

8-30-2006

## Warren County

Jonathan Jeffrey

*Western Kentucky University*, [jonathan.jeffrey@wku.edu](mailto:jonathan.jeffrey@wku.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc\\_books](http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_books)

 Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [Social History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Jonathan Jeffrey, *Images of America: Warren County*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in DLSC Faculty and Staff Book Gallery by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact [topscholar@wku.edu](mailto:topscholar@wku.edu).

# INTRODUCTION

Kentuckians are very geocentric people. If asked where they are from, they will say, "I'm from Warren County" or "I'm from Barren County." Many times, even if they live in a small town or city of some consequence, they will proudly prefer the name of their county over their municipality. Within a county, they might say, "Oh, I'm from the north end of the county." This interesting custom steered the organization of this book. I chose to have some photographs from the county seat and the area's largest town, Bowling Green, but the majority of the photographs are from the different geographic sections of Warren County. I was very much dependent on people sharing their photographs to complete the project, and I thank those who supplied them.

Warren County was formed in 1797 from adjacent Logan County. After several years of wrangling amongst several tiny communities, Bowling Green was chosen as the county seat and was eventually incorporated in 1812. Other towns were founded in the county, but few grew to any great consequence. Today there are four other incorporated communities in Warren County: Plum Springs, Woodburn, Smiths Grove, and Oakland. The county has an area of 546 square miles, which includes a variety of terrains from rolling hills in the northwest to flat, fertile fields in the southwest and northeast. The land is pierced by numerous sinkholes, as Warren County sits on several significant cave systems. Waterways are plentiful, with three significant rivers: the Barren, Green, and Gasper. Some might even add to this list one of the shortest rivers in the United States, Lost River. There are also several significant creeks, most notably Drakes, Trammel, and Bays Fork.

This book was not intended to be a picture book of famous individuals. There are a few, such as William Natcher and Duncan Hines, but most of the photographs are about everyday people doing everyday things. In these pages are people tending their fields and livestock, fishing, working in the quarries, attending church, eating watermelon, swimming, cooking, playing musical instruments, and simply lolling. This book celebrates the average person.

In compiling the book and looking at numerous photographs, I've drawn several conclusions. They say that data accumulation leads to pattern recognition. In other words, the more data one looks at, the more one is able to recognize patterns and perhaps why they occurred. The photographs I've observed from Warren County show how much people love the land. Farmers are shown standing in their fields admiring their hard work and the blessings of God; they steadfastly plow, till, and nurture the land. They recognize their sustenance comes from the soil. There is nothing quite as striking as a farmer examining his crops and livestock. An artist might as well be scrutinizing his own masterpiece.

Another observation I made is how much rural people love their animals. In days before mechanization, work animals such as oxen, mules, and horses were essential. They were fed carefully, groomed, and shod; they had shelter. They were also named. Naming something indicates affection. When people showed me pictures from their life, they could name the farm animals. That is touching.

I also observed how much Warren Countians love the water. I found them fishing, swimming, riding on steamboats, paddling skiffs, and picnicking or camping by the waterside. I saw men on log rafts and individuals using the rivers to take their materials to market. I saw ancient mills constructed on waterways. With miles of rivers and streams in the county, it's little wonder that we've negotiated a friendly relationship with the water.

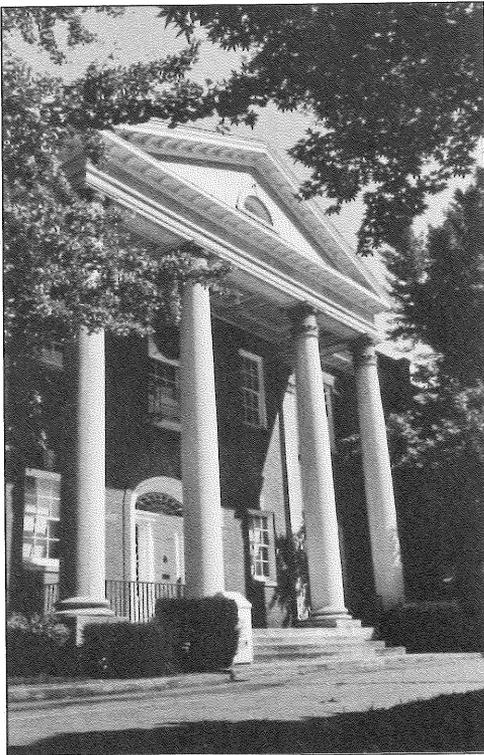
Finally Warren County people like to get together. They congregate for church, school, ice-cream socials, parties, after-church dinners, shopping, and just to talk. They like to stand around the potbellied stove and talk shop. They like to gather in the country store and discuss their crops. They enjoy sitting on the stoop while doing a little courting. They meet in Fountain Square for

all types of events. The church building and the schoolhouse—gathering places—are sacred and indicate the values held by these hardy people.

In conclusion, I discovered anew that Warren County is blessed. We have a lovely terrain that doesn't lean to any extreme. The area possesses fertile land and picturesque waterways. Certain natural resources have been found here in abundance: wood, building stone, and oil. Local industry and commerce thrive. Warren County's most important resource, however, is its people, a people who are innovative, generous, fun loving, and humble, and who enjoy finding solutions to problems together. I am proud to say, "I'm from Warren County, Kentucky."

I must finally remind our citizenry how fortunate our city is to have a place such as the Kentucky Building at Western Kentucky University, which houses the Kentucky Library and Museum. At this facility, professionals have faithfully cataloged and preserved photographs for the last 65 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 used collections in the library. I encourage readers to share images with future generations by contributing photographs to the Kentucky Library.

B69



**TREASURE CHEST.** The Kentucky Building on Western Kentucky University's lovely campus houses the Kentucky Library and Museum. Located here are books, manuscripts, and artifacts related to the cultural heritage of the commonwealth. Collecting Kentuckiana at Western Kentucky University began with a few concerned history professors who felt the need to preserve the commonwealth's unique history. Western Kentucky University's president, Henry Hardin Cherry, championed the idea in the late 1920s, and fund-raising began. Construction of the building, designed by Louisville architect Brinton B. Davis, began in 1929, but the Great Depression halted construction. With money from the Public Works Administration and with the assistance of local architect James M. Ingram, the building was completed in 1939. Each column on the front portico is turned from a single shaft of Bowling Green limestone—one of the many unique things about this attractive structure. A substantial addition was added in 1979. (Photograph by Robert Stuart.)