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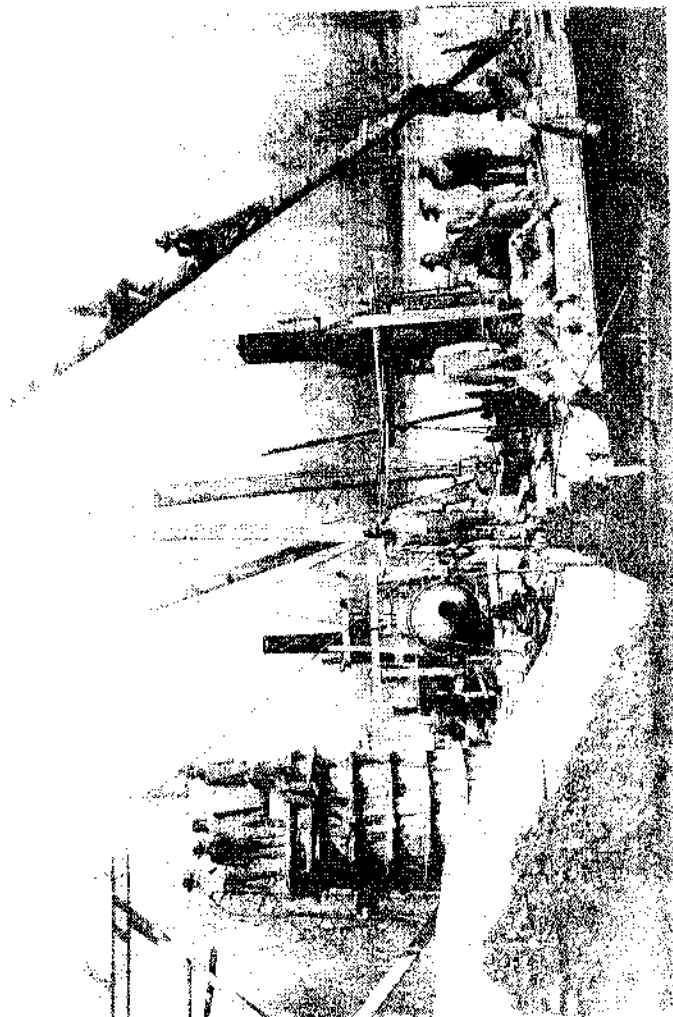
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The Editor's Page

Railroads were still the lifeline of trade, commerce, and communication in the first decade of the twentieth century when the Madisonville, Hartford & Eastern was constructed. This line was seen as a valuable asset for Owensboro businessmen, anxious to expand their trade with the towns of Ohio County which could not otherwise be easily and conveniently reached by rail. This article, too, deals with the booming optimism which pervaded the area, with its hopes for continuing economic growth spurred by the construction of additional rail lines.

Roads, too, were becoming important. The first automobile appeared in Daviess County before 1907, and consequently the condition of the county's road system took on an even greater importance. For merchants anticipating rural customers and for businessmen anxious to trade with the towns and villages around Owensboro, good roads were a "must," as they were for the countless farmers who needed a reliable means of getting crops to market. The improvement of the road system, as outlined by Judge E. P. Taylor in his 1902 report, marked a great step forward as the county entered the new century.

Pat Hume, a recent KWC graduate, spent a semester as an intern in the Kentucky Room, and his report was of such interest that it is reprinted as a sort of unofficial summary of what goes on in that most important archive.



The bridge gang at work on the MH&E bridge at Smallhaus. This photograph, dated April 6, 1908, was taken by Schroeter Studio, a "floating studio" which was a fixture along the Green River for a generation. A steam-powered concrete mixer is in the background, while the boiler on the right foreground operated the crane which lifted the dump bucket to the pier forms.

The Building of the Madisonville, Hartford and Eastern Railroad
by Lee A. Dew

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the *National Railway Bulletin*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1984, and is reprinted by permission. Full documentation and footnotes appear in the original.

"NEW RAILROAD, To Traverse Entire Length of the County." The Headlines in *The Hartford Republican* for Friday, June 9, 1905, were solid evidence that the rumors which had been spreading for weeks through the Rough River valley were true — a railroad was at last to be built through the county seat of one of Kentucky's largest and most coal-rich counties.

The newspaper rhapsodized about the advantages of the proposed line. "The line building of such a railroad," the *Republican* declared, "would greatly develop the section of the county through which it would pass." It predicted that the coming of the new line would enhance the value of "all property within several miles of the road." Construction would begin within ninety days "if the right-of-way and \$25,000 can be procured . . . by means of voluntary contributions."

The coming of the railroad through the heart of Ohio county promised the fulfillment of a long-held dream of the citizens of Hartford, Centertown, Sulphur Springs and Dundee, towns which had been by-passed by the railroad boom which had swept through Kentucky in the fifty years since the Civil War. Hartford was, in 1905, one of the few county seats in the state that did not brag of a rail link with the outside world, and its economy and growth suffered as a result.

One of the oldest towns in the Green River watershed, Hartford traced its founding to the building of a fort on a bluff overlooking the waters of Rough River "prior to 1785." The town, developed on land granted by an early pioneer, Gabriel Madison, boasted a population of 74 by the Census of 1800.

Hartford was linked by water with Evansville, Indiana, by way of the Rough, Green, and the Ohio Rivers, and gradually the town grew as a market and trade center for Ohio County. As early as 1823 a bridge was erected over Rough River and a wagon road developed to Owensboro on the Ohio, some 30 miles northward. With the great age of steamboating, regular packet service was established between Hartford and Evansville, facilitated by the building of a lock and dam on the Rough, some 12 miles downstream. By the turn of the century the *Repose*, *Piankeshaw*,

Rosie Belle, City of Hartford and *We Three* provided regular service for mail, freight and passengers, and a new steel bridge encouraged overland travel.

The first railroad through Ohio County, the Elizabethtown and Paducah, passed several miles south of Hartford, and a new town, Beaver Dam, sprang up to profit from the economic stimulation afforded by the Iron Horse. This line, completed in 1871, was merged with connecting lines in 1882 to form the Chesapeake, Ohio and Southwestern, and its gauge was narrowed from 5 feet 4 inches to 4 feet 9 inches to conform to the national standard. In December, 1893, this line became part of the Illinois Central Railroad.

Other rail lines also touched Ohio County. The Owensboro, Falls of Rough and Green River Railroad was built by Owensboro businessmen from that city through Fordsville in the extreme northeastern part of the county to Horse Branch and a connection with the Chesapeake, Ohio and Southwestern. This line was purchased almost immediately by the CO & SW and became a part of the IC with the acquisition of the parent company.

The Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis Railroad also touched Ohio County at Fordsville. This line began as the Louisville, St. Louis and Texas Railroad, which built a line from Henderson through Owensboro to West Point, Ky., in 1886. In 1891 a branch line was constructed from Irvington, in Breckinridge County, to Fordsville, a total of some 43 miles. The LH & St. L was controlled by the L&N, which at this time owned 81.57 percent of its common stock.

Thus while Ohio County was served by both the railroad giants of Western Kentucky, the IC and the L&N, neither line adequately reached much of the area, and most of the people of Ohio County were without direct rail connections. While the IC hauled large amounts of coal from its stations, Beaver Dam, McHenry, Rockport and Taylor Mines, other vast coal deposits, especially around Centertown, were virtually untouched because of a lack of transportation.

Still, by 1902, Ohio County was Kentucky's fourth-largest coal producing county, exceeded only by Hopkins, Whitley and Muhlenberg. In that year, Ohio produced 541,226 tons, of which 513,583 tons were shipped and 17,943 sold locally. Ohio County coal sold for an average price of 90 cents per ton, producing total sales of \$489,518. The 677 miners in Ohio County earned wages of \$350,216, while the 74 salaried officials and clerical employees took home an additional \$49,084.

Muhlenberg, the state's number two county in coal production, was also served primarily by the IC, although a branch of the L&N, the Owensboro & Russellville, bisected the county and served several important mining areas around Drakesboro and Browder. Hopkins,

the state's top producer with a 1902 total of 1,642,437 tons was L&N country, although the IC also did a lot of coal business there. Madisonville, the focal point of Hopkins county coal operations, was a major L&N terminus on the main line from Evansville to Nashville.

But while Madisonville was ideally situated to ship coal north and south on the L & N, the IC was in a better competitive position from the Hopkins County fields to the Louisville coal market, as that line had a more direct route to the Falls City. Coal shipments on the Old Reliable had to be billed to Henderson on the L&N, then Henderson-Louisville on the LH & St. L., which meant for a stronger haul, plus the additional cost of the transfer at Henderson. Thus, if the L&N intended to fully compete for the growing demand for Western Kentucky coal in Louisville and points beyond, a more direct line from Hopkins County was needed.

A line running easterly from Madisonville, passing through eastern Hopkins, northern Muhlenberg, and much of Ohio counties and intersection with the LH & St. L spur at Fordsville would give a faster route to Louisville. The new road would shorten the Madisonville-Henderson-Louisville route by more than 40 miles, and at the same time open up rich new mining areas to development.

An enthusiastic group of men met at Hartford on July 4, 1905, to incorporate the new line, to be known as the Madisonville, Hartford & Eastern Railroad Company. J. W. Ford of Hartford was elected Chairman of the Board, and R.E. Lee Simmerman of Hartford named Secretary. Ford was the largest investor in the line, owning \$25,000 worth of stock. H. H. Holeman of Madisonville subscribed \$15,000 in stock, and five other men pledged \$2,000 each, for a total capitalization of \$50,000.

After the Board approved the Articles of Incorporation, Simmerman announced that he had entered into a contract with a Tennessee firm, Walton, Wilson, Rodes & Co., to "grade and construct . . . a roadbed ready for the reception of . . . ties and rails . . ." for a total cost of \$175,000.

The first tasks facing the railroad builders were the raising of the \$25,000 sought from the communities through which the line was to pass, and the acquisition of right-of-way by voluntary contributions by landowners. "Hartford and vicinity should raise half the money," the *Republican* proclaimed, while Centertown "should come up with more than half of the remainder." Other funds, the paper suggested, should come from Sulphur Springs, Dundee and Fordsville, while "the smaller places" near which the railroad would run "should pony up a few thousand."

Throughout the fall of 1905 surveyors worked locating the line in the rough, hilly country, and engineers drew up specifications for the most complex engineering feat on the line, the construction of a high bridge

over the green River at a spot locally known as Smallhaus. By early January, 1906, the right-of-way was secured and construction engineers began walking the route of the new line to locate trestles, bridges and culverts and to estimate the volume of earth in cuts and fills. In addition, the engineers contracted for timber and stone for construction work, and bought crossties, an estimated 180,000 of which were needed.

Early in April, 1906, it was announced that bids would be taken for the project, despite the fact that the trustees had negotiated a contract with Walton, Wilson, Rodes & Co. nearly nine months earlier. No indication of this early contract had ever been made public, and when bids were opened another firm, C. D. Smith & Co., of Memphis was the apparent low bidder. It was then announced that all bids were unacceptable, and a new bidding date set. On this second attempt, the contract was then offered to Walton, Wilson & Rodes.

"The Company is amply provided for the work, which is their specialty," the *Republican* announced. "They have 750 good teams and a number of steam shovels." Construction, it was promised, would be completed in eighteen months.

Soon sub-contracts were let for such things as bridges, trestles, timber, and stone, and crews of men were soon at work clearing the right-of-way and preparing to start the arduous task of grading the line. Gangs of black laborers were brought in from Tennessee, causing consternation among some of the local inhabitants. These workers were housed in tent camps along the line, and were carefully segregated, rarely being allowed into "town."

In a large construction project such as The M H & E, great opportunities existed for small sub-contractors who were willing to bid on certain specific jobs. Typical of the men attracted to the new railroad was Gustav Swanson Nilson Stenberg of Nashville, and his son Carl Gustav Stenberg. They were both natives of Sweden, the elder Stenberg emigrating to the United States in 1883 and his family joining him in 1886 when Carl Gustav was five years of age. The Stenbergs took the contract to build the stone culverts on the line from Green River to Rough River, a distance of 24 miles.

The culverts were one of the first elements of the construction project, as they had to be in place before grading could be completed. They were build of cut stone blocks, weighing some 700 to 800 pounds each, built on a concrete slab foundation. The Stenbergs opened their own quarries in sandstone outcroppings along the line, and hauled the stones to the culvert sites on sleds pulled by teams of oxen. They employed from 15 to 20 men on the project.

Like many of the other railroad contractors, the Stenbergs boarded with families along the construction route, in their case with the Richard Durham family who lived between Centertown and the Green River

bridge at Smallhaus. There Carl Gustav Stenberg caught the eye of the daughter of the house, Dolly Durham, and they were married on October 10, 1907. They moved to a temporary home near the job site, a semi-permanent affair with four-foot high walls made of railroad ties, topped with a tent. It was not a glamorous honeymoon cottage, but a practical shelter that could be torn down when the job was finished in one area and moved quickly to a new site further down the track.

The Stenberg's honeymoon did not last long. On January 13, 1908, the elder Stenberg suffered a stroke and died, leaving Carl Gustav to finish the contract.

As construction proceeded on the M H & E, hopes grew throughout Western Kentucky that the new railroad would bring a surge of prosperity in its wake. Nowhere was excitement higher than in Owensboro, some 30 miles to the north. Owensboro had long envied the near-monopoly held by Evansville on the commerce of the Green River area, and hoped to tap the rich markets of McLean, Ohio, and Muhlenberg counties for its own businessmen. The Owensboro and Russellville branch of the L & N touched both McLean and Muhlenberg, but the new line, which would intersect the O & R branch at a place called Moorman, promised to give Owensboro direct ties to Ohio County for the first time.

Promoters were quick to exploit the junction point as a potential growth area. "Where is Moorman?" a full-page advertisement in the *Owensboro Daily Messenger* asked rhetorically. The answer: "Moorman is . . . in the heart of the richest coal field in Western Kentucky; in the heart of the wheat belt of Western Kentucky - one of the most productive agricultural regions in the state."

Three large coal mines were being developed at Moorman, the advertisement contended, which "will give employment to at least 500 miners," and exploit a 7-foot-thick vein of "a superior grade of coal to any now mined in Western Kentucky." For an investment of only \$25, (\$5 in cash and the balance in deferred payments, \$10 in 30 days and the remainder in 60 days) investors could purchase a lot, offered by the J. A. Harris Real Estate Company, and become eligible for a "grand prize" of \$100 in gold to be given to a lucky lot-owner.

If land in Moorman offered the investor a pot of gold (or at least the hope of winning a few double eagles) the rumors spreading about the future of the Madisonville, Hartford and Eastern Railroad promised even greater potential for development. The line, it was said, was part of a grand scheme by the management of the L & N to develop a line from Louisville to Paducah to compete with the Illinois Central. Another rumor saw the M H & E as part of line linking the coal fields with St. Louis by means of a bridge at Shawneetown, Ill. This line, it was claimed would shorten the time between Nashville and St. Louis by

"three to four hours" and clip "four or five hours" off the Louisville-St. Louis schedule.

While some looked for future wealth in the promises of unsubstantiated rumors, others saw the building of the M H & E as an opportunity for immediate business. Typical of these entrepreneurs was Oppie Kittinger of Bremen in Muhlenberg County. Persuaded that the M H & E would bring prosperity along the line, Kittinger sold his general store at Bremen and moved to Smallhaus, the newly-formed community at the site of the railroad's bridge over Green River. An uncle, who owned a store at Hartford, convinced Kittinger that a good business could be had at Smallhaus, supplying the needs of construction crews during the building of the railroad, and then serving the community which would undoubtedly develop at the site after the opening of the line.

The Kittinger general store thrived, and became the site of post office when Smallhaus qualified for that symbol of official recognition. In addition, Kittinger built a steam-powered grist mill, which operated two days per week grinding the grain that neighborhood farmers would bring to "town". Most of their early business, however, came from the "tent town" which had been set up for construction workers on the bank of the Green River. This camp, located some "three or four blocks" from the bridge site, housed both the "bridge gang" and the right-of-way workers.

While the black workers were not allowed into Centertown or Hartford, they were permitted to buy supplies at Kittinger's store, although most of their needs were met by commissaries operated by their employers. Many workers were kept on the job because of debts to the commissary, much in the same way that sharecroppers during this period were bound to the land by the crop-lein system.

These tent settlements were frequently the scene of drunken disturbances, which frightened the white residents of the neighborhood and sometimes led to violence. One black laborer, his head nearly severed from his body by a shotgun blast in the neck at close range, was denied burial in Centertown, and his body was eventually shipped to Hartford for burial at the almshouse farm. On another occasion a crap game at a railroad camp nearly Fordsville left one black worker dead and two seriously wounded. The dead man was "about seventeen years old."

More serious problems beset construction in the spring of 1908, when constructive ground to a virtual halt. Workers were dismissed, equipment stood idle, and the project seemed almost on the verge of abandonment, as the contractor seemed unwilling to proceed. Finally, after some negotiation, a new contract was let. The Griffith Construction Company, Knoxville, Tenn., was the successful bidder, and by the fall workers were again busy all along the line.

Serious engineering problems were also hampering completion of

the work. While earth moving proceeded smoothly on the eastern end of the line, and the grade in Ohio County was nearly complete, heavy rock formations in Muhlenberg County proved troublesome. Steam shovels were brought in to aid the excavating crews, and it was estimated that the removal earth in the road cuts would take "about four months" to complete.

Brighter news came early in January, 1909, with the announcement that Supervisor C. M. Henry of the L & N was assigning 30 section men to begin laying track at Madisonville. Some would begin work connecting the main line of the L & N with the Providence branch of that line, then under construction, while the remainder started on the M H & E yard tracks. As soon as the Providence connection was complete, "in a short time," the remainder of the section gang would move to the M H & E job, and they will be kept there until next fall."

As the rails began to be laid at Madisonville, and as the bridge over the Green River took shape, hopes again were raised that the line would become a through truck service rather than just a branch line. The ever-optimistic *Republican* began fanning the flames of civic pride in the possibilities. The new line, it claimed, was being built to unusual specifications:

The road bed and grade are pronounced the most ideal of any in the state, and but few in the whole country surpass it; the ties used are the best the markets affords; the steel is much heavier than is ordinarily used on new roads; the latest method of ballasting will be employed, the work having already begun (sic), whereas it is ordinarily the case that new roads except extremely important ones, are used for years without balast. . .

The dream of a direct connection through Shawneetown was again mentioned, which, if completed, would mean that the M H & E "will become one of the most important roads in the entire country." Of course, the paper added, these schemes may "appear too good to be true."

While the citizens of Hartford dreamed dreams of railroad empires, work along the line continued. The bridge over the Green River was completed in August, 1909. Several miles of track were in place near Moorman, and another section gang began laying steel on the eastern end of the road at the junction with the Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis spur from Irvington. This work, it was reported, was proceeding "rapidly."

The first work train entered Hartford August 2. "Excitement was at fever heat," the *Owensboro Daily Messenger* reported. The train arrived "about supper time, and it need scarcely be said that there were many

suppers delayed and many others not eaten for there was considerable excitement over the event . . . The whole population of the town turned out to see the incoming." The train, from Fordsville, brought construction supplies for the continuation of the road, which "is now being pushed . . . south of Hartford." "It is expected that the trains will soon be running on to Madisonville, the present western terminus of the road," the *Messenger* continued.

Scheduled trains soon were operating from Hartford, giving that city its first rail service. Train No. 2 left Hartford at 6 a.m., arrived at Irvington at 10 a.m., and returned to Hartford as No. 3 at 2:18 p.m. It departed again as No. 4 at 2:40 p.m., returning as No. 5 at 10:25 p.m. thus giving Hartford two round-trips daily. In addition to passengers the trains carried mail and express, and daily freights were also scheduled.

Attention now shifted to the Madisonville end of the line, where construction continued. By the end of September it was predicted that the line would be completed by October 10, but this date was to prove optimistic, as a series of delays caused numerous postponements of the completion date. The biggest delay was at Pond River, some eight miles east of Madisonville, where bridge work proceeded slowly. But if Madisonvillians were to experience frustration waiting for the road to be completed, they were cheered by the news that the M H & E and L & N planned "a handsome two-story passenger station, . . . modern in every respect . . ." to be shared by the two lines.

The Pond River bridge proved complicated, however, and the structure was not finished until early in October. On September 30 the Madisonville *Daily Hustler* reported the bridge nearly complete. "Steel is now being laid on the bridge and the remaining gap of about eight miles to Madisonville will be laid in a short time." Opening of the road, it predicted, would be on November 1, although the first train into Madisonville was still anticipated on October 10. Excitement increased when a dispatch from Nashville announced that the line would be opened on that date, but on October the *Hustler* was forced to print a disclaimer, claiming that the Nashville dispatch was "premature."

On Thursday, October 14, the newspaper announced that the first train would arrive on Sunday, the 17th. But by Sunday the arrival date had been pushed back another 48 hours because of "unavoidable delay on the part of the construction force . . . in laying steel." On Tuesday, and on Wednesday, October 20, the *Hustler* announced that the first train would arrive that day, as there were only some 700 yards more track to complete.

Finally the long-awaited day arrived, and despite a "heavy downfall of rain" a large crowd gathered to witness the driving of the last spike

and the arrival of the first train, a L H & St. L work train, which disappointed the crowd by not traveling into the city, but went instead directly to the work camp at the freight yard.

The railroad was still far from complete, however as much of the line was still without ballast. "Two work trains will be placed on the new road today and ballasting will be pushed as rapidly as possible," the *Hustler* promised. Full service on the line would begin "sometime between December 15 and January 1, 1910," the exact date to be determined by the completion of the ballasting.

Now another countdown began as the people along the line began anticipating the formal opening. By mid-November the railroad announced a December 15 target, but already some traffic was moving. The first trainload of coal moved along the tracks on November 16 on its way to Louisville. The Track was "soft" along the western end of the line, due to the lack of ballast, the train crew reported, but the trip was made without incident.

Finally, on January 4, 1910, the long-anticipated day arrived. The formal opening of the line took place, with the dispatch of the first regular passenger and mail train, which departed for Irvington. Included in the train were a mail and express car and a through coach which would continue on via the L H & St. L to Louisville. A mixed train, a freight train with a passenger "accomodation," was also scheduled as far as Mitchell, near Fordsville, where a connection was made with the Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis.

This arrangement was made necessary by a formal change of control of the M H & E. Throughout the construction phase, the new line was under the operational direction of the Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis Railroad, but on December 21, 1909, it was announced that the line was now under control of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. This change reflected a dramatic alteration in the status of the M H & E. The L & N, which had put up all of the money for construction of the road and which had acquired all of the capital stock, announced that in return it would receive M H & E bonds to cover construction expenses. It was also announced that all freight for points on the M H & E east of Moorman would be handled by the L & N via Moorman rather than the L H & St. L via Irvington, a move to strengthen business on the L & N's Owensboro-Russellville branch.

Reflecting this change, the new time card showed the addition of a passenger train operating from Owensboro to Irvington via Moorman (Nos. 141-142) as well as the Madisonville-Irvington service. This train left Owensboro at 8:45 a.m. daily, arriving in Irvington at 11:05. The West-bound train left Irvington at 10:13 a.m., arriving in Owensboro at 12:10 p.m. This schedule gave travellers and "drummers" the opportunity to leave Owensboro early enough to spend the large part of their day in the towns along the line.

Nowhere was the arrival of the trains greeted with more enthusiasm than at Smallhaus, where a water tower guaranteed that the trains would not only stop, but would spend some time taking on water. "We used to sit on the concrete pillars of our yard fence and watch the trains," Mrs. Gladys Kittinger Chinn recalls, and the children soon became good friends with the railroad crews. "We often shared our cookies or pies with them," Mrs. Chinn remembered, "and one year for Christmas the passenger train crew gave me a beautiful doll."

Travellers were frequent guests at the Kittinger home. "There were no restaurants or hotels in Smallhaus," Mrs. Chinn continued. If travellers missed their train, or their business kept them late, or if they were waiting for a packet boat, they always ate their meals at our house, and often stayed the night. The packets ran on an unpredictable schedule, so we often had 'guests' overnight. Of course, this was very exciting, and the children loved to stay up and listen to the grown-ups talk."

The Kittinger store had a loading dock at trackside where express, mail and merchandise for the store could be unloaded. Passengers waiting to board the train often waited at the store, where they could have a cool drink and a snack before the train arrived. Travelling salesmen, farmers, and riverboat crews all made the Kittinger store the focal point of life in Smallhaus.

The completion of the Madisonville, Hartford and Eastern Railroad meant excitement for young Gladys Kittinger and her friends. It meant an end to isolation for hundreds of families along the line, and it meant additional business for merchants, shopkeepers, coal miners and others for whom the railroad offered economic advantages. For Carl Stenberg, his wife, and their new-born baby daughter, Elizabeth, the completion of the line meant the end of a job, and the necessity to move on to some other construction project where good stone masonry was needed.

For the officers of the M H & E, the completion of the line meant the formal end of the existence of their company. They had spent a total of \$1,713,535.77 on the construction of the line, and an additional \$102,304.17 for improvements, such as depots and sidings, all of which had been advanced by the L & N. To secure this debt the trustees, meeting on August 15, 1912, voted to issue bonds in the amounts of the expenditures, secured by a first mortgage on "all the property and franchises" of the railroad, to be delivered "to the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company in settlement of advances made by said Company."

The great dreams held by the people along the line, that one day "their" railroad would become the basis for a great interstate route, never materialized. While the M H & E section was well-built and solid, the connecting link on the L H & St. L. from Fordsville to Irvington was

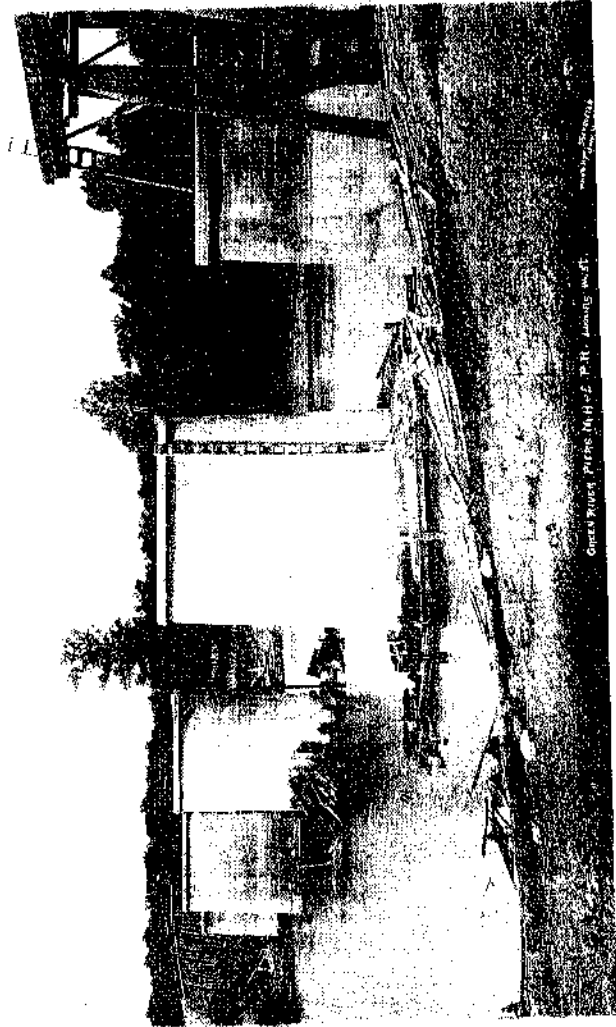
cheaply constructed. A train weight limit of 700 tons exclusive of engine, was placed on this end of the line, while heavier locomotives and trains as heavy as 2,225 tons could operate on the western segment. Thus running of heavy coal trains through directly from Madisonville to Louisville, or fast passenger service to Western Kentucky points never materialized. The lightly-constructed bridges and trestles of the Fordsville-Irvington trackage prohibited the line from realizing its potential.

Relegated to local service only, business dwindled as the era of the motor car and truck nibbled away at railroad revenues. On June 15, 1941 the last train disappeared down the track from Fordsville to Irvington and the rails were removed from Irvington to Hartford. The dismantling, stimulated by World War II, and its insatiable demand for scrap iron, was completed in July, 1942. From Hartford west the rails remained, serving coal mines and local shippers. Passenger traffic disappeared, and only an occasional freight, as the need occurred, made its way along the weedy right-of-way.

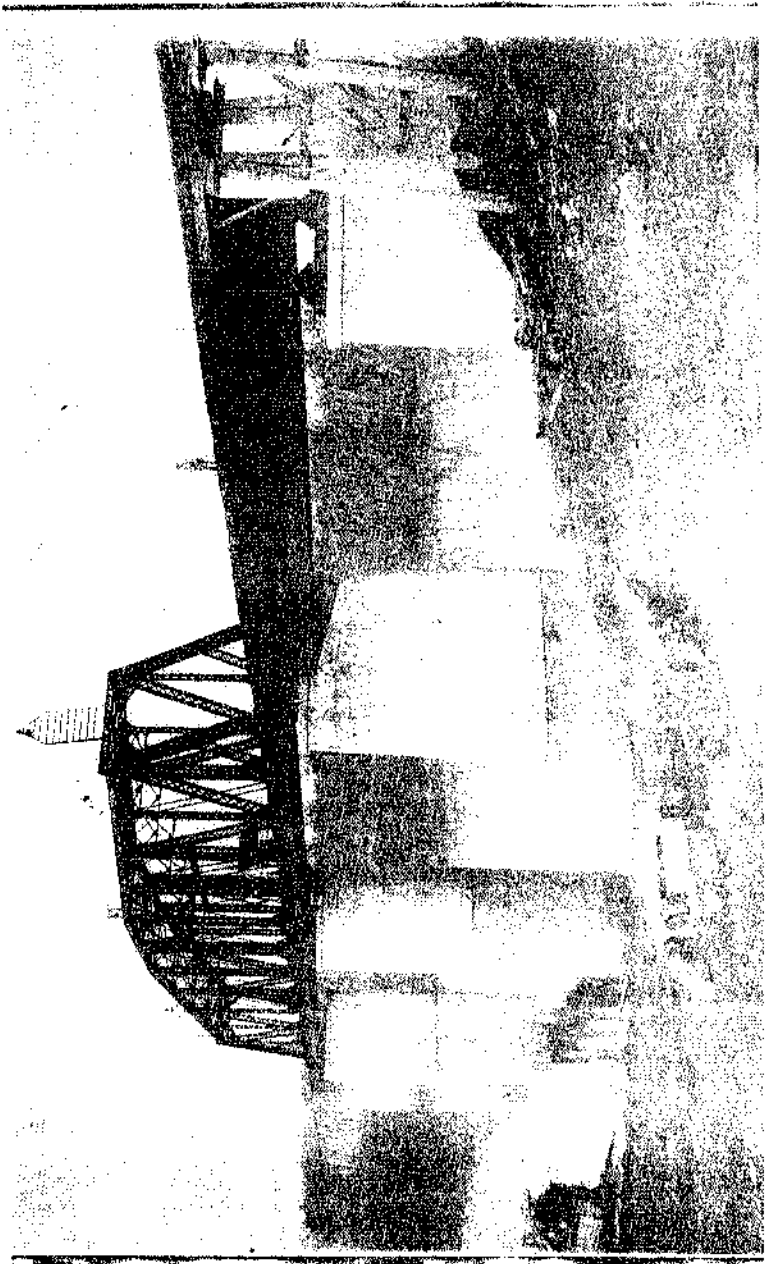
It seemed only a matter of time until the rest of the line might be abandoned, but in the 1970's the coal "boom" in Western Kentucky, coupled with increased demands for electrical power, gave new life to the M H & E. Plans were announced for the building of the D. B. Wilson Power plant of Big Rivers Electric Cooperative, with a projected annual consumption of 1.3 million tons of coal. In 1980-81 a 4.2 mile long lead track was built from near Smallhaus to the plant site at Wilson, Ky. New mines near Centertown, five miles west of Hartford, furnished additional traffic for the line during the early 1980's, and late in 1981 plans were completed for the laying of heavy weight welded rail along the line from Madisonville to Centertown, so that the line will be able to handle longer and heavier trains.

The five miles between Centertown and Hartford have been abandoned but the remainder of the Madisonville, Hartford and Eastern Railroad, built with such high hopes and enthusiasm some 80 years ago, will enter the last years of the twentieth century as an important link in the CSX system, serving as the coal-hauler it was designed to be in a world that its builders would not have imagined in their wildest dreams, a world of huge power plants, powerful towboats, massive draglines, and gigantic diesel locomotives; a world which has transformed the counties of the Western Kentucky coal field from the sleepy rural world of 1910 to important suppliers of America's most abundant fuel.

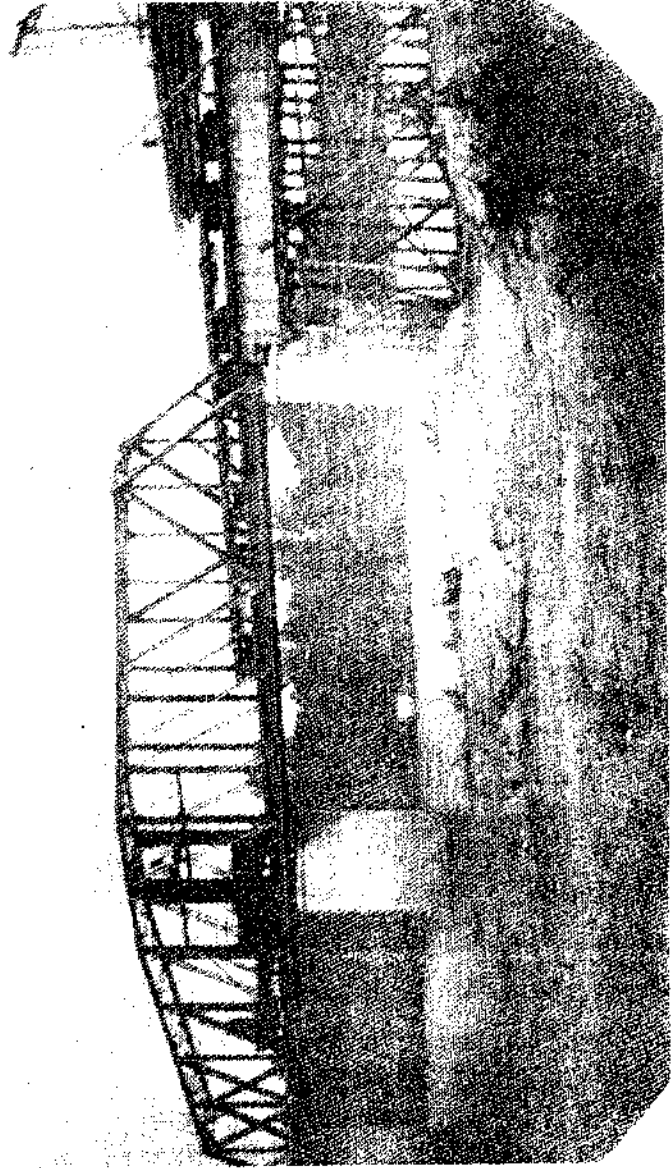
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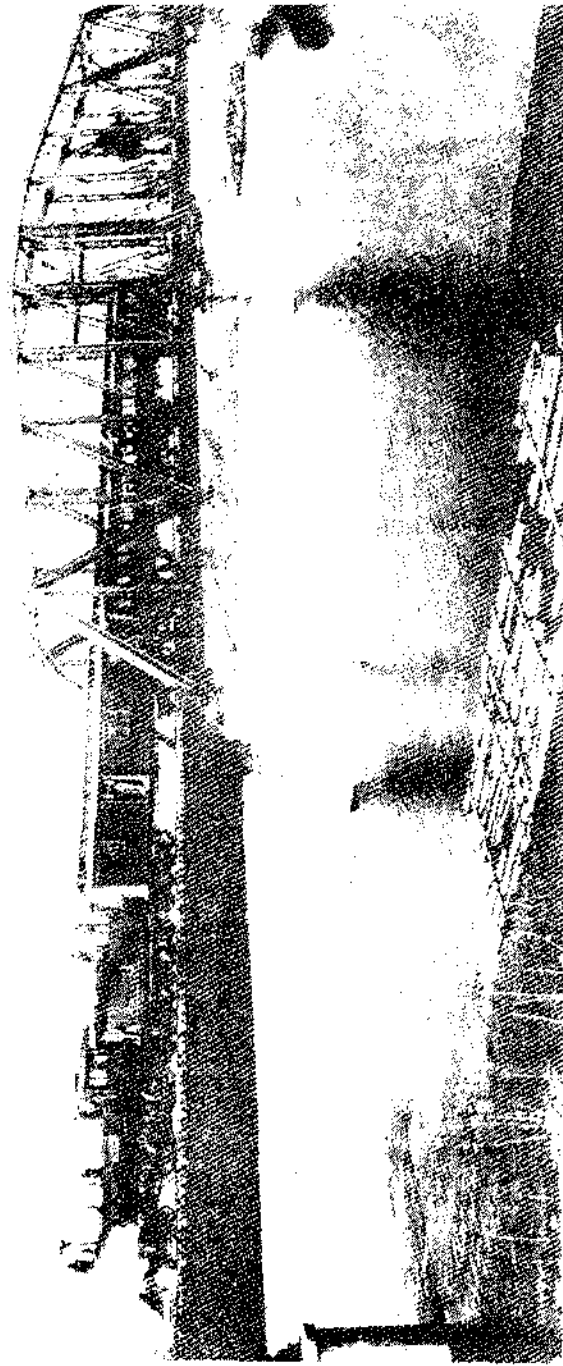
The bridge piers were finished on June 13, 1908, when Schroeter's Floating Studio took this picture. Note the wooden "cribbing" on both sides of the piers to permit free passage of floodwater.



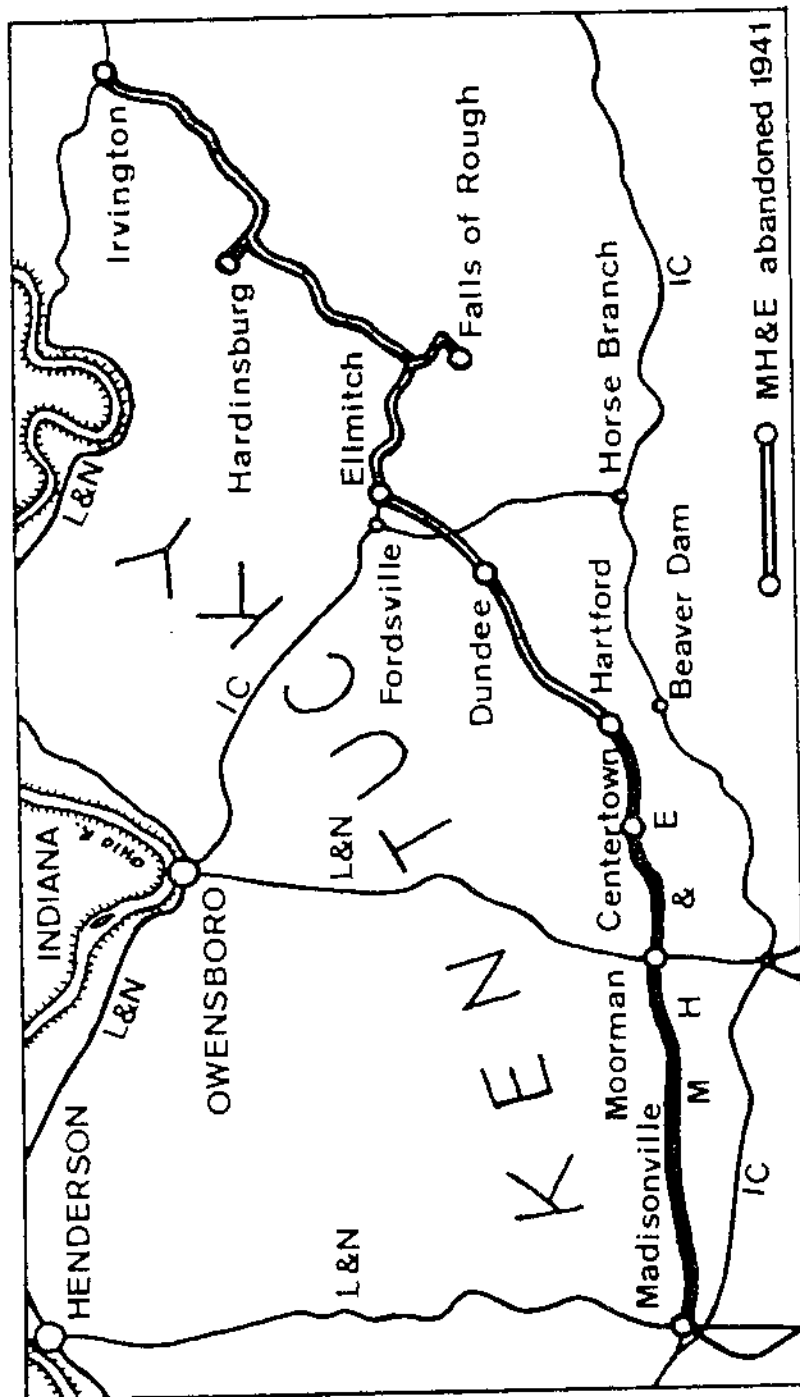
The completed Smallhaus Bridge awaiting final inspection, 1909.



A work train on the nearly-completed bridge at Smallhaus, Ky., on the Madisonville, Hartford & Eastern. The flatcars in the foreground appear to be carrying rail, so perhaps the train belongs to the "track gang."



The first train over the new MH&E bridge at Smallhaus, Ky. The locomotive and cars are lettered for the Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis Railroad. This photograph was taken before the acquisition of the line by the L&N during the period in 1909 when the line was being run from Moorman Junction eastward.



Life in the Kentucky Room
by Pat Hume

My experience of working at the library was very eventful. Sheila Heflin, director of the Kentucky Room, opened my eyes to many interesting topics.

I was aware of the Kentucky Room, but did not realize its importance to people interested in history. My job ranged from the boring to the very exciting. I was often asked to straighten the book shelves. This task appears useless at first glance. As I started sorting through the books, I realized that many books were out of order. The books had been reshelfed by people other than the library staff. This type of reshelfing often leads to confusion and unneeded hassle. The library contains a sign that states, "a misplaced book is lost." So I guess this tedious job has a great deal of importance.

I also filed many pieces of new literature in the vertical files. I often found myself reading many interesting items which were already filed. I was never aware of how valuable the vertical files can be to a person hunting a specific topic. These files contain almost any topic one may wish to research.

Another job I engaged in was the typing of obituaries. With the large interest in geneology, obituaries are becoming one of the most important tools for research. The library is in the process of moving from hand-written and hard bound volumes of obituaries toward a computer file. The computer will allow for easier and faster access to the obituaries.

One of the most interesting tasks I engaged in was the filing of the Investigator's Club papers. The papers were listed in the card catalog according to their subject. In order to index the papers, I had to read them first. The papers ranged from past experiences to solutions in the future. Members of the Investigator's Club read their papers for the group and then discuss the topics over a steak dinner.

The Kentucky Room offers its services to many people all over the country. Many of the items I researched were for people in other states. Many people wanted to trace their roots and find themselves being from Kentucky. I researched the city of Owensboro for a woman in Virginia. Her name was Owen and she wondered if her family had anything to do with this city. I helped research the Black Chautauqua by looking up newspaper articles. I ran across many important speakers which appeared in Owensboro for the Black Chautauqua. I also helped form a vertical file on the Ku Klux Klan. I was doing personal research on the Klan and used that information to help expand the vertical file collection.

Probably the most interesting topic I worked on was the hanging of Rainey Bethea. I was amazed to discover the carnival-like atmosphere

that surrounded the public hanging. The idea of crowds of people watching a man being put to death just shocks me.

I was helping to gather information for a woman that was going to write a book on the subject. I became so interested in this event that I read every article available. I even searched for the trial record. I read every testimony of the case. I knew about the hanging of Rainey Bethea, but my experiences at the library enabled me to take a closer look at this important event in Owensboro history.

Listening to the oral history tapes added to my knowledge of local history. The main event in Owensboro history I studied was the 1937 flood. Many people spoke of their experiences during the long rains of 1937. Joe Ford and many other local citizens shared the stories of people and how they survived the flood. The city of Owensboro came together to aid those citizens in trouble. Many citizens used their boats to deliver goods to trapped persons and also to rescue those in danger.

I learned information about all of Owensboro's mayors. I indexed cards with information on these mayors as well as organized the picture folder. These cards contained the term of office of each mayor. I enjoyed learning these dates so that I could see who was in control of our great city during the major historical events. Events such as World War I and World War II, Reconstruction, and the "Great Depression."

The patrons of the Kentucky Room are also important in the study of history. These people can tell stories of old cemeteries, old buildings, influential events of the past. One lady told me of the days when "Bugs" Moran occupied a house in Owensboro. These stories deliver a better message than those told in a textbook. These stories are told with meaning and interest.

Life in the Kentucky Room was different from what I expected. I was looking for a quiet, stuffy room where boring people went to look up old facts. I found that the Kentucky Room is a place of interesting people and topics. The room can enhance a person's knowledge of where he or she lives. I am glad I had the experience to learn about the Kentucky Room. I feel this semester in the library will aid me in classes of the future. My new found source of information is available to all and can be useful to all. The Kentucky Room just lacks exposure. If people knew about the usefulness of this resource center, it could be an advantage to every person.

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from a report issued by County Judge E. P. Taylor at the end of his term of office on January 1, 1902, and printed in *The Owensboro Daily Messenger* on January 10, 1902. Taylor was elected County Judge in 1897 and served through 1901.

Highways

There is nothing of more general interest to our citizens than our roads and bridges. Everyone is interested in good roads. They are the arteries of our local commerce, and enter largely into our religious, educational and social welfare. This court has taken special interest in the betterment of the condition of these thoroughfares.

At the beginning of the present administration, our roads were being worked under the old hand system that had been in vogue since the establishment of this county. The roads were certainly in bad conditions; had become flattened or lowered in the center, and mud holes and gullies permitted to form.

This court conceived the idea the these roads could be improved by the use of modern road machinery, made expressly for the purpose, rather than the use of the shovel and the hoe, and it inaugurated the use of this machinery almost entirely upon roads, gradually abolishing the hand method, so that for the last two years our roads have been worked entirely by taxation, thus making a complete change in that department of our work.

We think there is no doubt that our roads have been greatly improved under this system, and compare, at this time, most favorably with the roads of our adjoining counties, and we dare say that there are few, if any, who would be willing to return to the old system. This has also relieved thousands of men from working on our highways who had been required to give their time and labor to the roads often at the busy season of the year for the farmer, often at a great individual annoyance and expense.

This work has been undertaken and accomplished under many adverse circumstances. The year 1900 was an unusually bad one for road working on account of the excessive rains and washouts. Provender for our teams has been double the price and labor higher than for many years.

This system was an experiment, but, we believe, a successful one. The way has been blazed. This work has been accomplished at a far less expense than was thought possible by many; there having been only a slight increase in the property tax (none in the toll). In fact, the property tax has been reduced the last year. Of course this work can be improved. We profit by experience. The expense of this work, it would seem, might be lessened in the future, the roads having been rounded in the center and drained, for this reason, requiring less labor to keep them in repair.

Tile might be used to great advantage in almost all the roads of the county, also steel rollers to pack the surface. We are of the opinion that the use of drain tile and steel rollers would be of great advantage to our county roads. The tile affording underground drainage, thus preventing to a large degree the bad effect of the freezing and thawing, the roller packing the surface, thus forming a roof and thereby better surface drainage.

Many new roads have been opened and old ones widened. Owing to the increased value of lands in many sections of our county, this has been, necessarily, an expensive item. Many public ditches have been constructed under the drainage law. By these ditches the lands of many sections of our county, which have been heretofore of little value, are now some of the most productive in the county. The county has been required and has contributed its proportionate part for the construction of these ditches. This has been a considerable item of expense.

Gravel Roads

Under an act of the legislature in 1882, and by orders subsequently made by the county and fiscal court of Daviess county, the right was granted to different corporations to construct gravel roads, giving them the right to collect tolls for travel thereon "so long as such road shall be kept in good condition for travel." This seems to have been the saving clause for the people.

These grants at that time may have been justified by a condition then existing, and, in proper line with the spirit of progress and improvement necessary then. But it is certainly surprising at this time that a great rich and populous county like ours, having an intelligent and progressive citizenship, with a city like Owensboro in our midst, with its commerce and spirit of improvement and progress now manifesting within its borders, should have toll roads, a direct tariff upon the products of our county, and an embargo upon the commerce of our city; and that this should be true, too, with such gravel roads as we now have, seems an outrage, roads whose principal value, at this time, seems to be the power exercised by them out collecting tolls.

These roads certainly have been neglected and worn to such an extent that they are not by any means now what was contemplated that they should be when the grants were made, and they are kept in repair, to the extent that they are, at this time, more by reason of natural conditions than by any work bestowed upon them by the corporation controlling them. In fact, a great part of the year, the dirt roads are preferable to our gravel roads in their present condition.

That these conditions have been quietly submitted to by our people indicates a spirit of forbearance and law abiding character that is rarely met with.

Many of these corporations have been frequently indicted for failure to keep their roads in proper condition, provided for in the charter, and been subjected to fines, but they have continued to exact toll, and this too at the fullest rate allowed under the statute. One, at least, of these corporations was indicted for allowing its road to remain out of repair for thirty consecutive days, conviction for which, under the statute, in the circuit court, would work a forfeiture of its charter and all its franchises, but was permitted to escape by pleading guilty to allowing its road to remain out of condition for a few days less, thus, in effect, admitting the bad condition of its road, but at the same time not deterring it from collecting toll.

The attention of the fiscal court was called to the condition of these roads at its April term, 1898, and, thereupon, this court entered an order directing the county attorney, and employing as assistant counsel the firm of Walker & Slack, to institute proceedings against the Daviess Gravel Road company, pursuant to said order, and it was filed in the Daviess circuit court on May 26, 1899, against said company, it being alleged in said suit that said company had allowed its road to get out of proper condition for public travel, permitting it to become worn, rough and gullied and mud-holes to form, which was in violation of the conditions embraced in the charter and grant to said road, asking that said grants therefore be forfeited, and said company enjoined from the collection of toll, and that said road be restored to the county. Demurrer was filed by the company to this petition in the circuit court, which was sustained, the county thereby losing in that court. By order of the fiscal court this judgement was appealed to the Court of Appeals, and reversed in the Court of Appeals, the county thereby succeeding. This case has been remanded to, and is now pending in the circuit court. The question now to be submitted to that court is a question of fact, where or not it can be shown as alleged in the petition that said road was allowed to remain out of repair. If this is shown it would seem that there would be nothing in the way of recovery to the county of this property.

The fiscal court had power to do no more than it has done. It has no power to purchase these roads. That power rests only with the people,

and can only be accomplished by the vote of the people, and a vote can only be taken on this proposition by a written application signed by at least fifteen percent of the voters of the county to the county court. This question was submitted to the people at the November election, 1897, and was defeated. The fiscal court has exhausted its power. The matter now rests with the higher courts and the people.

financial condition

At the incoming of this administration there was no money in the treasury; orders were outstanding with nothing to pay.

The county has on hand at this date, January 1, 1902, the following available and personal assets, namely:

12 mules	\$4,830.00
9 graders	1,260.00
7 wagons	350.00
7 camping wagons and outfits	350.00
75 scrapers, plows, shovels, etc.	375.00
Gearing outfit, etc., for teams	250.00
Provender on hand for teams	225.00
Grader extras on hand	450.00
Lumber and material for bridges	350.00
Cash in hand of clerk on land sales	101.85
Cash in treasury	8,850.31
Total	<u>\$17,392.16</u>

In addition to the above, the franchise, railroad, telegraph, telephone and water works companies' taxes have not yet been certified by the auditor, and, therefore, not collected.

This will probably amount to	\$1,490.86
Also taxes on distilled spirits yet to be collected will probably amount to	<u>1,000.00</u>
making	\$19,883.02

As will be seen our county is in a healthy financial condition, and our tax rate just half that of most of our neighboring counties.

F. W. CLARK
L. W. SUTHERLAND
E. P. TAYLOR
Committee

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 Third Tuesday 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.

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The Editor's Page

This is another special issue for the *Daviess County Historical Quarterly*, and features papers done by two students of society member Aloma Dew's class at Kentucky Wesleyan in the History of Kentucky. Both Rob Henry and Judy Graves are KWC history majors. Rob is a senior, working on a degree in history and a certificate in teacher education. He plans to teach history of the high school level. He is also a member of the KWC baseball team. Judy is a non-traditional student who formerly attended OCC. She has lived in many parts of the world as a military wife, and is working on a degree in history, also with plans to teach.

The society is pleased to support these two fine historians through the publication of their writings, and the Editor calls upon Society members to also consider making contributions to the *Quarterly*. Although with this issue we pass the 1,000 page mark in our on-going task of publicizing the history of our city and county, we have only scratched the surface. These two papers in this issue demonstrate that much can still be done with familiar topics, and much further research is needed before the whole story of the history of Daviess County can be told.

Many of you reading this page have personal memories of childhood or youth which would make interesting papers. Get busy and share your memories - preserve them for the students of the future, so that they will have the opportunity to get to know the world you knew.

The Great Flood of 1937 in Owensboro
by Rob Henry

In January and February of 1937, the strongest series of floods in America's history struck the eastern United States. The areas the flooding affected ranges from just south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to New Orleans, Louisiana.¹ Countless rivers and streams flooded their banks and floodwalls in a twelve state region devastated by the flooding. Owensboro received no relief as the 1937 flood paralyzed much of the city. The great *flood* of 1937 remains the *flood* that all other Kentucky *floods* are compared to.

A combination of unusual weather patterns coincided to bring about the 1937 flood. In January 1937, a system of warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico was trapped over the Ohio River Valley between two systems of cold, dry air from Canada. As a result of this entrapment, the warm, moist system unloaded approximately 165 billion tons of rain on the region; about one-half of what the region would receive in a normal year.² This led to flooding all along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries.

The first mention of the coming flood was made in the January 14th edition of Owensboro's newspaper, the *Messenger*. The article was a short one which covered the ferry service being stopped west of Owensboro, but said the river shouldn't rise much more. Also noticed in the article was that Evansville residents needed to move their livestock and farm machinery to higher ground as the Ohio River had passed the flood stage there.³ On January 15th, the *Messenger* noted that the Ohio River had climbed a foot in the past 24 hours and that the river was nearing the flood stage at Owensboro.⁴ At this point, no one in Owensboro was seriously considering moving to higher ground.

Two days later, on January 17th, the *Messenger* made its first mention of possible evacuation, but added that the level of the river should soon recede:

In the Wilson Ferry section, west of Owensboro, between six and eight families will have to move if the river climbs four feet more. Since present indications are that the Ohio will begin to recede after rising about two more feet, these families were making no provisions to move yesterday.

This edition also featured the first picture of the flood--covering a dock at the foot of Frederica Street that was above water the day before.⁵ January 17th was also the date that the Ohio River reached its flood stage of 41 feet at Owensboro.⁶

The Ohio River reached flood stage from Cincinnati, Ohio to Cairo, Illinois on January 18th. By this time, residents of Stanley (10 miles west) and Maceo (10 miles east) had to evacuate and move their livestock. People in Rumsey (25 miles south) were preparing to move due to flooding from the nearby Green River, a tributary of the Ohio River, which was already six feet above its flood stage of 34 feet.⁷ Also on this Monday, Highway 60 between Maceo and Owensboro became impassible because of floodwaters.⁸

By January 21st, it was becoming obvious that the flooding was going to be much worse than originally expected. Under the main headline "FDR Pledges Fight on Poverty", the *Messenger* devoted most of its front page to information concerning the growing flood. Among other local information, the *Messenger* noted that various parts of Owensboro had already flooded and that the sewer system was unable to handle the amount of water coming from the river. The *Messenger* also recognized that all the families in Stanley endangered by the flood had been moved to safety.⁹

January 21st was also the day that the heaviest rainfall for a 24-hour period was recorded: 3.15 inches. The Louisville and Nashville (L&N) railroad was stranded at Hawesville (25 miles northwest) on January 21st as well.¹⁰ As the rain continued and the floodwaters rose, the situation became more desperate for those in the Daviess County area.

On Friday, January 22nd, the *Messenger* ran its first headline devoted exclusively to the flooding: "New Flood Record Seen for Area-Kentucky is menaced by Most Serious Floods in Decades". Articles on the front page included news that Owensboro could be isolated and that the river would pass the 48.9 foot stage reached by the 1913 flood (the previous worst in Owensboro history). Railroads and highways in and out of Owensboro were covered by this time.¹¹

Communications were strained by Friday the 22nd. The District Manager for the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, W.D. Haley, asked residents to use their telephones only in emergencies. On the 22nd, 200-250 calls a minute came in to the switchboard compared to a normal average of 30-40 calls a minute. With operators filling every available position on the switchboard, about 800 (?) of 1000 long distance calls placed on Friday were completed.¹²

January the 22nd was also the day that serious relief efforts began. On the 21st, Daviess County Circuit Judge George S. Wilson (Who also headed the Wilson Ferry Company) adjourned court in order to help residents evacuate and move their belongings and livestock to higher ground.¹³ A tow boat and barge were chartered by Mr. Forrest Miller, owner of Eck Miller Transfer Company, to bring in supplies and freight from across the river at Evansville, Indiana.¹⁴ The Knights of Columbus were called to a meeting on the 22nd by Mr. H.G. Bumgarten,

Comptroller of Ken-Rad Lamp and Tube Corporation, to prepare for the influx of refugees from the surrounding areas.¹⁵

Some of the most valuable work done in the face of the persistently climbing flood was performed by Mr. R.L. McFarland, a member of the Advisory State Highway Commission, and State Highway Engineers E.P. Ahler and Lamar Riney. They charted the expected level of the coming flood and compared it to various street intersections throughout Owensboro. Using these figures, McFarland and his men were able to determine where most of the flooding would take place and where evacuation needed to begin. McFarland then took levels outside of Owensboro to evaluate the possibility of the entire city being overwhelmed by floodwaters. His further measurements revealed that the most likely scenario was a backing-up of water from Panther Creek to the south, or water coming up 9th Street from the Green River. Mr. McFarland's measurements were invaluable in helping with the evacuation process. On that same day, acting Governor Keene Johnson placed Mr. McFarland in charge of all relief activities and agencies in Kentucky.¹⁶

By Saturday the 23rd, six flat-bottomed boats had been built and placed for use around the city.¹⁷ The *Messenger* noted on the 23rd that Owensboro was isolated by the Ohio River passing the high mark of the 1913 flood and that there were 140,000 people already left homeless throughout flooded areas.¹⁸ The Knights of Columbus Building was converted into a relief center for refugees on the 23rd, and by the end of the day, 200 people had sought refuge from the flood at its location on 7th and Frederica Streets.¹⁹

On Sunday, January 24th, the Ohio River had reached its flood stage along its entire length; from Portsmouth, Ohio to Cairo, Illinois. In a report on its relief activities during the flood, the American Red Cross referred to the 24th as "Black Sunday".²⁰ As of this Sunday, all of downtown Owensboro was paralyzed. Businesses were closed as water had flooded downtown and the store owners were helping with the relief efforts.

Radio played an important role in helping with evacuation. Ken-Rad Engineers built a broadcasting station that began operating on the 23rd. Cars with radios were used at dropping-off points for refugees to help coordinate the rescue effort.²¹

As Owensboro dealt with its flooding, the relief effort ran smoothly and efficiently. Refugee centers were opened at Daviess County High School, 3rd Baptist Church, Senior High School, Dunbar School, Longfellow School, and Moose Hall from January 24th through the 26th.²² According to W.P. Perkins, a rescue worker at Dunbar School, the refugee work helped citizens overcome racial barriers when helping: "When death was at hand, they didn't care who was up taking care of them".²³

Such a calm attitude wasn't always in evidence during this crisis, however. According to Barney Elliott, the owner of Barney's Toasty Shop at the corner of Walnut and Main Streets, Mayor Fred Weir wasn't as well equipped to deal with the crisis as most of his constituents. As Mr. Elliott was telling Mayor Weir of the flood conditions downtown, he said the Mayor was about to panic and said (as he was frantically wringing his hands):

Oh Barney, I don't know what's going to happen to the people here in Owensboro. I am scared to death. We'll all drown like a bunch of little chickens.²⁴

Fortunately, this attitude wasn't reflected in the efforts of the rescue workers.

By the 24th, the region and city were fairly secure. The food supply was more than adequate to meet the demand as four wholesale groceries reported that they had adequate supplies of food in addition to the flour mills being stocked with flour and meal. Meat was plentiful as Field Packing Company had a million pounds of meat in stock and cattle and hogs filling their yards. The only threat to the water, light, and gas supplies was a shortage of coal for use in the water and light plans. This shortage was alleviated by two coal mines located just below the city on Highway 60 that were unreachable by floodwaters unless the river level rose ten feet above what it already was. Fresh bread was also made available each morning by Frinz Baking Company.²⁵ This abundance of supplies allowed the people of Owensboro to feed incoming refugees and concentrate on relief efforts.

Generosity and courage were two commodities in abundance during this emergency. Donations poured into the local Red Cross to help with relief. By Monday the 25th, \$2,354 had been donated towards a total for Daviess County that was to reach \$21,572.15. In addition to these monetary donations, bedding and food was given freely. The second floor of the Federal building where the Red Cross was located had to be turned into a relief station where the 27,316 articles of bedding and clothing donated were distributed from.²⁶

By January 27th, it appeared that the worst the flood had to offer had passed. According to the *Messenger*, the "Flood's Fury Appears Spent", and the evacuation of those stranded by the flood was nearing completion. The paper also predicted that the flood would reach its crest that night or early Thursday morning at the latest.²⁷

The flood reached its highwater mark on January 30th when the newspaper reported that the river had reached its crest of 54.85 feet.²⁸ As the river began to recede, new concerns became evident. According to one Owensboro resident named Mrs. Waltrip, "In town, gasoline had leaked into floating water, gasoline was on the surface, so people

were warned not to smoke to prevent a fire.²⁹ Water was contaminated by dead livestock and had to be boiled and strained so it was safe to drink.³⁰

Perhaps the biggest task facing the Red Cross as the waters subsided was the issue of returning people to their homes as soon as possible. Many homes were carried off of their foundations by the raging floodwaters, and those that weren't had to be inspected for damage and disease. Few homes hit by the flood could subsequently be used. Most suffered from insecure foundations and plastering due to the force of the water. Floors buckled and filth was everywhere. Most homeowners had to wait for a new home to replace their old one.²¹

Many people whose homes were hit by the flood lost every thing that they owned, but the heaviest losses suffered came in livestock. Ferry boats and barges rescued as much livestock as was safely possible, but in most cases, the rescue attempts were in vain. According to one estimate, 2000 head of livestock were saved, but at least 1500 head of livestock were lost.³² The primary reason so much livestock was lost was because farmers simply didn't believe the water would continue to rise. By the time families were forced to leave their homes, there was only enough time to take with them what was necessary. Many people did bring livestock into the highest floors of their homes to try to save them, but this proved futile in most instances. Several homeowners returned to their homes to find bloated carcasses of their farm animals in the house.³³

When the floodwaters finally completely receded in early February, Owensboro faced a massive clean-up project. Debris, mud, sand, bloated livestock carcasses, and disease was everywhere. There was a widespread fear of an epidemic outbreak similar to that in Evansville. The Daviess County Medical Association vaccinated nearly everyone to prevent any outbreaks. Farmers and WPA workers burned and buried the thousands of carcasses that littered the countryside. Members of the Red Cross inspected and conditioned all homes before residents could come back to them or decide to build again.³⁴

It took nearly a month for downtown businesses to return to normal following the flood. It took nearly a month to get the water service working normally again downtown, and most businesses had to pump water out of their basements in addition to replacing any damaged goods.³⁵ Schools were out for about three weeks, and with the use of many of them as refugee centers, school was dismissed for over a month in many circumstances.³⁶ One aspect of life that remained as close to normal as possible was that of religion. The churches being used as refugee centers still held normal services and arranged for people of different denominations to receive transportation to other services when feasible.³⁷

Farmers were by far the hardest hit by the 1937 flood. Most farmers lost all or part of their livestock as well as farm machinery and their fences. In addition to those material losses, many farms took up to two to three years to regain their original fertility due to erosion and changes in the composition of the soil.³⁸ Many farms were covered with a deep layer of white sand left by the flood. In some places the sand was 15 feet deep, and Sam Ewing's farm, located where the river broke through, was covered with four to six feet of sand.³⁹

Many human interest stories can be recounted concerning the flood of 1937. In direct contrast to the panicked nature of mayor Weir is the story of Ford McCormick. Mr. McCormick had left in his boat to try and rescue a family trapped in their house by rising water. When Mr. McCormick hadn't returned within several hours, a search party (expecting the worst) was sent out after him that night. Mr. McCormick was found the next morning hung up with his boat deep in the woods none the worse for the wear. Courageous acts of this nature abounded throughout the crisis.⁴⁰

Despite the destructive fury of the flood, some joy came during the flood as well. On January 23rd, Charlotte Drury was born in Stanley at the home of an elderly couple who sheltered them during the flood.⁴¹ In West Louisville, a couple was blessed with twin daughters before their physician could arrive.⁴² Unfounded rumors and the supernatural were also accounted for during the 1937 flood. As the floodwaters were rising early, a rumor was circulated that the Ohio River was going to cut a new channel across Crabtree Street and wash away much of Owensboro.⁴³ One woman spoke of her friends seeing "ghosts" floating across the water. In actuality, these "ghosts" were explained as vapors from the gasoline floating on top of the water.⁴⁴ Stories of these sorts help to reflect the emotion and feelings felt during traumatic period.

Despite dealing with such a damaging flood, Owensboro was fortunate when compared to other cities hit by flooding. In Paducah, nearly all of its 30,000 residents had to evacuate. 230,000 people were left homeless in Louisville, with ninety deaths attributed there to the flood. Martial law was declared in Evansville, Indiana, in addition to an outbreak of scarlet fever among the refugees quartered there.⁴⁵

Smaller cities close to Owensboro were ravaged by flooding. Lewisport suffered from food and coal shortages, doctors had to be taken by boat to see their patients, and all the businesses were flooded. Everyone in Rumsey was evacuated except for the few who insisted on staying of the second floors of their homes and over one-third of Rumsey's homes were moved by the flooding. Calhoun suffered from a food shortage, and the courthouse had to be turned into a sick room for an ill refugee.⁴⁶

In the final analysis of the flood of 1937, Owensboro residents were

fortunate to escape further damage from the flood. In Daviess County, not quite one-third of county land was under water when the flood reached its highest stage (90,958 acres out of 282,545 acres of land were covered by water on January 29th.⁴⁷ Only 1,211 of the 23,668 Daviess County residents lived in areas that were flooded. Daviess County was hit with damages of \$107,410, a small sum when compared to local counties of smaller populations being struck by higher costs in flood damages.⁴⁸

The 1937 flood was also important in that it spurred further development along the Ohio River. 77 lakes have been built along the Ohio River to help prevent flooding as well as 41 floodwalls and levees. These lakes not only provide flood protection, but many of them provide recreation and economic stimulus to the local economy. Rough River, Barren, Green River, Nolin, Barkley, Cumberland, and Buckhorn Lakes all provide flood control, recreation, and financial gain for western Kentucky.⁴⁹

The memories and the effects of the 1937 flood are still alive in many people today. Many people lost relatives or material possessions in the flood, but Owensboro actually had no deaths linked directly to the flood. Courage and generosity resulted in the safe evacuation of all Owensboro residents. Hopefully, those characteristics exhibited during the flood of 1937 will be seen in future difficulties facing Owensboro.

Notes

1. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, Jan. 25, 1987.
2. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, Jan. 26, 1987.
3. Owensboro *Messenger*, Jan. 14, 1937.
4. Owensboro *Messenger*, Jan. 15, 1937.
5. Owensboro *Messenger*, Jan. 17, 1937.
6. Paul Lewis, "Owensboro and the Great Flood of 1937" (Investigators Club Paper), 3.
7. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, Jan. 18, 1987.
8. Lewis, "Owensboro and the Great Flood of 1937", 5.
9. Owensboro *Messenger*, Jan. 21, 1937.
10. Lewis, "Owensboro and the Great Flood of 1937", 5.
11. Owensboro *Messenger*, Jan. 22, 1937.
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18. Owensboro *Messenger*, Jan. 23, 1937.
19. Lewis, "Owensboro and the Great Flood of 1937", 7.
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36. Interview, E.W. Richmond and Wayne Foust by Jim Parr, Sept.,

- 1983, Tape on deposit (Kentucky Room--Owensboro Public Library).
37. Interview, Grace Morehead by Jim Parr, Sept. 1983, Tape on deposit (Kentucky Room--Owensboro Public Library).
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 41. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, Jan. 25, 1987.
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 43. Interview with Sally Byrd, Nov. 23, 1992.
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Women of Ken-Rad
by Judy L. Graves

Owensboro, Kentucky has many advantages. It is located on the banks of the Ohio River in what is known geographically as the Western Coalfields.¹ It has never been a thriving metropolis as the likes of Lexington or Louisville, still, there have been opportunities for the average person to find employment. The employment may have been working in the coal fields, tobacco fields, as a clerk in a retail store, or on the line in a manufacturing plant or distillery. A combination of industry, agriculture, and natural resources has kept the area from suffering the serious bouts of depression that have affected other areas of the state. One of the many business that helped, not only Owensboro but the women of Owensboro and the surrounding counties with employment and a sense of financial freedom, was the Ken-Rad Corporation. The Ken-Rad was owned and operated by Mr. Roy Burlew. The employment rolls rose from 18 people in 1918 to over 3,000 people when the company was sold in 1945.²

A southern woman is supposed to stay at home, bear and raise children, be a hostess to her husband or father's guests, chief cook, house-keeper, and of course the lady of entertainment and pleasure to her spouse. This is the ideal stereotype, and fortunately or unfortunately, is not true. Reality and stereotyping do not equate well. The fact of the matter is a great many women have had to work to either supplement the family income or provide the only income. One of the places that the women of Owensboro sought and found employment during the 1920's, 1930's, and the war years of 1940, was the Ken-Rad.

Mr. Roy Burlew came to Owensboro from Emporium, Pennsylvania in 1918, looking for a business to buy. He purchased the Kentucky Lamp Company located in down-town Owensboro. At the time of purchase there were only 18 employees. On November 8, 1918 the papers were signed. No one in the small river town envisioned the mammoth growth that was going to take place during the next twenty-five years, nor how many of the local citizenry would owe their livelihood to the new company. Burlew changed the name of the company to the Kentucky Lamp Company and proceeded to apply his considerable business expertise to making the little company grow. By 1920 the lamp company had grown and a new building was erected on Ninth Street to house the now 100 employees and equipment. Burlew increased his payroll to 175 employees before 1922, all local, and he began another operation. The lamp company made electrical appliances and lamps; the new company made radio tubes and was housed in a small building on West Main street. The first years in the radio tube manufacture

business, the company was named The Kentucky Radio Tube Manufacturing Company. Patents were obtained in 1929, and with expanding sales, Burlew incorporated the two companies under one name, The Ken-Rad Corporation. By now there were over 500 employees, primarily women.

The financial crash of 1929 slowed down the rapid increases that were being made, but did not stop production. The plans for expansion that had been made were put on hold, but the company did continue to grow. The lamp department employed 150 people and the radio tube department another 800. The new machinery which had been purchased for the expansion was kept crated for more than a year. Business was depressed, but began to come back in 1931. By 1933 the employment figures were up to over 1,000 and the expansion plans made in 1929 were put into effect. Structure additions were made at Ninth and Bolivar streets. By the end of 1939, the employment rolls had reached over 3,000, all local and predominately young women.³

The mayor of Owensboro, Harry C. Smith, and the city commissioners issued a Resolution on July 22, 1939. It was the seventeenth anniversary of the Ken-Rad. The resolution stated how grateful Owensboro and the local government were for having Roy Burlew and the Ken-Rad located in this city. Businesses and church leaders sponsored a large picnic; letters and telegrams of congratulations were received from not only the businesses in Kentucky but from all over the country.⁴

World War II was a war of new technology and the Ken-Rad obtained a government contract to manufacture one of the new type of transmitting tubes. However, this required additional structures and hiring 500 more employees. With those increases, the Ken-Rad soon exhausted the local supply of female labor. The adjoining counties were drawn from until they too proved unable to supply enough labor force. It was at this point that new plants were built at Bowling Green, Kentucky and Tell City, Indiana. Buildings were also leased in Rockport and Huntingburg, Indiana for the manufacture of tubes.⁵

In May 1944 the Union came to the Ken-Rad and the workers pay was increased along with additional benefits. On January 2, 1945, Roy Burlew sold the Ken-Rad Corporation to the General Electric Company of Schenectady, New York. Most of the top management remained, and there was not a layoff of employees. The company continued to grow and remained the largest employer in the area.⁶

Who were those thousands of women that worked for Ken-Rad? Where did they come from? Why were they working? What became of them? What was it like for a young southern woman in the early part of the twentieth century to work outside of the home?

Stanley Burlew, Vice-President of Ken-Rad and son of Roy Burlew,

has been asked the same question everytime he has been interviewed. Why were there so many young women hired to work and no men? His reply was, "Women were hired in production because they could function with their hands better and faster on our assembly line. Men's hands were too large and they were not as dexterious." When queried as to his feelings on the same of the company, Burlew answered, "I thought it was good; however, at the time I'm sure many of the 7,600 employees did not think so. But looking back it was very gond for them and Owensboro."⁷

Lucille Whitaker, a current resident of Philpot, Kentucky, widow, living alone, remembers when her father was killed in a car accident in the late 1920's. She and her mother moved from Eddyville to Owensboro so her mother could find work. It took over six months to find employment and then it was in a laundry. Lucille stayed at home watching her younger brother and sister while her mother would earn as little as 36 cents some days. They lived in a shot-gun style house at the edge of Owensboro. There was a big field beside it and a man used to bring his cow out to graze every few days. He was friendly and often spoke. One afternoon the man asked Lucille if she would like to go to work at the Ken-Rad. Lucille's reply was she wasn't yet 16 so she couldn't. He told her as soon as she was, to go see Miss White at the Ken-Rad and she would be hired. Lucille commented, "It is a shame that people today don't seem to care about anyone but themselves. People are just not like they used to be." When she turned 16 in 1931, she went to the Ken-Rad and applied. Miss White was expecting her and she was hired that day and started the next. The man with the cow was Miss White's brother.

Lucille worked for ten years at her job. She felt the Ken-Rad was very good to her. If the department she was working in ran out of work, they would send her to another department, and not send her home which was the practice of many companies. Somedays she would package tubes, somedays she would work on the line making parts to go upstairs for the manufacture of the tubes.

Taking time off to have a baby, it was right back to work. Now the situation was a little different. Children have a tendency to get hurt or get into trouble. One day there was a phone call for her to come home, her child was hurt. From then on every time the floor supervisor would come toward her, she was sure it was a message to go home because her son was hurt.

One afternoon Lucille sat working, making a part to go upstairs when she noticed Roy Burlew was standing behind her watching her work. She kept working; he kept watching. Finally he came over and explained to her a different way of doing the procedure she was working on. He told her if she did it his way it would be better made and the whole

procedure would go faster. She was very relieved he had not fired her and she did not take offense at his criticism. "He was right, you know. But he talked kind-of funny. I think he must have been a foreigner," Lucille stated. Being a young girl from the South, she probably sounded as strange to him as the Pennsylvanian sounded to her.

She stayed for several more years and then moved on to another job, paying more; plus the fact she had gotten older and the Ken-Rad preferred young strong females. The work was hot and hard. Lucille didn't work there during the war years, and felt sure that it was a lot different then. When asked what she remembers most about the Ken-Rad she replied, "I really liked working there. I was able to help mamma and still have money for me. It was hard work, but it was work."⁸

Edith Whitaker, retired bakery owner, residing in Owensboro, remembers that she applied for work at the Ken-Rad the day after she graduated from high school in 1939. She lied about her age, saying she was 18 even though she was only 17, and was frightened the company would check and she would lose her job. Why did she go to work instead of continuing her education or getting married right away? Edith said her family was very poor and they needed all the help they could get. Even though the country was starting to come out of the depression, real money was scarce and children helping out the family was the accepted practice. She appreciated the job, but hated every day she worked there.

Edith worked in the area of mounting on the fourth floor with a unit of seven girls. She was the first girl on the unit and after she had been there for a while she would have nightmares about getting to work late, or not getting there at all, causing the rest of the unit to not have anything to do. The fourth floor had huge windows with big fans in them to keep the air circulating. Since the parts being worked on were so small, by necessity the flow of air was above the heads of the workers. Edith stated you would sit at a table, in a hard, straight backed metal chair, with a goose neck lamp with a metal shade that radiated heat. There you would sit, hunched over with a pair of tweezers, welding one small part to another small part. It was tedious and *hot* work. The only time the place was not hot was early in the morning, right after you arrived for work. There would be an inspector at the end of the table, and if everything was not done just right, the part had to be undone and redone. When a whole tray of tubes had been rejected, the girls would be very angry. They were working on piece work, and this would lower their output.

Employees were not allowed to leave their work stations except to go to the bathroom. When you left you had to be sure you were enough parts ahead so the girl on the right side of you did not run out of parts to work on. If you tarried too long in the bathroom, when you returned, you had six girls very mad at you. You didn't have any choice as to the unit

you would be assigned to. There were some nice young girls and some girls you really would rather not be around. Since it was hot, at times the odor of perspiration was overpowering; and there were some girls who did not bathe as regularly as they should have.

Edith remembers the heat was so bad that girls would pass out right and left on excessively hot days. A stretcher would be brought, the girl picked up and taken down to the infirmary. Once she had been revived, the girl would return to work. Edith believes some of them passed out from the heat because they were so poor and they were coming to work without eating. Most of the young girls she worked with were nice; but the inspectors were a different story. They were usually women who had been there for a while and were older. Most of them were nice, but every now and then you would get one that was "mean as a snake". The management would send people out with clip boards and a stop watch. They would watch you for days, then go back to their office and try to figure ways to get more parts out of you. Usually a person would work five days a week. Toward the starting of the War, when a big order would come in, work hours would be extended for an hour or so and half a day Saturday.

When asked about the men who were working at the Ken-Rad, the reply was that men were in a real short supply. You would see them at the gates as guards, or fixing the machines, but the unit workers were all young women. Edith commented, "I don't mean to make it sound all bad. Working in a factory is not my cup of tea. But we were young, full of vim and vigor, and we would get into a little mischief every now and again." She related the "trick" she and her friends had liked to play on the others. They would start the rumor that the crew would be getting off early that day, and laugh at how fast the news would spread until it got back to them, even with an exact time they would be leaving.

Everyone worked really hard. It was important to work well with your unit even if you did not like the girls. Everyone on the units salary would depend on how well you did as a group. Money is a great motivator. Some of the units worked faster and better than others and made more money. This would cause jealousy.

Edith worked there off and on until after the war. During the war if she could be with her husband in the navy, she would quit the Ken-Rad and go be with him. After he would leave, she would go back to the Ken-Rad to work. She said they would always take you back. They were desperate for help, and anyone who had a little experience was assured a job.

The things Edith remembers the most is the heat, odor of sweat, climbing four flights of stairs twice a day, and patriotic music playing over the loud speakers during the war. When asked why she quit, her reply was, "I was afraid we would starve to death if I quit, but I had had

enough of it. I wanted to be up on my feet moving around. That sitting there all day wasn't for me. But it was the tail end of the depressinn, and people would do anything to get a job no matter how bad it was."⁹

Hazel Young, retired clerical worker, and farmer's wife living in Panther, also remembers applying for a job at the Ken-Rad the day after graduation, in June 1941. She had applied at the phone company and the Ken-Rad. Then Ken-Rad telephoned her within a matter of days and put her to work on the fourth floor, in a unit of five girls. Hazel was engaged at the time, and her future husband also worked at the Ken-Rad. While Hazel was making tubes, her husband was working in maintenance, fixing machines, and doing odd jobs for Roy Burtlew.

Hazel liked working at the Ken-Rad but the girls' surprised her. She was from a somewhat traditionally valued family and the way the other girls talked, told jokes, and swore was a shock. The hollering at each other when a tube had been worked wrong bothered her, until she learned that a 'messed up' part had to be redone, and this would affect your paycheck. Lying about her age, she started when she was barely 17 years old.

Music was played over the loud speakers and Hazel found this to be soothing. She said no matter how bad things were, she would block them out of her mind and listen to the music. She also remembered the experimentation on the fifth floor. After she had reported to work one morning, the supervisors took six units up to the fifth floor. They were put into white uniforms and issued white gloves. She said it was bad enough working on something totally different than you were use to, but trying to hold the tweezers with the gloves and work was really difficult. They worked up there for a couple of days a week for several weeks, and were never told what it was they were doing or why. "Of course, everyone knew they were doing something secret for the government."

One day Hazel was sick and had her husband reported to the plant she wouldn't be in to work. Hazel went back to bed and was awakened by the door bell in their upstairs apartment ringing. She hollered for the person to come in, the door was open. The bell kept ringing and she started down the stairs to see who it was. She passed out on the stairs and the next thing she knew, a nurse from the plant was bending over her saying, "Well, you really are sick." It seemed as though the girls would call in sick when they wanted the day off to be with their boyfriend or husband so the company instituted a policy of checking on those who called in sick. If they really were sick, they got medical help, if not, they got reported.

The girls working at the Ken-Rad who were married during the war years would quit their jobs to go be with their husbands when they could. After their husbands had shipped to another base or overseas,

the wives would return and be rehired. Hazel also participated in this policy. She had gotten married in late 1941 and after her husband went into the army, every chance she had, she would quit the Ken-Rad and go be with him.

When asked what she remembered the most about working at the Ken-Rad, the answer was, "I think it was the heat. And it took me a long time to get use to the way the girls talked. I heard cuss words I didn't know existed. And the music. I really liked that."¹⁰

Martha Byrd, retired office worker, living with her husband in Philpot, remembers that it seemed like she had always known about the Ken-Rad. She remembered Miss White, the lady who did the hiring at the Ken-Rad, as being very nice and concerned about the girls she would hire. The rule was during the 1930's you had to be 16 years old to work, but Martha said she knew that there were girls working there younger. Times were hard in the late 1920's and 1930's, and girls would either lie about their age or if they looked old enough they would not be asked how old they were. Martha thought it was wrong, 15 or 16 year old girls weren't really mentally old enough to be working with, "all that going on that was going on. Most young girls back then were really very naive and sometimes ended up doing things they shouldn't have, then getting scared and did even more stupid things." When asked what she meant by this statement, she replied, "You know, like getting pregnant and then trying to do an abortion on themselves. We didn't know about birth control or getting a doctor to do an abortion, even if we had the money. I don't blame Miss White for that. It was bad everywhere. I know what I am talking about when I say the girls were dumb, I was only 15 when I started."

Martha was from a small family living outside of town. Her father had only made \$60.00 for his share of the tobacco crop in 1932. Money was non-existent and their grand-mother was already helping them. Martha begged her parents to let her go to work during the summer, saying she would be laid off before school would start in the fall. Her parents let her go into town and apply at the Ken-Rad. She looked older and was not questioned on her age. Earning \$6.05 a week, she paid \$3.00 a week room and board, bought material for a new dress, a pair of shoes, and still had money to help at home.

During the year 1932 the Ken-Rad started receiving more orders and Martha was not laid off. She remembered the heat on the fourth floor where she was working. The girls were issued a cold wet towel and then came in to work. After lunch they would be issued another one. Even with the towels, she remembered the girls passing out from the heat. She continued to work but found another place to live. This time, since her wages had gone up to 35 cents per hour, she paid \$6.00 per week room and board. The room was one large bedroom divided with sheets and

had six beds. The board consisted of a brown bag lunch to carry to work. It was not for some time until the girls living there found out their landlady was renting out their beds to six more girls who worked a different shift. The sheets would hardly have time to cool down before the next group of girls would arrive.

Martha left the Ken-Rad in 1933 and did not return until 1944. By that time she had married and had a child. The Ken-Rad wanted young healthy females, but were so desperate for help, if you had any experience at all, they would hire you. Martha, as most of the young married workers with husbands in the military did, quit every time she had a chance to be with her husband and then returned when she could not.

There were male mechanics stationed all around on the floor to make sure the equipment the girls were working on was kept in running shape. If one girl's equipment went down, six other girls could not work. Men were also used as guards at the entrances and would search your purse and any packages you had as you left the plant.

When asked what she remembered most, her reply was, "The ungodly heat! In the beginning it was a way to help the family, but it really made me feel good to have a paycheck. It made me feel like somebody."¹¹

Emily Holloway, a retired education administrator, resides in Owensboro most of the year. As a young black girl she graduated from Owensboro's black high school, Western, in 1941. She went away to college but returned in 1942 to find a summer job to help with her education. That summer the Ken-Rad was in the process of installing a cafeteria for their employees. It was to be located in a separate building across the street from the main plant on Ninth street and the crew was to be all black.

Although Emily was not the first black woman to work *in* the Ken-Rad, she was on the crew of the first blacks to work *for* the Ken-Rad. She remembered the hundreds and hundreds of people who would come in to be fed. The crew working in the cafeteria worked split shifts; coming in to fix a meal, then going home until it was time to fix another one. Emily said she worked as a server, and they had a really good chef, not just a cook. All the people working there were black except the supervisor. When asked if there were any problems with the white workers, she said no, at the time there was a lot of prejudice, but since they were in effect doing what the white people expected of them, waiting on the whites, there weren't any problems. And too, they weren't taking any jobs away from white people.

Emily left for college at the end of the summer and did not return to Owensboro until she had graduated in the winter of 1945. At that time there was an all black crew working at the lamp division on Second

street. With black workers, black inspectors, and white supervisors; there was absolutely no interaction between the whites and blacks. Owensboro was lucky in that there was no shortage of jobs. The prejudice that was experienced was the usual for a southern town of the 1940's. She didn't work long at the lamp plant, obtaining a job in the field she had trained for. Unfortunately, Owensboro did not get the benefit of her education, she moved to Cincinnati to teach.

When asked what she remembered the most, her reply was, "Not much really. It was for such a short time, and we weren't really working at the Ken-Rad. We were stuck off by ourselves. I was just glad to be working."¹²

There were thousands and thousands of young women who worked for the Ken-Rad between 1918 and 1945 when it was sold to the General Electric Company. Men as well as some older women worked during this time. Men did the heavy lifting, janitorial, maintenance, research, driving, and of course management. There were some women supervisors, usually by reason of seniority of time worked. The office personnel and unit workers were all young women. Older women could not take the excessive heat or work fast enough on the units. The Ken-Rad was not a place one went for a career, it was a place one went to for a paycheck.

Who were these women who worked at the Ken-Rad? They were the daughters, sisters, and wives of the local residents and the surrounding counties. Why did they work? For a paycheck to help make living easier; no pure and lofty motives such as ideas of women's liberation. What became of them? Some of the women continued to work for General Electric after the war; some women went to other jobs; some women returned to the home when their husbands returned from the war. What was it like to work there? It was a *hard and hot* way to make a living, but most women were glad for the work.

Owensboro was very fortunate that Roy Burlew selected a small lamp company and increased the business and consequently the employment roll for the town. The company provided a valuable service in the area as well as to the government during the war. Radios with Ken-Rad tubes had been fitted into the planes that bombed Japan and helped end the war.¹³

In conclusion, there is not a life in the town of Owensboro that was not touched in one way or the other by the women who worked at the Ken-Rad. The money generated by the company helped the town to stay prosperous. The ability to work outside the home for the thousands of Owensboro women helped fuel the fires of women's liberation, while it was putting food on the table. The Ken-Rad has long passed from existence, but the memories of the women who worked in the hard hot conditions will always remain, not only with the women themselves, but the town. Owensboro owes a debt of thanks to these women.

Notes

1. Aloma Dew. Class lecture, History 3355, Kentucky Wesleyan College, October 1992.
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4. Owensboro, Kentucky - Ken-Rad. Hanging Vertical File. Kentucky Room Daviess County. (correspondence, records, telegrams from the 17th Anniversary of Ken-Rad).
5. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, December 20, 1944.
6. Lee & Aloma Dew, *Owensboro The City on the Yellow Banks*. (Bowling Green, 1988) 153-164; Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, January 21, 1945.
7. Interview with Stanley Burlaw, November 21, 1992.
8. Interview with Lucille Whitaker, October 24, 1992.
9. Interview with Edith Whitaker, October 3, 1992.
10. Interview with Hazel Young, November 6, 1992.
11. Interview with Martha Byrd on September 12, 1992.
12. Telephone interview with Emily Holloway, November 28, 1992.
13. William Foster Hays, *Sixty Years of Owensboro 1883-1943*. (Bowling Green, 1988) 130-131.

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A Subjective History of Owensboro's Sewers
by James Kennady

Editor's Note: This is a reprint of a letter printed in *The Messenger*, April 14, 1901, in which Mr. Kennady outlines the history of early sewer construction in Owensboro. Kennady, of 903 East Main, was listed in the City Directory as a "brick manufacturer," and thus has a vested interest in the city sewer system, the main components of which were constructed of brick, although, by 1900, many tile sewers were being laid.

The immediate motivation for this letter, which was printed prominently on page one of the newspaper, was a major break in the sewer at Main and Daviess Streets which caused a gaping hole to appear, blocking the street and eventually causing the sidewalk and awning supports on both the Second Street and Daviess Street sides of the S.W. Anderson Co., to collapse. Anderson's at this time was located on the southeast corner of this intersection, where The Bridal Shop was located until recently razed.

To make matters worse the street remained blocked for months with the city doing nothing to facilitate repairs. Fortunately the summer was extremely dry, but as soon as repairs began, in August, some five months after the break, a heavy rain caused increased washouts, and it was additional weeks before the repairs were accomplished and the streets reopened for traffic.

Editor Messenger: "The mills of the gods grind slowly but exceeding fine."

Much has been said in regard to the sewerage of our city since the breaking of the Daviess street pipe. I hope you will pardon me if I go back to the first sewer built in our then village of "Yellow Banks," some time in the late 50's. It was built on Triplett street, commencing at the south side of Main, running across Main and dropping into a well, or man-hole. The sewer was then continued seventy-five or a hundred feet until well onto the blue clay and thence to the river. I will have more to say anon about this blue clay.

This then town was merged into a virgin city of some three thousand inhabitants in 1866 and at once put on metropolitan airs by electing a mayor and six councilmen. Now, I must tell you that Owensboro up to that date was looked upon as the "graveyard of Kentucky," hence its slow growth from 1810 to 1866. After these worthy burghers were duly

inducted into office, they looked about to find some way to improve the sanitary condition of our young city. They found, on examination, that at least one-fourth, if not one-third of the city was covered with water three-fourths of the year, especially the southeastern portion. These councilmen and mayor were common folk, composed of mechanics and merchants, not knowing much of hydraulics, but were satisfied that water would not run up hill, hence the necessity of underground sewerage. The vexing question was as to how to get the money, as you must know that the revenue was then 25 cents on the hundred dollars.

The legislature met then annually and the first year they had a bill passed through giving them 40 cents on the hundred dollars. This amount was increased the second winter to 75 cents on the hundred dollars. It was soon settled among themselves that there should be three sewers constructed, one on Triplett, one on Daviess and one on Mulberry, and that the one on Triplett should be built first, as there was more surface water to be drained off in that section of the town at that time than elsewhere. The following summer a four-foot sewer was built, running from the river to Fourth street. You must know that where Tip Bransford's mill now stands was in the country then. (Ed. note - the Bransford Mill was at 704 E. Fourth St.) You will readily understand that this sewer was taken to the town limits in that direction. The next year the sewer on Mulberry was built and there it was they struck eighteen inches of quicksand that underlies all of this city, and it is the plague of all engineers the world over. In fact, it was for days the contractor believed he would have to abandon the work and lose all he had done, but by a heroic effort in pile driving and the use of straw he succeeded in fulfilling his contract and landed his sewer on the south side of Fourth street. I will say in passing that these "old fogies" never contemplated running this sewer straight on to the river, but intended in the near future to build a sewer or rather continue this sewer down the ravine to the river, thus killing two birds with one stone, as it would long since have been filled level with the other part of the town, and forever obliterating this ugly eye-sore. (Ed. note - This ravine ran from the foot of Frederica street southwesterly through what is now the parking lot of the Executive Inn to approximately Second and Walnut streets.)

Now there was a problem to be solved in the making of this Daviess street sewer. They had passed through much sand in the construction of the Triplett street sewer and that innocent monster, quicksand, at the Mulberry street sewer. Now the question was how to circumvent these hideous things that nature seemed to have put in their way.

I intimated in the beginning that I would have something more to say on the subject of the clay underlying this city. This blue clay is what geologist would call laminated shale. Now, Mr. Editor, I have read much, talked much, thought much, and seen much of various shales or

clays, and will venture the assertion that this is the most remarkable clay in some respects that can be found in the world. It is entirely impervious to water and even when it is exposed cannot be eroded by it, and to only two elements, frost and sunshine, will it succumb.

Nature comes more than halfway to serve man, and if he is not too pig-headed to embrace the opportunity he will be rewarded royally. These "old fogies" thought and thought, and talked and talked, one whole winter, and finally concluded to allow nature to assist them in the building of the Daviess street sewer, and that was simple enough. They concluded to tunnel through the stratum of clay that nature had put at their disposal. They commenced at or near low water. They employed a reliable coal digger to tunnel at night with one laborer to wheel out the clay, and an old English bricklayer, who plumed himself on having worked under the great English engineer Stephenson. The old man made a good job of it. The sewer is five feet in diameter, shaped like an egg with the small end down. This man had one laborer to assist him, carrying the brick and mortar. These four men made about eight to ten feet of sewer a day. Imagine, if you can, how many men it would have taken to have built that sewer from the surface. These "old fogies" built up to the south side of Main street and believed, in their simplicity, that this sewer would be carried to the low lands near where the "Texas" railroad now runs. Robbie Burns, however, says something about the plans of men and mice. These "old fogies" had built these two sewers and part of the third and some other permanent work, such as making the abutments for what was then called the dirt bridge, on Main Street, about four thousand dollars worth of work on the wharf, besides keeping up the necessary expenditure for gas, fire and police protection and street hands, and when they were through and struck a balance sheet they did not owe a cent to anybody and always had a small balance in the treasury.

But in their simplicity these old fogies did not know "how to run a town." I doubt very much whether, when they were elected as mayor and councilmen, any one of the seven had ever seen a "bond," much less have the temerity to issue one.

You have read Victor Hugo's description of the Battle of Waterloo and of Sedan and many a pen picture of Pickett's immortal charge at Gettysburg or Dante's "Inferno." Now imagine to yourself that it was possible to get them in your mind at one time and you would have some faint conception of the excitement in this town over preventing these "old fogies" from continuing this Daviess street sewer. My! My! My! There was more money spent than would have built the sewer. Many of our best citizens completely lost their heads. They went so far as to brand these "old fogies" with all manner of corruption, and the worst of all was that "they were sinking the dear people's money under ground"

and "we must have reform" - "such men ought to be swept off the face of the earth." Now I will tell you of one of the most potent ways they had of getting votes. These "old fogies" had a law on the books that no one could vote unless he had paid his taxes. Whether that was a good law or not I will not say. At any rate they paid thousands of dollars of back taxes in order to accomplish these ends.

I'm done for once and all with this matter unless some member of that "reform" council dips his oar in the turbid water and then you will possibly give me more space.

Now we come to the present trouble with the Daviess street pipe. I called it a pipe, for it does not reach the dignity of a sewer. Let us understand that I have no axe to grind, large or small. The members of the council and mayor are my friends, I having known some of them during their entire life, and will say for them that they will do the right thing if they know it. In the first place, no well equipped engineer will stake his reputation on draining one-third of the water that falls on this city in a twenty-four-inch clay pipe, with joints not over two or two and a half feet in length, and that imbedded in sand six or eight feet in thickness. I would not say that they are not doing the best they can as merely a temporary arrangement for the present until they can continue this five-foot sewer as first contemplated.

There has been much said about the breaking of this wall on Main street. This well was simply built to carry off water from Main street and not the water of one-third of the city. You must know that the great bulk of the water now carried in this Daviess street pipe was thrown there less than one year ago, and the first great rain since that time tossed it up as if it had been in the hands of a child.

We all know that water is as gentle as a June breeze when we have it under control, but lose our grasp on it and it is more destructive than a tornado. Now when they have completed your well and put back this Daviess street pipe and two and a half or three inches of water falls in eleven minutes as it did the night it broke, then there will be a repetition of the same trouble, either at Main street or elsewhere on the line of this pipe.

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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 Third Tuesday 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.

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The Editor's Page

Once again the Daviess County Historical Quarterly is proud to devote an issue to student papers, both produced in Lee Dew's class, The United States Since 1945, at Kentucky Wesleyan College. These papers demonstrate the high level of scholarship that young historians are demonstrating in the area of Daviess County history, thanks in part to the encouragement of the Society in sponsoring and funding the Quarterly.

Lori A. Coghill is a senior history major from Henderson, who plans to attend graduate school following her graduation in May of 1994. Rob Henry, who had an article in the April issue of the Quarterly, is working on a degree in teacher education and plans to teach history at the high school level.

Both of these papers deal with on-going problems which the county continues to confront as we struggle through the decade of the 1990's. The question of minority relations, whether it be by race or gender, continues to be vexatious, with little apparent progress being made to bring minority groups into full participation in the economic and political life of our community. Perhaps the new century will bring the opportunities for the final achieving of this goal, which has eluded us in the past.

In Owensboro-Daviess County politics, women have taken a back seat to the needs of the "old boys" network and the institutional discrimination of the state and local political process. Currently, Owensboro politics are dominated by men. Most women wanting to run have neither the resources nor the connections to have a successful campaign. The absence of women from local literature on politics and the history of the county clearly demonstrates the gender bias within Owensboro-Daviess County politics. National political trends suggest that after the acquisition of suffrage in the early 1900's, women's political participation declined drastically. Thus, the lack of female participation in Owensboro-Daviess County politics reflects the national mood as well as the nature of the political realm within Daviess County. The political attitude within the county allows the old boys network to control the political process.

The first woman to enter Daviess County politics in 1884 was Mildred Summers Lucas. Lucas won her re-election campaign, but the state court of appeals said that since Lucas could not vote, then she could not hold public office.¹ Upon the death of her husband, she became the city jailer. Several other women also obtained political office through the death of a spouse. In 1928 Mrs. Tandy Harl took her deceased husband's place as the Daviess County Circuit Court Clerk. Mrs. Harl served for five years. Similarly, Mrs. Everett Thompson became sheriff in 1936 when her husband died. She served for two years. Also, in 1941 Katherine Griffin took her husband's place as Daviess County Clerk and served until 1962.²

The first woman to be elected in her own right to a major office outside of a school board position was Louise Gasser Kirtley. Kirtley served as a state representative to the House from 1962 to 1966. In the two decades following Kirtley's election only two women were elected and both were elected to lower offices. By the late 1980's, only two women had served on the city commission. Claudia Myles was elected from 1975-1977 to serve on the City Commission. Also, Ann Murphy Kincheloe served a single term in 1979. By 1915, women were allowed to vote only in local school board elections. With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 women were granted national suffrage. Still, political participation and voting rights were not related. Since 1962, there have been no women in Daviess County political office within the county government.³

In the late 1970s, women had an optimistic outlook of potential involvement in Daviess County politics. Vickie Stovall became the first woman to serve on the Daviess County School Board. Yet, most of the

political pioneers for women did not associate their success as a major victory for women's rights. Claudia Myles said of her political position, "I grew up in man's world and in politics. I have a lot of drive and desire to serve the community. That desire just isn't in every woman."⁴

In 1985, Owensboro was one of only five counties with no women or blacks in public office. Also, only four women had been elected in Daviess County since 1815. Two women were serving as school board members. Patricia O'Connor served on the city school board and Helen Mountjoy on the county board. Another facet of local politics involved women in city and county planning boards. Of the 186 people serving on boards, only 44 were women. Several reasons were given to justify the lack of female political participation. First, the lack of high level local appointments discourages female participation. Second, the Daviess County community was not encouraging to female political leaders. Third, females lacked a strong base of political support.⁵

Another cause of women's low political status within Daviess County was the low wages paid to local government employees. Government employment is often a stepping stone for political leaders. Women in Daviess County made up 43% of the work force in 1985. Also, women in local government only earned \$13,000 per year in comparison to the average male salary of \$16,000. In 1984, Owensboro hired eighteen government workers - all male. Within Daviess County there was only one female department head, Debbie Elder, the head of the County Parks Department. Also, of 82 administrative or professional positions within Daviess County government only five were women.⁶

In 1986, Mary Ella Burns was appointed by Martha Layne Collins after the death of her husband to his former position as Daviess County Commissioner. Mrs. Burns was the first woman on the Daviess County Court. Despite Mrs. Burns new position and apparent victory for women in politics, her only concern was to fulfill the goals and objectives of her husband. Similar to the other women appointed after their husband's death, Mrs. Burns did not have her own political identity or goals. Thus, what appears to be a victory for feminists is actually shallow.⁷

The greatest political victory for women was in the school board races in Daviess County. In 1988, only two women had been elected to the City Commission. One woman had been appointed to the Daviess County Fiscal Court. With women consisting of 52% of the Owensboro-Daviess County population, female participation on planning commissions was low. The Urban County Charter Commission established in 1988 had 26 members and only six were women. Aloma Dew noted that the cause of the lack of political clout for women in Daviess County was an absence of a female "power base". Mrs. Dew also stated that women tended to choose voluntary activities over political involvement.⁸

Women also became involved in Daviess County politics over the merger issue. First, Olive Burroughs asked the Urban County Charter Commission to include minorities on its committee. Next, Aloma Dew requested that the commission also include women on the committee. Keith Lawrence, reporter for the *Owensboro Messenger Inquirer*, also made a plea to the women of Daviess County to become more involved in local politics.⁹

Another method that local women used to become involved in politics was through lobbying. In the late 1980's, women's lobbying groups made progress in welfare reform and abortion rights. Other issues women lobbied for in the state government included rape victim rights, child support, delinquency, defeat of a fetal homicide bill, defeat of a bill requiring doctors to disclose abortion information to the state, and a 5% increase in money to Aid to Families with Dependent Children.¹⁰

Women also became involved in local politics through various clubs and groups. Beginning in 1948, the *Democratic Woman's Journal* appealed to women to become involved in political parties and other citizen groups. Mrs. I.M. Hendrick of Owensboro served as a District Director in Daviess County for the Democratic party.¹¹

In 1989, Helen Mountjoy became the first woman to win a primary election for county commissioner. John Hager, editor of the *Owensboro Messenger Inquirer*, said of Mountjoy's victory, "Our community will become all the stronger as women are treated as equal partners in the right to lead county government." Mountjoy was defeated in the general election.¹²

Currently, Cissy Gregson is the only city superintendent of a major department. Gregson previously served as the manager of the Owensboro Transit System. Gregson is in charge of the city's third largest department with an annual budget of \$2.4 million.¹³ The department consists of 59 employees and 56 are male. Thus, Gregson, a woman, successfully manages a million dollar organization with 56 male employees in an effective and efficient manner, yet women are relatively unsuccessful in Daviess County politics.¹⁴

Other recent female community leaders include Cheryl King and Forrest Roberts. King was named Chairperson for the Owensboro-Daviess County Chamber of Commerce in 1990. King was the first female to head the chamber.¹⁵ Also, Forrest Roberts was named to the Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission in 1989. Roberts was the only woman on the all male board.¹⁶

The state government of Kentucky has established several commissions to study the problems encountering women in Kentucky politics. In 1966, the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women found that of the 970,937 women in Kentucky 75,000 were involved in women's clubs and groups. A major national organization, the League of

Women Voters, dealt mainly with educational issues in Kentucky. One of the most active women's groups in Kentucky during the 1960s was the Kentucky Federation of Homemakers. This group published and distributed thousands of copies of state constitutional revisions. Also, the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs boasted over 258 groups in Kentucky with over 14,000 members. These groups dealt with issues concerning seat belt laws, public transportation, vehicle inspection, and safer highways. Another group active in Kentucky was the Kentucky Federation of Business and Professional Women with over 80 clubs. Other groups included Daughters of the American Revolution, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Junior League of America, and the Council of Jewish Women. The report in 1966 also noted the increasing participation of women in state politics. By 1921, women were being elected to the state House of Representatives. In 1924, the first female Secretary of State was appointed in Kentucky. Similarly, in 1928 the first female Secretary of the Treasury served in Frankfort. Since 1928, every governor has appointed a female to his/her cabinet. Yet, state politics was far from equal. One statistic reported in 1966 showed that of 120 state tax commissioners only fourteen were women.¹⁷

In 1969, the Commission on the Status of Women also reported on women's concerns under Governor Louie B. Nunn. The commission suggested that the governor create a liaison between his/her office and state women's groups. Also, the commission said that the governor should write a bi-monthly newsletter to all state women's groups. As of 1969, all women's groups were required to register with a state commission. In 1969, the working force in Kentucky consisted of 35% of women.¹⁸ In another Commission report in 1968, the Kentucky statute KRS 404.020 said that women could not "sell, convey, or mortgage her real property unless her husband joins in the contract."¹⁹

Another important factor in considering female political participation involves females in the legal profession. Many use the legal profession as a stepping stone to acquiring political office. Since 1970, female lawyers have increased by 17%. Almost 140,000 lawyers in the United States are women. 80% of these lawyers entered the profession after 1970. Women rarely share in partnership with only 6% of going to women. Also, there are very few female associates – only 25%. 14% of all female lawyers work in government. In judicial positions women comprise 9% of Article III federal judges and 8.5% of state court judges. 3% of women work in legal services and public defense.²⁰ The lack of women in the legal field foreshadows the absence of women in the political process.²¹

Women in the political process are mainly found on the Kentucky school boards. In 1991, there was only one female mayor in Kentucky. In the state legislature, of 138 representatives only 7 were women.

Twenty women ran for these legislative seats.²²

Helen Mountjoy encountered great adversity when running for office in Owensboro. Mrs. Mountjoy was elected to the Daviess County Board of Education. She describes the "uniform" for women in politics as the skirt suit. Some stereotypes portray women in politics as cold and masculine, but in actuality they are just like every other woman. Mountjoy noted that the most valuable experience for women in politics is club experience. She also stressed the importance of strong family support when running. Other valuable qualities for women in politics include "thick skin" and a sense of humor. Mountjoy included these characteristics because of the ridicule and discouragement women candidates receive. Also, most women candidates are political novices. Thus, they automatically encounter great difficulty. The first disadvantage is a lack of visibility, resources, and political allies and networks. Second, female political contributors give less than male campaign contributors. These difficulties face female candidates in Daviess County. Of 43 elected positions in Daviess County only one is held by a woman. Between 1787 and 1984, 10,000 Congressmen were elected in the state of Kentucky. 116 of these Congressmen were women and 113 succeeded their husbands – only three were elected on their own merit. Mountjoy also found another problem for female politicians is a lack of role models.²³

Analysis of Daviess County Politics as Applied to National Trends

National Trends suggest that the greatest gains from women in politics has been in the local governments. This gain is due to a lack of competition in most local races. However, Daviess County politics tend to be more competitive within the parties. In 1964, 37% of local administrators and officials were women. In many other small towns, women politicians have taken a strong hold of government. In 1959, the women of Walsenburg, a town of only 5000, had a "violent disagreement" with the all-male local government. Both Republican and Democratic women united to form an all-female slate, which won every local office. Miss Mary Kanane of Union County, New Jersey was elected as commissioner in 1960. She was the only female on the eight member board. She won her re-election in 1962, and in 1963 she was elected surrogate judge.²⁴

Female mayors also tend to occur more often in small communities. Yet, Owensboro has not had a female mayor. In 1964, there were 112 women mayors. In the 1960s two women mayors were elected – Mrs.

Ruth Benell in Pico Rivers and Miss Joanna Boatman of Kalama, Washington. In 1957, Mrs. Katherine Elkus White became mayor of Red Bank, New Jersey, a town of only 12,700 citizens. In another small town, Richard, Virginia, Mrs. Eleanor P. Shephard was elected mayor in 1962. In 1967, Laurel, Mississippi elected Mrs. Fem Buckler to the office of mayor. Another place of political involvement for women is in administration. For women in Owensboro this has been the predominant arena for political participation.²⁵

Jewell Lansing's book *Campaigning for Office: A woman Runs* offers suggestions for women running into political office. Lansing lists 101 tips for women considering running for political office. The book is written by a female politician yet the tips and advice are condescending and are for the most part common sense. In the 1990's, it is even a degradation to women that such a book must even be written.²⁶

There is no such book for men. Consequently, the only advice for a women entering politics is that it is a "Man's World" complete with the old boys network. Women are subject to "symbolic putdowns" by the male dominated political system. Women are excluded by rhetoric -- congressmen, men of the house, etc. Other women are referred to as "sweetheart" or "darling". Women are also often excluded from some discussion and outside political activities because some consider them a special interest. Other male politicians attempt to put women in their place.²⁷ Helen Mountjoy encountered many of these obstacles in the political campaign and office holding experience. People in the community would call her husband to ask whether or not Mrs. Mountjoy was running. She was called "darling" and "honey" by her political peers. Thus, the problems that faced many politically active women throughout the country also affected women in Daviess County.²⁸

Another problem facing women politicians is the opposition they face from other women in their community. Of registered female voters, only 46.2% said that they would vote for a woman running for President. Also, only 77% of women polled wanted more women in political office. Political scientists have noted that women already in high party positions do not tend to encourage or recruit other capable women politicians. Also, when women obtain high party positions, they often leave due to frustration over their inability to deal with the "old boys". Many women are unable to participate in politics or work on campaigns. 15% reported that a lack of child care prevented them from participating in politics. Only 58.4% of women demonstrate a high level of support for women in politics. The female political cohesiveness is less than any ethnic or religious group. 10% of women feel that females are less capable than males. Also, 20% think women should not hold political office, and 30% admitted that they would choose a man over a woman who was equally qualified. Thus, women have become their own worst enemy.²⁹ Helen

Mountjoy noted a similar trend within Daviess County. She stated that women often do not support or encourage female candidates, and contribute less money to support campaigns. Often times, these women will suggest that the female politicians should stay at home and portray them as bad mothers and wives. This type of pressure is particularly effective in a town as small as Owensboro.³⁰

Another important aspect of women's political participation involves the different political styles between men and women. Women are often criticized for this different style which deviates from the traditional "old boys" network politics. Originally, women were allowed to participate in politics, but were assigned specific tasks which were appropriate for women. They could cook, sew banners, or cheer for the male candidates. Initially, women borrowed a style from their male counterparts. The approach of politics began to emphasize advertising and education, and women employed both of these tactics. Due to the new educational component of politics women gained a greater role, because for the most part women were in charge of the home which included the education of her family. The next phase of female leadership involved pressure group volunteerism. This type of political participation is extremely evident in Owensboro. The women's movement has always had dissension within its ranks, yet its unique style of leadership confused many and often caused the movement to lose credibility. When women were finally able to obtain political involvement, they were often frustrated by the "marginal roles" and lack of respect they received.³¹

The new political woman is defined by Bella Abzug is shaped by the new demands on her economically, socially, mentally, and physically. Abzug also discusses the formation of the National Woman's Political Caucus (NWPC) in 1971. The conference of the first Caucus included 300 women from throughout the country and representing many women's groups. The NWPC three target "goals" included issues and legislation, party reform, and the election of more women to political office. The NWPC was partially successful in the passage of Title 9 of the Education Amendments, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, and the Equal Pay Act. Their greatest challenge still is the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The NWPC was also successful in party reforms as women started to gain leadership within the party organization. One of the greatest obstacles for women politicians has been the labeling of women as the "exotic species" by Republican candidates and right wing zealots. Reagan opposed the ERA, and made vague promises for feminine political equality, but made no specific pledges or plans. Reagan once said that women lacked cohesiveness in a response to a reporters question concerning the impact of the female vote on his election as governor.³²

Conclusively, women in Daviess County politics are grossly under-

represented. Nationally, the trends suggest that women thrive politically in small communities. Yet, Owensboro has maintained the "old boys" network. However, women in Daviess County have maintained the traditional political role through volunteer work and other women's clubs and groups. Still, women in Daviess County tend not to seek public office. Several reasons are plausible explanations for this phenomenon. First, local politics in Daviess County are extremely competitive, thus discouraging the participation of women. In other small communities the lack of competition for political offices have opened the doors of political opportunity. Second, the "old boys" network dominates local partisan politics. Women are often token administrators within the party, but the chief power elites are the male office holders. Third, many women lack the financial support and a dedicated constituency necessary to run for political office. Fourth, the goals and concerns of national women's groups such as the NWPC are not overwhelmingly supported by most local women. Thus, those women who do run cannot count on the female population of Daviess County to vote consistently for female candidates or candidates that support women's issues. In order to break through the "old boys" network women must first begin to support each other.

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The 1960's was a period that was filled with turmoil and change in American history. The Vietnam War, popular music, economics, foreign relations, the struggle against growing poverty, and the fight for equal rights by women all brought change to society that is still being felt today. However, the fight by blacks to earn their civil rights may have most changed the face of American society. Desegregation in education, public housing, public institutions, employment, and government has forever altered the course of American history. These changes were felt in Owensboro, but not to the radical or violent extent that people generally expect when considering the struggle for civil rights.

As America entered the 1960's, blacks and whites held strictly defined roles in society, but progress had been made in several key areas. This was evidenced with the Supreme Court's rulings on segregation in schools with *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954-55, the Interstate Commerce Commission's banning of segregation on interstate travel in November, 1955, and the Supreme Court's subsequent affirmation of the ICC's ban on bus segregation in November, 1956.¹ Many northern areas were desegregated or working towards it, but in the South, segregation was still common practice.

Owensboro, with its central location geographically, possessed aspects of both the North and the South in its race relations as the 1960's opened. Similar to the North, blacks and whites were able to live and work in close proximity so far as certain common courtesies were observed. In the South, there was little mingling of blacks and whites. However, like the South, certain jobs were held by whites only, many schools were still segregated, certain housing areas were segregated, as were several public institutions, and local government was slow to accept blacks within its ranks. This ambiguity is reflected in the ambivalent attitude observed in Owensboro regarding the move towards integration.

Owensboro experienced a smooth transition to integration when compared to other cities and counties across the country. Following the *Brown* decision, Owensboro schools moved to integrate. A biracial task force was formed in 1955 in order to determine the course of action to be followed regarding integration.² High schools began to integrate in 1956, while junior high and elementary schools began the following year.

In 1955, Owensboro had three high schools: Owensboro Senior High and Owensboro Technical High was an all-black school. A "Reconciliation of Integration" was passed unanimously on August 29, 1955 by the Owensboro Board of Education. This allowed tenth through twelfth graders at Western High School to attend any other class at either

of the two high schools that wasn't offered at Western. By 1960, a handful of black students had attended foreign language or R.O.T.C. classes offered at Senior High School.³

Owensboro took a more tolerant stance towards integration than many American cities. In 1957, black high school students had to be protected by the National Guard when attending all-white Central High School. The first black student at the University of Alabama was confronted directly by Alabama Governor George Wallace in 1963.⁴ In Owensboro, little protest was made to the idea of desegregating schools. The most violent incident occurred when a cross was burned in an Owensboro school yard in 1960.⁵ Some prejudice was encountered among the students, but curiosity and distrust was more prevalent. Many of the students had never interacted with students of another race before and were uneasy due to the lack of experience.⁶

Following the integration of the high schools, the junior high schools and elementary schools soon followed suit. By 1962, two of the previously all-white junior high schools had been integrated, and five of the nine previously segregated grade schools had been desegregated.⁷ The next step towards integration involved the discontinuation of Western as a high school and downgrading it to an elementary school.

In 1964, Western ninth graders were assigned to Foust or Eastern Junior Highs, and the next year, seventh and eighth graders were assigned to other junior high schools. Beginning with the 1965-66 school year, Western had become an integrated elementary school. An interesting note to the Western story is that while it was a combination junior high/elementary school, the 1963 mixed chorus sang "We Are Climbin' Jacob's Ladder," "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel," and "No Man is an Island" at the graduation ceremony. In 1964, the Western mixed chorus sang "We Are Americans Too," an oration was given by Ernest Emery titled "Optimism-Formula for Freedom," and Edna Duncghy sang a solo titled "Song of the Soul" at the 1964 graduation ceremony.⁸ With Western becoming a grade school, integration in Owensboro was complete.

Once integrated, students were put in the situation of daily interacting with students of another race. It was obvious at first that fear of the unknown caused black and white students to stay away from each other. One teacher mentioned that most black students tended to shy away from joining social clubs and were somewhat intimidated because they felt like invaders.⁹ This unease and distrust was reflected when black students did run for elective offices: black students tended to vote for other black students while white students voted primarily for other white students. In the first few years of desegregation, black students were unable to elect one of their own to an office because they were a minority.¹⁰

One area in which black students immediately made an impact was athletics. Blacks and whites who played together on athletic teams

shared common experiences on the field that helped them learn to accept each other off the field and in the classroom. Depending on each other in such team sports as basketball and football enabled black and white students to slowly break down prejudice and develop trust.

Owensboro Senior High fielded championship teams in basketball, football, and track, due in large part to the larger talent pool to select from following integration. In the first year of integration, the Owensboro Senior High basketball team posted sixteen wins against only one loss. In fact, it has been suggested that one of the reasons Senior High absorbed grades nine through twelve of Western High is because Western had beaten Senior High in basketball.¹¹ Regardless, integration helped bring black and white students closer together.

Another aspect of integration in public schools that is often overlooked is the situation facing black teachers. Even though black teachers were certified to teach and were guaranteed their jobs, most of them remained insecure regarding the much larger number of white teachers and staff members. Principal Joe Brown helped ease the way for black teachers to be accepted by their white counterparts by not tolerating any animosity and encouraging acceptance.¹² With the passage of time and strong leadership, integration enjoyed a fairly smooth transition in Owensboro schools.

With the integration of schools, the quality of education for blacks increased. "Separate but equal" had been applied as separate, but not equal. Textbooks were second-hand and outdated; materials such as paper, desks, and athletic uniforms were either inadequate or nonexistent; and lack of funding to alleviate these problems hindered black teachers' efforts to teach their black students.¹³ When public schools became integrated in Owensboro, increased funding and materials gave black students the same educational opportunities as white students. Integration was important in public schools because for the first time, black and white students could interact on a large scale instead of being sheltered.

Public housing in Owensboro in the 1960's was extremely segregated. Many sections of town were completely segregated, including some sections of town that blacks didn't go after dark, and some that whites didn't go to after dark.¹⁴

Much of Owensboro was segregated as evidenced by these numbers:¹⁵

Nannie Locke	50 units/50 blacks
P.G. Walker	50 units/50 blacks
Harry C. Smith	123 units/98% white
Rolling Heights	274 units/97% white
Rolling Heights Addition	30 units/30 whites

There were sections of town in which poor blacks and whites lived together such as Mechanicsville and Baptist Town, but most blacks and whites

lived in segregated sections of the city if at all possible. In fact, the 1979 Kentucky State Commission on Housing ruled that Owensboro was the third most segregated city in Kentucky, behind Murray and Hazard.¹⁶ Segregation in Owensboro rarely translated into violence, but it was readily apparent in public housing. Steps have been taken towards Affirmative Action in public housing, but the numbers have been slow to reflect those efforts.

No written documentation indicates that Owensboro differed from many other comparable American cities regarding racial segregation. Kentucky passed a state Civil Rights Act on January 27, 1966, which took effect on July 1st, 1966. Under the leadership of Governor Edward T. Breathitt, Kentucky became the first southern state to pass a statewide Civil Rights bill. This Civil Rights bill applied to non-discriminatory practices in employment, public housing, public institutions, and education.¹⁷ The state government issued pamphlets to city governments to assist them in dealing with the issue of desegregation. These policies extended to public institutions including schools and recreation facilities such as swimming pools and parks, but they also carried over into private facilities. For example, theatres were opened to blacks in the late 1950's. Soon after, restaurants, stores, barber shops, and churches opened their doors to members of both races. Despite legal implementation of civil rights legislation, an unspoken policy of segregation was continued by many institutions.¹⁸ Overcoming these prejudices required time and patience of those struggling against them.

Employment practices followed a set standard in Owensboro. The number of jobs available to blacks was comparable to that of whites, but blacks were relegated to holding certain jobs with little promise of upward mobility. Jobs open to blacks were limited to areas subservient to whites including serving as cooks, house servants, and the all-encompassing field of janitorial services. One of the few institutions in which blacks worked side by side with whites was at the local steel mill, integrated in 1953.¹⁹ With the national Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Kentucky Civil Rights Act of 1966, employment opportunities slowly become comparable to those of whites. State and local commissions on human rights were formed to ensure that fair employment practices were followed.

Blacks encountered difficulties gaining acceptance into local government. The first black to run for an elective office was John Williams, who ran for Owensboro city commissioner in 1965. Williams earned enough votes to make it through the primary and run for election. In the election, Williams finished last with 2,296 votes. Future Mayor Irvin Terrill finished first with 6,971 votes.²⁰ It wasn't until 1985 that Owens elected its first (And only) black city commissioner, Reverend R.L. McFarland. The growing influence of blacks in community affairs

has been slow regarding local government positions.

Racial superiority groups such as the Klu Klux Klan and Black Panthers never gained a solid foothold in Owensboro. Any violence or demonstrations that occurred in Owensboro were limited to personal grievances instead of random acts taken against other groups. When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, the reaction in Owensboro was much calmer than in many cities. Riots that took place in such cities as Cincinnati and Pittsburgh never materialized in Owensboro. Instead, a "Day of Prayer" was called for.

The largest outbreak of racial violence occurred in August 1968. The incident began with the shooting death of twenty-nine year old Henderson resident Jerry Brown. Mr. Brown was shot at the Formal Club at about 12:15 A.M. Saturday, August 17, by twenty-eight year old Monroe Griffith of Owensboro, his business associate, during an argument. Disorders arose when witnesses felt police, who had arrived quickly, were slow to call for an ambulance.²¹

During the time lag, blacks in attendance became restless and angry. The group of blacks, which eventually had grown to over 200 people, began to throw rocks, taunt police officers at the scene, and rock cars nearby. When Mayor Irvin Terrill arrived on the scene shortly thereafter in an attempt to restore order, his car was rocked and pelted with objects, one of which broke his window, resulting in a slight cut over his left eye. The demonstration took place in the areas between 4th and 5th streets, extending to Elm and Walnut Streets. The crowd did not disperse until about 5:30 that morning. Police reported that nineteen cars were damaged by foreign objects and that several shots were fired, but there were no major fires or acts of vandalism. Two men were arrested for violating a state law against inciting a riot: twenty-six year old Lorenzo Williams and eighteen year old Charles Howell, both of Owensboro.²²

In the early morning hours of Saturday, August 17, Mayor Terrill and County Judge Pat Tanner called for a city-wide curfew going into effect at 8:00 P.M. and extending until 6:00 A.M. Sunday morning. The curfew extended to closing businesses on Saturday in an effort to keep people off the streets. A seventeen block area was also cordoned off from 3rd and 7th Streets to Walnut and Frayser Streets to deter the curious, but complaints of white sightseers were still voiced by residents of the area. Reverend John Dunaway called for a "Day of Prayer" in trying to help cool tensions, and he also announced that a meeting would be held that Monday afternoon at 2:00 P.M. for residents to voice their opinions regarding the incident.²³

The next day, Sunday, August 18th, twenty-one people were arrested for violating and continuing curfew. John Debow, Bill T. Miller, Geraldine Riley, and James Lorenzo Williams were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct. Williams had been released that morning on \$5,000

bond after being charged with inciting a riot on Saturday. Three people were arrested for carrying concealed weapons and eleven others were arrested in violation of curfew. Mayor Terrill called for the curfew to be extended for Sunday night, with the sale of all alcoholic beverages prohibited.²⁴

The Sunday issue of the *Messenger-Inquirer* included an Associated Press on the front page titled: "Police Say Curfew Best Riot Control." This article dealt with a study of eight American cities placed under curfew to combat race riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4th 1968. Cincinnati, Ohio; Greensboro, N.C.; Kansas City, Mo.; Trenton, N.J.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Wilmington, Del.; Richmond, Va.; and Memphis, Tenn. (Where King was killed) were the cities studied. This article was most likely issued by the paper in another attempt to defuse tension.

On Monday, August 19, charges of police brutality were brought against five officers following the public hearing that afternoon. Thirty-five officers came to the meeting in protest and defense of the charges brought against the five officers. An affidavit was filed by Carolyn McNary, Edna Valentine, George Bond Jr., and Charles Howell. The affidavit charged Detectives Fred Hall and Jack Braden, Patrolmen Henry Roach Jr., David Rose, and David Glass with use of excessive force in handling the riot situation. The charge against Glass was that he entered the house at 914 West 4th Street without a search warrant. Radio Dispatcher Richard McDaniel and fellow officers stated that Glass was not in that part of town at the time of the alleged incident. The Board of Commissioners ruled that the charges against all of the officers were being questioned in light of the discrepancies involving the Glass incident. None of the officers were suspended or punished for the charges brought against them.²⁵

At the Monday afternoon meeting, the Human Relations panel came up with four conclusions regarding the situation. It encouraged the mayor to go on the radio to review "current community conditions," hoping that Monday night's curfew would be the last for the city (The county-wide curfew had been lifted the night before); the panel found that all officers in the area had been going about their normal duties; a request was put in for an information center to be opened, for this disturbance and future incidents, where facts and information would be given to the public in order to dispel rumors; and the panel called for mutual respect to be extended by both the police and the public. The committee also announced plans to hold another public meeting on Monday, August 26, at 2:00 P.M.²⁶

The curfew was extended to Monday night, but following the calm Monday, Mayor Irvin Terrill announced that the curfew would be lifted for Tuesday night. During the time the curfew was imposed, fifty-one

people were arrested for curfew violations ranging from inciting a riot to violating curfew restrictions. On Tuesday afternoon, County Judge Pat Tanner also criticized the *Messenger-Inquirer* for "constantly stirring up sectionalism" between the city and county. But due to the calm, rational efforts of Owensboro's leaders and police officers, a dangerous situation was controlled with a minimum of disruption and violence.²⁷

Later that week, disturbance broke out in Evansville after three white men were arrested and charged with assault and battery after a black woman was grazed by an arrow and a window had been broken out in a black family's home. The unrest escalated into rioting later that night after officers stopped two carloads of blacks in stolen cars. Other blacks maintained that the violence erupted as a reaction to officers fighting with a black youth who had been running through the area.²⁸

The Evansville City Council imposed a curfew on the city that extended from 8:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M. and banned the sale of liquor, firearms, and ammunition. The disorder continued through Friday night with four people injured as a direct result. Carolyn Gold was struck by a ricocheting bullet, Patrolman Leonard Stilwell suffered a bullet wound in his right shoulder while he was guarding a fire hose, and two firemen were injured while fighting the resulting fires. The two nights of rioting, which included shooting, vandalizing, looting, and firebombing, resulted in property damage estimated at \$275,000. The worst damage was caused by a \$250,000 fire at Cottage Building Products Co., a lumber yard in the middle of Evansville's black neighborhood. Five other businesses suffered damage as a result of the rioting.²⁹ The violence and chaos experienced in Evansville illustrate the underlying tensions still existing between blacks and whites, as well as how fortunate residents of Owensboro were that the disturbances there were moderate in comparison to those suffered in other communities.

On Wednesday, September 4, charges were heard against five officers charged with brutality during Owensboro's racial disturbances. Two of the officers, Detective Fred W. Hall and Patrolman Henry Roach Jr. had been charged before. The other three officers charged were Patrolmen William N. Estes, Bill Pyland Jr., and James Yeckering. The charges were heard and dismissed by the board of commissioners, headed by Mayor Irvin Terrill.³⁰

After the riots, a group was formed by Mayor Terrill's Human Relations Committee to uncover the basic problems within Owensboro's black community. The chairman of this committee was Reverend John Dunaway. Wednesday, September 11, the Committee outlined a set of main problems facing Owensboro. According to the committee, housing, streets, sidewalks, street lighting, employment practices, and representation of minority groups on government committees and boards were causing problems for blacks. Five subcommittees were organized to

address these issues: Housing; Streets, Sidewalks, and Lighting; Employment Practices; Employment Communications; and Minority Representation on Government Commissions and Boards.³¹ These committees represent an effort put forth by Owensboro in race relations that was not found in many areas.

In summary, relations between blacks and whites in Owensboro during the 1960's involved an initial distrust that, while occasionally marred by strife, slowly developed into a growing sense of respect and acceptance. One story I came across in conducting interviews effectively illustrates the pride and independence of blacks seeking equality in society. The story comes from Donald Owsley (President of Owensboro Chapter of NAACP from 1965-75) when he was a young boy in his father's (C.T. Owsley) barber shop. According to Donald, several wealthy white men received haircuts in his father's barber shop. One day, while Donald was receiving a haircut from his father, he asked his father why he didn't ask his wealthy white customers for financial assistance. Donald said his father stopped cutting his hair, slowly swiveled the chair around, looked him in the eye, and said: "Son, those men don't owe me anything but their business and the respect they give me. It's up to me to better my life." According to Mr. Owsley, this story reflects the attitude of independence that was a tremendous asset to blacks during the turmoil of the 1960's.

Great strides were made in Owensboro regarding race relations in the 1960's. Desegregation in education, public housing, public institutions, employment, and government was mandated in the 1960's, but its effects weren't completely felt until the 1970's.³² With integration, many myths and prejudices on both sides were shattered. Blacks and whites in Owensboro have been able to interact on a much larger scale that has increased understanding through the sharing of common experiences.

1. Juan Williams, *Eyes On the Prize*. (Minneapolis, 1988), 312.
2. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, May 10, 1984.
3. Bell, Lisa, "Achieving Equality: Desegregation of the Owensboro Schools, 1955-1969," *The Daviess County Historical Quarterly*, April 1989, 26.
4. Williams, *Eyes On the Prize*, 173.
5. Henderson, Danny, Editorial to Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, May 14, 1984.
6. Interview with Bob Kunkle, April 18, 1993.
7. Bell, "Achieving Equality," 30.
8. *Western Hi-Lites*, Western Junior High School Yearbook, 1963-64.
9. Bell, "Achieving Equality," 31.
10. Interview with Donald Owsley, April 27, 1993.
11. Interview with Donald Owsley.
12. Bell, "Achieving Equality," 31.
13. Interview with Bob Kunkle.
14. Interview with Donald Owsley.
15. Kentucky State Housing Commission Report—1979, and interview with Donald Owsley.
16. Kentucky State Housing Commission Report—1979.
17. Kentucky State Commission on Human Rights—Fifth Report, 1966.
18. Interview with Bob Kunkle.
19. Interview with Donald Owsley.
20. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, July 21, 1965.
21. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 18, 1968.
22. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 18, 1968.
23. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 18, 1968.
24. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 19, 1968.
25. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 20, 1968.
26. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 21, 1968.
27. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 22, 1968.
28. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 25, 1968.
29. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 25, 1968.
30. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, September 5, 1968.
31. Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*, September 11, 1968.
32. Interview with Donald Owsley.

Christmas Displays
in Owensboro, 1901

Editor's Note: The following is reprinted from *The Owensboro Messenger*, and is a contemporary description of the Christmas displays along Owensboro's Main Street in 1901.

The Owensboro merchants in their holiday displays are not a whit behind those in the leading centers of trade in the United States. The show windows this season are perfect marvels of beauty and attractiveness. A leading merchant the other day remarked that the merchants of this city were right in the van in the latest methods of drawing trade. It has been demonstrated that nothing has a tendency to attract customers more than an artistic display of salable wares in the front windows of a mercantile establishment. This is the Owensboro merchants have long since realized, and they are putting their experience into operation. At first it was only the dry goods merchant that paid any attention to the show window display, but it is no longer that way here. All classes of dealers have dropped into the modern way and now Owensboro buyers look with as much anxiety for an attractive display in one kind of establishment as another.

As stated in the outset some displays this season are wonderful in the design and appearance. One can gaze with delight for an hour or two into the front windows of the H. B. Phillips company's establishment. The display of gent's furnishing goods and neckwear in one window is a perfect picture of the latest fashions in this line. The arrangement as to effect is perfect. So it is in the ladies' furnishings goods window. Sometimes in the plainest departments apparently, the best displays are found. For instance the window devoted to the carpet and window shade department is the most admired at the store. Here an organ is formed of carpet sweepers. From rolls of window curtain the pipes are represented. At this organ a lady appears seated in the attitude of making sweet strains of music. Hundreds have complimented the effect of the design.

Across the street the eyes of the throng of purchases can feast again in the large front windows of Anderson's bazaar. Here are displays of the latest fashions from all over the world. In one of these large windows, almost the size of a small store, there is a collection of fancy goods for men and women that almost seems dreamlike in appearance. For

precision and taste the display could not be surpassed anywhere outside of the centers of fashion and design. The latest novelties in furs in their arrangement does not do a thing but carry one in his imagination to the lands of endless snow and ice.

Nothing less marvelous is found on exhibition in the front windows of the magnificent establishment of McAtee Lyddane & Ray. This firm has a beautiful design in the center of which is located a display of the latest in fine umbrellas. From this center diverges in colors like the rays of the sun rows of magnificent articles of ware. Some are costly while others are in range of the poorest pocketbook at this season of the year. Sometimes it looks cold on the outside, but it is the reverse on the inside. Here will be seen an army of clerks waiting on the customers that are crowding around the counters.

One of the most catchy displays in the city is found at Levys'. They have a window in which there is nothing on exhibition but fine gold, pearl and silver mounted umbrellas. This, under the electric light at night, is a scene of beauty that will long be remembered. Here the most fastidious taste in this line can feast to absolute satiety. Some of these umbrellas are as rare in design as they are costly in price while others are beauties at a moderate price. No display in the city has been complimented more than this one.

The display of manicure sets and toilet articles at A. J. Williams' has been the subject of unending comment for the past two weeks. The effect of these silver pieces under the dazzling electric light is more remarkable. In the other window is a most thrilling and inviting scene to the young. There is the old-fashioned fireplace with the blaze burning low, just ready for the appearance of old Santa Claus, so that his pants will not be scorched as he emerges from the chimney. On each side are rows of long stockings, the receptacles for all that old Kris Kringle might see fit to leave behind.

In this list must be mentioned the windows of the Louisville store. While this store met with an accident in getting their fine display burned before the public had a chance to behold it, yet another display of the wares of an up-to-date design was soon inaugurated.

Montague & Barnes have no special display in their windows, but the scene inside is a busy one.

The jewelry stores this year have some unusual attractive displays of cut glass and solid silver ware. These can be seen at B. H. Rounds &

Sons, R. Moss's, Frank Pardon's, Steitler's, and W. L. Coppersmith's. All of the dealers in this line say that the trade this year is running more to the goods than ever before. Most of the purchases that have been made are of cut glass or solid gold and silver ware. This though is evidenced by the display in the show windows. The dealers in this line say that the trade this year has been better than it has been for years.

The book and stationery dealers are not behind in their Christmas displays. Santa Claus can be seen in all his polar glory in the front window of W. E. & I. N. Parrish. Here he stands some three feet high in a garb as white as the driven snow and a smile on his radiant face as big as all out-of-doors. On his back is a load of trinkets and toys for the young. It seems that he is just about to start on his long, but short journey. In the other window is what the young girl and boy can again feast on with beaming eyes and longing hearts. Here is the steam elephant and Noah's ark full of animals ready to be turned loose on any Ararat that may be found by a curious and anxious young American. Here are the games that must be taught the children by the joyous mothers and a thousand other things that the ingenuity of man has devised for the child's satisfaction and the parent's pocketbook.

Geo. and Otis Parrish, on Frederica are among the most artistic window dressers in the city and their Christmas display is very fine.

Geo. H. Cox and Co. display their books in an attractive manner.

You are mistaken if you think that the grocers have not the Christmas fever. In their front windows are everything that is inviting to the appetite. Here is game of all kinds ready to be conked. The toothsome turkey is stacked in great piles and it is assured that everybody will get a good Christmas dinner.

The fruiterers and confectioners are in their element at the Christmas season. The cold weather prevents window displays, but a peep inside is enough to tempt an anchorite. Great pyramids of oranges and apples, festoons of pineapples, long rows of bananas, pile on pile of nuts and candies of variegated hues and all imaginable shapes please the eye and excite the palate when you look in at the Velotta stores, the two Gassers, Dora and McGee and the two Rose Candy Kitchens. The stocks at these places are larger and more attractive than ever and there will certainly be no famine when Christmas comes.

When it comes to window displays in his line, Albert Guenther has more than a local reputation. He is constantly making new designs and will probably spring a surprise at W. A. Guenther & Sons before

Christmas.

A. Steitler, Jr., has his hardware novelties, toys, china goods and household supplies well arranged and they attract much attention.

The Jumbo Bonanza hasn't much room for window displays, but their store is a bewilderment of holiday goods and toys.

The furniture dealers have no trouble in making a display of their wares and the E. W. Smith company and J. W. Richardson have made the most of their opportunities.

Year by year the popularity of gents' furnishings increases for holiday presents and not along the young men stop at the windows of A. H. Kigel & Co., Wile Bros. and Cohen Bros. to observe the artistic arrangement of neckties, handkerchiefs, suspenders and other things that go to make presents for men and boys.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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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 Third Tuesday 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.

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The Editor's Page

This issue of the *Quarterly* features a variety of articles touching on aspects of the county's history from earliest settlement to the 1930's. Rob Henry's article on relief efforts at the time of the 1937 flood is particularly appropriate when seen in the perspective of the great Mississippi River flood of 1993. This article is a companion piece to his article on the flood itself, which appeared in the April 1993 issue of the *Quarterly*. Rob, a KWC history major, is currently practice-teaching at Owensboro High School.

The development of Owensboro and Daviess County at the turn of the century is the subject of the second article, which was presented, in an expurgated form, at a recent meeting of the Ohio Valley History Conference. It deals with one of the most significant periods in the county's history, a time which saw dramatic changes in the ways people made their living, both in the city and on the farm.

The article on the Griffith-Crow family is by David Smith, a KWC Alumnus who recently completed his Master's degree in Public Policy at The University of Chicago. While the *Quarterly* does not solicit articles on family history, this essay, dealing as it does with the formative early years and with people so vital to that formation, is welcome for its historical insights into the period.

The Relief effort of the 1937 Flood
by Rob Henry

In January and February of 1937, the strongest series of floods in America's history struck the eastern United States. The areas the flooding affected ranges from just south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to New Orleans, Louisiana. Countless rivers and streams flooded their banks and floodwalls in a twelve state region devastated by the flooding. Owensboro received no respite as the 1937 flood paralyzed much of the city. The great flood of 1937 remains the flood to which all other Kentucky floods are compared.

A combination of unusual weather patterns coincided to bring about the 1937 flood. In January of 1937, a system of warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico was trapped over the Ohio River Valley between two systems of cold, dry air from Canada. As a result of this entrapment, the warm, moist system unloaded approximately 165 billion tons of rain on the region; about one-half of what the region would receive in a normal year. This led to flooding all along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries.

As the floodwaters rose along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the American Red Cross prepared to come to the aid of those affected by the flood. Members of the National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. and the Midwestern Branch Office in St. Louis were not initially alarmed as the Ohio River rose. Major floods were not common in mid-winter, in fact, no major mid-winter flood had struck the United States in about 25 years. In addition, the local chapters of the Red Cross were equipped to deal with practically every human need.

Despite early hopes and the work of local rescue workers, it was obvious that by mid-January that trained national disaster relief workers would soon be needed in the Ohio River Valley. On January 17th, the Ohio River reached its flood stage from Cincinnati, Ohio to Cairo, Illinois. Also on this date, residents of Stanley (10 miles west) and Maceo (10 miles east) had to evacuate and move their livestock. People in Rumsey (25 miles south) were preparing to move due to flooding from the nearby Green River, a tributary of the Ohio River, which was already six feet above its flood stage of 34 feet. Also on this Monday, Highway 60 between Maceo and Owensboro became impassible because of floodwaters.

On January 19th, Red Cross sent out its first two national disaster workers – a pair of nurses sent to Calhoun, McLean County, Kentucky, to help the State Health Department in nursing the sick and immunization against typhoid. The Red Cross also notified 70 chapters in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee to be prepared to deal with any emergency. Twenty Red Cross chapters also noted that they had begun

evacuating families.

Two days later, another dozen disaster relief workers were sent to the Ohio River Valley, and ten Coast Guard boats were being used in Evansville, Indiana, as well as two more at Hazelton, Indiana. This press release also mentioned that precautionary relief headquarters had been established in Memphis, Tennessee.

By January 21st, it was becoming obvious that the flooding was going to be much worse than originally expected. Under the main headline "FDR Pledges Fight on Poverty", the *Messenger* devoted most of its front page to information concerning the growing flood. Among other local information, the *Messenger* noted that various parts of Owensboro had already flooded and that the sewer system was unable to handle the amount of water coming from the river. The *Messenger* also recognized that all the families in Stanley endangered by the flood had been moved to safety with the help of local rescue workers.

By January 22nd relief headquarters had to be formed in five other localities: Louisville, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Cincinnati, and Portsmouth, Ohio. In Kentucky, acting Governor Keene Johnson sent a message to the Red Cross to send more help as soon as possible. Requests such as those from Johnson were coming in hourly to Red Cross headquarters. How they managed to deal with this influx of request serves as a great example of organization.

Franklin D. Roosevelt insisted on being involved with every aspect of the relief effort. Meetings were held between President Roosevelt and Red Cross officials, and on January 24th, the decision was reached to hold a daily "luncheon" in order to continuously coordinate relief projects. As well as the Red Cross, the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Works Progress Administration (WPA), Public Health Service, and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were involved. Roosevelt and the committee members decided that the Red Cross should handle and coordinate all relief efforts.

Considering the widespread region being struck by flooding, the Red Cross had to wisely delegate its authority to ensure that progress was quickly made. Besides the General Headquarters being made in Washington D.C. and the Branch Office in St. Louis, eight regional offices were established. In further subdividing, each region was divided into areas that were covered by the local Red Cross chapters.

In Owensboro, communications were becoming strained by the flooding. The District Manager for the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, W.D. Haley, asked residents to use their telephones only in emergencies. On the 22nd, 200-250 calls a minute came in to the switchboard compared to a normal average of 30-40 calls a minute. With operators filling every available position on the switchboard, 80 percent of the 1000 long distance calls placed on Friday were completed.

January the 22nd was also the day that serious relief efforts really began in Owensboro. On the 21st, Daviess County Circuit Judge George S. Wilson (who also headed the Wilson Ferry Company) adjourned court in order to help residents evacuate and move their belongings and livestock to higher ground. A tow boat and barge were chartered by Mr. Forrest Miller, owner of Eck Miller Transfer Company, to bring in supplies from across the river at Evansville, Indiana. The Knights of Columbus were called to a meeting on the 22nd by Mr. H.G. Bumgarten, comptroller of Ken-Rad Lamp and Tube Corporation, to prepare for the coming refugees from the surrounding areas.

Some of the most beneficial work done in the face of the persistently climbing flood was performed by Mr. R.L. McFarland, a member of the Advisory State Highway Commission, and State Highway Engineers E.P. Ahler and Lamar Riney. They charted the expected level of the coming flood and compared it to various street intersections throughout Owensboro. Using these figures, McFarland and his men were able to determine where most of the flooding would take place and where evacuation needed to begin. McFarland then took levels outside of Owensboro to evaluate the possibility of the entire city being overwhelmed by floodwaters. His further measurements revealed that the most likely scenario was a backing-up of water from Panther Creek to the south, or water coming up 9th Street from the Green River. Mr. McFarland's figures were invaluable in helping the evacuation process.

With the rapidly rising floodwaters, boats were of the utmost importance to local relief workers. By Saturday the 23rd, six flat bottomed boats had been built and placed around the city. The *Messenger* noted on the 23rd that Owensboro was isolated by the Ohio River passing the high mark of the 1913 flood and that there were now 140,000 people already left homeless throughout flooded areas. The Knights of Columbus building at the corner of 7th and Frederica was converted into a relief center for refugees on the 23rd, and by the end of the day, 200 people had sought refuge from the flood.

On Sunday, January 24th, the Ohio River had reached its flood stage along its entire length: from Portsmouth, Ohio to Cairo, Illinois. In a report on its relief activities during the flood, the Red Cross referred to the 24th as "Black Sunday." As of this Sunday, most of downtown Owensboro was paralyzed. Businesses were closed as water had flooded downtown and the store owners were helping with the relief efforts.

Radio played an important role in helping with evacuation. Ken-Rad engineers built a broadcasting station that began operating on the 23rd. Cars equipped with radios were used at dropping-off points for refugees to help coordinate the rescue effort.

As Owensboro dealt with its flooding, the relief effort ran smoothly and efficiently. Refugee centers were opened at Daviess County High

School, Baptist Church, Senior High School, Dunbar School, Longfellow School, and Moose Hall from January 24th through the 26th. According to W.P. Perkins, a rescue worker at Dunbar School, the refugee work even helped citizens overcome racial barriers when helping: "When death was at hand, they didn't care who was up taking care of them".

One of the main needs of the Red Cross at this time was adequate funding. In Owensboro, Daviess County, and all across America, donations poured in to help people hit by the flood. Even though Americans had donated eight million dollars the year before to help flood victims, money was donated freely again in 1937. In a span of 20 days, 21 million dollars was raised by the Red Cross. The grand total of donations from within the continental United States reached \$25,565,680. When including the value of food, clothing, bedding, and other donated goods, that figure rises to over 28 million dollars. This relief fund established world records for funding during a peace-time disaster.

The Red Cross used many means to raise this money. President Roosevelt issued a proclamation on January 23rd that 2 million needed to be raised to help continue to care for those that had already been evacuated. Newspapers covered every possible angle of the flood in order to make people aware of the suffering taking place and to elicit sympathy and donations. Many famous cartoonists published cartoons to eloquently bring out the flood victims' plight.

Motion pictures were important as newsreel men tried to picture the flood in all its fury and power. These films showed the public just how powerful the flooding was. Theatre programs also helped with the fund-raising. Benefit performances were given by entertainers who donated their time and appealed to their fans to donate money to the cause. Chapter workers would also stand in the lobby soliciting contributions. Churches and local business groups were also instrumental in appealing for and collecting donations.

Generosity was an abundant commodity in Owensboro and Daviess county. By Monday the 25th, \$2,354 had been donated towards a total for Daviess County that was to reach \$21,572.15. In addition to these monetary donations, bedding and food was given freely. So freely that the second floor of the Federal building where the Red Cross had located had to be turned into a relief station where the 27,316 articles of bedding and clothing donated were distributed from.

One of the primary problems facing the Red Cross relief effort was fighting disease. Vaccinations and treatments had to be given under extremely adverse conditions against an atmosphere conducive to the spread of disease. Factors contributing to the possible spread of disease fought by the Red Cross were: the bloated decaying carcasses of livestock, pollution of the drinking water supply, and the cold weather which often induced shock in patients being transferred.

In many areas, local hospitals had been destroyed by floods or were rendered inoperable. To overcome the lack of readily available hospital facilities, the Red Cross constructed 315 temporary hospitals and supplied them. In Daviess County, the Daviess County Medical Association vaccinated people to prevent any outbreak of disease that commonly follows a natural disaster. In McLean County, the courthouse had an office turned into a sick room for one ill refugee. In Lewisport, residents had to endure several days without medical attention, and even then, the doctors had to reach their patients by boat, an arduous task made more difficult by the cold weather and lack of supplies.

As the floodwaters began to recede in early February, a new aspect of the relief effort emerged. This issue was returning people to their homes as soon as possible. Many people had nothing with them except the clothes they wore when they escaped from the flood. Many homes had been carried off of their foundations, by the raging floodwaters, and those that hadn't had to be inspected for disease and structural damage. Few homes hit by the flood could subsequently be used. Most suffered from insecure foundations and plastering due to the force of the water. Floors buckled and filth was everywhere. In many places, homeowners had tried to protect their livestock from the flood by putting the livestock in the highest part of the house. In almost every case, the homeowner came back to find dead livestock in their home. Most people had to wait for a new home to replace their old one.

The restoration of normal living conditions was the most involved, extensive building project attempted by the Red Cross. About 55,000 building cost estimates had to be prepared and about 30,000 new buildings had to be built and inspected. In houses left standing by the flood, water damage was extensive, both inside and outside. Many homes had been inundated with water for so long that the walls and ceilings were completely saturated. Because of how long they had been under water, floors in many homes had to be entirely replaced. Besides water damage, the freezing temperatures caused the saturated walls to freeze, further weakening them.

An additional difficulty faced during the restoration process - a lack of construction workers and builders. Most were already tied up on private construction work, but enough finally arrived to complete the task. An interesting story related to this concerns the relocation of Leavenworth, Indiana. A small town built on a flood plain, Leavenworth was often in danger from or extensively damaged by floods. The flood of 1937 practically destroyed the whole town. When rebuilding Leavenworth, the Red Cross moved it to a new site above where it used to be. This example shows just how much the Red Cross was able to accomplish.

As new homes were being built and old ones were being inspected, the cleaning up began in full force. Debris, mud, and sand covered the

countryside. Farmers and WPA workers had to either burn or bury the thousands of livestock left in the wake of the flood. Many farms were covered with a deep layer of white sand left by the flood, usually ranging from four to six feet deep.

Final relief expenditures for the flood of 1937 were actually surpassed by the amount of money donated to help in the recovery process. Of the 25 million donated, 24.8 million was used for flood relief while the rest of it was set aside for a disaster preparedness program. In Owensboro, \$90,007.18 was spent for flood relief in a total of seven different categories. The expenditures were as follows:

Daviess County Expenditures:

1. Rescue, transportation and shelter -	\$10,321.28
2. Food, clothing and other maintenance -	21,628.74
3. Building and repair -	9,043.36
4. Household goods -	23,404.61
5. Medical and nursing -	2,390.10
6. Agricultural rehabilitation -	23,038.29
7. Occupational rehabilitation -	180.80
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$90,007.18</u>

Donations from Daviess County residents added up to \$21,572.15.

The 1937 flood was beneficial in that it spurred further development along the Ohio River. Seventy-seven lakes have been built along the Ohio River to help prevent flooding as well as 41 floodwalls and levees. These lakes not only provide flood protection, but many of them provide recreation and economic stimulus to the region. Rough River, Barren, Green River, Nolin, Barkley, Buckhorn, and Cumberland lakes all provide flood control, recreation, and financial gain for western Kentucky.

In the final analysis of the 1937 flood, the relief effort was directly responsible for the speed and good condition of the return people made to their homes. Through the diligence and organization of the Red Cross, a disaster was made survivable for many people. Also important was the courage and generosity people displayed during this crisis. Hopefully, those characteristics exhibited during the flood of 1937 will be seen in future difficulties facing Owensboro.

Industry & Agriculture: Owensboro and Daviess County
in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century

by Lee A. Dew

The history of the industrial revolution, as told in textbooks, does not mention Owensboro, Kentucky. Instead there are passages dealing with the rise of the great industrial cities - Pittsburgh, Cleveland, New York, Chicago - and of the great industries which changed America from an agrarian to an industrial nation. Yet proportionately the impact of the coming of industrialization to America was as profound upon many small towns and cities as it was in the great metropolitan areas, and the changes - economic, social, demographic and political - as significant to the people involved.

Owensboro in 1870 was a small agrarian community - by 1910 it had become a bustling industrial town with a large blue-collar population, air pollution, crowded streets, a modern transportation system, and all of the other characteristics associated with profound change. Young people migrated to Owensboro in search of jobs in the 62 manufacturing establishments listed in the city in the Census of 1910 or in the many service businesses, from saloons to power plants, which served the needs of the booming little metropolis. To paraphrase a song of the era - "How're you going to keep 'em down on the farm once they have seen Owensboro, Kentucky.?"

Owensboro's population in 1870 was 3,437; by 1910 it had soared to 16,011, an increase of 466 percent. This placed Owensboro sixth among the cities of the Commonwealth, up from tenth in 1870. It was ranked fifth in total manufacturing output, with a diversified economy based both on traditional elements focused on the products of the land and with a new "high-tech" factor producing products and utilizing technologies undreamed of only a generation earlier.

Owensboro's economy began with a strong agricultural base, rooted deep in the fertile soil of the Ohio and Green River valleys with their lush crops of tobacco and corn and thick stands of hardwood timber. Daviess County by 1879 was third in the commonwealth in the production of tobacco with a crop of 9,523,451 pounds, and seventh in the production of corn, with 1,392,599 bushels. These two crops were the keystones of Owensboro's first industrial developments - tobacco processing and distilling.

Owensboro counted 18 tobacco stemmeries in the 1870's which processed the tobacco for shipment to markets around the country and overseas. By 1879 these factories employed 111 "males above 16 years," as well as 71 "females above 15 years" and 80 "children and youths,"

with a total payroll of 262 persons. They were paid wages for the year 1879 of \$62,156, or an average of not quite \$247 per year. A high percentage of the employees of the stemmeries were blacks, who would work for low wages on erratic schedules (the work depending in part on weather conditions - if it was too dry to handle the tobacco, the factories did not work) and who would tolerate the dusty and unpleasant conditions in the factories.

By 1879 Owensboro and Daviess County had eleven distilleries, employing 108 men; by 1883 this number had grown to eighteen. About half of these establishments were located within the city itself, while the remainder were scattered throughout the county. Total production was about 1,000 barrels per day. More than 200 persons were employed in the distilleries, from managers and distillers to clerks, salesmen, engineers, firemen, mash hands, bottlers, warehousemen and common laborers. They all worked under the watchful eye of the government revenue office, whose more than 30 storekeepers and gaugers oversaw every step of the production of the whiskey and made sure Uncle Sam got his tax revenues therefrom.

There was also a vast number of people who owed their livelihood to the tobacco and distilling industries, but did not work directly for the companies. Chief among these were the coopers, more than 70 of whom lived in the city in 1886. They produced the "tight barrels" in which whiskey was aged and shipped, and the "slack barrels" or hogsheds which were used in the transporting of tobacco, flour, and many other products. The coopers consumed vast amounts of clear white oak timber, which had to be cut, sawed, dried, planed and transported. Carpenters found jobs building factories and warehouses, blacksmiths fabricated the steel bands which held the barrels together, while wagon makers, harness makers and drayage firms all looked to the factories for a part of their income.

The distillery "boom" collapsed in the early 1890's, due part to government tax laws and in part to changing drinking habits among American imbibers. But the distillery industry left a continuing impact on the community - an urban work force; a heterogeneous population with a variety of religious and cultural traditions; a strong retail sector which had grown and thrived during the boom times and which had erected modern iron-front stores along Main Street; a growing transportation network; and a body of skilled craftsmen, especially woodworkers, whose talents would soon be turned to the growing wagon and buggy industry.

Owensboro's first industries also stimulated railroad building. Owensboro was always a river town, and for many years the packet boats were the city's only transportation facility. Owensboro languished in the 1850's while rival towns - Henderson, Evansville, Louisville - acquired

railroads and the economic stimulation which they furnished. Beginning with the construction of the Owensboro & Russellville line in the early 1870's, Owensboro businessmen successfully promoted rail construction, so that by 1890 the city was served by three lines - the L&N, the Louisville, St. Louis & Texas, and the Illinois Central. Thus Owensboro entered the decade of the 1890's with adequate rail service, both passenger and freight, and abundant and cheap water transportation. Telegraph and telephone lines were also strung, giving Owensboro businessmen instant communication with markets, customers and suppliers, and an electric light plant furnished power to a growing number of commercial customers. By 1890 a technological infrastructure was in place which would provide support for rapid industrial expansion in the two decades ahead. The railroads also brought cheap coal to Owensboro - fuel to power the boilers and machines which would make industrialization possible.

But it was another kind of horsepower which stimulated the first of Owensboro's "new" industries. Steamboats and railroads were important, but for everyday travel and farm-to-market transportation the people of the 1880's relied on the same technology that had been the standard of Western civilization for two millennia - horsepower. Horse-drawn vehicles of all kinds were in use, and the gradual improvement of rural roads and town streets meant an increasing demand for wheeled vehicles, and Owensboro soon developed into an important wagon and buggy manufacturing center. By 1910 one company alone, the Owensboro Wagon Company, turned out 10,000 wagons per year. This firm began in 1884, during the height of the distillery "boom" and steadily enlarged its market for wagons of all sorts, from the light delivery "hack" to heavy logging wagons and dump wagons for construction work. It was a major consumer of locally-cut oak and hickory lumber.

By the turn of the century the company had installed the most modern equipment available, including many steam-driven automatic turners and lathes. "Even the sand-papering is done by machinery," the firm boasted.

Many of the skilled wood-workers in the factory had begun as carpenters or coopers in the distilling industry, and it was a small step for a skilled blacksmith from making hoops for whiskey barrels to making steel tires for road wagons. Except for wheel hubs, skeins and spokes, every part of the wagon was manufactured in Owensboro. By 1901 the company reported sales to 22 states and the island of Cuba, and had bought out the Blunt Wagon Company of Evansville.

The company took great pride in its massive 225-horsepower steam engine, which supplied most of the power for the plant. The sawdust shavings and waste materials generated by the manufacturing process became fuel for this engine, making the company virtually self-sufficient

in fuel. They also operated their own electrical generator.

Workmen at the Owensboro Wagon Company were well-compensated, with expert piece workers receiving as much as \$2.50 per day in 1901. Foremen received \$3 per day, and common laborers were paid the prevailing rate of \$1 for 10 hours. The factory also had the first time clock in Owensboro.

Other buggy manufacturers included the Hickman-Ebbert Wagon Company, Frey Brothers, Gilbert-Wahl Vehicle Company, Yager-Small Company, and the Owensboro Wheel Company, which produced wagon wheels for these factories and shipped completed wheels to customers in a wide area. These companies all produced a variety of wagons, but the best sellers were the common road wagons, widely used by farmers and city merchants alike as a general-purpose vehicle – the pickup truck of the day. These wagons came equipped with a driver's seat (which would hold two to three people) and sold for an average price of \$35 in 1901.

For many city dwellers and farmers the road wagon was their only vehicle; used to haul merchandise during the week and the family to "town" on Saturday or church on Sunday. For the most affluent, or in the slang of the day the "carriage trade," there were carriages and buggies of all sorts produced in Owensboro by several manufacturers, the most import of which was the F.A. Ames Company. Other buggy-makers included the Basham-Lindsey Carriage Company, the Hoagland Buggy Company, the Kentucky Buggy Company, and the Owensboro Buggy Company. The Gilbert-Wahl Company built buggies as well as wagons, and the Carriage Woodstock Company and the New Royal Body Company produced buggy and carriage bodies under contract to other manufacturers.

The Ames Company, located at Third and St. Elizabeth streets, claimed to be "the largest carriage factory in the world owned by an individual." Ames contended that his plant made a profit of only \$2 on each buggy or carriage produced, but with an annual output of 15,000 vehicles, this furnished him with an annual income of \$30,000, making him one of the richest men in Owensboro. The factory regularly shipped its products to Germany, South Africa and the West Indies, and occasionally to South American ports, as well as to "all the Southern States," and maintained sales offices in Dallas, Kansas City and Havana.

The work force at the Ames Company varied between 200 and 250 men and boys, depending upon market demand, with an average wage of \$12 per week (10 hours per day, 6 days per week, or 20 cents per hour on the average). The highest salaries, up to \$35 per week, went to the master finishers who were paid on a piecework basis. This wage made them the highest-paid workmen in Owensboro. The Ames plant consumed more than 300,000 board feet of elm, oak, ash, poplar and hickory lumber annually, which meant an income of some \$100,000 per year for

lumbermen and sawmill operators in the Owensboro area.

Other industries also consumed locally-produced products. The Owensboro Brick and Sewer Pipe Company was founded in the 1890's, and employed 25 men a minimum wage of \$1.25 per day, with a top wage of \$2.50 per day or more depending upon output. This plant was capable of producing 12,000 tiles or pipes per day, with sewer pipe of up to 24-inch diameter being manufactured. They also made a line of chimney pots and flue liners, and shipped finished products "all over the South and Southwest." Power for the plant was provided by a sixty-horsepower steam engine and the main press was a forty-four ton steam-powered monster which exerted a pressure of seventy-one tons.

The most "up to date" factory in Owensboro was the Kentucky Electrical Company, the products of which were attracting attention at the great World's Fair being held in 1901 at Buffalo, N.Y. One of the highlights of the fair was the widespread use of electric lights, the bulbs of which were manufactured in Owensboro. The Kentucky Electrical Company produced incandescent light bulbs of all sorts, and also produced electrical dynamos, generators and electric motors. The company was founded in 1899 by A.H. Kreidler and was one of only 20 companies in the nation producing electric light bulbs.

Thirty girls were employed in the bulb plant and were paid on a piece-work basis, with wages varying from \$4.50 per week for the most inexperienced to \$9 per week for the most efficient workers. "All these are Owensboro girls," the management boasted.

The heavy iron frames for the dynamos and generators were cast in Owensboro by the Southern Iron Works, and all other parts of these mechanisms were fabricated in the factory. Many of the machines were built for southern cotton mills or for electrical generating plants on steamboats.

By 1905 Owensboro reported a total of 63 manufacturing establishments, a 23.5 percent increase from the 51 plants reported in 1900. A total of 1,418 "wage-earners" were employed in these plants, earning an annual payroll of \$514,008, or an average salary of \$362.48 per worker. This was substantially less than the average manufacturing wage for Kentucky, which was \$408.71, reflecting perhaps the number of women employed in Owensboro's industries, and also the number of industries employing unskilled and semi-skilled labor. The figures also reflect the continuing presence of tobacco-processing establishments with their seasonal labor force, mostly black. Too, many of Owensboro's industries suffered seasonal layoffs as their products were much less in demand during the winter. This was especially true of construction-oriented industries such as saw and planing mills, brick and tile plants, and the wagon business.

The prosperity of the period was reflected in a variety of civic

improvements. A new electrical generating plant was constructed to meet the growing demand for power, and the streetcar line was electrified and expanded. New suburban developments appeared, expanding the limits of the city, especially between Parrish and Griffith Avenues, and in the Seven Hills industrial area, where the newly-formed Chautauqua Association was constructing a beautiful park, complete with an auditorium with a seating capacity of 12,000, a dining hall, rental cottages and a miniature train.

Optimistic Owensboroans welcomed the proposal by the streetcar company to construct a "grand boulevard" and trolley line "extending entirely around Owensboro and affording excellent factory sites, beautiful residence districts, and favorable localities for schools and other public institutions." Another group was promoting an interurban electric line to link Owensboro with communities in western Daviess County and McLean County, while yet another line was proposed linking Owensboro with Henderson and Evansville. The Owensboro and Rockport Bridge and Terminal Company was formed to construct a bridge over the Ohio River to provide rail service "for steam or electric cars, or cars run by any other motive power" to connect with the Southern Railway at Rockport, Ind., and give Owensboro its long-sought connection with the northern markets.

These schemes all evaporated in the financial crisis known as the Panic of 1907. By the end of that year conditions worsened dramatically in Owensboro due to a "dearth of currency." Workers were laid off or hours reduced, although the newspaper was able to report that no Owensboro factories had been forced to close. Two Owensboro banks failed early in 1908, however, which in turn led to the failure of the Owensboro Chautauqua.

Despite the nationwide depression brought about by the panic, the number of manufacturing establishments increased in Owensboro by 1909. In that year there were a total of 69 plants, up from 63 in 1905. This statistic was misleading, however, as industrial employment dropped dramatically, from 1418 workers in 1905 to 1,064 workers in 1909, a loss of some 24 percent. Total wages dropped from \$514,008 in 1905 to \$468,000 four years later. Total value of products produced rose from \$3,319,000 to \$3,505,000 during the same period.

This decline continued until 1914, when the outbreak of the European war revitalized the American economy. By 1914 the number of manufacturing plants had shrunk to 62 in Owensboro, and employment had dropped somewhat, to an average of 1,001 workers. Value of products produced increased substantially, to \$4,056,000, up some 15.7 percent.

Despite the loss of jobs, Owensboro was still a factory town and its population was heavily dependent upon manufacturing employment. One

out of every sixteen Owensboroans was a factory worker many of the others, employed in retailing, wholesaling, and "service" industries, owed their positions to the factories and their payrolls and supplies budgets. The money in the weekly factory pay-packet went not only for essentials such as food, clothing and shelter, but some was used to buy tickets to the four Owensboro theaters, which featured not only traditional Vaudeville, but new-fangled "moving pictures." Some went, too, to support the many saloons, although a growing prohibitionist movement seemed intent upon eliminating "Demon Rum," even in a town in which distilling was an old and respected industry. While no workers could afford such luxury, some of the profits from Owensboro's economy went into another new-fangled gadget, one which eventually would mean the end of many of the jobs so prized by Owensboro workers. The first automobile appeared on the city's streets by 1905, and by 1907, the year of the panic, there was an automobile dealer in the city, offering Ford and Columbia vehicles for sale, and "having a splendid business."

Perhaps the greatest impact of the industrial age on Owensboro, however, was not the shiny new cars on the streets, the new consumer goods, or the burgeoning subdivisions, but rather a profound change in the people themselves, and in their attitudes. A revolution had taken place in their lives as well as in their economic activities. The impact of industrialization was especially profound on three groups within the population - groups whose entire culture was affected by the economic changes taking place.

Factory jobs had opened a new era of opportunity for women, 101 of whom were employed in factories either as clerks or production workers by 1914. More than one-third of the office workers in manufacturing plants were female, while the 64 female production workers (including five females under the age of 16) comprised seven percent of the production labor force in Owensboro. This compares to Kentucky as a whole, where women held 21.8 percent of the office jobs and 14.9 percent of the manufacturing jobs. It must be noted that the largest category of women in manufacturing was in the garment industry, which was not represented in Owensboro. Statewide 32.3 percent of the factory workers in 1914 were under the age of sixteen, while this number in Owensboro was insignificant. By 1914 Owensboro women were assuming new roles. They had recently led the fight for the construction of a public library, and many were demanding a greater voice in government at all levels. By 1915 the Owensboro Women's Suffrage movement would count some 500 members.

Blacks, too, found new opportunities in an industrialized Owensboro. In the years after the Civil War a large percentage of Daviess County's black population lived in rural areas, and there were a substantial number of black small farmers in the 1880's. By the early

twentieth century the black population had shifted into the city, where many found jobs in industry. True, their opportunities were limited to the dirty and arduous jobs and the bottom of the pay scale - stokers, janitors, common laborers and tobacco strippers, but many also found jobs in service industries. There were black barbers, businessmen, carters and draymen, waiters, and cooks, while many black women found jobs as laundresses and servants in white households. The black community supported three physicians and a number of black fraternal and social organizations, as well as numerous black churches.

But Owensboro, despite the appeal of its bright lights, retail stores, streetcars, and all the other examples of modernity, was still a small town, containing only a fraction of the total population of Daviess County. Most Daviess Countians lived on the farm, and followed the way of life which had provided livelihoods for their fathers before them. The census counted 41,020 citizens of the county in 1909, of whom 16,011 lived in Owensboro, and a few hundred in the smaller towns of the county, such as Whitesville, Curdsville and Yelvington. The great majority, more than 34,000, lived on farms. The number of farms, in this industrializing era, had increased from the 3,616 in 1900 to 3,707 in the census of 1910. While part of this increase came from the division of large farms among children or heirs, these figures still indicate that agriculture was still a viable way of life - by 1910 it was a popular lifestyle, one which provided a comfortable living for people with wits enough to plan and strength to work.

Overwhelmingly the farm population of Daviess County was native born and Caucasian, with 3,415 farmers fitting that category. Only 36 "foreign-born white" farmers were listed in the census, while "Negro and other nonwhite" farmers and family members numbered only 256. Farm property was valued at an impressive \$16,389,093, up by 60 percent from the \$10,241,670 assessment only 10 years earlier. Of this nearly a half-million (\$436,283) was for machinery, compared to \$382,350 at the turn of the century.

But "machinery" on the farm did not have the same meaning as it did in highly-industrialized Owensboro. The year 1910 was the high point of horse agriculture. While there were a few steam traction engines at work on farms in Daviess County it would be another decade being there were enough tractors on farms to make it worth while to include a category for them in the census reports. The farmers of Daviess County, and the world, relied on animal power to perform the vast amounts of labor necessary to make a crop. There were 8,431 horses on the farms of Daviess, along with 4,010 mules and 36 burros. Oxen, a prime draught animal of the nineteenth century, were no longer used in numbers sufficient to count, and were lumped in with cattle, of which there were 10,206 of all sorts listed, along with 18,642 swine, 7,265 sheep and 102

goats.

Even in Owensboro, with its many factories, belching smokestacks, clanging trolleys, and several blocks of paved streets, animals still largely ruled. The first few automobiles were beginning to challenge horses for the right-of-way on Main or Frederica streets, but the traditional vehicles still outnumbered the new-fangled "horseless carriages." There were substantial numbers of animals listed in census as "not on farms," meaning within the limits of the city of Owensboro or the smaller villages of the county. Some 3,560 cattle were shown in this non-farm category, which included the many cattle owned by distilleries, being fattened in the feed lots which distilleries such as Rock Springs on the Hardinsburg Road operated in conjunction with their plants. Lean cattle were bought in the west of from local farms, brought into Owensboro and confined in feed lots, where they were fattened on distillery mash, which was a by-product of the process of producing bourbon. This mash which consisted of corn and other grains was rich in nutrients, and provided a profitable sideline for the distilleries, which sold the fattened cattle to meat packing plants. Of the urban cattle some 385 were listed as dairy cattle, confined for the most part in back-yard pens.

A total of 1,335 horses and 324 mules and burros were listed in the non-farm category. Some of these were owned by drayage companies and livery stables, while others pulled public cabs or delivery wagons for stores and businesses. But many of these animals were privately-owned, used to pull the family surrey or buggy, and were housed in stable areas in the carriage houses located behind the fine residences being built along Griffith Avenue or in the Parrish Addition between Parrish Avenue and Griffith. Not all households were fine enough to own their own carriage horse, but even modest dwellings might have a pen in the back yard where a pig could be fattened for the winter on kitchen scraps. The census reported 214 such animals in the city, along with 17 sheep and goats, probably being readied for the barbecue pit. Most houses had a chicken coop with a few laying hens and perhaps a few chicks to be fattened for the skillet as well, while nearly everyone with enough yard space had a vegetable garden.

While the transplanted country folk in town, working in factory or office or shop, sought to keep ties with their rural roots with their backyard bean patch, the farm population continued to keep alive what was still the ideal lifestyle in the minds of most Americans. The Jeffersonian dream of a yeoman citizenry with each man working his own land was still the way of life of choice of most Kentuckians, and this life was still profitable and fulfilling for the sturdy farmers of Daviess County. Owensboro's hungry population provided a ready market for all sorts of agricultural products, and the many distilleries were guaranteed consumers of grain in vast quantities. The hog pens and hackyard

gardens could not provide nearly the amount of vegetables, potatoes, meat, eggs, milk and syrup that a hungry urban population demanded. The farmers of Daviess had a ready market for the products of their gardens and fields.

While agriculture in much of Western Kentucky had been disrupted for much of the decade of the 1900-1910 period by the so-called Black Patch War, Daviess County had seen little of the violence and tension which was the curse of less urbanized counties with less diversified agricultural economies. In counties such as Crittenden and Trigg, Hopkins and Christian, where farmers were almost totally dependent upon tobacco as their cash crop the "war" against the "tobacco trust" took on a violence which shocked the nation. But in Daviess there had been few incidents of plant-bed scrapings, and no real damage from incendiaries, such as those who had left a trail of burning barns and tobacco warehouses in less fortunate counties.

The price of tobacco had risen from the middle years of the decade when some farmers had been offered as little as two cents per pound for their crop. By 1910 the average price for all grades and types of tobacco in Kentucky was ten cents per pound. For Daviess County farmers, who grew 16,322,970 pounds of the leaf in 1909, this meant a gross income in excess of 1.6 million dollars - cash money to pay taxes, buy equipment and supplies, furnish clothing and shoes for the family, and perhaps even have enough left over for some of the luxury items displayed so temptingly in the store windows along Owensboro's main street.

The price of corn, Daviess County's next most important crop, also was up, reflecting a substantial increase in the overall value of Kentucky crops. Between 1899 and 1909 the value of Kentucky's agricultural output increased by a phenomenal 76 percent. Corn sold in the latter year for an average price of 60 cents per bushel, and Daviess County grew 1,694,399 bushels of corn. Planted to 36 inch rows with a corn drill which set hills 36 inches apart, the rich soil of Daviess averaged a yield of 29 bushels per acre for the 59,762 acres planted in 1909.

Corn was not a primary money crop like tobacco, most of it being grown for consumption on the farm as feed for hogs and chickens. Picked by hand and stored in cribs, it was fed also to horses and mules to supplement the oats which formed the basic staple of the diet of these animals. Surplus corn was sold, especially if the grower lived close enough to the Ohio River or to a town to make transportation practical. For farmers away from the river bank, however, hauling corn to market by wagon over unsurfaced roads was not an economically-feasible operation. Few graveled roads existed in the county by 1910, although the County Court was beginning a program to provide "all-weather" roads in the rural areas. Still, land transportation from farm to market was practical only for small shipments and at dry seasons.

For ready cash between tobacco harvests the farm family was much more likely to rely on "country pay," or barter, taking items to town which were either readily salable or which could be traded for staples to an Owensboro merchant. Butter and eggs; strawberries and other fruits in season; vegetables; barrels of potatoes, dried apples or peaches; sorghum; hams; lard - all of these things found eager buyers in Owensboro, and Daviess County farmers found these crops well worth the work. Nearly 100,000 fruit trees were enumerated in the census of 1910, including 63,877 apple trees, 22,329 peach trees, and smaller numbers of pears, plums, cherries and quinces. Money could also be obtained from the sale of honey, wool and cheese, and the sale of animals for slaughter.

The commercial growing of corn was not economically feasible on many of the farms in Daviess. They were simply too small to produce a surplus of this vital grain. There were 276 farms of less than nine acres, 542 of 10 to 19 acres, and 884 of 20 to 49 acres in extent. While these operations were sufficient to provide a living for a family, they were not of sufficient size to furnish enough corn to make a concentration upon that crop worth while. It took a large farm to make that kind of an operation pay. The largest number of holdings, 1,078, fell into the 50 to 99 acre category, while 665 measured from 100 to 174 acres and 177 from 175 to 259 acres. Only 85 farms were larger than 260 acres, and only one measured more than 1,000 acres in 1909. It was only on these larger farms that a sufficient surplus of corn could be produced to make it worth while to invest the cost in money and labor to transport the crop to market. Improved roads made this task easier than it had been even a decade earlier, and new styles of wagons such as those produced by one of Owensboro's most famous manufacturers, the Owensboro Wagon Company, provided the means of getting grain to market in good weather. County roads were slowly being improved so that they could be traversed at all seasons of the year. Before the turn of the century the roads were almost all unimproved dirt tracks, but under the dynamic leadership of County Judge E.P. Taylor, who served from 1897 to 1901 there was a major improvement in road maintenance. Taylor left a road department which bragged of six teams of mules, nine graders, seven wagons, and a substantial balance of cash in the treasury (nearly \$9,000) to be used for graveling rural roads. Taylor also began the court case which would be cause, within a short time, the elimination of toll roads within the county, and the buying out of the private road companies by the fiscal court.

Some small grains, too, could be sold off the farm. The small grains were of less importance than corn in terms of volume of production, yet played an important part in the general diversification of Daviess County agriculture. Wheat, rye and oats had the advantage of being crops which all utilized the same production technologies - all were planted with a grain drill, harvested with a binder, and, when dried in the fields in

shocks, were then threshed by an itinerating threshing machine. Wheat was by far the most important of the small grains, with 14,572 acres devoted to its production in 1909. All of the wheat crop was sold off the farm, either to local millers or shipped in bags to flour mills in other cities. Oats were grown on 955 acres and were almost invariably utilized on the farm for animal feed or sold in town for that purpose. Rye, the other small grain grown in Daviess, was produced on 124 acres, primarily for sale to the distilleries. There was no record of the production of the other common small grains, buckwheat and barley, in Daviess County in 1909.

What was most important about these statistics was that every bushel of grain produced translated into money. The value of cereal grains produced in 1909 was listed in the census at \$2,778,978, far surpassing the value of all other crops combined, including tobacco. Further the value of the grain crop was increased by off-farm sales, as every bushel sold for whatever purpose provided business and profit for grain dealers, millers, distillers and other consumers of this, Daviess County's most important product.

Thus by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century agriculture remained not only the most important economic activity in Daviess County, but grain agriculture had emerged to play an increasingly-important role in the economy of both farm and town. Surely there was money to be made in the grain business, and any entrepreneur with vision to see the future and the courage to take the necessary risks could build a business on the solid foundation of Daviess County's location in one of the nation's great grain-producing areas. For no matter what industries might rise and flourish or decline and disappear in Owensboro; no matter what the stock market might do; no matter what cycles of "boom and bust" might affect urban wage-earners or high-collared bankers; the soil would continue to produce its golden wealth of grain. Here, as much as in buggies or bourbon, lay the hope for the future prosperity of the people, urban and rural, who made up the population of Daviess County.

by David Smith

From 1815 to 1850 few families could rival the Griffith/Crow family's prominence in Daviess County. The principle members of the family were Joshua Griffith, father; Remus Griffith, son; William Ridgely Griffith, son; and Warner Crow, son-in-law.

Joshua Griffith moved from Maryland to Ohio County, Kentucky in 1805. He stopped near Hartford for one season to put out a crop. As Indian attacks became less frequent Joshua, like others, rode into the wilderness to find a homesite. In 1806 he brought his family to the log house he built during the past year. The house was located in a rich valley between two ridges in what was to be Lewis Station, now Utica. The only other families in that section of the county were the McFarland family, Adam Shoemaker, and Captain Ben Field - a veteran of the Revolutionary War.

On Joshua's arrival in Hartford he owned 10 slaves and 11 horses. With his new homestead he added another slave, but at the expense of 3 horses. In 1808 Joshua's oldest child, Lydia, married Warner Crow. Warner came with his parents, Joshua Crow and Mary Wayman, from Maryland to Ohio County around 1798 at the age of 10.

A year after Lydia's marriage Joshua's oldest son, Remus, married Sallie Hardley. Although Remus owned no land he did possess 3 horses in 1809.

By 1815, the first year of Daviess County's existence, Joshua Griffith had a tax value of \$2400 coming from 212 acres of land, 9 slaves, and 5 horses. Joshua's force in the community was a silent one as his chief source of fame was being foreman of the Ohio County Grand Jury that indicted William Smeathers for the murder of keelboatman Andrew Norris. However Joshua took pride in being a good father, provider, and community leader.

The following description of Joshua and his personality is found in The History of Daviess County, Kentucky 1883, "Joshua Griffith was a peculiar man, very much like a Quaker in his dress and appearance. Remarkably fond of the company of those he liked, and full of fun. He was a great man for eggs and always had plenty of them on hand. We could always tell you at Mealttime, who he liked or thought most of. He would put the question to each one, "Do you like eggs?" "How do you want them cooked?" Each guest's eggs would be cooked as ordered, and placed on the table, and each guest directed to his proper place. If he did not fancy the guest, only the number named by him or her was placed. If he thought well of the next an additional egg or two was served, but if he

fancied or was specially fond of any particular one, then double the number was placed for that person. He was fond of children and amused himself much at their pranks, and sometimes played pranks on the children and larger persons. He had his coffin made 20 years before he died and kept it in a room up stairs, immediately above the room occupied by him, and generally under the bed immediately above. He always during fall, winter, and spring kept good apples in the coffin for convenience, and also kept some of his egg gourds under the same bed, and whenever youngsters or children came, he would ask if they wanted apples or eggs. Of course all said "yes." He would say, "You are young, and must wait on yourselves; just go up stairs and look under the bed and push the lid off that box, and get as many apples as you want, and bring me some; and you who want eggs, look in the gourd behind the box and get some." The result may well be imagined, for as soon as the bedclothes were raised, the light dimly revealed the coffin, and then there was such a "getting down stairs," without many apples or eggs, and after his laugh was over, he would call his faithful body servant, "Red," and have as many apple and eggs brought down as the youngsters and others could devour. In 1840 he exhibited to the writer a tea-kettle in good, serviceable condition, which he had purchased in Baltimore the day before his marriage, more than 60 years previously, and had continuously used the kettle the whole time."

Joshua's character was described in Daviess County Historical Atlas (1875) as "a rare one even for the times in which he lived. By his energetic disposition he attained a position of considerable influence in the community. His old neighbors declared him to be the most liberal men they ever knew, and for his charity he was celebrated throughout the whole county. Sometimes a scarcity of meat would be felt throughout the settlement, and bacon would advance to a high price. In such a case Joshua Griffith was frequently known to refuse to sell to persons who came to him with the cash, offering a good price for his entire stock, telling them if they had money there was no danger of their starving, but it was his duty to provide for his poor neighbors around him, who had not the means wherewith to buy. Among his other acquirements, he had gained a knowledge of medicine, and his skill was in use in this direction in the families of the neighbors for a distance of several miles. He never charged for his services. No man was more truthful. If he was ever guilty of a mean action it was never known. His general kindness and charity made him popular and beloved everywhere in the community, and he was one of the few men in the County who died without an enemy."

Joshua reached his greatest value of \$4,361 in 1820 with his original 212 acre plot of land plus a 350 acre plot, a town lot in Hartford, 9 slaves (5 over 16 years old), and 5 horses. At the time of his death in 1845 Joshua owned 200 acres of land (of the original 212) worth \$600, the

Hartford lot worth \$40, 3 slaves worth \$950, and 3 horses worth \$100 for a total worth of \$1,690.

Remus, Joshua's oldest son, bought his first tract of land in 1816 - in his 7th year of marriage. Besides the 1000 acres he owned 5 slaves and 5 horses for an overall worth of \$2,420. Remus continued to buy land until 1825 he owned 10,773 acres in Daviess County, 3750 acres in Ohio County, 25 acres in Union County, 1 acre adjoining the public square in Hartford, and 4 1/2 acre lots in Hartford. At the same time he owned 109 slaves (3 over 16 years old), and 5 horses. The total value of all his possessions (land, slaves, and horses) was \$19,323. Remus was also elected as Daviess County's 4th Sheriff in 1825, however after his 2-year term was up he never entered politics again. Instead Remus spent the rest of his time farming and expanding his acreage and worth. He reached his peak value in 1840 at \$32,870. He owned 9605 acres on land in 7 tracts in Daviess County worth \$14,775, 152 acres in 3 tracts in Muhlenburg County worth \$595, 7000 acre tract in Hancock County worth \$7,000, 200 acre tract in Breckenridge County worth \$100, 7600 acres in 3 Ohio County tracts worth \$4,700, 2 lots in Hartford worth \$500, 9 slaves worth \$3,000, 8 horses worth \$450, and 30 head of cattle worth \$250.

When Remus died in Calhoun in 1845 he was the 3rd richest man in the lower tax district of Daviess County, behind his brother William and Simpson Stout, and 10th richest in the entire county. In addition to his property (land, slaves, horses, and cattle) value Remus was one of the few people in Daviess County to own a pleasure carriage at the time of his death.

Joshua's youngest son, William Ridgley Griffith, struck out on his own in 1815 at the age of 21 years old and quickly made a name for himself. He received his early education in Hartford and then attended St. Joseph College in Bardstown. In 1815 he became the first county clerk of Daviess County and after holding that post for 3 years he studied law and was admitted to the bar . . .

At the time of his marriage in 1822 to Anria Moseley he owned 7890 of land in Daviess and Ohio Counties along with 2 lots in Hartford, a lot in Owensboro, 1 horse and 2 slaves for a total assessed value of \$8,055. William's law practice centered around land claims. At that time much of the land in the county was taken up in large claims and the actual settlers had trouble buying the land. The growth of the population in the county and the improvement of the land was nearly nonexistent as uncertainty and suspicion arose as clear titles to land could rarely be achieved. William became an agent for many of these claims and planned to buy all the Claims and dispose of the land to the actual settlers. His partner in some of the claims was one of the earliest, brightest, and ablest lawyers, Philip Triplet. William sold these lands at very favorable terms of low rates and long credit. This caused increased

immigration which resulted in the rapid development of the county's resources.

William possessed superior qualifications as a business man. He was exact in his transactions but liberal in his dealings especially with those of limited means. He was a man of honor and integrity and although his business relations were extensive there is not the slightest evidence that he ever took advantage of any one or was not honest or upright with his deals. He instructed surveyors to give more acres of land rather than the buyer find his land short. The people who purchased land from William felt confident that their titles were sound and were unwilling to buy land from anyone else if it could be avoided.

A Whig, William was successful and prominent in local politics. He served as State Representative in 1829 and 1835 and served as State Senator from 1831-1835 and 1839-1843. He represented the people of Daviess County with ability and integrity. He enjoyed the confidence of the people to an unusual degree and discharged his duties conscientiously and with regard to the interests of his constituents.

William's value peaked in 1839 at \$77,836.50 with 12,161 acres in 7 Daviess County plots worth \$22,316.50, 1800 acres in Ohio County worth \$1,800, 400 acres in Muhlenberg County including a town lot all worth \$2,400, 8 Owensboro lots worth \$3,500, 14 slaves valued at \$7,000, 12 horses valued at \$720, and 25 head of cattle worth \$100.

At the time of his death in December of 1848 he was the 2nd wealthiest man in the county at \$76,035, only Robert Triplett was richer at \$83,150. William owned 7,745 acres of land, 23 slaves (15 over 16 years old) 15 horses, 30 head of cattle, 24 town lots in Owensboro and Rumsey, a pleasure carriage (inherited from Remus), and a gold watch. He was described in the Daviess County Historical Atlas as being nearly 6 feet tall and of heavy build. He was cheerful in his disposition, with an inexhaustible fund of humor.

As mentioned earlier Warner Crow married Lydia Griffith, Joshua Griffith's oldest child, in 1808. At this time all Warner owned was 500 acres of land in present Ohio County. In 1811 he moved to a 172 acre plot in present Daviess County and purchased 3 horses. With the formation of Daviess County he owned 150 acres, 2 slaves, and 2 horses for a tax value of \$670.

In 1818 Warner became Justice of the Peace and held that office for 5 years. In 1820 Warner was elected to serve in the State House of Representatives. He was sent back to Frankfort as State Representative in 1839, 1842 and 1843 - only the 3rd person at that time to be reelected from Daviess County. During that time he also held the post of Sheriff (1829-1831).

Warner's property assessment peaked in 1842 at \$7,750 when he owned 242 acres of land worth \$2,500, 13 slaves (7 over 16 years old)

worth \$5000, 3 horses worth \$150, 12 head of cattle worth \$50, and 1 mule worth \$50. A year later he bought a pleasure carriage placing him in an elite group with such vehicles. Warner sold his land in 1844 and moved to Owensboro. With this he started selling off his slaves, horses, and cattle. In 1845 he owned 14 slaves (7 over 16 years old), 3 horses, and 14 head of cattle. By 1865 all Warner owned was his Owensboro lot worth \$1000, and 4 slaves (2 over 16 years old) worth \$100.

Warner died on February 25, 1866 and *The Owensboro Monitor* carried the following story on his death.

Judge Crow has long occupied a prominent position in our midst, and filled at the time of his death the office of Police Judge. He was far advanced in age, having passed by several years the allotted "four score and ten of man", and was remarkable of the vigor of his physical powers, and the unimpaired state of his intellect. It was his boast that during his long life he never used tobacco in any form, nor ever tasted any intoxicating beverage, and a remarkable exemption from sickness and other ills flesh is heir to.

With Warner's death that part of the Griffith/Crow family's chapter closed, however the prominence of the family did not end as William's children and Warner's children continued to make contributions to Daviess County.

THE DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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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 Third Tuesday 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.

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