
**THE DAVIESS COUNTY
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY**

Volume II

JANUARY

Number 1

**Published by
THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY is published in January, April, July and October, by the Daviess County Historical Society. The **QUARTERLY** is supplied free to all its members.

Annual membership dues are \$5.00

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The Editor's Page

The *Daviess County Historical Quarterly* begins its second year of publication with a variety of articles. James D. Cockrum's article describes Owensboro's response to the first turbulent weeks of World War II, when the lives of the city's citizens underwent profound change as the reality of war entered their lives. Cockrum, a graduate of Kentucky Wesleyan College, is the College's associate director of admissions.

The fame of Daviess County as a distilling center was well-known by 1880, when some eleven distilleries shipped their products to thirsty citizens throughout the nation. The *Chicago Journal* sent a reporter to Kentucky to investigate the distilling industry for which the bluegrass state was so famous, and the resulting article awarded the county the recognition it so justly deserved.

By 1880 there were 394 Owensboroans of German birth, according to the census of that year. Zion United Church of Christ stands today as a monument to the determination of the Protestants among these German settlers to establish a place of worship where they could worship according to their German traditions. Illustrated on the cover is the second Zions Kirche, built in 1900, with its unique belfry, unfortunately removed when the building had to be re-built because of structural flaws.

OWENSBORO GOES TO WAR

by James D. Cockrum

INTRODUCTION

Sunday, December 7, 1941 began as a pleasant day in Owensboro. Not terribly cold for December, families were able to walk to church and enjoy a few hours outside. Mrs. C. C. Mitchell remembers that December 7, 1941 found her 8 months pregnant. Following church, she and her husband also decided to enjoy a short walk. Upon their return, the Mitchell's switched on their radio, and listened with the rest of Owensboro as the details of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor were described over WOMI. December 7, 1941 had become the "Day of Infamy," and in a few short hours, the United States would officially enter the Second World War.

But December 7, 1941 marked only the beginning of the military commitment to combat. The "war effort" had begun many months earlier and Owensboro, like communities across the nation, put forth her best effort toward the national defense. By December 1941 projects related to defense, (from the local level to federal programs), were in effect in Owensboro and had been operating in some instances for well over a year.

THE MILITARY IN OWENSBORO

Most of the earliest defense-related programs were those established at the federal level and enacted at local level, the most obvious being the Selective Service Administration. Daviess County was served by two draft boards—Kentucky Local Draft Board #35 and #36, (city and county, respectively). By December, 1941, these local boards had held two separate registrations for young men of draft age. The first was held on October 16, 1940 shortly after the establishment of the boards earlier that month, and the second was held July 1, 1941. The first year of operation provided 5,927 draft registrants from Owensboro and Daviess county.

Added to that total was the registration of two young men from Cincinnati, Jim Densford and George Wilson, who found it necessary to register in Owensboro. It seems that Wilson and Densford were enroute to New Orleans on a summer canoe trip when the July registration arrived, and stopped to register in Owensboro rather than risk the legal problems inherent otherwise.

One gentleman was unlucky enough to discover just what legal problems were available if draft legislation wasn't followed closely. Stanford Puckett, of Indianapolis, IN, visited Owensboro without notifying his Indiana draft board. When Puckett was arrested in Owensboro on charges of public drunkenness, he was also convicted of draft evasion and forced to forfeit \$2,500 bond before being returned to Indianapolis.

Another military consequence of early defense effort in Owensboro concerned the local unit of the Kentucky National Guard. In reorganizing their military efforts, the War Department found it necessary to disband the 22nd Cavalry Division of the Guard stationed in Owensboro in October of 1940. The Owensboro unit was one of several reorganized into the 106th Separate Battalion, Coast Artillery (AA), with headquarters in Hopkinsville, Glasgow, Springfield, Monticello, and Madisonville.

Those drafted in Owensboro normally found themselves headed for Louisville with little public fanfare. Draftees would report to their local boards at 7:30 a.m. to board buses for the Louisville induction centers. But in September, 1941, both local draft boards established funds to provide Bibles and prayer books to local draftees. Protestant men were presented Bibles and Catholic men received the prayer books in ceremonies presided over by local priests and ministers. In March, 1942, the local Lion's Club joined in to sponsor patriotic rallies before each group left for induction. Also in March, 1942, Owensboro High School began "pre-draft" classes, under the direction of Major C. W. Burkett, professor of Military Science and Tactics at OHS. The classes were to help the draftees get a jump on their expected training.

The Selective Service was not Owensboro's only access to the military. Ernest Freeman and A. J. Hanlin, recruiters for the Army and Navy, maintained offices in the Federal Building on Frederica Street, and published their volunteers in the "Recruiting Notes" column of the Owensboro *Messenger*. The volunteer program was steady before Pearl Harbor, but increased dramatically following the attack. Over 25 volunteers were processed on Monday, December 8, a figure which surpassed most weekly totals.

Mr. Hubert McFarland was the first Owensboroan to arrive at Sgt. Freeman's Army Recruiting Office the day after Pearl Harbor. Despite awaiting decisions about job applications with the FBI and the Tennessee Valley Authority, McFarland was of the mind that volunteering would allow him to know what to expect rather than throwing himself at the mercy of the draft and the military process of duty assignment.

In addition to the increase in volunteers, Pearl Harbor also brought other changes to the Owensboro recruiting offices. Almost immediately

the Army raised the age limit for volunteers from 28 to 35, and enlistments were limited to "duration of the war plus 6 months." The Navy, with a drastic need for servicemen following Pearl Harbor, maintained current enlistment options and lowered physical requirements.

Those Owensboroans who were drafted or volunteered received a preview of Army life in July, 1941. The month of July found units from Ft. Knox across the state on maneuvers. On July 2, 1941, the 47th Battalion Medical Department arrived in Moreland Park; and the following week over 2,500 members of the 1st Armored Division also bivouaced in Moreland and Legion parks. Local citizens spent picnic afternoons touring through the makeshift camps in Owensboro.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

While the military had a great impact on Owensboro, the true spirit of Owensboro's contribution to the nation's entrance into World War II was best evidence in areas outside the military. One of the best and earliest examples of volunteer efforts in Owensboro was the work of the Owensboro chapter of the nationwide organization "Bundles for Britain." Established in November, 1940, the chapter was responsible in its first year of operation for over 1900 pieces of clothing shipped to London families bombed by the German Luftwaffe. In addition to these garments made in Owensboro, the organization also collected 932 pounds of used clothing. These were all shipped to the national organization's warehouse in New York City for overseas distribution.

In December of 1941, Bundles for Britain began its most unique and successful program in Owensboro. Mrs. Paul Held, the newly elected chairman, announced that the organization was requesting that each farmer who would sell his 1941 tobacco crop at the Big Independent Warehouse donate one "hand" of tobacco from each basket brought to market. Ironically, the December 7 edition of the Owensboro *Messenger* quoted Mrs. Held as saying that the project would be a big aid, "...if and when the United States enters the war..." in switching their efforts to aid both US and British forces. The entire project raised \$2050 for the organization, which was renamed "Bundles for Blue Jackets" following Pearl Harbor.

America's staple effort in any relief action is the American Red Cross, whose efforts in Owensboro before Pearl Harbor were fairly routine. The summer of 1941 saw the Red Cross offering their normal programs of first aid, blood drives, and swimming lessons. The entrance into the war required increased efforts, and citizens of Owensboro responded in champion fashion.

The Owensboro chapter fund drive beginning in January 1942, had a quota of \$13,000. The drive kicked off on January 7, and when "Red Cross Sunday" in the local churches ended on January 11, already \$3,094.20 had been pledged. Chairman Mike Callas was quoted as saying that "the Japs are running this campaign for us," and he expected little trouble in completing the quota. Only 31 days later the entire \$13,000 had been collected.

Two other local drives also epitomized the spirit of Owensboro when defense was the issue. The first was Owensboro's contribution to the statewide aluminum drive announced by Gov. Keen Johnson on June 27, 1941. Members of the American Legion met and organized the Owensboro effort. Mr. John Polkinghorn and Mr. Ralph Wible were designated as co-chairmen, and Mr. Charles Cox served as the county organizer. Huge collection baskets were placed on the Courthouse Square and the lawn of the Federal Building, and July 23, 1941 was designated as collection day. Nearly every civic and social organization volunteered their membership, from the Boy Scouts to the Elk's Lodge. With 12 committees working the rural county and the Legionaires working the city voting precincts, over 5790 lbs. of aluminum were collected in the countywide effort. Three local transportation companies, (ECK Miller Moving & Storage, Newbold Transportation, and Mayflower Moving), volunteered to transport the load to the regional collection center in Louisville. The aluminum was placed in the spare room available on regular trips and by August 22, a total of 6750 lbs. had been delivered.

The second effort involving a majority of local citizens was the drive held to purchase defense bonds. In addition to the bonds purchased by individuals, local employers joined together in an attempt to raise 100% participation by their employees in payroll-deduction bond sales. The effort began on January 20, 1942 when Mr. Ed Roth, of the Defense Savings Division from Washington, D.C., attended a meeting of 30 Owensboro businesses who employed 40 or more persons. Two months later over 5,000 persons had enrolled in the bond program, and more than 80 local companies had achieved their goal of 100% participation. City employees also joined the effort, including the Police and Fireman's Pension Board who had purchased \$14,800 in bonds before the official drive even started.

Other private efforts, not so large in number, still matched these in spirit. These include such contributions as the tea held by Mrs. Robert Brewer to aid the American Field Service, an American medical team in the Middle East. The United China Relief Fund, also smaller in number, was able to raise over \$1,000 through the efforts of the local Rotary Club, who sponsored a football game between Owensboro and

Hopkinsville. Ticket purchasers were honored with their name on a plaque placed in the Courthouse.

It would be impossible to list the efforts of every citizen or organization who participated in similar activities. Their numbers would be in the hundreds. It would not be improper to say that Owensboro spared *no* effort when a call for help was received.

ECONOMY AND RATIONING

World War II also had a great effect on the local economy of Owensboro—sometimes positive, sometimes negative. Among the first to benefit from the “war economy” were three of Owensboro’s major employers. KEN-RAD received War Department contracts for radio tubes in June, 1941. While the total amount of these contracts was only \$2,980, they did pave the way for later defense work at KEN-RAD.

Modern Welding Company was the earliest winner in the war economy of Owensboro. Two defense contracts from the Department of the Navy provided nearly \$100,000 of business to Modern Welding. The first was received in October 1941, and totaled \$48,120 for the construction of buoys and buoy moorings. The second, received in March 1942, was also for a sum of \$48,000.

The third major employer to benefit from the defense economy was the Glenmore Distillery Co. When the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, an immediate need was created for gunpowder and munitions. In January, Glenmore was reported as 1 of 3 Kentucky distilleries ready to produce “industrial alcohol” for use in manufacturing gunpowder. By February, Glenmore was producing 20,000 gallons/month of the weapons-grade alcohol for shipment to powder plants in Memphis, TN.

Other business was not so fortunate as the larger manufacturers. As defense needs began to create shortages of many consumer products, several local companies began to feel the pinch. As early as June 1941 ads were regularly appearing in the classifieds of the Owensboro *Messenger* encouraging customers to buy before severe shortages set in. One such advertiser was Paul’s Radio Service, who stated in his ad that parts for radios were becoming scarce, and encouraged his customers to repair their radios soon. Others used their ads for public apologies for increases in costs due to defense considerations. Also in June 1942 the Illinois Central Railroad placed an ad publicizing the fact that they spent over \$17 million on defense-related improvements despite only \$3.4 profits for the first 4 months of 1941.

The utility companies were particularly hard hit by the advent of war. In February 1942 the War Production Board issued orders which

prevented the Owensboro Gas Company from installing new gas units or converting to gas any homes or commercial businesses. The Green River Rural Electric Association was also forced to curtail services in early 1942 due to a shortage of copper wire needed for extension of power lines.

The local retailers in Owensboro took the economic lag in good stride. In September 1941 they banded together in "Retailer for Defense" and devised strategies, delivery schedules, and even a "Mrs. Typical Customer" contest in a show of support for national defense despite their own problems. Following Pearl Harbor, all but two local merchants emptied their shelves of all Japanese merchandise. The shelves had long been clear of any German and Italian goods.

As the months following Pearl Harbor passed, the shortages became more frequent and official rationing became defense priority #1. The first officially rationed commodity in Owensboro was auto tires. In late December, it was announced that tire rationing in Kentucky was to begin January 4, 1942. As might be expected, the first reported theft of tires also occurred on January 4th. The Daviess County Tire Rationing Board was officially established on January 7, 1942 and located their office in the Odd Fellows Bldg. on Third St. For the duration of the war, Owensboroans were forced to apply for tires through the board, and the board was charged with allocating the monthly quota. The following month also saw limits imposed on new car sales in Owensboro.

Sugar was the next commodity to hit the rationing lists. Although official limits were not imposed until April 1942, the local Coca-Cola Bottling Company imposed rationing upon its own products in late January. Coke would no longer allow individuals to buy Cokes in bulk at their plant, and cut back their sales to retailers. Again, just prior to the beginning of official rationing, theft of the precious commodity was reported. Over 1,200 pounds of sugar was stolen from the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company in late March, a few weeks before Owensboro reported to local elementary schools to register for sugar cards.

As in previous situations, the citizens of Owensboro responded first with their good nature. Mrs. C. C. Mitchell related her memories of shopping after rationing came to Owensboro:

When you saw a line forming, you just jumped in it.
Whatever it was, you would need it eventually, so you really
didn't have to ask what the line was for.

These were not unexpected problems, and civic leaders did their best to prevent or ease the hardship when possible. One such attempt was

the trip in July 1941 to Washington, D.C. by Mayor Harry Smith. Smith, accompanied by Kentucky Commonwealth Attorney D. C. White, lobbied in favor of Owensboro as the site of some of the 200 planned defense plants of the War Production Board. Although this effort of Mayor Smith was unsuccessful, he was later able to negotiate a Coast Guard unit locating in Owensboro.

In early January 1942 Coast Guard officials arrived in Owensboro to increase security at Lock and Dam #46. With river traffic steadily increasing with defense-related products, the government decided to limit access to the dam area, and Dublin Lane was closed as a result. With the Coast Guard becoming more concerned with the security of the area, Mayor Smith talked with the Guard, who recommended to the Navy that the abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps facility on the city's east side be purchased as a Coast Guard site. The proposal was accepted, and in early March 1942, the CCC facility was leased to the Guard for the sum of \$600/year.

MEDIA AND WAR COVERAGE

Perhaps one reason that Owensboro citizens were able to face their problems in such a realistic manner was the great amount of war coverage they were exposed to. The front pages of the Owensboro *Messenger* were almost totally reserved for war-related stories. Only news of extreme national or local interest was able to crack page one. The news of the death of Lou Gehrig, a long-standing national hero, was run beside that of the deaths of over 20,000 Nazi soldiers in the Mediterranean Sea.

And of course, with a great amount of coverage, mistakes were unavoidable. The headline of the Special Edition of the *Messenger* on the afternoon of December 7, 1941 contained misspelled words which slipped through the proofreaders in the haste to report Pearl Harbor. But the most embarrassing mistakes of the press occurred in the false reporting of the deaths of Louis Hornbeck and John Hamlet, supposedly the first Owensboro casualties of the war. Both were reported alive days after their obituaries appeared in the *Messenger*. To be fair, both instances were spawned out of letters to the families from Rear Admiral Nimitz, who notified them of their son's alleged death. The *Messenger* soon stopped reporting individual deaths due to both censorship regulations and the problem of accurate confirmation.

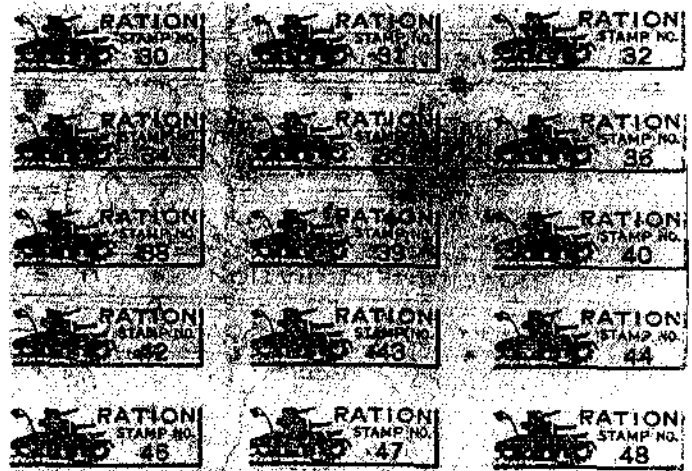
The *Messenger* also provided some unique coverage with cut-out maps and charts for readers to keep the "war score." The March 29, 1942 edition contained the most interesting example. Readers were encouraged to follow the war in the Pacific by coloring in or crossing

out each Japanese warship as it was reported sunk or damaged. The chart contained a detailed list of the Japanese ships, including the names.

SUMMARY

Owensboro was well prepared for the entrance to World War II. The "war effort" had been in place here long before war actually arrived, and the transitions were relatively easy to implant. Owensboro was easily enjoined in defense projects, whether the thrust was military, monetary, or requiring personal sacrifice. The relief efforts of organizations such as the Red Cross, the defense bond drives, and the military services found Owensboro ready and willing to aid in any manner.

This study has provided me an interesting look at the willingness of the citizens of my hometown to respond to the very difficult circumstances of war. The attitude apparent in the Owensboro of 1942 would be a welcome addition to any community of the 1980's. This is definitely one instance where knowledge of history could aid current society in the solution or prevention of problems in a more productive manner.



Rationing brought the reality of war home to the housewives of Owensboro, who struggled to provide nourishing foods for their families within the constraints set by the rationing system. For grocers, keeping up with the stamps became a monumental headache, as each pound of sugar, meat or other rationed items had to be accounted for with the appropriate number of stamps.

KENTUCKY'S LIQUID PRODUCT
Daviess County, the Source of the Genuine Bourbon
HOW IT IS MADE
(W. H. Day, in *Chicago Journal*.)

About three months ago the *Journal* was induced to send one of its representatives to Kentucky, and while there to make a personal examination of the immense whisky distillery interest of the State. Kentucky has and does now stand head and shoulders over any State in the Union, or in fact any country underneath the sun, for the production of a thoroughly first-class fine whisky. After making the rounds of the distilleries in Anderson, Nelson, Fayette, Franklin and Jefferson counties, and giving the readers of the *Journal* the result of his personal examination, he then went to Owensboro, Daviess county, the home of the genuine sour-mash whiskey. Daviess county claims, and very justly too, that she was first to produce the genuine hand-made old-fashioned fine cooper-distilled sour-mash whisky. Mr. T. J. Monarch commenced the manufacture of this article as far back as 1868. Since that time fully a dozen first-class houses of this kind have been put in operation with wonderful success, and now Daviess county produces more first-class fine sour-mash whisky than any other county. The revenue paid into the United States Revenue Department for sour-mash whiskey and tobacco for Daviess county doubles that paid by any other county in any State of the Union. Owensboro, the county seat of Daviess county, is located on the South bank of the Ohio river, and numbers about 15,000 people. Prominent among its other institutions there are about twenty stemming and prizing tobacco establishments; the smallest has a capacity for handling 600,000 pounds, whilst several of the largest have a handling capacity of 2,000,000 pounds a year. This is the most flourishing city in the State of Kentucky, and its prospects for the future are very bright. Your reporter made a personal examination of the manner in which sour-mash whisky is made in Daviess county, with the following result:

The Process of Manufacture.

The whiskies made in Kentucky are classed under two general heads, as sweet-mash and sour-mash, from the nature of the processes by which they are produced, the distinguishing characteristics of which are in the kind of ferment employed. Sweet-mash distilleries use only fresh artificial yeast, while in the sour-mash process the tub last set for fermentation, or the tub containing the most fresh yeast while at its highest state of fermentation, has yeast taken from it and applied to the small mash tubs which have already been in mash forty-eight hours,

together with rye meal, malt and water mixed thoroughly, and then run off into the fermenter. There it stands seventy-two hours, as required by law, at which period it is ripe and ready for distillation.

The time consumed in the small mash tubs is one of the distinguishing points between sweet and sour-mash whisky, and without the consumption of this time a strictly sour-mash cannot be made. The latter produces a far finer grade of whisky, but at the sacrifice of a number of advantages which somewhat compensates the sweet-mash distiller for the inferior quality of his products. These advantages include a yield of from one-fourth to one-third more from the same quality of grain as the result of a more active fermentation, a saving of one-third the time, and more than one-third in cost of manufacture with increased capacity from the same outlay, as the United States Internal Revenue laws prescribed that the time of fermentation shall be forty-eight hours in the sweet-mash process, and seventy-two hours in the sour-mash. The Government classes every distillery under one of these two heads, and requires that each shall use its designated fermenting agent as described above, its officials on the spot, having personal supervision of the distillery with instructions to prevent any variation from the prescribed method of precedence. Some sweet-mash distillers scald their grain with slop and some with water, the distillation began completed at one operation, without the expense and delay of doubting. . .

How Whisky Is Made.

Whisky is generally made from corn or rye, and the unequalled excellence of that produced in Kentucky is undoubtedly due to certain natural

Characteristics of the Soil,

which imparts peculiar qualities to the cereals raised on it, and especially to the nature of the water found in certain localities, when it is charged with those alkaline and earthy salts which experience has shown to be indispensable in forming these peculiar principles to which the flavor of fine whisky is due. This is not a merely theoretical assumption, but an empirical truth, which has been proven again and again by the futile efforts which have been made to produce good whisky in other sections which do not possess these natural advantages. The physical characteristics of corn or rye are so entirely different from those of whisky that it would seem difficult to trace the series of changes by which the one is derived from the other; the transformation is effected partly by mechanical means in preparing and handling the materials, partly by a few chemical reactions. The grain is first ground in a gristmill, and the meal introduced into the mash-tubs, where, by the agency of heat, the starch granules are ruptured, and their contents

prepared for the action of the malt. This substance contains a peculiar principle called *diastase*, by whose agency the starch, by union with water, altered into glucose, or grape sugar. After this change is completed the contents of the mash-tubs are emptied, when ready, into the fermenting vats, where by the action of a ferment the sugar is decomposed with the formation of alcohols and carbonic oxide, the latter passing off as gas, while the former remains in mechanical union with the water of the beer. The next step is the separation of the alcohols by distillation, resulting in the finished product.

When 100 bushels are mashed per day about eighty tubs are employed in the process. When Bourbon whisky is to be made a suitable quantity of boiling-hot water or slop is first introduced, to which is added the proper proportion of corn meal. After mixing it is set to one side to scald and cool. Before anything more can be done the scalded grain must be cooled down, so that when the mash is completed and set for fermentation, its temperature will be between 70 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the temperature of the fermenting room. On the following day the scalded corn meal, which is found to be caked and the consistency of cold mash, is

Broken Up By Hand

and thinned down with cold water. At this stage of the process a small proportion of barley, malt and rye meal is added, without being scalded. The diastase of the malt converts, by a chemical change, the starch of the scalded corn meal into a grape sugar or glucose, which is necessary before there can be any vinous fermentation, which produces alcohol. After the mash has been thoroughly mixed, it is all turned from the small tubs into the fermenting vat, and then the mashing is completed by thoroughly mixing and thinning down with cold water until it fills the vat to within about four inches of the top, at a point fixed by law. The mashing process is now completed, and the gravity and temperature of the mash having been taken in accordance with the law, it is set for fermentation. The fermentation now proceeds for seventy-two hours, which is the time allowed by law in a sour-mash distillery.

Messenger & Examiner
June 30, 1880

In Memoriam

Dan Madison King. 1914-1984—Past President,
Daviess County Historical Society
First Vice President. 1982-1984

ZIONS KIRCHE
a history of the German Protestant Church
in Owensboro
by John F. Schroeder

A great number of German immigrants moved into the Midwest during the years between 1830 and 1866. Some followed a northern route via the Erie Canal to Buffalo, thence westward along the Great Lakes. Some landed at New Orleans and came up the Mississippi to St. Louis settling in the towns and farmlands in the Missouri valley. Still others chose a middle route and came along the Ohio River and settled in sprouting towns like Cincinnati, Louisville, Owensboro, and Evansville.

There were many things in their homeland which they sought to escape—the depressed economy, an authoritarian political system and militarism and ecclesiastical tyranny. But there were some things which these German newcomers wanted to maintain. One of these was their mother tongue. Those with a religious orientation wanted a church which spoke their language. Thus, wherever these German immigrants settled, efforts were made to establish German congregations.

The tenth church to be organized in Owensboro had as its purpose a ministry to the German Protestants in this community. The *Deutsche Evangelische Zions Kirche* (German Evangelical Zions Church) was organized on April 2, 1872, when a constitution was adopted. Five men placed their signatures on that document: Andreas Walz, Adam Zinz, Friedrich Friedmann, George Kiefner and Adam Steitler. In less than a week twelve more names were added.

An event like that comes about only as the result of previous planning and work. The unofficial beginnings of Zion Church go back at least five years prior to the signing of a constitution. Although an exact date is not known, Pastor George Huebner, then pastor of a congregation in Cannelton, Indiana, was the first German minister to preach in Owensboro for the German-speaking Protestants. He came only a few times and in addition to preaching also baptized some children.

A second attempt to start a German congregation was made under the leadership of Pastor B. Sickel, a teacher at one of the high schools. an organizational meeting was held on November 24, 1867, at which time forty persons agreed to form an association for the purpose of establishing a German Evangelical Church in Owensboro. They made

financial commitment totaling \$252, decided to hold worship services on Sunday mornings at 11:00 o'clock in Reinhart's Hall (above a grocery store on the southwest corner of Second and Allen) and to open a German Sunday School as soon as possible. Rev. Sickel was appointed pastor, and George Schmidt was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Association. This group looked forward to the establishment of a congregation and parish school. These plans dissolved when Pastor Sickel unexpectedly left Owensboro.

Pastor George Schoettle from Newburgh, Indiana, made the next attempt at starting a church for German Protestants in Owensboro. He was given encouragement by Pastor Huebner who had moved from Cannelton to Blue Grass, Warrick County, Indiana. Pastor Schoettle came to Owensboro once a month, conducting services for the German evangelicals in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and in the Court House. Illness and discouragement caused him to discontinue his effort in July 1869.

Pastor Reimer, from the Methodist Church in Cannelton, then made an attempt to organize a congregation, but without success. When Pastor Schoettle in Newburg heard that the Methodists had given up their efforts, he returned to Owensboro in November 1871, and once again worked toward the establishment of an Evangelical Church. In this endeavor Andreas Walz was especially helpful. Pastor Schoettle came during the week once every two weeks to preach in the Court House and also serve Holy Communion. There was a backlog of baptisms, and he baptized many children, sometimes three or more from one family at the same time. (The church baptismal records begin in 1869, ante-dating the organization of the congregation due to the ministry of Pastor Schoettle at that time.)

Within a few months it appeared possible to organize a congregation, and on April 2, 1872, the church came into being with the adoption of a constitution. It was decided that the newly formed congregation needed a resident pastor instead of the "commuting" services of Pastor Schoettle from Newburgh. At his suggestion the congregation turned to the Evangelical Synod of the West for help in obtaining the services of a mission pastor and also for financial support in paying his salary. This request was granted, and the President of the Synod sent Pastor W. Baehr to become Zion's first pastor. He came from Germany and was introduced to the congregation by Pastor Schoettle at a service in November, 1872. This first pastorate was brief, ending in June, 1873. As a new immigrant, Pastor Baehr could not accustom himself to the difficult conditions, and he was assigned to another field of activity by the President of the Synod. (Many of the early German Evangelical

pastors received their training either at the Basel Mission House in Switzerland or the Barmen Mission House in Germany. Pastor Schoettle had come from Barmen.)

The Church Council then turned to Pastor Schoettle again, and through Mr. Steitler urgently invited him to become pastor. He accepted the call and moved to Owensboro with his family on July 21, 1873. The congregation rented a house for him at \$10 per month. Worship services were held in the German schoolhouse at a monthly rental of \$6. There both the Sunday School and the Choir were started. Attendance began to increase, and Pastor Schoettle credited the lay leadership for much of the new enthusiasm which brought about many accomplishments in a short period of time.

A building site was purchased at the corner of Seventh and Allen for \$600. It may not have been the most desirable looking piece of real estate, since it was described as being "partly a water hole." To pay for this site and also a future building several Council members and friends of the congregation solicited funds in the city. The Ladies Aid, organized by Mrs. Julia Schoettle and Mrs. Steitler on September 1, 1873, gathered \$300 for the building project.

In January, 1874, with ten members present a congregational meeting was held to decide on building plans. The first plan was to build a brick church fifty feet long and thirty-five feet wide. Beneath the church four rooms and a hallway were to be provided as living quarters for the pastor's family. The ceiling in these quarters was to be ten feet, and in the church there was to be a fifteen foot ceiling. If at all possible, a wood tower was to be added.

After some cost calculations were made, it was decided that a combination church-parsonage would be more expensive than separate buildings. Plans were changed, and a parsonage was built first consisting of three rooms, plus a kitchen and a summer kitchen, a porch, a hallway and a basement. Construction by Mr. Theobald at a cost of \$900 took place in February and March 1874. The house was ready for occupancy by the pastor's family at the end of March. (This house was later sold and moved, and is now incorporated in the house on the northwest corner of Seventh and Lewis Streets.) With the parsonage completed, steps were taken in April and May to build the sanctuary. The construction was done by Mr. Rueker and Mr. Dawson, their bid being \$2879.56. The pulpit, altar and pews were made by Mr. Delker. The total cost of the building and the furnishings was \$3690.50.

Financial problems confronted the congregation during the erection of the church. A loan which the congregation had made was not forthcoming. So once again Pastor Schoettle felt obliged to solicit funds. He turned to neighboring Evangelical congregations for help.

Loans of \$300 to \$1000 were secured from the congregation and Pastor Jud of Newburgh. An additional \$1000 was received from collections in other congregations. Rev. Spathelf in Huntingburg, Indiana, loaned the church \$185 with which to buy a melodeon. In May 1874, Pastor Schoettle himself loaned the church \$632 at 6% interest, to be paid back in three years. It took thirteen, the final payment not being made until 1887. Interest rates on the various loans ranged between 5% and 10%.

The following story appeared in the *Owensboro Monitor* on October 28, 1874: "Sunday last was a day long to be remembered by the German residents of our city, it being the event of the dedication of the church of Deutsche Evangeliste, a handsome structure which has just reached completion. The *Arkansas Belle* was chartered for the occasion by a large delegation from Henderson, and the *Dick Johnson* by a still larger crowd from Cannelton and Rockport. On the latter steamer standing room was at a premium, and even the engine room was all taken up, so great was the crowd. The magnificent Silver Cornet Band was conspicuous on the roof of the latter boat, and regaled the concourse on and around the wharfboat with some excellent music as she steamed away for home."

Pastor Schoettle reported that on October 26, 1874, about 800 people arrived in Owensboro on river steamers from Evansville, Newburgh, Cannelton, Tell City and other surrounding communities for the dedication of the church with services held in the morning, afternoon and evening. Meals were served for these visitors in the City Hall. Many people had been invited to speak at the dedicatory services, but time ran out before all of them were able to give their speeches.

Pastor Schoettle continued his ministry at Zion until August, 1877. Following his resignation, the congregation entered into a difficult four-year period with four different pastors coming and leaving in rapid succession. Val Ziemer served for eleven months, F. B. Cunz for three months, H. Kunkel for about five months, and Edward Schweizer for eleven months. Controversy and possibly some scandal surrounded the pastorates of Cunz and Kunkel. Whether or not the charges of improper conduct made against Cunz were true of just idle gossip is not known, but he was asked to leave immediately. Apparently Kunkel defended his predecessor, and so he was also asked to resign. During this turmoil the young congregation struggled to maintain its life and in 1880 considered the possibility of sharing a pastor with the German congregation in Henderson.

A measure of stability was given to the church when H. F. Deters became pastor in August, 1881. He served for four years and was succeeded by C. J. Schaller in 1885, who had a nine year pastorate. He

was followed by T. C. Gebauer who remained in Owensboro for four years. With this continuity of leadership the church began to grow and become firmly established in the community. But even the best efforts of these pastors did not solve the financial problems which continually plagued the congregation. In order to meet operating expenses it was often necessary to borrow money, either from banks or from some of the members. The German immigrants were not accustomed to the pattern of supporting a church with freewill offerings. In Germany the churches were state-supported with tax money. It took the German immigrants a while to develop the habit of underwriting the total program of the church by their offerings. The earliest financial records dating from 1874, indicate that on an average Sunday the collection amounted to less than three dollars. From these offerings the treasurer paid all of the church expenses except the pastor's salary. This item is not found in the earliest records, and it can be assumed that the salary was paid by the Evangelical Synod of the West for the first few years. A notation indicates that it was under \$300. In the early 1880's the pastor's annual salary rose to \$300 and then \$350. The organist was paid \$25 a year, and the janitor received \$40. In order to pay the pastor's salary, the members were expected to pay dues. From time to time either the Council or the congregation itself would decide to send out notices to delinquent members who were one year in arrears in the payment of their dues for the pastor's salary. Failure to pay up within three months could result in the removal of their names from the membership list. Whether or not this policy was enforced consistently is not known, but at least on several occasions persons lost their membership standing, and some unpleasant controversies occasionally developed.

In 1888, the church treasurer reported the good news that all debts had been paid on the church property. The congregation celebrated the event by buying the property on Allen Street next to the church for \$700. The following year, 1889, a new parsonage was built on that site. The Church Council awarded the contract to Mr. Werner for \$2450. At a congregational meeting, one member objected to this contract asserting that the Council had given the contract to Mr. Werner because he served them a glass of wine. The congregation supported the Council's decision and "excommunicated" the objector.

A subtle change began to appear in the life of the congregation during the 1880's. A younger generation was growing up for whom German was a foreign language rather than their mother tongue. In 1889, these younger members requested that the pastor preach in English two evenings a month. A congregational vote was taken with twenty favoring the request and fifteen opposing it. Lacking a two-thirds

majority the motion failed. Pastor Schaller in an effort to meet the needs of the younger generation asked permission to have "lectures" in English. As a compromise proposal this was accepted by the congregation, and the English language made its first official appearance in the life of the German Evangelical Church. A number of years went by before English was officially acceptable in worship services. The constitution as adopted in January 1897, established German as the language for Sunday morning services and English for Sunday evening. The services for the cornerstone laying in 1900 and the dedication of the church in 1901 were bilingual. In 1903, on an experimental basis, English was used in the morning service on the first Sunday of each month. The practice was continued, and in 1910 the third Sunday was converted to English also.

Originally all church records were kept in German. Church treasurers were the first one to begin dropping in an English word or two here and there in their record keeping. Some pastors also wavered between German and English in recording baptisms, weddings and funerals. When a wedding or funeral service was conducted in English, this fact was noted in the record. Minutes of council and congregational meetings were consistently kept in German without exception until January 1909, when a sudden and complete change-over to English was made.

Other changes were also taking place. The congregation was growing in size, and the original building was becoming inadequate. Shortly after Rev. W. A. Bomhard became pastor in May 1899, the congregation deliberated between remodeling and enlarging the old church or building a new one. A decision to build a new church was reached on September 2, 1900. The work of tearing down the old church began immediately with as much material as possible from the old building begin salvaged for use in the new construction. The cornerstone was laid on September 30. During the building program the congregation met in the YMCA at the corner of Third and Allen. As designed by Architect Joseph Ransley the new building was 94 x 58 feet with a steeple reaching up 65 feet. It was ready for dedication on August 18, 1901. All former pastors still living were invited to participate. Among them was the founding pastor, Rev. George Schoettle. The building costing \$12,000 plus furnishings included a sanctuary, parish hall with lecture hall, class rooms and a pastor's study.

The erection of this building was a significant advance in the life of the church during the pastorate of Rev. W. A. Bomhard, who remained in Owensboro until November 30, 1907. Under his capable leadership not only did Zion continued to grow but also a satellite congregation organized in 1896, in Stanley, by Rev. T. C. Gebauer. Six families from

Zion living in the Stanley area formed St. Paul's German Evangelical Church which met in the Oakford Methodist Church. With the departure of Rev. Bomhard this ten year old congregation apparently disbanded. Its records have been preserved at Zion. Rev. Bomhard had a special talent for keeping complete and meticulously neat records.

In choosing his successor the congregation asked for more than the usual three candidates. They wanted to hear three more, and then decided to call Rev. Henry F. Grefe as pastor in 1908. During his eight year pastorate the use of English increased and audio-visual aids were introduced. From time to time he used "stereoptican lectures", something new in those days. Another "first" during his pastorate was the installation of a pipe organ. Prior to that time several reed organs had been used. The first one had been purchased in 1874 for \$185. Later it had been replaced by a larger model requiring the services of an "organ pumper." Young lads in the congregation earned 50¢ a month performing this duty. They lost their job in the fall of 1909 when a pipe organ powered by a "water motor" was installed. Edmund Giesecke of Evansville installed this instrument at a cost of \$2025. To pay for it an organ fund had been established, and donations were sufficient to cover about seventy-five percent of the cost. However, the congregation was not aware of a \$1000 gift from Carnegie, which was announced as a pleasant surprise on the day of dedication. Thus the church had a surplus of several hundred dollars in the organ fund, most of which was used to pay off a note on a steam boiler installed in 1908, and to bolster the General Fund.

During his pastorate, Rev. Grefe became a controversial figure, and a misunderstanding developed between him and a portion of the congregation. The resulting conflict between pastor and congregation, and between members of the congregation had an adverse effect on the life of the church. Some members left the church and united with other congregations. Rev. Grefe resigned amid a flurry of charges and countercharges, many of which were published in the newspaper. Into this conflict situation the congregation called as its next pastor in 1916, Rev. John Keller, a young man just out of seminary for a year or two. Although he served Zion for only one year, he did score a "first"—he and five members of the congregation undertook the first every-member canvass to solicit pledges for financial support.

Following Rev. Keller's resignation the congregation decided to turn to an old friend for help, Rev. T. C. Gebauer, who had been pastor from 1894-1898. He was living in Henderson and "commuted" back and forth for a little over two years in order to serve as pastor once again. His second pastorate, brief though it was, healed the wounds of past controversies, and the life of the congregation was stabilized.

Financial problems were still common, but solutions were gradually worked out. In 1900 total church income was \$1,170.17, and expenses were \$1,075.66. The pastor was paid \$616.66, the organist \$60.00, and the janitor \$72.00. The pastor's salary was supposed to have been \$700.00, but income did not allow full payment. Monthly salary payments to the pastor were often irregular amounts depending on the financial status. Many times during 1903 the treasury was "in the red." The year 1904, started off with a \$150 contribution from the Ladies Aid, but by the end of March the treasurer reported a deficit of \$4.97.

Time and time again the Church Council voted to borrow anywhere from \$100 to \$300 "to tide over the present deficiency." Various plans were formulated to deal with this problem. Around 1910 and for several years thereafter an annual financial statement was prepared and printed listing each member by name and the specific amounts contributed by each person to the church. In January, 1913, "an extra expense offering" brought in \$263.30 which enabled the church to pay off a \$200 loan made in September, 1912 "to tide over the financial depression." Since it worked once another "deficit offering" was called for in December 1913. Around 1919 a "White Elephant Fund" was established, the "white elephant" referring to the church debt. Members were asked to pledge to this fund. It worked! At the annual congregational meeting in January 1920, the pastor reported, "The past year was a glorious year for it saw the final debt paid on the church through the channel of the White Elephant Fund."

The Council sometimes had to do some fancy financial "footwork" in taking money from one pocket to pay bills out of another pocket. In 1920, "the treasurer was instructed to find out when the street improvement bond would come due and borrow the money from the Jubilee Fund and pay same. The Jubilee Fund in return would be given the Certificate of Deposit of the White Elephant Fund now bearing interest due July 8, 1920. The amount being \$245.18."

Another device for dealing with church finances was the preparation of a budget initiated in 1919. Generally speaking the only item in the early budgets which ever caused much discussion was the pastor's salary. Other items were largely fixed expenses, but the pastor's salary did allow room for decision-making. The earliest salaries were under \$300. In the 1890's the salary was about \$600. After 1900 the figure crept upward and reached \$1000 in 1910. During the prosperous post-war years between 1920 and 1929, the salary moved up to \$2500, and at the same time favorable economic conditions caused church financial problems largely to disappear. Debts were incurred for capital improvements but not to meet operating expenses.

A major rebuilding and remodeling program was initiated in 1919 with the establishment of a Jubilee Fund designed to pay for building improvements in observance of the church's 50th Anniversary in 1922. Over the years some structural problems had become apparent in the building as constructed in 1900-1901. Some ornamental stone-work had fallen off, and in 1915 the remaining stones were ordered removed. Defects had also appeared in the walls of the sanctuary. According to one story, the brick layer at the time of construction had not always been completely sober, and either he did not mix the mortar properly or else laid some of the brick when the temperature was too low and the mortar froze. In any event, large portions of the walls had to be rebuilt, and the Jubilee Fund was started for this program. Architect J. W. Whitehead drew up plans which included completely rebuilding the north and south walls of the sanctuary starting about ten feet above ground level. New face brick was used on the Allen and Seventh Street walls. The steeple was redesigned as a tower, and a new roof was put on. A new educational building erected behind the sanctuary included a kitchen, dining room and club room in the basement, and an auditorium/gym with adjacent class rooms on the first and second floors. During the rebuilding program the church used the high school for worship and Sunday School classes. A combination Dedication and 50th Anniversary Service was held on November 5, 1922, with Rev. W. A. Bomhard returning to Owensboro to preach the dedicatory sermon. A week of special events followed. The pastor during this building program was Rev. Daniel A. Blasberg.

When a history is based primarily on church records, it is easy to concentrate only on what was happening within the walls of the church. However, even church records will reflect the changes going on in the world around it. Just a casual glance at funeral records will immediately reveal advances in medical science as the years pass by. Early funeral records are dominated by the deaths of babies and young children. And a notation in the death record of a 66 year old woman reports the cause as "old age." The treasurer's records reveal other kinds of changes like the switch from gas lamps to electricity. Prior to 1900 there was a regular monthly gas bill, because the first church was illuminated with gas lamps. The new building erected in 1901 was equipped with electricity, but for some mysterious reason three years went by before the church started paying an electric bill. In April, 1904, for the first time an entry for "electric light" indicates a payment of \$1.75, and thereafter electricity became a regular monthly expense. Those years prior to that were not spent in the dark, because in 1902 an "incandescent lamp" was purchased for 60¢, and an electrical switch was repaired for \$1.25.

The church also moved through the transition area from horse and buggy to automobile. An early picture of the first church clearly shows some hitching posts for the benefit of those who "drove" to church. In 1913 one Council member was instructed "to look after the stable roof." The Council minutes of September 6, 1920, contain the following resolution: "To comply with the city ordinance in respect to hitching posts: Mr. Hafendorfer moved and seconded by Mr. Kunze that the posts be removed to rear of the church was carried. Mr. Saalwachter agreed to move them."

Either the city ordinance was later changed or the Church Council engaged in an act of civil disobedience four months later. On January 3, 1921, the minutes record: "Mr. Siebe was instructed to put hitching posts along the street." The following month: "Mr. Siebe was given vote of thanks for the efficient manner put forth in placing the hitching posts about the church and parsonage."

Wherever the hitching posts were supposed to be and were actually placed was not of concern for very long, because already the horseless carriage was bringing about changes. Streets needed improvement and in 1913 the Council agreed to pay a bill for oiling the streets. Five years later in 1918 a major street improvement was undertaken along Seventh Street. The church was assessed \$249.62 for the improvement of E. Seventh on the basis of 129 front footage @ \$1,935 per foot.

While the coming of the automobile stimulated street improvements and eliminated the need for hitching posts, it brought with it the need for "filling stations" which were not regarded as desirable neighbors. Therefore on September 6, 1926, "a resolution was drawn up protesting against a filling station being built at Seventh and Allen." It was signed by the pastor and members of the Board."

A far more serious situation was the First World War, which created a special problem for congregations with a strong German background. In many communities their use of the German language made them objects of suspicion and derision. Some congregations and their pastors were regarded as subversives at worst, and at best they were suspected of being unpatriotic by using the enemy's language. There is no indication in the records that Zion or its members became objects of hate in Owensboro, but the war probably hastened the end of the use of German in any church services. To counteract any lingering suspicions about this German congregation and to ward off criticism, Pastor Gebauer in February 1918, asked the Council's permission "to have a patriotic meeting and display the different flags—service flag, Christian flag, and the regular stars and stripes." Permission was granted.

Another encounter between the church and the world was the question of movies on Sunday. Apparently some of the churches mounted a campaign in 1930 to close the movies on Sunday. The

Council minutes for September 9, 1930 contain this brief comment: "The Sunday movies were discussed at length and the board decided to stay clear of all proceedings."

Depression years affected churches just as they did individuals and business. On March 7, 1932, the Council voted to reduce the salaries of the pastor, organist and janitor by 10%. A year later, due to financial conditions, the janitor's time was reduced to two days a week at \$1.00 per day. A further saving was sought in 1933 by dispensing with midweek Lenten services to cut heating and lighting costs. That year Lenten services were combined with the Sunday evening service. Also in 1933, the pastor voluntarily took an extra 10% reduction in salary. The choir members, long accustomed to receiving a dollar from the church at Christmas, were treated instead to a party given by the Council. During each of the years from 1931 to 1935 the Council found it necessary to borrow between \$150 and \$300 a year to meet operating expenses. These notes were paid off by 1937, and the church entered the year 1938 free of debt.

The financial pinch during the depression years was felt more keenly because of a threefold program undertaken in 1929. It included the installation of a new Hillgreen Lane pipe organ, remodeling the chancel area to accomodate the enlarged organ, and redecorating the sanctuary. The new organ had three manuals and incorporated most if not all of the pipes from the previous organ purchased twenty years earlier. The total cost of this program was \$15,000, the organ representing about one-half of that amount. A bit of "old Owensboro" was incorporated in this remodeling project. Twenty-four theater seats were bought from the old Grand Theater for use as choir chairs at a cost of \$36. They were bought with the intention of using them temporarily until a further decision was made. The chairs have been used "temporarily" for the past 55 years! The organ and the remodeled sanctuary were dedicated on December 1, 1929. Rev. C. T. Rasche was pastor at that time.

With a few exceptions, membership lists or records for earlier years are not available to trace the growth of the congregation. It is known that forty persons placed their signatures on an agreement to organize a German Evangelical Church in 1867, but there is no record of how many people became charter members when the church was officially organized in 1872. It appears that the number of members was small in comparison to the number of German Protestants in the community who used the services of the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals. An undated list of "voting members" possibly from the 1880's contains the names of seventy-one men. The names of fourteen women are listed separately on another page. Lines were drawn through twenty-three of the men's names with notations indicating that they had

died, moved away or were “excommunicated.” Some of the notes are barely decipherable and the reasons for excommunication are unclear. A record of persons taking communion in the late 1890’s contains 195 names. In 1901 a church directory was published listing 252 members. That number dwindled to 195 by 1922. Probably most of this loss happened during the controversial pastorate of Rev. Grefe and the conflicts which surrounded his resignation. By 1930 the membership had climbed to 300.

The names on those old lists are all German-sounding names. Even though the German language disappeared from church life sixty to seventy years ago, there are still a few echoes to be heard. Many German names on the current membership list, the singing of “Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht” each Christmas, and the old badly weathered 1874 cornerstone—those are dim reminders that this church was once the *Deutsche Evangelische Zions Kirche*.

RESOURCE MATERIAL

A History of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, by Theophil W. Menzel. Published by Christian Education Press, 1961.

The German Church on the American Frontier, by Carl E. Schneider. Published by Eden Publishing House, 1939.

Minutes of a Meeting held November 24, 1867, written by George Schmidt, and accompanied by a subscription list.

Manual and Directory for German Evangelical Zion Church, 1901, Rev. W. A. Bomhard, Pastor

Newspaper Clippings from October 28, 1874, the Cornerstone Laying 1900, Dedication 1901, Organ Dedication 1909, Jubilee 1922, Remodeling Program 1929, and 75th Anniversary 1947.

Seventy-fifth Anniversary Book, 1947

Personal remembrances by members of the congregation.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Daviess County Historical Society is open to all who have an interest in the history of Daviess County, the Green River Valley, or Kentucky. The Society meets on the Fourth Friday of each month from September through May. Most meetings are held at the Owensboro Area Museum on South Griffith Avenue.

Monthly programs of the Davless County Historical Society are apen to all, and non-members are encauraged to attend and participate.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Volume II

APRIL

Number 2

Published by
THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY is published in January, April, July and October, by the Daviess County Historical Society. The QUARTERLY is supplied free to all its members.

Annual membership dues are \$5.00

Inquiries regarding memberships and other matters of business may be addressed to the Society Secretary, Mrs. Shelia Brown Heflin, Owensboro-Daviess County Library, Owensboro, Ky. 42301

Correspondence concerning contributions and other editorial matters relating to the QUARTERLY should be addressed to the Editor. The editors and the Society assume no responsibility for statements made by contributors. Addresses of the authors will be supplied upon request to the Editor.

DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL

Volume II

April, 1984

Number 2

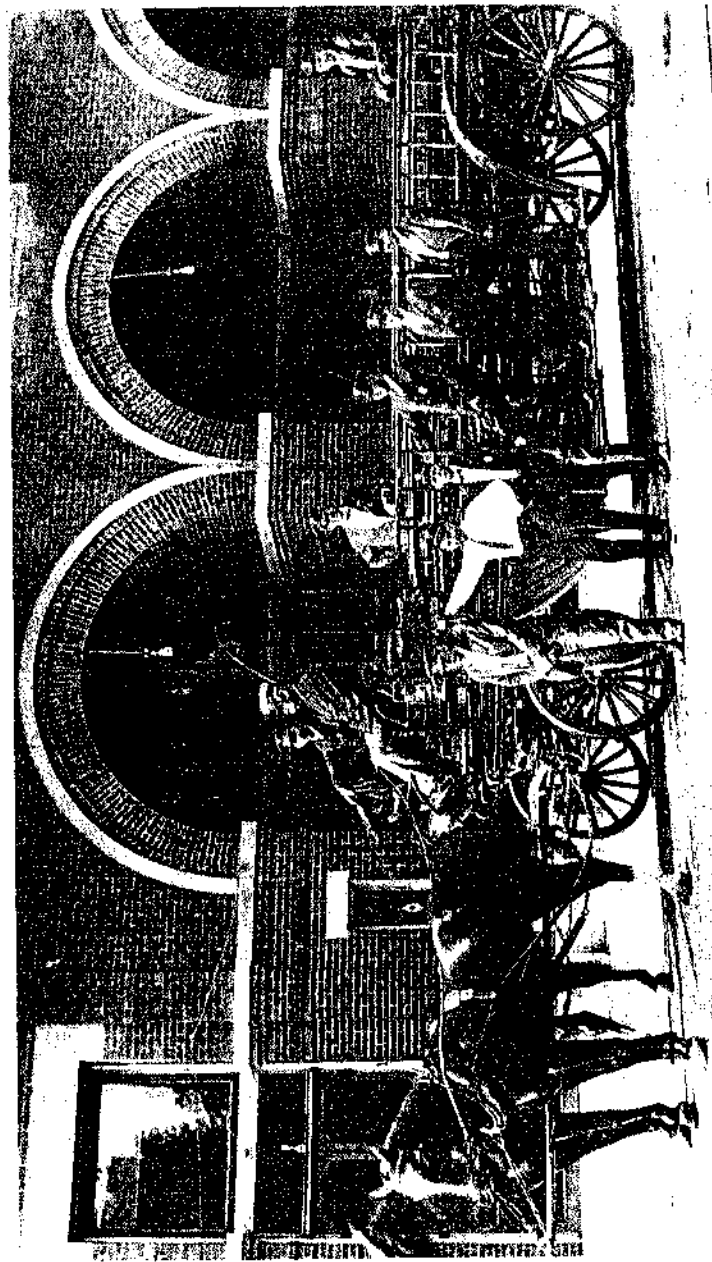
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The Editor's Page

This issue of the *Quarterly* hits a lot of different time periods, with articles on the Civil War era, the 1880's, the Turn of the Century and World War II. Leonard Rex, a student at Kentucky Wesleyan College, writes about the turbulent year 1944, when Owensboro's largest industry was involved in a labor dispute which attracted the attention of the entire nation.

How an earlier war affected the women who remained at home and coped with everything from minor inconveniences to guerilla attacks is the subject of a paper by our Society's president, Aloma Dew, lecturer in history at Kentucky Wesleyan. Ruth Westerfield takes us back to the days when the horse and buggy and the bustle were in style in her personal memoir of a prominent Owensboro family. Ruth has been a faithful member of the Society for many years, and her paper serves as a model that many others could follow in sharing their memories of the past.

This summer marks the Centennial of Daviess County's oldest steel bridge still in use, and with the plans already drawn to eliminate three of the four remaining steel bridges built before 1900 in the county, the "Focus On" section looks at these valuable relics of a by-gone era, and also takes a look at the "Lighter Side" of the 1880's.



Members of the newly-organized Owensboro Fire Department pose proudly with their new ladder wagon. The department, organized in December, 1901, was composed of a chief and 12 firemen. Note the kerosene lantern hanging by the driver's seat, and the streetcar tracks in the foreground.

THE SEIZURE OF THE KEN-RAD PLANT, 1944

by Leonard Rex

On November 2, 1918 Roy Burlew arrived in Owensboro, Kentucky. Within a week he purchased the Kentucky Electric Lamp Company. Such was the beginning of the Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation which became the largest employer in Daviess before 1945. At that time Mr. Burlew sold the tube plant to General Electric and the lamp plant to Westinghouse.

By 1941 Ken-Rad was well established in Owensboro. On May 28, 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed an unlimited national emergency. He stressed the strengthening of defence to the limits of national power and authority. In referring to labor problems in his speech he said,

A nation-wide machinery for conciliation and mediation of industrial disputes has been set up. That machinery must be used promptly—and without stoppage of work. Collective bargaining will be retained, but the American people expect that impartial recommendations of our government services will be followed by both capital and by labor.

On June 1, 1941 Ken-Rad conceived the Ken-Rad Transmitting Tube Company and began full scale production for the Signal Corps and the Navy.

In July, 1943 the National War Labor Board ordered Ken-Rad to sign a contract with the AFL (American Federation of Labor) United Automobile Workers Union. Terms of the contract included wage increases to a minimum of fifty cents per hour for production and maintenance workers after a six-week "learner" period. This amounted to increases up to ten cents per hour for workers earning less than fifty cents per hour at that time. A general increase of three cents per hour was to be granted to all production and maintenance workers earning more than fifty cents an hour, and a five cent differential provided for night shift workers. These wage increases applied to 3,200 of the 4,000 workers employed at the Owensboro plants. The WLB (War Labor Board) directive did not include any of the Ken-Rad feeder plants in Kentucky and Indiana. The wage increases, however, were to apply retroactively to September 4, 1942.

The WLB directive was first issued July 22, 1943 after a hearing between Ken-Rad and the AFL on January 1, 1943. Ken-Rad and the union asked the WLB to reconsider, but it affirmed the order January 6, 1944 and reissued it March 31, 1944. The counsel for Ken-Rad declined to comply with the WLB order to sign the contract or to comply with the board's interim order to sign a contract covering only non-wage provisions.

Friday, April 14, 1944 the War Department took control of the Owensboro Ken-Rad plants under an executive order from President Roosevelt calling for the enactment of the WLB order. At four o'clock in the afternoon forty-five Army personnel lead by Colonel Carol Badeau of the Lexington Signal Corps depot arrived at Ken-Rad. By five o'clock they notified the War Department that they were in control. Within a half hour the President's executive order and a statement by Colonel Badeau were read over the plant's public address system. The take over came as a surprise to most of the workers, but production was carried on normally after the announcements.

The full text of President Roosevelt's executive order was as follows:

Whereas after investigation I find and proclaim that there is a threatened interruption of the operation of the plants and facilities of Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation and Ken-Rad Transmitting Tube Corporation, located at Owensboro, Ky., as a result of a labor disturbance, and that the war effort would be unduly impeded or delayed by such interruption.

Now, therefore, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the constitution and laws of the United States, including Section 9 of the selective training and service act of 1940, as amended, as President of the United States and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, It is hereby directed as follows:

1. The secretary of war is hereby authorized and directed, through persons or instrumentality as he may deem necessary, to take possession of the plants and facilities of Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation and Ken-Rad Transmitting Tube Corporation, located at Owensboro, Ky., together with any real or personal property, and other assets, whenever situated, used in connection with the operation of such plants and facilities in such manner as he deems necessary for the successful prosecution of the war, and to do all the things necessary for, or incidental to, the production, sale, and distribution of the products thereof. The secretary of war is further authorized to exercise any contractual or other rights of the corporations and to take such other steps as he deems necessary to carry out the provisions and purposes of this order and the directive order of the National War Labor Board, dated March 31, 1944.

2. The secretary of war shall operate the plants and facilities of the corporations under the terms and conditions of employment which are in effect at the time the possession of the plants and facilities mentioned herein is taken, and during his operation of the plants and facilities shall observe the terms and conditions of the directive order of the National War Labor Board, dated March 31, 1944.

3. The secretary of war is authorized to take such action, if any, as he may deem necessary or desirable to provide protection for the plants and all persons employed or seeking employment therein.

4. Possession, control, and operation of any plant or facility, or part thereof, taken under this order, shall be terminated by the secretary of war within sixty days after he determines that the productive efficiency of the plant, facility, or parts thereof has been restored to the level prevailing prior to the threatened interruption of production referred to in the recitals of this order.

The heart of Colonel Badeau's statement was as follows:

These plants have contracts for vital war material and any interruption of work would delay and impede the war effort. the Army's purpose in taking over the operation of these plants is to see that our armed forces get the equipment and supplies required for scheduled operations. We will keep possession only so long as is necessary to accomplish this mission.

I sincerely hope that all persons concerned will cooperate fully to the end that production will continue normally and the Army will be able to release the plants at an early date.

Colonel Badeau and his staff met with union officials that evening in place of the scheduled union meeting at which a strike vote was to be taken. Following the meeting the union stated that an immediate grievance procedure would be set up and that the wage increases were in effect at that time with back pay being issued as soon as the calculations were finished.

Another plant in Bridgeport, Connecticut was taken over by executive order the same day. The Navy took over operation of Jenkins Brothers who also failed to comply with a War Labor Board order.

The next day Ken-Rad Corporation filed suit in the U.S. District Court in Louisville, Kentucky against Colonel Badeau in his personal capacity. In the petition Ken-Rad asked the court to restrain Badeau from effecting any wage increases, from seizing, holding, or operating Ken-Rad property, and to give "further relief as may be required in the premises." The petition went on to state that the War Labor Board order is unlawful because it provides for "unlawful and inflationary wage increases;" it assumes sub-standard conditions; it establishes an "unlawful and arbitrary reduction of beginners' training period;" it discriminates "against experienced and more efficient employees;" it produces an "unlawful retroactive affect;" it had "unlawful participation of employee representatives in (the) Board's order;" and it departs "from the standard fixed by the statute."

April 19, 1944 the War Department took control of Ken-Rad's four feeder plants. The War Department statement said that this action "was necessary because of the interdependence of the Ken-Rad properties and the impossibility of maintaining operations at peak efficiency at the principal plant at Owensboro without bringing the feeder plants under War Department direction." Colonel Badeau assumed the supervision of the feeder plants. The plants were taken over simultaneously at seven o'clock in the morning in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Tell City, Huntingburg, and Rockport, Indiana. the four plants employed a total of 1,700 workers. However, since the War Labor Board order was only directed to the Owensboro plant, the wage increase was not extended to the other plants.

The suit against Colonel Badeau was heard in U. S. District court in Louisville April 27, 1944. After hearing the arguments, Judge Mac Swinford arranged for the filing of briefs by both Colonel Badeau and Ken-Rad. Counsel for both sides agreed that facts in the case should be submitted in the form of affidavits from Roy Burlew, Ernest Kohler, Jr., Lieutenant General Brehon Somervell, and Colonel Badeau. General Somervell, assistant chief of staff of the Army supply division, made the following statement regarding retroactive wage increases:

No action has been taken. . .to pay retroactive wage increases. Payment. . .will not take place until computation thereof has been made and other necessary information has been accumulated, which will take some weeks. When computations have been made and the necessary information obtained, retroactive wage increases will be paid out of Government funds accumulated out of current income from operation during Government possession to the extent that such funds prove sufficient for such payment.

Colonel Badeau asserted that this was in full accord with the President's letter to the Secretary of War on April 13, 1944.

Judge Swinford handed down his decision May 9, 1944. The seizure under section three of the War Labor Board Disputes act was upheld. This decision gave an important precedent for further seizure cases.

The workers for the most part behaved normally. According to one management official "the people fell in line." The Army contingent was comprised of mostly officers. They oversaw operations and acted as top level management. The group under Colonel Badeau included no armed troops.

On May 24, 1944 Owensboro headlines proclaimed agreement between Ken-Rad and the AFL. Ken-Rad and union representatives reached the settlement on May 16, but the WLB deferred action until May 23. The contract contained four major differences from the WLB order. First, the WLB order provided for a six week learner period rather than the eighty-four day period furnished in the new contract. Second,

for retroactive pay increases for all employees from September 24, 1942 until July 22 1943; whereas the new agreement excluded those workers who left the company unless they left to enter the armed services. Third, the order only concerned the Owensboro plant. The contract included the Bowling Green, Tell City, Huntingburg, and Rockport plants also. Finally, the order contained no provision for collection of union dues by the company; the company and union agreement included this "check-off" procedure. The wage increases called for in the WLB order were kept essentially intact. The War Labor Board approved the settlement May 23, 1944 and began immediate action to return the Ken-Rad plants to private operation.

May 25, 1944 the War Department and Ken-Rad officials arranged for the return to company management. After nearly six weeks Roy Burlew and other top officials reappeared at the Ken-Rad plant in Owensboro to resume control. The simultaneous switch from War Department to civilian control of all property occurred at two o'clock in the afternoon, central war time. Burlew was welcomed back with cheers from his employees and congratulations from Colonel Badeau. Badeau issued a final statement, and the Ken-Rad plants returned to normal operation. Marvin Harris, Material Control Manager at that time, said the change-over took place "without a hitch."

The Ken-Rad take over certainly was important to Owensboro. For six weeks it rivaled the war for front page space in the Owensboro *Messenger*. The lives of more than 4,000 employees were directly affected. However, the Ken-Rad episode generated other far reaching consequences. The Army wanted to write a book about the experience, since it worked so well, to be used as a guide if the situation arose again. The Ken-Rad precedent was cited in the House committee investigation of a similar seizure of Montgomery Ward in Chicago. But, most importantly, the United States government take over of the Owensboro Ken-Rad plant demonstrated wartime power over defence-related industries.

TOOTING OUR OWN HORN

The Daviess County Historical Society received statewide publicity in the January-February issue of *Back Home in Kentucky*. The magazine featured Daviess County, and contained articles by Aloma and Lee Dew and Joe Ford. It is available at the Owensboro Area Museum. The Society was mentioned, as was the *Quarterly*, in the introduction to the Dews' article, which was entitled "Daviess County - From Buckskin to Beethoven."

LITTLE ADO ABOUT MUCH—LIFE ON THE HOMEFRONT IN CIVIL WAR OWENSBORO

by Aloma Williams Dew

Life for the typical woman in the 1860's could be characterized, with apologies to William Shakespeare, as "little ado about much." Theirs was the task of maintaining civility and stability in a chaotic world; and about all we know of their activities is that they apparently accomplished their task with little fanfare.

For most of our recorded history, it is the men of whom we read and one would almost assume all the accomplishments and burdens were theirs alone. In reading through the 1883 *History of Daviess County*, one discovers many sketches of men and accounts of male activities, but almost nothing about women—except death notices. This *History* does report that though one or two women made attempts, the "women's movement" never really gained a foothold in Owensboro. They were apparently frightened off by uncomplimentary articles in the local newspaper and threats of violence from some local males. But there must have been more. Why? What were these women doing, what were their problems and fears? Was everyday life too demanding and time-consuming to leave energies for the feminist movement? Perhaps so. While the men debated Union and Confederate strategies or were off fighting for one side or the other, or were evading the draft; while everyone was stalked by the omnipresence of sickness and death, while shortages and high prices made life difficult and coping with guerrilla attacks and troop occupation of the town and fear and contempt of the slaves and free black soldiers haunted their lives, the women of Owensboro tried to carry on as usual, to continue the civilizing activities for which women have always been the caretakers—to provide comfort and stability in an uncomfortable and unstable world.

When the Salmon's house was robbed and burned by Negroes in 1858 and when Q.D. Mitchell was killed by a Negro picket in 1864, how did the women react? When earthquakes rattled the town in 1860, twice in 1862, and again in 1863, what were the fears and reactions? When smallpox struck as it did in 1865, 1868, and 1869 and many times during the war; and when J. S. Dawson lost four children at one time to scarlet fever in 1858, how did Owensboro's women react? Nowhere can we find this. The war on the homefront in Owensboro is not so well-recorded as the political and military events. But let us take a brief glimpse at what we do know, so that the shadowy women of history will seem a bit more real, and their accomplishments of simply creating a corner of normality will be recognized for its true importance.

Sickness and death were ever-present in the life of the 19th century woman. A man might bury several wives and many children. A common cause of death among Owensboro women was puerperal fever (childbed fever). It was caused by the weakened condition resulting from childbirth, unsanitary conditions, and unsterilized medical instruments. This was pre-Lister, the germ theory of disease was not yet accepted.

Another common ill was the ague. Although considered a normal, if somewhat painful disease, it was often fatal. In 1857, 113 women (including female children) were among the 179 total deaths in Daviess County. In that year, scarlet fever was a prevalent cause of death as it was the next year when the four Dawson children died. Consumption and typhoid fever were common visitors. In 1860, 124 Owensboro women died from various illnesses, but often the cause was unknown.

Malaria was the bane of the entire Ohio Valley and Owensboro was no exception. It was thought to be caused by bad night air, but in reality was caused by anopheles mosquitoes breeding in the poor drainage of Panther Creek south of town. That situation was not remedied until 1923.

A frightening malady was milk sickness, a mysterious disease endemic to an area encompassing the midwest, upper south, and southwest—not found anywhere else in the world. Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks died of this illness in Pigeon Creek, Indiana, not far from Owensboro. Death usually was imminent within five days to two weeks after the onset of the illness, although it could be a chronic ailment. One contracted milk sickness by drinking milk of cows that had eaten a plant called white snake root, which even today grows in abundance in the area. Small children and women who were nursing an infant often received milk sickness because they were more likely to drink large quantities of milk. The irony is that since it was the milk drinker who became ill, when she took to her bed, with appetite and energy gone, she subsisted mainly on milk. Fewer city dwellers had milk sickness because once contaminated milk is mixed with healthy milk, the poison becomes so diluted as to be harmless. The only effective treatment was drinking beverage alcohol because alcohol neutralized the poison in the victim's system. It was an easily misdiagnosed illness which affected the liver, brain, kidneys, heart and mucous linings of the stomach and intestines. In 1861 among the causes of 80 female deaths in Daviess County were listed inflammation of the liver, inflammation of the brain, and bilious vomiting and bilious fever. It can only be surmised that some of these may have been milk sickness.

Smallpox was greeted with great fear, although by the 1860's vaccination was fairly common and epidemics not as widespread as earlier. But frequent troop movements through Owensboro heightened

the problems of smallpox and other contagion. An example is the small Rebel girl who caught smallpox from a Confederate soldier stationed in Owensboro.

Women had to contend with the fact that teething and worms were fatal to many children. This can be seen the death certificates. Throughout the state in 1860, there were 64 deaths attributed to teething. Diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, and croup claimed their casualties, too.

As there was no hospital and few doctors, Owensboro's women must have eagerly awaited the weekly *Monitor* to see what advice on home remedies, health tips, and other information would be offered in a column called "The Housewife."

Treatments for everything from bunions to headache appeared. The advice for arthritis or rheumatoid aches was not unlike today's treatments by heat-generated ointments—applications of bruised horse radish were advised. In addition to home remedies read and those passed down from generation to generation, there was a plethora of patent medicines available. One of the more interesting advertisements for Dr. Baker's Pain Panacea claimed to have cured cancer and to be good for back and stomach pains, burns and cuts, colic and diarrhea, headache, toothache, earache, weak breasts, liver complaints, general debility, ague, sore mouth and throat, weak eyes, coughs, colds, and spine and kidney diseases.

In spite of the constant presence of death and disease, the women of Owensboro were determined that life would go on, and some amount of society and civility continue.

Education and the number of churches grew as Owensboro's women continued working to protect the wayposts of civilization. Some of Owensboro's young women such as May Blair attended boarding schools such as Science Hill Academy in Shelbyville, Kentucky. Her father James Blair proprietor of a local dry goods store, encouraged his children to read and study, and he always brought books as gifts from his frequent business trips to Philadelphia. They even received a magazine published in Philadelphia called *Merry's Magazine*, which they enjoyed, according to Mary Blair Woodward's recollections.

There were church-related activities, such as the fair and supper which the Episcopal ladies held in December of 1864 to raise money to help build a church building. In June the Baptist women had a strawberry supper to finance repairs on their church. Some Owensboro women held a supper and tableaux for the benefit of the poor in the fall of 1863. There were sewing societies and, of course, revivals. Mrs. Ella Johnson remembered that as a girl in Civil War Owensboro the only forms of entertainment besides a rare party were church socials and the annual Sunday School picnic and Christmas tree.

Millinery shop which offered all the latest Paris fashions—bonnets, hats, cloaks, furs, ribbons, veils, nets, fans, combs, perfumes, and cosmetics. In 1864 when marauders burned a wharfboat which, among other things, contained \$3000 worth of goods for Miss Jackson, women must have been dismayed. In spite of the finery available at Miss Jackson's and other stores, many Owensboro women probably fit the description written by Charles Coffin of a young lady on board the steamer *Grey Eagle* bound down river to Owensboro and points South. This lady may have disembarked in Owensboro: "She wore a plain dress of gray homespun without hoops, and when standing, appeared as if she had encased herself in a meal bag. There was no neat white collar or bit of ribbon or cord or tassel. . . ." But not all Owensboro women were content with such an image. Even hair dyes were available which would change gray, red, or rusty hair "instantly to a beautiful natural brown or black without injuring the hair or skin."

Mary Payne who lived in Henderson discussed the latest style in bonnet trimmings with her sister Anna in Hopkinsville. No doubt sharing the ideas of some Owensboro women on fashion, she wrote in a letter that she wanted a bonnet decorated with black ribbon with an orange edge and orange and black flowers. The flowers were to be on both the inside and outside of the brim.

For the style-conscious woman of 1861, formal styles were fashioned after those worn at the Inaugural Ball—small caps or ringlets of flowers on the head, choker necklaces, bustles accenting tiny, corsetted waists, and a daring off-shoulder look. Less formal wear decreed high necks, long sleeves, and full skirts. In 1863, magenta, teal blue and light brown were the most fashionable colors. One could update last year's clothes by dyeing them the new colors using a recipe for magenta and orange dye which appeared in "The Housewife." By the end of the War, fashions were more tailored, sleeves were less full and skirts were more princess-shaped with fewer flounces and ruffles, reflecting perhaps a more somber mood and new style trends.

Even during the War, when so many things had to be sacrificed or skimmed upon, Christmas was observed. By 1860 Santa Claus was an established figure in both the north and the south. But northern children (and Owensboro children with access to northern periodicals) had the advantage of visualizing the Jolly Old Elf as Thomas Nast had drawn him. Victorian Christmases were times of parties, feasting, and worshipping—all the traditional customs. As Owensboro's woman strived to make this a time of normality and happiness, she could purchase oranges and oysters from Guenther's and other grocers, dolls at Miss Jackson's, silver watches at Bransford's, or perhaps chess boards, books, hair brushes, combs, pipes, and writing desks at Ashby's drugstore. Many Owensboro women probably received Charles

Dickens' new book, *Great Expectations* which was available for Christmas in 1861.

Ella Johnson remembered Owensboro's wartime Christmases, with Christmas trees strung with popcorn, chinquapins, and red haws. One of the highlights of the holiday for her and her playmates was the Sunday School Christmas tree party. Each child received a gift—usually a “little fat black *Bible*” and a silver thimble. More exciting though was a mosquito net stocking filled with pink and yellow candy fish and sometimes an orange.

A typical Christmas menu might include roast turkey with cranberry sauce, boiled fowl with celery sauce, boiled ham, goose pie, turnips, salsify, coleslaw, winter squash, beets, boiled mince pudding, baked lemon pudding, and pumpkin pudding. Dinner might even include a fresh pineapple which could be obtained from Guenther's.

Margaret Walker of Brandenburg probably typifies Owensboroans when she wrote that the stockings hung “packed and cramed” on Christmas Eve. One child received a large wax crying doll, a pair of scissors, a toy watch and garters. A watch, two dolls and perfume were among the gifts for another. An older daughter received kid gloves, cologne, a Bohemian glass extract bottle and stockings.

But for all the celebration and seeming affluence, the war intruded upon the day, as the *Monitor's* 1862 Christmas Eve editorial pointed out: “The splendor of the day is obscured by black war clouds, portending sorrow, death and ruin. . . . The wail of widow, of the bereft parent, sister, brother, and friend rises to Heaven from the hilltop, the plain and the valley. The old homes around which cluster so many memories of innocent childhood's happy hours have been ruined and blackened by sulphurous shock of battle. . . .”

Owensboro's women, hardly mentioned in our history books, suffered the anxieties of war, and many suffered the anguish of the death of friends and family. She coped with inadequate medical care, epidemics of disease, inflated wartime prices, and the tension of Unionists and Secessionists spying on each another. She was constantly alert to rumors of guerrilla bands in the area and might have her garden or stable looted by them. She waved goodbye to hastily-raised units riding off to defend Union or Confederate causes, and sewed flags for them to rally 'round. Later she might nurse wounded fathers, brothers, or husbands—or bury them. She watched in horror as the courthouse was burned by Confederate guerrillas.

These women are just as historically important as the soldiers and politicians. They kept the home fires burning, so that the soldiers and politicians would have something to which to return. She was determined that life with all its civilizing influences and traditions and trappings continue. She provided stability and order in a world turned upside down. For this she deserves more than a footnote in the history books.

She did not create the tumultuous world of the 19th century in which she fould herself, but she strived to nurture and protect all those things that form civilization so that life would be worth continuing after the War was over. This she did—quietly, diligently, and admirably with no medals, no glory, and little record.

MI LLINERY.
 1864. SPRING. 1864.
MISS C. JACKSON,
 RESPECTFULLY INFORMS THE PUBLIC
 that she is now in receipt of a large and
 seasonable stock of
Paris Millinery,
 Embracing all articles appertaining to the
 trade, including
 Bonnets, Hats,
 Combs, Fans,
 Flowers, Feathers,
 Ribbons, Veils,
 Laces, Nets,
 Collars, Caps,
 Handkerchiefs, Fans,
 Combs, Brushes,
 Perfumery,
 Cosmetics.
 &c., &c.
 She invites the public to examine her stock
 and is prepared to sell low for CASH.
 M71 MISS C. JACKSON.

The hardships of war seem far away when luxuries such as these advertised by Miss Jackson's shop could be had in Owensboro. Even during wartime the belles of Daviess County could dress in the latest continental fashions, if they had the cash.

MEMORIES OF THE SLAUGHTER FAMILY, AND THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"

by Ruth Westerfield

Not many people in Owensboro can remember Miss Sue, Miss Blanche, and Miss Emma Slaughter, who were among the belles of Owensboro during the early 1900's, but I remember them. We had a grocery on the corner of Seventh and Triplett streets. The Slaughter sisters lived at 815 Triplett Street, where the Spastics Home is now located, and many times the conversations among the customers in our store centered around the great, lavish parties at the Slaughter home. Although we lived near, no one in the neighborhood was a part of the festivities—the guests were always from the "upper crust."

Joseph Weaver Slaughter, the father, was born in Culpepper County, Virginia, (where the Slaughter name is still quite prominent). He married a belle from Frankfort, Ky., Sallie Greenleaf McKee, whom he had met at a "platform" dance while visiting Owensboro. Five of their seven or eight children lived to maturity—Sue, Blanche, Emma, Joseph Weaver, Jr., and Gus. None of the girls married and the two boys had no children, which explains why, though prominent during the two generations, the Slaughter name is not well-known in Owensboro today.

In 1881 Joseph Weaver Slaughter bought three acres of land at Triplett Street and McFarland Avenue (now Ninth Street). It was bounded on three sides by an apple orchard. In 1884 he built a spacious frame house with all the gingerbread trim, verandah, side porches and a big lawn on which many parties were held. There were four rooms, servants' quarters and kitchen downstairs, and four rooms and a bath upstairs, plus an attic and basement. The widow's walk, which many of the houses from the river to about Twelfth Street had, offered a magnificent view in all directions, but it was especially built to watch the boats along the river. It functioned as a lookout for incoming and departing boats, so that people would know when to go to meet the packets. Then, as now, river transportation did not adhere to a very strict schedule.

Mr. Slaughter was deputy sheriff and county jailer from 1867 to 1878. After retiring from public office he engaged in business, entering into partnership with John Thixton in the distilling and wholesale liquor business. McCulloch, Monarch, Field, Hill and Perkins were other names prominent in the distilling industry during that time. Mr. Slaughter was vice president of the Owensboro Banking Company, and director of the Owensboro Wagon Company and the Owensboro Ice Company, among other business ventures.

Mr. Hayes, in his history of Owensboro, refers to the period 1900-1910 as the "Great Decade." Many improvements were made. One was the public water works. The water works was located at the foot of Triplett Street. According to Miss Emma Slaughter, "when we had water and wanted to put it in the bathtub, it was nothing but mud. After bathing, we would stand in front of the fire to dry off and then take a whsk broom and brush off the sand. The water works was owned by a man in Louisville and officials were being paid to keep a public water system out of Owensboro. Typhoid and malaria were commonplace and there was just one epidemic after another. My father used to walk the streets of Owensboro talking to people, trying to get a public water system. Finally we got a 12-man city council which led to our getting a public water works and then that lead to our getting other things, especially street improvements." Mr. Hayes adds: "Besides water, it (the water works) also furnished, without additional charge, a large and colorful supply of mud therewith, the color and earth content varying with the stage of the river."

Joseph Slaughter was one of the 12 men on the Business Men's Council. Others included John G. Delker, E. H. Breidenbach, A. Steitler, Jr., Mike Cary, John S. Miller, C. F. McCarroll and Robert Brodie. These names are familiar because their descendants still live here and are continuing to contribute to the progress of Owensboro.

In 1899 the city voted a \$200,000 bond for street improvements, the result being 809 for and 181 against the bonds. I don't know how many streets were improved, but I do know that Mr. Slaughter exchanged the right-of-way in front of his property for a retaining wall. The wall in front of the Spastics Home is a part of that wall.

In 1900 the city purchased five acres of ground at Daviess Street near Fourteenth Street, and this was the beginning of the municipal electric plant, which previously was privately-owned.

On November 6, 1900 an election was held on another \$200,000 bond issue for a municipal water works. It passed, 1,942 for and 444 opposed.

Other improvements during this "Great Decade" were a hospital, reorganization of police and fire departments, formation of the Investigators Club, and the founding of the Great Seven Hills Chautauqua. The second lynching in the county's history took place, and Sam Jones, the great evangelist, came to town.

So much for Mr. Slaughter and his accomplishments. Let us now see how he and his family lived privately. If they did not use their beautiful surrey, they could have ridden the mule-drawn cars around town on the Owensboro street railroad. They were later (in the middle 1890's), replaced by electric streetcars. The latter were described as "handsome vestibule cars." Streets were deep mud or clouds of dust at that time,

depending upon the weather. Sidewalks, however, were pretty good.

The Slaughters, along with other Owensboro residents, got the *Owensboro Messenger*, which began as a weekly, then was published semi-weekly, later tri-weekly, and finally, by 1887, daily. By 1884 they could also subscribe to the *Inquirer*.

If they needed an attorney there were R. H. and E. P. Taylor, Robert S. Todd and John G. Weir among others. Doctors included Josiah Hale, the first one in this section to study in Europe, Edward Luckett, W. D. Stirman, who built "Stirman's Folly," the finest home in Owensboro at the time and now the Haley-McGinnis & Owensboro Funeral Home, S. S. Watkins, a former surgeon in the Confederate Army, and J. F. Kimbley, formerly a surgeon in the Union Army.

If they needed medicines there were several druggists, including Smith and Bates or John Head's, or Courtney's or Brashear and Crossier where John Friedman, Sr., clerked for seven years before becoming the proprietor.

The Slaughter women loved shopping at S. W. Anderson's on the southeast corner of Second and Daviess Streets, where Lee Wilson Sporting Goods is now located. H. P. Phillips & Co., founded in 1881 and later Phillips Bros. and McAtee, which later, in 1899, became McAttee, Lyddane and Ray, offered stylish merchandise also. Solomon Wile and Sons offered good selections for men in their store on Main Street between Allen and Daviess, as did Wolf on Main between St. Ann and Frederica.

The Temple theater, on Second and Daviess where S. W. Anderson is now located, offered fine entertainment. A portion of the original wall on Daviess street is now a part of the Anderson Building. The Hall theater next to the Planter's Hotel was a favorite until it was destroyed by fire.

Lumber and building supplies could be purchased at J. N. Grady's at Ninth and Crittenden, John R. Osborne & Son at Seventh and Daviess, or J. V. Stimson & Bros. on Moseley Street. In 1902 these firms merged to form the Owensboro Planing Mill. (I haven't been working there that long. It just seems like it.)

Have you seen the electric cars of the period? The Slaughter sisters had one around 1910. So did Mrs. W. T. Ellis, the Baers and the Rosenfelds.

Joseph W. Slaughter died August 4, 1916, when he was 78 years of age. He was one of Owensboro's "oldest and best-known and most highly respected citizens," to quote a newspaper clipping. Mrs. Sallie M. Slaughter was stricken with paralysis in May, 1924, and thereafter was an invalid. Her passing on July 19, 1927, at the age of 84 was noted in the press as "the loss of one of the best-known and most generally beloved women of Owensboro."

Some time after the death of their parents, the remaining members of the family moved into one of the two smaller houses that had been built on their property. By then World War II was in progress. Two of the sisters became bedridden with long illnesses before they died. Miss Emma Slaughter, the last of the aristocratic old family and a handsome, stately lady to the very last, died November 16, 1969 at the age of 95.

The family home, meanwhile, had been sold to a Mr. Tucker, who, in turn, sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Wendel Foster in July 1947. The old house witnessed the birth of a great community endeavor spurred on by the efforts of a courageous young couple with a handicapped child. It was there that a handful of dedicated people gathered to begin a drive which launched the first building program of the Spastics' Home and School. The old Slaughter home was 79 years old when it was torn down to make way for the new building. A photograph over the fireplace in the modern lobby of the Spastics' Home is all that remains as a reminder of this important family.

ANNUAL POT-LUCK DINNER

Mark your calendars for May 18, the date of the Society's annual dinner at Zion Church, Seventh and Allen Streets. Bring a vegetable, dessert or salad, and come for fellowship, food and a good program. The Rev. John Schroeder, the author of the article on Zion Church in the January issue, will speak on the German heritage in Owensboro and Daviess County. Don't Miss It!

FOCUS ON—THE LAST OF THE “IRON BRIDGES” IN DAVIESS COUNTY

This year will mark virtually the end of an era in the history of transportation in Daviess County as three of the last of four steel bridges built before 1900 are removed by state highway department contractors. Work is nearly complete on the new bridge over Panther Creek on the Curdsville Road, Highway 456, and a contract has been let to replace the Short Station Road bridge over Panther Creek off Highway 54. Also scheduled for oblivion is the Old Panther Creek Bridge at Moseleyville on Old Highway 81, which will leave the bridge on Ray Road over Blackford's Creek as the only remaining steel bridge in Daviess antedating 1900.

Little did the taxpayers realize when they saw an obscure item in *The Owensboro Messenger*, November 14, 1885, announcing the construction of “iron” bridges, what a bargain they were getting. The article claimed that the bridges would last “a life-time.”

“With the completion of the Narrows bridge, there are now five iron bridges in Daviess County, which have been erected at a cost exceeding \$27,000,” the paper declared. “But it has been found that iron bridges, which are good for a lifetime, are more economical than old wooden structures which are constantly in need of repairs.”

The first steel bridge in the county was the Glenn bridge, built at a cost of \$9,000, but “as it was paid for with borrowed money it eventually cost between \$10,000 and \$11,000.” Others built by 1885 were the Hayden bridge, “which is a very light one,” at a cost of \$4,500; the Livermore bridge which cost \$6,500; the Blackford Creek Bridge which cost \$2,500; and the Narrows bridge, also \$2,500.

Most, if not all, of these early bridges were built by the Smith Bridge Company, Toledo, Ohio. Three of the four remaining structures are all by the Smith Company, the Ray Road bridge, built in 1884; the Old Panther Creek bridge, dated 1885; and Curdsville Road bridge, dated 1887.

These three bridges are all of similar construction being of the style known as steel through—truss bridges, with the weight of the bridge being carried by overhead steel beams while the deck load is borne by vertical rods. All of the early bridges had wooden decks, and the Ray Road and Old Panther Creek bridges still feature this type of roadway. The Panther Creek Bridge is 130 feet long and 13 feet wide, while the Ray Road bridge is 90 feet in length.

A smaller bridge is the Short Station Road bridge, which is not dated. Highway department records indicate only that it was built before 1900, and the bridge contains a nameplate of the Champion Bridge

Company, Wilmington, Ohio. It is a much shorter steel truss bridge, measuring some 38 feet in length, and the deck has been concreted, as has the Curdsville Road bridge.

Perhaps the most beautiful of the old steel truss bridges was located on the Curdsville-Delaware Road. This bridge, of similar design to the other long bridges, was replaced a few years ago.

Thus it appears that by the end of 1984 the only remaining steel truss bridge dating before 1900 will be the Ray Road bridge, which is located east of Yelvington, off highway 661. To find this rather obscure bridge, go east from Yelvington on 662, turn north on 661 for about one-half mile, then east on Ray Road to the bridge, which marks the line between Daviess and Hancock counties. It is a one-lane gravel road, but accessible in all weather. It is a part of Daviess County's historical past which should be maintained and treasured.



The Ray Road bridge over Blackford's Creek on the Daviess-Hancock County Line. This was the first steel bridge over Blackford's Creek, on what was, at the time, the most important road in that part of Daviess County.



The Curdsville-Delaware bridge in western Daviess County, removed in 1981, was unique for its great height and gracefulness. Almost lace-like in appearance, it represents an era in which structures were expected to be beautiful as well as functional.

FOCUS ON - A "GIRLIE" SHOW IN OWENSBORO, 1885

In the 1980's there have been a number of establishments in Owensboro which featured male dancers and "strippers" for an all-female audience, but a century ago Owensboro could boast of no such entertainment. Most of the popular offerings of the day were of classical or semi-classical musical productions, "Negro" minstrels, light comedies and variety shows, with little of the bawdy burlesque comedies offered in larger cities.

Thus in November, 1885, when the Opera House promised the showing of a program featuring only women, it caused somewhat of a sensation in the community. "ONE NIGHT ONLY, Saturday Eve., November 14, Lilly Clay's Co. of Ladies Only, in the Great Hit of Paris, an Adamless Eden!" the advertisement proclaimed, promising "a full company of 30 Lady Artists and a complete Ladies' Orchestra of Ten Lady Musicians." Reserved seats, at 75 cents and 50 cents, were available at Zulauf's jewelry store. "Remember, every act and novelty is presented by a lady, not a man on the stage," the advertisement continued. "See the great first part scene—30 ladies on the stage."

On the same page the *Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger* touted the show with a news story, strictly tongue-in-cheek, under the headline "A Busy Saturday Night:"

The rink will be open this morning to ladies and this afternoon the grand free-for-all will take place, but there will be no skating to-night.

The members of the lodges will all have to go to lodge to-night.

There will, of course, be a special council meeting to-night.

We presume the school board will meet to-night.

The bank cashiers and clerks are all so overrun with work they will have to go back to the bank to-night.

There is such a heavy run of job work the job printers will all have to work to-night.

The newspaper compositors will all have to get in their cases for Monday morning to-night.

The judges and lawyers attending court at Hawesville will certainly all be home on the late boat to-night.

Every married man in town will have to come down to get a shave and bath to-night.

the physicians will all have calls to attend patients to-night.

The male members of the choirs will all have to attend choir meeting to-night.

The merchants and clerks will all be detained late at the stores because of a heavy run of business to-night.

The storekeepers and gaugers have all been summoned to meet the collector and his deputies on important business at the revenue office to-night.

The steamboatmen will run their boats in an hour or two ahead of time to-night.

The poor railroad officers and clerks will be detained at their offices by pressure of business to-night.

The tobacco men will have to go to their factories to "catch a season" to-night.

The drummers will all be in off the road to-night.

The distillers association will meet to-night.

The members of the bar will all have engagements to meet clients at their offices to-night.

The ministers—they will stay at home and prepare their sermons on the wickedness of the world to-night.

As for the newspapermen, they will go to the opera-house, professionally, you know, to report the Adamless Eden show.

Unfortunately for these busy business and professional men with their multitude of excuses, the packed house at the Opera House was in for a disappointment. The newspapermen, who had to attend, "professionally, you know," reported as follows:

Those who went to the opera-house Saturday night expecting to see a very tough show were disappointed. There was little, if anything, said on the stage of an objectionable nature to the most fastidious. There was not much in the cantata, and the singing was quite inferior. The best feature of the performance was the music by the orchestra composed entirely of females. The leader was an expert violinist and earned hearty applause in her solo performance.

Whatever the appearance on stage of the Adamless Eden show, it did accomplish one thing of historical importance—it gave us a century later the opportunity to chuckle over and appreciate a great example of old-fashioned home-town journalism at its best. Who would imagine today a newspaper running as a straight news item the "hype" of the

promotional story and the subjective, obvious disappointment of the review. One thing about the newspapers of a century ago—you knew where they stood on every issue from a presidential campaign to the hopes for a “hot time” on a Saturday night!



For ninety-seven years the Mattingly Bridge has spanned Panther Creek on the Owensboro-Curdsville road, now highway 456. By midsummer its replacement, foreground, will be complete, and another historic bridge will disappear, having served the people of western Daviess County for more than three generations. Photo by Andrew Dorfman, KWC.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Daviess County Historical Society is open to all who have an interest in the history of Daviess County, the Green River Valley, or Kentucky. The Society meets on the Fourth Friday of each month from September through May. Most meetings are held at the Owensboro Area Museum on South Griffith Avenue.

Monthly programs of the Daviess County Historical Society are open to all, and non-members are encouraged to attend and participate.

Printed by Quality Printing Co., Owensboro, Ky.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Volume II

JULY

Number 3

Published by
THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY is published in January, April, July and October, by the Daviess County Historical Society. The QUARTERLY is supplied free to all its members.

Annual membership dues are \$5.00

Inquiries regarding memberships and other matters of business may be addressed to the Society Secretary, Mrs. Shelia Brown Heflin, Owensboro-Daviess County Library, Owensboro, Ky. 42301

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DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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July, 1984

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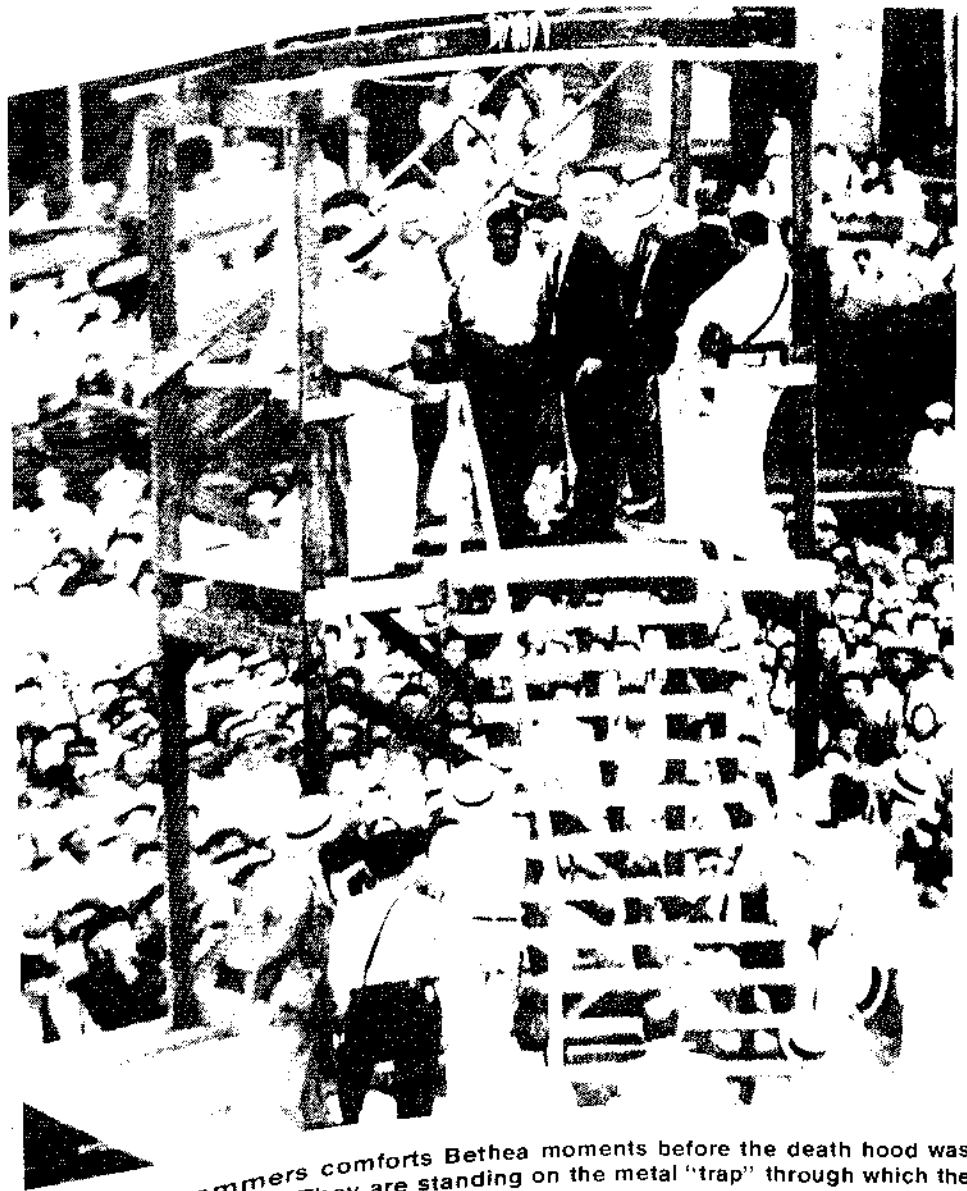
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The Editor's Page

No event in the history of Daviess county in the past 50 years has attracted as much attention as the hanging of Rainey Bethea. Still today this subject is of interest to students, historians and the general public. Editor Lee A. Dew's paper is an interpretation of this traumatic event.

Politics is a continuing passion among Daviess countians, and the election of 1960 was no exception. Kentucky Wesleyan student Douglas Tennant's examination of this election offers an objective analysis of the passions and emotions which surrounded one of the most hard-fought campaigns in our nation's history.

Politics, too, has traditionally been a source of entertainment, and the election of 1899, which was the prelude to one of Kentucky's greatest political tragedies, offered the people a carnival-like atmosphere which, coupled with a holiday, was a great excuse to load the family onto a train or steamboat or into the wagon or buggy and come to town for a celebration. Labor Day, 1899, was such an occasion, as Dew's nostalgic description of it indicates. Finally, we look at an institution we all take for granted, the free delivery of mail to our homes.



Fr. Herman Lammers comforts Bethea moments before the death hood was placed over his head. They are standing on the metal "trap" through which the condemned man would soon be dropped. The noose is being held by the executioner, wearing a suit, standing behind Fr. Lammers. (Photograph courtesy Louisville Courier-Journal & Times).

THE HANGING OF RAINEY BETHEA

by Lee A. Dew

The massed crowd waited expectantly along the bank of the Ohio River in the cool last minutes before dawn on the morning of Friday, August 14, 1936.

As the first gray shadows lightened the East, hawkers moved through the mass of people selling their wares. Cries of "Popcorn, hot popcorn!" "Ice cream!" "Get your nice hamburgers!" "Cold soda pop!" resounded through the throng.

Babies whimpered at the strangeness of the occasion. Small children clung fearfully to their mothers' skirts. Drunken men laughed and joked. Others just stared at the tall dark shape of the gallows, sitting ominously over a "pit" of railroad ties in the center of what was ordinarily a vacant lot.

Many of the spectators had maintained an all-night vigil, some sleeping on the ground, others clinging to vantage points on electric poles or rooftops, still others peering out of the windows of neighboring buildings.

Suddenly, as the coming dawn sent its first rays of pink and red into the eastern sky, the crowd hushed. A group of men walked from the nearby jail toward the gallows. In their midst was a 22-year-old black man, Rainey Bethea, carefully guarded by a platoon of sheriff's deputies.

At the base of the scaffold Bethea stopped, kneeled, and silently prayed. Then he mounted the first few steps to the gallows pit, sat down, took off his shoes and socks, and put on a new pair of silk stockings which he pulled from his pocket. Then, after kissing a crucifix offered to him by a priest, he climbed the final thirteen steps.

Awaiting him was G. Phil Hanna of Epworth, Ill., a cattle breeder and self-styled "consulting expert executioner." Hanna, who had made a life-long study of hangings, was an expert at tying the knot in such a way that the victim's neck would be broken by the fall through the trap. He consistently refused to spring the trap himself at executions, and hated being called a "hangman."

Bethea stood on the platform, looking down at the sea of faces staring up at him from the crowd. There were scattered shouts—"Take him up!" "Up on the scaffold where we can see him!" "Let's go!"—but most of the crowd was silent, awed by the sudden reality of approaching death.

Hanna led Bethea to the trapdoor at the center of the scaffold deck,

bound his arms and ankles, and prepared to place the death hood over his head.

"Let him talk!" someone in the crowd shouted, perhaps thinking of the year before when a convicted rapist being hanged in the Western Kentucky town of Smithland harranged a crowd of 1,500 for an hour before being dropped through the trap.

Bethea was silent.

Hanna adjusted the black hood over Bethea's head, then placed the heavy rope around the condemned man's neck, making sure the knot was located where it would afford maximum leverage between the taut rope and the falling body.

Then he nodded to his assistant, a former Louisville policeman, Arthur L. Hasche, who stood on the far corner of the scaffold with his hands on the trip lever. At Hanna's signal Hasche pulled the lever, and Bethea dropped to his death.

It was 5:31 a.m.—sunrise in Owensboro, Kentucky.

Daviess County's sheriff, Mrs. Florence Thompson, who had succeeded to the office several months earlier on the death of her husband, sat alone in her car some fifty feet away, unnoticed by the crowd.

Her ordeal was over! For Mrs. Thompson the past few weeks had been agony. As Kentucky's only woman sheriff, many people expected her to pull the trap. It was only in the last few days before that fateful sunrise that she had made her decision not to participate.

Bethea's body hung from the scaffold for some 16 minutes, until physicians pronounced him dead. The crowd surged forward. Eager hands tore at the death hood, ripping off souvenirs of black cloth. Gradually the mass of people began to move away. Within an hour the vacant block between First Street and the Ohio River was empty except for the looming gallows and a few curious stragglers, some carving mementoes from its timbers.

* * * * *

Bethea's trip to the gallows began some two months earlier, when, on June 7, 1936, the body of Mrs. Elza Edwards, 70, a wealthy widow, was found in the bedroom of her apartment. She had been criminally assaulted and choked to death, and many of her jewels and other valuables were missing.

Later that day Coroner Delbert Glenn called the Owensboro police chief, R. P. Thornberry, and told him that he had found something in the clothing of the dead woman which he had first thought belonged to her, but now he was not sure. The chief, he added, had better take a look.

The object was a signet ring, made of celluloid, with a black, Old English "R" on a white front. Chief Thornberry recognized it as a type manufactured in the Kentucky State Penitentiary at Eddyville, and

sold for the benefit of the prisoners. "Was it an ex-con that committed the crime?" the Chief wondered.

Detectives searched police records seeking a link between local criminals with records of confinement in Eddyville and the initial "R". Three days later a warrant was issued for the arrest of Rainey Bethea, charging him with the rape and murder of Mrs. Edwards.

Bethea, a native of Roanoke, Virginia, had lived in Owensboro for five years, and was employed at various homes as a houseboy and yard worker. He had been sent to the Eddyville prison on a charge of housebreaking, and was paroled in January, 1936. He had been in frequent trouble with the Owensboro police on minor charges since that time.

The black man was arrested at 2:05 that afternoon by two policemen who discovered him hiding along the river bank. One of the officers pointed his gun at Bethea, crouched behind some willows, and shouted: "Come up here, boy." Bethea surrendered.

After a hastily-conducted arraignment, Bethea was rushed to Louisville for safety by the Owensboro authorities, fearful that there might be some attempt at a lynching if he were kept in the city.

The jewelry missing from Mrs. Edwards' apartment was not found in Bethea's possession, nor had a search of the river bank revealed the hiding place of the stolen loot. A fellow prisoner at the Daviess County jail, where Bethea was held briefly, testified that he saw the accused man take something from his mouth and flush it down the toilet. The plumbing fixtures were taken apart, but nothing was discovered.

Enroute to Louisville, heavily guarded by a city policeman and two deputies, Bethea confessed to the crime and told the officers that the missing jewelry was hidden behind some window curtains in his room. Upon their return to Owensboro the officers conducted a search, but found nothing. Meanwhile, safe in jail in Louisville, Bethea repudiated his confession, claiming he was drunk and did not know what he was saying.

The next day, however, Bethea again confessed, this time to a guard at the jail. The missing jewelry, he told the guard, could be found in a barn loft across the alley from Mrs. Edwards' home. Police searched the loft, and found rings, necklaces, earrings and a dress.

A Grand Jury indicted Bethea for criminal assault on June 22. Kentucky law provided the death penalty for a number of crimes, including both criminal assault and murder. It further stipulated that death should be by electrocution for all capital crimes except criminal assault, or rape, for which the penalty was hanging. The hanging could be conducted either publicly or privately, according to the statute. Owensboro officials selected the charge which carried the possibility of public punishment.

Bethea was returned to Owensboro on June 25 for his trial, the only day he would spend in the town between his arrest and execution. The jury deliberated for four and one-half minutes before bringing in the verdict of guilt.

Early in July, while Bethea waited in the Louisville jail, a team of lawyers sought to block his execution, tentatively scheduled for July 31. On July 11 they filed an appeal with the Court of Appeals, the highest court in the Kentucky judicial structure. On July 29 the appeal was denied.

The Federal District Court in Louisville, meanwhile, issued a temporary writ of *habeas corpus*, staying the execution, and a hearing was scheduled for August 5. The execution was postponed. Several witnesses appeared at the hearing, and, at the conclusion of the testimony, a permanent writ of *habeas corpus* was denied. Bethea's last legal remedy was exhausted. The next day Governor A. B. "Happy" Chandler set the execution date for August 14.

The death warrant specified the hanging should take place on the courthouse square. Sheriff Thompson protested, claiming the crowds would trample the shrubbery around the courthouse, so the site of the execution was moved to the yard of the county garage, a few blocks away on the river bank.

Mrs. Thompson, meanwhile, was agonizing over her role as the county's chief law enforcement officer. Traditionally it was the sheriff's job to carry out executions. But Mrs. Thompson, a 42-year-old widow with four children, was torn by doubt. She consulted her priest, as well as most of the Protestant clergy of Owensboro, and all of them assured her that the execution was "justified by God's law as well as man's." "There is no doubt about his guilt," she told a newspaper reporter, "otherwise I might feel differently. His death, even by hanging, will not atone for what poor Mrs. Edwards suffered."

"When this thing is over I don't want anyone ever to mention it to me again," Mrs. Thompson continued. "I want to forget it completely, wipe it out of my life. I had no idea when I became sheriff that I would be confronted with a situation like this."

Mrs. Thompson kept her final plans to herself as the fateful day approached. On Thursday, August 13, Hanna arrived with his portable gallows, which he began assembling. The gallows, 15 feet tall, sat on an improvised base of railroad ties which formed a "well" into which the body dropped. Eight steps led from the ground to this first level, then the traditional thirteen steps climbed to the top. Beams extended upward above the deck to the frame upon which fastened a crossbeam, from which the noose descended. The steel trapdoor was built into the deck, and workmen tested it carefully.

Meanwhile in Louisville Bethea was waiting out his last days.

Shortly after his conviction he asked for a priest, and the Rev. Herman Lammers, assistant pastor of the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville, baptized him. Father Lammers visited Bethea on Thursday, and promised to accompany him to Owensboro that night.

That afternoon, about 4 o'clock, Bethea ate his last meal, consisting of fried chicken, pork chops, cornbread, pickles, mashed potatoes, lemon pie, and ice cream. He also wrote a letter to his sister in South Carolina:

Dear Sister:

This is my last letter and I have told them to send you my body and I won't you to put it Beside my father and I am saved and dont you worry about me Becuse I gon to meet my maker and you must pray to meet me some day in the outhur World so you must pray heard sister that we will meet someday and don't you worry at all Becuse I saved looking to meet you Some day in the outhur world so good by and pray that we will meet again Some day.

A short time later two Daviess County deputies arrived to escort Bethea back to Owensboro. His time had run out!

Thursday was a busy day in Owensboro! While Sheriff Thompson contemplated her responsibilities and Hanna and his crew assembled their gallows, the town underwent a metamorphosis. From a sleepy city of some 20,000 people, Owensboro was transformed. Highways leading into the town were jammed with cars, busses, trucks, and horse-drawn wagons bringing in the crowd.

Passenger trains into the city were packed, and freight trains disgorged loads of non-paying passengers—some 300 were reported to have disembarked from one such train in the Owensboro freight yards that afternoon.

Chartered airplanes arrived bringing newspaper reporters and photographers from New York, Chicago, and Louisville. The planes were parked on the edges of the airport's one runway ready to take off again with photographs for the late Friday editions.

By the time Bethea sat down for his last meal every hotel room in the city, some 450 in all, was filled, and scores of people were being turned away. Thousands milled through the streets on foot, and a constant

procession of automobiles inched through the downtown area. The heat and dust were stifling!

The Western Union office announced that it would remain open all night to accomodate newsmen wishing to file late stories and citizens who wish to send wires to friends and relatives. The post office, which closed at 9:30 p.m., reopened at midnight to meet the demand of people wanting stamps.

Captain Jesse Stone of the Kentucky State Police caused near panic among newsmen when he announced that all cameras found at the scene of the hanging would be smashed. News agencies immediately attempted to contact the Governor, and telephone and telegraph wires hummed until the police declared that the camera-smashing plans had been abandoned.

Hot dog stands appeared on the sidewalks and in doorways of downtown stores. A gasoline station near the gallows site sold sandwiches and cold drinks to the curious throngs. Hawkers of tamales, ice cream, watermelon, and other delicacies added a carnival-like atmosphere to the area. One enterprising merchant even sold fried fish freshly caught from the Ohio River.

Owensboro Mayor Fred Weir, worried about the growing throngs, issued orders closing all saloons and bars at midnight except for those establishments selling only beer. "We don't want to have any trouble," he explained. Thirsty citizens still had recourse to the outlying nightclubs and roadhouses, one of which advertised a "hangman's ball," complete with imported orchestra. A motion picture theater scheduled a midnight show.

Many Owensboroans held "hanging parties," inviting friends from out of town to be their guests for the festivities. Sheriff Thompson's seventeen-year-old daughter stole away from home to attend one such gathering. "Necktie breakfasts," held just before time to attend the hanging, were another popular social activity.

Sleep was out of the question for many of the throng downtown, although hundreds stretched out on the running boards of cars, on the slopes of a ditch bordering the hanging site, or on the courthouse lawn around the base of the Confederate monument.

As the hour of dawn approached, the crowd surged toward the gallows. A fence, hastily erected the day before by the nervous police, proved no obstacle. A few spectators vaulted it. The crowd, seeing that the police did nothing to restrain them, shoved against the wire. Soon the fence was leveled, and the mass of humanity, faces upturned toward the gallows, pressed to the very edge of the pit.

The time had come!

* * * * *

The headlines that afternoon told the story in bold-faced type: From Chicago—"Death Makes A Holiday: 20,000 Revel Over Hanging;" From Evansville, Indiana, some 30 miles downriver—"Ghostly Carnival Precedes Hanging (Fifteen Thousand Gather in Dim Light of Dawn to See Raw Death); From Louisville—"Volunteer Hangs Bethea ('Did Your Ever See a Hanging?' 'I Did,' Everyone in this Kentucky Throng can now Boast)." Photographs of the execution were on front pages from coast to coast.

By the time Bethea's body was cut down and carried to the horse-drawn hearse of a Negro undertaker, the highways leading from Owensboro were packed with cars. The spectators headed back home to the many states from whence they had come to see the spectacle.

A requiem mass was said for Bethea at St. Stephen's church at 8 o'clock; then, less than three hours after he was pronounced dead, Bethea's body, dressed in black tuxedo, was buried in a pauper's grave. Complete simplicity was the rule at the interment, since the county was limited by statute to an expenditure of no more than \$25.00

The downtown area slowly regained some appearance of normality, as shopowners returned to their business, and as city crews labored to clean up the mounds of trash left by the departed throngs. Sleepy children were put to bed, and the adult population of Owensboro returned to the workaday world of a hot August afternoon. Most Owensboroans seemed convinced that justice had been well served.

"Rainey Bethea's hanging here this morning, . . . vindicates the majesty of the law and preserves unsullied the good name of the community from the stigma of mob violence," the *Owensboro Messenger* proclaimed in an editorial. "Rainey Bethea paid the penalty which awaits others who may render themselves guilty of a similar crime."

Others were not so sure. Editorials and news stories around the nation publicized the hanging in pejorative terms. "Barbarous, grotesque, a travesty, a mob scene, inhuman, incredible, a spectacle, an orgy, a Roman holiday,"—these were some of the expressions used to describe Bethea's execution.

The editor of the neighboring *Henderson Gleaner* wrote satirically:

. . . The time—the ungodly, ghostly break o' day hour—the impossible hour chosen for a public execution—was in itself a confession of error. . . .

The hour should have been set at a CONVENIENT time—say the hour that a big circus begins—two o'clock in the afternoon. This would have enabled tens of thousands to come to the hangin' bee and get home in time to milk the

cows. The hanging should have been at the High School stadium where EVERYBODY could sit and be comfortable and see the ghastly spectacle.

On the national level criticism was more specific. *The Christian Century* voiced the thoughts of many:

Capital punishment under any circumstance is normally questionable; capital punishment administered by the state for the amusement and the degradation of its citizens and their children is unspeakably revolting. As in the case of every lynching, the principal victim was not the man who in a brief moment of suffering dropped to his death, but the community whose people were brutalized by watching and participating in the event. What conception of the value of human life can be expected in children who have seen the killing of a man made the occasion of a public show?

"Is this the twentieth century?" *The Commonwealth* asked, calling the execution "a morbid longing for self-expression in brutality." Much of the blame for the "primitive savagery" of the event, the editorial continued, lay with "a cheap and lurid press which profits by wallowing in every bloody deed."

John Lowe Fort, executive secretary for the Louisville Council of Churches pleaded in a letter to the *Courier Journal* for "an end to such morbid entertainment." "Surely," he wrote, "the legislature that repeals the law for providing public executions and the Governor who . . . signs the bill would do much to redeem Kentucky from public and national disgrace."

Owensboro reacted chauvinistically to all criticism. The *Owensboro Messenger*, in a front-page editorial four days later, blasted the "vile slanders" spread by the "vultures of the press and radio." The newspaper called for the creation of a "defense fund" for fighting the "campaign of lies, exaggerations and excesses conducted in the press and on the air. . . ." "Scurvy reporters who are getting away with murder," the editorial concluded with a bad choice of synonym, "should be taught a lesson."

The *Courier Journal* sought to re-focus attention on the real issue of the Bethea case: "Owensboro is not singly to blame. . . ." "That such a thing could happen is not Owensboro's fault any more than it is Louisville's." It was the "morons from all parts of the country" who

were responsible for the "shameful performance," the paper continued. Wherever the hanging occurred, it would have drawn "just as morbid a crowd. . . ."

The debate lasted for weeks as letter-writers and editors analyzed the impact of Bethea's execution. One thing was certain—neither Kentucky nor the United States needed another such display. Gradually opinion began to coalesce—the law must be changed; public hanging must be abolished.

The Kentucky General Assembly met the following January and one of the first bills introduced bore the ponderous title: "An Act to repeal and re-enact Sub-Section One of Section One thousand one hundred and thirty seven (1137-1) of the Kentucky Statutes, Carroll's edition of 1936, being chapter One hundred and sixty-three (163) of the Acts of the General Assembly of 1920, relating to the death penalty for the crime of rape."

The new act stated:

That from and after the period that this law shall take effect the mode of the execution of a death sentence must in every case be by causing to pass through the body of the condemned a current of electricity of sufficient intensity to cause death as quickly as possible, and the application of such current must be continued until the condemned is dead.

All executions of the death penalty by electrocution shall take place within the walls of the state penitentiary, hereafter indicated by the Board of Prison Commissioners, and in such enclosure as will exclude public view thereof.

It was passed by both houses of the General Assembly, and signed by the Governor, March 12, 1938.

* * * * *

An era ended. The death of Rainey Bethea, in its grossness, brought about reform. The legality of the death penalty itself remained for another generation to argue; but the people of Kentucky decided, after the spectacle in Owensboro, that death by indignity for the entertainment of the sick, the morbid, and the curious must be abolished.

THE KENNEDY-NIXON ELECTION IN DAVIESS COUNTY, 1960

by Douglas Tennant

Does Kennedy's farm program provide Daviess County a strong agricultural and economic future? Will Nixon succumb to the relentless pressure imparted on the presidency by the Soviet Union and Krushchev? These questions and others confronted the United States voter and in particular, the voting public of Daviess county, Kentucky, in the 1960 presidential election. John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Richard Milhous Nixon attempted to answer these key questions in Daviess county and throughout the United States. Perhaps the most pressing issue of the campaign in Daviess county, however, rested in the religious convictions of John F. Kennedy. This predominantly conservative, Protestant county's religious tolerance and knowledge of the issues would be tested and their effects shown in the voting patterns. Let's examine the issues and personalities involved in the 1960 Daviess county presidential race and determine the effects of the personalities involved.

Before understanding the Kennedy-Nixon election we must understand the events occurring in Daviess county and the characteristics of the voting public in the early 1960's. According to the 1960 United States census Daviess county was inhabited by 70,588 persons and this figure represented a twenty-six percent rise in the population of Daviess county since 1950. These figures proved to be the trend of the entire United States during the late 1950's and early 1960's. President Eisenhower enjoyed remarkable popularity and success in office and the nation continued to produce babies and cars and issues. Businesses sprang into existence and previously established firms continued their success. C. Waitman Taylor, Jr., a resident of Owensboro and an employee of General Electric during 1960, supported this notion of brisk business. Taylor suggested that the emergence of Texas Gas Corporation and General Electric provided fine employment opportunities in Daviess county and thus influenced a migration of strongly conservative and Protestant voters to the area. Essentially, Daviess county consisted of strong, conservative political views with extreme optimism towards the future.

Meanwhile, back on the farm, Daviess county was also composed of a substantial agricultural base. In 1959, the U.S. Census Bureau concluded that approximately seventy percent of all land in Daviess county served an agricultural means and the average farm price hovered around \$25,000. Even as Owensboro moved into a stronger

industrial economy the past "bread and butter" of the county's economy, the farms, continued to provide a major issue on any politician's score card. Likewise, the typical farm owner in Daviess county averaged 50.7 years of age. Predictably this age group constituted a major voting block and their votes probably would sway any race in the county.

Internationally, Daviess countians expressed deep concern over growing communist threats and infiltrations. U.S. citizens evacuated the troubled Congo when Russian insurgents stirred social and political unrest in that African country. Likewise, Daviess county observed "those Communists" causing trouble in Cuba. With all these terrifying events the people of this area desired protection. Civil defense plans were outlined by the Owensboro mayor and Daviess countians expressed their concern for a strong civil defense program and a strong defense stance and budget when dealing with "those Communists." These strongly conservative leanings required a strong defense stance along with a good farm program and any candidate who could appease the voters concerning these two issues would gain the inside track in Daviess county.

Finally, the political makeup of the county continued to be strongly Democratic. Waitman Taylor suggested that the traditional ratio consisted of a three or four to one favor for the Democrats. Taylor, however, pointed to the "physical Republicans" of Daviess County, also. Essentially, the majority of the county Democrats registered as such so as to enable themselves to be a positive force in primary elections. In fact, Daviess county was a conservative area that was supported by a prosperous farm industry and keenly aware of growing needs for strong defense actions to combat growing communist threats. These issues deserved attention. Let's look now at these issues and their effects on the voting of Daviess county.

First, the candidates' foreign policy stances and experience provided Daviess countians with a major issue in the election as well as the rest of the country. Both candidates knew that a strong anti-communist stance was desired by the majority of the people of Daviess County and the U.S. Attempting to appease the voters both Kennedy and Nixon incorporated strong defense platforms. Kennedy and the Democrats called for America to regain its lost prestige and power through a stronger defense plank enhance by economic growth. Along the same lines, Nixon and the Republicans decided to promote a "no price ceiling on America's security" type of foreign policy platform. Essentially, the platforms provided no help in determining the best candidate because of their extreme similarity.

Throughout the campaign the Daviess county voters experienced

continued claims of foreign policy expertise by both candidates. Nixon gained an early upper hand by nominating Henry Cabot Lodge, former U.N. ambassador and foreign expert, as his Vice President. This act also alienated many voters in the county because their favorite son, Senator Thurston Morton, jockeyed for the nomination until the end but finally lost to the expertise of Lodge in foreign affairs and Lodge's ability to gain votes in the strongly Democratic Northeast. Following his nomination for Vice President, Lodge quickly gained the sympathy of Daviess county voters by exclaiming that our fight with communism is a "life and death struggle" and we would use "...strengths and talents God gave us to build a world in which freedom will be secure;". Daviess county voters wanted to hear this. Nixon gained the quick lead but Kennedy enlisted his running mate, Lyndon Johnson, Senator from Texas, to bombard Owensboro and western Kentucky with his strategy. In late October Johnson appeared in Owensboro to promote Kennedy's experience and foreign policy objectives and many Daviess county voters turned out and welcomed Johnson.

Soon, however, political rhetoric from the candidates ceased and world events forced them to take stances on impending foreign policy decisions. Waitman Taylor, Jr. suggested that the Quemoy and Matsu incident in China became the overriding issue in the campaign in Daviess county. In a *Messenger and Inquirer* article Kennedy denied the importance of China and chose to concentrate on Cuban intervention whereas Nixon followed President Eisenhower's policy of defending Quemoy and Matsu if the Chinese invaded. I think the voters perceived Kennedy's actions not as positive criticism against declining prestige but as a deliberate attack on a very popular Eisenhower administration. Kennedy furthered the separation between his foreign policy and the strong pro-Eisenhower voters of Daviess county. Nixon won this battle.

Likewise, experience of the candidates generated a great deal of commotion in Daviess county. An editorial appearing in the Owensboro paper justified both candidates as being well-qualified and very professional. Daviess county did not suffer from the opinion that existed in many other areas that John Kennedy was too inexperienced. Daviess county voters' opinions were expressed quite well by an article in *Nation* magazine where the editorial saw both candidates' personalities as suitable and well-adjusted to the pressures involved. If any doubt existed in the minds of Daviess county voters the debates between Nixon and Kennedy would have answered them. Taylor suggested that Kennedy was perceived as the winner in all the debates and he stressed that Daviess county never again judged Kennedy as inferior to Nixon as far as experience was concerned. Summing up, I would suggest that the foreign policy and experience issue provided no advantage to Kennedy

and very little, if any, to Nixon in Daviess county. The voters recognized that the next President, whoever he might be, would stand tall against the Russians. Nixon may have exceeded Kennedy only in his campaign's repeated sympathetic responses to the voters concerning Russian interventions.

Second, the farm issue arose in Daviess county. As said before, agriculture played a major role in the economy of this area and when forty percent of the population lived in rural settings their influence on the candidates was substantial. Both candidates implanted major farm programs in their party platforms. Nixon's program rested on the "payment-in-kind" clause that put land in retirement while the farmer collected his usual amount of crops from storage areas; whereas, Kennedy based his program on price supports to supplement and equalize farm incomes with other industrial incomes. Other than these divergent methods to ease production and foster growth the two campaign programs essentially existed of the same clauses. Kennedy, however, faced severe opposition to his minimum-wage increase bill from the farmers of Daviess county as seen in the County Farm Bureau article in the *Messenger and Inquirer*. The county farmers realized that an increased minimum wage would create lower prices because wages are "two to one over productivity." This blunder by Kennedy presented a substantial block to the Kennedy progress in Daviess county that the farmers would not soon forget. Kennedy, however, met this challenge by attacking the programs of Eisenhower's Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Benson, and linking Nixon with such destructive programs. Unfortunately this tongue-lashing led to a series of shouting matches of political rhetoric between the two candidates over the farm issue. Eventually, I think the farm issue became not so much an issue as it did a ploy just to get the farmers to vote. An article in the *Messenger and Inquirer* stated that no matter which candidate wins they will "insure farmers are going to get plenty of attention." Again, this issue turned into political rhetoric with the issue and stances never completely uncovered or held and the farmer confronted by two similar programs, both insuring the continued importance of an agricultural base for America.

Third, most campaigns are won and lost not on political issues and promises but on personalities of the candidates and prejudices of the voters. Such was the case in the 1960 Daviess county presidential race. I have described the two major issues of this race yet it appears to me that neither issue presented a clear choice for the voters. both Nixon and Kennedy fought clean, hard, professional campaigns but finally, in Daviess county, the election rested on religious tolerance. Many political observers attempted to underwrite the religion issue but I

think William Andrews explained it best in *Nation* magazine. Andrews stated that the race came down to the choice of the South to rationalize whether it appears more acceptable to be anti-Catholic than pro-Republican. Likewise, as William G. Carleton explains in *Nation* magazine the thoughts of a typical southerner; "I don't care what the Democrats promise us old folks. I have to vote for Nixon to offset the Catholic vote. The Catholics would vote for Kennedy even if he were a yellow dog." This was the mood present in Daviess county in 1960. Let us see how Kennedy and Nixon dealt with this religious prejudice.

From the race's beginning Nixon spoke out against making religion an issue. Nixon stressed that Kennedy can make religion have all or no effect and Kennedy was satisfied to keep religion off the front pages. Soon, however, anti-Catholic literature sprang up in the nation and although Waitman Taylor, Jr. argued that he never experienced such literature I believe that anti-Catholic literature cropped up in Owensboro. Protestant preachers were vocalizing the bad effects of a President "who owes his allegiance to the Pope." Protestant Daviess county was being tested and two events soon helped Daviess countians decide where they stood. First, the Rev. Jess C. Moody proposed a plan for a bright economic and social future for America and submitted the plan to Senator Thurston Morton of Kentucky. Northern papers soon linked Moody, pastor of Owensboro's First Baptist Church, to anti-Catholic quotes in his past and Moody readily apologized. Moody said, "The purpose of all this is to solidify the New York vote for Kennedy. The result will only be an even greater chasm of philosophy between the North and South. Let's drop the religious issue! Mr. Nixon has—Why not Kennedy?" I think in Owensboro this event promoted anti-Catholic and anti-Northern-Democrat feelings and furthered Kennedy's split in Daviess county. Later, Daviess county again encountered the religion issue. Robert Kennedy, brother of John Kennedy and his campaign manager, spoke in Evansville of the extreme anti-Catholic feelings expressed in this area. Again the county's voters experienced a revelation of their religious intolerance, and I think it only made them more mad and opposed to Kennedy. Finally in early September a Kennedy aid voiced the candidate's concern of "acute anti-Catholicism." James Wine, advisor to Kennedy, described this area and state as anti-Catholic and almost accused this area of voting for Nixon because of the mere fact that Kennedy was Catholic. That event may have solidified Nixon's victory in Daviess county. Kennedy went on to capture the major Catholic districts such as Knottsville, Whitesville, St. Joseph and Stanley, yet Nixon overwhelmed Kennedy in the rest of the county. Even the predominantly Catholic districts in the city failed to give Kennedy a majority.

In summary, Nixon and Kennedy appeared as professional candidates both with the ability to run the country, yet in Daviess County Nixon won by an amazing 3,539 votes. Just one year earlier the Democratic candidate for Governor, Bert Combs, won the county decisively by a margin of almost 5,000 votes over his Republican opponent. I think the religious prejudice of Daviess County and the "physical Republicans," as Waitman Taylor, Jr. says, provided enough of a gap to allow Nixon to expose that gap and capitalize on it. Likewise, I realize now the importance of a national party. During 1960 the Massachusetts wing of the Democratic party had nothing in common with the Daviess county wing and this led to a separation in party loyalties. People enjoy voting *against* a particular mode of thinking or religion rather than voting *for* any other alternative. Finally, the election of Martha Layne Collins serves as a comparison to the Kennedy-Nixon election. In the thirty intervening years it seems Daviess county has recognized its prejudices and moved from its political backwardness. If a woman was elected governor I am sure a Catholic could carry Daviess county today.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Friday, September 28, will be the date of the Annual Dinner of the Society. It will be at Zion Church, Seventh & Allen Streets, and will be catered by Barbara Bittman and Patsy Crady. The program will be by Dr. Robert Cockrum, entitled "Howard Harris, Ragtime Dentist," and will feature performances of "Doc" Harris's music.

OWENSBORO CELEBRATES LABOR DAY, 1899

by Lee A. Dew

Labor Day had become an important holiday in the United States by the 1890's, thanks to the agitation of the American Federation of Labor, and Owensboro's laboring men spearheaded the celebration of their "special day" in Daviess county. The AFL local in Owensboro, Federal Labor Union No. 7010, headed by President William Lossie, was the major labor organization in this part of the state, enrolling large numbers of coopers and other woodworkers serving the large and booming distilling industry.

As a holiday, Labor Day had an appeal to all classes of citizens, coming as it did at the end of the summer and marking the beginning of fall activities, such as the new school term. Too, in Kentucky, it also marked the real beginning of political campaigns—those for federal offices on even-numbered years and for state offices on the off-years. Thus Labor Day, 1899, assumed a position of great importance in the minds of nearly all citizens, as Kentucky was locked in a bitter gubernatorial campaign between the Republican candidate, Gen. William S. Taylor and the Democratic nominee, William Goebel—an election which would lead ultimately to the assassination of Goebel and a very real threat of civil war between the parties.

Thus Labor Day, 1899, was imbued with an unusual partizan fierceness. Taylor, the Republican candidate, declined an invitation to speak, as the meeting was sponsored by a labor union, but Goebel was scheduled to attend a great picnic and rally, which was to follow a downtown parade and be followed by a general barbecue, races and other amusements. Goebel announced that Senator J. C. S. Blackburn would accompany him and also speak at the meeting, which was to be co-sponsored by the Daviess County Goebel Club, headed by E. R. Pennington.

The Owensboro *Messenger* published a program for the day's events, beginning with the parade at 9 a.m. through the downtown area, followed by a program of races for all ages at 10:30, a "barbecued dinner on the grounds" at noon and the political speeches at 1:30 p.m. "The committee desires it known that ladies are expected to attend the picnic," the newspaper added, even though they could not vote and therefore might have little interest in the speeches.

Special rates were offered by both the Illinois Central and Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis railroads for persons planning to attend the events, although the L & N, which was backing Taylor, refuses to allow

any discounts on its Owensboro-Russellville line. The steamboat *Gazelle* offered an excursion, and a crowd of some 225 people packed her decks, mostly from Lewisport and Hawesville.

The parade was described the next day in the *Messenger* in glowing terms:

The Labor Day parade was a marked success. It formed at Third and Frederica streets. It was headed by the city police, mounded, followed by the Strouse Bros. band of Evansville; members of the local labor union on foot in pairs; Chrisney, Ind., brass band; members of local Goebel Club; Mayor Small and members of city council in carriages; Red Men's float; orchestra; Railroad Transfer company's coal display; six floats displaying the business of the Castlen Cooperage company, showing the staves and heading in the rough, then through the various processes of workmanship until the barrel was finished, the barrels being actually made on the wagons; Grimes Bros. carpet display; Saunder's furniture display; Gilmour Bros. tobacco; Oberhausen's shingles; Hop Gold beer; Gilbert's flour; the fire department bringing up the rear. The parade was over four squares long and was one of the largest local parades ever given. It was certainly a great credit to the promoters. The parade started at Third and Frederica streets and pursued the following route; Third to Allen, out Allen to Seventh, Seventh to Frederica, down Frederica to Fourth, down Fourth to Locust, down Locust to Main, up Main to Triplett, and out Triplett to the fair grounds.

Following the parade the crowd moved to the fairgrounds at what is now Gabe's shopping center to view the various athletic contests, which featured a potato race, barrel race, sack race, rope race and wheelbarrow race, open to all entrants; and special races for participants age 10 and under; age 10 to 15; and age 15 and over. Other features included a slow mule race and a special one-mile race for adults. Prices varied from 75 cents to \$3, with a special prize of a manicure set and silver case for the winner of the one-mile event.

Following the barbecue the speaking began, with a crowd estimated at between 8,000 and 10,000—"an outpouring of farmers, laboring men, and men from all conditions of life, not to mention the hundreds of good women," as the paper reported, despite the weather, which was "one of the warmest days of the summer."

Goebel, introduced by Clarence M. Finn, launched a bitter attack on the incumbent Republican governor, William O'Connell Bradley, the McKinley administration in Washington and the influence of the "boss" of the Republican party, Marcus A. Hanna, and in general gave the Democrats of Daviess county the kind of speech they came to hear. Blackburn, better known to local voters, was greeted with cheering as he "delivered blow upon blow at the enemies of Democracy. . . ." The crowd, it was reported, was swept by "wave after wave of enthusiasm."

Finally the speeches were over, and Goebel was driven to the Planters House and Blackburn to the Rudd Hotel for rest and a little quiet politicking, while the crowd was serenaded by Stouse's High Art band, twenty pieces, from 4 to 6 p.m., and entertained by a baseball game.

Gradually the crowd thinned as the out-of-town visitors made their way to the depot or the landing for the return trip home, and city dwellers drifted homeward for supper. For those who still had energy for celebrating, however, there were the lights of Hickman Park, where a travelling company was opening a one-week stand with the play "The Woman in Black." The summer plays and Vaudeville programs at Hickman Park were quite popular, the play "Peck's Bad Boy" having just closed after having a very successful run.

And so despite the heat, despite the ravages of the tobacco worm, and despite the fact that school would start the next day, Labor Day, 1899, was a great success. National problems such as the rise of trusts and monopolies and foreign problems such as the Boer war in South Africa and the Phillipine insurrection could be temporarily forgotten, and Daviess countians could do what they enjoyed the most—playing games, eating barbecue, and getting "het up" about politics.

FOCUS ON - HOME MAIL DELIVERY IN OWENSBORO

July 1, 1890, was a big day for Owensboro. It marked the beginning of home delivery of mail, a service long sought by the city, and a real status symbol of the day.

From the time the first post office was founded in Yellow Banks, in 1818 or 1819, according to the 1883 *History of Daviess County*, mail had been delivered to customers only at the post office. Even after the change of the post office name to in about 1839 to 1840, window service continued.

Postal patrons had to go to the post office counter and ask for their mail, which meant that citizens had to get out in all kinds of weather, and even the sick and elderly either had to get themselves to the post office or rely upon friends or neighbors to pick up their mail for them.

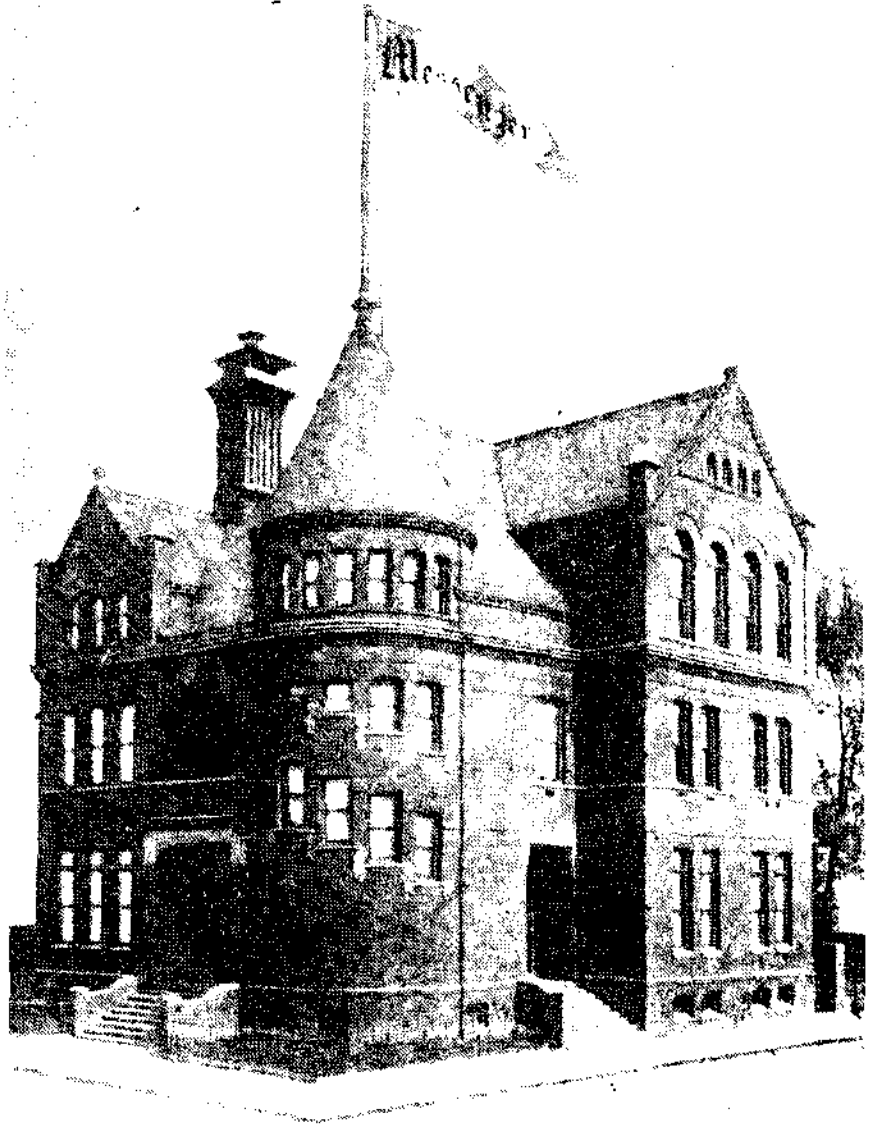
Undelivered letters were listed periodically in the newspapers, by the name of the addressee, but no other effort was made by the post office to insure delivery.

Service to the post office itself had improved considerably after the opening of the Owensboro and Russellville Railroad to Central City in 1872. This meant that mail could now reach the city by rail from Louisville, whereas up until this time all mail service had been by packet boat. When the river was low or frozen, mail service stopped, and for days or even weeks at a time the city was cut off from contact with the outside world.

When the law was passed by Congress providing for free home delivery of mail, it specified that the post office must have a minimum sale of stamps of \$10,000 per year. It was not until the late 1880's that Owensboro began to approach that magic figure. In the calendar year 1886 total stamp sales were \$9,825.43 and the following year the receipts climbed to \$9,922.64. In 1888 sales for the year finally reached \$10,354.69, but since the year, for purposes of the law, was calculated not by the calendar year but from April 1 through March 31, the city lacked "the pitiful sum of \$17.94" of reaching the required total.

Thus, as the spring of 1889 approached, *The Owensboro Messenger* began agitating for the establishment of the service. "Owensboro is now, and has been for several months, entitled to free mail delivery by virtue of the amount of business done at the postoffice," the paper declared, claiming that "only \$2,178.93 in stamp sales needed to be recorded by March 31 to qualify the city under the law.

"We are entitled to free delivery and by all means ought to have it at once. All that is needed is to forward a respectable petition, accompanied by a statement from the postmaster, and the service will be established



It was a proud day for Owensboro when the new post office building at Third and Allen streets was finally completed. It served until 1912 when the new federal building at Fifth and Frederica was built. In 1914 it was bought by THE OWENSBORO MESSENGER (see the flag) and was occupied by the newspaper until 1968, with the completion of their new building. It was razed in 1969 to make way for a parking lot for S. W. Anderson. (Photo courtesy McFarland Photography.)

honorably discharged veterans of the Union army, whose only requirement was physical ability to perform the work.

By the time a new Republican postmaster was appointed, in March of 1891 with the naming of Col. J. H. McHenry to the position, Owensboro's post office boasted five regular letter carriers and two supernumerary or substitute carriers. They were Fred Kollenberg, F. B. Routon, Will Sample, Will Gans, and W. H. Alexander, carriers; and Will Clayton and Pete Hugger, Jr., substitutes.

Other postal officials at that time were Irvin Haney, assistant postmaster; Ed Hayden, mailing clerk; D. S. Nall, general delivery clerk; and Ed Axton, stamp clerk.

With a new post office, new home delivery, and a new postmaster, things were looking up for mail service in Owensboro, and plans were being drawn to expand mail service so that there could be night service and also Saturday mail pickup. Owensboro was in a period of growth and expansion, and its new mail service was seen as a part of the new "boom" times which everyone were convinced were "just around the corner."

* * * * *

The new post office building, occupied in 1890, had a long and distinguished history. It housed not only the postal service but the Federal court and the U.S. Internal Revenue office. In 1912 the federal offices moved to the new government building at Fifth and Frederica streets, and the building stood vacant until 1914, when it was bought by *The Owensboro Messenger*, and served as the offices and production plant for the *Messenger*, and, following the consolidation in 1929, the *Messenger-Inquirer* until 1968, when the newspaper moved to its new building at Fourteenth and Frederica streets. In 1969 the building, along with the Clara Herr building next door, were demolished to make way for the building of a parking lot by the S. W. Anderson Company.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Daviess County Historical Society is open to all who have an interest in the history of Daviess County, the Green River Valley, or Kentucky. The Society meets on the Fourth Friday of each month from September through May. Most meetings are held at the Owensboro Area Museum on South Griffith Avenue.

Monthly programs of the Daviess County Historical Society are open to all, and non-members are encouraged to attend and participate.

Printed by Quality Printing Co., Owensboro, Ky.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Volume II

OCTOBER

Number 4

Published by
THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY is published in January, April, July and October, by the Daviess County Historical Society. The QUARTERLY is supplied free to all its members.

Annual membership dues are \$5.00

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The Editor's Page

No person who lived through the Great Depression of the 1930's can ever forget these troubled days, brought back to mind by the fine article by Shelia Heflin on the WPA in Daviess County. Not only did the Works Progress Administration provide much-needed employment for many persons, the projects undertaken by that agency continue to serve the people today, nearly a half-century later. It is hard to find in history an example of tax money better spent for the general welfare! Mrs. Heflin, the Society's secretary, is director of the Owensboro Daviess County Library's Kentucky Room, and is a graduate of Kentucky Wesleyan College. This article was a part of her thesis for the MA degree in History from Western Kentucky University.

Dwayne Cox, a KWC graduate who is completing work on his doctoral program in history at the University of Kentucky, is an archivist at the University of Louisville. He first wrote his paper on patent medicine in Owensboro while an undergraduate at KWC.

The German heritage in Daviess County is one of the strongest molders of the county's history, and few institutions founded by the German immigrants had a more profound effect than St. Joseph's church. Mrs. Helen Coomes, for many years a parishoner at St. Joe's, has written a sensitive short history of this fine old church.

One of the functions of the Quarterly is to serve as a resource for future students of the county's history. The index to the first two volumes of the DCHQ, while not comprehensive, will be a valuable tool not only for future researchers but for anyone wanting a ready-reference to the 192 pages of the Quarterly which are indexed.

THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION IN DAVIESS COUNTY, 1935-1943

by Shelia E. Brown Heflin

The Depression effected the people of Daviess County in many ways. For some very little in their changed, for others the bottom dropped out. The less fortunate lost their jobs which were their only means of supporting their families. Many tried to survive on their own, while others turned to the government for aid. During the Thirties the government supplied two types of aid—the dole, simply a handout, or the work programs. If an employed person met certain qualifications he was then eligible for job on the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which President Franklin D. Roosevelt had created on May 6, 1935. Antagonists jeered that the program consisted of make-work projects which were of little value. They ridiculed the WPA, saying the initials actually stood for “We Piddle Around.” Indeed, there was some piddling around, but also a great deal of fine work. The local WPA construction projects proved the worth and benefit of the WPA to the citizens of Daviess County.

A majority of Daviess County men probably worked on street and road construction. According to WPA Area Engineer Larry Depp, practically every street in Owensboro prior to World War II was paved or improved by the WPA and in most cases sewers were also installed.¹ The city sponsored the WPA street projects from January 1936 to May 1943, and the City Engineer's office designed and supervised the construction.² The city furnished a percentage of the materials and the WPA supplied the remainder plus the workers. Retired City Engineer Russell Shifley stated that the percentage the city provided depended upon the amount of labor needed for the job. He said that this arrangement “made it a little easier on the cities because most of them, especially Owensboro, was in financial straits and it aided the city to do more work because they didn't have to pay the total cost of the material.” In fact, Owensboro even recovered a portion of their material cost from the property owners who petitioned the city to have their street paved and agreed to pay footage. This amount, calculated to pay the city's portion of materials, ranged from 90¢ to \$1.50 per lineal foot.³

From 1936-1939 the streets were paved with water bound macadam and surfaced with natural rock asphalt. In 1939 crushed limestone became difficult to obtain and the city engineer switched to Portland cement concrete. This allowed the street crews to use river gravel and sand as the aggregate, both of which were easily acquired locally. The WPA operated a rock quarry between Livia and Glenville to help

supply sandstone for county road projects. Depp estimated 20-25 men worked on the quarry project using air compressors to break the stone and the county's rock crushing machinery to crush the rock into a usable size.⁴

Shifley marveled that many of the WPA constructed streets still exist and are in fairly good shape. All the street work was done by hand to assure as many people as possible WPA jobs. WPA men prepared the grade with picks and shovels. A concrete mixer was allowed, but it was fed by hand. When ready, the workmen rolled the two bag mixer to the spot and dumped it. Then they spread and finished the concrete entirely by hand. ⁵

Approximately 550 men per year received WPA work on city streets and county roads between July 1936 and December 1938. A June 1938, *Owensboro Messenger* news article reported that since 1936 the WPA had spent \$456,416 on city streets, sewers, and water mains compared to the \$140,035 that city officials and property owners spent as sponsors. The WPA spend \$128,061 on county road projects with the county contributing only \$30,244 as the sponsor. The WPA not only employed the economically needy, but made possible improvements that "would either not be made or would be years in coming to Owensboro."⁶

WPA street work within Owensboro included surfacing the streets with either cinders, oil, or concrete, and constructing curbs and gutters. Owensboro had 85 miles of streets in January 1942. Twenty-five miles were paved and the remainder were cindered or oil treated. Although the city began paving projects in 1901, the WPA accounted for approximately 42% of the improvements in just a short span of time—four years.⁷

WPA county road projects often involved preparing the road for proper surfacing by grading and draining the area. Many roads were surfaced with either bank gravel or river gravel.⁸ During 1938, with 250 men the WPA built almost 30 miles of new roads in Daviess County and also added 4 bridges: two with 16 foot spans, one 20 foot span, and one 15 foot span.⁹ WPA labor also expended a lot of muscle in 1941 when they constructed six culverts, six bridges, and 20 miles of highway.¹⁰

Sewer projects provided another area of employment for a majority of people. It took muscle, not skill, to man a shovel for digging ditches. During May 1938, approximately 300 men received WPA employment either constructing or repairing Owensboro sewers.¹¹ According to Shifley, the areas of Owensboro which did not have sewers at that time, received them with the aid of the WPA.¹² The city spent \$36,156 in 1938, while the WPA contributed \$70,294 for the two and seven-tenths miles of sewers built that year. Sewer work not only involved digging the ditches, but also included constructing the manholes and making

all the necessary house connections and laterals.¹³

Charles Tipmore, who lost his job making furniture at the Ames factory, dug ditches for the WPA sewer project which ran from the street car barn at Sixth and Breckinridge Streets to Fourth Street. He used grub hoes, spades, and long handle shovels to dig the ditch. Tipmore stated that the WPA worker dug, but city employees actually laid the sewer pipe.¹⁴ Edward Girvin recalled earning about 25¢ an hour digging ditches on a WPA sewer project on East Nineteenth Street. He was sixteen or seventeen years old the first time he worked for the WPA. He worked in a team with two other men digging a ten foot ditch. The two men took advantage of Girvin's youth by putting him in the bottom of the ditch with a short handle shovel while they stayed on top. As he tossed out dirt, they used the long handle shovels to throw it back out of they way. This meant two people handled the same amount of dirt as one did, with better shovels. Girvin stated that his strenuous first day of work exhausted him. The next day, the foreman learned of the situation and questioned Girvin as to why he was in the bottom of the ditch with the short handled shovel. He replied that the other two told him to work in the bottom and that there were only two long handle shovels and they got them. The foreman made those two men get in the bottom and kept Girvin on top for the remainder of the project. Despite the initial treatment he received, Girvin believes that the WPA was not only beneficial to the participants, but also to the cities.¹⁵

The biggest sewer project undertaken by the WPA was the repair of the sewer cave-in at Sixteenth and Breckinridge Streets. A March 1938 cloudburst caused the 70-foot-deep tunnel sewer to break. The rushing water carried sand and subsoil into the break, creating a huge hole, about 300 feet by 150 feet, that caused seven homes on Breckinridge street to slide in to the hole. Depp stated that they needed in excess of 30,000 cubic yards of dirt to refill the hole. This equalled approximately 8,000 loads of rubbish, cinders, and soil. Over a fourteen-month period a new shaft was constructed to the deep tunnel and the damaged sewer was replaced with a new sewer line at a more shallow elevation. Shifley recalled that it took three different WPA appropriations to finish the costly repair job. The new shaft alone cost over \$13,000. Cleaning 5,000 yards of sand from the sewer break to the river, 15-16 blocks away, also cost several thousand dollars.¹⁶

Other sewer projects in the rural areas of Daviess County took the form of the old fashion country outhouse. A September 1936 news article reported that WPA workers had built 225 of 400 sanitary toilets. They built these in accordance with specifications provided by the state board of health.¹⁷ The threat of typhoid led the State Department of Health to cooperate with the WPA and the United States Public Health Service in providing a program of "community sanitation involving the installation of sanitary privies on any property,

either public or private.'"¹⁸ Robert Stiff worked on the WPA sanitary toilet project. He remembered being taken around by truck out in the county where he asked the home owner if he could inspect their outhouse. If the privy failed to meet government standards, he discussed the situation with the owner. The owner was not forced to acquire a new outhouse, but if he wanted a new one the WPA would build it. The catch was that the property owner had to pay for the materials. If they wanted a new outhouse, Stiff added their name to his list. After he collected several names, WPA workers began constructing the new facilities.¹⁹

The sanitary toilets were built on Eighteenth Street across from the old Ames building. Later the project moved to the Stanley area of the county.²⁰ Naturally, the shell of the outhouse was wood. A concrete slab served as the floor with a concrete seat and lid attached. All this was placed over a deep hole which was walled up with wood.²¹ Once in place, the new WPA outhouse was ready for immediate use.

In the beginning of the WPA many people voiced the opinion that building outhouses was as big a project as needed to be assigned to WPA workers. However, under the leadership of capable supervisors, the public soon realized it was possible to take people on relief and do something worthwhile for the community.²² The WPA project at the Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital is a prime example of these attitudes.

WPA Area Engineer Depp read in the local newspaper about a meeting between Judge Jim Wilson, Mayor Fred Weir, and the hospital board concerning a proposed \$150,000 bond issue for construction of an addition to the hospital. He attended the meeting and suggested they proceed with the bond issue, but also apply for WPA aid. They laughed at him, asking if it would have two holes or three holes. He loaded them into his car and drove to Madisonville, where they viewed the WPA at work on a hospital and a high school. Properly impressed, they decided to try Depp's suggestion.²³

In a special meeting, held January 26, 1938, then Mayor Harry C. Smith and City Commissioners Lyman S. Cox and Henry Cline agreed to execute WPA Form No. 301, which involved applying for WPA assistance. They also contracted with Otis and Lea of Louisville, Kentucky, for drawing up the hospital plans.²⁴ The WPA approved the project application and allocated \$125,498 towards the construction cost. The city financed the remaining funds by selling \$150,000 worth of bonds. Excavation work for the hospital foundation began January 23, 1939.²⁵ A. D. Gore, the WPA foreman, used 35 men to clear the grounds and excavate for the heating plant. The number of workers increased as the project progressed.²⁶ In order to insure the maximum amount of WPA labor, Depp planned that the 60,000 cinder blocks needed for the seven-story building be built on the hospital grounds.

Cinder blocks were used for the inner wall and were faced with brick. WPA workmen tamped very fine cinders into a mold to form the blocks. M. N. Bostorn, superintendent of the hospital construction, reported 20,000 cinder blocks ready to be used on June 24, 1939. At that time 103 men from relief rolls worked on the site.²⁷ Nade Greenlee and James Dennison were two of the workmen on this project. Greenlee hauled dirt away from the project and earned approximately 25¢ per hour. Dennison helped construct the smoke stack and the floors of the main building and took home \$12 per week for his efforts.²⁸

The new addition took two years and five months to build. WPA men worked on almost every phase of the construction. The plumbing and electrical work were the only jobs handled by outsiders. The new seven-story addition contained 27 private rooms, 10 semi-private rooms, and 4 rooms which contained 4 beds each. The addition doubled the capacity of the old hospital and it included a surgical department on the seventh floor and a kitchen plus classrooms for student nurses in the basement. Hundreds of people toured the new hospital on June 22, 1941, at an informal open house. The following day a formal dedication with a flag raising ceremony officially opened the new hospital unit.²⁹

The WPA also took great interest in projects dealing with public schools. WPA funds not only helped build halls of learning, but also provided extras from which students derived pleasure. During Fall 1938, WPA workers laid sidewalks at Owensboro Senior High, Longfellow, Emerson, and Washington Elementary schools.³⁰ Owensboro High School students certainly enjoyed one particular extra, an addition to their school stadium, which WPA funds provided in 1940-1941. The Owensboro Board of Education authorized and signed the application for WPA aid at the February 1940 monthly meeting. They agreed to sponsor the project which entailed building sections to seat 1800 people on the east side of the football field and 400 people on the west. The estimated cost for these improvements totaled \$30,400. The Board was responsible for one-fourth, or \$7,600, of this amount.³¹

The architectural plans and the WPA application were sent to the Madisonville WPA office for approval. Approved at this level, they traveled to Louisville, and then to Washington, D.C. for final approval.³² The Board received word in April 1940 from Congressman B. M. Vincent that the WPA approved \$30,926 for the additions to Rash Stadium.³³ Later, in July 1941, Senator Alben W. Barkley wired Superintendent John L. Foust that the WPA had allotted \$10,016, for additional improvements. The improvements included a drainage system, a running track, repairing the seats in the old stadium, and a concrete wall round the football field.³⁴

John T. Stites supervised the WPA stadium project, which began in early July 1940, with twenty men preparing the grounds for construction work.³⁵ By early September the workmen excavated and poured the

concrete base for the new portion of the stadium and began pouring concrete for the 400 seat annex to the old part of the stadium. The eastern tier also included a press box in the center and a band stand.³⁶ At the August 1941 school board meeting, Superintendent Foust reported on the project, "as tile is being put in to drain the field, a water system is being installed to sprinkle the field. Preparations are being made to build a concrete block wall around the field."³⁷ Red Devil supporters helped WPA and city officials formally dedicate the new additions to Rash Stadium on Friday, September 21, 1941, in the pre-game activities of the OHS-Reitz Memorial football game. Although OHS lost, 34-13, the fans jubilantly celebrated the completion of the WPA stadium project.³⁸

The Daviess County Board of Education also applied to the WPA for aid to modernize and improve their schools. During August 1936, the Board announced that WPA projects for their West Louisville, Sutherland, and Whitesville schools had been approved. The WPA and the school board installed a \$600 cistern to provide more water at West Louisville and extended the basement at Sutherland into a playroom. A \$2,000 project at Whitesville included painting and plastering classrooms, building a parking lot, and adding to the farm shop.³⁹ Paint, plaster, new sidewalks and driveways, and landscape work for the grounds constituted the WPA work approved for Stanley and Maceo elementary schools.⁴⁰ During 1940, the WPA provided a \$9,155 grant to the school board for the addition of an auditorium at Sutherland school.⁴¹

The largest WPA project sponsored by the county school board involved the building of a new Utica High and Grade School. In 1936, the WPA repaired the old Utica school by plastering and painting as needed and sprucing up the outside by landscaping the yard. They also added two new rooms for the agriculture class and farmshop and elevated the home economics wing by constructing a basement beneath it. The improvements and repairs cost \$7,000, of which the county board paid only \$600.⁴² P.C. Younker, a WPA engineer, reported that 40 men were at work on the project in September 1936.⁴³ The Utica community celebrated the project's completion with a basket dinner at the school on December 1, 1936.⁴⁴ All their work crumbled to the ground when the school burned December 10, 1938. The Board of Education met in called session on January 10, 1939, and instructed their architect to apply for WPA aid. The minutes of that meeting state, "It was thought wise by the board to apply to WPA assistance due to the great saving in this building."⁴⁵ The WPA replied in April, allotting \$48,168 for the \$80,000 project.⁴⁶ In mid-January 1941, the WPA approved an additional allocation of \$4,082 for landscaping the grounds and for other minor construction not included in the original grant.⁴⁷

Nade Greenlee, a WPA worker, hauled material to the Utica project site. He earned about 25¢ per hour to haul such items as posts and benches to the school and haul dirt away from the grading.⁴⁸ The construction of the new school took less than two years. At the November 1940 school board meeting Walter Scott Roberts, the architect, announced that the school would be ready for occupancy January 1, 1941.⁴⁹ The building was ultra modern and its architectural design was unique in Daviess County. One of the newest innovations of the time, reinforced monolithic concrete construction, made the building fireproof. Charles Tipmore recalled building runways 30-40 feet in the air during the construction work. Workmen then rolled wheelbarrows full of concrete up the incline. At the top, they dumped the concrete into the forms. Educators wholeheartedly approved the many windows to admit the necessary light for study without eyestrain. The thoroughly modern school included an auditorium-gymnasium, a sound-proof music room, a library, nine classrooms, complete science units, a cafeteria and kitchen, and an office for the principal.⁵⁰

The city school board sponsored the Owensboro Technical High School project, their largest project in connection with the WPA. On October 19, 1939, the WPA approved plans for the building of a new trade and vocational school with a grant of \$76,989. The project included demolishing the old building and erecting a new building which would house a trade school for boys, a vocational school for girls, and an auditorium-gymnasium.⁵¹

WPA workmen began demolishing the old building February 14, 1940. On May 20, they started pouring concrete and by July 31, the bricklayers were at work.⁵² The new three story structure fronted 180 feet on Frederica Street and extended 178 feet on Fifteenth Street.⁵³ Approximately 90 WPA men worked on the project at the time of the corner stone laying ceremony on October 17, 1940. The building was 35% complete with the gym ready for its roof and the third story concrete floor already poured.⁵⁴ Depp described the excellent construction of the school:

This building was of beam and column construction, reinforced concrete and masonry from its foundation to the ceiling of the top floor, fireproof, even to the doors, stairways. The only thing you could have burned was the wooden surface on the seats in the gym, which were set on concrete, and the roof.⁵⁵

In July 1941, the WPA allotted \$4,167 more for improvements to the Technical High grounds. The work included laying concrete sidewalks, street curbs, and making two driveways.⁵⁶ WPA workmen completed the building October 18, 1941. The cost, including equipment, totaled \$225,000.⁵⁷ School board members and WPA officials, aided by many

proud Owensboroans, dedicated the new Owensboro Technical High School on October 30, 1941.⁵⁸

Needing office and storage space, the WPA, in cooperation with the City of Owensboro, built a very useful warehouse on the corner of Fourth and Orchard Streets. The city paid only \$1,400 for the project and the WPA supplied the remainder of the \$8,420.⁵⁹ Greenlee, a WPA truck driver, stated that concrete mixers, cement, picks, shovels, and various other tools were stored in the warehouse. The building also contained the Area Supervisor's office.⁶⁰ At the WPA's demise the warehouse became city property. It has since been a part of the city garage and the headquarters for the city beautification department.

Along with constructing large buildings, the WPA workers also aided in smaller tasks. When the old city light plant at Fourteenth and Lewis Streets was demolished WPA registrants cleaned the bricks for other construction projects.⁶¹ Another smaller project involved city and county beautification. The Daviess County Fiscal Court sponsored a beautification project in Spring 1940. The WPA granted \$2,186 for the improvement and beautification of the Daviess County Courthouse lawn. County Agents J. E. McClure and W. O. Hubbard directed the landscaping project, with the local Garden Club also providing assistance.⁶² In a sense, the WPA crews which sealed old mine entrances also contributed to the beautification of Daviess County, as well as making the area safer. The sealed entrances prohibited copperas water from leaving the mine to pollute streams and damage nearby vegetation.⁶³ A concrete wall also hindered precocious children and adventuresome adults from coming to harm in an abandoned mine. Tipmore explained that WPA workmen sealed old mines in the Moselyville area by building a form and pouring concrete down into it. The hardened concrete effectively sealed the mine entrance.⁶⁴

Large or small, Daviess Countians were extremely pleased and proud of all the completed WPA construction projects. They were equally proud of the WPA white collar projects, service projects, recreation project and the emergency and defense projects. Many Daviess Countians felt the initials WPA really stood for "We Proudly Achieve."

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Interview with Oren Larry Depp, Sr., by Shelia E. Brown, Owensboro, KY, 20 October 1977.
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- ³ Interview with Russel Shifley, by Shelia E. Brown, Owensboro, KY, 20 November 1977.
- ⁴ Depp interview; Interview with Charles E. Tipmore, by Shelia E. Heflin, Owensboro, KY, 4 January 1983; *Owensboro Messenger*, 1 January 1939.
- ⁵ Shifley interview.
- ⁶ *Owensboro Messenger*, 12 June 1938.
- ⁷ *Owensboro Messenger*, 4 January 1942.
- ⁸ *Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer*, 27 September 1936.
- ⁹ *Owensboro Messenger*, 1 January 1939.
- ¹⁰ *Owensboro Messenger*, 4 January 1942.
- ¹¹ *Owensboro Messenger*, 4 May 1938.
- ¹² Shifley interview.
- ¹³ *Owensboro Messenger*, 1 January 1939.
- ¹⁴ Tipmore interview.
- ¹⁵ Interview with Edward Girvin, by Shelia E. Brown, Owensboro, KY, 16 October 1977.
- ¹⁶ Shifley interview; *Owensboro Messenger*, 28 May 1939.
- ¹⁷ *Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer*, 27 September 1936.
- ¹⁸ Judy Jenkins, "There's a place for nostalgia, but there should be some limit," *Henderson Gleaner*, 16 March 1983, p. B1.
- ¹⁹ Interview with Robert S. Stiff, Sr., by Shelia E. Heflin, Owensboro, KY, 7 February 1983.
- ²⁰ Tipmore interview.
- ²¹ Interview with Willetta Francine Whitten Brown, by Shelia E. Brown, Owensboro, KY, 2 August 1977.
- ²² Depp interview.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Owensboro City Commission, Minutes of Meetings of the City Commissioners, 1938, Meeting of 26 January 1938.
- ²⁵ *Owensboro Messenger*, 22 January 1939.
- ²⁶ *Owensboro Messenger*, 26 January 1939.
- ²⁷ Depp interview; Interview with Nade Greenlee, by Shelia E. Brown, Owensboro, KY, 2 October 1977; *Owensboro Messenger*, 25 June 1939.
- ²⁸ Greenlee interview; Interview with Elizabeth Dennison, by Shelia E. Brown, Owensboro, KY, 2 August 1977.
- ²⁹ Depp interview; *Owensboro Messenger*, 22 June 1941; William Foster Hayes, *Sixty Years of Owensboro 1883-1943* (Owensboro, KY: Messenger Job Printing Co., Inc., 1943), pp. 76-77.
- ³⁰ *Owensboro Messenger*, 15 November 1938.

- 31 *Owensboro Messenger*, 9 February 1940.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Owensboro Board of Education, Minutes of Meetings of the School Board, 1940, Meeting of 11 April 1940.
- 34 *Owensboro Messenger*, 15 July 1941.
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- 41 *Owensboro Messenger*, 23 May 1940.
- 42 *Owensboro Messenger*, 19 July 1936.
- 43 *Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer*, 27 September 1936.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 29 November 1936.
- 45 Daviess County Board of Education, Minutes of Meeting of the School Board, Meeting of 10 January 1939.
- 46 *Owensboro Messenger*, 20 April 1939; 4 January 1942.
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- 48 Greenlee interview.
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- 52 WPA Description of Owensboro Technical High School, Owensboro, KY, 17 October 1940. (Placed in Corner Stone of Building).
- 53 John L. Foust, "Some Facts About the Owensboro Trade School or Technical High School," 17 October 1940. (Typewritten Report Placed in Corner Stone of Building.)
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- 56 *Owensboro Messenger*, 15 July 1941.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 30 October 1941.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 31 October 1941.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 23 August 1938.
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"THE GREAT AMERICAN FRAUD" IN OWENSBORO

by Dwayne Cox

The latter nineteenth century was the nadir of medical education and practice in the United States. Rival sects of physicians competed for dominance, medical schools opened almost overnight, and the nostrum trade, encouraged by new techniques in marketing and advertising, offered a variety of fraudulent and sometimes dangerous remedies to unsuspecting consumers. At the same time, the medical profession made only feckless attempts at self-regulation and no government agencies existed to protect the public from a growing number of unscrupulous individuals who offered medical advice and quick cures for every human ailment imaginable.¹

Professional medical practice and home remedy were probably little different in the Owensboro of the 1890s than they were in countless other American cities of comparable size. The town boasted about four dentists and twenty physicians, most of whom probably served their patients as well as the technology and scientific knowledge of the day allowed. In addition to its physicians and dentists, the city also supported about eleven druggists, whose stores undoubtedly stocked the patent medicines purchased by those who either distrusted or could not afford the services of the medical establishment.²

If volume of advertising provides any indication of sales, the town's residents consumed plenty of the nostrums available to them during the 1890s. Magazines, almanacs, bill boards, and medicine shows all touted a variety of wonder cures, but newspaper advertising provided the blood of the nostrum trade. Urey Woodson's *Owensboro Daily Messenger* ran about ten patent medicine advertisements per page during the early 1890s. One nostrum maker, whose products were regularly promoted in the Owensboro paper, spent about \$1,000,000 per year on national advertising during this period. The fear of lost revenue undoubtedly weakened the resolve of more than one newspaper editor who under other circumstances may have supported legislation to regulate the nostrum trade.³

No product received more publicity in Owensboro than Hood's Sarsaparilla, "the true elixir of life." Manufactured from the roots of a Latin American plant, sarsaparilla had been touted as a cure for syphilis during the sixteenth century. Later it fell into disuse, only to be revived during the early nineteenth century by the patent medicine promoter Benjamin Brandreth, who claimed that globules of sarsaparilla were identical to globules of blood. In addition to purifying the blood, Hood's Sarsaparilla also fought blindness, deafness, and pimples. Like all sarsaparillas, the variety manufactured by C. I. Hood and Company

contained alcohol, about twenty per cent by volume. Like other patent medicines, Hood's specialized in publishing and distributing testimonials and other inspirational literature about its medical powers. Many of the testimonials for patent medicines were either fabricated, or purchased, or both.⁴

Owensboro residents endured the claims of no more worthless a fraud than Radam's Microbe Killer, a harmless concoction that consisted almost entirely of water. William Radam, the inventor, was one of the first patent medicine makers to capitalize upon popular interest in recent breakthroughs of the bacteriological revolution. To many newspaper readers, the discoveries of Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, and William Radam seemed equally plausible. Radam insisted that microbes swarmed throughout the human body and were the primary cause of degeneration and death. His Microbe Killer fought this process and thus prolonged a vigorous life. Radam achieved such popularity that by 1890 he operated seventeen plants across the United States for the manufacture of Microbe Killer. According to one estimate, he turned an annual profit of about six thousand per cent.⁵

Northern companies dominated the patent medicine industry, but industrious southerners also capitalized upon the sales potential of nostrums. Sometimes advertisements carried a sectional appeal, as in the case of Dr. William's Pink Pills for Pale People, which promised to relieve the swamp fevers that United States soldiers contracted while fighting in the South during the Civil War. Atlanta provided the headquarters for at least two southern firms that marketed remedies in Owensboro: Swift's Sure Specific and Botanic Blood Balm. The latter 'claimed to drive "old bad blood" from "the citadel of life," as well as to clear up "sore and filthy nostrils." Its alcoholic content, which was not revealed on the bottle or in the advertisements, equalled that of many wines.⁶

Other cures advertised in Owensboro during the 1890s contained dangerous amounts of drugs unknown to the consumer. Shiloh's Consumption Cure cost fifty cents per bottle and contained chloroform. Morphine, cloroform, and opium were among the ingredients of Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption, a product with undoubtedly provided temporary relief for the sick who consumed it. Another product widely available in Owensboro, Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, mixed opium and alcohol. Green's Nervura was known as "the king of the braces" until Peruna took over the market. The latter was about one quarter alcohol by volume and claimed to cure nothing but catarrh, although the manufacturer gave this malady such a broad definition that Peruna, by implication, relieved almost any ailment. Not all patent medicines contained dangerous drugs, but most of them made exaggerated claims about their curative powers.⁷

Owensboro also provided a stopover for travelling doctors who appeared periodically to offer their wonder cures. During the early 1890s, the most persistent may have been Dr. W. D. Rea, who made regular appearances at the Rudd House to cure everything from cancer to sexual exhaustion. The good doctor even promised to pay fifty dollars to any patient whose problems he could not diagnose within five minutes. Apparently, Rea impressed enough of the town's residents to keep up the demand for his services, which included treatments with electronic devices that represented "the day of modernism and not fogyism." Dr. Rea claimed credentials from the Hospital College of Medicine, one of several rival schools that offered classes in Louisville during the nineteenth century.⁸

Ironically, the patent medicine trade peaked on the eve of legislation that dramatically altered the nature of drug manufacture and marketing during the twentieth century. Some of the more vocal opponents of the nostrum business appeared among the reforming journalists and other writers of the Progressive Era in American History. Samuel Hopkins Adams, who published a popular attack upon the patent medicine industry early in the twentieth century, may have done more than any one person to inform the reading public about the dangers of misbranded drugs. Harvey Washington Wiley, the crusading head of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Chemistry, also campaigned for the passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act, which became law under President Theodore Roosevelt. Eventually, many of the patent medicine makers who advertised in Owensboro during the 1890s were convicted for violations of this legislation. The passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act provided a textbook example of the varying themes that made up American progressivism: the crusading journalist, the growing authority of the federal government, and an early brand of consumerism. At the same time, physicians, pharmacists, and other individuals concerned with health care underwent a transformation that stressed a growing degree of what would today be called "professionalism."⁹

Today drug manufacturers not only must disclose the contents of their products, but also face penalties for false claims in advertising. At the same time, professional consumer advocates monitor the industry in ways unimagined by Samuel Hopkins Adams and Harvey Washington Wiley. But even though legislative restraints have changed the nature of drug manufacture and marketing, the media still abounds with banal advertisements for a variety of over-the-counter remedies. Furthermore, medical quackery, while less visible than it was during the last century, has by no means disappeared. James Harvey Young, the foremost authority on the patent medicine industry of the nineteenth century and various forms of medical fraud in the twentieth, attributes

the persistence of quackery in part to humanity's timeless ability to believe the impossible. On the other hand, while medical practice and true "wonder drugs" have become increasingly sophisticated, the price of the highest quality health care has risen beyond the means of many Americans, which may account, in part, for the persistence of cheaper, less reliable cures.¹⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ See the following works on medical education and practice in the United States during the nineteenth century: Martin Kaufman, *American Medical Education: The Formative Years, 1765-1910* (Westport, Connecticut, 1976); William G. Rothstein, *American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century: From Sects to Science* (Baltimore, 1972); and Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York, 1982). John H. Ellis, *Medicine in Kentucky* (Lexington, 1977), covers medical education and practice in the commonwealth during the same period. James Harvey Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Potent Medicines in America before Federal Regulation* (Princeton, 1961), is the foremost authority on the nostrum trade during the nineteenth century. In *The Medical Messiahs: A Social History of Health Quackery in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 1967), Young brings his subject up to the present.

² Hal Newton Carlyle, comp., *The Owensboro Family Directory and Daviess County Gazetteer* (Owensboro, 1891), pp. 216-217; H. Thorton Bennett, comp., *Owensboro City Directory* (Owensboro, 1889), pp. 165-177; William Foster Hayes, *Sixty Years of Owensboro, 1883-1943* (Owensboro, n.d.), pp. 361-362.

³ See Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, especially pp. 104, 211. Samuel Hopkins Adams, *The Great American Fraud* (New York, 1905-1906), was written as an expose of the patent medicine business and contains information on the nostrum manufacturers' relationship with the press; pp. 123-142. All the patent medicines mentioned in this essay were advertised extensively, usually daily, in the *Owensboro Daily Messenger* during the early 1890s.

⁴ Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, pp. 74-76, 185-188, 213-214; Adams, *Great American Fraud*, pp. 21, 143-146.

⁵ Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, pp. 144-162; Adams, *Great American Fraud*, p. 59; Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Chemistry, *Service and Regulatory Announcements* (Washington, 1914-1923), Notice of Judgment 205, 623, 3004, 6321, Chemical Supplement 10, 14, Notice of Judgment 4000, 4198 (hereinafter SRA).

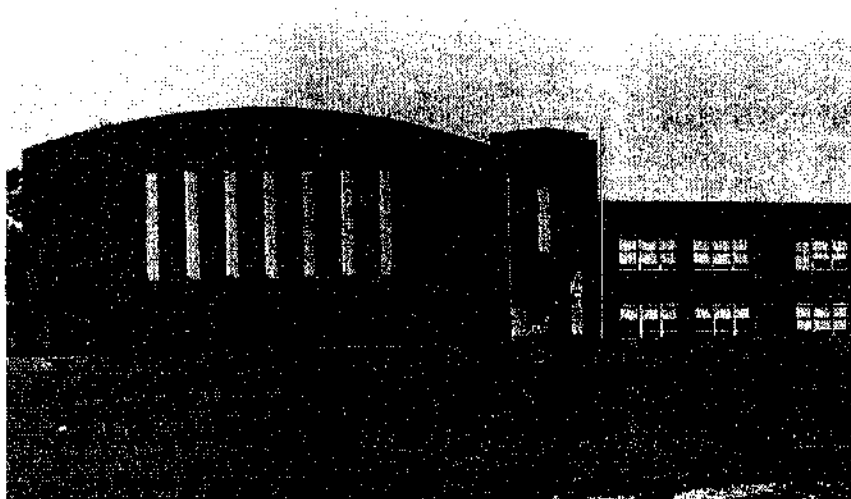
⁶ Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, pp. 97, 99; SRA, Chem. Supp. 31, NJ 5001-5050.

⁷ Adams, *Great American Fraud*, pp. 12-13, 45-54, 60-67; SRA, NJ 27, 539.

e Advertisements for the services of Rea and other travelling or "mail order" physicians appeared in the *Owensboro Daily Messenger*, January 9, 30, 1890, February 4, 5, May 6, June 7, 1891, March 20, 1892, January 15, April 2, August 14, 27, 1893, to mention a few examples. See Ellis *Medicine in Kentucky*, pp. 8-22, and the Hospital College of Medicine and other schools that operated in Louisville during the nineteenth century.

⁹ Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, pp. 205-244. See also James G. Burrow, *Organized Medicine in the Progressive Era: The Move Toward Monopoly* (Baltimore, 1977), pp. 3-13; and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967).

¹⁰ Young, *Toadstool Millionaires*, pp. 247-262; Young *Medical Messiahs*, pp. 423-433.



The Utica School was the largest WPA project in the county outside of the city of Owensboro. Completed in 1940, the building incorporated the most modern architectural designs and building methods. Photo by Joseph Hix.

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Helen Coomes

Kirche Heilige Joseph. Today the old church at Fourth and Clay Streets is known only by its English name—St. Joseph Church.

The old Germans are long gone. Two world wars, ethnic prejudice and time have erased many memories of the old ways from their descendents, but the group of Catholic German farmers and their families who migrated from southern Indiana to the rural areas of Owensboro have left for this community a beautiful historical landmark, which they bought and paid for with their own sweat and labors and savings.

The history of St. Joseph Church lies in the unrest that swept Germany beginning about 1830 and in the missionary zeal of a Yugoslavian priest named Joseph Kundek.

Kundek, ordained a priest in the archdiocese of Agram, Croatia, in the summer of 1833, heard of the need for Catholic missionaries in America. In the Fall of 1838, he arrived as rector of the mission at Jasper, Indiana.

Some German immigrants were already trickling into southern Indiana by that time. The poor harvests beginning in 1844 moved the German immigrants to America in deluge.

Kundek had a vision of creating a little Germany in the hills of southern Indiana and ran advertisements in German-language newspaper high-lighting the advantages of the area.

An old story says he would walk a day's journey and drive a stake in the ground marking the spot of a new German town. The next day he would walk another day's journey. Towns like Fulda, Tell City, Mariah Hill, Ferdinand, St. Meinrad and Jasper owe much of the German heritage to Kundek's zeal. And so does Owensboro.

By 1850, more than 150,000 Germans had come to the United States and a few thousand of those had settled in southern Indiana. About that time, some of them began drifting south of the Ohio and finding Owensboro to their liking.

Owensboro was already populated by the English and Scotch-Irish by the beginning of the 19th century. As always when cultures clash, the newcomers found themselves outsiders in their new community. Owensboro's original German Catholics were allowed to worship at the old St. Stephen Church but the Germans were only allowed to sit in the back of the church away from the rest of the congregation.

Prejudice against German Catholics continued for years. In 1863, Owensboro's German population formed the German-American Association and started a school for the education of their children. There

was also a German-American bank downtown. And in 1898, the German-American Association founded a hospital that it turned over to the city a year later. That hospital is today Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital.

German Catholics founded their own school here about 1868. About that time, the Rev. Paul Volk of West Louisville began working with the county's German Catholics. St. Joseph parish was organized in 1870 and held their first services in a school house at Third and Cedar Streets. Most of the time, the German people still attended Mass at St. Stephen's because Father Volk came into town at irregular intervals.

In 1871, this group of Catholic German farmers and their families built their first church, a 80 by 30 foot frame building, in the old Triplett's and Sweenie's Precint, near MacFarland Street (now approximately Ninth Street). The church was dedicated by Rev. Ivo Schacht, then pastor of St. Stephen's.

On May 12, 1878, soon after arrival of the second pastor, Rev. P. J. Haesley, St. Joseph's Church was destroyed by a fire caused by lightning. The need was filled by building a temporary church on the same site (dimensions: 20' x 30') by order of Bishop McCloskey.

The German parish was not allotted money from the diocese to build their church because Bishop McCloskey did not want a church built at this location; he had plans for a new church to be built at Seventh and Frederica so that it would be closer for some of the German families who lived in the west end of Owensboro. The congregation at that time had 65 families with 78 school-age children and the people of the church paid for it themselves.

The German people went to their banks in Owensboro, borrowed money on their own personal notes and donated the money to the parish for the construction of the church.

One elderly widow who ironed for a living, and made approximately 75¢ per week, pledged 25¢ per week for the church.

A Mr. Camuff (Kamuf) travelled from Owensboro to Peoria, Illinois soliciting funds for the church from other German Catholics. Bishop Spalding of Peoria gave Mr. Camuff permission to come to his diocese for the purpose of soliciting money for the construction of the new St. Joseph Church.

The parishioners would go around to the church members picking up their pledges, and when they would run out of money, they would make the circle again and pick up additional money for construction.

When more wood was needed, they went back to the individual parishioners for wood, and much of the labor for the construction of the church was supplied by the parishioners themselves.

The congregation still did not have quite enough money to hire an architect to design the church. An old priest from Peoria, a German

Catholic, hearing of their plight, gave them building plans used by another church,

Work was begun on the 86 by 43 foot brick church building in late 1878. On March 7, 1880, the church was blessed and services were held by Rev. Haesley, even though work was not complete. The building and lot had cost \$10,000.

The parish sent a letter to Bishop McCloskey informing him of the completion of the new church. Bishop McCloskey, being perturbed by this news (since he had wanted the church built at Seventh and Frederica Streets), sent an order for the church to be closed. Services were held in the church anyway, but this is the reason why the church was not officially dedicated until 1883.

By the turn of the century, the building was reported in poor repair with the windows falling out. In 1912, the building was enlarged by an addition to the south end of the building and the stained glass windows now in the church were imported from Munich, Germany at a cost of \$300 each.

The main requisite for a pastor was he must speak the German language. Even though the vernacular Latin was used for the Mass prayers, sermons and confessions were spoken in German. The use of German was discontinued during World War I because the language was forbidden by the government. In 1942 and 1943 were about the last years for the use of the German language by the older German parishioners in the confessionals, though the practice of the pastor delivering his sermon in German had been gradually phased out prior to this time.

—DON'T FORGET—

Subscriptions to the Daviess County
Historical Quarterly make great Christmas
Gifts.



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Lee Dew

The Daviess County Historical Society is open to all who have an interest in the history of Daviess County, the Green River Valley, or Kentucky. The Society meets on the Fourth Friday of each month from September through May. Most meetings are held at the Owensboro Area Museum on South Griffith Avenue.

Monthly programs of the Daviess County Historical Society are open to all, and non-members are encouraged to attend and participate.

Printed by Quality Printing Co., Owensboro, Ky.
