page 18.

Published in 1853, "My Old Kentucky Home" was adopted as Kentucky's official state song in 1928. Dr. Marshall Myers breaks down the meaning of the song composed by Stephen Foster on page 28.

And lastly, Georgia Green Stamper reminds us to take a moment out of our busy lives to appreciate and admire the beauty of springtime in Kentucky with her essay "Lilacs and Spirea" on page 31.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* and that you will share it with your friends in print or 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**. And be sure to follow us online to learn more about Kentucky Reads and how you take part in this statewide literacy project.

Bill Goodman
Executive Director
Kentucky Humanities



Improving Lives

The Kentucky Colonels, through our Good Works Program, is proud to once again sponsor the ***Kentucky Humanities Council.*** Learn more about how The Kentucky Colonels improve lives throughout the Commonwealth at KyColonels.org.

Kentucky Colonels®

Catha Hannah joins Board of Directors

Catha Eff Hannah was elected to the Kentucky Humanities board of directors at the October, 2017 board meeting. She will serve a three-year term, with a second three-year term optional. As a member of the 23-person volunteer board of directors, Hannah will help set policies, award project grants to community organizations, and participate in fundraising to help Kentucky Humanities meet the growing demand for its programs.

Catha Hannah has worked in education since 2005, currently as a technology teacher and school technology coordinator for Western Middle School for the Arts in Louisville. She has long been active in the community, volunteering with organizations including the Louisville Ballet, Girl Scouts of Kentuckiana, Wood and Marie Hannah Foundation, and the Gheens Science Hall and Rauch Planetarium.

Hannah earned a bachelor of science degree in agriculture from the University of Kentucky, a master's in arts in teaching from Bellarmine University and a master's of education in instructional technology from the University of Louisville.

U.S. Poet Laureate visits the Commonwealth

On March 16th and 17th, Kentucky Humanities hosted U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith at three sites in the state's 2nd congressional district in a partnership with the Poetry & Literature Center of the Library of Congress. The visit was part of Smith's National Project Rural tour, an effort to reach populations typically underexposed to poetry.

In Bowling Green, Smith read and discussed her poetry and others with the clients of Men's Addiction Recovery Campus (MARC), a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility serving 120 men struggling with addiction. A public event at the South Central Kentucky Cultural Center in Glasgow on Friday evening drew 125. Smith read several of her poems and was then joined by Kentucky Poet Laureate Frederick Smock for a discussion of their duties as poets laureate, and a Q&A with the audience. The event was bookended by remarks from Congressman Brett Guthrie and Glasgow Mayor Dick Doty, who composed his own poem for the occasion. On Saturday morning, Smith spoke to an enthusiastic group of 25 children and adults at the New Haven Branch of the Nelson County Public Library.

Tracy K. Smith is a professor of creative writing at Princeton University. She is the author of three collections of poetry for which she has won the Pulitzer Prize, the Cave Canem Poetry Prize, the James Laughlin Award, and the Essence Literary Award. She was appointed the 22nd Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry in June 2017.

Kentucky Humanities wishes to thank the Poetry & Literature Center at the Library of Congress, the staff and clients of MARC, the South Central Kentucky Cultural Center, and the New Haven branch of the Nelson County Public Library.

Photos by Shawn Miller/Library of Congress

2017 Kentucky Book Fair

The 36th annual Kentucky Book Fair marked many changes for this iconic event, including a move to Lexington. The Alltech Arena at the Kentucky Horse Park provided a great environment for 174 authors and nearly 2,500 patrons, all of whom came out to celebrate reading, writing, and books. Featured authors included Wendell Berry, Rita Mae Brown, Ally Condie, Wayne Flynt, Jamie Ford, bell hooks, Loyal Jones, David Joy, George Ella Lyon, Bobbie Ann Mason, Karen Robards, Adam Silvera, Daren Wang, Crystal Wilkinson, and other national and local authors, including James Archambeault, David Arnold, Steve Beshear, Gwenda Bond, Christopher Farnsworth, Heather Henson, Rebecca Gayle Howell, Holly Goddard Jones, David King, Maurice Manning, Sharyn McCrumb, Robert Olmstead, Stella Parks, Christopher Rowe, Frederick Smock, and Mary Ann Taylor-Hall.

A robust slate of presentations and discussions began with a Kentucky Chautauqua® performance from Virgil Covington, Jr., portraying William Wells Brown. Other highlights included Main Stage presentations from Rita Mae Brown, bell hooks and Crystal Wilkinson, as well as a young adult author panel featuring six popular young adult literature authors, and a panel on sex, gender, and sexuality in Kentucky literature with Fenton Johnson, Kim Edwards, and Jason Howard. The Literary Luncheon featured *New York Times* bestselling author Jamie Ford, who discussed his newest book, *Love and Other Consolation Prizes*.

KBF Kids Day hosted a record number of Kentucky students in grades 3-12; 847 students from 21 schools participated in presentations from 10 authors, including national bestselling author Ally Condie, former Kentucky Poet Laureate George Ella Lyon, and co-authors Gwenda Bond and Christopher Rowe, who have written a new intermediate series. High school students participated in a powerful Master Class with activist and author Erin Merryn, who spoke on her survival of childhood sexual abuse and how students can use their experience and passion to be a "Voice for the Voiceless." After a pizza lunch, students were treated to a lively panel discussion with six young adult authors on everything from their writing and teen years, to Harry Potter, and how books can influence all Americans.

KBF's Bestselling Titles

1. *The Art of Loading Brush: New Agrarian Writings,* Wendell Berry
2. 2018 James Archambeault Kentucky Calendar, James Archambeault
3. *People Over Politics,* Steve Beshear and Dan Hassert
4. *Who Killed Betty Gail Brown? Murder, Mistrial, and Mystery,* Robert Lawson
5. *The Girl in the Blue Beret,* Bobbie Ann Mason
6. *The Origins of the Cornbread Mafia,* Joe Keith Bickett
7. *Roots to the Earth,* Wendell Berry
8. *BraveTart,* Stella Parks
9. *Christmas in the Bluegrass: Hometown Holiday Stories,* Bob Rouse
10. *Crazy Like a Fox,* Rita Mae Brown

Thanks to our Sponsors

We'd like to thank our sponsors and the many, many volunteers it takes to bring this event to all Kentuckians!

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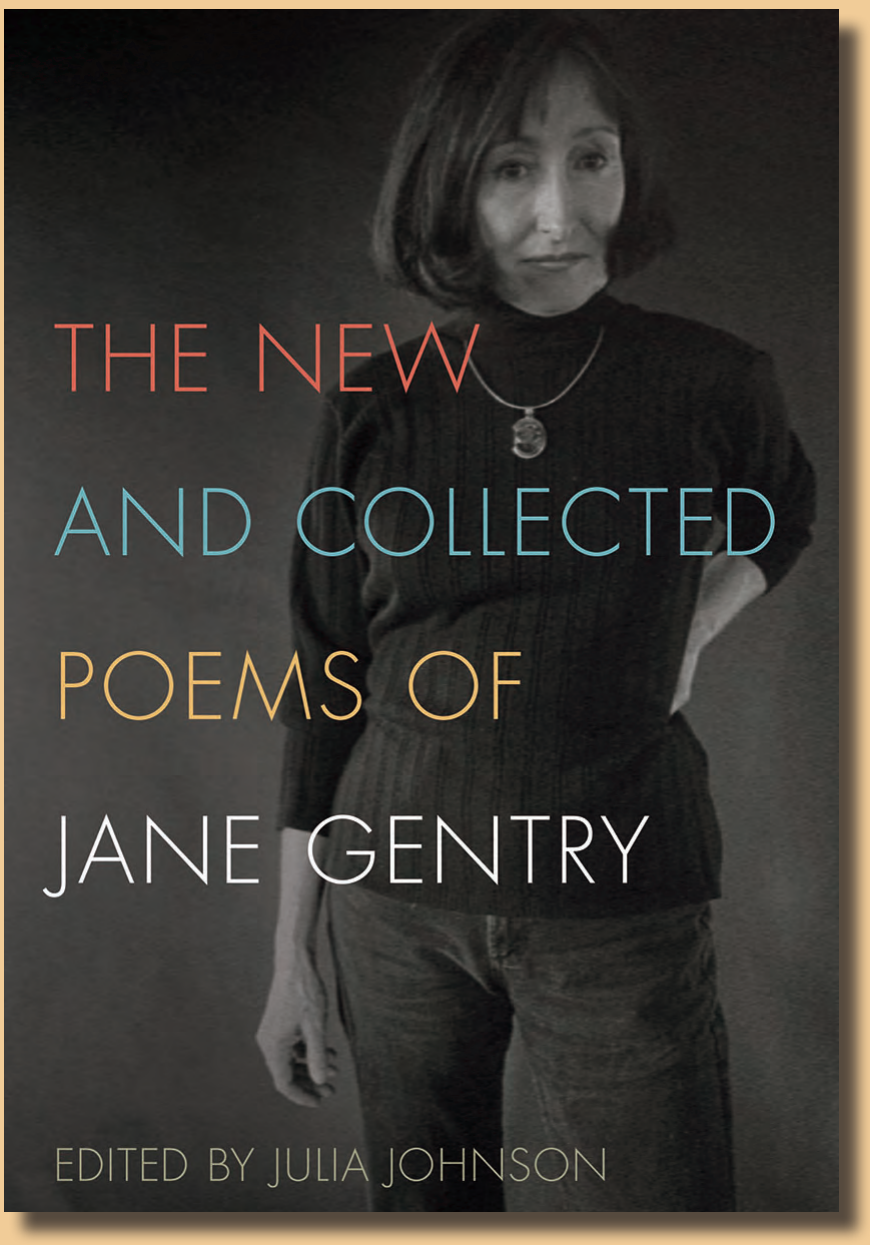
The New and Collected Poems of Jane Gentry, a Study in Protean Epiphanies

By Linda Elisabeth LaPinta



In 2014 Kentucky lost an astute poet, a master teacher, and a gracious mentor. Her death at age 73 came far too soon for those who knew the Lexington native as their University of Kentucky Honors College English professor, as their Versailles neighbor, or as a sister writer. Her name, Jane Gentry, remains as simply elegant as her verse.

So it is to its credit as well as hers that the University Press of Kentucky recently published *The New and Collected Poems of Jane Gentry* edited by the writer's University of Kentucky English Department colleague Julia Johnson, because the book serves as a rich legacy for Gentry, as well as for a publisher focused on showcasing the Commonwealth's best.

Most of Gentry's subjects are as conventional and customary as is the act of breathing. Yet in cataloging the significance of the commonplace, her pitch-perfect phrasing pierces her reader's heart. In "My Mother's Clothes" she writes, "On a December night/ I brought them/ from her nursing home,/ forgot them on the porch/ under stars brittle with cold./ I left them hanging, far/ from the warmth/ of her body, away from fires/ that keep winter from us./ Her clothes, familiar

to me/ as her skin: the wool plain/ dress she made; her favorite/ jacket, hunter green,/ with its lapel pin, DWG,/ my father gave her—/ the shape of the body/ holding as they swung/ from their shoulders/ on the porch arms empty/ against the weather."

Another sort of love poem is "April in Your Garden," a valentine to an intimate. "The day falls open out of the sky." she begins. "Even the cedar bent from the wet late snow/ seems to rise up into it/ like the richest voice in a chorus." Her narrator's confident crescendo peaks with her declarations, "Your body is as real as a tree./ I sit outside in bright sunshine/ and see your movements tap like a ghost/ behind the screen of the open window./ My hand gripping this pen/ suddenly yearns toward home: between/ your neck and shoulder, inside/ the glove of your hand—places right/ as the purse of the oriole's nest/ I see rising, falling on invisible/ currents high in the ash tree,/ among green fists of new leaves."

In her introduction, Johnson highlights Gentry's myriad publications and awards, among them Gentry's 2007-2008 term as the state's poet laureate. Johnson also quotes the author's WRFL Lexington public radio program comments concerning the poet's work in which Gentry said, "These poems are about everyday events and feelings in an ordinary life. I think I tend to focus on moments of insight, even—sometimes, I hope, revelation—when human experience sheds its protective mask of ordinariness and exposes the bright bones of time itself, of the sureness of death, and the quick beauty that such conditions make possible."

"Quick beauty"—flashes of protean epiphany in familiar, everyday contexts—describes Gentry's poetry well. As the poet's friend, Kentucky writer Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, states in her foreword, "What's in these pages is an act of radical generosity, an uncensored record of a life lived and treasured by someone with an ardent, receptive spirit, someone capable of penetrating—that is, finding words that led her toward the full apprehension of—her experience, its truth. She lived deeply, felt at home in her own world, and went out into the larger one not as a visitor to it but as a citizen of it."

The New and Collected Poems of Jane Gentry is an homage to a Kentucky wordsmith who dedicated her life and work to cultivating her heritage and nurturing the literary talent of apprentices across the state. George Ella Lyon, another Kentucky poet laureate, comments, "At once earthy and learned, wild and restrained, she is a poet of the whole self."

In that the "poet of the whole self" becomes the poet of our best selves, *The New and Collected Poems of Jane Gentry* is significant indeed.

About the Author

Linda Elisabeth LaPinta directs Spalding University's doctoral program in leadership. Under her maiden name, Beattie, she published three books related to Kentucky writers and a fourth book about intimate partner abuse. In addition, she has published numerous book reviews and magazine articles in local and national newspapers, magazines, and journals.

Reflections of a Vanished Generation:

War and Memory in a Small Kentucky Town

By James M. Prichard

In the fall of 1962 I suspect every American boy eagerly awaited the premier of *The Longest Day* — an all-star Hollywood blockbuster about D-Day that featured everybody's cinematic hero, John Wayne. My family had driven from Ohio to visit our eastern Kentucky kin and stopped off in Ashland to stay with my maternal aunt. After attending services on Sunday morning, I overheard a group of veterans discussing *The Longest Day* on the church steps. One old soldier related that he saw combat in World War I and declared somberly, "You know, if they ever made a movie that showed what war was really like — there would never be another one."

In those years the Second World War was only yesterday and World War I had not quite vanished from the nation's collective memory. I still recall, at the age of 12, meeting the legendary fighter pilot Captain Eddie Rickenbacker during his 1965 book signing in my home town of Dayton, Ohio. At about the same time the *American Heritage History of World War I* topped my Christmas wish list. I also remember visiting the Doughboy memorial in Grayson, Kentucky, where my grandfather, Omar Henry Thomas (1889-1977), proudly pointed out his name on the list of 700 Carter County men who served in the conflict.

My interest in the "War to End All Wars" was rooted in the stories my grandfather told me and the stories I heard from his younger brother, French Lyman Thomas (1896-1984). During the early 1960s I spent every summer with my maternal grandparents in Hitchins, Kentucky, and I vividly remember when my brother and I visited Uncle French who took us to the attic of his home and let us play with his Doughboy helmet and gas mask. In the years that followed I also met other old veterans from the town including my grandfather Prichard's first cousin, Proctor L. Prichard (1895-1975) and little Robert L. "Chigger" McGuire (1894-1980).

The little town of Hitchins has virtually faded away in recent years, but it was a thriving community when America entered the war on April 6, 1917. Located near the Little Fork of the Little Sandy River in Carter County, the town sprung up with the completion of what later became the C&O Railroad through the valley in 1881. The new line intersected with the Eastern Kentucky Railroad, which ran northward to Riverton on the Ohio River. Although the community post office would be named Anglin, the town that sprung up at the site was christened Eastern Kentucky (or E.K.) Junction.[1]

Unquestionably the biggest event in the town's history was the 1912 visit of former President Theodore Roosevelt during a whistle-stop tour of Kentucky along the C&O. Roosevelt, who was running for president on the independent "Bull Moose" ticket, addressed more than 1,000 people during his brief stay.[2] Shortly afterward, the community was re-named Hitchens after Edward Stanley Hitchens of the General Refractories Company opened a firebrick plant nearby. On December 20, 1912, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* proclaimed "All Hail Hitchins" in a brief article about the growing town which now boasted the "largest and most modern firebrick plant in the world."[3]

While the small town grew and prospered, events in Europe placed the nation on the path to war. After Europe plunged into conflict in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson worked to keep the United States from being drawn into a world war. However, Germany's adoption of submarine warfare in the Atlantic, which cost American lives, and the 1917 revelation that Berlin was secretly prepared to aid Mexico in recovering the lands lost to America in the early 19th century made war inevitable. On April 6, 1917, President Wilson signed a Congressional resolution that formally declared war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[4]

Young men soon swarmed to recruiting stations across the nation and several Hitchins men rushed to Grayson, the county seat, to enlist. My grandfather Omar Thomas was a 29-year-old carpenter for the C&O Railroad at the time. He traveled all the way to Lexington to join the Navy but was rejected due to a hearing defect. He then returned to Grayson, and with other local men, including Robert L. McGuire of Hitchins, enlisted in the Army at Grayson on or about April 18th.[5] My grandfather was always stout, and at his funeral I spoke with McGuire who recalled that day. The tiny, frail old gentleman related that grandpa patted his belly and said he was hale and hearty and bound to be accepted. However, he told McGuire he was far too short to serve. The old gentleman laughed and told me that after they got to Fort Benjamin Harrison at Indianapolis, my grandfather was sent home while he was issued a uniform. Fortunately, for the sake of his pride, my grandfather was drafted less than a month after his return to Hitchins.

Omar Henry Thomas (left), pictured with an unknown comrade, was rejected from the Navy because of a hearing defect. He was later drafted by the Army.

In all, more than 51 young men from Hitchins answered the call. They came of age at the dawn of the 20th century, which witnessed the rise of the automobile and the birth of flight. While their grandfathers left the farm to fight in the Civil War,

[1] Robert Rennick, *Kentucky Place Names* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988): 142.

[2] *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 4, 1912.

[3] Ibid, Dec. 20, 1912.

[4] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004): 10, 13-15.

[5] U.S., Lists of Men Ordered to Report to Local board for Military Duty, 1917-1918, www. Ancestry Library.com.

the majority of these young men were brick yard workers, coal miners, or railroad men.[6] At least 20 alone left their jobs at the General Refractories plant to go off to war.[7] Three local men, Bill Bailey, John Bailey, and Trigg George, joined the Navy.[8] John Wilson Blankenship joined the fledgling Army Air Corps and was afterwards stationed at Wilbur Wright Field in Ohio and Ebert Field Flying School in Arkansas.[9]

The remaining 48 men swelled the ranks of the Doughboys, as the Army infantrymen were dubbed during the conflict. Hiram Bailey, James Monroe Bailey, James A. Bledsoe, Ebert Branham, Logan Clevenger, Roy F. Clevenger, Claude Fields, David Fraley, William Fraley, Harry Gorman, Arnie Hale, Bourke McDavid, Glenn Mobley, Alexander Sagraves, Watt Savage, Bert Sparks, my grandfather Thomas, Vane Vincent, Marion Whitt, John M. Womack, and Jessie Young served stateside.[10] The following men served "Over There" but never saw combat: Voyl Adkins, Lige Barker, Birt Blizzard, Marion Chaffin, Fred George, Earl Gifford, William P. Gifford, Blaine Isaacs, William McKinley Isaacs, Frank B. Jenkins, Grover C. Johnson, Strother Johnson, Robert L. McGuire, John McKinney, Charlie Maggard, Loy Porter, James H. Rice, Clyde J. Shepherd, Willard T. Skaggs, and Fred Vanhorn.[11]

A handful passed through the horrors of the Western Front. Pvt. Commodore Porter, who served in the 113th U.S. Infantry, was severely wounded in France on September 7, 1918.[12] Walter Griffith, Richard Hamilton, David M. Hutchinson, and Proctor Prichard participated in the bloody Meuse-Argonne Offensive (September 26-November 11, 1918) in a rugged, heavily wooded region in northern France. The epic struggle tested the mettle of the American troops and the nation praised the heroic deeds of the men of the Lost Battalion and Sgt. Alvin C. York. Long overshadowed by Yorktown, Gettysburg, and D-Day, the Allied attempt to break through the German lines was the largest, bloodiest battle American forces have ever participated in. Of the 1.2 million Americans engaged, more than 26,000 never returned home.[13]

Privates Griffith and Hamilton fought with the 16th U.S. Infantry of the 1st Army Division, the legendary "Big Red One." Hamilton was slightly wounded on October 3rd as the 1st Division advanced under heavy German fire in the western sector of the battle zone.[14] The next day, near the village of Fleville, Griffith was ordered to deliver a message to the front lines when he stumbled across a German machine gun nest firing on the advancing Americans from the rear. The young Kentuckian crawled to the emplacement unobserved and shot both gunners down. For this act of heroism, he was awarded both the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Croix de Guerre.[15]

Sgt. David M. Hutchinson served in the 6th U.S. Infantry of the 5th "Red Devils" Division. The "Devils" went into action on October 14th and captured the village of Cunel. For the next seven days the command was heavily engaged. The division went into action again on the October 27th and during the final phase of the American thrust the 6th Infantry was the first Allied unit to cross the Meuse River.[16] A private in the 52nd U.S. Infantry of the 6th Division, Prichard participated in the pursuit of the retreating Germans at the climax of the battle.[17]

One summer day in the '60s I heard grim accounts of the battle I've never forgotten. My grandfather, Thomas, and his brother, French, were sharing their wartime experiences. As previously noted, my grandfather served stateside as a Sergeant with the 17th Ammunition Train in Texas and

[6] Kentucky Council of Defense, Kentuckians in the World War, 1917-1919: Summaries of County Histories: Bracken-Casey, (Frankfort, Ky.: 1919-1922) Vol. 8:4442-4497. [7] The occupations of the Hitchins men were found in U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, www.AncestryLibrary.com.

[8] Kentucky Council of Defense, Kentucky in the World War, 1917-1919: Individual Record Sheets of Kentuckians,(Frankfort: 1919-1922), Vols. 20: X, 12736, Vol. 59:40796. (Hereafter cited as KCD: Record Sheets)

[9] Ibid, Vol. 25: 16695.

[10] Ibid, Vols. 16-144.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid, Vol. 107: 76713.

[13] Robert H. Ferrell, *America's Deadliest Battle: Meuse-Argonne*, 1918 (University Press of Kansas, 2007): xi.

[14] KCD, Record Sheets, Vol. 63: 43653; Vol. 65: 45248.

[15] Kentucky Council of Defense, Kentucky in the World War, 1917-1919: Special Honors, Vol. 4: 1757,2253.

[16] Kentucky Veterans Bonus Records, Public Records Division, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Ky. Edward G. Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne*, 1918 (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2008): 331-336;392-94.

[17] KCD, Record Sheets, Vol. 108: 77609. Ibid, Histories of Divisions, Vol. V: 2560-2562.

Oklahoma. French, who lived outside Hitchins on their parents' farm, served in France as a private in the Machine Gun Company of the 116th U.S. Infantry. As part of the 29th "Blue and Grey" Division, the 116th was heavily engaged in the bloody fighting at Molleville Farm in the eastern sector of the battle zone.[18]

From the October 8-14, the 116th was heavily shelled, subjected to a poison gas attack, strafed by enemy aircraft, and engaged German infantry on the ground.[19] Uncle French related that two men were killed at his side — one decapitated by a piece of shrapnel, the other nearly cut in half by a burst of machine gun fire. On another occasion he and several comrades hit the dirt during an artillery barrage. Uncle French dove on top of one of the men and suffered a slight head wound from shrapnel. However the man beneath him lost his leg. He also related that he had a solitary encounter with a German soldier in the trenches — the two foes stopped and stared at each other before warily going their separate ways.

Years later, his sister told me that his first letter home was written on scraps of paper found in a dugout. He told the family that, "Undoubtedly somebody's prayers are being answered or I wouldn't be here." He later told her that he and his comrades went without food or water for three days and were forced to drink from muddy hoof prints. When he discovered some coffee in an abandoned German foxhole, he ate it dry.

I recall he shared these grim memories in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. Many of his old nightmares were brought to the surface by sibling rivalry — my grandfather liked to point out that French was only a private while he was a sergeant. I had no idea how rare the moment was until years after French's death when a stunned son told me this was the first time he ever heard of his father describing his combat experience. He added with emphasis that his father never talked about the war to his children.

The Doughboys who fought, suffered, and died in the Argonne helped to break the will of the proud German Empire. Pressed on all fronts, the Germans called for an armistice on November 11, 1918. After four long years, the guns fell silent all along the Western Front. Following months of negotiation, peace was formally declared with the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919.[20]

To honor the sacrifices made by many of its citizens, a Doughboy Memorial was erected on the Carter County courthouse grounds. The monument was dedicated on November 11, 1941.

In the months that followed, the battle-tested Americans returned to the states and ultimately their homes. The community had not only been spared loss on the battlefield but none of the Hitchins service men had fallen victim to the deadly 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic that scourged the war-weary world. Yet one man was fated to die in uniform. On December 15, 1918, Pvt. Watt A. Savage, who was stationed at Camp Zachary Taylor, was shot to death in an altercation with a civilian on the streets of Louisville. He lies today in an unmarked grave in the Savage Memorial Cemetery just east of town.[21]

[18] Lengel, To Conquer Hell: 346-47, 363-64.

[19] Captain Joseph P. Ast, "History of the Machine Gun Company – 116th Infantry" (Box 35/Folder 8). Virginia World War I History Commission, Archives Records Service, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.

[20] Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory; America in World War I* (New York: basic Books, 2003): 386-389.

[21] *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Dec. 24, 1918.

Joseph P. Ast Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville

French Thomas (second row from the top, last figure on the right) pictured with a group of the Machine Gun Company of the 116th U.S. Infantry.

In the years that followed, the men who marched off to war resumed their lives. The Willie C. Lewis Post of the American Legion was established in Grayson, and my grandfathers Thomas and Claude Fields were among the Hitchins men to join the veterans' organization.[22] At the same time, the people of Carter County remembered their war dead on each passing Memorial Day. On May 30, 1937, more than 500 people gathered at the Russell (now Savage) Chapel near Hitchins. The crowd was addressed by former Kentucky Governor William Jason Fields, who visited the European battlefields as a member of Congress in 1919. The Carter County native paid tribute to the memory of those who perished in the World War. Echoing the post-war disillusionment of the times, Rev. L.D. Roe of Grayson also spoke on the "uselessness of war and the great need for peace."[23]

Adopting a post-war tradition begun by our British allies, the American Legion declared the poppy to be the official flower for remembrance of the war dead in 1921. Throughout the '20s and '30s the people of Carter County observed "Poppy Day" during the month of May.[24] Yet, the observation of Armistice Day, which was declared a national holiday in 1938, was the central event for the generation that fought the Great War.

In the spring of 1941, the Grayson and Olive Hill posts of the American Legion launched a fundraising campaign to erect a Doughboy Memorial on the Carter County courthouse grounds. The

[22] Grayson (Ky.), *Sandy Valley Enquirer*, June 1, 1939.

[23] Ibid., June 10, 1937.

Carter County Fiscal Court appropriated more than $1,500 for the project, but an additional $1,200 needed to be raised to finish the task.[25] On July 3rd, the Grayson *Sandy Valley Enquirer* covered the campaign kick-off featuring a concert and speeches by community leaders.

Local attorney Rupert Wilhoit declared:

> *Seven hundred young men of Carter County answered the call of their country in 1917. Of these 202 were wounded and 27 were killed… Every citizen should receive as a high privilege the opportunity to now assist the American Legion in establishing a perpetual monument to them and their accomplishment.*[26]

The people of the county responded and the statue was formally dedicated on November 11, 1941. Former Carter County Judge Henderson Richardson Dysard addressed the large crowd who gathered despite the cold weather. The 66-year-old jurist's words of remembrance were tempered by the dark clouds that once again threatened the land, "To me it is an awful and solemn fact that we are here trying to perpetuate the names of the fallen while a greater war then that in which they fought is now devastating the world." He continued, "Alas! What have we now to show for the sacrifices they made?" He then pointedly remarked that young Burl G. Pennington of neighboring Elliott County was among the many American sailors recently lost when a German U-Boat sank the *Reuben James* off Iceland. While he praised those who fought to "make the world safe for democracy," he observed that, "They are at rest. Their work is done. They left work for us to do."[27]

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor the following month and the United States was plunged once again into a destructive global conflict. Today, the Americans who led the nation to victory in World War II are honored as the "Greatest Generation." The heroic deeds of the Doughboys on the Western Front have been eclipsed by the fighting men who crushed the Axis powers. Yet those who fought and sacrificed "Over There" were a tough generation — the first to endure the horrors of modern, mechanized warfare. A lost generation that soon learned that their "War to End All Wars" brought only the illusion of peace.

That little Kentucky town I loved has virtually disappeared along with the old soldiers I remember well. But the young Doughboy on the courthouse grounds in Grayson still stands bravely at his post — a moving monument to a vanished generation and the triumph they won on the battlefields of France.

About the Author

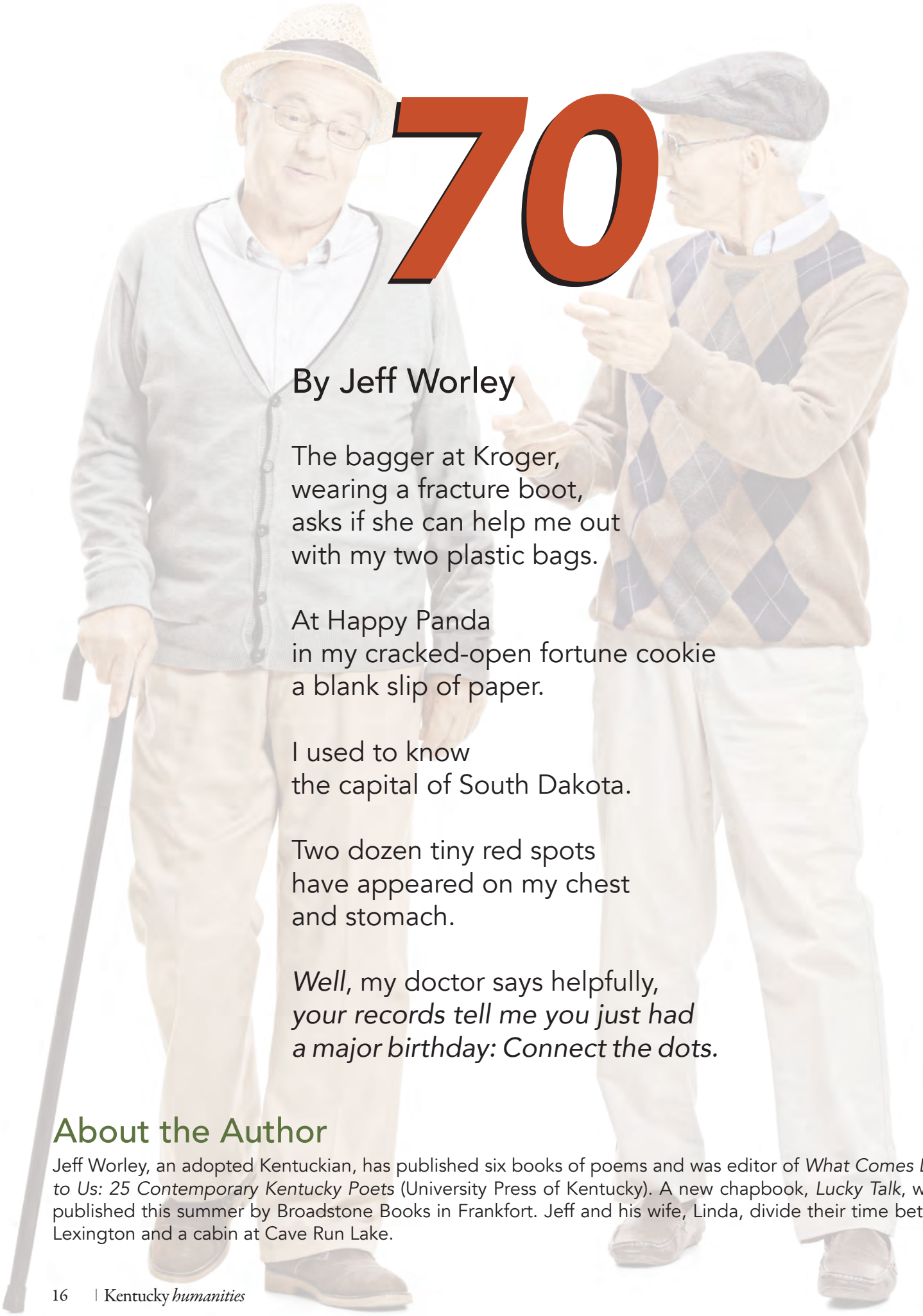
James M. Prichard supervised the Research Room of the Kentucky State Archives from 1985 to 2008. The author of *Embattled Capital: Frankfort Kentucky in the Civil War,* he currently works in the Special Collections Department of The Filson Historical Society in Louisville.

[24] *Louisville Courier-Journal,* Oct. 7, 1921; Grayson (Ky.), *Sandy Valley Enquirer,* May 11, 1939.

[25] Grayson (Ky.), *Sandy Valley Enquirer* May 29, 1941.

[26] Ibid, July 3, 1941.

[27] Ibid, Nov. 13, 1941.



70

By Jeff Worley

The bagger at Kroger,
wearing a fracture boot,
asks if she can help me out
with my two plastic bags.

At Happy Panda
in my cracked-open fortune cookie
a blank slip of paper.

I used to know
the capital of South Dakota.

Two dozen tiny red spots
have appeared on my chest
and stomach.

Well, my doctor says helpfully,
your records tell me you just had
a major birthday: Connect the dots.

About the Author

Jeff Worley, an adopted Kentuckian, has published six books of poems and was editor of *What Comes Down to Us: 25 Contemporary Kentucky Poets* (University Press of Kentucky). A new chapbook, *Lucky Talk*, will be published this summer by Broadstone Books in Frankfort. Jeff and his wife, Linda, divide their time between Lexington and a cabin at Cave Run Lake.

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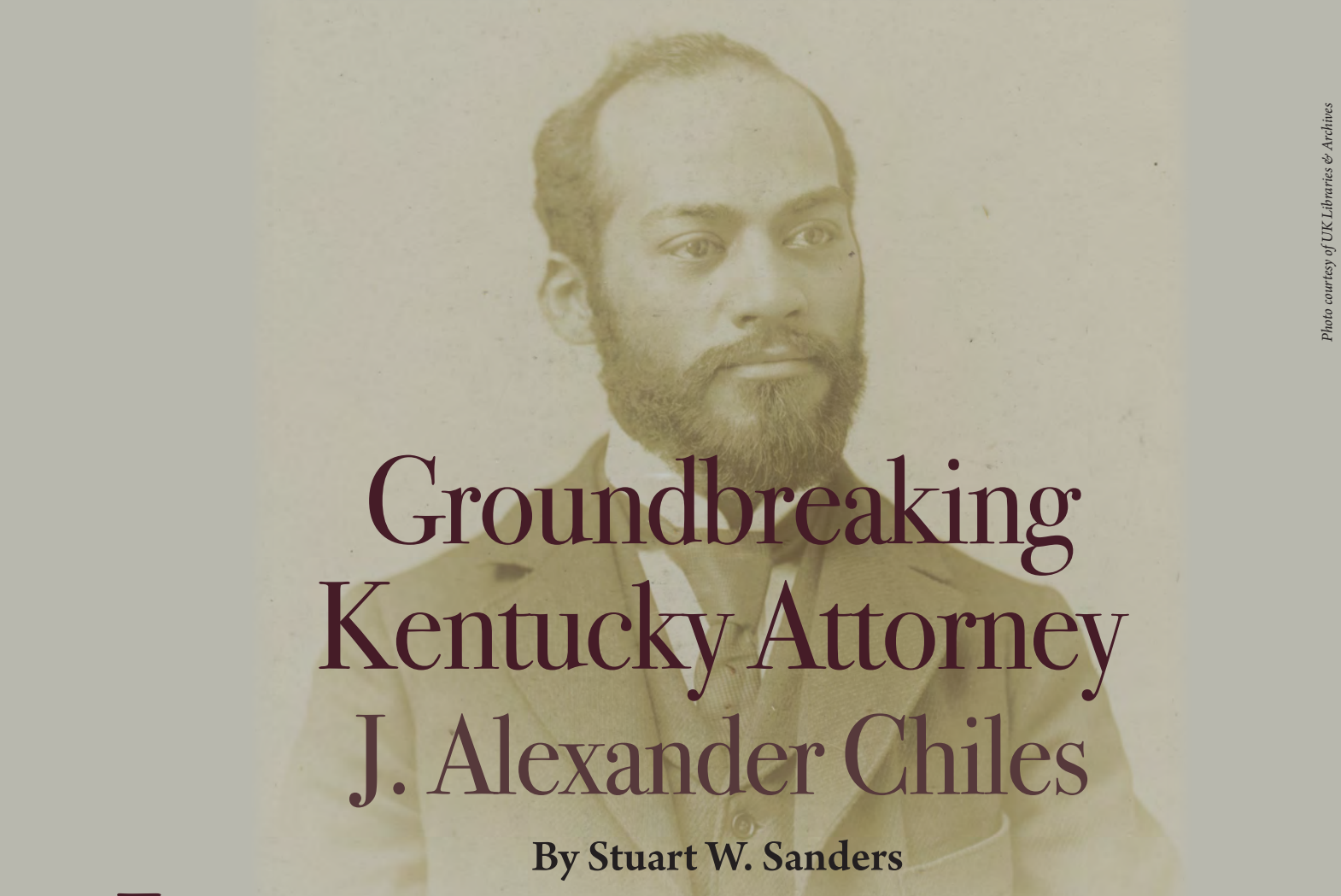


Photo courtesy of UK Libraries & Archives

Groundbreaking Kentucky Attorney J. Alexander Chiles

By Stuart W. Sanders

J. Alexander Chiles was one of the first African-American attorneys to practice law in Lexington. Likely born into slavery and largely self-educated during his formative years, Chiles was one of a handful of black attorneys who challenged Kentucky's segregation laws.

Shortly after opening his practice in Lexington in November 1890, one newspaper called Chiles "the leading Negro lawyer in central Kentucky." Despite this acclaim, he worked under the shadow of institutionalized discrimination. In one instance that ultimately defined Chiles's work, railroad officials, citing the state's "Separate Coach Law," forced him from a "whites only" passenger car. Chiles sued the railroad over the incident and eventually argued his case before the United States Supreme Court.

Born in Richmond, Virginia, on June 8, 1860, Chiles was one of eight children born to Richard and Martha Chiles. His father, listed in the 1870 census as a "mulatto" laborer, was probably a slave at the time of Alexander's birth. Immediately after the Civil War, Alexander and his twin brother, John, attended a Freedman's School in Richmond. Because his parents needed financial assistance, however, Alexander and John left school to work. First employed at a tobacco factory, Alexander eventually became a hotel porter and bell boy. The short time at the Freedman's School must have had an impact, for Alexander spent his spare time reading and studying.

In 1882, Alexander enrolled at Lincoln University in Chester County, Pennsylvania. To pay for college he worked as a waiter in the student dining room. Family members, including his twin brother, also sent him money to help pay for his education. Upon his graduation in 1887, Alexander entered law school at the University of Michigan. Again, family members provided assistance, and he received his law degree in June 1889.

That fall, Chiles opened a law office in Richmond, Virginia. In 1890, a card advertising his services at 309 North 8th Street appeared in the *Richmond Planet*, an African American newspaper. Within a year, however, a friend convinced Chiles to move to Lexington, Kentucky. When Chiles departed for the Bluegrass State, the *Planet* noted that "The able young lawyer, James Alexander Chiles, has decided to leave this city and locate in Lexington, Ky. This will be read with regret by his many friends. During his stay here he has made a creditable record for himself, and risen rapidly in the estimation of the people . . . He is untiring in his faithfulness to his clients."

When Chiles settled in Lexington, few people hired him as an attorney. According to one local newspaper, "it was generally said that a colored lawyer couldn't make it in Lexington . . ." Both whites and blacks feared that "Mr. Chiles' color would bias the courts in their decisions and prejudice the juries against his clients." Chiles was persistent, stuck out the lean times, and his practice grew. Soon, the newspaper noted, "Everybody has confidence in Mr. Chiles now as a business man and a lawyer, and he is doing his race great good and making some money for himself. This is right."

Around this time, Chiles married Fannie J. Baines of Philadelphia. When she moved to Lexington, she taught school as Chiles built his legal practice. To help make ends meet, Alexander also worked as a real estate agent. They eventually adopted a daughter, Lillian, who was born

in December 1892. The family was also active in their church, a Seventh Day Adventist congregation.

One biographical sketch noted that "As a lawyer, Mr. Chiles has been a decided success and enjoys a lucrative practice. The interests of his clients never suffer for want of attention." As a general practice attorney, Chiles accepted all types of work, including hard-fought criminal cases where life and death literally hung in the balance. In 1896, for example, he defended Henry "Mud Dauber" Smith, an African American who was accused of raping Mary Hudson, a white widow. A white jury found Smith guilty and sentenced him to hang. Upon taking the case to the Kentucky Court of Appeals, Chiles argued that, for a black defendant, it was necessary for African Americans to be on the jury in order to ensure a fair trial. The Court of Appeals, however, upheld the verdict. Chiles then sought to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Because of the expense, the *Richmond Planet* asked that donations be sent to Chiles's Lexington office at 4 ½ West Short Street. Fundraising appeals, however, made no difference; the Supreme Court refused to hear the case. Smith was executed in June 1896. According to one newspaper, he "died protesting his innocence."

Chiles also used his legal expertise to fight segregation, and one case in particular — which he argued in front of the U.S. Supreme Court — was a personal fight.

In April 1904, Chiles bought a first-class railroad ticket on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad to travel from Washington, D.C., to Lexington, Kentucky. When the train reached Ashland, Kentucky, passengers changed trains for the final leg of the journey. When Chiles entered the first-class car of the new train, railroad officials told him he had to go to the "colored" passenger car.

The officials were following Kentucky's "Separate Coach Law." Enacted by the Kentucky legislature in 1892, this law directed passenger trains traveling through Kentucky to provide separate cars for white and black passengers. Although this state law had previously been challenged based on Congress's sole authority to control interstate commerce, the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case before the U.S. Supreme Court essentially upheld the separate coach policy.

Chiles had ridden from Washington, through Maryland and Virginia, and into Kentucky in the first-class car. Therefore, when the conductor at Ashland told him to move into the "colored" car, Chiles told him that he was an attorney and knew his rights; he had purchased a first-class ticket to travel through multiple states and was an interstate passenger beyond the reach of the state's Separate Coach law. This, Chiles said, prevented the railroad from forcing him into second-class accommodations. Again told to move, Chiles refused to give up his seat. The conductor then called a policeman who moved Chiles and his luggage into the blacks-only car.

On April 11, 1905, Chiles sued the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in the Fayette County Circuit Court for $10,000 in damages. As an interstate passenger, he claimed, the railroad erred by moving him to the "colored coach" when he entered Kentucky. Furthermore, the lawsuit contended, the railroad "called to their assistance a police officer, and by threats of violence and by force and violence ejected plaintiff from said car, greatly to the mortification of plaintiff and to his public humiliation, thereby subjecting the plaintiff to intense mental suffering . . ."

Chiles's lawsuit made headlines. The *Nashville Globe* wrote, "Mr. Chiles is going at the evil in earnest and we hope him unprecedented success." The case was ultimately reported in national newspapers, including the *New York Tribune* and the *Washington Evening Star*.

When the suit was heard in the Fayette County Circuit Court, the all-white jury ruled against Chiles. He asked for a new trial, which was denied. Chiles then took the case to the Kentucky Court of Appeals, which upheld the circuit court verdict.

In 1910, Chiles argued his case before the U.S. Supreme Court. This action placed him among the earliest African American attorneys to appear before the nation's highest court. The Supreme Court, however, also upheld the lower decision. The majority argued that because of the Constitution's interstate commerce clause, the railroad company, as a private enterprise, could "adopt rules and regulations for the government of their business, free from any interference except by Congress." Since Congress had not acted to prevent the segregation of interstate passengers, the majority decision stated, this "was equivalent to the declaration that a carrier could by regulations separate colored and white inter-state passengers."

Simply put, since Congress was responsible for interstate commerce, and since Congress had not made a law forbidding companies from segregating train cars, railroad companies could follow state laws, like Kentucky's Separate Coach Law, to impose segregation on interstate travelers. The court also referenced the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which established that states could maintain laws creating "separate but equal" public facilities.

Justice John Marshall Harlan, a Kentucky native, was the lone dissenter. This stance echoed Harlan's earlier role in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, in which he earned his reputation as the "Great Dissenter."

In October 1910, the Supreme Court denied a motion to rehear the case. According to one newspaper report, "Chiles gave nine reasons why his case should be reheard. The Supreme Court could not see any of them. His authorities include verses from Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Isaiah, Esther and the Constitution of the United States." Pleas from the Bible and the Constitution fell on deaf ears. Chiles had lost his case.

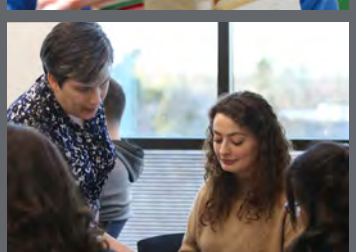
The Separate Coach Law in Kentucky existed until 1955, when the Interstate Commerce Commission banned railroad segregation. The Kentucky legislature finally repealed the law in 1966.

Rebuffed by the courts, Chiles returned to Lexington where he maintained a solid legal practice. He died in Richmond, Virginia, in April 1930.

As one of Lexington's first African American attorneys, and as an early black lawyer to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court challenging racial segregation, one early biographer maintained that Chiles "will always take high rank among the prominent men of Kentucky." Although he lost his suit against the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, it remained the pinnacle of his legal career. Chiles's case, though unsuccessful, helped knock chinks in the armor of Kentucky's Jim Crow laws.

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* and *The Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky*.



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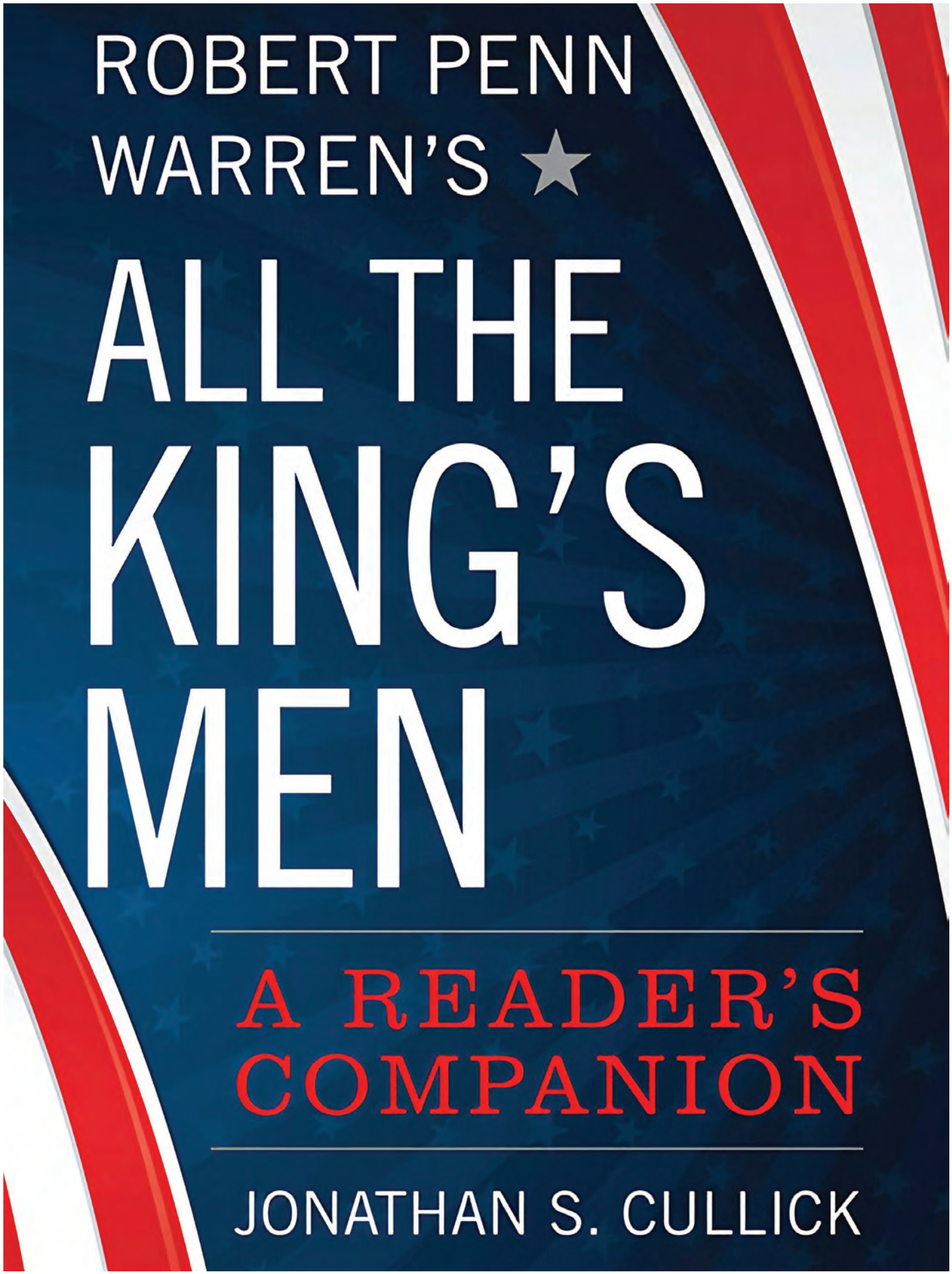
ROBERT PENN WARREN'S
ALL THE KING'S MEN
A READER'S COMPANION
JONATHAN S. CULLICK

INTRODUCTION

"Tell Me a Story"

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By Jonathan S. Cullick

If you drive to the small town of Guthrie, located in Todd County, southern Kentucky, you will be greeted by a sign proudly announcing that you are entering the birthplace of the nation's first poet laureate and three-time Pulitzer Prize recipient, Robert Penn Warren. When I was a graduate student at the University of Kentucky in the 1990s, working on my dissertation on Warren, my wife, Cheryl, and I made this trip a couple of times. Drive to the corner of Third and Cherry Streets, and you will arrive at a charming red house, the Birthplace Museum. An official Commonwealth of Kentucky historical marker (marker no. 1879) introduces the house.

> *A native of Guthrie, Warren was one of nation's most prolific writers, a world-renowned man of letters. Graduate of Vanderbilt Univ., summa cum laude, 1925; member of the Fugitives (writers group). Rhodes scholar at Oxford, 1928–1930; and twice a Guggenheim Fellow. He was professor of English at La. State, Minnesota, and Yale universities.*

And on the reverse side of the marker:

> *Robert Penn Warren, 1905–1989 Designated "First Poet Laureate of the United States" by Congress on February 26, 1986. To date only person to receive a Pulitzer Prize in both fiction and poetry. Warren was a three-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize: 1947 in fiction for* All the King's Men*; 1958 in poetry for* Promises*; 1979 in poetry for* Now and Then: Poems 1976–1978.

Every year on or around April 24, writers and their readers throughout the state of Kentucky convene in the capitol building in Frankfort to observe Kentucky Writers' Day, a day of celebration sponsored by the Kentucky Arts Council to honor the commonwealth's former and current poets laureate. Visitors can meet the authors who inspire them and hear the authors give readings of their works, and every other year the celebration features a special ceremony to induct the state's new poet laureate. The date April 24 was not chosen arbitrarily; on the contrary, it was a deliberate decision: it is the birthday of Robert Penn Warren.[1]

[1] Kentucky Arts Council, "Kentucky Writers' Day," n.d., at http://artscouncil.ky.gov/KAC/Showcasing/Event_WritersDay.htm, accessed August 11, 2017.

The annual celebration in April 2005 was augmented by another special event hosted in Warren's hometown. The City of Guthrie held a week-long celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Warren's birth, which culminated in a ceremony on April 22 to dedicate a US postage stamp being issued to honor Warren and his work. Cheryl and I had the pleasure of attending this day of festivities. The town's mayor and members of Warren's family were in attendance, as were many of the town's citizens and visitors who made the trip for the day (including scholars and educators participating in the Robert Penn Warren Circle conference at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green). First-day releases of the stamp and commemorative items could be purchased, courtesy of the US Post Office in Guthrie. Ann Wright, Kentucky's US Postal Service district manager, said, "It is an honor to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Robert Penn Warren. . . . His powerful ability as a poet and author—as three Pulitzer Prizes attest—is unmatched." The festive atmosphere of the day—with food, activities for children, tours of the Warren museum, and participation of local businesses and civic organizations—made it clear that Guthrie is proud of its native son.[2]

That native son left Kentucky to attend Vanderbilt University at the age of sixteen (in 1921), then the University of California at the age of twenty (in 1925), and finally Yale University at twenty-two (in 1927). In 1931, he would be named acting assistant professor at Vanderbilt, and in 1934 he would be appointed assistant professor at Louisiana State University. Subsequent travels and career moves would take him to Italy, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, France, and Vermont, among other locations far from home. Yet he returned to Kentucky throughout his life, sometimes physically to visit family, but more often he visited imaginatively to reconnect with the people and places that would supply him with materials for writing.

From 1958 to 1963, Warren wrote narrative essays that were printed as articles in *Holiday* magazine. These historical narratives incorporated elements of the personal travelogue. Some were about Texas history, but one of them brought him back to Kentucky. "The World of Daniel Boone" is a travel piece that takes you, the reader, on a trip to Boonesborough, Kentucky: "On U.S. 60, east out of Lexington, that is probably the way you will go—out past the great horse farms of Kentucky, the hunt club and the swelling pastures and white paddocks and stone walls and noble groves. It is beautiful country, even now. It was once thought to be Eden."

Your road trip proceeds until you arrive at Pilot Knob and a retelling of the story of Boone's entry into in Kentucky.

The date: October 10, 1773. Sixteen-year-old James Boone, the eldest son of Daniel Boone, has been injured and captured.

Impatient with local Indians' reluctance to sell their land rights in Kentucky, Daniel Boone had led a group, including James,

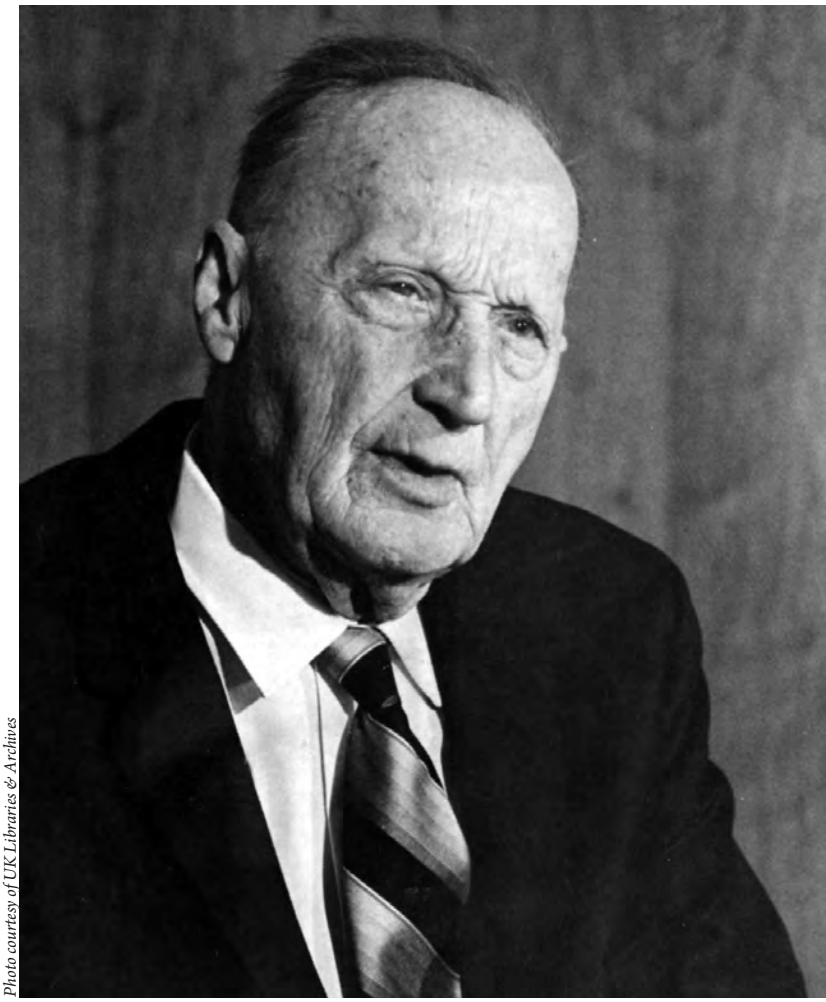

Photo courtesy of UK Libraries & Archives

In addition to being a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Robert Penn Warren was the first Poet Laureate of the United States.

from Tennessee through the mountain trace. On that fall night, a small group of stragglers that had ventured about three miles from the main camp was attacked. For the rest of that harrowing night, James was tortured to death. When the bodies were discovered, "there was little leisure for mourning" as Boone's party immediately prepared to counterattack. Ultimately, this event prompted the would-be settlers to delay their plans.

In the aftermath, Boone and his family stayed in Kentucky for the winter, but in late spring the father "made a solitary pilgrimage" to the grave of his fallen son. "We can look back on this moment of lonely mourning," Warren tells us, "the most melancholy moment of Boone's life, by his own account—and see it as a moment that gives inwardness and humanity to an age. Beyond the clichés of romance of the frontier, beyond the epic record of endurance and the manipulations of land speculators and politicians, beyond the learned discussions of historical forces, there is the image of a father staring down at the patch of earth."

As readers, we empathize with the parent who looks upon the grave of the child. We share the father's sense of devastating loss,

[2] Kentucky Historical Society, Historical Marker Database, n.d., at http://migration.kentucky.gov/kyhs/hmdb/MarkerSearch.aspx?mode=County&county=110, accessed August 11, 2017; Guthrie, Kentucky, "About," n.d., at http://guthrieky.com/about-2/, accessed August 11, 2017; Robert Penn Warren Birthplace Museum, website, n.d., at https://www.robertpennwarren.com/birthpla.html, accessed August 11, 2017; "Author Robert Penn Warren Honored on US. Postage Stamp," PR Newswire, April 4, 2005, at http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/author-robert-penn-warren-honored-on-us-postage-stamp-54169642.html.

bewildered in his disbelief that the natural order of time has been so violated by his son's death. The moment takes on archetypal significance as Boone becomes every father, and the weight of the sorrow is so monumental that the writer is compelled to render it in the terms of epic. "It is like that moment in the midst of the heroic hurly-burly of the *Iliad* when Hector seeks out his wife and little son, and the baby cries in terror at the great crest of horsehair on the bronze helmet, and Hector lifts off the helmet, lays 'it shining on the ground' and takes his son in his arm."[3]

This brief excerpt illustrates that "the historical sense and the poetic sense should not, in the end, be contradictory," as Warren states in the preface to his book-length poem *Brother to Dragons*.[4] Returning to historical places and events in person sharpens our perception of the historical experience. We must know the facts of what happened. Making those return trips in the imagination enlivens our sense of the spirit of that historical experience. We must grasp for some truth of what happened.

Literature makes that kind of return possible. Warren connects Boone's moment at the grave to a moment in a great canonical work of literature, Homer's epic of the Trojan War. It is a connection that everyone can understand, many readers having encountered the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in high school. With all the connectivity of the twenty-first century—texting and Facetime, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr—we still connect to history and each other in this elemental way—through the telling and retelling of our stories. The human being, as described by Jonathan Gottschall, is "*the storytelling animal*." Reading, viewing, and listening to stories does not serve merely our entertainment preferences. Narrative is crucial for our survival. Our 0stories "make us human."[5] We connect to the stories we have read because we seek to be consoled, reassured, and inspired and because our ideas, our beliefs, our values, and even our very identities need to be challenged, confronted, and questioned. With those objectives in mind, I propose that Robert Penn Warren's masterpiece novel *All the King's Men* is more compelling and possibly even more relevant now than ever. It is time for us to return to one of the finest writers in the United States and one of the quintessential works of political fiction in American literature.

Politics is the arena where stories—usually dramas, sometimes tragedies, and occasionally comedies—are played out on a grand stage of human complexities and flaws. These days that stage is built from cable television and the Internet, where reporters, talk-show hosts, bloggers, and pundits provide commentary like a twenty-four/seven Greek chorus. Though I have not done any study of the matter, I would speculate that Shakespeare probably tops the list of

[3] Robert Penn Warren, "The World of Daniel Boone," *Holiday*, December 1963.

[4] Robert Penn Warren, *Brother to Dragons* (1953; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), xiii.

[5] Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2013).

writers most often referred to in political commentary. References to plays such as *Julius Caesar*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Coriolanus* appear occasionally in newspaper opinion pieces. Articles in the *American Spectator* and the *Guardian*, for example, called Hillary Clinton "the Lady Macbeth of Little Rock" and referred to President Barack Obama as "Hamlet on the Potomac."[6] Shakespeare's fictional kings and princes must be some of the most influential leaders in history if measured by the power they exert on our understanding of current events. By that same standard, one of the most influential governors in US history might very well be a work of fiction: Willie Stark of *All the King's Men*. When National Public Radio broadcast what it called a "profile of one of America's greatest and most controversial politicians . . . the quintessential American demagogue," it said of Willie Stark that he was "a champion of the little guy who became a governor and a tyrant" and then it concluded, almost as a quip, "He's also fictional."[7]

Stark is indeed a demagogue who begins with ideals but ends up compromising those high values. In the name of getting good things done, he cuts ethical corners. Warren's novel raises uncomfortable but crucial questions about desired ends and the means used to achieve them. It raises uncomfortable questions about the wielding of power and the role of ethics in politics. It asks us to consider: *How can we enable the coexistence of our values, which we never want to compromise, and our political processes, which demand compromise?* It asks us to consider not only the obligations of our elected leaders but also our own responsibilities as the citizens who give them power. It even asks us to confront the relationship between news reporters and the elected officials they cover.

These questions are pressing upon us at this moment in Kentucky and in the United States. The political landscape of our nation is polarized, with citizens divided into camps that barely speak to each other and fail to acknowledge good faith in each other's positions. Making this polarization worse, unfortunately, too many elected officials, for their own political advantages, are exploiting and even amplifying those rifts rather than attempting to mediate them. Indeed, different sides of arguments even adopt their own sources of news and facts. Here in Kentucky and across our great country, we must dedicate ourselves to finding common ground because in a pluralistic society we have no other option if we aspire to be peaceful and productive. The novel *All the King's Men* provides us one tool for engaging in that civil dialogue. We must return to Warren's story of power and demagoguery, of authoritarianism and corruption, which was prescient when Warren wrote it in the aftermath of the world at war and remains prescient for our contemporary circumstances

Photo courtesy of the Robert Penn Warren Birthplace Museum

The Robert Penn Warren Birthplace Museum is located at Third and Cherry Streets in Guthrie, Kentucky.

and all time. As Warren worked on *All the King's Men*, humanity was engaged in the most massive war and slaughter of innocents in the history of the world. Two decades later, as Warren was working on his poem *Audubon: A Vision*, the United States was in conflict with itself, as was very evident in the war in Vietnam, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and protests erupting throughout the nation. Warren wrote,

> *Tell me a story.*
> *In this century, and moment, of mania,*
> *Tell me a story.*[8]

We are close to entering the third decade of another century. But literature is timeless, and *All the King's Men* might be more relevant than ever. Let's tell the story.

About the Author

Jonathan S. Cullick is professor of English and former chair of the English Department at Northern Kentucky University. He is the author of several books including *Religion in the Twenty-First Century: A Longman Topics Reader* and *Making History: The Biographical Narratives of Robert Penn Warren*, as well as many articles on William Faulkner, Walker Percy, Robert Penn Warren, and other southern and American writers and topics.

[6] Daniel Wattenberg, "The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock," *American Spectator*, November 20, 2015, at https://spectator.org/64729_lady-macbeth-little-rock/; Jonathan Freedland, "Enough of Playing Hamlet: Obama Needs to Act Now," *Guardian*, September 3, 2013, at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/03/enough-hamlet-obama-act-now-syria.

[7] Melissa Block (host) and Ron Elving, "Willie Stark Lives On," *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, September 8, 2008, at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94394578.

[8] Robert Penn Warren, *Audubon: A Vision*, in *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren*, edited by John Burt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 267.

Kentucky Humanities' ambitious new project, Kentucky Reads, will use Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *All the King's Men* to guide a statewide conversation on contemporary populism and political discourse, and their relationship to journalism. With funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as cooperation with valued partners, we'll embark on a series of discussions and multi-disciplinary events centered on Warren's celebrated and timeless work, and what it can teach us today.

April 24th

Paint the Town Red

Kentucky Humanities announced the Kentucky Reads program from the Robert Penn Warren Birthplace Museum in Guthrie, Kentucky.

June-July-August

Kentucky Humanities Book Club

Join Bill Goodman and a guest for three monthly Facebook Live discussions on *All the King's Men*. Sessions will be available for viewing after live streaming as well.

September 5th

All the King's Men
at the Kentucky Theater

Kentucky Theater screening of *All the King's Men* (1949), Academy Award winner for Best Picture, Best Actor (Broderick Crawford) and Best Supporting Actress (Mercedes McCambridge).

September 9th

Documentary Sneak Preview

Preview of *The Robert Penn Warren Story* documentary from KET and award-winning filmmaker Tom Thurman at the Lexington Public Library Farish Theatre.

September 13th

Community Forum

Northern Kentucky University hosts a keynote address from Dr. Jonathan Cullick on his book, *Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men A Reader's Companion*, and a Community Forum on journalism and politics.

September 17th

Bale Boone Symposium

The Gaines Center for the Humanities at the University of Kentucky presents the Bale Boone Symposium, featuring *New York Times* #1 bestselling author and historian Jon Meacham, speaking on the relevance of Warren's work, from politics to race to regional culture.

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This program is part of the "Democracy and the Informed Citizen" Initiative, administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils. The initiative seeks to deepen the public's knowledge and appreciation of the vital connections between democracy, the humanities, journalism, and an informed citizenry.

We thank The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their generous support of this initiative and the Pulitzer Prizes for their partnership.

September 18th

Community Forum

Paducah's Market House Theatre hosts a live reading of scenes from the stage adaptation of *All the King's Men* followed by a Community Forum on journalism and politics.

October 22nd

Documentary Premiere

Official KET premiere of *The Robert Penn Warren Story* at Van Meter Auditorium on the campus of Western Kentucky University, followed by a Q&A with Rosanna Warren, poet and daughter of Robert Penn Warren, with filmmaker Tom Thurman.

October 23rd

Community Forum

Western Kentucky University hosts a Community Forum on journalism and politics.

November 16th & 17th

Kentucky Book Fair

Dr. Jonathan Cullick teaches the KBF Master Class for high school students on November 16, and gives Main Stage presentation at the Kentucky Book Fair on November 17.

Unconfirmed Events

October 8th or 15th

Actors Theatre of Louisville hosts a live reading of scenes from the stage adaptation of *All the King's Men* followed by a Community Forum on journalism and politics.

October 9th or 16th

The University of Kentucky hosts a live reading of scenes from the stage adaptation of *All the King's Men* followed by a Community Forum on journalism and politics.

"My Old Kentucky Home": An Extended Look

Photo courtesy of UK Libraries & Archives

By Dr. Marshall Myers

In Louisville, every first Saturday in May, at Churchill Downs, as the competing horses slowly walk to the starting gate, the whole nation becomes Kentuckians in the singing of "My Old Kentucky Home."

The words nostalgically flash memories in the mind of a gentle place where "the lady" should not "weep" because remembrance of "my old Kentucky home" will support all even when "hard times comes a-knocking at our door."

Even abolitionist Stephen Douglass praised the power of the song, calling the composition "a heart song… [with] the finest feelings of human nature. ["My Old Kentucky Home"] can make the heart sad as well as merry, and call forth a tear as well as a smile."

It should not prove surprising then that the song is often sung in praise of yet perhaps another place and another time.

Is the song really about memories of a long time ago? Or is there more to Stephen Foster's song than what the crowd believes it is singing?

Is The Song About Memories And Who Is The Narrator?

When looking at the lyrics in their entirety, several things become obvious. The song has a strong persona, in this case a slave, who laments that he and perhaps another will soon have to leave "My Old Kentucky Home." For while the "sun shines bright on my old Kentucky home," the persona, it appears, is a slave who is to be sold "down river" and who realizes that the good times at his old Kentucky home will soon fade.

But for now the other slaves are "gay" and the youngsters "roll on the cabin floor, all merry, all happy and bright."

[Yet] "by'n by hard times come a-knocking at the door," meaning the slaves think that the master will have to sell some of his slaves to be able to pay his debts and keep "My Old Kentucky Home."

The slaves then realize that very soon he will have only sweet memories of "My Old Kentucky Home" to get by. But the slave narrator advises the lady of the cabin that she should "weep no more, my lady,

weep no more today" for she too will have sweet memories to sustain her, so he advises her to "sing one song for my old Kentucky home, far away."

How Realistic Is the Speaker That He Will Be "Sold Down River"? What Are the Chances?

Is the slave narrator correct in thinking that he will soon leave "my old Kentucky Home"?

Exact numbers are not available, but some statistics assist in understanding just how justified the speaker is that he will be "sold down the river" in order to pay off the master's debts.

In 1840, the state had, according to Marion Lucas's extended study of slavery in Kentucky, 182,258 slaves. By 1850 that number had shot up to 210, 981 slaves, just three years before "My Old Kentucky Home" was published, an increase of nearly 29,000 slaves in 10 years who needed shelter, clothing, and food.

In a word, many slave owners found themselves with way too many slaves.

Most slaves were concentrated in the Bluegrass Region and in the far western part of the state. In those places, slavery was more like the slavery in the Deep South, with large numbers of slaves working in hemp or tobacco fields, tending crops that called for human hands.

But for the rest of the state such arrangements were uncommon.

Unlike the large plantations of cotton, rice, and sugar cane of the lower South, the "peculiar institution" in Kentucky had for the most part what may be called "domestic slavery." The slave worked directly with the master, sometimes even working beside him in planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops like smaller plots of hemp, and corn, or tending farm animals, usually hogs, but some sheep and cattle.

What Were The Slaves' Perception Of Slavery In Kentucky?

While no form of slavery is acceptable, the perception at the time was that life was easier for slaves in the state than it was for those in the steamy and dusty cotton fields, where the slave driver was quite free with the dreadful lash of a whip if slaves did not perform to his standards. In fact, slaves were often literally worked to death, dying in their mid-thirties, and often living in the crudest of disease-ridden cabins with only perfunctory medical care.

Life was not easy for slaves.

The loam of the once rich limestone-based soil lost some of its fertility, and the need for so many slaves dwindled. As a consequence, hated slave traders frequently visited farms, offering to buy excess slaves. The temptation, too often, became a reality and slave traders bought several slaves. At times, the farmer broke up whole families, but the money farmers received for trading in human flesh frequently soothed the conscience if it could turn his "hard times" into financial gain.

The whole sale and delivery of slaves to the market down South was relatively easy. Some traders built a boat large enough to accommodate 50-70 slaves, often chained together to prevent them from escaping. Or traders transported their human chattel on a steamboat, making the trip seem shorter, but the cost of transportation ate into the profits in the markets at Natchez, Mississippi and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Photo courtesy of UK Libraries & Archives

Known as "the father of American music," Stephen Collins Foster published "My Old Kentucky Home" in 1853.

Returning from a visit to Joshua Speed near Louisville, Abraham Lincoln observed how slaves "were chained six and six together… A small clevis was around the left wrist of each, and this fastened to the main chain by a shorter one at a convenient distance from the others; so that the negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trot line."

When slaves arrived at their destination, they were purchased like chattel to do hard labor for the rest of their lives in the cotton, rice, or cane fields.

It was a life slaves in Kentucky had heard about and rightly dreaded, for slaves had reasons to fear being "sold down river."

What Were Stephen Foster's Views Of Slavery?

Earlier, Stephen Foster's songs pictured slaves as happy and gentle people, but as Foster, the American Troubadour, more closely studied the terrible plight of southern slavery, he wrote fewer song that portrayed them as stereotypes in songs like "Old Black Joe," a composition often used in minstrel shows of the day.

But the decade of the 1850s brought real change with the nation and within Foster. In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a poignant and sentimental novel that pictured the pitiful plight of slaves in Kentucky.

The story may only be legend, but President Lincoln is supposed to have said that when Mrs. Stowe visited the White House, he asked, "Is this the little lady that caused this great big war!" For the book had a profound effect on the nation's conscience.

Foster also felt other influences. During this same period, he spent time working as a bookkeeper in Cincinnati, across the river from slavery in Kentucky where *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was to have taken place.

But as legend has it, a visit to Judge John Rowan's estate, Federal Hill, near Bardstown, Kentucky, provided the impetus for Foster to re-title a song "Uncle Tom," based on the character from the novel, to "My Old Kentucky Home."

The story goes that Foster was so inspired by the conditions of the slaves there, but little evidence exists to support that story. What seems more likely was that Foster finished the song while home near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

What Is The Second Stanza About?

The seldom-sung second stanza is even darker than the first with images that paint pictures of all the things the slave narrator will no longer be able to do when he must leave "My Old Kentucky Home":

They hunt no more for the 'possum and the coon,
On the meadow, the hill, and the shore.
They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon,
On the bench by the old cabin door.
The day goes by like a shadow o'er the heart,
With sorrow where all was delight.
The time has come when the [slaves] have to part,
Then my old Kentucky home, good night.

The stanza lists a number of things the narrator will miss. Typically, for example, slaves were given Sunday off from their labors. During this time, the slaves supplemented their food supply by hunting animals they could find in the immediate area. Women would also forage for vegetables and roots, like poke weed, nuts, and edible berries of all types. When the master butchered, he gave the slaves the parts he did not want, like the head or intestines, which the slaves turned into various dishes like souse and "chittlins." All those things the narrator will no longer be able to do.

In this same stanza, particularly poignant are the lines that refer to the slaves singing together "by the glimmer of the moon [and] on the bench by the cabin door." Slaves, then, often gathered to sing songs passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," and "Steal away with Jesus."

The latter song became a signal to other slaves that some would try running away that night. It's not surprising that runaway slaves referred to the Ohio River as "the Jordan." When escaping slaves reached the shore of a free state, they looked for "safe houses" marked by various signs like a candle in a certain window or a blanket on the clothes line. Across from the bottom land in Meade County, for example, slaves who had swum the Ohio River found a "safe houses" in New Amsterdam, Indiana.

But to slaves who stayed, memories of past days of fun and frolic will become "like a shadow o'er the heart" and will be replaced "with sorrow where all was delight," for "the time has come when the [slaves sold to the slave trader] will have to part" and all the departed slaves will have only the remembrance of "My Old Kentucky Home," and the good times there to sustain them.

While in the first stanza the narrator remembers the good times; this second stanza spells out in specific terms just what the slave will miss.

What Does The Third Stanza Do?

The third stanza anticipates what the slave "sold down river" will experience, by using three similar lines, but leaving him to reflect on the memories of "My Old Kentucky Home" to get by:

The head must bow and the back will have to bend,
Wherever the [slave] may go.
A few more days and the troubles all will end.
In the field where the sugar-cane may grow.
A few more days for to tote the weary load,
No matter 'twill never be light.
A few more days till we totter on the road,
Then my old Kentucky home good night.

This stanza, like the other two, is followed by the chorus, and the narrator predicts that the long journey "will end" and "the head must bow and the back will bend" "in the field where the sugar cane may grow." The song uses the matching lines to emphasize the weary anticipation of the long journey until he arrives down South. Each line then begins with "a few more days," giving the stanza balance.

But when the slaves arrive at the destination, there "no matter 'twill never be light" with only the sweet memories of his "old Kentucky home" to sustain him in the terrible life he will have in the deep South.

In The End, What's "My Old Kentucky Home" Really About?

So "My Old Kentucky Home" argues for the beauty of life in the Commonwealth through the words of a slave being "sold down South." "Hard times" have come to his master, and the narrator will be sold to the slave trader, and taken down South to work in dreadful conditions.

The slave's words remind us all of heartfelt memories that crowd the imagination of perhaps another place and another time, but the song's melancholy melody and touching words create pictures of the good life at "My Old Kentucky Home."

Note: "My Old Kentucky Home" became Kentucky's official state song by order of the legislature in 1928. The words were changed slightly when in 1986 "darkies" was replaced by "people." In places, the author has used "slave" when the context called for it.

About the Author

Retired in 2012, Dr. Marshall Myers was coordinator of composition and full professor at Eastern Kentucky University in the Department of English. He has published more than 300 articles, scholarly pieces, poems, and short stories. Dr. Myers has authored two books on the Civil War in Kentucky: *Great Civil War Stories of Kentucky* and *Neither Blue Nor Gray*. His book, *Only in Old Kentucky: Historic True Tales of Cultural Ingenuity*, continues the theme of early Kentuckians "making do" in their circumstances. Raised in rural Meade County, Dr. Myers received a B.A. in English from Kentucky Wesleyan College, an M.A. in English from Eastern Kentucky University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Louisville.

Lilacs and Spirea

By Georgia Green Stamper

I'm pretty sure I gasped. Maybe I only think I did, embellishing the memory, but a sight that unexpected can make you gasp, and I'm pretty sure I did.

We almost didn't stop by the farm that afternoon. Early that morning, we'd driven to Cincinnati where I'd given a lecture. We needed to get home to Lexington for an evening obligation. But my family's vacant home-place is halfway between, and only a few miles off the Interstate. Ernie and I agreed we needed to check on it after a winter of neglect.

I'm hesitant to admit this, since the four generations of my family who preceded me spent every season of their lives there. But it depresses me to go to the farm in the wintertime. The land that sustained us sleeps naked in winter, every ugly flaw exposed. The old house is cold.

But this was spring, not winter. I needed to check on things, I reminded myself, as we pulled into the driveway in front of the house.

That's when I gasped. The farmhouse could have danced in a Disney fairy tale or been sculpted in fondant and served as a wedding cake. The old lilac and spirea bushes, covered in lavender and ivory lace flowers, had reached the second-floor windowsill of my girlhood bedroom. They jostled with each other down the sides and across the back of the white, clapboard house, veiling it in a million tiny blossoms. Only the black roof peaked out over the flowers.

The sight of the blooming house had silenced us. Now I said, "I'm glad we decided to stop." What inadequate words.

"Yes," Ernie said. Then, "I'd forgotten how pretty lilacs smell."

Mother planted these shrubs, tiny switches Aunt Bessie gave her, around 1952, several years after the big house burned. Uninsured, my family hastily re-built a smaller home on the site. Faded black-and-white photographs document Mother's stories of the discouragement she felt in those first years after the fire. The unpainted concrete block foundation rises from the ground six feet or more where the site slopes downhill, and in the rear, it's exposed a full story high. There's no grass. Big rocks dislodged by the jackleg builder's bulldozer rest where he'd shoved them in a hurry to be done.

I would have whined. But Mother kept at the job, slow and steady, determined to turn ours into a beautiful place; my father and grandfather helped when they could. A lifetime later, crippled by arthritis, Mother would speculate that it was the making of the yard that put her on the path to her wheelchair. She lugged the heavy rocks away. She nurtured the grass. And Aunt Bessie gave her plant starts.

I don't know how one gives a spirea or lilac start to someone. I remember Friendship Bread that made the rounds when I was a young wife. Its ancient yeast starter had been passed from friend to friend, one fermented pinch at a time, leavening friendship and expanding waistlines through generations. My batch, however, flipped over in the backseat of my station wagon on the way home. I never got all of that historical dough washed out of the car's carpet.

Aunt Bessie, though, knew how to start and keep plants alive. The yard that surrounded her pretty, brick house was a botanical laboratory. Everywhere there was a blooming this or that, a mammoth fern, a towering decorative grass, an exotic bulb, a prickly succulent. Her out-of control shrubbery created dim caves beneath their branches for sleeping cats and children playing hide-and-seek. Weeping willow trees, fit for Tarzan's trapeze antics, screened the road.

I don't remember a young Aunt Bessie, though she never seemed old to me. She always wore circles of rouge on her cheeks, and her hair fluffed around her face in waves. As a teenager, she'd left the farm for the city's shops and streetcars. I never heard anyone mention what job she held. Perhaps she only lived with city relatives like poor, young women do in Jane Austen novels. But for the rest of her life, she loved Cincinnati.

Marriage to my grandfather's youngest brother, Murf Hudson, carried her back to the country. I wonder now if her passion for growing flowers and exotic plants was her way of coping with her exile from the city because I don't recall her using her green thumb to produce vegetables. Pragmatic, farm-to-table gardening was left to Uncle Murf. Maybe her yard was a boastful way of saying to the world, "I've been somewhere else." Why ever, it pleases me that her spirea and lilac bushes are still blooming on my farm, if not her lawn.

A quick search turned up a glass jelly jar left behind in the old kitchen. With my make-do vase, I plunged into the caves under the shrubbery to pick a bouquet like I did when I was a kid. The flowering spirea branches, prickly despite their delicate bridal veil illusion, scratched my arms. The lavender lilacs were as soft as silk against my nose.

"I'm glad we decided to stop," Ernie said as we left.

"Yes," I said, "me too." I held my jelly jar of flowers steady between my knees all the way back to our house in Lexington.

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 Speakers Bureau.

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