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Landmark Report (Vol. 30, no. 3)

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"A future with a past"

LANDMARK REPORT

VOLUME XXX, NUMBER 3

LANDMARK ASSOCIATION OF BG/WC

NOVEMBER 2012

The Landmark Association
& Meyer Mortgage
present a

Christmas Tour of Homes

Saturday, December 1, 2012 • 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. • \$10 per person

Dave & Kim Bouchey – 1306 Euclid
Lynn & Julie Olson – 933 Covington
Jeff & Margaret Stein – 936 Covington
Gary and Neill Caudill – 828 Covington
Stephen & Patsy Morgenthaler – 1310 College

Landmark Store & Silent Auction at 1301 College



The Landmark Association of Bowling Green-Warren County

A non-profit organization established in 1976 as a community advocate for preservation, protection and maintenance of architectural, cultural and archaeological resources in Bowling Green and Warren County.

Board of Directors

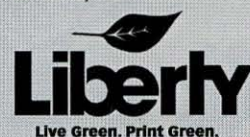
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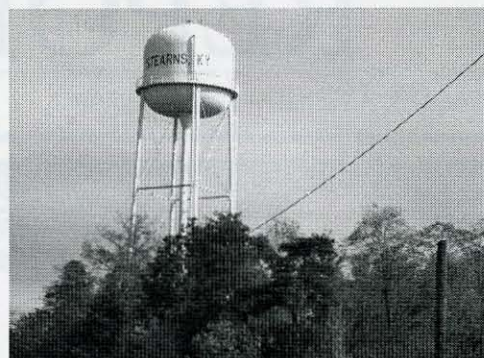
Landmark Report encourages unsolicited articles or suggestions for articles and will consider all for publication.

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Not a paid advertisement.

Members Trek to Stearns for Fall Ramble



ABOVE: The Stearns water tower near the depot. Photos courtesy of Jonathan Jeffrey.



ABOVE: The terminus of the Big South Fork railway at the Blue Heron Mining Camp. After eating lunch, the group explored the nearby coal tippie, the entrance to the Blue Heron mine, and hiked around the area visiting interpretive sites and enjoying the fall foliage.

BELOW: Part of the group visiting the chapel on the campus of Lindsey Wilson College in Columbia. The unusual chapel was designed by noted Arkansas architect, Fay Jones (1921-2004). None of us will forget the filling dinner we enjoyed at Betty's OK Country Cooking.



BELOW: Landmark members Bill & Joey Powell, Jim & Jean Harris, Donna Lile and others enjoy the rail ride on railway on a gorgeous fall day.



SPRING RAMBLE PLANNED FOR MID-APRIL TO COLUMBIA, TENNESSEE TO TOUR ANTEBELLUM MANSIONS AND HAVE A DELIGHTFUL LUNCH EXPERIENCE.

Calendar

- December 1** Christmas Tour of Homes
- Mid-April** Ramble to Columbia, Tennessee
- Early-May** Walking Tour of Fountain Square
- May** Annual Meeting

Meet the Larths

By Jean E. Nehm



Larths Club members in the 1940s enjoying an outing. Photo courtesy of Alicia McFarland.

The Larths Club is a long-standing and active women's literary club in Bowling Green, into which a few men have made an occasional and interesting appearance. The first man to make a contribution did so at the very beginning. In 1925, several young women, who had participated in a high school club together, desired to form a literary club. These charter members included Mrs. Herman Lowe (Emma), Mrs. George Meuth (Jewell), Mrs. Lucille Tubb Robinson, Mrs. Emory Smith (Pauline), and Mrs. C. Earl Venable (Nina). Article II of their constitution stated, "The object of this club shall be to study Literature, Art, Religion, Travel, History, and Science." It was Emma's husband Herman who suggested that the club's name could be created by using the first letters of their topics. Thus, the Larths Club was founded and named.

In the early years of the club, the women selected one of their main categories for the year's theme, and individual members prepared a specific program to present on the first and third Thursday of each month from October through May. An example of the members' enthusiasm was their year-long study of astronomy in 1939. Not only were their individual topics—constellations, planets, stars in mythology, eclipses and tides, comets and meteors, nebulae, and telescopes—challenging, but the women voted to have four meetings in the evening in order to observe the night skies. As recorded by the secretary, "The second night observation meeting of the Larths Literary Club was held in the log cabin in the Stovall garden. A box lunch, each box decorated with

a constellation, was provided by the hospitality committee. A contest was held to determine what member could guess the most constellations correctly. First and second prizes went to Elizabeth Strayhorn and Mary Frances Eaton."

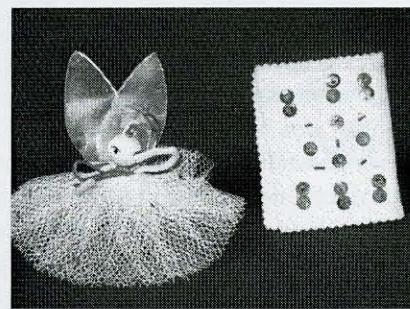
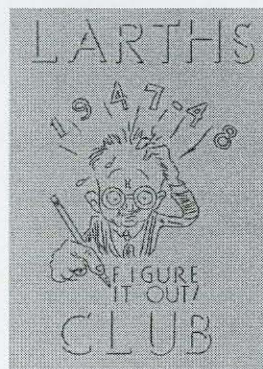
The theme for the 1948-1949 year of study was just as broad and deep: The South. Individual members presented programs on the TVA, modern prose writers (Caldwell, Faulkner, and Wolfe), poets (Donald Davidson, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and James Weldon Johnson), music in the South, gardens of the South (Bellingrath, Cypress, Magnolia, Middleton, and Brookgreen), parks of the South (with Louise Toomey sharing "Kodachrome slides of parks visited by her and her husband"), and agriculture and industries of the South.

In 1950, the women, who had begun to refer to themselves as "the Larths," studied the latest research in order to present programs on the various breakthroughs in science: new drugs from molds, atomic energy, synthetic textiles, and plastics.

In 1966, another influential man contributed to the history of the Larths Club. In the club's study of folklore, Jean Kirby gave a program on the life and literature of Jesse Stuart, her uncle. By then, Jesse Stuart, a former Kentucky poet laureate, was such a renowned author that Western Kentucky University invited him to speak in its University Lecture Series on October 6th. That noon, the Larths Club hosted a private luncheon for Jesse Stuart and his wife, Naomi Deane, at the Bowling Green Country Club. That evening, a section of Van Meter auditorium was set aside for the Larths Club members, and their teenage daughters served as ushers. The secretary, Mary Jo Cook, wrote in the minutes that the club "shared him with the rest of our town and he really gave an inspirational talk. . . . He received a standing ovation." She added,

"On Saturday I went to the bookstore and he autographed a copy of our program with a nice commentary to the Larths. We are very pleased with ourselves, . . . and as an 'unbiased' member, I think our pride is justified." A few days later, the club received a sweet thank-you note from Mrs. Stuart, thanking "the Larths Club for the beautiful orchid. Your luncheon was such a beautiful, delightful one. Your warm, gracious attention to our visit in Bowling Green made both Jesse and me very happy indeed and we thank you so very sincerely." Later in the month, the club voted to donate a first edition of Mr. Stuart's book *Tales from the Plum Grove Hills* to the Kentucky Library. They also voted to invite Mr. and Mrs. Stuart to be honorary members of the Larths Club. At the November 3rd meeting, pride and excitement must have prevailed when the secretary "read a letter from Jesse Stuart accepting our invitation of honorary membership on behalf of Mrs. Stuart and himself." The Stuart letters and

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Left: Larths Club program from 1947-1948. Photo courtesy of Special Collections Library, WKU. Right: Handmade party favors constructed by Maydelle Funk for the Larths Club Christmas breakfasts. Photo courtesy of the author.

the autographed program are among the club's treasured artifacts preserved in the Manuscripts Archives unit of the Special Collections Library at WKU.

As the years passed, the women continued to give themselves significant subjects to research. With the theme of Highways in 1970, for example, members chose to report on the Santa Fe Trail, the Wilderness Road, the Mormon Trail, the Oregon Trail, the Natchez Trace, El Camino Real, the Autobahn, and the High Road in the Pyrenees. Not intimidated by research, Irene Love in 1979 used seven books plus the World Book Encyclopedia and some newspaper articles to prepare for her program on Mary Anna Randolph Custis Lee (Mrs. Robert E. Lee).

The T for Travel in the club's name seemed to be an especially favorite topic, with world travelers Louise Toomey and Emma Lowe giving popular programs about their interesting destinations. Sometimes the members themselves would travel to places such as the Hermitage in Nashville, the Old Union Church, and the Kentucky Museum to see the Growing Up Victorian exhibit. In addition, each year they left Bowling Green to drive to Frances Richards' home for their meeting. One year, the minutes recorded that "we left the noise and traffic of the city behind and made our way to the rural setting of Simpson County, where we enjoyed the gracious hospitality of Frances Richards in her lovely country home. . . . We were shown through the house, the garden, and the museum, a very special treat. We took our reluctant leave feeling that we had just experienced one of the highlights of our Larths Club year, and arrived home a little later than usual."

Another club tradition for many years was the annual spring picnic at Mary Jo Cook's summer cottage on Barren River Lake. The usual plan was to bring a salad, meet at Mary Jo's home on Euclid Avenue, and then carpool to the lake where their hostess treated everyone to a ride on her pontoon boat. The Larths delighted in "the house tour, the bridge tour, the lodge tour, the wildlife tour, the dock tour, and Skaggs Creek." One year, however, the peaceful routine turned into an adventure. Recording the minutes in June

1971, the secretary reported that just as they were fully engaged in enjoying the scenery, "a few raindrops began to fall—then the Heavens opened. Mary Jo anchored the boat at a boat dock protected by a cliff. The wind blew and the lightning flashed. We were drenched but our spirits were not dampened in the least. . . . Emma on Mount Etna, or Louise on the far side of the world, did not have a more thrilling or exciting adventure. Our compliments to Mary Jo for her excellent handling of the boat—we felt safe with her at the wheel." Even today, Mary Jo vividly remembers the event, adding the humorous detail that in the midst of the storm, the ladies broke into song, singing "Nearer My God to Thee" and "Shall We Gather at the River?"

The annual Christmas breakfast has certainly been one of the club's most cherished traditions. On December 7, 1946, Maydelle Funk invited the Larths Club to her gaily decorated home for a gift exchange and breakfast before an open fire. Who could have known then that this lovely event would become a thirty-year tradition, eagerly anticipated each year by Maydelle, who adored entertaining, and by the members, who so deeply appreciated her gracious hospitality? Each year, the secretary reported on the beautiful Christmas decorations and the lavish meals, saying that this "was the best we've ever had." It was also noted that Maydelle was "beautifully assisted by her children." Her daughters Suzanne and Gretchen, many decades later, still have fond memories of their participation. Prior to the Larths' arrival, the children were on "polishing detail" for the silver and were expected to help set the festive table. And on that special morning, they greeted all the ladies at the door and welcomed them into their home. Suzanne even remembers how "lady-like" she felt as a twelve-year-old, wearing a midnight blue taffeta skirt, pretty white blouse, black patent leather shoes, and rhinestone bobby pins in her hair—all dressed up, just as the adults were. Gretchen remembers taking the ladies' coats

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Lou Toomey preparing the refreshment table for the Club's 60th anniversary in 1985. Photo courtesy of Special Collections Library, WKU.

and mink stoles to a bedroom. While the ladies were all busy eating, chatting, and opening gifts, Gretchen and another sister Melanie had great fun trying on those stylish coats and stoles and admiring themselves in the mirror! Their brother Mark played the piano, mostly for seasonal background music and once for a gift exchange activity; the gifts were passed around and around the table, and when the piano music stopped, each member opened the gift that was just passed to her. In 1972, the secretary again wrote about the club's joy in sharing the Christmas spirit together at Maydelle's home. "Twenty-four years has not abated our anticipation, but twenty-four years has emptied the house of children and we missed them."

All the years of Christmas joy at the Funk home came to a sad closure with the passing of Maydelle in December 1977. Irene Love, the secretary in January, wrote a poignant tribute: "Not only was she our sister Larth but our dear, dear friend. Her enthusiasm for life and her endless activities were a constant inspiration to us. For thirty years, she had entertained the Club at her home with an annual Christmas breakfast, an event we had all come to feel was the highlight of our club year. The gracious and warm hospitality in her home and the delicacies, so beautifully served from her kitchen made each year more memorable than the last. Rest in peace, Maydelle. Each of us has had her life made richer because we knew you, and the stars in heaven must surely shine brighter because you are there."

The Larths Club members were also very fond of Maydelle's husband, Dr. Jess Funk. When sending him a copy of their tribute, they also expressed their gratitude to him, for he, too, had been present and had thoroughly enjoyed the annual Christmas breakfasts. "As Secretary of Larths Club, I have been asked to express our appreciation to you and your family for all the good times we have enjoyed in your home. Your open door and warm hospitality will always be remembered. . . . Thank you for all your kindnesses through the years." Many years earlier, Dr. Funk had affectionately nicknamed the women in his wife's literary club "the Larks." The ladies cheerfully adopted the name, and there are several allusions to it in the minutes, such as this from 1978: "The April winds blew us right into Lillian Reneau's living room for our April 6 regular meeting." Writing about a late fall meeting in 1986, the secretary wrote, "Despite the gloom of an overcast sky on a dreary November 20, 1986, eleven chattering Larths flocked together for another afternoon of study in the home of Atha Ford."

Other husbands made appearances at club meetings. Alicia McFarland's husband Joe gave some programs sharing his travel stories, such as his trip to the Bahamas. Likewise, Emma's husband Herman assisted Emma with programs about their many trips to global destinations, including Scotland, Nova Scotia, the South Sea Islands, and the Pacific

Northwest. His photography skills were greatly admired by the club. His death in 1987 was noted in the club minutes: "With him went some of the Larths Club heritage. Herman Lowe gave our club its name. With Em, he has had great interest in our organization. On many occasions he shared his interest, his talents, and his travels. . . . We shall miss him."

The passage of time has seen several changes in the Larths Club. Members now meet only once a month, and they no longer use the structure of being assigned one of the L-A-R-T-H-S topics; instead, each member chooses her own topic or books to share. Rather than exchanging Christmas gifts, the club now donates to a local charity. What has not changed is the original purpose of the club as stated in the constitution—to study literature, art, religion, travel, history, and science, especially to stay abreast of the current issues of our time. Their enthusiasm for studying and meeting in each other's homes is still strong.

To meet the Larths today, however, is to learn that the club embodies far more than scholarly work and meetings. June Rose Garrott has fond memories of many of the past members, speaking with reverence of their varied and interesting lives; in fact, she notes that the club members are almost a family in closeness. Indeed, many of the members have literally been related. Alice Simon, for example, is the daughter-in-law of Lillian Reneau. Mary Jo Cook's daughter, Elaine Price, and Maydelle Funk's daughter, Gretchen Broderick, were both members. Alicia McFarland is the daughter of Arline Rawlins, one of the earliest members. Mrs. McFarland says she will never forget the loving support of the Larths Club when she lost her dear mother. Because of their compassion and many years of shared experiences, she absolutely treasures the deep friendships within the club.

To meet the Larths today is also to understand the importance of this literary club in the members' lives. Alice Ford admits that in these modern times with the Internet, electronic readers, and thirty-second sound bytes, the idea of a literary club may seem anachronistic. Yet, with a few changes to update the club's format, the club has transitioned well into the 21st century, with interesting topics and priceless friendships.

Reflecting on the history of the club in 1986, the secretary wrote, "We gratefully appreciate the efforts and good works of those members who came before us, for we know our club is what it is because of them and their dedication to making Larths Club a personal cultural enrichment." To meet the Larths today is to witness the same devotion and the beautiful continuity of this esteemed literary club. ▲

Preserving Our Cemeteries: Action Steps To Making It Happen

by Sue Lynn McDaniel, Warren County Cemetery Board Member



Pioneer Cemetery probably after a cleanup in the 1930s spearheaded by John B. Rodes. Although it appears that these stones have been cleaned, they were actually painted white. This is not a preservation method and is strongly discouraged. Photo courtesy of Special Collections Library, WKU.

Many of Warren county residents' last landmarks are vanishing from our cultural landscape. Tonya Colley of the City-County Planning Commission estimates that our county has over 500 cemeteries. In the summers of 2004 and 2005, Phase I of a Warren County Cemetery Documentation Project surveyed 36 cemeteries within our county. By the end of Phase II, a total of 218 cemeteries were surveyed. Several publications on Warren County cemeteries have attempted to provide comprehensive listings, but much work remains. In more recent years, local real estate surveyors have informally joined in our efforts to preserve information about small family cemeteries by calling Colley to report graves located in their daily work. The Warren County Cemetery Board meets regularly to discuss issues relevant to our cemeteries and serve as a community resource.

In September of this year, Historic Preservation Planner

Miranda Clements and I attended Preservation Kentucky's workshop: "Our History Rests here: Preservation and Restoration of Historic Cemeteries." During the two-day event, professionals discussed basic strategies and methods for concerned citizens to contribute volunteer labor. Jason Church, Materials Conservator from the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, delivered the majority of the lectures and hands-on training. From Jason Church and the other speakers, I learned the following:

Do NOTHING to the cemetery until you have learned the basics so that you do not lose information while trying to improve the site. Many well-meaning individuals have excluded graves when fencing a cemetery, disrupted a grave while removing trees, damaged monuments by cleaning them improperly, mended a stone with materials that

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caused greater long-term harm, or destroyed information by re-setting tombstones where they no longer marked the grave. When visiting isolated cemeteries, take flowers, pull weeds, & make photographs. By locating, visiting and making photographs with date stamps of small cemeteries, volunteers can document that their cemeteries have not been abandoned. Representing Kentucky's Cemetery Preservation Program, Ann Johnson stated: "Once a cemetery, always a cemetery....If all stones are taken away, it is still considered a cemetery." Johnson stressed that, although Kentucky Revised Statutes as they relate to cemeteries have no enforcement piece, concerned citizens should call their sheriff if they are denied access to family cemeteries on private property. Land owners are not required to maintain, but cannot damage, add a deer stand or alter the cemetery. If graves are tended and visited during the previous 10 years, property holders cannot move grave markers and they must give 60-day notice in the local newspaper of their intent. Other actions items could include: Watch local newspapers for notifications of intent to move tombstones. Report any notifications or information you might have observed about changes to Warren County cemeteries to our cemetery board via Sue.Lynn.McDaniel@wku.edu Locate all existing documentation including plot maps and previous listings of the graves Use family collections & the Special Collections Library (formerly known as the "Kentucky Library") in the Kentucky Building at WKU [9-4 Monday-Saturday when WKU classes are in session]. Ask family genealogists and local historians to share information in their research files with you and WKU's Special Collections Library. Search FindAGrave.com and other genealogical & cemetery websites. Conduct oral history interviews with local residents and family members who have knowledge of the burial ground. Surveying the cemetery by forming a grid pattern & chart what you see Include plants, trees, current tombstones, and noticeably indentations in the ground. Donate copies of all research and listings/surveys you complete to WKU's Special Collections Library. If you have knowledge of a cemetery on private lands, contact me by phone (270-745-3246) or e-mail (sue.lynn.mcdaniel@wku.edu). If you are interested in volunteering with the Warren County Cemetery Board's efforts to create a comprehensive file of known information about our local cemeteries, contact me by phone (270-745-3246) or e-mail (sue.lynn.mcdaniel@wku.edu). If you are a member of a local volunteer organization interested in donating funds or in assisting in plant identification, research, removal of trees & undergrowth, monument cleaning and/or repair, or fence repairs and/or installation, contact me by phone (270-745-3246) or e-mail (sue.lynn.

mcdaniel@wku.edu)

Complete a Kentucky's Cemetery Census Survey Form (available at http://history.ky.gov/pdf/CommunityServices/Cemetery_Census_Form_rev11-08.pdf) to help build the Commonwealth's database of cemeteries and burial sites. Beginning next year, apply for cemeteries to be designated "Kentucky Pioneer Cemeteries" Based on successful programs in Texas and other states, Kentucky plans to begin an "Adopt a Cemetery" program and will designate cemeteries as "Kentucky Pioneer Cemeteries" if the markers indicate they accepted burials by 1842. Consider attending the next historic cemetery restoration workshop offered by Preservation Kentucky at their annual meeting.

Together we can preserve these historic cemetery landmarks. ▲



Members of the workshop gently cleaning an unusual limestone marker. Limestone markers are quite common in south central Kentucky, particularly in Warren County. Photo courtesy of the author.



The limestone marker after its cleaning. Photo courtesy of the author.

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

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LANDMARK
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Bowling Green-Warren County



"A future with a past"