

# Footprints

In History

Jessamine County Historical Society

Quarterly Newsletter of January 2023

## 2022 was a busy year

For various reasons, it has been a long time since we published a newsletter, but that doesn't mean that the historical society has been idle.

Our quarterly meetings and fall chili cookoff/fundraiser (see following articles) all featured interesting speakers bringing historical subjects to life. History was all around us at our annual summer picnic at Camp Nelson. We participated again this year at Wilmore's More Tales festival with a booth to sell history books and prints and to introduce ourselves to more Jessamine County residents.

The continued success of our Wither's Library book sales not only produced funding for our organization, but also freed up a lot of space in the office. That has provided us an opportunity to rearrange furniture and displays and do some overdue house cleaning. As part of that process, we will be setting up a work station to make our microfiche and digital files more accessible.

Although our focus is history, we are moving steadily into the twenty-first century. To further expand our research capabilities, we now have internet at the office. We have also begun to digitize our index of reference books, articles, maps, and files. It will be a time consuming process but, in the end, it will greatly improve our organization and efficiency.



## The President's Message

**Richard Lucas**

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas. I had my three children, their spouses and all nine grandchildren with me, which makes that one of my favorite times of the year.

Things are going pretty well with your Society. We had some gifted speakers for our Chili Cook-off and our quarterly meetings. Several new members joined during meetings. We managed to make some money selling books from the old Withers Library at the office. We also sold a number of the more valuable books on Ebay (thank you Pat.) With so many books gone, we've been able to rearrange our office space to make it more accommodating.

I would like to remind everyone that the annual dues were payable on the first of the year. Also, our next quarterly meeting is on the 27th of April at 7:00. We're working to confirm another dynamic speaker for the meeting. I look forward to seeing many of you then.

I hope everyone has a great 2023.

*Richard Lucas*



## The Treasurer's Two Cents

**Pat Hunt**

New members are always welcome to the Jessamine County Historical Society. We welcomed the following new members for 2022: Timothy C. Brown, Ed Bryson, Jim Cundiff, Gary Gardner, Laura Halls and Pamela Scott, Steve Baker, and Virginia Simpson. Your participation is most appreciated!

The Swintosky donation of old Withers Library books has been instrumental in keeping the Jessamine County Historical Society in a good financial state. Just in 2021, the sale of old library books was \$887.00. The more valuable books are sold on eBay; the sales for 2021 before the approximate eBay selling fee of 14% totalled \$927.75. We thank Mike Zuck for convincing his family that donating these books to us was a good idea! Just recently, a restaurant owner from North Carolina, who is using the old books to decorate a third restaurant, purchased

600 old books for \$500. Our office was filled to the brim with old books until recently. Now we only have one large bookcase with books to sell.





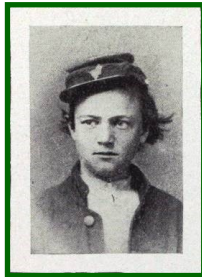
# Kentucky Heroes



Sgt. First Class (Ret.) John Trowbridge

Our April meeting, held at the Wilmore Municipal Building, featured speaker John Trowbridge. As Command Historian for the Kentucky National Guard and co-founder and former chairman of the Kentucky National Guard Fund, Inc., Mr. Trowbridge has been collecting artifacts, writing articles, and amassing a wealth of stories and anecdotes about Kentucky service men and women for years. He shared the history of the Medal of Honor itself as well as anecdotes about some of Kentucky's recipients.

Of the 70 who have merited that distinction, the youngest was William Horsfall, only 15. He received the award for saving the life of a wounded officer during the Civil War.



William Horsfall

The only woman ever to have received the medal was also a Civil War honoree. She was Dr. Mary Walker. Though turned down when she attempted to join the Union Army, she was taken on as a civilian employee - the first female surgeon in the army. After performing surgeries near the front, she crossed behind enemy lines to treat wounded civilians, and was arrested as a spy. She was held in a prisoner of war camp until being redeemed in a prisoner exchange. Dr. Walker was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Andrew Johnson, but in



Dr. Mary Walker

1916 the Medal of Honor board removed over 900 names from the list of recipients, including hers, on the grounds that she was a civilian and neither enlisted nor commissioned at the time of her service. It was restored in 1977. After the war, Dr. Walker continued her unconventional career as a lecturer and campaigner for temperance, reform in women's dress, and women's suffrage. She died in 1919, the year women finally earned the vote, at the age of 86.

Mr. Trowbridge was instrumental in obtaining medals for several Kentucky service members who were either denied, or approved but never awarded them. One of those was Andrew Jackson Smith, an enslaved person who escaped to join the Union Army. In the battle of Honey Hill in South Carolina, he picked up the regimental colors when the color sergeant fell and then carried them through heavy fire as a third of the enlisted men and half of the officers were killed. One hundred and thirty-seven years, his descendants received his medal from President Bill Clinton.

Not all recipients of the medal fought in declared wars. Private William H. Harris of Mt. Vernon, Kentucky was with the 7th cavalry (Custer's regiment) at the battle of Little Big Horn. He was recognized for carrying water to the wounded in the face of enemy fire.

These Kentucky heroes and more are commemorated on a seven foot tall, fiberglass obelisk in the Freedoms Foundation Medal of Honor Grove in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The latter is a 53 acre wooded site in which each state has an obelisk set in its own acre. There are currently 44 names inscribed on the monument, but it should have 70. Last year the Kentucky legislature appropriated funds to replace the obelisk with one made of granite listing all of Kentucky's Medal of Honor recipients, and to upgrade the site.



Medal of Honor Grove Valley Forge PA

We heard that a group of historians recently attempted to recreate the episode in which General George Washington threw a silver dollar across the Potomac River. Although they took turns in repeated trials, not one was able to reproduce Washington's feat. Every coin fell into the river short of the goal. I guess that just shows that a dollar doesn't go as far as it used to.

## Fishing With Daniel Boone

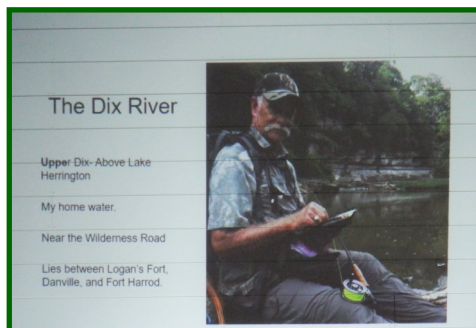
The life and legend of Daniel Boone have been the subject of so many books and articles, beginning when he was still alive, that it is difficult to find a fresh perspective from which to talk about the famous woodsman and explorer. However, at our July meeting, the historical society welcomed a speaker who has attempted to do just that. Hunting and fishing guide and author, Bill Carman, is currently working on a new book about Boone.

Mr. Carman's approach was to visit the areas



July meeting at the Wilmore Municipal Building

where Daniel Boone was known to live or travel, fishing in waters that he would have been familiar with. Development has changed some of those places beyond recognition, but some have barely altered. In particular, Mr. Carman described fishing along the upper Dix River: hearing the rush of the water as Boone must have heard it, smelling the same odors,

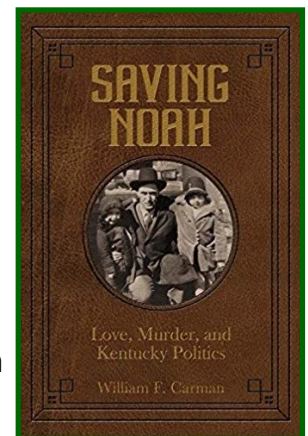


feeling the stings of the same insects, seeing the same birds and trees. By filling his senses with the sensations of the wilderness Boone loved, Mr. Carman hoped to come to a better understanding of the man himself.

It seems to have worked. He talked with real feeling about Boone's boyhood living in a cave along the Yadkin River, about his time in Boonesboro, his rescue of his daughter and two friends after their capture by Indians, and especially about the loss of Boone's son Isaac along the Licking River at the battle of Blue Licks.

His explorations have led him to an idea for another book or article with a similar inspiration. His next work will be about Daniel Boone's caves. Boone is associated with a number of caves - in fact or in legend - several of them in Jessamine County.

Mr. Carman also shared an excerpt from his latest published book, *Saving Noah*. It is the true story of a murder which took place in nearby Rockcastle County. In 1932, Sheriff Noah Tipton was shot down on the street in Mt. Vernon. The killer was tried and convicted, but later pardoned by then governor Ruby Lafoon. Tipton's wife Lillie was appointed to finish his term in office.



The theme of this book is very different from the outdoors genre in which Mr. Carman usually writes, but it is also close to his heart. Sheriff Noah Tipton was his great grandfather.



# Summer Picnic at Camp Nelson

Historical society member Tracy Lucas graciously offered his headquarters near Camp Nelson National Cemetery for our June picnic. Tracy is the commander of the Camp Nelson honor guard, an all volunteer group which pays tribute to active duty military personnel who are buried at the cemetery there. They provide a horse drawn caisson for the casket, a riderless horse, and a canon salute at each ceremony.

For that purpose, Tracy purchased property with an existing building adjacent to Camp Nelson. The canon and caisson are kept on the grounds, and the old structure houses antiques and a library of history and especially military history. What a perfect location for an historical society event.

After some morning showers, the weather cooperated so that members had a choice of enjoying the potluck meal inside or at the outdoor picnic tables. Tracy, who is a wealth of information about Camp Nelson, gave anyone interested a tour of the house and answered questions about his work there and his own military career.



Tracy Lucas

For those not familiar with this Jessamine County landmark, it has a complicated history which deserves its own article. In brief, Camp Nelson refers both to a Civil War era fort and supply depot and to the cemetery adjacent to it. The fort was also a recruiting station for African American soldiers and served as a refugee camp for the families of those recruits. After the war, the federal government required that the bodies of union soldiers buried in scattered battlefields be reinterred in national cemeteries. The cemetery at Camp Nelson was named one such in 1866. Part of the grounds of the original fort, with one surviving structure, was a National Historic Landmark operated by the Jessamine County Fiscal Court until 2013. At that time, it became a National Monument operated by the National Park service.

Additional land has been donated to and purchased by the cemetery over the years to enable it to accept new burials of veterans. Whenever a ceremony for a member of the military who died on active duty is held, Tracy and his fellow volunteers will be there to honor them and to pay respects on behalf of us all.



Horse drawn caisson

*"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."*

– Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address

# Upset in Chili Cookoff; Jessamine True Tales

In October the society held its annual Chili Cookoff/fundraiser at the Blue Building in Nicholasville's City County Park. Each year cooks from Nicholasville, Wilmore, and Keene bring chili made from their favorite recipes and attendees have the opportunity to sample as many as they like and vote on which community can boast the best chili cooks. The location of the contest rotates among the participating towns.

Until last year, the sponsoring community has always won the bragging rights. Although the event took place in Nicholasville in 2022, Wilmore was voted the winner. Congratulations to cooks Mayor Harold Rainwater, Judy Woolums, Patrick Wesolosky, and Lee Robinette. Also participating on behalf of Nicholasville were Pat Hunt, Beverly Zuck, and Dodd's Corner Restaurant. The Dixie Café represented Keene. There were no losers though. The historical society brought in several hundred dollars and everyone enjoyed chili, desserts, and an interesting lunchtime speaker.

Dean Richards is an transplant from Indiana who has lived in Jessamine County for over twenty years. A retired lawyer and now an author with a life long interest in history, he has been a frequent visitor to the historical society where he has found ample source material for his latest book. He shared with the audience what he called "true but untold tales of Jessamine County between 1861 and 1865".

The anecdotes he related ranged from the tragic: a young black couple who committed suicide rather than be taken by the soldiers pursuing them, to the comic: how some enlisted troops at Camp Nelson retaliated against officers whom they disliked. (It involved unhygienic toilet practices and a fresh water spring restricted to the use of officers.)

In one incident related by Mr. Richards, a stagecoach was carrying several women from



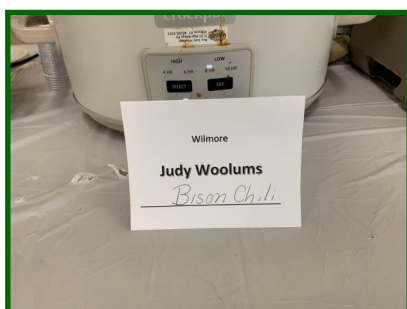
Jessamine County on their way to Lexington to sell their baked goods. When union soldiers attempted to commandeer the coach and horses,

the coachman tamely surrendered them, but the women resisted and pursued the soldiers to retrieve their wares. When they caught up with them, the food had all been eaten, so they sued the soldiers for theft of their goods. And won.

Mr. Richards told the audience about a touching instance of chivalry between adversaries. In a battle which took place along the Kentucky River in Jessamine County, rebel forces called a cease fire to allow a union soldier to retrieve the arm which had been blown off in the fighting.

After the talk, several members of the audience came up to ask questions or to relate stories of their own.

Everyone at the historical society has an interest in history, but it seems to gain a special significance when we can relate it to places and names that are familiar to us.



Dean Richards

## Murder or Not?

Also in October, we held a quarterly meeting at the Jessamine County Library. Our speaker was David Kirkpatrick, Assistant Director of the Mercer County Library in Harrodsburg. Mr. Kirkpatrick is in the process of refining an original play about the man after whom Harrodsburg is named.

Although James Harrod was an important and respected figure in the town - founder, judge, and member of the city council - his disappearance in 1792 did not elicit any search or investigation. There was not even a mention of it in the town records. Before setting out the cases for and against foul play, Mr. Kirkpatrick spent time delving into James Harrod's life and the historical context in which his drama is set.



David Kirkpatrick

Harrod grew up in backwoods Pennsylvania where he learned self-reliance and wilderness survival. He fought in the French and Indian War when he was just a teenager. In 1773 he traveled with Thomas Bullitt to what is now Kentucky on a surveying expedition. The British had acquired the land in a treaty with the Shawnee. Unfortunately, the Shawnee had no claim to it. Harrod returned a year later with 30 men to found a settlement. Forced to abandon it by threat of Shawnee attack, he returned in the spring of 1775 with 198 men women and children to found the new fort and town of Harrod's town or Harrodsburg as it is now known. Amidst rival settler's claims, (the Transylvania Company had been ceded the territory by the Cherokee -

who had no rights to it) fighting with native tribes, and the ongoing Revolutionary War, Harrod was instrumental in formulating laws, setting up courts, and obtaining gunpowder for protection (with the help of George Rogers Clark) from Virginia governor Patrick Henry.

Eventually, Harrod married and moved to what is now Danville, Kentucky where he and his wife had one daughter. He disappeared while on a hunting trip with two other men with one of whom he had been involved in legal disputes for several years. Though sightings of him were reported in various places in later years, none was confirmed. His wife eventually remarried, but later divorced on the grounds that her first husband was still alive.

Did Harrod survive his disappearance? Did he choose a wilderness divorce: just walking away from his marriage? If not, is it likely that a man with his woodcraft skills would have gotten lost or died from an accident? Did the hunting companion who had lost several law suits to Harrod choose this method of revenge? Mr. Kirkpatrick asked the audience to act as a jury and decide. In this case, the majority voted for murder.

Mr. Kirkpatrick hopes to have his play performed in 2024 for the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harrodsburg.

The meeting was also a business meeting. Among other items on the agenda was the the election of a new secretary since Charlie Hamm withdrew from the office. Pat Hunt agreed to act as joint secretary/treasurer and was elected by acclamation.

In the next newsletter we will have profiles of the history society's officers and board of directors.

*It's a new year. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, the \$20 dues can be paid at the office by cash or check during our regular open house hours or by check mailed to the office address. Please join us for during our open houses and for our quarterly meetings. The next meeting will be on April 27th with .a speaker to be confirmed later.*

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President - Richard Lucas

Vice President - Lee Robinette

Secretary/Treasurer - Pat Hunt

Newsletter Editors – Pat Hunt  
and Lee Robinette

## Mission Statement

The mission of the organization is to collect and perpetuate facts of historical interest to Jessamine County and Kentucky; to awaken interest and encourage the study of the history of Jessamine County and Kentucky; to collect and preserve relics, historical sites and documents of historical interest; to assist in marking historical sites with tablets or memorials; to receive property of any kind and to do any and all acts that would in any way further the goals and purposes of this organization.

Membership in JCHS is only \$20.00 per year. Mail a check made out to JCHS, or better yet, come visit us on Thursdays between 1:00 and 3:00 or on the second Saturday of each month between 12:00 and 5:00.