

A Quarterly Publication  
Of the Hardin County  
Historical Society,  
a Non-Profit Organization.  
Originated in 1931

**Fall Quarter 2019**

# Bits and Pieces

**OF HARDIN COUNTY HISTORY**

[www.hardinkyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.hardinkyhistoricalsociety.org)

Sherrill Williams, Researcher

Michael L. Bell, Compiler

mike@glendalecc.org

## **MAJOR GENERAL ROSCOE LEE MURRAY**

**1895- 1987**

**By Monie Matthews**

We will examine the life of Major General Roscoe Lee Murray in two parts, his educational and his military careers. The two careers will often overlap and intertwine with each other. We will discuss some of his other interest and his wife.

### **EDUCATION CAREER**

Roscoe Murray was born September 18, 1895 at Priceville, Hart County, Kentucky near Bonnieville. His parents were Charles and Ann Johnston Murray. He was the grandson of David L. Murray, who was an attorney in Larue and Hardin Counties in the 1860's and 1870's. The Murray's originally came to Kentucky from Virginia and Pennsylvania. The town of Murray, Kentucky and where Murray State University is located was named for the Murray family.

Roscoe Murray's parents decided to move to Upton when he was a small boy to afford him and his brother, W. T., a better education opportunity. He graduated from Upton High School and upon graduation took the exam to qualify as a teacher. At age 18, he began his teaching career at Steele's Cross Roads which is now on Fort Knox property. He was assigned to the one room school and given three erasers, a box of chalk, and a water bucket. With this, he taught 56 students. The pay was \$39 a month for the six-month term. He saved his money and entered Western Normal School in the education program. His next teaching assignment was Clear Run School. In 1917, he was promoted to a two room, two teacher school at Colesburg. During 1917-1919, he was called to duty and went overseas.

In 1919, he returned home and attended Ogden College which was part of the Western Kentucky Normal School in Bowling Green. While working on his degree, he was assigned as a principal at Oakland in Warren County for both graded and High School students. In 1923, he was a principal at Reidland near Paducah.

After obtaining his AB degree in teaching in 1924, Roscoe Murray was the principal at Lebanon Junction from 1924-1928. Mr. Murray studied at Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee and received his Master of Education. He took a principal position in Kingsport, Tennessee over two school for two years. He moved on to Erwin, Tennessee as a superintendent for two years at the salary of \$300 per month. The city went broke and he was paid in local scrip. One of the school board members did buy his scrip for cash as he left.

That brought Roscoe Murray back to Kentucky and he landed at West Point in 1933-1934 as superintendent. His hometown of Upton reached out to him and went there for the next seven years before World War II would call. As Upton, he worked toward his PhD but was unable to complete it due to the war.

## **MILITARY CAREER**

Roscoe Murray received a draft notice and reported for duty in 1917. He first went to Hodgenville and spent the night at the Lynn Hotel on the square. Next, he rode a train to Cecilia and on to Louisville to report to Camp Zachary Taylor. The barracks were the old two-story frame barracks with almost no heat in the winter. Roscoe Murray was one of the few fortunate not to succumb to the influenza outbreak during the next few months.

In April 1918, he reported to Camp Sherman in Chillicothe, Ohio for further training. His group went to Long Island, New York and then sailed for Europe. His first assignment was in the south of France. That region was noted for its unique railroad cars and were called "forty and eights". His Division was the 84<sup>th</sup> Division known as the Rail Splitters. In the spring of 1918, his Division merged with the 91<sup>st</sup> Division known as the Wild West Division. The Wild West was comprised of men from the far western United States, cowboys, Native Americans and miners. This unit saw lots of action as Germany was going all out in its effort for victor. This proved to be the beginning of the end for Germany and our troops suffered heavily in its effort for victory. Murray's group saw may of the French towns that had been devastated by the war after the war was ended. They quartered in local houses and barns as they helped to repair some of the damage.

Murray's group spent four weeks in Lemans while waiting for transportation back home. One night, Murray overheard a captain talking about going back home to Elizabethtown. They struck a conversation and after a short time made some connections and realized they had known each other back home. The captain's

**name was Stanley Jones and he was later postmaster for Fort Knox.**

**Murray's ship encountered a hurricane only three days out to sea. Most of the men were sick, including Murray for the next eleven days. The troops landed in Hoboken, New Jersey and camped for about a week on Long Island. While at Long Island, Murray ran into an old friend from Upton that he had gone to school with for several ears, Willie R Gunn. Willie Gunn was the mess sergeant and Murray ate well that week.**

**From Long Island, the final leg of the journey was taken. Murray returned to Camp Taylor in Louisville, remained there for four or five days before being discharged. He had to buy a suit in Louisville before leaving because his woolen military clothes had all shrunk while they were being sprayed on Long Island.**

**Roscoe Murray told another story about his army life. When the 84<sup>th</sup> Division and the 91<sup>st</sup> Division merged the upper brass decided there were to many non-coms. The non-coms in the 84<sup>th</sup>, including Murray were all demoted back to privates. He had to take off his sergeant stripes immediately. A corporal in the 91<sup>st</sup> decided to take advantage of this and made fun of Murray for his demotion. The unit Colonel heard about the situation and checked into it. He saw on Roscoe Murray's papers that he had easily passed the Gas, Flame and Smoke School exams and had acted as the defense officer for the Division. He was immediately re-instated, received his stripes, and was promoted to officer grade. His officer promotion would not catch up to him until just after the war's end.**

**Roscoe Murray did take his 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant rank with him as he continued with the National Guards. He conducted summer camps for the Citizen Military Training Corps (CMTTC) at Camp Knox in 1926 and 1927. He was promoted to the rank of Captain which he held for fourteen years until the start of WWII.**

**On June 11, 1941, Roscoe Murray was ordered to active duty with the promotion to Major. He was assigned to a personnel office and was in charge of training officers to train solders for combat. He set up several training post around the state and the region. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was assigned to Camp Campbell as its commander. He remained in that position until the war was over. In 1946, he had some heart issues and was sent to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. He retired from there with the rank of Colonel.**

**Roscoe Murray would return to duty one more time as Adjutant General of Kentucky during the Korean Conflict. Murray had worked for a time with Earl**



Roscoe Murray

Clements, candidate for Kentucky governor in 1947, after his active duty retirement. On the day, Clements was inaugurated, December 7, 1947 Roscoe Murray was named Adjutant General. The Legislature approve Murray's promotion to Major General and he was the first to hold that rank. He held that post for four years until 1951. He oversaw Kentucky troops being sent to Korea during the Korean Conflict. Murray gave a speech in Elizabethtown to the soldiers and the local armory bear his name and a plaque was place in his honor. Roscoe Murray served in various capacities for three wars.

## **OTHER FACTS**

Roscoe Murray moved back to Elizabethtown in 1952 after his retirement. He moved to the Colonel Craig's place at Craig's Cross Roads about a mile north of



Red Mills on 31W at the intersection where the road west lead to Glendale and the road east heads to Hodgenville. The Murray's loved to travel overseas and every room of their house was filled with souvenirs from such places as India, Egypt, Israel, Malaysia, etc. Their home was once the Civil War site Camp Nevin.

Roscoe Murray was active in many civic functions. He was a member of the American Legion and was very active with it cause. Locally, he belonged to the Upton United Methodist Church, Elizabethtown Rotary Club, and the Masonic Lodge 149.

Our own Clarence "Les" Dawson often gave Major Murray credit for being a mentor to him and helping "Les" rise through the ranks in Frankfort.

## **KATHERINE WALTERS MURRAY**

Katherine Walters married Roscoe Murray on June 14, 1930. She was the

**daughter of Jacob Walters of Larue County<sup>7</sup> and Clara McGee of Louisville. Her grandparents were Thomas Jefferson Walters, a captain in the Union Army and Hannah Holderman. The Holderman's built the original Aetna Furnace in Hart County. Her great grandfather was William Walters of Larue County. In 1781, a Conrad Walters, Sr. and Jr. and Jacob Walters are listed as early settlers of Phillip Phillips fort, site of present-day Hodgenville. Mrs. Katherine Walters Murray was active in the American Legion serving at the state level during the 1930's and at the nation level during the 1940's. She was often called upon to give speeches at various military functions around the state.**

**Presidents Letter.** . . . . It's fall...the rain finally came and provided relief from this long, dry summer. Even though the heat was intense most weekends, our volunteers showed up and spent time under the shade of the maple trees at the Lincoln Heritage Cabin. Here they shared its history with inquiring visitors. My sincere thanks Carolyn Ritchie, Hedi McNutt, Paul Urbahns, Donald Stovall, Jim and Deb Weise, Millie Robinson and Charles Van Lahr.

We started two projects this year, the Sara Bush Lincoln cabin restoration and a request to the Kentucky Historical Society for signage designating the Geoghegan Cemetery a historic landmark. Unfortunately, the wheels of progress move slowly sometimes when there are others involved. We do have options and will be discussing them at the October 28th meeting.

I want to thank all of you for your support to me as President the past four years. I will continue to support the Society wherever I can be useful. The Nominating Committee will present a new roster of officers to be voted on at the next meeting. We must continue to work together to preserve our heritage and historic landmarks in Hardin County. The folklore passed down to us must be passed on to our children because it is what makes us who and what we are today.

I hope to see you at the October 28, dinner/meeting at the Brown Pusey House. Love at First Bite will bring us a great meal and Ken Henderson, director of the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame will be our speaker and then take us on a tour of the facility. Please call and make your reservations by Friday, October 25th, (270-765-2515).

I wish you and your family a blessed Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas.

Twylane Preston Van Lahr

**October 28 meeting at the Brown Pusey House and gardens.** Dinner begins at 6:30 and program to follow around 7:15. Our caterer is **Love at First Bite**. MENU: Pork Loin with apples, Rosemary red potatoes, Bourbon and maple glazed Carrots, mixed harvest salad, orange spice tea, Coffee, spiced apple cider, and for dessert choice of apple or pear crisp with cream sauce. **Cost is \$12.00**. Please make your reservations by call **270-765-2515** before Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>.

Major business item will be the election of Society leadership. Contact Kenny Tabb if you are interested in helping or if you have a suggestion of someone serving. Thanks to all of our present officers for their outstanding guidance.



**OCTOBER PROGRAM:** Speaker-Ken Henderson, director of the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame and an opportunity to visit the facility for no charge. The Hall of Fame is a wonderful addition to the community.

During, the October 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, Kenny Tabb will present a slate of officers for your consideration. Contact him if you or you know someone interested in serving the Society.

## **HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P. O. Box 381**

**Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42702**

**Meeting: October 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Brown Pusey House and**

**Cunningham Gardens**

**Call (270) 765-2515 to RSVP**

**before 10/25 Meal at 6:30**