

IDEA GUIDE



VISITLEX

Lexington Visitors Center
215 West Main Street
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 233-7299 or (800) 845-3959
www.visitlex.com

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE BLUEGRASS

Whether you are spending a day, a week or longer in the Bluegrass Region, you and your family will learn fascinating information about African Americans. Gleanings from your travels will become answers to questions that you might not ever have thought to ask.

History in the Heart of Downtown

The public square at the center of downtown was platted in 1780 as the site of the courthouse for the newly established town of Lexington. The square has always been, and still is, a place where significant events and community activities have occurred. Archive records tell of a fight between a school teacher and a wildcat, controversial slave auctions, military drills, Civil War skirmishes, riots, hangings, speeches and fires that destroyed previous courthouses. This history has been inclusive of African Americans both enslaved and free.

By 1789, an area of the square had been designated as a marketplace and named after the market in London, England - Cheapside (old English ceapan means to buy). William Tucker (1787-1837), a free African American, was one of the merchants who advertised the sale of household items and spices from his stall. Farmers and others, during their monthly visits to transact legal business, bought, sold and swapped livestock and agricultural products. The sale activity, known as Court Day, ended in 1921. Historian J. Winston Coleman, Jr. documented two dozen dealers in Lexington who bought and sold the enslaved between 1833 and 1865. This commercial enterprise established Lexington as one of the largest slave markets in the south. The Cheapside Auction Block

Bluegrass Note: A number of nationally known individuals started their lives in Kentucky. Vertner Tandy (1885 - 1949), son of constructor Henry Tandy, became the first African American licensed architect in New York and a founding member of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternal organization. He designed the New York mansion of Madam C.J. Walker, the hair care product millionaire and Berea Hall dormitory on the campus of Lincoln Institute, Simpsonville.

stood near Main Street. The historical marker giving an account of the sale of African Americans stands in the northeast courtyard on Short Street. It was placed on the former site of the whipping post, erected by order of town trustees in 1806.

The impressive Romanesque design courthouse, the fourth built on site, was erected between 1898 and 1900. The Tandy and Byrd Construction Company, owned by African Americans Henry Tandy and Albert Byrd, laid the brick under the stone façade. The building was renovated in 2018, and now houses several businesses including the Lexington Visitors Center.

In 2009, Cheapside once again became an open-air market when area farmers and merchants began selling fresh produce and food products every Saturday from April through November. The pavilion also serves as performance space for musicians during “Thursday Night Live” and shelters those who attend local festivals, events and celebrations.

Walk around the square to read the wayside markers and stroll our downtown streets to view other points of interest. Historical Highway Markers are located throughout Lexington. Those highlighting African American history include: Doctors’ offices at 118 N. Broadway; Historic Pleasant Green Baptist Church

at 540 Maxwell Street; Lyman T. Johnson who integrated the University of Kentucky on Administration Drive; Polk/Dalton Infirmary at 217 Elm Tree Lane; African Cemetery No. 2 at 419 East Seventh Street; The Colored Orphan Home at 644 Georgetown Street; The Agricultural and Mechanical Fair of Colored People at Georgetown Street past Nandino Drive; and Maddoxtown Community on Huffman Mill Road. Main Street Baptist Church placed a historic marker at their church in 2015, celebrating 151 years at their West Main Street location.

Equine Industry Superstars

Plan a visit to the Kentucky Horse Park by traveling down Hwy 922, Newtown Pike, to Iron Works Pike. On the way, you'll pass the **Coldstream Research Farm** on the left. It was once the thoroughbred breeding farm McGrathiana, owned by H.P. McGrath. On this farm worked Oliver Lewis, the African American jockey who won the inaugural Kentucky Derby in 1875. The winning thoroughbred was Aristides, trained by renowned African American Ansel Williamson. Williamson was inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in 1998. Outlining a portion of the original boundary of the farm is a rock wall fence. A sign designates that it was crafted by African American masons who had replaced the Scottish and Irish immigrant stone masons of the 1840s and 1850s.

Admission to the **Kentucky Horse Park** includes both the International Museum of the Horse and the American Saddle Horse Museum. African Americans were the national sports superstars during the early development of the thoroughbred racing and Saddlebred horse industries. There are memorials to Isaac Murphy, the first African American jockey to win three Kentucky Derbies, and the famous thoroughbred, Man o' War and his groom, Will Harbut. "The Buffalo Soldiers of the Western Frontier" is a permanent exhibit housed in the International Museum of the Horse. Pick up a DVD produced by the American Saddlebred

Bluegrass Note: The rock fences seen as you travel the roadways are of limestone that was uncovered in fields during cultivation as well as quarried. Most were dry laid - without the use of mortar. The Lexington Fayette Urban County government has ordinances in place that encourage the preservation and restoration of area stone fences. The nonprofit Dry Stone Conservancy has taken on the task of preserving and restoring the stone fences by conducting workshops to train new masons in old techniques. Look for signs that designate the dates, styles and builders of these fences.

Association entitled "Out of the Shadows", the story of African American trainers and owners. (859) 259-2746.

African Americans played an important role in the development of the racing industry. Stop by the **Lexington Public Library** downtown and you'll see a mural highlighting a number of influential early African American jockeys, and the world's largest ceiling clock. (859) 231-5501.

The Stories of Slaves and Soldiers

Another day's tour can take you just outside Lexington to **Waveland**, site of a restored historic mansion and slave quarters. Head south on Nicholasville Road, then turn right onto Waveland Museum Lane. The stone building where the enslaved were housed and worked has been

Bluegrass Note: The Aviation Museum at Bluegrass Airport off Man-O-War Boulevard and U.S. Hwy 60 has an exhibit about the Tuskegee Airmen of Kentucky as well as other aviation history. 4316 Hanger Drive, behind the airport (859) 231-1219.

preserved and furnished with period artifacts. The guides tell you the history of enslaved on the property in conjunction with the story of the Bryan family, relatives of Daniel Boone, who lived in the Mansion house. (859) 272-3611.

Leaving Waveland, turn right onto Hwy 27 again and travel south past Nicholasville, taking the 27 Bypass. Signs let you know you are approaching **Camp Nelson**, established in 1863 as a supply camp for the Union Army during the Civil War. It became the third largest recruitment and training center for African Americans who formed the regiments known as the United States Colored Troops. Kentucky recruiters enlisted 23,700 African Americans, primarily among those who were enslaved. Some 10,000 began their training at Camp Nelson.

The camp originally encompassed 4,000 acres and held 300 buildings which were dismantled following the war. The house that was used as headquarters was

saved and has been restored. Guided tours are available. A self guided tour of the grounds will lead you to the camp's earthen fortifications which are being restored.

A number of artifacts which have been unearthed can be viewed in the interpretive center, a replica of a barracks. Camp Nelson Heritage Park was added to the National Parks Underground Railroad Network to Freedom in 2007.

The third weekend in

September, the park celebrates Camp Nelson Days. The site comes alive with re-enactors of the 12th Heavy Regiment of the USCT and other military units.

Lectures and demonstrations (firing of the cannon, cavalry charges, open fire cooking) help you experience what camp life was like for the soldiers as well as the families who escaped slavery and became free.

Adjacent to the Heritage Park is the **National Military Cemetery**. In an original section, the grave sites of African American soldiers can be found. Check the list of those who are interred to see if you might have relatives who were veterans.

Just beyond the park are several Kentucky Highway Markers that tell the history as it relates to the formation of the Hall community and the Ariel school established following the closing of the camp. (859) 881-5716.

Cousins of Influence

Lexington and Richmond are the locations of homes of two influential men who were cousins.

Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate is located at 120 Sycamore Drive, just off Richmond Road. At its zenith, the estate encompassed over 600 acres which were developed, cultivated and harvested by 50 enslaved at one time by Mr. Clay's telling. The farming operations also included active livestock breeding of horses, sheep and cattle. An interpretive history of the work performed by the enslaved in the management of the farm and household is presented.

Bluegrass Note: The town of Nicholasville is the birthplace of Morgan and Marvin Smith, the twin brothers whose photography captured images of Harlem, New York between 1935 and 1952.

There are archival panels along with a sketch of Charles Dupuy, a member of the family responsible for the personal care of the Clay household. The Dupuy family traveled to Washington, D.C. when Henry Clay was appointed Secretary of State in 1825 and lived in the Decatur house, the Clay's official residence. The story of Charlotte Dupuy's lawsuit filed in 1829, petitioning for her freedom as well as that of her two children, is truly fascinating.

Charlotte did not win the suit, but Henry Clay did finally emancipate her and her two children, Charles and Mary Ann, in the 1840s. There are archive photos of the T.H. Hummons' family and other African Americans who were employed in the household from the 1900s to 1964. (859) 266-8581.

From the Henry Clay estate, turn right onto Richmond Road and take I-75 South to Richmond, exit 95, to discover **White Hall State Historic Site**, the home of Henry Clay's cousin. The road leads to the home of Cassius Marcellus Clay - not the boxer - but the man who served as Ambassador to Russia during Abraham Lincoln's presidency. Cassius became an ardent emancipationist, having freed 50 of those enslaved to him in 1844. He printed the True American, a newspaper in 1845 promoting the emancipation of the enslaved. White Hall, a 44 room Italianate mansion, makes an impressive appearance as you approach the entrance.

At the right rear of the house is a stone building that was used as housing and workspace for the enslaved. Several of the original outbuildings have also been restored. One serves as the Gift Shop and location for admission to the home. There are picnic tables and restroom facilities, so plan for lunch or a late afternoon snack on the grounds. (859) 623-9178.

An Afternoon in Paris

A scenic drive to Paris will take you past historic horse farms and more rock wall fences. Take Broadway/Paris Pike, Hwy 68 North from Lexington. One of the first

Bluegrass Note: Cassius M. Clay supported the founding of Berea College in 1855, donating both land and money. Founder John G. Fee promoted the idea of a school where students from the Appalachian region could be educated regardless of race and income. Julia Britton, grandmother of Benjamin Hooks, Director of the NAACP, John H. Jackson, first president of Kentucky State University and Carter G. Woodson, founder of Black History Week, were graduates. The college is located in Berea, KY, just south of Richmond. You can spend a full day in the town enjoying the food, crafts and history.

stops should be the Thoroughbred Training Center located at 3380 Paris Pike. This facility actually trains future champion horses. You do need to be there before 9 a.m. if you want to see the horses put through their paces. Observing the work here will help you understand what is involved in the care and preparation of thoroughbreds for their careers in racing.

In earlier times, the tasks you observe would have been performed by African Americans, many of whom were children and young males. At age seven and eight, they started working in the barns and stables. By ten years of age some were being mounted on the horses as exercisers. Jockeys Isaac Murphy and William Walker began riding at the age of 11 and Raleigh Colston, Jr. rode in his first Kentucky Derby at the age of 13 in 1875. (859) 293-1853. Reservations recommended.

If you have stopped at the training center, return to Paris Pike and continue into town. Visit the **Hopewell Museum**, (859) 987-7274, located in the old Paris post office at 800 Pleasant Street. There is a permanent display featuring Garrett Morgan, inventor of the traffic signal and gas mask. Look for the Kentucky Historical Highway Marker at 10th and Vine Streets that marks the birthplace of Garrett Morgan.

Several quaint, independently owned restaurants make great lunch or dinner stops to round out your afternoon in Paris.

A Hamlet and a Railroad Town

Leaving Lexington from another direction, head west on Leestown Road (Hwy 421) and you'll pass an African American community established in 1865 by Frederick Braxton, founder and minister of the Main Street Baptist Church in Lexington. He had purchased land and sold small acreage to other blacks after emancipation. They named the community in his honor, **Bracktown**.

Stay on Hwy 421 until you reach **Midway**. Turn left at Hwy 62 which will lead you to town. Don't be surprised to find that the railroad tracks run through the middle of the street. When goods were delivered by rail, it made it convenient to off load supplies directly to stores. On Railroad Street, a marker pays tribute to Edward Dudley "Dick" Brown. He was born into slavery in Lexington about 1848. R.A. Alexander purchased him at auction around 1856 and brought him to the Woodburn farm in Woodford County where he began

his career as a stable boy. He eventually advanced to exerciser, jockey, trainer and finally owner of his own thoroughbred, Ben Brush, 1896 Kentucky Derby winner. Also in town are Historical Markers detailing the history of the Second Christian Church, Smith Street; Pilgrim Baptist Church, 133 East Stephen Street and St. Matthews AME Church, 112 S. Winter Street. They are within walking distance from Railroad Street.

A Capital Idea

Leaving Midway, get back on Hwy 421 and follow it into Frankfort, Kentucky's capital. Take the bypass until you see the sign directing you to **Kentucky State University**. Founded in 1887 by act of legislature, it became the first state supported school to train African Americans to become teachers. John H. Jackson, a native of Lexington, became its first president. Recitation Hall was the first building completed in 1887 by stone mason, James C. Brown. The building was renamed Jackson Hall and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The building is now the office/museum of the Center of Excellence for the Study of Kentucky African Americans. Visit the Welcome Center to view a display on African American history. Visitor permit parking is available.

Other sites to visit in Frankfort are the **Memorial to United States Colored Troops** at the Greenhill Cemetery, the **Kentucky Military History Museum**, the **Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History**, **Kentucky State Capitol** and **Old State Capitol**. Historic Markers are located at St. John AME Church, 210 West Clinton; 1st Baptist Church at 100 W. Clinton and Emily Thomas Tubman House on Washington Street. 🐎

**For more information contact VisitLEX
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*Written by Yvonne Giles, December 2008 (last update 2018)
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