

THE Bluegrass Historian

SPRING 2024

 LEX HISTORY

TAKING OFF WITH THE LEXINGTON HISTORY MUSEUM!



Queen of the Turf | New at the Museum
130 Years of the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky

Our Mission: To inspire our future by collecting and preserving Lexington's history and telling our stories.
Lexington History Museum, Inc. | www.lexhistory.org

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**Lexington History
Museum, Inc.**

PO Box 748
Lexington, KY 40588

**Lexington History Museum
210 North Broadway, Lexington**

Hours: Thursday & Friday Noon - 4:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
School & Group Tours available by appointment.

General admission: \$10 | Under 5 years: Free
Special rates available for seniors, military and groups.

2024 Events & Exhibits at the Museum

JULY 19 – Gallery Hop
*Growing Up in Lexington:
Community Inspired Lexington Students*

AUGUST 25 – *LexTalks*
Nora “Rosie” Moosnick & Tori Cruz-Faulk,
Campus Candor: Students’ Stories Unmasked

SEPTEMBER 20 – Gallery Hop
featuring fiber artist Kim Dixon

**SEPTEMBER 12 - FEBRUARY 15, 2025:
SPECIAL EXHIBIT**

*Among Women: 130 Years of the
Woman’s Club of Central Kentucky*

OCTOBER 20 – *LexTalks*
Carly Muetterties,
Bluegrass Bold: Stories of Kentucky Women

NOVEMBER 15 – Gallery Hop

The Bluegrass Historian is sponsored in part by

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KEENELAND 

**TWO NEW
GRANTS PROVIDE**
**Educational
Offerings**

See page 2



PODCAST:
**Lex Talk
History!**

We've launched a new podcast—**Lex Talk History!**—in collaboration with WUKY. Every month, museum director Mandy Higgins, WUKY's Alan Lytle and guests discuss Lexington-related history topics. Episode topics include women's sports, horse racing, Asian American heritage and history, and LGBTQ+ Lexington. You can listen to Lex Talk History on Apple Podcasts and the WUKY website—and you just might hear clips on WUKY's afternoon coverage as well.

Meet
Ella Offutt **Pepper**

Facing foreclosure, this Bluegrass beauty saved her husband's famed Pepper Distillery and the Thoroughbreds on their Meadowthorpe Farm.....page 11

**Support a Valuable
Community Asset.....** page 3

**What's New
at the Museum.....** page 7

**Among Women: 130 years
of the Woman's Club of
Central Kentucky** page 9

Plans for Phase II..... page 10

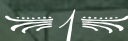
Halley Field page 13

*Cover image: "Air Climbers of America; Lexington Airport, Halley Field,"
Collection on Lafayette Studios, University of Kentucky Archives (96PA101)*

Become a **LexHistory Member**

Lexington History Museum members support our mission to inspire our future by collecting and preserving Lexington's history and telling our stories. Membership dues help fund our exhibits, research, education programs, and more!

Join Today! Online, in person, or by mail.
Scan the QR code at right or visit www.lexhistory.org/join.



LEXHISTORY AWARDED TWO GRANTS TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

In January, the **Peoples Bank Foundation** awarded the Lexington History Museum a grant to introduce school field trip activities. We worked with museum education specialist Brittany Petty to develop activities for learners at all levels to deepen their experience during visits. School-aged visitors can now expand their time in the museum with four field trip themes. Through prearranged visits, students will have the opportunity to explore symbols of Lexington, understand civics in the community, learn of Lewis and Harriet Hayden's freedom journey and legacy, or observe and analyze the role of museums in Lexington.



Painting of the horse Lexington by Edward Troye from Transylvania University Library collection.

And, if that's not exciting enough, this spring we were awarded a **Kentucky Local History Trust Fund** grant administered by the **Kentucky Historical Society** to develop museum interactives as part of the exhibition. Coming soon, museum visitors will have the opportunity to learn firsthand what it means to measure a horse "in hands," with the racehorse Lexington's help. We will also be adding a dry-stacked stone fence display and interactive to further engage learners in Lexington's iconic landscape. These hands-on activities will help visitors "touch" history and cross disciplines in their learning—measuring objects in hands is as much about the history of the horse industry as it is math! Building dry-stacked stone fences requires not only an appreciation for art and beauty, but also a bit of engineering prowess and design.

All of our field trip activities align with Kentucky Department of Education Social Studies Curriculum Standards. While we would love for classes to visit us in person, we understand the difficulties educators currently face in securing transportation. **Book field trips or learn about ways the Lexington History Museum can bring these educational experiences into classrooms by contacting Executive Director Mandy Higgins!**

*We are grateful to **Peoples Bank Foundation** and the **Kentucky Local History Trust Fund** for their support as we continue to share our community's history with learners of all ages!*

SUPPORT A VALUABLE COMMUNITY ASSET



The Lexington History Museum is in the “forever business.” We are a valuable community asset that transcends generations, helps to preserve our cultural heritage, and that tells the stories of our past that otherwise could be lost or forgotten. We also play an important role in the education of future generations by providing opportunities to learn and engage with the past in order to help them better understand the future.

In 2022, **arts and cultural production** in Kentucky accounted for more than **six billion dollars in the state’s economy** and contributed more than 50,000 jobs throughout the state.

The Lexington History Museum is a key member of the arts and culture sector in Lexington, adding to the fabric of a vibrant and economically important area of our fast-growing city.

Significantly, the Museum’s work intersects with tourism, economic development, and education to bring families together in Lexington and help attract and retain an engaged and passionate workforce in Fayette County.



CONNECT WITH HISTORY HERE

We want the Lexington History Museum to be a place where our visitors, whether they are local residents or tourists, experience ALL of Lexington’s past—the triumphs and tragedies, important steps and missteps as well as significant progress and missed opportunities. The information and experiences we offer can help people to “connect the dots” between our past and our future and expand our vision for what is possible.

The region is blessed to have a number of history-focused organizations, but only the Lexington History Museum is uniquely positioned with a singular mission and responsibility to tell ALL of Lexington and Fayette County’s history.

INSPIRE OUR FUTURE

With our sights keenly set on the celebration of Lexington's 250th, we are working diligently to create in-depth and engaging exhibits, forge new partnerships throughout the city to broaden our reach and impact, and continue to collect, preserve, and tell the stories of the materials in our care.

LexHistory will also encourage community-led responses to history by forging partnerships with schools, universities, and community groups in developing educational programming, exhibits, and collections that showcase Fayette County's historical significance to the region, state, and nation.

The fully functioning, state-of-the-art history museum that LexHistory envisions and Lexington deserves will offer a variety of authentic and compelling experiences that are unique to the history, culture, and beauty of Lexington and Central Kentucky. We will attract local, regional, national, and international tourists.



MAKE A “FOREVER” INVESTMENT

Philanthropic contributions are vital to LexHistory and will impact all of Fayette County and the region as we share Lexington’s history with our local residents, our school children, and tourists from all over the world—both now and in the future. With solid financial footing, LexHistory can continue to develop and grow to meet the needs of residents and visitors alike in their pursuit of knowledge and understanding of Lexington’s history. Investing in the Lexington History Museum is a “forever” investment.

COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS – Investments in our collection, expansion, storage, and preservation of historically significant documents and artifacts enhance the understanding of our cultural heritage and recognize the value of LexHistory as the primary steward of our city’s history. Your support also enables us to maintain on-site permanent and temporary exhibits in the Dr. Thomas Hunt Morgan House.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH – A key feature of LexHistory is to provide educational opportunities and learning experiences for people of all ages. Your investments enable LexHistory to partner with elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions and their respective faculty and staff to develop and deliver resources and curriculum in a variety of formats and modalities.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT – Our interface and collaboration with other organizations that focus on specific aspects of Lexington’s history and the broader stakeholders in the community from the world of business, government, education, and civic organizations help to create avenues for important dialogue about our past and its influence on our future. These interactions and conversations can lead to more inclusive ways to share our history that attract the interest of local citizens and tourists.

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE – Your investments help us to maintain our operational infrastructure. They are critical to fulfilling our unique mission and to remain open to the public. The staff, space, equipment and technology required to continually collect, store, preserve, and exhibit historical documents and artifacts comprise the “bread and butter” of the Lexington History Museum.

PLAN YOUR INVESTMENT

There are a variety of ways to invest in LexHistory as a tax-deductible, charitable contribution:

OUTRIGHT GIFTS – Gifts of cash by check or credit card, either monthly, quarterly, or all at one time, that provide immediate financial assistance to LexHistory.

PLEDGES – A formal Declaration of Intent to invest in LexHistory by making regular annual donations over a specific time period.

APPRECIATED SECURITIES (STOCK GIFTS) – Gifts of long-term, appreciated securities have two major advantages:

- (1) providing an income tax deduction and
- (2) eliminating capital gains taxes to the extent allowed by law.

GIFTS IN HONOR OR GIFTS IN MEMORY – Gifts may be made in honor or memory of a loved one, friend, colleague or business.

ENDOWMENT GIFTS – Gifts made to the Thomas D. Clark Endowment are permanently invested. Only a portion of the annual interest income is spent each budget year.

PLANNED (DEFERRED) GIFTS – These gifts are designed to maximize your investment in LexHistory and may achieve specific tax advantages for you or your designated beneficiaries, either now or at the time of your death. You should consult your tax- or estate-planning advisor about the type of planned gift that is most appropriate for you and your family.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS – Sponsorships are an excellent way to gain visibility for your company and support the Museum. A list of these opportunities can be found on our website.

To discuss sponsorship opportunities or ways to support LexHistory, please contact Dr. Amanda Higgins, Executive Director at mandy.higgins@lexhistory.org or 859.440.1582.



Donate Here

What's New at the Museum!

We've had amazing feedback on Phase I of our permanent exhibit, and we know there is so much more Lexington history we can bring to our visitors. Below are some of our new acquisitions. See page 10 for some of the stories we're developing for Phase II.



NEW ACQUISITION:

BEATEN BISCUIT MACHINE

Beaten biscuits are a Southern specialty. Unlike buttermilk biscuits, beaten biscuits are dense and flat. They require intense labor. Cooks “beat” the dough for more than an hour to work the simple dough until it “blistered,” then formed biscuits, marked the tops with the tines of a small fork and baked them.

Donated by Jean Moore from the home of Mary Dale Robinson at Robindale Farm along Nicholasville Road.

Invented in the mid-19th century, biscuit machines—also “brakes” or “breaks,” both spellings appear frequently—became common

kitchen appliances. The brakes consist of two large rollers and a crank, and are often mounted on a table with a marble top.

NEW ACQUISITION:

MOURNING DRESS

Rebecca Moye donated this mourning costume to the Rome Area History Center (Rome, Georgia), where archivist Tony Pope carefully cataloged each piece before reaching out to us and forging a plan to bring the dress back home to Lexington.

According to the family, one or both of Moye's grandparents (college students at the time) bought the dress from the 1940 estate sale at Belle Brezing's home at 59 Megowan Street, now Eastern Avenue.

With no maker's labels or tags and only the family lore that it was made for a woman “of ill repute,” LexHistory is unable to trace the garment definitively to Belle. Nonetheless, it is a beautiful example of a period mourning dress.





THE PORTRAIT GALLERY:

Chloe Gifford was the 1939-1941 Woman's Club of Central Kentucky President. At age 38, she was the youngest Club president. She was one of the first women to earn a Law Degree from the University of Kentucky College of Law and successfully passed the Kentucky Bar Exam at 21. She taught at the Sayre School in Lexington, eventually becoming the Dean of Women. After her career in education, Gifford returned to UK where she became the Director of Community Services for University Extension.

Gifford was active in Lexington's political and social scene, serving in leadership roles with the American Association of University Women, the Kentucky Welfare Association, and the General Federation of Women's Clubs-Kentucky. She was

the national president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs from 1958 to 1960, leading an organization of more than 11 million women worldwide. In that role, she got to know Eleanor Roosevelt and traveled throughout the world.

Gifford's leadership of WCK helped grow club membership to more than 400—many joined because she made hundreds of personal phone calls. She was witty and a commanding public speaker, qualities she used in her leadership roles throughout Central Kentucky and the world. Even in death, her philanthropic spirit helped Lexington and Kentucky. She bequeathed funds in honor of her parents to the UK Chandler Medical Center. Ms. Gifford died in June 1982 and is buried in the Lexington Cemetery.

"Among Women," will feature portraits—mostly digital—of the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky presidents from 1894 to present. WCK presidents serve two-year terms and are responsible for the overall health and organization of the Club. When WCK owned the Thomas Hunt Morgan House, the past presidents' portraits hung on the dining room wall separating it from the auditorium.

Reform movements have existed in the United States since before the ratification of the Constitution. Many were led or heavily influenced by women, including the Anti-Slavery movement, education reform and others. Following passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, women focused on social reforms and gaining suffrage. They established women's clubs, social in nature but intent on changing public policy. Many were segregated, which led to African American women founding their own influential clubs such as the Lexington Chapter of the Kentucky Association of Colored Women's Clubs—formed in the early 20th century—which helped establish a day nursery, founded the Phillis Wheatley Young Women's Christian Association, and sponsored talks and performances in town.



NEW SPONSORED EXHIBIT

Among Women: 130 years of the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky

The Woman's Club of Central Kentucky (WCKK) began in October 1894 in the parlor of Merrick Lodge (at the corner of Short and Limestone), with Mrs. M. A. Scovell serving as the founding president. Mary Gratz Morton, the wife of Jere R. Morton, along with other founding members, reached out to existing social clubs to “create among women an organized center of thought and action, for the promotion of social, educational, literary, and artistic growth, and whatever relates to the best interests of the community.”

Women who joined the club were expected to pay one dollar in annual dues and 25 cents for guests to attend programs. The earliest members of the WCKK were prominent women, mostly from Lexington and surrounding counties.

Since its founding, the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky has helped build educational facilities, maintained a historic building, and collaborated on important public health statutes. Their focus today remains remarkably similar to the founding, with an added purpose to “broaden the outlook for women of Central Kentucky by keeping them informed on matters of national and international scope.”



*Woman's Club member **Madeline McDowell Breckinridge**—Henry Clay's great-granddaughter—was a leader of the women's suffrage movement in Kentucky. Married to Desha Breckinridge—editor and publisher of the Lexington Herald—she advocated for women's rights in the newspaper and lived to see the women of Kentucky vote for the first time in the 1920 presidential election.*



*Woman's Club members **Eva Stevenson** and **Mary Dudley Short** were appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Library in April 1902 and helped spearhead the **Carnegie Public Library** campaign. Before public libraries, subscription or paid libraries were commonplace.*

Now, at their 130th anniversary, the Museum is helping the WCKK look back to move forward! Opening in mid-September “Among Women: 130 years of the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky,” will weave the Club's and Lexington's histories together, to highlight how the Club's philanthropic work influenced social and political changes in the 20th century and the important space the WCKK created for its members, including the dining room that the Club built at the Thomas Hunt Morgan House. *Underwriting for this exhibit is from the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky.*

Madeline McDowell Breckinridge, Henry Clay Memorial Foundation papers, 1777-1991, undated, University of Kentucky Special Collections (96m2)

What's Next Planning for Phase II

TRAINS, PLANES & AUTOMOBILES



Transportation changes in Lexington—from dirt roads to trains and trolleys to New Circle and Blue Grass Airport—Lexington's growth has been shaped by its transportation systems. Do you know about the Lexington Motor Car company founded in 1909?



Plans for this exhibit include the inter-urban routes, trolley tokens, and how to calculate travel times on horse, by rail, and in a car!

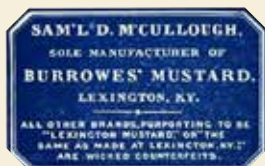
EDUCATION

Our community has been known for its educational institutions nearly since its founding. Private and public schools as well as colleges have nurtured millions of students over the centuries. School pride and traditions help weave together our current residents with our history. Did you know about University High or that Transylvania was once called Kentucky University?



FOODWAYS, PRODUCTS & PRODUCERS:

Lexington's foodways, culinary stars, and products have helped share Lexington with the world. This exhibit will tell about the work of home cooks and their practices, professional chefs, and major corporations—including Lexington's own peanut butter company: Big Top.



These exhibits above are in the planning stage and available for underwriting and sponsorship—contact Executive Director Mandy Higgins for more information.

If you have artifacts in your home or business that help showcase Lexington history—Curator Katrina Dixon would love to talk to you about potential donations or loans.

Meet Ella Offutt Pepper

Most early accounts of Ella Offutt (Kean) Pepper discuss her beauty and her pleasing voice. Beyond an 1883 divorce from Col. L. R. Kean and an 1888 newspaper society page item about her traveling in Switzerland with a Boston group, little has been recorded about her before life with Col. James E. Pepper.



Born in 1856 in Shelbyville, Kentucky, Ella Offutt was well-liked socially, and accounts of her beauty spread throughout Kentucky and beyond. She wed Col. James E. Pepper on July 25, 1890, in Shelby County. In 1892, the Peppers purchased Meadowthorpe Farm from bookmaker William H. Cheppu, who sold the farm to satisfy a debt. Jacob Hostetter had owned the well-known stock farm until his death in 1886.

Col. Pepper tended to live lavishly and overspend. He traveled in a private rail car named “The Old Pepper” decorated with images of his famed whiskey label. He spent much of his time promoting his whiskey in Manhattan at the Waldorf-Astoria where he would socialize with other big names including Astor, du Pont, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and even Teddy Roosevelt. By 1896, James and Ella were financially overextended and facing bankruptcy. The famed Pepper Distillery and Meadowthorpe faced foreclosure.

Beyond her beauty, Ella Offutt Pepper was a skilled horsewoman and formidable businesswoman. When the Meadowthorpe horses went up for auction, she rose to the occasion and bid on her beloved Thoroughbreds. Once others at the auction

continued next page

Meadowthorpe Farm postcards from the LexHistory collection.



James E. Pepper was the third generation of Peppers to operate the family Bourbon distilling business, which his grandfather, Elijah Pepper, had established in Versailles in 1812 on the same land where the Woodford Reserve Distillery is today. Oscar Pepper, son of Elijah, made his own mark by helping to perfect the sour mash method of distilling. Oscar died in 1865, leaving the business to his 15-year-old son, James. Assisted by guardian and mentor Col. E. H. Taylor, Jr., James worked to expand the distillery. But Taylor took it over in 1877 when James could not repay a loan. Taylor sold it to Labrot and Graham soon after, but that did not stop James from securing enough capital to purchase the land a year later in what is now known as the Lexington Distillery District. Pepper established what was then the country's largest-ever distillery, the James E. Pepper Distillery, in 1880.



saw she was trying to get her horses back, no one would bid against her. Ella took over the racing operation—training and racing the horses. She won races around the world and sold horses so successfully she was able to buy back the distillery. Her great success was widely reported, and by 1899 she had become known nationally as the *Queen of the Turf* after grossing \$50,000 in stakes and purses, and \$32,000 in sales that year.

Much like her husband, who piped water to the distillery from nearby McConnell Springs rather than rely on water from the adjacent Town Branch, she believed that pure water was the foundation for all life and that the horses deserved water as pure as any human had to drink. Since a horse drinks around eight gallons of water a day, she had a 200-foot deep artesian well drilled to ensure her horses were getting the purest water possible. Previously, the horses were drinking water from surface drainage, but drilling so deeply tapped into water containing calcium, magnesium, and iron, which Pepper attributed to the success of her horses.

Ella also believed that the way her horses were handled brought out their quality. After working with and cooling her two-year-olds, she would let them loose into the pastures to “romp and jump in the blue grass.” According to Ella:

*Before I adopted this natural mode of caring for young horses our veterinary bill was enormous. Some one of the colts was sick all the time. The young things had distempers, fevers, and everything else. Since I adopted the natural method, as I call it, we have had practically no sickness among the horses, and they seem to be much healthier, and capable of standing all kinds of weather without injury.**



Ella Offutt Pepper sold the farm and distillery in 1906. She died in 1939 at the age of 82 at her niece's home in Louisville.

**From an interview in Breeder and Sportsman, July 1, 1899: Vol. XXXV Issue 1.*

Portraits of Ella Pepper courtesy of the International Museum of the Horse, Kentucky Horse Park.

HALLEY FIELD



Ford Tri-Motor Plane, Halley Field, May 1928.
From the Museum's Malick Collection.

By the time of Col. Pepper's death in 1906, Ella had owned and run the distillery and farm for nearly ten years. She sold both and took to traveling.

The distillery went to a group of investors who continued to operate it and make Pepper whiskey.

Meadowthorpe was purchased by Dr. Samuel H. Halley, president and general manager of Fayette Tobacco Warehouse. He and his family lived there through the 1920s. In the summer of 1927, the acreage on the property was used for Lexington's first airfield, which was only a level pasture surrounded by trees that made taking off and landing a challenge.

In 1928, Charles A. Lindbergh landed an exact replica of his famous plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, for an overnight visit to Dr. Scott D. Breckinridge. Halley Field hosted air shows, air circuses, flight training, sight-seeing tours and small air services.

In 1930, a municipal airport was built on Newtown Pike, and Halley Field was abandoned by 1934. In 1949, the property became a residential subdivision, retaining the name Meadowthorpe.



Lexington History Museum, Inc.
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