Landmark Report (Vol. 30, no. 1)

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The Landmark Association invites you to its

Annual Dinner Meeting

Thursday, May 24th
Shaker Tavern at South Union

Reception 5:30 p.m. on the expansive verandah
Dinner 6:15 at the Tavern • Presentation and Awards 7:00

SEATING LIMITED • INVITATIONS MAILED AT THE END OF APRIL

Calendar of Events

April 15 Deadline for Landmark Grant Applications
April 24 Deadline for Landmark Awards Nominations
April 27 Ramble to New Harmony, IN (for details, see page 2)
April 28 Work day at Pump House
To volunteer contact Jason@hildabrandinteriors.com
May 17 Preservation Conference • 601 State Street
For information contact Miranda Clements, 842-1953
May 24 Annual Dinner Meeting
September 9 Annual Picnic
December 1 Christmas Tour of Homes
Ramble to New Harmony, Indiana
FRIDAY, MAY 24 – 8:30 A.M. TO 8:00 P.M.
$50 PER PERSON
(Includes transportation, lunch, tour fees, light supper)

Come join members of Landmark as we tour Historic New Harmony, Indiana on Friday, May 24. This community has a fascinating mix of nineteenth and twentieth century architecture and an even more unusual history. New Harmony is the site of two of America’s great utopian communities. The first, Harmony on the Wabash (1814-1824), was founded by the Harmony Society, a group of Separatists from the German Lutheran Church. In 1814, led by their charismatic leader Johann Georg Rapp, they left their first American home, Harmony, PA. Indiana’s lower Wabash Valley on the western frontier gave them the opportunity to acquire a much larger tract of land. In 1825, the Harmonists moved back to Pennsylvania and built the town of Economia near Pittsburgh. Robert Owen, Welsh-born industrialist and social philosopher, bought their Indiana town and the surrounding lands for his communitarian experiment.

We’ll arrive at New Harmony in time for a delightful lunch at the highly acclaimed Red Geranium restaurant. Afterwards, we’ll take a two-hour tour of the community. We’ll also take time to walk the labyrinth, see the roofless church, and visit the quaint shops. After a delightful day of touring, we’ll stop for a light supper on the way back to Bowling Green. The $50 fee will include everything but your shopping.

Landmark Report 2

April 2012
for a year), Jennie Arabella Davis's son, Elmore Wood Davis. The two distant
two older children collected the proceeds of his life insurance to the L&N depot, stealing away to the home of
Elmore, at 44, found himself a widower with three children and Jennie, at 39,
father's bicycle for his short commute
the handlebars of her
room for Davis at the time of her retirement in 1985. Courtesy of Special Collections Library, WKU.

Left: Elmore Wood Davis,.png

Smiths

Jennie Cox never forgot her first crush, Hise and Arabella Davis's son, Emlor Wood Davis. The two distant
cousins did not marry, however, until Emlor, at 44, found himself a widower with three children and Jennie, at 39,
both her and little Virginia. Other men in Jennie's life, most notably her grandfather Meredith Cox and an uncle who
died seven months after Emlor, had favored her with small bequests, but their largesse could not atone for a husband who
had unpardonably betrayed his ill-educated and unprepared wife by expiring in a Louisville infirmary. From then on, wrote
Davis, her mother's sole objective was to save her child from the
curse of dependency, from spending her life bobbing like a cork upon waters churned by the selfish whims of men.
Already accustomed to the "discipline of making ends meet up to the last," Jennie now sacrificed her needs to a higher purpose,
that of giving her daughter the means to make her own way in the world.

That she succeeded was evident from Davis's own self-willed
voyage to Owensboro in 1942, where she answered the call of a
steady wage and spent a few months assembling television
equipment for the L&N depot, steering away to the home of
her father's bicycle for his short commute

Elmore, at 44, found himself a widower with three children and Jennie, at 39,
became a widower with three children and Jennie, at 39,
began to wish for a child of her own. They took up residence
in Smiths Grove, in a house on the northwest corner of 5th
and Main Streets that Emlor, the local freight and passenger
agent for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, had purchased
in 1909. About a year after their marriage, on December 7, 1919, their only child, Virginia, was born.

Emlor's death on April 23, 1925 was a watershed in the life of
his five-year-old daughter. Before then, Davis's travels
had been only those of small-town childhood, perched on the
handlebars of her father's bicycle for his short commute to the L&N depot, steering away to the home of Ella Rodes, her beloved "Negro cook and mamsy," or rattling around Adairland, the farm west of Buck Wood's old place operated by Maggie Wood Baird, the revered half-sister of
her grandmother Molly Wood Cox. Afterward, the journeys
became permanent. Davis's youngest half-brother had
already been sent to the care of grandparents, and Emlor's two older children collected the proceeds of his life insurance and fled from their widowed stepmother. Ella, too, exited the suddenly downsized household, her presence no longer necessary or affordable.

"I have to be man and woman both," was Jennie Cox Davis's
grim understanding of the financial purgatory confronting
their grandchildren

She was not. Like her mother, Davis had inherited, saved and invested. Excluding the sizeable sums she was rumored to have given away just prior to her death, her estate consisted of cash, certificates of deposit and stock valued at $336,782; her house and personal effects brought the total to just under $400,000. Davis directed that 80% of it be given to the journalism department of her alma mater, WKU.

Her astonishing friends, of course, were left to wonder how
Davis had amassed such a fortune and why she spent none of it on herself. Only amateur psychology—the scars of the Depression, fear of indifference, and the influence of her unhappy mother being the most popular theories—can address the latter question. As to the former, the record is murky enough to have made it a topic worthy of Davis's own investigative
talent, but her personal papers hinted at an answer. Despite working for much of her life in the South, Davis apparently
did not pursue a stake in the burgeoning postwar economy of the
Sun Belt. Instead, her investments stayed close to home, in farmland near Smiths Grove and especially in lots along
Glasgow which, when sold for development, gave her the
profits that she took to the bank for compound interest. In her
memories, Virginia Wood Davis insisted that she had no regrets
about leaving Kentucky; nevertheless, both her life's journey and its central riddle suggest that Kentucky—where her ashes are now interred in a family cemetery in Goodnight—never
left her. ▲

"When you strip away the rhetoric, preservation is simply having the good sense to hold on to things that are well
designed, that link us with our past in a meaningful way, and that have plenty of good use left in them."
—Richard Moe, Former executive director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

April 2012

Image 4.jpg

Landmark Report 4
A Cursive Timeline of Bowling Green’s Oldest Women’s Literary Club

By Jean E. Nehm

The Ladies Literary Club met with Mrs. Hines Tuesday, April 3rd. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted. Some members responded to the roll call. A motion was made and seconded to change the time of meeting from 2:30 to 3:00 and the business meeting is over.

A small excerpt from the 3 April 1888 minutes highlighting the attractive cursive handwriting found in the early minute books. Courtesy of Special Collections Library, WKU.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, secretaries of the Ladies Literary Club of Bowling Green began keeping detailed minutes of their meetings, using an elegant, formal writing style. Samples of their lovely penmanship in leather-bound volumes can be seen at the Kentucky Library and Museum, where they have been donated and archived. The gently curving strokes of ink suggest a flowing timeline, inviting readers to travel across the years from 1880 to the present.

In doing so, we not only learn about the activities of the club and its intelligent, caring members, but we also witness the unfolding, interesting history of our community.

Early in 1880, Mrs. J.D. Hines was sitting at her sewing machine in her home on State Street, when her friend Mrs. T.S. Stevens came to call. It was Mrs. Stevens who suggested that several women form a literary club in Bowling Green. Several months earlier, fifteen men had formed a club (the XV Club), and she felt strongly that women too ought to have a club. She was also adamant about not including refreshments, suggesting that the women in this new club would be superior to the men, who centered their meetings around a meal.

In March, twelve women met at the Girls’ College to found the Ladies Literary Club. Highly organized, they elected a president, vice president, and secretary. A program committee divided the members into “classes” of three, to present assigned programs on the first and third Tuesday afternoons of each month. Some of the topics seem quite daunting. For example, one class was responsible for discussing Egotism, Wit, and Sarcasm. Other assignments included Heat and Ventilation (“subjects of vital and practical interest to us at this season of the year,” according to the January 6, 1886 minutes); Reason, Imagination, and Will; Arctic Regions, Congo Regions, and Turkestan; and Currents and Inhabitants of the Oceans. Looking back in 1905, Mrs. Hines reminisced, “We were young then and full of courage, and stood uncrushed in the presence of any subject however vast.”

The population of Bowling Green in the 1800s was not much larger than 5,000, and the city did not yet have a library at which to do research for these topics. It is not surprising, then, to learn that some of the women were “delinquent” coming to the meeting without a paper to read. They were still expected to perform their duty, however, so once in a while there were more than the three scheduled programs in one afternoon. Mrs. Hines recalls, “Ah, the struggle we had to keep our eyes open and listen to this accumulation of learning!”

Over the years, members began to choose their own topics, which often focused on literature, and the delinquency problem disappeared. Later still, the three-member classes were replaced by a single member presenting a program, either as a written scholarly paper or told in a more informal manner.

The minutes in springtime sometimes mention low attendance because “the annual monic known as Spring Cleaning” had consumed their time. But all members were present for a special ceremony at Reservoir Park on Saturday (continued on page 7)

(Ladies Literary Club, continued from page 6)

afternoon, March 5, 1887. In celebration of Arbor Day, the club planted a tree—the Society forming a circle. Each member in turn throwing in a shovelful of earth.” Deposited under the tree was a sealed glass jar containing a brief history of the club, a list of members, and a poem written by one of them, Elizabeth Thomas.

Nine years later, the club sadly met again to bury a jar containing their club’s yearbook and a memorial to Miss Carpenter in whose memory they planted fifteen mountain ash trees at the old fort of Potter College. Miss Carpenter had given her program on October 20, 1896 and died just days later. The growing fondness of members is clear in this excerpt of their memorial which was published in The Evening Journal: “Just as the last lingering rays of an October sunset had faded from the hills, an unvoked guest entered the classic halls of Potter College and laid his cold, icy hand upon the gentle, refined, intellectual Miss Carpenter, and the white soul of our friend went out in the starlight never to return.”

In 1898, the Ladies Literary Club collaborated with the Current Topic Club (a new women’s literary club) to establish a library. They assessed $1.00 dues per year for the purchase of books on Russia, their next course of study. For years, business meetings were filled with much discussion on the collection of books, location of the library (Mrs. McElroy offered a room in her home), times (open from 4:00 to 5:00, rotating turns to serve as librarian, and a certificate to be used when checking out books. The library became known as the Women’s Literary and was moved to a room in the McCormack Building. By 1910, over one thousand books had been accumulated in the library collection; the L.L.C. was concerned, though, about the increasing number of fictional works (“a very bad effect on the morals of this library”) and felt that their club money should be used solely for “study books.” By 1911, the word “burdensome” appeared in the minutes in regard to all the demanding work required by the two clubs in maintaining the library. Even though the Y.M.C.A. offered “a litheated, heated room and a librarian who would keep the room open several times during the week,” discussions leaned toward donating the library either to the State Normal School or to the city Board of Education. Finally, a decision was made. A typed statement by the Board of Education was inserted into the minutes in 1913 accepting the “absolute gift” from “the ladies of this City, who have the interests of the children, of this City, at heart.”

(continued on page 8)
to work. Rather than meeting there, Mrs. McElroy again offered a room in her home, and Miss Rodes and Mrs. Barr offered the use of their sewing machines for war work every Tuesday afternoon. The October 16, 1917 minutes close thusly: "With a feeling of sadness that our delightful meetings would be interrupted for a time, yet with a realization of the importance of giving our patriotic service to the work of the Red Cross, the club adjourned." The faithful, handwritten minutes did not resume until April 25, 1919.

In October 1924, the ladies of the Episcopal Church requested that three members represent the club at their fundraising spelling contest. Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Carson, and Mrs. Herman were drafted. To the absolute delight of the club, Mrs. Potter won, and her silver loving cup trophy was duly admired at the next meeting. In their excitement and pride, the club purchased a perennial for Mrs. Potter’s garden and also wrote a clever acrostic using the letters of Mrs. Potter’s full name:

**HER GIFTS**

Martha, on a summer’s day, Ardently plays golf, they say; Runs the scales, and wields the bow; Trains the choir, dulcissimo; Half her gifts I can’t relate And one we wish to celebrate.

When Club members meet to vie — On a platform wide and high — Of the number who would spell, Dauntless, she alone can quell "Socinianism" 's awful spell.

Please, dear Pattie, let us tell Others that we love you well: Through your garden’s magic voice Take our thanks: with us rejoice Every season when these flowers Repeat to you "We’re glad you’re ours!"

And so the seasons passed, often noted poetically in the cursive penmanship of the day’s secretary. An entry for October stated, "The weather was beautiful, as if a belated summer’s day had wandered on into the realms of Indian Summer glory and bewildered, lost its careless way, amidst..." (continued on page 9)

(Ladies Literary Club, continued from page 8)
In 1880, the club celebrated another milestone—the 100th anniversary. Creative invitations, featuring a poignant design by Peggy Truman of an 1880s woman sharing a book with a 1980s woman, were sent to members and former members. After an enjoyable afternoon of fellowship, members “felt this was a very auspicious occasion and felt a closeness to those ladies who formed this club 100 years ago.”

Current members are still proud of their past, still active, and still enthusiastic. Anna Jo Johnson, a member since 1971, speaks about what an honor it is to be a member of the Ladies Literary Club. She adds that the club presents an award for fiction in Western’s English Department every year. Julie Ronell loves to check Barnes and Noble and the New York Times book reviews to find a great book to present, but one of her most memorable programs was not about a specific book but rather about her life-altering experience in Tsavo National Park in Kenya. She treasures the friendships formed in the club and the fact that such busy women still reserve precious time twice a month for fellowship and learning. Julia Roberts, who was pleased to bring her mother to meetings when she was in town, particularly enjoys the diversity of interests of the members, the intimate setting in members’ homes, and the fun of sharing. In her case, the important work for gifted children being done at the Western Kentucky University is a special topic for her to present. Regina Nowell enjoys doing the research required to prepare for her programs, calling it a great “brain stretch.” Her home on Park Street, built in 1851 and the location of notable Civil War history and prominent residents, has also inspired several interesting programs. Carol Wedge, an honorary member, has fond memories of once being the youngest member and now being one of the oldest, with so many memorable programs in the intervening years. She finds it heartwarming that people still appreciate literature. Similarly, Jane Parker, an active member for over 40 years and now an honorary member, has enjoyed members of every age and is grateful for being a member of the L.L.C. for so many years of her life. BarbaraEnglish is pleased that her daughter-in-law is now a member so that there “will always be an English in the L.L.C.” She cherishes the tradition of the secretaries passing the “hallowed book” of minutes, still hand-written, to the next secretary.

The initials L.L.C. stand not only for the name of the club but also for their special motto—Love, Light, and Culture. The founders of the Ladies Literary Club would no doubt smile to realize that Longevity, Lovely ideals, and Continuity also characterize this proud literary club today. When discussing a 1905 quotation by Harriett Thomas Hines saying that the most beautiful feature of this club is “the perfect harmony and good will and sympathy among its members,” Anna Jo Johnson enthusiastically added, “It’s still like that today!”

**BOWLING GREEN NATIVE SURVIVED THE 1900 GALVESTON HURRICANE**

My Dear Sister:

Your sweet letter came this morning. You know we appreciate your kindness towards us, but we are all right and consider that we lost very little; compared to the majority of people in Galveston. John and I think that our loss won’t be over fifteen hundred dollars and that is so little when we know we have plenty left to live on. Yes, we lost lots of our clothes, but you know the children had too many anyhow so I shared we could well afford to lose some. I lost one week’s washing. The woman had not gotten the clothes home and her house and everything went so fast we couldn’t prevent it. I did walk out a good many of my clothes away before I left Galveston—to people who did not have one thing in the world. Oh! there are thousands of people there without one penny.

Many at 2 o’clock Saturday Sept 8, I looked out and saw the gulf water backing up. 32 Street. I did not feel afraid at all as we did not have one bit of wind to speak of. But in an hour Frances came back in the house and wanted her bathing suit on so she might wade in the water in the street. When we went to the door and the water was backing up my front steps. Well yes telephoned John and he said there were no signs of water over Market St. But said he would come home as soon as he could. Well about then the wind sprung up and the waves were up several feet. Then Mr. P could not get home and could not get a carriage or horse for no price. He offered a man $20 dollars for the loan of a horse to ride home. Would not take him home for no price. Well the result was he did not get home until half past three Sunday morning. I was entirely alone with the children until the worst of the flood was over and did not know what second our house would go and I wish the lakes would recede. We were at the mercy of the water and flying timbers. While I had that fear I did not believe once that we would be lost. I read the Bible and prayed as I never had before. I read out to the children and it was the only thing that kept me quiet when I would lay the Bible down and look out I would almost scream with fear for Mr. Parker. So afraid he might have started home on foot—which if he had no doubt he would not be living today. And too I was afraid for my hedgehog and bobby; so when I would begin to walk the floor and look troubled my poor little boy would take me by the hand and say—don’t cry (cry) don’t cry (cry) mama. I not let the house fall on you—I will stay [stay] with you. Then he would say ‘weal’ (weal) this book me and bring me the Bible. No Many. I don’t believe anything saved us but Providence. Our house stood but of course several windows were blown out and a good deal of the roof off. The front steps taken clear off somewhere and our water tank can’t be found.

After the storm was most over the Taylor family of which there are seven come over and at 2 o’clock in the morning four of another family came. So you see we then had fifteen, that is after Mr. P came which was half past three Sunday morning. Oh! I suffered death those long hours. Even after the storm was over I listened all this time for someone to tell me John was lost and he was in a worse condition than I was. He was here, but he could not get home and did not know. He gave me orders to go all the way from the store in water up to his chin over roofs of houses, dead people and animals, thinking or almost thinking that he would never find us when he got home Mary I can’t describe this storm. What you see in the papers is not overdrawn if anything it was even worse than the papers put it. I am glad my friends were so interested in me but if this storm and destruction would not melt a heart of stone I don’t know what it would take. However I believe they were interested and are glad to know I had so many friends. Tell them we were saved through prayer and John and I believe that is all that saved us. The Lord saved us, Mr. Parker downtown, and I at home praying.

As to coming to Galveston, I don’t know what we will do. You know John can’t just leave the store and run—for there is where we get food and clothes. But really I can’t stay just yet. Will tell you as soon as I find out. Bob came to Galveston and brought us to Ft. Worth, and poor mother was most wild about me and the children. She said she almost knew John was at it is sweet of you and Addie to offer us a home but we are alright now. We have one we want to dispose of now. True you know John can’t live in the world but we want to get something for ourselves and think we will as there are lots of people in Galveston who have no homes and have to stay and have to buy a place to live in. Our house is rented now for twenty dollars a month in the condition it is.

Tell Mr. Kahn that I appreciate his interest in us. People were so grieved that they lost all they had in the world but thankful that they had their families saved. Mary I am so nervous I am hardly well but try to get over that part of it and get to be myself again. I could write all day but must stop as I have to write to Mr. Parker. Would love to come to see you all—but the trip is too far and we are all right here. Yours E.
Perhaps you could pass this newsletter along to someone you think would be interested in supporting Landmark's efforts in historic preservation advocacy.

I (we) want to support the Historic Preservation efforts in Bowling Green and Warren County.

Name  
Mailing Address  
City  State  Zip  
Telephone  E-mail  

----------------------------- Levels of Membership -----------------------------

[  ] Foundation $25  [  ] Ionic Order $100  [  ] Entablature $500  
[  ] Doric Order $50  [  ] Corinthian Order $250  [  ] Cornice $1,000  

Checks should be payable to:  Landmark Association  
P.O. Box 1812  
Bowling Green, KY 42102-1812