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Bowling Green

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1900 Bowling Green has been in almost constant momentum. During the first half of the 20th century Bowling Green evolved from a sleepy Victorian town into a thriving small city. This transformation was abetted by a committed cadre of creative and positive thinking leaders in all fields of endeavor: business, finance, religion, medicine, education, and law. This book concentrates on the period from 1900 to 1950 in which Bowling Green was just beginning to explore its potential.

One of the most significant factors in Bowling Green's emergence as a regional commercial center from 1900 to 1950 was the development and improvement of transportation routes and facilities. During these important years the city enjoyed access to good roads, river traffic via steamboats and barges, rail service on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, and by the late 1930s a developing airport. These transportation routes made Bowling Green. Without them there would be no way to get goods in and out of the city, nor a means to bring people into the area.

Bowling Green needed ways for people to find this wonderful city as it emerged as a place of consequence. Some people came to the community's health facilities: the City-County Hospital (now the Medical Center), a tuberculosis sanatorium, the state board of health, and several private hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics. Thousands of students came to Bowling Green to continue their education at Ogden College, Potter College, Bowling Green Business University, and the growing Western Kentucky State Normal School (now Western Kentucky University). Customers visited regional banks, teeming department stores, legal offices, and numerous other types of service providers. Transportation helped the city and surrounding area get their products to the national market. Such commodities included agricultural products such as corn, grains, tobacco, hogs, horses, and strawberries. The area also boasted several important local natural resources—petroleum, limestone, lumber, and asphalt—that could be exported because of the transport availability. The city recruited new industry that depended on transportation, including Pet Milk, Honey Krust Bakery, Holley Carburetor, Ken-Rad, and Union Underwear. People also came to Bowling Green for entertainment, whether it was a week at Massey Springs, a bar-b-que at Beech Bend Park, a musical or sporting event at WKU, or an evening at Pauline's.

The first half of the 20th century also saw tremendous national events that affected our history: the invention of the automobile, World War I, Prohibition, Women's Suffrage, the Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II, and the Cold War. Warren Countians did not go unaffected by these events. Photographs help document local reaction to national events and thus are considered primary source material. They aid in interpreting significant happenings for future generations; they are evidence.

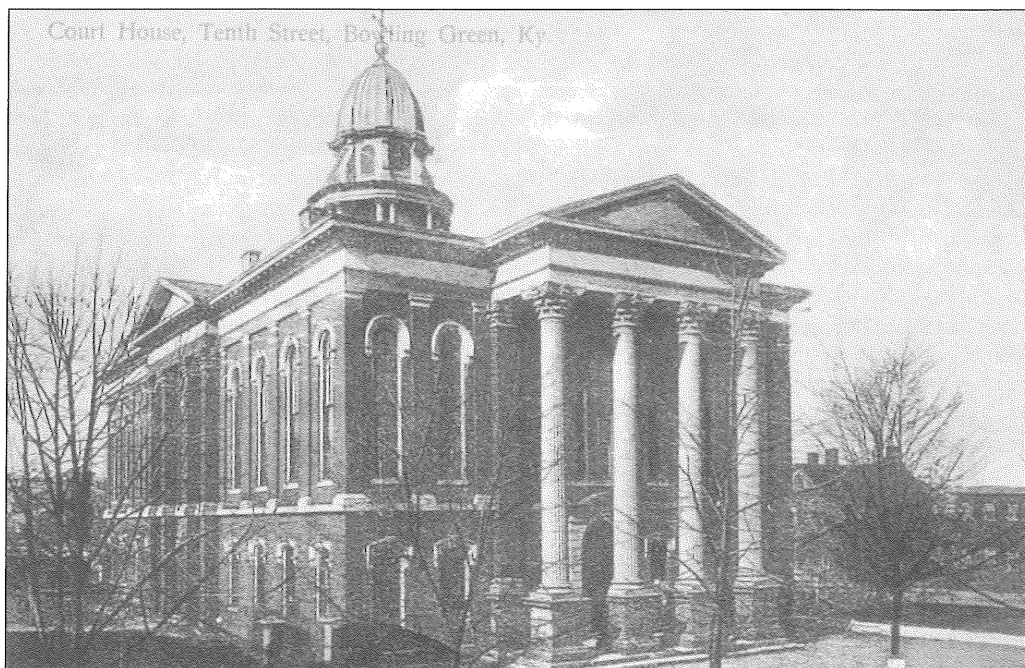
Fortunately, Bowling Green had several good photographers who helped document this significant era. One of the best known photographers was Edgar Cayce, the famed clairvoyant who spent six years in Bowling Green (1902–1908). Unfortunately, his studio burned twice while he was here. Most of his photographs that survive are portraits and some commercial photography for what was then the Southern Normal School (now WKU).

Perhaps the most prolific and accomplished photographer of the first part of the 20th century was Eugene Franklin (1886–1952). He was a native of Barren County and came to Bowling

Green from Memphis in 1916. Franklin took some of the best surviving photographs of Bowling Green businesses, events, and people. His skilled hand is seen throughout the pages of this book. After suffering a stroke, Franklin sold his photography business in 1946. Other notable local photographers who were just beginning their careers around the mid-century mark were Ches Johnson, Marshall Love, and soon afterwards, Tommy Hughes. All of these men have left an indelible mark on our local heritage, because photographs freeze history.

We are also fortunate that our city has a place such as the Kentucky Building at WKU, which houses the Kentucky Library and Museum. At this facility, professionals have faithfully cataloged and preserved photographs for the last 50 years. Photographs are selected for historic or documentary interest, visual or artistic merit, or interesting clothing or backgrounds. The library owns over 15,000 photographs ranging from daguerreotypes, to cyanotypes, to tintypes. Prints and negatives are cataloged and stored in acid-free folders and containers. The photographs create one of the most interesting and most used collections in the library.

In compiling this book I have tried to include a variety of photographs ranging from children playing to a church burning. With thousand of photos to choose from, I was looking for well-executed pictures. However, there were significant events, people, or places in our city that were only documented by amateurs, but thank goodness they were there to snap those shots for posterity's sake. I hope you enjoy watching Bowling Green's history through the camera lens of Bowling Green's past professional and amateur photographers.



WARREN COUNTY COURTHOUSE. D.J. Williams designed the third Warren County Courthouse in 1867 and construction was completed in 1869. The Italianate structure boasts a Classical pedimented portico supported by magnificent fluted columns topped with massive Corinthian capitals, all carved from Bowling Green limestone. The architect masterfully crowned his creation with a lovely neo-baroque cupola, which has been rebuilt twice. The building's interior was completely remodeled in the mid-1950s, but little change has been made to the exterior.