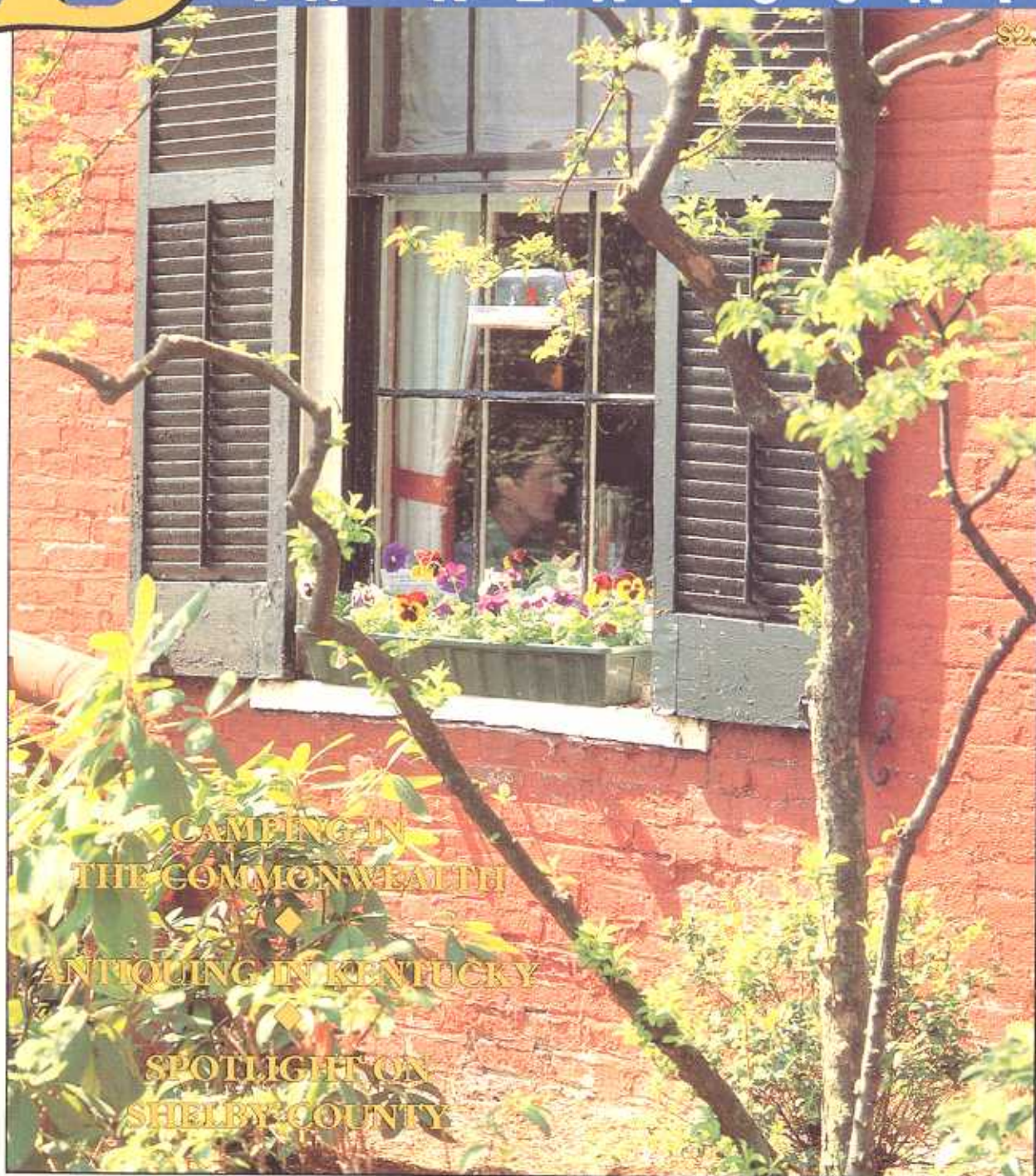


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SPOTLIGHT ON
SHELBY COUNTY

SHELBY COUNTY

Kentucky's Country Home

BY TERRY SEBASTIAN

Shelby County, celebrating its bicentennial last year with the Commonwealth, has a strong history and a bright future, two things residents are proud to tell any visitor.

Connected to Louisville and Frankfort by I-64 that practically bi-sects the county east to west, Shelby County draws many tourists who are traveling the state seeking a touch of hospitality. Travelers in Kentucky have always looked to this gateway to the Bluegrass for good food and safe shelter, and have generally found it. Early pioneers wandering the worn and rutted road between Louisville and Lexington came to rely on inns here, where today modern restaurants still serve up generous helpings of Southern food and hospitality.

The county's tourism commission likes to say Shelby County is Kentucky's country home, offering something for every taste. With history, Bluegrass scenery, specialty and antique shopping, and plenty of festivals and local activities, it's true. Green golf courses, rolling horse farms, famous restaurants, and historical buildings all make Shelby County a special place for visitors and residents alike.

The Commonwealth's third county, Shelby was created from a portion of Jefferson County after Kentucky gained statehood. It was named in honor of Isaac Shelby, the state's first governor. Shelby served two terms: 1792-1796 and 1812-1816. Shel-



by, a hero of the Revolutionary War, Indian campaigns, and the War of 1812, had counties named after him in nine states. Shelbyville was designated as the county seat. The county was larger in size when first formed, but a few years later it was divided into Spencer, Henry, and Trimble counties, and donated land to Oldham, Carroll, Franklin, and Anderson counties, as well.

Lying within Shelby County on Clear Creek was Squire Boone's Station, or Paint-

Top: Wakefield-Searce Galleries. Left and above: Shelby County in the heart of the bluegrass, is rooted in an agricultural heritage.

ed Stone Station, between Shelbyville and Eminence. Established in 1779, it was one of the first settlements on the Wilderness Road between Fort Harrod and the Falls of the Ohio (later Louisville).

Early pioneers buried within Shelby County indicate its influence in the state's early history. Benjamin Logan, who came to Kentucky with Daniel Boone in 1775 and built Logan's Fort (St. Asaph) in Lincoln County, is buried here, as is James Knox, leader of the famous "Long Hunters." Major Bland W. Ballard was a hunter, Indian fighter, and scout for George Rogers Clark in the Wabash expeditions, died in Shelby County in 1853, and is buried in the State Cemetery in Frankfort. Since those early days of traffic on the Wilderness Road, Shelby County has known movement and diversity—it has seen stagecoaches, railroads, Interurban cars, and today Interstate 64 bisects the county.

Carved from Jefferson County, Shelby County's history, economy, and culture have always been linked to neighboring Louisville. And, while the interstate has been in place for several years, only recently has its effect on the county begun to make its presence felt. An industrial boom brought manufacturing jobs to the county and modern travel made commuting to Louisville, Frankfort, and Lexington possible for rural residents.

While industry has grown, agriculture hasn't taken a back seat in Shelby County. In the 19th century, when hemp was a commonly grown commodity in the Com-

monwealth, Shelby was one of the chief producing counties. Crop income for the county from hemp reached an annual high of \$150,000 in 1860, when 900 tons of hemp were consumed to produce 2,000 bales of twine and 5,000 coils of rope in the same year. Shelby was one of 10 Bluegrass counties accounting for more than 90 percent of the United State's hemp yield in the late 1800s.

As the market for hemp dwindled with the importation of tariff-free jute around 1915, other agricultural products took its place. Shelby is by far the leading dairy county in Kentucky, with large dairy barns and herds of Holstein cattle at every turn. The area's dairy tradition is celebrated each June with a Dairy Festival.

The county is also third in burley tobacco production, while the Shelbyville burley tobacco market has been the third largest in the world and was a pioneer in the loose leaf auction trade, instituted here in 1912.

Early residents followed Squire Boone to the county, and Shelbyville, a satellite of Boone's Station, was in existence long before it was incorporated in 1792. The county seat was founded on land owned by William Shannon, who donated sufficient land for the courthouse and three public parks. By 1814, the city's boundaries were extended due to the county's rapid growth.

A noted fountain on the court square was originally erected in 1895 at Fifth and Main streets to commemorate the loss of horses when "Black Dave" Martin's Civil War guerillas attacked the stockade located there in

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1864. The public fountain, purchased for \$785 from a New York iron works includes a figure said to be an allegorical representation symbolizing the Atlantic Ocean.

Early settlers brought with them a belief in education, and a number of schools and academies dotted the county. Most famous of these was Science Hill, a school for girls that was founded in 1825 and operated for 114 continuous years under the direction of two families. Portions of those original school buildings today house Wakefield-Scarce Galleries, an antique dealership with a national reputation.

Another noted school near Simpsonville was founded in 1909 as a vocational school and was the only state high school for training black youth. The facility was named for Whitney M. Young, Jr., a native son, who was a noted civil rights leader and served as director of the National Urban League until his death in 1961. With the passage of the Integration Act in the 1950s, it became a training center.

The area's interest in education is reflected in the authors who have hailed from this Bluegrass county. Alice Hegan Rice, a contemporary of authors Fox and Allen, was born in Shelbyville at the home of her grandfather. She spent the rest of her life in nearby Louisville and is most noted for her book *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*.

Achieving an honor that no other book by a Kentuckian ever achieved: No. 1 on the annual best-seller

fiction list (1907) was *The Lady of the Decoration*. It was written in 1906 by Frances Little (pseudonym for Fannie Caldwell Macaulay, a Shelbyville native).

David Alexander, born in Shelbyville, attended the University of Kentucky and began his writing career with the Lexington Herald. A diverse journalism career took him to New York where he graduated with high honors from the New York Institute of Criminology, after studying for his new role as a mystery writer. *Most Men Don't Kill* and *Murder in Black and White*, both published in 1951, were widely reviewed and they and his later works (15 mysteries between 1951 and 1962) earned him national visibility.

With closer ties to her native county was Rachel M. Varable who grew up in the county, graduated from Science Hill Academy, and attended Eastern Kentucky State University and the University of Kentucky. Her ancestry gave her an interest in American and English history, and this coupled with a talent for research led her to write children's stories set in an earlier day. Early books were about princesses and gypsies. But her fourth book, *Julia Ann*, told a true story about Kentucky that, though fictionalized, records the founding of Science Hill Academy and is based on the memoirs of Julia Ann Tevis' childhood in the early 1800s. Other books followed, but only a few touched on Kentucky. One of note was *The Story of Mark Twain's Mother*—Twain's mother, Jane Lampton, grew up in Adair County.

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MEXICAN BEEF STIR FRY - 25 MINUTES

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 lb beef flank steak | 1 red or green bell pepper, cut into thin strips |
| 2 Tbsp vegetable oil | 1 med onion, cut into thin wedges |
| 1 tsp each ground cumin and dried oregano leaves | 1 to 2 jalapeño peppers, thinly sliced |
| 1 clove garlic, crushed | 3 c thinly sliced lettuce |

Cut beef steak into 1/2 inch thick strips. Combine oil, cumin, oregano and garlic, reserve half. Heat half the seasoned oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add bell pepper, onion and jalapeño pepper, stir-fry 2 to 3 min or until crisp-tender. Remove and reserve. In same skillet stir-fry beef strips (1/2 at a time) in remaining oil 1 to 2 min. Return vegetables to skillet and heat through. Serve beef mixture over lettuce. 4 servings.

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Today's students are served by the Shelby County School System, offering elementary, middle, and high school, as well as a vocational school offering training for future employment.

Churches, too, were important to the early settlers, as they are to Shelby County residents today. Congregations of many creeds gather in churches scattered across the county, including in Shelbyville the Centenary Methodist Church (rebuilt after a 1978 fire according to its original 1897 plan), the Catholic Church of the Annunciation (circa 1860), St. James Episcopal Church (circa 1867), and First Presbyterian Church (circa 1897). Outlying communities, too have their share of churches, serving a number of believers.

As in many communities, Shelbyville's downtown section began shrinking a few years ago, and by 1985 there were a lot of vacant buildings there. But today, at least in part because that year the city council established the Shelbyville Historic District, most storefronts shelter new businesses—specialty shops, antique dealers, and others. A few bed and breakfast facilities have hung out their shingles, and tourism is becoming big business for this small community.

Thousands of visitors come every year to browse the Wakefield-Scearce Galleries where a composite of English antique furniture and silver, curio pieces, collectibles, and unique gift items are available. The Georgia Room, in keeping with its 19th century atmosphere, serves fine food with a Kentucky flavor.

Others viewed the visitors as an opportunity and today numerous antique and gift shops line the downtown streets to serve them. Beige, green, mauve, turquoise, and purple paint adorn the three-story structures, giving it the authentic Victorian flavor of its origins. Other shops share space on the old Science Hill property, and November is the community's busiest season, as tourists arrive for the Galleries' Christmas shopping season kickoff.

Nearby Simpsonville, named for Captain John Simpson who fought at Fallen Timbers, practiced law in Shelbyville, and was elected four times to the state legislature, boasts the region's largest year-round indoor flea market as well as a North Carolina Discount Furniture Outlet. Also in Simpsonville, visitors will find the Old Stone Inn, established in 1805 as a stagecoach stop and today an historic restaurant. This area is also known as the saddlebred horse capitol of the world.

Other Shelby County communities benefit from their location within commuting distance of three metropolitan areas and a picturesque and hospitable countryside. Across the county, located on Highway 43 bound toward Henry County is Cropper, named for James Cropper, said to be the first to build a home and store in this area, heavily populated by Dutch Tract families.

South of Cropper is a small community named Finchville, named for its founder Ludwell Finch who bought a farm and opened a blacksmith shop. Today, its claim to fame is based on its Turkey Crossing on

Highway 55 just before the town limits. Sam Medley uses his hay bales to create designs such as a turkey, a tree, or a pumpkin for the holidays.

Originally Hardinsville, Graefenburg is located near the Franklin County border. Located along Highway 60 in an area known to flood occasionally, the town was given its name after the Postal Service learned of another Hardinsville in the state.

Situated along I-64, Waddy owes its existence to the railroad that helped get the town started in 1888 when Major Thomas Waddy donated part of the land for the railroad's right-of-way.

Also known for its festivals is Mount Eden, who celebrates Independence Day with parades, a beauty contest, and a greased pig contest. Said to be so beautiful and its soil so fertile it made early settlers think of the Biblical Eden, the community boasts a high-tech pig producer and Bauer's, a manufacturing operation producing Modjeskas candy sold in fine gift shops across the state.

Clay Village, also known as Clayvillage, said to be named for

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