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## Barren County

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Barren County, in its formation, was taken from parts of Green and Warren Counties, and became the 37<sup>th</sup> county in Kentucky. In turn, its original 1500 square miles have been taken to create the surrounding counties of Allen, Hart, Metcalfe, and Monroe. Today, though a cohesive community, it has many parts as represented by the small towns that make up the whole. Communities such as Park City, Cave City, Austin Tracy, Etoile, Eighty-Eight, Hiseville, and Temple Hill remain vibrant today because of their cultural traditions. The county and its residents also preserve their sense of place and love of the land. The natural features of the landscape have made agriculture the primary industry for the county though manufacturing, retail and medicine are fast encroaching as economic diversification continues. Tobacco production is dwindling in the county but Barren still ranks at the top of beef and dairy cattle production in the state.

The love of history and heritage is evident in the county as Barren holds strongly to its history, rural roots and family ties. Many of its first settlers were Revolutionary War soldiers who received military service land grants. The county retains much of the verdant beauty that was noted by early travelers. One commenting in 1840, after an excursion through the entire region, noted “none but a recreant to nature, and undeserving of its pleasures, could remain indifferent to the charms in such lavish profusion around.” The traveler further comments on the “healthiness of the climate, the fine range for cattle, the facilities for raising swine, the culture of tobacco, and the growth and preservation of the timber,” as reason enough to totally disagree with the appellation of the “Barrens.”

Census and other records show more settlers of Scottish ancestry, coming by way of Virginia, established Barren County. Thus the county retains and celebrates this cultural heritage through its very popular Highland Games. The games, complete with bagpipes, kilts and competitive athletic events, have become so popular that the Kentucky Tourism Council recently named the event as one of the Top Ten Festival Events of the summer. The county seat also bears the name of Glasgow, though there is disagreement if the designation comes from Glasgow, Scotland or Glasgow, Virginia. An early visitor to the county seat remarked at the beauty and cleanliness of the town, and its environs as well as noting, “There are more beautiful, accomplished and intelligent women in Glasgow than in any other town of size in Ky.” Quite a compliment! The love of community, service and philanthropy is also evident as county wide there are over 40 different types of very active clubs, organizations, societies and community groups such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, South Central Kentucky Historical and Genealogical Society, and business and professional women's clubs. Glasgow, established in 1799, is located near the geographical center of the state and is about 100 miles south of Louisville and 85 miles north of Nashville. The town, as will be shown in the photographs, has seen many changes through time but remains today the economic, social and cultural center of the county.

The most notable land features in this region of Karst topography are its numerous sinkholes and caves. Barren County is also home to parts of Mammoth Cave National Park and has benefited greatly from its proximity to this natural wonder since it is Kentucky’s number one tourist destination with its over two million visitors each year. The cave, a World Heritage site, is the world’s longest known cave system with over 367 miles of explored passageways. Other than tourism, caves have also provided county residents with income through the production of “saltpeter” or potassium nitrate. The chemical was a necessary component in the production of gunpowder and reached its peak manufacture during the War of 1812 in caves in Temple Hill, Freedom and Austin locations.

Though there is no central theme to the selection of photographs chosen for this book, the beauty of the land and its people shine through. I have tried to represent all areas of the county and have included many of the notables who have proudly called Barren County, the county of their birth. A myriad of activities are represented by the photographs as people go about the everyday tasks of making a living by harvesting tobacco, making molasses or sawing timber or enjoying the simple pleasures of country life. Education has been and continues to be of vital significance as the photographs showcase many students as they proudly stand with their teachers and other visitors in front of “their” school. The significance of the one room school in the community cannot be understated as it was once said that one could claim the hallmarks of greatness if you were born in a log cabin or attended a one-room school as Abraham Lincoln. Many Barren residents have this benchmark. The importance of the social gatherings are noted in the photographs of people as they meet for religious ceremonies, family reunions, shopping, ball games, fairs, and parades.

It is a distinctly Kentucky tradition. If asked, “Where are you from?” a quick reply will tell the county of origin, not the city. My own ancestors came to Kentucky in 1796 and settled in Barren County soon after and so my love and admiration of the county and its citizenry runs deep. In the captions, and in this pictorial history, I have tried to include significant and interesting facts about the county and its people. I also hope the reader will find through the images of the book, a perspective created that showcases the personality of this south central Kentucky county that is defined in the words family, home, church, school and kinship, and see the land as it still is today, beautiful and productive.