

Bits and Pieces

of Hardin County History

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MARY JO JONES, EDITOR

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100 Years Ago

PROPERTY ASSESSED FOR TAXATION IN 1907

By March, 2007, the recapitulation of the County Tax Assessor's books had been finished and showed a total valuation of property in Hardin County of \$5,169,952. This included the \$336,779 raise of the County Board of Equalization and was a gain of \$576,949 over previous year's valuation, being by a large margin the highest assessment ever reached by the county.

The figures show that in 1906 the farmers of this county raised 554,324 bushels of corn on 25,710 acres; 207,144 bushels of wheat on 16,142 acres; 212,710 pounds of tobacco on 455 acres; and 4,196 tons of hay on 3,764 acres.

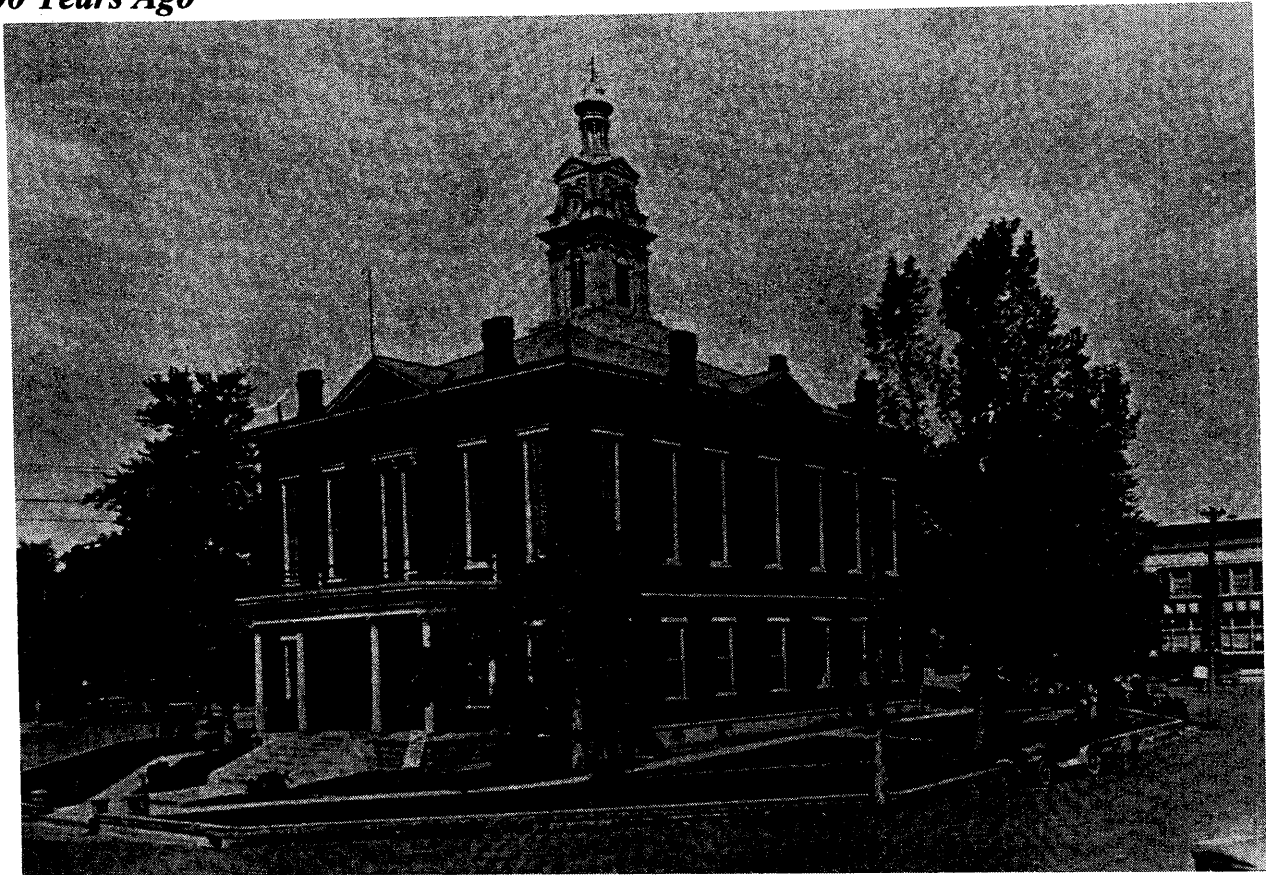
Other interesting statistics for the year just closed [1906] are as follows:

Male citizens over 21 years of age - 4,752
 Children 6 to 20 - 5,238
 Acres of land - 352,799, valued at \$2,932,613
 Town lots - 1,332, valued at \$761,784
 Bonds, cash and deposits, \$760,169
 Value of live stock, farm implements and household and kitchen furniture - \$1,457,042
 Thoroughbred and standard horses - 33, valued at \$6,185
 Common stock horses - 7495, valued at \$314,269
 Jacks and jennets - 118, valued at \$6,470
 Registered cattle - 193, valued at \$3,647
 Common stock cattle - 13,126, valued at \$177,616
 Sheep - 10,10,938, valued at \$31,461
 Hogs - 20,572, valued at \$69,242
 Stores - 90, with goods valued at \$191,538
 Pounds of hemp - 2,502
 Bushels of oats - 27,785
 Mules - 2,366, valued at \$135,620
 Libraries - 27, consisting of 5,869 volumes, valued at \$6,160

Taxable property in the City of Elizabethtown amounted to \$704,654. In 1906 the whole amount of taxable property was \$538,173. The total gain in 1907 is the sum of \$166,481, which is a little over thirty percent. It would seem that every \$3 invested in real estate one year ago has rolled around and found one other dollar to be added to it. This is a most remarkable increase and shows where to go to invest money. Of the increase, however, \$80,000 is due to an assessment of the city's two banks, which heretofore was not made.

(Source: *The Elizabethtown News*, various 1907 issues.)

M. J. J.



THE COURTHOUSE CLOCK

December 5, 1932, was a memorable day in downtown Elizabethtown. A few minutes past noon, the fire alarm on the roof of the City Hall sounded and volunteer firemen rushed to get the fire engine at the fire house at 111 West Dixie. They were shocked to learn that the Hardin County Courthouse in the center of the Public Square was afire. It started in the second story or perhaps in the cupola and badly damaged the building. Fortunately, all of the records were saved. The shell that remained was demolished and the present courthouse was built in the same location.

This is not a story of the courthouse fire, however, but rather of the clock located in the cupola. The building was erected in 1872. In 1907 a committee composed of representatives of the city and the county agreed to purchase a handsome large clock to be placed in the tower of the building. It was purchased from the E. Howard Clock Co. of New York at a cost of \$550, including complete apparatus of dial works, shafting and connections, and shipping charges. One-third of the cost was paid by the city and two-thirds by the county.

It was installed in July, 1907, and was a handsome addition to the town. It was the full capacity of the cupola, each of its four dials being four feet in diameter. The dials were of fine plate glass, with eight-inch hour figures. Behind these were arranged electric lights so that the time could be read all over town by night as well as by day. It was warranted against all original defects for a period of five years and was guaranteed not to vary more than thirty seconds per month. It struck the hours and struck one at each half-hour.

So far as I have been able to determine, it perished in the fire of 1932.

CITY MAIL DELIVERY IN ELIZABETHTOWN

With today's fleet of carrier-driven mail trucks, soon-to-be forty-one-cent letters and twenty-five-cent "penny" post cards, it may be interesting to you to read about the institution of city mail delivery in Elizabethtown, with one full-time and one part-time carrier who made all their rounds on foot. Of course, the population of Elizabethtown was less than one-tenth that of today, but as you read this, decide whether or not we've made real progress!

On October 1, 1930, a new era began in Elizabethtown—mail delivery throughout the city. Prior to that time, it had been necessary to call at the post office for mail, either from a post office box or from the clerk at a window. Before city delivery could begin, many plans had to be made to institute the new service.

Twenty-nine men took the examination which was held to secure an eligible list for carrier. Two were to be employed – one as a regular and the other as auxiliary. The regular was to work eight hours per day for an annual salary of \$1700, and the auxiliary six hours a day at an hourly wage of 65 cents.

Residents were required to provide suitable receptacles for their mail. Business establishments did not need to provide receptacles if they were open at the time of delivery. A slot in the door was adequate for receiving mail and was preferable.

The residential delivery route was as follows: From the post office, then located on the Public Square, west on Dixie to Mantle Avenue; retrace to Maple Street; south on Maple to Helm; east to Miles; south on Miles to junction of College and Park Avenue, serving those avenues; north to Helm, east to Mulberry;

north on Mulberry to Poplar; west on Poplar to Thomas, serving Churchill Court; east to Mulberry; north to end of sidewalk; south on Main to Brown; east to Central Avenue; serve Central Avenue to end of sidewalk; thence to Montgomery Avenue, serving that street to end of sidewalk; thence to post office via Central Avenue. Elizabeth Street and right angle continuation should also be served from Mulberry. Afternoon trip omits Poplar Street west of Mulberry.

The carrier for this route reports at the post office at 6:30 AM and leaves by 7:45 AM, returning by 11:40 AM and ending the morning's service by 11:45 AM. The carrier reports back to the Post Office at 1:00 PM and leaves by 1:20, returning by 3:40 and ending the afternoon's service at 3:45 PM.

The business delivery route was laid out to serve the business district around the Public Square and courthouse; east on Dixie Avenue to Glendale road; west on Dixie Avenue to Race Street; north and east on Race to East Railroad Avenue, serving that street; thence to Haycraft, serving that street, and returning on Race to Dixie; west to Main; south on Main to Davis Alley; west to Mulberry; Mulberry to Helm Alley; east to Main and thence to post office. First afternoon trip will omit east of railroad on Race and other streets. Third afternoon trip will serve only around Public Square and to the railroad on Dixie.

The auxiliary carrier was assigned the business route, and reported to the post office at 6:30 AM and was scheduled to leave by 7:30 AM, returning by 9:40 AM, ending the morning's service by 9:45 AM. This carrier reported back to the post office for the second

trip at 1:00, leaving by 1:15 PM and returning by 2:30 PM. He then started on his third trip, leaving at 2:40 PM and returning at 3:40 PM, ending the afternoon's service at 3:45 PM.

You will notice that almost all sections of the city received mail delivery by carrier twice a day, with a third delivery to a small section of the downtown business district. First-class letter postage was two cents per ounce, while penny postcards cost just that—one cent for a stamped card.

Also included in the service were eight collection boxes where patrons could deposit outgoing mail for pick-up by the carrier. They were located at Dixie Avenue and Maple Street; College and Miles streets; Dixie Avenue opposite the high school [*present location (2007) of State Theatre*]; Mulberry and Elizabeth streets; Central Avenue and Brown Street; East Dixie Avenue at Race Street [*now (2007) Central Avenue*]; East Dixie Avenue at

(Source: Elizabethtown newspapers, September, 1930.)

Glendale Road; and Race Street [*now East Poplar Street*] and West Railroad Avenue.

The postmaster announced that unless at least 85 percent of the residences on the routes provided suitable receptacles for their mail, the service would not be established. Fifteen days before the date of the inauguration of the service, a report would be made to the Post Office Department, and failure of the patrons to meet with this requirement would necessitate either postponement of the establishment of the service, or complete withdrawal of the authority therefor.

The postmaster also stated that business establishments need not provide receptacles for their mail if they are open at the time the carrier calls. A slot in the door will serve the purpose and is preferable.

M. J. J.

WALNUT HILL GOLF COURSE

In early September, 1930, it was announced that Elizabethtown would soon have a golf course. A nine-hole course was under construction at the northern city limits of Elizabethtown by Hays Burnett. It was laid out by Sam W. Severance, secretary of the Kentucky State Golf Association. The location is partly on a hill and partly in a valley, and is expected to afford golfers every conceivable kind of shot.

The first hole is 250 yards long and has 3 as par; second is 375 yards, par 4; third, 300 yards, par 4; fourth, 135, par 3; fifth, 420, par 4; sixth, 160, par 3; seventh, 400, par 4; eighth, 410, par 4; and ninth, 500, par 5. The length is 2,950 yards, and par is 34. A brook is a hazard on six of the nine holes.

It was also announced that Burnett was constructing a hotel, with a swimming pool and other athletic facilities, near the course, located on Dixie Highway, just north of Elizabethtown. It was stressed that the course would be open to golfers of Elizabethtown and Camp Knox, who now play at Bardstown and Louisville. [ED. NOTE: The hotel building, located at 540 West Dixie Avenue, is now occupied by Duplicator Sales and Service.]

(Source: *Hardin County Enterprise*, Sept. 4, 1930.)

M. J. J.

The "Great Depression"

Some years ago the Hardin County Historical Society had a series of programs presented by members, each one reviewing the significant events of Hardin County history in a given decade. William H. Marriott, long-time editor of The Elizabethtown News, a semi-weekly newspaper published for many years in Elizabethtown, spoke about the decade of the 1930's. The following is a transcript of his remarks about the Great Depression:

The period of the 1930's will, I believe, be known here as the decade of the Great Depression and the recovery from it; of two terrible droughts and of the emergence of Elizabethtown from the status of a slightly better than average county seat town in Kentucky to a progressive and growing small city whose potentialities then began to be recognized and are now being fully realized.

It was October 24, 1929, when the crash occurred on Wall Street. Yet, two months later as the new decade began, it was largely dismissed as a stock market upset, destructive to some speculators, disturbing to investors, but having few, if any, serious implications for the hinterland. Yet, as 1930 wore on, business gradually and steadily worsened. Purse strings were tightened, and the financial and business community suffered a severe shock on November 17th of that year when the National Bank of Kentucky, in Louisville, the largest national bank in the South at that time, closed its doors.

The year 1931 was one of a relentless and constant downdrift of values and of a steady attrition of prices in all fields. That was the year in which tobacco crops, in many instances, failed to bring selling charges on the warehouse floors. A few glib persons undertook to spin wry jokes about that circumstance, not realizing, I am sure, that they were making light of human privation and misery.

The bottom year of the depression was 1932, and it was generally accepted that July of that year was the worst month. I recall two examples, locally, that will give you some idea about the depression. First, I may say that the depression divides itself among people of two classes: those who don't remember, and those who can't forget.

In 1932 of that year, Mr. Claud Brown bought a valuable farm in Hardin County for twenty or so dollars an acre. Now it is one of the best farms of the county. [ED. NOTE: Mr. Brown sold that farm in 1966, and it is now the home of Bob and Ella Mae Wade.]

I remember driving along on a road that year with Mr. W. C. Montgomery, then President of the First-Hardin National Bank. We drove along a farm some ten or fifteen miles from Elizabethtown, and he said, "Our bank has \$20.00 an acre against that farm. I wonder if it's worth it." It is highly improved since then, but I believe it would sell for \$300 an acre today.

Some of you may remember, just as another example, Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Albert. They lived, in their early married years, at Nolin. They had a nice frame home at Nolin. I'm sure it was a fairly large one, because they reared a family of eight children. In the depression years, long after they had moved to Elizabethtown, that house sold for \$750, and one of the two men who bought it told me later that he made no profit on it, except, he remarked, he believed he got some grapes out of the arbor as his profit, and he was glad to get out of the transaction. [ED. NOTE: That house is still standing in Nolin, although in a rather run-down condition, in the southeast corner of the intersection of the highway and the railroad track.]

The year 1933 was that of the Banking Holiday. That came about March 4 or 6. That brought about two weeks of utter business stagnation. All banks in the nation were closed, and no checks, of course, could be cashed. Everybody froze on to their currency, and there was no currency afloat. I remember that our newspaper business raises very little currency in ordinary times and, of course, retail stores, service stations, hotels, theaters, and the like take in mostly currency. Since our business received very little currency in ordinary times, and like many others, we had very little money with which to pay our employees. We prepared to give them orders on stores on Saturdays; and one of the wisest of Elizabethtown men, Mr. Charles Lanz, volunteered to send us about \$50 and we divided it out among our employees. That would not go very far now, but it helped considerably then.

There has been a great deal of talk recently about the decline in the stock market. The Dow-Jones Industrial Average, which is the generally accepted barometer of the market, has declined from a high of 735 to a low of 526, and is now about 597. That was a decline of 29%. In the depression it declined from 389 to 43, which was a decline of 87%. L & N stock sold down to \$7.50; Pennsylvania Railroad went from \$103 to \$6. Illinois Central RR sold at \$3.50. Standard Gas and Electric declined from \$202 to \$2. What has happened recently, or any time since the depression, is like a slap on the wrist compared with a lethal blow in reference to the depression. As Al Jolson used to say in his show: "You ain't seen nothin' yet." I hope you don't see it if you haven't; but if you didn't live through the depression, all these recessions and disturbances are as nothing in comparison with it.

About July, 1936, I think, marks the real turning point in Elizabethtown. At that time Dixie Avenue, as a paved street, was opened, and from thence on, Elizabethtown, with a few minor setbacks incident to national causes, has continued to grow and to prosper. You hear a great deal more about persons when they are ill than you do when they are well, when they are bad than when they are good. You hear a great deal more about war than you do about peace. I have discussed the depression at length and taken a very few words for the recovery. I think that is just human nature.

Mary Jo and World War II

(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE)

I was glad when the holidays were over and I could get back to Caserta and into a regular routine. The work was hard, the hours sometimes long, and the boss was obnoxious. (I'd like to use some other word, but I might shock somebody.) However, the girls were congenial even though I never saw most of them outside working hours. But the Royal Palace, where I spent a great deal of my time, was much more grandiose than anything I'd seen in Rome with the exception of St. Peter's Cathedral. And during my few free hours, I could spend my time exploring it. Look it up on your computer sometime and see where I worked. (Be sure to specify *The Royal Palace of Caserta*, because there are several hotels in Italy known as the Royal Palace.)

Behind the Palace was a beautiful garden with a stream running through the middle of it, from the hill in the distance. The higher-ranking officers (colonels and generals) lived on the hill in small temporary movable buildings (quonset huts). Their aides lived in tents nearby. The area was called the Cascade Camp. Their combination Dining room and officers' club was known as The Grotto. The Grotto was beautiful—had two out-spread parachutes hanging from the ceiling and a pool of water in the center of the room with floating fresh flowers.

As American females were scarce, the girls from our office were much in demand socially, and we frequently received an invitation to General Somebody-or-Other's cocktail party. At one of these parties, I met Jack Conway, a general's aide, and we became good friends. He was pretty much my "steady" for the remainder of the time I was in Caserta. We understood each other—neither of us wanted to spend the rest of our life with the other. But it was a convenient arrangement. He had use of his general's sedan and driver and ate at the generals' mess hall, where the food was much, much better than any place else in Caserta. Jack was from New York City, a graduate of Fordham, and had some "polish." He would take me to dinner three or four or five times a week, depending upon my work schedule. I liked to go there because the food was so good. And whenever I went, the Italian waiters would present me with a small bouquet, sometimes camellias, sometimes a mixture, and a couple of times, green orchids. The mess sergeant one evening was trying to get a floating blossom for me from the pool, and fell in, head first.

The bartender at the club was an Italian named Gennaro. He was always nice to Jack and me. Ordinarily, the bar served what the Italians called cognac; and if that's what it was, it wasn't very good. However, all the generals had their own American whiskey at the bar, and Gennaro usually provided Jack with a drink from some ranking officer's bottle of "bourbon cognac."

Clare Booth Luce was in attendance at one small party I attended. I couldn't see her very well, as she spent most of the evening sitting in a dimly lighted room.

when spring came, the gardens were really spectacular. One Sunday afternoon Jack and I went for a walk through the huge place, with more than three hundred kinds of flowers and trees. Camellias—pink, white, red, and spotted; green orchids, which are lovely for a corsage. Loads of jonquils, hyacinths, and many other flowers which I couldn't identify.

Probably the first hint of my discontent with my job came on Easter Sunday, when I had to work all day, and didn't even get time off to go to church. We never got time off for church, but I thought Easter would be different. I worked until four in the afternoon. Jack picked me up, and we went to the Grotto Club. We sat on the porch—I had a real Coke with fresh lemon juice in it. We walked around the formal gardens near General McNarney's (the Theater Commander) quarters, returned to the club, had another Coke, then just sat and watched the sunshine, the people, and the water cascading along.

We went to dinner about seven o'clock. We had fruit cocktail and soup to start, then chicken, dressing, giblet gravy, asparagus, mashed REAL potatoes (usually our potatoes were powdered), lots of butter, homemade rolls just out of the oven, chocolate ice cream and tiny pastries. Quite a change from our dining facilities at the palace.

In April we received news almost immediately of the death of President Roosevelt. The entire Mediterranean Theater officially went into mourning for thirty days—flags at half mast and no "organized" social gatherings, dances, etc. Musicians at the Grotto Club were given an "indefinite" rest.

My roommate, Barbara Johnson, was somewhat of a "loner." She made friends easily. She was always flying off somewhere for a long week-end and not getting back to work on time. She was AWOL so much, that, as punishment, she was transferred to the diplomatic mission in Tirana, Albania, for month. That was devastating to Barbara, as Albania was austere, no men and no airplanes. She thought it was about the worst thing that could have happened to her. I must admit that I wouldn't have volunteered to go there. She wasn't scheduled to depart for a week, but the farewell parties began. There was an abundance of beer at the PX for some reason, and they issued back rations. One night we had a beer party in our room. I worked until about nine, and when I arrived the party was in full swing. At that time, the weekly ration was increased from three to five bottles. I always got mine, but rarely drank it. However, my friends never let it go to waste.

The weather was improving now that it was spring. We didn't have nearly as much rain as in the winter, and I could see that it was "Sunny" Italy after all! The sunshine lifted my sagging morale.

V-E Day was quite a celebration. Troops had a two-day holiday, and even we were given one day off! However, I didn't take that day off—somebody had to work, and as I had nothing to do, I volunteered to be there. I planned to use that day off later for something more interesting, and finally used it the following week when Martha came for a visit. I had my room alone while Barbara was in Tirana, so there was room for a guest. I think she enjoyed her visit—she stayed out until 2:30 AM both nights she was there. Those late hours weren't for me.

(TO BE CONTINUED)
