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Bits and Pieces

OF HARDIN COUNTY HISTORY

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Sherrill Williams, Researcher

Michael L. Bell, Compiler

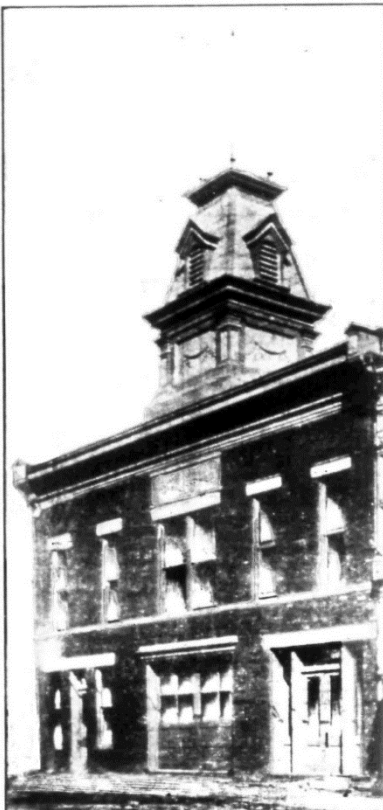
mike@glendalecc.org

Elizabethtown's Mayors and the Beginnings of City Government Compiled by Paul W. Urbahns

CITY HALL DEDICATED.

Public Ceremonies At The Opening of Elizabethtown's Municipal Building.

A Splendid Structure With Capacious Hall, Fire Department, Court Room And Offices.

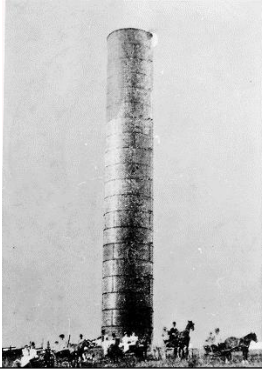


Dedicated in 1906 during
Parks administration

In its earliest years, Elizabethtown was governed by a Board of Trustees. This group transacted the town business. For example in 1825, Town Board members Armistead H. Churchill and Allen Singleton were appointed to procure two ladders, twenty - six feet long, and six fire hooks to be kept in the market house in case of a fire.

Though not dealing directly with the mayors of the city I feel I would be remiss if I did not mention the period of time when Samuel Beal Thomas proposed that Elizabethtown float a bond in the amount of \$75,000 to help pay for construction costs incurred by bringing the offices and maintenance shops of the Elizabethtown and Paducah railroad to town. There was some town board resistance to the plan, but the people gave the measure a large positive majority. The completion of the railroad brought a great prosperity. The town population tripled to 1,743 in 1870. The population grew again to 2,526 by 1880.

The bonds had been sold but the town board refused to levy a tax on property to pay off the bonded indebtedness. Therefore, the city defaulted on the bonds. The town board further refused to hold elections for town trustees. So for a number of years, Elizabeth Town (as it was spelled then) had no official government. This situation continued until after the death of Mr. Thomas in 1874. Later, the railroad was proposed to be extended to Louisville and a route bypassing Elizabethtown was chosen. The city lost the railroad shops and offices. This was a direct cause of the population to take an immediate drop in 1880 and the town would not regain the same level again until forty years later in 1920.



Elizabethtown Standpipe (Water Tower) – Designed and constructed during R L Wintersmith's administration for the city water works. This photo was taken in June 15, 1900.

The first city hall/municipal building was dedicated Nov 3, 1906, during the administration of Mayor R. B. Park. The structure was built at a cost of \$5,350 on property that the Wintersmith family sold to the city for \$2,000. The lot had been the site of the Wintersmith store, opened in 1812, but had stood vacant since the fire of 1887. This town lot had been in the Wintersmith family for half a century. Prior to 1906, government meetings had been held in one of the city's taverns. The volunteer fire department equipment had been stored in one of the old livery stables around town.

Due to a change in the city's classification by the state in 1893 **Robert Lawrence Wintersmith, Jr.** (b 1842 - d 1917) was selected Elizabethtown's first mayor by the town board and served in that position for 12 years. This should be considered a tribute to his personality and ability as he came from a firmly Republican family in an otherwise heavily Democratic portion of the state.



R. L. Wintersmith.

Wintersmith was a civil minded individual and announced immediately upon election that he was returning his salary to the city. The city councilmen, not to be outdone, notified the city to keep their pay also. These acts of patriotism were not especially costly, as the mayor's salary was \$75 a year, and councilmen were paid at a rate of \$2 per meeting. Both the city water works and city electrical lighting system was conceived and built during Wintersmith's administration.

Mayor Wintersmith's father R.L. Wintersmith, Sr. is credited as being the only person in Elizabethtown to vote for Abraham Lincoln for President in the election of 1860. Wintersmith, Sr. then went to Washington after Lincoln's election and secured for his son, D.S.C. Wintersmith, the appointment of postmaster in Elizabethtown.



Robert "Buck" Buckner Park (b 1855-d 1945), generally known as R.B. Park, was elected to his first term in 1905 which lasted until 1909. Additional terms as mayor included 1914-1921, and 1926-1929 for a total of 16 years. Park was a major dealer in mules. The Courier Journal reported in 1917, that Park had sold 125 mules to Lewis and Jewell of Cincinnati at a cost of \$200 each for a total of \$25,000. That occupation did come with its share of risks. It was reported in 1914, that he sustained serious injuries when kicked by a mule in Leitchfield.

Dr. Frank P. Strickler (b 1855-d 1923) served as mayor for one term, 1910-1913. During his first year in office, Mayor Strickland issued a sweeping order that no fireworks should be used on the city's streets during holidays. A city ordinance to this effect was passed and city officers were required to see it was carried out.

Neff Jenkins (b 1874- d 1947), served one term as mayor from 1922 until 1925. Jenkins grew up in the Glendale section of Hardin County. In 1904, then serving as county assessor, joined with a friend William Essex to form Jenkins & Essex construction and lumber yard. The firm is still in business at this writing.

Frank W. Joplin (b 1872 - d 1956) served as mayor from 1930 until 1949, a total of twenty consecutive years setting a record which stands today. Joplin was a well-known and respected businessman. Joplin previously served as Postmaster in Elizabethtown, beginning in 1895. He owned the Joplin Hotel as well as partner in the Joplin and Lanz Department Store. He built the Joplin Theater, though it opened as the Masonic Theater on South Main Street in 1930. This was the first theater in Elizabethtown equipped to show sound motion pictures. Later it was renamed the Ritz Theater until it closed. Mayor Joplin is best remembered for his leadership of the city, during the trying times of World War 2 during which the city experienced unprecedented growth due to the nearby Fort Knox Military Reservation.

J.W. "Jim" Atwood was elected in 1949 but declined to serve.

City Councilman Harry Miller was selected to serve Atwood's term from 1950 until 1953. Miller operated a frozen food locker plant on South Main Street with lockers to rent for many years, before retiring and moving to Florida.

Henry Pusey Richards (b 1910 - d 1996) was mayor from 1954 until 1957. He won the election in 1953 on the "community ticket" which promised to introduce a "high moral standard" to city government. This was considered being needed to combat the proliferation of bootleggers in business at the time. One of Richards' first actions was to fire most of the police officers at the time because of corruption. During his term, office buildings, three churches, two factories, a high school and an elementary school were also constructed. Richards also developed a system of 500 off street parking spaces to assist in the growth of the downtown business district.



Leonard T Bean (b 1914 - d 1985) served as mayor for a decade from 1958 until 1969 after serving for two years (1950 - 1951) in the Kentucky Legislature. Bean was a graduate of Vine Grove High School and became a sports writer for the Courier Journal and Louisville Times before moving to Elizabethtown. He owned the Bean Publishing Company, the Elizabethtown News and started the Inside The Turret newspaper at Fort Knox.



James Roden "Suess" Pritchard (b 1912 - d 2001), a native of Tennille, Ga., became so well known as mayor during his terms, 1970-1981, according to R.R. Thomas, many people thought his first name was Mayor. Pritchard was an advocate of "county wide planning and zoning." He was instrumental in attracting numerous industries to the Elizabethtown area and served as president of the Elizabethtown Industrial Foundation. While H. Pusey Richards had been concerned during his term of mayor about Elizabethtown losing its "small town charm," Pritchard preached growth.

Michael B. Carroll

served as mayor from 1982 until 1989. Carroll was instrumental in convincing Japanese manufacturing companies into opening plants in Elizabethtown. Carroll lost in his re-election bid in 1989 to Patricia V. Durbin.

Patricia V. Durbin (b 1937), served as mayor for two terms from 1990-1998. She was the first female elected mayor in Elizabethtown.

David L. Willmoth Jr. served from 1999 until 2010.

Tim C. Walker was elected in 2011, but died during his first term in June 2013. Walker was a Civil War history buff, reenactor and collector. A portion of his collection is currently on display at the Hardin County History Museum.



City Councilwoman, Edna Berger was selected to fulfill the last 18 months of Walker's term, then she was elected to a full term of her own until 2018, when she decided not to run again.

The current mayor Jeff Gregory was elected to office last year, 2019.

Based on a listing prepared by City Clerk Mary Chaudoin in 2013. Updated by the author with assistance from Kenny Tabb and the Ancestral Trails research Library in the Hardin County History Museum.

Notes: *R L Wintersmith Jr. – Elizabethtown’s first mayor. The Breckinridge News (Breckinridge County newspaper) made these comments about this picture. “He is a handsome, fine looking fellow and if there is anything in looks he will make a good Mayor.”*

Picture of Henry Pusey Richards from the Brown Pusey House Collection

MIKE’S MAYOR MUSINGS

COL. ROBERT B. PARK.

After an engagement of three years, Col. Robert Buckner Park, 87, former mayor of Elizabethtown, was married at 3 p.m. Monday to Miss May G. Shrader, 50, of 2332 Bonnycastle. The couple will make their home at the bride's residence.

Colonel Park, who served his city as mayor for sixteen years, formerly headed the American Standard Asphalt Company here. He left the asphalt business to become a dealer in mules. Colonel Park's first wife died in 1933.

The ceremony, witnessed by intimate friends and relatives, was performed at the bride's home by the Rev. Dr. H. H. Sweets, secretary of the educational branch of the Presbyterian Church of the United States.

The Courier-Journal
(Louisville, Kentucky) · 24 Dec 1940, Tue ·
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Mrs. Bean, Mayor Bean, Mrs. Bowles, and Flo Bowles
Elizabethtown County Club Dedication –Courier
Journal Feb 23, 2958



LINCOLN'S SISTER-IN-LAW.

Mrs. Emily Todd Helm's Hard Fight For a Kentucky Postoffice.

Kentucky has two women postmasters, both of whom are related to President Lincoln by marriage. They are Mrs. Emily Todd Helm, postmaster of Elizabethtown, and Miss Mary Todd, postmaster of Cynthia. Mrs. Helm is a younger sister of Mrs. Lincoln, and Miss Todd is a namesake and niece of the war president's wife.

Mrs. Helm is attracting considerable attention just now because she is one of the most interested parties in a contest for the possession of the Elizabethtown postoffice. She has been postmaster for three presidential terms, but not long ago Congressman Montgomery procured the appointment of Frank W. Joplin as her successor. The act aroused the friends of Mrs. Helm, and they are doing all they can to prevent the confirmation of the nomination. The ex-Confederates in the senate are supporting her because many of them knew and admired her husband, gallant General Benjamin Hardin Helm, who fell at Chick-



MRS. EMILY TODD HELM.

The Daily Leader
Lexington, Kentucky Sat, Feb 23, 1895
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mauga while leading his famous "Orphan Brigade," so called because of the number of officers it lost in battle.

Senator Joe Blackburn was fighting not far away when Helm was killed, and he feels a certain sense of obligation to protect his old comrade's wife. The appointment has been hung up in the senate with the aid of ex-Confederate senators and a number of Republicans who remember that Mrs. Helm was a sister of Lincoln's wife, and Senator Blackburn vows that it shall never be confirmed. Montgomery is a Democrat, and as a Republican has been elected to succeed him the Kentucky senators will, by long established custom, have the nomination of the Elizabethtown postmaster at the next session. If Joplin's nomination is not confirmed at this session, the Kentucky senators, it is said, will urge Mrs. Helm's claims. Meanwhile she will continue in office until the appointment of her successor is confirmed by the senate.

When the war began, President Lincoln did all he could to induce Helm to side with the Union, but in vain. When Helm fell at Chickamauga, Lincoln sent a pass to Mrs. Helm, who passed through the lines and was for several weeks a guest at the White House.

The Courier Journal on Sept. 3, 1950 printed: "Eight boys who played on Elizabethtown High School's football team the past two years enlisted at Louisville in the Air Force as a group. They are Rodney E. Jenkins, Joseph A. Miller, John H. Dickey, **Michael B. Carroll**, Julius A. Wise, Clyde H. Miller, Jr., Wayne Slaughter, and Frederick Eugene Hagan."

The longest siege in United States frontier history was the thirteen-day siege of Fort Boonesborough in September 1778.

Elects Alderman As Its Mayor

Special to The Courier-Journal.

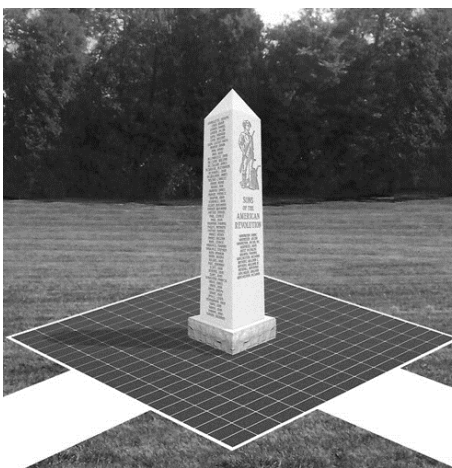
Elizabethtown, Ky., Jan. 2.—Harry M. Miller tonight was elected Mayor of Elizabethtown by the Council in place of J. W. Atwood. He was unopposed. Atwood, elected in November, decided not to qualify for the office.

Elected to the Council with Miller in November were Willard Winfrey, Jesse Murray, Claude L. Vertrees, Jr., Kenneth Hagan, and Ross Cardin. Tonight's meeting was the second of the new City Council.

Floyd Holland, who served several years as police judge, but was defeated for re-election in November, was appointed City attorney. He succeeds Damon Cooper.

The Courier-Journal

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The Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) wish to honor the Patriots who lived within the original 1793 Hardin County boundaries and who served in the American Revolution. A memorial will be placed in Freeman Lake Park containing the 143 names identified in Mary Jo Jones book – REVOLUTIONARY WAR VETERANS IN HARDIN COUNTY.

The obelisk will be surrounded by a rectangular bed of 250 red bricks that may be purchased for \$125.00 each and engraved with name of patriots not certified to be on the obelisk. Also, any patriot from one of the original colonies. Send your \$125.00 check for each brick to American Revolution Patriots Memorial P O Box 1937 Elizabethtown, KY 42702. Questions contact sarhardinch@gmail.com

More than 100 native Kentuckians have been elected governors of other states

400 Salute Mayor At Elizabethtown Community Banquet

Special to The Courier-Journal

ELIZABETHTOWN, Ky. —Mayor Leonard T. Bean of Elizabethtown was honored last night "for ten years of faithful service" to the community at a banquet given by the Elizabethtown-Hardin County Chamber of Commerce.

Some 400 persons attended the event at Elizabethtown High School and heard Circuit Judge J. Howard Holbert cite the mayor's record. Mayor Bean has two years to serve in his third term as mayor.

The chamber presented the mayor with a plaque, eight silver julep cups and a silver tray.

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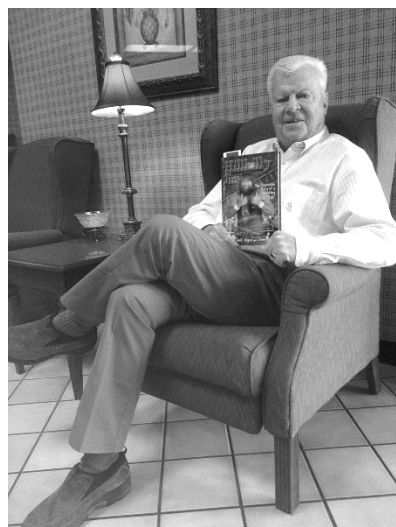
*The first enamel bathtub was made in
Louisville in 1856.*

*In 1921 the law passed making it legal for
women to serve on juries.*

APRIL 27TH MEETING: Brown Pusey House and Cunningham Gardens. Dinner is served at 6:30. Gary West will speak immediately following. Dinner is \$12.00 and space is limited, so make your reservation early. Call (270) 765-2515 before April 24th.

Our meal will be prepared by Chef Jesica Jones - '**Love at First Bite Catering**'
Menu: Spring Salad: Mixed greens, asparagus, green onion, green spring peas, shredded carrots, served with a lemon thyme vinaigrette; Retro 50s - Creamy Lime jello salad- lime jello base filled with fruit and pecans; Bakery Roll with softened butter; **Grilled Chicken breast** in a lemon/thyme & garlic cream sauce; Cheesy scalloped potatoes; Steamed Vegetable Medley in a rich butter sauce. Dessert is **Fresh Strawberry Shortcakes**- homemade shortcakes with a touch of almond, served with sweet vine ripened strawberries & vanilla bean whipped cream. Drinks: Sunergos Coffee/ Decaf, Mint Tea & old fashioned Lemonade

OUR SPEAKER: Gary P. West grew up in Elizabethtown and attended Western Kentucky University before graduating for the University of Kentucky with a degree in journalism in 1967. At UK he was a daily sports editor for the Kentucky Kernel. Later he served as editor for the nation's largest civilian enterprise military newspaper at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. From there he went to work as an advertising copywriter in the corporate office of one of the country's largest insurance companies, State Farm Insurance in Bloomington, Illinois. In 1972 he returned to Bowling Green, Kentucky. Along the way, for twelve years, he worked in the athletic department as executive director of the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation at Western Kentucky University, and provided color commentary on the Hilltopper Basketball Network. In 1993 he became executive director of the Bowling Green Convention and Visitors Bureau, where he solidified his background in hospitality. He is a freelance writer for several magazines in addition to writing a syndicated newspaper column.



He will be speaking of his latest book: **MURDER ON YOUNGERS CREEK ROAD** an account of the brutal death on Jan. 13, 1975 of Peggy Rhodes, 57, the wife of a prominent local car dealer Paul "Dusty" Rhodes..

PRESIDENTS CORNER

Sincerely,

Josh Cooper

Hardin County Historical Society

P O Box 381

Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42702

Meeting: April 27th

Brown Pusey House

Call (270) 765-2515 to RSVP

Before: 4/24

