Effectively Radiated Powers: The Cultural Impact of Media on a Kentucky Community

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EFFECTIVELY RADIATED POWERS:
THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF MEDIA
ON A KENTUCKY COMMUNITY

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Master of Arts

by
William Bryant Drury
May, 1993
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THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF MEDIA
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the city of Henderson, Kentucky, and its people who have been a major part of my life. Many of the golden childhood memories that I received from its influences will always remain with me. Unlike many towns, Henderson has its own fingerprint, a unique signature it leaves on the lives of its citizens.

I thank Larry Williams and Boynton Merrill for allowing me the use of books from their personal libraries concerning the history of Henderson, Henderson County, and the state of Kentucky. I also thank Chet Behrman, whose meticulous notes allowed me to retrace the seminal moments of WEHT’s broadcasting. The contributions these gentlemen gave me became indispensable to some elements of my thesis research.

I thank Smith Ezell and James Pressley for their insightful recollections of the magic Henderson movie houses created for Hendersonians. The movie medium they helped build and foster no longer exists in Henderson, now given up to television. Only an Old Orchard Twin Cinemas and a much older Starlight Drive-In remain.

I thank Chet Behrman, Ulysses Carlini, Brod Seymour, Jerry Tolbert, and Elmer Chancellor for the treasured personal stories of their first days in
Henderson's new television medium. As broadcasters in the 1953 newly-approved FCC ruling of UHF frequencies, much of the nation's earliest television broadcasters modeled presentations based upon their work. They not only worked in the medium, they helped invent it.

I pay tribute to those who have attempted to instruct me. From Miss Edna Vogel's Henderson kindergarten, where I first learned to recite "The March Wind," to Dr. Larry Winn's depiction class, from which I learned the difference between "munikanalogy" and "Munich Analogy," I owe my knowledge and appreciation of learning.

A special thanks goes to my thesis committee: Dr. Dale Wicklander, Dr. Carl Kell, Dr. Larry Winn, and Dr. Loren Ruff who have guided my research, construction, and writing of this thesis. They served as the Earth, Wind, Rain, and Fire behind this treatise. Their concern and consideration for this project made it possible. Dr. Kell has guided my ship well as my faculty adviser. Together, they represent some of the finest intellectuals at Western Kentucky University.

Last, I thank my parents, Carolyn and William Drury, whose love and encouragement deserve far more than words of gratitude. As people, they have been honest, compassionate, and sincere with me. As their son, they have made possible for me that which was not; they have created hope when I had none; they have stood by me when I failed. The life experiences they have passed on to me linger as priceless, while their sacrifices remain infinite and resolute in helping me to secure my dreams. I dedicate this work to them in partial receipt.
"Well, it's on the river and you can travel to just about anyplace in Henderson in thirty-minutes on a bicycle," I told people wanting to know the size of Henderson, Kentucky, "and it has at least one of anything you'd ever need." It seems I spent my bike-riding days in explaining Henderson in just that manner to those who do not know of the city. The statement makes several points. It indicates that Henderson is small, yet ambitious enough to have a variety of industry and amusements at the disposal of the natives. In another way, the statement indicates that the town is, or has been, progressive if not aggressive in
its development.

When people ask me about Henderson, I become hesitant as I ponder the question. Much of the soul of Henderson abides in metaphor: a zebra with many stripes. Henderson seems to operate in conflict with itself; one spirit attempts to identify itself with its Southern agricultural heritage that holds on to the names of its founding fathers, including their achievements and stigmas; its other essence runs head-on with its Northern industrial progressiveness, making way for other names it hears from outside Henderson, so long as the news has no offense to its Southern traditions.

Though historians and authors have written of the town's developments, I have not seen nor heard of any formal written history of the electronic media of Henderson, Kentucky. While ambitious sketches abound of Henderson's river boat days, its opera and theater stages, and its earliest newspapers, nowhere have I found, for example, any detailed description of its movie houses, its drive-ins, its radio and television stations. In examining the development of downtown Henderson each medium played an extensive role in providing a major reason for Hendersonians to dress up and to come downtown to socialize.

Before the electronic media came to Henderson, voters gathered outside the newspaper building and waited into the wee hours of election night for local, County, state, and national results. By contrast, up to the early 1940s, the town's radio station signed off at sunset while Henderson's newspapers continued serving the community as the pulse of local news gathering. When Hendersonians
became sated with their news desires they wanted entertainment.

With glittering marquees, carpeted aisles, velvet curtains, and deep-cushioned seats, Henderson's movie houses promoted an aura of excitement and enthusiasm. Combined, they were driving forces that allowed its citizens a visual measure of the world at large, producing endearing faces of actors and actresses in suspense, action, and drama serials from the entertainment world. The houses captured the local appeal by providing stage shows for benefit drives, talent showcasings, and special events.

A gentle tug of social change began to take place in the early 1940's as Henderson's first radio signals beamed out into its homes. To hear news and entertainment, listeners had to remain home and off the streets of downtown Henderson. They no longer had to dress up to go see and be seen. Each family could have its full dose of news and entertainment right in the comfort and confines of their home. Radio represented one of the first major conflicts in vying for the time and money of its citizens. Downtown socialization became threatened, depending upon the radio night or the special feature playing at the movies.

Television rang the warning signal to downtown Henderson and to all other media. It could provide the best (and worst) of all media combined: news and entertainment, with sight and sound. It could present up-to-date local news and local entertainment; it could lead in fund drives and special events; it could provide soap opera serials and feature-length films, at no cost. The Henderson family had to pay only the price for one solitary ticket; and a television set became its
"window to the world" as a guaranteed, limitless show.

In my research I have not found any evidence of celebration by Henderson citizens in knowing that its market is one of the first UHF television stations that signed on the air in 1953, and that the station was only one of thirty-five UHF stations that were not "major market" stations, meaning the top ten largest populated cities. Henderson had not only one, but three network affiliated television stations nearly ten and twenty years before many cities, larger in population, had but a single television station, let alone a radio station.

Over the past few decades, television has come to Henderson veiled in stealth-like attributes that have greatly diminished the lure of Hendersonians from the once circus and market-like atmosphere of the downtown area. The face of Henderson's downtown has altered dramatically instead of its once-bustling street business. Yet, the town has thrived and prospered when all other media have come to its shores, or down its highway. Why?

A part of the answer lies with the cultural background of Henderson people. The community has had many treasures given to and taken away. Henderson has worn labels of the richest, the wildest, the largest, the highest, the driest, the smallest, the poorest. The town also has been a vanguard market in electronic media, having radio and television within its city limits several years before the rest of the nation. Its Southern heritage of over a century-ago home-news lifestyle seems to have severely clashed with the "global village" media values of society today. A second and third generation now replace the founding owners,
managers, and operators of the media. In their place, the rich pioneering media history of Henderson is waning. Soon, the loss of founding media pioneer accounts may occur.

This thesis chronicles the development of Henderson and its media. Unlike most pioneering towns that sprung up west of the Allegheny and Appalachian Mountains during the 18th century, Henderson assumed a unique position in the development of the Midwest as an important and major tobacco port, as an agricultural conduit to the North and industrial path to the South, and as an outpost of trade to the West. A clearer picture of its aggressive nature becomes evident by tracing the hard-fought beginnings of the region. As Henderson grew in importance, so did its lust grow for excitement and entertainment. Compared to the gleaming major Atlantic seaports of the youthful nation, Henderson sparkled like a diamond amongst the rough and crude Midwest settlements by providing residents and travelers inland entertainment at its Ohio riverport.

Two overlapping questions embrace the focus of the study: what caused the underlying pride of development that Henderson obviously possesses? Why, too, has Henderson had such an extensive amount of media from which to choose?

The questions serve as a blueprint for depicting the cultural growth and the impact of media that has existed in Henderson and for its smaller surrounding communities. Information will come from printed newspaper articles, books of Henderson and Henderson County history, interviews with some of those few
remaining theater operators, phonograph operators, and broadcasters. I use my twenty-years' experience of working in radio and television production, sales, and management to interpret the jargon of their craft and to make their information more meaningful to the reader.  

Henderson has historical roots back to the "Original Thirteen Colonies." Legislators took measures to make the territory of Kentucky a fourteenth colony of the "United Colonies," before, on September 9, 1776, the Continental Congress passed legislation changing the name to the "United States." To trace the land's development is to understand better the nature of Henderson's people. From its earliest days, it has relied upon its sister rivertown Evansville for its livelihood, trade, and kinship, even as it has competed with its neighbor for river trade, identity, and stature.

No one can say that the town has merely "existed." Pride, pioneering, and a sense of community remains of utmost importance to the townspeople. Its part in our nation's wars, its flooding rivers, tobacco and river commerce, and economic hardships during the Great Depression of the 1930's have placed a stamp of character on the town that remains unique to Kentucky. Henderson's nature of beneficence has allowed it to have heart, while its cloistering notion of community often has sheltered it from the mainstream of advancement. Of all its history, no year stands out as a benchmark of change, most notably in its media, than does 1953. That year the town left one philosophical thought and responded to and began adapting to another, the electronic age of information. This work examines
the depth of Henderson's change, a fascinating facet of its modern heritage.

Historians have written about the state, the county, and the city of Henderson, but documentation of its modern media remains slight or nonexistent. The media names and images of long ago that its people read, heard, and saw, remain the unsung and near-forgotten pioneers for their contribution to the family Henderson, Kentucky citizens. This work serves a reminder of those names and beckons us to remember them all.
CHAPTER ONE

Henderson, Kentucky, nestles cozily high on Ohio River's eastern bank in Kentucky's northwest section. Standing nearly four-hundred-feet above sea level Henderson, historians consider the town as "the only floodless city in the Ohio Valley from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Cairo, Illinois (Wilson, 1928)." This particular Kentucky area along the river carries the designation as "Western Waters" in its earliest Virginia deed titles (Starling, 1887). So hastened was the Westward Movement from the established states of the original thirteen colonies to the site of what is now Henderson, that only about sixty-years span the gap between its wilderness status in the land that became the State of Kentucky, and its identity as the town of Henderson.

Etched in the inceptions of Henderson and Henderson County are the beginnings of the country. I found it vital to trace the country's influence on the land of Kentucky as well as Kentucky land as an importance influence on the country. In these readings a "spirit" of the people for forging ahead emerges and becomes more defined. For those who have studied and researched the origins of Henderson County, this work should present little new material. My major historical sources are Bodley, Collins, Perrin, and Starling.
I found Judge Lewis Collins' work, *Historical Sketches of Kentucky*, written in 1850, a seminal and authoritative work of Kentucky's early development. Edmund L. Starling's *History of Henderson County, Kentucky*, written thirty-seven years after, in 1887, offers a good, in-depth survey of a pioneer Henderson County and City of Henderson, Kentucky. William Perrin's *A History of the State*, written in 1886, gives wonderful accounts of the state, particularly its riverboat days. Information to bridge the gap of information, the undertones of Kentucky becoming a state, and how Henderson became a county and city I discovered in Temple Bodley's *History of Kentucky*, written in 1928. None matched his insightful writing and his clear explanations of how the state of Kentucky came into existence as the fifteenth state of the United States, becoming a springboard for the opening up of America's Western frontiers.

Its people's free-spirited growth flourished between the times of two great wars, both aimed at liberty and independence: the Revolutionary War and Civil War. Though the pages below convey information on both wars, a detailed exploration is beyond the scope of the present work. Because of the Kentucky territory's pivotal position in both wars, I bring up only matters specific to the advancement of Kentucky's becoming a state and the development of its western front, namely, the region around Henderson.

The stock of people who fashioned their new way of life by coming over the Allegheny mountains reveals an important aspect of the development of the area. In the 18th century, crossing those mountains meant leaving modern and protected
To a major degree, it meant leaving the harassment of British influence. The Revolutionary War simmered only as ill-feelings toward the British who taxed the colonists in populated areas, stationed troops among them, regulated their trade, and attempted to close their frontiers to settlement. Indians still prevailed and hunted the very soil that explorers were attempting to mark as their own. Often, the joy a settler found in life came only from surviving for another day. A portrait of the openings to the state needs painting to establish a heart and soul to the images of the pioneers who came to settle, develop, and grow in what is now the community of Henderson, Kentucky.

The first-known American-born explorer, with European ancestry who ever penetrated Kentucky was John Salling, of Virginia, in 1730. Salling had heard of vast salt-licks in the region and he wished to seize the opportunity to claim the licks for his Virginia (Collins, 1850). The first inhabited spot in Kentucky, and the second that had "a local habitation and a name," was the Shawnee town, in Greenup county (in the Northeast corner of Kentucky, bounding Ohio), nearly opposite Portsmouth, Ohio (Griffing, 1880).

An extensive flood of the Scioto River caused the inhabitants, consisting of Native Americans and a few French traders to take their effects to the hills. The Indians then built their town on the Kentucky high ground side of the river, but, during the French War, in 1755, abandoned it for fear of the Virginians. They soon resettled the town and had constructed as many as twenty log-cabins by 1773.

In 1750, a party of Virginians, led by Dr. Thomas Walker, with Ambrose
Powell, Colby Chew, and others, entered through Cumberland Gap and explored what is now the counties of Bell, Knox, Whitley, Laurel, Clay, Owsley, Breathitt, Perry, Letcher, and Harlan. Then, in 1758, Dr. Walker reached Dick's river, in Lincoln county. In 1767, Daniel Boone led a North Carolinian party down through Eastern Kentucky. Between 1761 and 1767, several companies of hunters came into Southeastern Kentucky from Virginia and Pennsylvania. In 1765, Colonel George Croghan was "the first White person having discovered the Ohio River as low down as Henderson (1887)." Captain Harry Gordon had surveyed and mapped, in some crude way, the entire length of the Ohio, so that by 1776, much of the Northern boundary of Kentucky existed.

Exploration quickened as Captain James Smith and four others passed through Cumberland Gap, and, coming upon the Cumberland river, passed down its entire length to the Ohio. John Findlay, in 1767, followed with several others, penetrating into the Kentucky land as far as Red River, probably around Estill County. Christopher Gist, an explorer for the Ohio Company, passed down the Ohio to the mouth of the Kentucky River, and up that stream easterly to the Kanawha River.

The most extended early visits into Kentucky were those in 1769-71, composed of two parties. The first party included Daniel Boone, John Findlay, John Stewart, Joseph Holden, Daniel Monay, and William Coole reaching the Red River, in Estill County; a second party, led by Captain James Knox, and known as the "Long Hunters," consisted of over twenty men from North Carolina and Virginia,
The Long Hunters explored much of Southeastern and South-central Kentucky as far as Lincoln and Green Counties. Captain Thomas Bullitt led surveying parties to the Falls of the Ohio, and in August 1773, laid out a town where Louisville now stands, and made numerous other surveys in that region.

Another party of surveyors from Virginia, with three McAfee brothers at their head, fell in with Captain Bullitt, as they traveled to the mouth of the Kentucky River. Up this stream they made frequent surveys in what are now Henry, Franklin, Anderson, and Mercer counties. They then returned home through Eastern Kentucky.

By the summer of 1774, other parties of surveyors followed, led by Colonel John Floyd, Hancock Taylor, and James Douglass. Two parties of hunters and explorers, accompanied the explorers under the leadership of Captains James Harrod and Isaac Hite, who helped blaze a pathway to the Western interior of Kentucky. On June 15, 1774, the town of Harrodstown, now Harrodsburg, began and the settlement of Kentucky was born. Even Daniel Boone helped in assisting the town's construction. In a few years, George Rogers Clark would be one of the men holed up at the fort to withstand the latest raid of Shawnee Indians. The raid made little sense to him as he cowered while Indians shot at them at will. He thought settlers were better off to fortify their settlements with firearms and ammunition against future Indian attacks, a plan he kept in mind for future use.

In examining almost any facet of early American history, including the Kentucky area, one first looks to the East to discover the origins of the West.
Some of the characters of those times were colorful and purposed; few were both. Many of the pioneer tales west of the Alleghenies and Appalachians would be dull were it not for the reverberant nuances of reputation that countlessly retold of the legendary Daniel Boone, of his fights with Indians and land discoveries. Among those who ventured to claim such mountainous boundaries of land for themselves, none exceeded the character and conviction of Richard Henderson, not even Daniel Boone.

Boone's first visit to the Kentucky Territory, in 1767, brought North Carolinian parties along his famous "Wilderness Road" through the Cumberland Gap. Boone's explorations throughout the states of Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Indiana left a trail of names bearing his legacy: Boone's Gap, Boone Ridge, Booneville, Boone County, Boone Station, Boone's Fort, and the first Revolutionary fort, Boonesborough, named for him by the President of Henderson & Company, later known as the Transylvania Company. Colonel Richard Henderson, here enters the picture (Kerr, 1922).  

Richard Henderson determined that life would not remain as it appeared to him. Born in Hanover County, Virginia, on April 20, 1735, to poor Scot-Welsh parents, Henderson could neither read nor write until he became an adult. His first job of any importance was as constable, then as under-sheriff to his father, the newly appointed sheriff of the County, where the duties educated him largely in the practical knowledge of men and things for which he became distinguished in his later life. He learned not only to read, but to study law with his cousin, Judge John
Williams. After a brief time, he applied for license to Charles Berry, chief justice of the colony, whose duty it was to examine applicants, and on whose certificate the governor issued Henderson a license to practice law (1850).  

Berry asked Henderson, following his license application, just how long had the young Henderson read and what books of law had he read. After being told that the time was too brief, Berry turned Henderson down, stating that the law examination was of no use, since no man could read and digest so much material in such a short amount of a time. With great promptness and firmness, Henderson replied that it was his privilege to apply for a license and that the judge’s duty remained to examine him; and, if he qualified, grant him the certificate. So well did the young Henderson do on the scorching examination that the certificate the Henderson received the certificate, with encomiums upon his industry, acquirements, and talents. He soon rose to the highest ranks of his profession, whereupon honors and wealth followed (1850).  

At the Battle of Alamance, near the Alamance River, on May 16, 1771, fighting broke out between the Regulators, who were against the aggressions and extortions of the crown officers, and the British. The troubled time brought a halt in justice courts for which Henderson had been acting as an associate justice in Hillsboro, Orange County, in Virginia. Henderson lost much of his fortune in this fighting, and decided that such loses would not occur again. He set out to devise the most extensive scheme of speculation possibly ever recorded in the history of this country (1850).
As far back as the Puritan establishment of Jamestown, the Virginia territory claimed sea-to-sea rights in its original charter. By 1624, while the British government oversaw the development of its fledgling colonies, it annulled Virginia's sea-to-sea charter, giving way to its Camden-Yorke opinion granting individuals the right to acquire land, by whatever means, from the Indians. Then, the vast lands west of the Alleghenies came under the jurisdiction of the Shawnee, Iroquois, and Cherokee. For the Indians, land defined a place, not a property with boundaries. The Iroquois and Shawnee ceded their rights to the lands between Ohio and Tennessee, leaving the Cherokee as the land's owners.

"The benevolent decree issued by the King of England, the Proclamation of 1763, set apart for the Indians and the royal fur trade all the western region gained by the Treaty of Paris, but the colonists, who had fought the French and Indians and promised bounty lands, had no desire to have them located in this western wilderness" (Cotterill, 1917). The settlers wanted their bounties to lie in civilized areas, not having to fight one battle after another by spending the rest of their lives having to defend their property from hostile Indians.

With the British in charge of supervising the development of the country, Henderson planned from a greater vision. By claiming wilderness land, his power base would rise with the British. He commissioned Daniel Boone to explore the Kentucky territory and to report his findings to know clearly the very nature of the lands for which he'd bargain with the Cherokee. Patrick Henry, then governor of Virginia, also sent a messenger to probe Cherokee interests concerning Kentucky
land sales during this time, but with the approach of the Revolutionary War, plans for negotiating the lands came to a halt (1917). Under provisions of the British "Royal Proclamation in 1763," signed by Lord Dunmore of England, which halted the warranting of land grants west of the Alleghenies, Henderson formed his Henderson & Company in hopes of having a land cache if the England could not enforce the Proclamation. He remained aware that any colony west of the Alleghenies would be in disagreement with the Proclamation, but other colonial leaders, including George Washington, considered the decree a temporary measure and one that lay unsecured. Henderson theorized that if he could acquire the vast lands, under any title other than the United Colonies, he would have bargaining power with the British decree if he were to prove authority of land ownership.

The Richard Henderson & Company consisted predominantly of officers John Williams, brothers Thomas and Nathaniel Hart, William Johnson, James Hogg, David Hart, Leonard Hendly Bullock, John Luttrell, with Richard Henderson as president over this company core. Soon becoming a major consortium out of North Carolina, Richard Henderson & Company sought business in exploring, claiming, and developing trans-Allegheny lands for sales distribution after the Revolutionary War (Perrin, 1886). The company also held the land then known as Fincastle County of Virginia against the British and Indians during the country's strife and early development. In reporting his findings of his explorations, Boone suggested that Henderson should also use the company to settle the Kentucky
territory. He described the richness of the Fincastle area of Kentucky lands he had seen on "the other side of the mountains," or "Transylvania," in Latin. Richard Henderson considered changing the name of Richard Henderson & Company to Transylvania Land Company, which he would in 1779.

Most of the land of Kentucky and Northcentral Tennessee, then, came under the grant jurisdiction of the Cherokee Indians. The Henderson consortium made a decision to purchase the Cherokee title for its Henderson & Company with the purpose of establishing some settlements and gaining land speculations. The region demanded by Henderson and yielded by the Indians lay between the Kentucky and the Cumberland rivers (1917). Henderson arranged a deal with the leaders of the Cherokee nations to sign an agreement for the land, known as the Treaty of Watauga, for $50,000. With one stroke at the pen, Henderson and his associates became the owners in two-thirds of Kentucky and portions of Northcentral Tennessee, nearly 2,000,000-acres of land. The company of Henderson, Nathaniel Hart, James Luttrell, and Daniel Boone, met on March 17, 1775, with the entire nation of the Cherokee Indians, only twelve-hundred in all, and a few hundred frontiersmen at the region of Sycamore Shoals, at Fort Watauga. The fort lay at the Watauga branch of Tennessee's Holston River, near the present-day Elizabethtown (1880). Tensions could not have been any higher due to Indian uprisings all around. Henderson made sure plenty of spirits flowed at the signing. Luckily, for Henderson's party, reports indicate the meeting played into a gala celebration for all.
Straight-away, Henderson began to show the fiber of his convictions by claiming the new land as a proprietary government, with him as its president and Boonesborough as its seat of government. The new country received the name of "New Independent Province," being known informally as "Transylvania." The first legislature assembled at Boonesborough, meeting under the shade of a large elm tree that grew near the walls of the fort. The members formed themselves into a legislative body, by electing Thomas Slaughter, chairman, and Mathew Jouett, clerk. Colonel Henderson, on behalf of himself and his associates, in "a speech of sufficient dignity and of excellent sense," addressed the cismountaine legislature, the earliest popular body that assembled on the west side of the Appalachian mountains (1887). Henderson established and formulated a new principle of laws for rising colony settlements west of the Alleghenies (1922). Henderson, in essence, readied to launch a whole new colony in that region, with either "New Independent Province" or "Transylvania" as its name.

A "new country" scenario emerges that remains too tempting to pass without some speculative comment. Henderson virtually goes unmentioned in Kentucky history and his name disappears in American history. While Transylvania Land Company accounts occasionally refer to Henderson, even their references rarely include mention of Henderson as its president. Only by reading Henderson County history can one read the nature of its founding and the character of the man for whom the citizens named the county. Only by including the name of the land company, some of the state's earlier chronicled writings, and associating the
development of the territory with the company does one see any connection to the
man's name. A forgotten name, even though later Henderson would hold
enormous power over a fledgling Continental Congress. Although history omits
the Henderson name, the names of those who fought to establish Kentucky often
read as major figures in American history.

By contrast, historians repeatedly write of the explorations of Daniel Boone,
so one can easily trace his famed trailblazing, heroic dealings with the local
Indians, and attempts at developing settlements throughout Kentucky. Yet, in
accounts of Boone and the Transylvania Land Company, Henderson receives no
mention.

Henderson's life was simple: His business was the acquiring and selling of
land. West of the mountains, the Transylvania Land Company represented an
attempt to build a new civilization and, at least on paper, it constituted a low-level
of government. Henderson's chief scout and explorer had been Daniel Boone,
who made tremendous efforts in exploring those new lands and had firsthand
connections with friendly Indians and settlers throughout most of the Kentucky
frontier. The name "Boone" seemed synonymous with settlement, security, and
safety to the owner of it, who had followed him, and who had relied on him. Even
the Indians admired Boone. Only those various tribes who disliked any form of
white man entering their hunting lands caused trouble to his westward movement.
Unfortunately for the whites, those tribes showed their discontent clearly and often.

Henderson and his partners, including Boone, made a deal with the
Cherokee for fully half of what is now the state of Kentucky, including a sizable portion of present-day Northcentral Tennessee. They then "owned" nearly two-thirds of all the land called "Kentucky"; that meant they owned more land than did anyone else in North America. Clearly, New Independent Province stood as an empire within the country and represented the only form of government west of the Alleghenies. Later historians considered this situation "a setup" for a claim as an eventual 14th Colony. One historian, Brodley, opined that Henderson was in position to found a country.

Among frontiersmen, land owners, and woodsmen, survival belonged to the young and fit. At this time, though, Boone at age 41 and Henderson at age 40 could have rested to reflect on their passing achievements and their progressing ages. The potential for great power and wealth might have been a temptation too easily ignored for Henderson, Boone, and all the partners of the Transylvania Land Company. The scenario has the men counting their owned acreage and, because of their wealth, becoming less intrigued with the adventures of exploration, let alone its dangers. As frontiersmen, their advanced ages could be signalling the time for a genteel retirement. Henderson might desire to be more at ease with developing the potential power and wealth found in Virginia, which still battled for position as a member of the Continental Congress. Border disputes continued to brew in the Continental Congress, even while Henderson formed more visions of purpose for his new lands.

The scenario built around Henderson is rich with "what if's." With his New
Independent Province he controlled all lands, rivers, routes, and avenues to the West. Only the constant threat of renegade Indians spoiled an otherwise perfect picture for Henderson and his men. The lands under control offered unlimited opportunity for settlement and any established settlements would make payment to the country of New Independent Province, namely to Henderson himself. The New Independent Province country represented a wealth of hunting and natural resources for growing food. Politically, it could become the key element in negotiating between the British, French, and Indians. Even the Continental Congress, along with King Louis, would have to negotiate with New Independent Province and its Boonesborough government seat. For a moment then, Richard Henderson appears to have held the fate of the entire United States in his hands. He had personnel and he had provisions for trading favors with the French, the Indians, and even the British.

The Eastern seaboard confined the United States until Kentucky could become the 15th State admitted into the "United Colonies," thus the first state west of the Alleghenies. The Continental Congress secured its inclusion, which regarded the territory as vital for the survival of the Colonies and for the materialization of an emerging "Manifest Destiny" nation.

While aspiring to maintain order in the United Colonies, the Continental Congress had to deal with new acts from England, most of them atrocious from the Colonists' standpoint. The Atlantic States had to defend their stand on every issue against the English. The interior territories sheltered themselves somewhat
from the continual English legislative harassment of the Colonies: the Proclamation of 1763 halted Westward growth past the Alleghenies. The "Revenue Act of 1764" lowered tax so the Colonists paid for imports. The "Quartering Act" required Colonists not only to house British troops but to help pay for their expenses; the "Stamp Act of 1765" required the purchase of a stamp on every colonial document. The "Townshend Act" seemed to tax every form of product and services in the Colonies. These taxes were eroding any hope a colonist might have of making a living in the seaport cities and states. Discontent mounted and ire followed.

By contrast, the Kentucky territory remained mostly unaffected by the plight of the seaport colonies, so continued in its inland optimism — and no one more optimistic than Richard Henderson. Henderson immediately commissioned Boone to blaze a trail from Tennessee's long island Holston River to a chosen Kentucky Otter Creek spot so that Henderson's party could follow. Upon arriving at the creek, Henderson recorded the event in his diary for April 20, 1775:

Arrived at Fort Boone on the mouth of Otter Creek, Cantucky River, where we were saluted with a running fire of about twenty-five guns (Dannheiser, 1980).

Little could Henderson know, that the firing of "the shot heard around the world" happened a day earlier and that the Revolutionary War had begun at the Commons of Lexington and Concord. The night before, British General Thomas
Gage had ordered Major John Pitcairn, to seize stores of powder and shot collected by the colonists, thereby inadvertently starting what he was trying to prevent. Pitcairn went on to Concord, looking for caches of powder and shot. Pitcairn and his thousand men marched through the night until, early in the morning, April 19, they met a band of fifty or sixty militiamen on the green at Lexington. Captain John Parker commanded the militiamen. Someone fired, a volley followed, and eight militiamen died.

Marching on to Concord, the British took the town and destroyed its stores. By now, every farmer and militiaman was firing from the roadsides. Soon, the entire British detachment withdrew before the fierce attack of the New England citizen troops. Colonials fired upon the British from behind hedges and fences all the way to Boston, losing two-hundred, seventy-three men during the march.

These months dimmed the hopes of the emerging new country. England attached outlandish taxes on imports and exports from the East, while the Indian nations continued attacking small settlements and villages in the interior. In the midst of this chaos, Henderson & Company seemed to represent a third threat: a detached and separate nation west of the Alleghenies. The "United Colonies," now facing English adversaries against its Eastern coastal cities, had to consider the possibilities of an emerging antagonistic force at its back, from just over the Alleghenies.

In the late 1700s, at least ninety-percent of Kentucky was inhabited by Virginians, few of who looked favorably upon Henderson for wanting to establish
a proprietary government in the Kentucky territory. Instead, almost all pioneering Kentuckians wanted Virginia to control Kentucky and to confirm their land claims. These pioneers sought protection from Virginia against the Indians. Eighty-seven of their leaders signed a petition to the Virginia state legislature to secure its rule. Evidently, the legislature left the petition unheeded. Virginia’s claim to Kentucky already lay in trouble with the Continental Congress (1920).

Earlier, in the first session of the 1774 Congress, Benjamin Franklin proposed relevant policy in his "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union." One of the articles gave Congress the power of "settling of all disputes and differences between colony and colony, about limits, or any other cause, if such should arise, and the planting of new colonies when proper" but, Congress had rejected the article. Meanwhile, Virginia claimed the lands west of the Alleghenies as its Fincastle County. The Congressional delegates denied Virginia’s claim. To the contrary, they asserted that the King claimed those lands; that if wrested from him it would be "by the joint effort, blood and treasure" of all the states; and that therefore the lands should be the joint property of all. This assertion of the King’s ownership departed from the long-standing contention of the colonies that he never had personal ownership of their ungranted charter lands, but held legal title to them only for the colonies as their sovereign representative. It was a royal prerogative abandonment of popular rights against the colonists. For now, the sole purpose of the Congress hinged upon obtaining liberty, within colonialism. The move to the independence of nationhood would come later. This effort to have
Congress appropriate the western land was most extraordinary since no authority existed to initiate a government, much less to be one. Plainly, such a Congress could have no claim to an acre of western lands; and it was equally clear that, if any state had title to them, neither Congress nor the other states had lawful power to appropriate them (1928). 20

More commotion arose in the Congress. Being more influential than any other state, Virginia stood as a deciding factor how the other states would live, grow, prosper, and be protected by its fellow-colonies. Virginia was seeking new grounds west of the Alleghenies, and other states were not. Further, most Virginians west of the mountains were claiming those lands for Virginia. Members contended that, regardless of the land size, Congress should not prohibit a state from seizing new boundaries. States within their charters had nothing to fear just because they remained small; the rest of the states would help protect them.

Had Virginia failed to maintain her jurisdiction over Kentucky, the pioneers there faced one of four courses:

(1) Accept any land titles and government as Henderson and Company could give them, even though they evidently believed such grants worthless.

(2) Accept British protection and governance by turning loyalists. Had this course been followed, Kentucky would soon have become the gathering place for the King's supporters.
from the western borders of Pennsylvania and the southern states, and would need to contend with Indian warfare along the inner frontiers. Thousands of western Indians, their own distant homes being safe from attack, would have ravaged the Pittsburgh and Kanawha districts, swept the Holston settlements, and made the Valley of Virginia and western and central Pennsylvania seats of terrible destruction. Those frontiers would later furnish Washington with many of his most valuable fighting men and sorely needed supplies, especially live stock, which could be driven great distances and find forage on the way.

(3) Submit themselves and their lands to the jurisdiction of the Continental Congress. This course would have been the most disastrous of all, since Congress would have given them no real protection, being ill-prepared to carry on a war with so powerful an enemy as Great Britain even along the seaboard. The so-called "United States" was little more than the name for a loose and wholly irregular league of thirteen separate Colonial states, functioning only by their acquiescence and through a Congress that had no real element of sovereignty. It could not tax for military monies, or enlist or draft troops, or issue money.
Refuse Virginia's maintain of her jurisdiction over Kentucky along with recognizing and protecting the pioneers there as her citizens, the pioneers would be free to set up a state of their own. Had this been done, they could have negotiated with Congress for admission to the confederation upon equitable terms, the principle of which being the confirmation of land titles under the laws of Virginia.

This Virginia notion became critical to the "United Colonies." An independent Kentucky could be a danger to the Atlantic states. With Kentucky out of the confederation, the British would protect, rather than harass its people. (This move would bring New Independent Province into count as another issue for Congress in dealing with the British.) The vast acreage of the rich Kentucky lands would have invited great numbers of loyalists from the East, and most-probably the population would soon have become pro-British. A tornado stirred that could lay the Revolutionary War to naught if the pioneers were to be a part of British support west of the Alleghenies. The situation made conceivable a possibility that the British could win the remaining unsettled lands from the Indians as far as the Pacific coast. Many foresaw that the King and colonies were entering upon a determined struggle and that perilous times were ahead. To no other people in America was the danger so great as to the pioneers in Kentucky. Of the small settlement handfuls of men, there was, set far out in the wilderness like an island
in the sea, a two-hundred-mile journey over difficult mountains from their nearest Holston neighbors, while both north and south of them were thousands of warlike allies of the British. Situated as they were, it seems extraordinary that they did not either abandon Kentucky or seek peace with the British and Indians. Had they been only of the ordinary type of backwoodsmen they doubtless would have done that. 22

People did not call the Kentucky backwoodsmen "ordinary." From another of Bodley’s books, George Rogers Clark, Clark defines the Kentucky "spirit" of pioneers:

Correction of a persistent error need mentioning: The pioneers of Kentucky are usually described as of one general class, brave Indian fighters, but rude and ignorant. Certainly there were many of that kind, but also many of a very different kind. It should be clearly understood that the rush of settlers to Kentucky in 1775 and early 1776 was very different from ordinary migrations to the borders of civilization. It occurred at a time of great excitement in Virginia and adjoining colonies over the recently explored land of promise; and it drew into its current a great many enterprising young men from well known families. Few of them, perhaps, represented over-well the culture standards of their own families, for they were evidently
fonder of adventure than of books, and more interested in western lands than in eastern society; but they were not boors.

Despite the rough conditions of life where they were, many of them preserved much of the courtesy of the old eastern colonial society in which they had been reared. Men of this class inevitably furnished the brains and became the leaders and mainstays in the western struggle for independence and empire. No inferior class would have visioned the greatness of the American cause, or been willing to make the sacrifices necessary to carry it to success.

George Rogers Clark, a hardy young Virginian, had gained the respect and admiration of many Kentuckians and Virginians. Those of Congress also held him in high esteem. The British were well into terrorizing the colonies, as were the Indians, and fear began to grow as to the fate of the land west of the Alleghenies. Clark set off for the Virginia capital at Williamsburg to lay his thoughts before Governor Patrick Henry. With some patience and much diligence he convinced Henry that only by striking in force, taking the offensive in the enemy's own territory, could Kentucky be made safe. With an American show of strength and a British defeat, Clark argued, the Indians would know that it was prudent to remain north on the "Indian side" of the Ohio River. Clark's real orders were
secret; publicly he was only recruiting Virginia militia to protect the Kentucky settlements from attack (Yater, 1979). 24

Clark later wrote that he found various opinions about Henderson’s claim: many people thought the claim a good one, while others seemed concerned only with their steads, and yet others doubted if Virginia could have any authority in the Kentucky country. The Virginia convention adjourned and would not meet until the fall. While waiting for legislative action, Kentucky pioneers faced a major problem. They had little-to-no gunpowder; without which, they could not hunt for food or protect themselves from savage Indians. Henderson could not make a promise of providing plentiful gunpowder for settlers in New Independent Province. The provision of gunpowder lay as an immovable obstacle in attracting followers to feel comfortable in building in the territory. Without the powder, everyone lived in life-threatening danger.

As it would turn out, gunpowder would be the factor to propel Kentucky into the "Union." The Kentucky settlers found it extremely difficult to negotiate with the renegade Indians. Gunpowder would quell the sporadic Indian forays into the small settlements, as well as provide the means to fell wild game. Powder remained scarce throughout the still-unexplored Kentucky backlands, and Virginia had none to spare. Clark begged for five-hundred pounds of gunpowder from Virginia to give to Kentucky, a territory not even Virginia’s own. Clark argued that "If a country was not worth protecting, it was not worth claiming (1928)." 25

Due to Clark’s representation of the Kentuckians, the Executive Council of
Virginia recognized the Kentuckians as citizens living within the bounds of the state and entitled to her protection, even though recognition alone could not meet the Kentuckians’ needs. The land still had no law, nor representation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Long recognized as the leaders for the "Kentucky Cause," Captains George Rogers Clark and John Gabriel Jones became delegates of Kentucky by Council appointment. However, Clark wanted Jones and himself, named as deputies rather than delegates, so they could act as agents of the assembled pioneers and would be free to negotiate with the Virginia Assembly for terms before acknowledging her jurisdiction. As delegates, otherwise, their trips would be countless travelling back and forth carrying the latest offering of the people of Kentucky and those of the Virginia Assembly.

In Clark’s none-too-laconic opening statement to the Assembly, he immediately attacks "usurpers" of the Kentucky land to show its vulnerability:

Humbly sheweth, that many of your petitioners become adventurers in this part of the Colony in the year 1774, in order to provide a subsistence for themselves and their posterity, but were soon obliged by our savage enemy to abandon their enterprize. And in the year following, after the country had been discovered and explored, many more became adventurers, some of whom claimed lands by virtue of warrants, granted by Lord Dunmore, agreeable to the Royal
Proclamation in the year 1763, and others by preoccupancy, agreeably to the entry laws of Virginia. In the meantime a company of men from North Carolina purchased, or pretended to purchase, from the Cherokee Indians, all that tract of land from the southernmost waters of Cumberland River to the banks of Louisa or Kentucke River, including also the lands on which inhabitants live in Powell's Valley. By virtue of which purchase they stile themselves the true and absolute proprietors of the New Independent Province (as they call Transylvania) they are endeavoring to erect, and in consequence of their usurped authority, officers both civil and military are appointed, writs of election issued, Assemblies convened, a land office opened, conveyances made, lands sold at an exorbitant price, and a system of policy introduced which does not at all harmonize with that lately adopted by the United Colonies; but on the contrary, for aught yet appears, this fertile country will afford a safe asylum to those whose principles are inimical to American Freedom.

Silence must have stilled the meeting. The "survival" ante raised the pot on a whole new game stakes: Without Kentucky, there would be no Virginia, and without Virginia, there would be no United Colonies. Doubt grew throughout the
Colonies as to its ability to withstand a British invasion, much less a British rule. British forces fortified their supplies, by comparison to the spotty munitions stockpiles held by the colonists. Someone had to give.

The opening remarks by Clark rocked the Assembly. Clearly, doom could overtake almost everyone if they abandoned Kentucky, or gave it a local government with military authority and organization. Without the admission of Jones and Clark, the Assembly feared that Kentucky would not receive its requested powder and for that lack, the loss of Kentucky and with it, perhaps, all of Virginia's charter territory west of the Alleghenies. It also feared that abandoning the important outposts which Kentucky possessed would expose Virginia's long line of inner frontiers to destructive Indian warfare. Two Virginia gentlemen who heard Clark's plea the loudest were Colonels George Mason and Thomas Jefferson. They came to support the Kentucky cause.

The legislators fell upon their own contradictions: With first things first, the Assembly denied the Kentucky petition for admission to Virginia. Yet, they couldn't vote on the petition until Kentucky was part of Virginia. Jefferson then offered a bill to separate Kentucky from the greater part of Fincastle and make it a new separate county. Next, the Assembly could vote to admit Kentucky. With Kentucky having status as a Virginia county, the state could allot the needed gunpowder to the Kentucky peoples.

Richard Henderson & Company, and the one to gain the most, raised the first objections. Colonel Arthur Campbell, the county lieutenant of Fincastle
County, and the one to lose the most, raised his objections. Third, a set of opponents promoting the Indiana and Vandalia companies came forward to complain. They, too, had claims in West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky. Virginia had established a county government over the region embracing "Indiana," and settlers were entering upon lands there under Virginia grants (Bodley, 1926). 26

The Assembly would toil over these complaints for almost three months finally to get legislative possession of Kentucky so it could lawfully allow the shipment of gunpowder into Kentucky, one of its counties. The Assembly proposed a two-way split, then three ways. In the progression of the bickering, the parish of Botetourt arose in the discussions as divided into four distinct parishes and added to the bill. On the final meeting day, the body divided Fincastle County into three new counties and divided Botetourt parish into four distinct parishes.

Thus, the first government came to Kentucky. To one who realizes the national significance of this event, it must seem strange that it has rare mention in history and only as a bare chronological fact concerning Kentucky. It has never received the emphasis of its importance as an essential link in the chain of determining events that extended the boundaries of the United States from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi and later to the Pacific (1928). 27
Dreams of Richard Henderson shattered in learning the latest proceedings of the Virginia legislation. His claim to the Kentucky land became invalid. His dreams, along with those of his partners, including Boone's, emptied. A single Continental Congress vote erased his entire New Independent Province. With the death of one nation, a new nation now had a chance to survive. The United Colonies, with its supply of gunpowder, could hold off a sustained invasion by a combination of English and Indians.

Suddenly, all sorts of land claims arose, many of which overlapped other claims, and were laid on top of other claims, or crossed over onto other state borders. The overlapping claim maps represented a near-chaotic montage, containing mere parts and pieces of a nation, allowing more room for error, than for precise definition of its outlying colonies. One by one, members of Congress began to take action. The legislative body began to remap its lands, define its borders, and count the heads upon which it could rely. Soon, under the oversight of the Continental Congress, land claims came under control. The legislature voided archaic British and French claims and more defined boundaries came into existence. If the Colonies were to survive, they had to survive as one; they had to become a nation as no other; that the Colonies were one out of many.

The north side of Kentucky lay tranquilly stable during the period of land disputes. In November 1780, three counties divided the County of Kentucky: Fayette, Lincoln, and Jefferson. By the time the County of Kentucky had become the State of Kentucky, in 1792, Logan County was born out of Lincoln County and
embraced all the counties south of Green River. In 1796, Christian County came from Logan. With Logan established, the counties of Henderson, Hopkins, Webster, Livingston, Union, Caldwell, Trigg, Hickman, Calloway, Graves, McCracken, Crittenden, Marshall, Ballard, Fulton, Lyon, a part of Todd and Muhlenberg, and the present County of Christian came into being. In December 1798, Virginia made the following proclamation to the Transylvania Land Company:

Whereas it has appeared to this assembly, that Richard Henderson and Company have been at a very great expense in making a purchase of the Cherokee Indians; and although the same has been declared void, yet, as the Commonwealth of Virginia is likely to receive great advantage therefrom, by increasing the inhabitants, and establishing a barrier against the Indians, it is therefore just and reasonable the said Richard Henderson and Company, be made a compensation for their trouble and expense.

The ordinance went on to define the boundaries of the compensation:

Beginning at the mouth of the Green River, thence running up the same 12½-miles, reduced to a straight line, on each side of the said Green River; thence at right angles with the same till the said lines intersect the Ohio, which said river
Ohio, shall be the western boundary of the said tract, be, and
the same is hereby granted the said Richard Henderson and
Company . . . (1880).  

The decision brutally clipped the 2,000,000-acre empire Henderson
dreamed as his, to only a fraction of the original Cherokee bargain. A year later,
in December 1790, President George Washington strongly recommended to
Congress the propriety of admitting Kentucky into the Union.

Henderson's glee first waned, then crumbled after he found out the state of
Virginia voided the buy of his Kentucky and Tennessee lands. He did recover,
however, as Virginia granted Henderson's company 200,000 acres beginning at
the Green River's mouth in northwest Kentucky (1887).  

At least he had
something to show for his efforts: the area bustled with river commerce,
settlements easily established, and his profits would more than compensate his
investments. Henderson most likely made many plans for the land, though he
never did see those ideas realized. He died on January 30, 1785, without ever
having seen the land of Red Banks.

Transylvania officers Hopkins, Allen, and Purviance went to the Green River
land to survey and develop the Virginia grant. Arriving at the mouth of the Green
River, the group discovered that a Pennsylvania Dutch settlement already existed,
a settlement they called Red Banks. After showing claim to the territory, the
company gave each settler who had built or was living at Red Banks one lot of one
acre if he had been on the land before May 1, 1794.

The mouth of the Green River at Red Banks quickly became the source of great wealth as riverboats passed on their way to the Ohio River. Settlers loaded their hunted, grown, and built riches for trade aboard rafts and boats all along the southern downstream river route to meet at Red Banks and connect with the Ohio River trade. The area, because of its trade riches, would add terror to the annals of early riverboat history. Notorious crews of outlaws with names such as, the Harpe Family, May, Mason, and Wilson, and Murrell gangs would soon seek their fortunes by robbing others of theirs. For these men, human life was of little value. For them, committing murder or robbing at gun, or knife-point to procure even the most menial object was only a mean to an end. They did not claim the Red Banks as a permanent home, because they devoted their lives to wild adventure, thievery, and murder in all their manifold sins and wickedness. They rendezvoused on the bank of the river to rob boats floating upon the river, and, frequently, to murder the crews. Red Banks served as their headquarters, and robbing boats their occupation, until Captain Young and his company, who had organized to drive them out of the country, appeared in the river area. For a number of years, John A. Murrell camped at times upon the identical spot where the home of A. J. Anderson now stands, opposite Diamond Island, at the mouth of the Green River, and gave to that place the poetic name it yet retains, "Forest Home." After the appearance of Captain Young, the clan then located at or near Cave-in-Rock, Illinois, where they continued to pursue their nefarious avocation (1887).
Many of the communities, including those along the Green down to Warren County on the Gasper River, faced constant threats from every inland trail and from every bend of the river. The frontierspeople cried out to God to deliver them from evil. Many frontierspeople believed that a strong faith in God allowed them to survive against virtually any perils of the wilderness.

In 1797, a revival swept through the area, generating even more reliance on acts of God as opposed to those of humankind. Religious interest manifested itself in a magical way, extending its influence in every direction. Enthusiasm affected the entire Green River country, beginning south in Warren County. In those days there were very few, if any, church buildings for the small and scattered populations. No matter, ministers often traveled from one hamlet or village to the next in bringing the latest of their Biblical excitement of preachings (1887). 31

The Presbyterians of that Frontier Revival believed in far less emotionalism and far more intellectualism. Citizens organized several schools in the region, which began around the Gasper River, near Bowling Green, and ended around Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Presbyterian clergy became quite active in establishing centers for learning and later in founding schools and colleges of the time. John Witherspoon, President of Princeton University in 1768, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, often directed and guided his students to become Presbyterian ministers and to spread the word of religion and learning throughout the western frontier. A wall of division occurred between them and those caught
up in the religious fervor and anti-intellectualism.

Rough frontiersmen wanted emotional experiences, not theology from an educated clergy. Thus, many people turned to more emotional Baptist and Methodist teachings and evolved a new sect, called the Disciples of Christ. The frontiersmen were very suspicious of the Presbyterians. Their plain and simple pioneering life went hand-in-hand with their emotional religion. It provided teachings of relying on nature for food, good social values, and harmony in living together. Their Bibles continuously reminded them of angels who had become wicked, not bowing to humans as a creation of God, and who took human women as wives. Education, they believed, could corrupt their ideals of life's existence, distort their simple values, and turn their people toward materialism. For anyone to turn their back against the simple "world view" of Biblical truths were handmaidens of the Devil.

The Baptist and Methodist churches opposed education until around 1825, believing faith, not education, should form a minister. They preferred to reinforce their faith through a pastor who "got the call." The peoples did not trust the new ideas of the educated clergy, the ideas that flamed their feelings of anti-intellectualism. The broad area became known as "The Bible Belt" where religious fundamentalism was strong and anti-intellectualism ran high. The people who came from the Carolinas and Virginia were of English and Scottish stock, while the peoples in the North diversified in stock as tradesmen of French, German, and Finnish blood. Many of the people who came into Kentucky were people who took
up awarded grants for their services in the Revolutionary War.

The Ohio River began acting as a dividing line. On either side lived people of northern or foreign extraction from those who came largely from the British Isles, then filtered through the plantation and slavery experience in Virginia and the Carolinas and who now settled south of the river. Evansville's proximity to the mouth of the Green River became a major reason for its existence. Bundled timber came down the Green River on rafts, guided and propelled by the downstream current. Traders also piloted rafts and boats filled with immense amounts of live stock, furs, and hides. Negotiating their cargos of heavy bundles of timber on small rafts and boats past the mouth of the Green River and merging into the downstream current of the Ohio posed as a slow and painstaking process. The loads needed gentle nudging to the edge of the waters and out of the main current. Evansville became the spot on the Ohio River that most boat and timber bundles landed once they came out of the Green River current and into the current of the Ohio. Almost all the heavier boats had to drift downstream that far before they could make a safe and dependable landing.

Timber, immense amounts of beautiful timber, went through Evansville where milling, planing, and shipping to all points north and east took place. Because of the massive livestock shipments, Evansville became a meat packing center, shipping its meats to the North. Henderson, for the most part, remained agricultural, relying upon and ship tobacco as its chief trade. Its tobacco shipments were piled on boats headed down the Ohio to the Mississippi River and
out onto the Atlantic Ocean to Scotland and to other European countries.

Henderson had other connections to Europe. Tobacco people often sent their children away to school, usually to England. The tobacco barons had money for fine homes, servants, and all the trappings of luxury but they did not have, however, the core education to enjoy properly, nor to know, the true wealth they possessed. Although they worked as exceptionally fine business people, they wanted their offspring to represent the family name in the highly educated status of an English university degree. Therefore, a so-called Tobacco Family Plan emerged as a way of the rich Henderson life: Henderson inherited the rich tradition of peoples who were Industrially Northern, yet Culturally Southern, though their Old South lifestyle attitude continued (1992).  

The Transylvania officers traveled downstream from the Redbanks area, just below the Evansville settlement, and down the Ohio to where its waters ran deep, calm, and straight there to lay out the beginnings of a town. On April 6, 1797, a completed map defined the town, named in honor of the Transylvania Company president, Richard Henderson. General Samuel Hopkins, agent and attorney for Henderson & Company, along with Colonel Thomas Allen, a surveyor hired by the Company, mapped out the area of what would be the City of Henderson, first, consisting of four parallel longitudinal streets and twenty-five cross streets neatly hugging the bank of the Ohio River (see footnote).  On December of 1798, the Transylvania Land Company received its grant from the state of Kentucky and the county of Henderson, with the city of Henderson as its county seat. By 1799,
Henderson County separated from Christian County to embrace all of that territory later divided into Henderson, Hopkins, Union, and Webster Counties (1880).  

The Kentucky Historical Society sign on Henderson's Central Park lawn, then named Transylvania Park, reads:

COUNTY FORMED, NAMED

By Kentucky Statute, Dec. 1798, effective May 1799, the county of Henderson was formed out of part of Christian. Named to honor Col. Richard Henderson, founder of the Transylvania Land Company, which was granted land on Green and Ohio Rivers by Va. Gen. Assembly, 1778, to compensate for voiding purchase of land from Cherokees in Eastern Kentucky. Park named for Company.

The ending line, "Park named for Company," validated its owner when the county came to form. Called Central Park today, the park has had several titles: Transylvania, Public Square, Audubon, and now Central. Central Park belongs to the elite group of municipal parks as the oldest park west of the Allegheny mountains (1976).  

No doubt everyone retired to the downtown Bradley Tavern after the inauguration ceremonies since it served as a "meeting place" before, during, and after government business. Bradley's seemed to serve as a catchall location for
virtually any town meetings. Such became the case even after determining the northern boundaries of the county.

At the date of the 1799 ordinance, only three of the original partners were living: Thomas Hart, James Hogg, and John Williams. John Williams, James Hogg, Richard Bullock, Walter Alves, John Umstead, and Henry Puviance, attorney for Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, and L. Henderson signed the ordinance. Out of all the good intentions, the pomp, the grandeur, and noble causes of creating the very foundations of a town, no one could predict the bizarre string of events to befall the quaint, little rivertown of Henderson, that even its favorite sons and daughters would haunt it.

One can only imagine the consternation of their expressions when Charles Buck, in 1821, approached the town council with the claim that he was sole heir of John Luttrell (one of the original Transylvania partners), and that one-eighth part of the entire town of Henderson, including its lots, streets, alleys, and public grounds bought from General Samuel Hopkins, belonged to him. Until Charles Buck received his due, Henderson did not belong to her citizenry, so the town and lot owners bought him out for thirteen-hundred, fifty dollars (1887). 36

Four years after this injury came the insult: the heirs of Walter Alves, one of the signers to the ordinance, and Richard J. Hart, one of the heirs of Henderson & Company, came forward to claim even more property than had Buck, demanding five-sixteenths of Henderson. After much negotiation the Trustees and citizens of Henderson bartered with the Alves and Hart heirs. The town assembled a
package of land it could trade for the claim against it by the heirs. The package contained donated lots, or lots bought for a nominal sum by bartering away property donated for public use, and in which each Hendersonian had no more interest. Because the Alves and Hart families did not demand money, it was an easier matter for the lot holders to pay in something that did not belong to them than with something that did (1887). 37

In 1850, as Henderson began conducting heavy tobacco trade from its waterfront, the town Trustees contracted to widen the Ohio River wharves on Water Street, which, then, lay one-hundred, twenty-five feet in width. At the street's busiest shipping areas, its width became more than two-hundred-feet. A portion of the proposed lots to widen belonged to the public and to the Alves and Hart family, the same public property lots bartered away in trade twenty-five years prior. James Alves claimed seventy-five feet in width, or more, for future expansion of the street. Again, the title deeds went to court.

"In the suit concerning the riverfront, the court held that the deed from the citizens to James Alves did not pass title, but that the property belonged to the public. Its citizens took the case to the Court of Appeals, and in July 1855, Judge Marshall affirmed the decree (1887)." 38 The suit had merely been a tongue-in-cheek joke, a thorn in the side of the town Trustees that Alves had first faced when being sued over land the town had not wanted first, and over which it had taken a Court of Appeals decision to void his claim.

Last, in 1859, with its deed books dog-eared, the County of Henderson laid
claim to the strip of land running from Center Street to the first upper cross street (First Street), and lying immediately to the back of the Court House. Someone, either City or County employees, had to maintain its appearance and upkeep. Henderson Trustees claimed the portion of their town belonged to the park edge and was city. The County had claimed the town line stopped there. "There was a long and hotly contested suit between the county and the town, but the latter was successful (1887)."

The Nation, State, County, and City of Henderson, now mapped, rested easily. No doubt all retired to Bradley’s to claim victory.

Roads received special attention, especially those on the waterfront as tobacco trade became jammed with farmers bringing their loaded wagons from the North, South, and West. Roads began spiking outward to neighboring towns and hamlets; roadways began to trace rapidly across once-established animal trails, from one hamlet to the next and, in the heavily populated areas where streets were a necessity, gravel covered wintry wet roads and summer’s dusty roads. The mighty Ohio River still determined its western boundary; it also determined the accessibility to the North, toward Indiana, its neighboring state.

In those uncertain days of either bad roads or high rivers, "time" had become another element of importance to the Henderson businessmen. Though shipments ran regularly on the Ohio, and limited telephone service added speed to some transactions, another mode of commerce still needed its role in the community. Trade branched out in all directions, and soon, "time" became a commodity as important as all other products. Transportation needed another
mode of travel.

Barry Bingham, owner and publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal, laughingly mentioned that the warning word had gone out from the American Automobile Association that the roads were not very dependable:

Beware of the roads! They're killers. Avoid the whole state, if you can. Most roads in Kentucky at the turn of the century were, at best, dirt roads. Some of the luckier, richer areas had fine-graveled surfaces. Even they had plenty of sharp stones that cut into the tires of automobiles as if they were paper. Even at that, the roads were good for hauling heavy loads only in the best of seasons (1982). 40

Needed was a faster, more dependable mode of travel, one that relied on neither good roads nor rivers. It needed to be tough as steel; swifter than river currents; and be as dependable as gravity. Henderson needed a tough, swift, and dependable railroad system. The locomotive came to the city, ironically, delivered by steamboat. Railroad development held the key to year-round commerce and trade.

The economic goals of the Henderson community speedily advanced the establishment of a railroad line to Nashville. This would provide a connection to the South, Southeast, and West. Henderson businesses were feeling the
pressures of meeting trade orders and wanted relief by expanded trade with the nation. The Henderson and Nashville Railroad connection established a rail line to carry coal from the rich Western Kentucky coal fields, to the Southern cities of Nashville, Memphis, and to other industrial cities below them. The railroad line became the second most important train-carrying cargo line in the country second only in coal tonnage hauled to Pittsburgh (1880). 44

A few years earlier, in the peak of the riverboat days, the company of the Henderson-Nashville Railroad had formed and had laid tracks at its Fourth Street to the edge of the Ohio River. The company foresaw a day when supplies and produced goods moved by either rail or water, so it planned a loading dock for trains at the river. With the assurance of constant river traffic, a railroad dock would make possibly a more accessible route of delivering goods between river traffic and other inland cities below Henderson.

By 1861, the Civil War would halt those commercial plans of a dual delivery system of goods. The war would halt all river traffic since the Ohio River served as a dividing line between the Northern and Southern states, thus between the Union and Confederate armies. Each army would terrorize and hijack shipments made by the rail systems. Any river craft that once freely used the Ohio River now was subject to random shots from either shore. Raids on both systems happened often and people felt unsafe. Neither army could be sure of which political side the boats and trains were sympathetic or to the political purpose of intended cargoes, so both armies shot at them. Riverboat owners bailed out of the business by the
dozens and so did their passengers. Trains became freight trains, seeing little passenger commerce with only a few brave souls who travelled by rail at their own risk.

By late 1865, and with the War nearing its end, the company became reincorporated as the Evansville, Henderson, and Nashville Railroad. Local tobacco merchant and businessman John Henry Barret bought a locomotive, "The Pony," the first machine of its kind to appear in Henderson. It made its first run on the newly laid track to Madisonville, Kentucky. In January 1871, after the company merged with the St. Louis and Southeastern Railway Company, tracks soon extended to the Kentucky-Tennessee line at Guthrie, Kentucky, where it connected to a line that ran to Nashville. Following the formula of Henderson's Fourth Street rail development, building a rail line through the center of a business district, towns began to develop their commerce along the rail line, such as Busbys, Robards, and Sebree (1887).

In 1879, owners of the powerful Louisville-Nashville Railroad saw a future for the Henderson-owned railroad. It set out to acquire the St. Louis and Southeastern line, renaming it the Henderson Division of L & N. L & N also saw another future for the line: a bridge; a bridge that would start at Henderson's Fourth Street, stretch across the stately waters of the mighty Ohio River, and onto Indiana soil. For the first time the Ohio would cease as a barrier, with a bridge connecting the Kentucky and Indiana communities of Henderson and Evansville marking the banks of the river.
In 1885, the L & N Railroad Bridge connected the two communities and states. Then, the L & N bridge, with its 27,995-feet of span, became the world’s longest trestle span. By linking Kentucky to Indiana, the L & N could join the Illinois Central Railroad, the I. C., and passenger service carried out from Chicago to Nashville, north and south, and to St. Louis to Louisville, east and west. A second company, the Ohio Valley Railway Company, constructed a line from Henderson, in 1887, to points southwest into Union County and on to Princeton, Kentucky. Two years later, it ran a spur line that stopped at the northern shore of Henderson to transport railcars by ferry across the Ohio. Soon, the Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southwestern Company purchased the Ohio Valley Railway Company and made overtures of building an additional bridge across the Ohio out of Henderson, though no actions ever began to build a new bridge. In 1893, the Illinois Central bought out its line and operated the company as the Illinois Central Gulf Line, and in 1904, L & N gave the line permission to use the bridge.

In the meantime, a third railroad sprang up, called the Louisville, St. Louis and Texas Railroad Company, to specialize in heading east to West Point, Kentucky, thereby joining the lines heading into Louisville. A major step in progress took place with the railroad because the line built a bridge over the Green River to connect Henderson by rail to Owensboro. Finally, both rivers seemed to lose their battle as barriers in separating their neighboring Kentucky and Indiana citizens. Shortly, the railroad system became the Louisville, Henderson, and St. Louis Railroad.
For its day, Henderson stood as Railroad Mecca for the southeastern states. It could have grown even larger. The rail companies wanted to expand, but land prices had become extremely high. Most of the properties for development were already the properties of the tobacco magnates and riverboat owners. The railroad companies drew up adjusted expansion plans toward developing less expensive locations, such as Paducah and Evansville, where the prices still remained favorable.

The Ohio River always marked the boundary line between Kentucky and Indiana. On the north shore of the river lay nearby Evansville, Indiana. The peoples on both sides of the Ohio shores come from nearly the same stock of English, Scotch-Irish, and German descendants. In their migration to the West, their numbers had become hardened, tough, enduring, somewhat stubborn, and most proud of their heritage. They lived their life as they found it: carving their future out of once-dense forests that blocked their way in their search for new grounds, blazing trials from animal runs, defending their families against local Indians, building their homes and sustaining their lives from the raw materials they found in the region. Those living north of the Ohio River showed tendencies of adopting a northern industrial attitude of life, displaying rich German hard work and ethics, while, on the river's southern side, the peoples kept their southern-style of culture and plowed their farmlands to raise crops. Industry, for the most part, thrived only at the edge of Ohio riverbanks. On either side, especially at the settlement of the "Redbanks," Henderson paid little attention to the growing states'
rights questions in national decision-making. The issue seemed of little importance; an issue belonging only to those who lived in the extreme North and extreme South. In both portions of the country, legislation spawned issues concerning man and machine. The cauldron kept brewing, then boiled. Its lid would blow off and a war would result.

The Civil War certainly raised the irritation of neighboring Kentucky and Indiana peoples, as did its Hendersonians and Evansvillians, though the situation did not spark the fury of these people as much as it did of those in the Deep South. Geographically, the Ohio River acted as a North-South division line between the states of Kentucky and Indiana, but their sentiment drifted little in the Ohio waters. These were Northern slave States and they certainly did not share the same fervency of State Sovereignty political ramifications as did those owners who stood to lose their cotton plantations in the Southern coastal states. As horrible as the malady connotes of enslaving people, area people considered slavery a weak institution that existed in these Northern states. As Arnett points out, "the first census of Henderson, made in 1799, shows only thirty-three slaves owned by six families. Many owners used slaves for farm labor and in tobacco stemmeries, but other owners trained them as artisans (1976)."

Although chattel slavery existed in Henderson, Kentucky remained with the Union. Although the Union claimed the Ohio River, travelers headed up and down its stream often tempted North-South gunshots from either river bank. Both states felt comfort in being under the hand of Federal rule, rather than relying solely on
The Civil War raged all around the Henderson area. Except for the defeat of Confederate General Braxton Bragg, at the Battle of Perryville, and pocket fights in Eastern and Southern Kentucky and Northern Tennessee, the Civil War seemed to rage all around the states, with only glimpses of its blinded cause being seen in neighboring communities. People even avoided reading the "Emancipation Proclamation." "Nigger Traders" existed all around the Kentucky area and up into Henderson. Sales of slaves in Henderson occurred on Water Street, down by its river dock and up a block at First and Main streets. A block or box, sometimes the tail end of a wagon, served at the attention spot at this corner to display the 'wares.' Prospective buyers asked male slaves to lift heavy weights, or to race each other to determine which slave had the fastest "revolving" feet. Oddly, ownership of a slave served as property valuation and not as a human being. The situation lived with an understanding that, with little-to-no apologies, the economy of Henderson rested on the backs of its slaves.

Areas where the Proclamation had little effect lie precisely where slaves had their most freedom. Even in such states as Tennessee and Virginia, the Proclamation applied only to the areas that were still in rebellion, and not to the pacified ones. In other words, it proclaimed freedom from slavery where the government could not enforce the Proclamation and left it untouched in the areas where it could. Yet, the Emancipation Proclamation would become one of the most powerful, important, and consequential proclamations any American president
could ever issue (Catton, 1981).  

Serious fighting broke out at Fort Donelson, and many Henderson men lost their lives there. Perryville and Donelson brought home the sting of war. All too often, long-time buddies, even family members, fought on opposing armies. Some, too, were Hendersonians. Starling writes of how the War affected its Henderson families:

There was a full company of Confederates, and, perhaps, as many Federals, from Henderson engaged in that conflict. There were two brothers from Henderson, one serving in the ranks of the Confederacy and one in the ranks of the Union, again there were three brothers in the same battle, one in the Confederate and two in the Union army. There were classmates and former bosom friends arrayed against each other, and this made those wicked days more sad and terrible to contemplate (1887).

On July 17, 1862, Confederate Brigadier General Adam R. Johnson led thirty Confederate raiders into Henderson. They stole fifty guns, confiscated hospital supplies, and robbed some commissary stores. From Henderson, they crossed the Ohio River and invaded Newburgh, Indiana, only to return to camp in Henderson. Summons for Union army help came from Louisville, but none came
because of fearing Morgan's Raiders in the area. In just over a month, a group of Union soldiers from Evansville, Indiana arrived. By then, the Confederates had left (1887). 46

In many ways, the Ohio River made Kentucky, including the Henderson area, extremely unattractive as a prize of war for either army. The "South," with its high-strung emotions, ended at the Kentucky-Tennessee border. Across the Ohio River's distance to the Indiana border, its emotions lost much of their steam. Riches gained, in travelling through Kentucky, only to ford a river, only to continue into the North, seemed extremely distant when giving up only a few spoils of victory to the Confederate armies. With that reasoning, the Ohio River flowed as a barrier against the industrial bounty riches to the North. The South would stop at the Ohio, and along with it, many of its cultural values.

Since the earliest days of the area's development, the communities of Henderson and Evansville have developed a slightly different style of living, even though each has kept an eye on the other community just across the river's shore. Evidence indicates that their differences lie in the early river trade that fostered some of their prideful feelings. Though neither Kentucky nor Indiana had any major problem with state sovereignty, strife still existed between Northern and Southern sympathies (1886). 47 Certainly the Civil War divided families and people's notions, even though the presidents of both warring States came from the same "neutral" Kentucky. Those shores saw families on either side support the North or the South in this country's Great Conflict. As river towns, not only waters
flowed between these neighbors, so did the emotions of their political bent. Kentucky most likely had the worst of the draw in being a Northern state, with Southern political tendencies; a state with slaves treated differently than those in the Deep South. Henderson’s first Black vote came on August 1, 1870, in an election that had far fewer political outcries and demonstrations than even previous elections (1976).  

Starling’s book quotes the works of General Adam R. Johnson, Captain Ollie B. Steele, and Colonel James H. Holloway, “Sketches and Recollections.”

It is due to the colored people to say that, under the circumstances attending the radical change from slavery to freedom, the great change of becoming their own masters, and toiling for their own support, in place of having the cares of life to devolve upon masters, their behavior surprised their most sanguine friends, who had viewed the situation with anxious solicitude. They came into this new life as though they had been drilled and tutored for months; they accepted the situation with a becoming grace, and while some few were disposed to behave unruly, the great majority behaved like men of sense and character, settling down to the realities of life, and going to work to build up themselves and growing families (1887).”
Although the Ohio River has served as a common "lifeblood" for Henderson and neighboring Evansville, so much of the area's "communication," the sharing of each community's company, has depended upon overcoming the river as an obstacle. Much of the area's history has evolved from the river's unpredictability, whether its waters have receded to a trickle or risen out of their banks. The Ohio has kept the Northern and Southern cultures divided as though they existed on opposite sides of the globe, although one can easily see and hear the other working and playing on the along the shoreline of their respective state. Time has not completely unshackled the restraints against developing forms of communication that have kept their cultural distances from joining. Even broadcast signals, signals that disregard geographical and cultural boundaries have not dried the barrier of the river.

The Ohio River can be unforgiving at times because of the topography of the area. The elevation of the Ohio and Green River Basins lies lower than the upstream country and averages only around four-hundred feet above sea level. Predictable annual Spring flooding in the area, or any unusual amount of precipitation often brings their waters spilling over their banks. As the Ohio flows down toward the Henderson area, it comes into confluence with the Green river just above Evansville. Large quantities of trade goods often sailed down the Green to the Ohio, then westward down to Evansville, and on to Henderson. From their earliest days, Henderson and Evansville relied upon that trade, with much of their growth and success depending upon the Green River Valley Company, a
conglomeration of all trade dealers along the Green River.

Traveling west of Evansville, the gently flowing Ohio River traces a plume of land that radically juts northward, then crooks its flow, first bending southwest, then bending to the South, cutting back toward the Southeast, and finally, southward onto the Kentucky town of Henderson, a distance of a little over eight miles. Most maps either omit or smooth out this maverick curve that envelops the parcel of land, which, in the territory's beginnings, settlers called, Green River Island. Only a small bayou detaches it from the Ohio River proper today.

Because of the river's erratic meandering along these shores, the sharp curve denotes one of the few path locations in which the river does not define an exact state boundary. Kentucky's state line protrudes almost two miles north of the Ohio River into what Indiana terms as its soil at this point. With the elimination of this land, the Ohio River is approximately eight miles shorter and the distance between Henderson and Evansville merely would be the width of the Ohio River. That tract of land long has been the core of perturbing feelings that have persisted since the very founding generations of the two river communities, when the two peoples began only slightly relying upon and greatly competing against each other.

In June 1, 1792, Kentucky became a state, the first state brought into the Union west of the Alleghenies. As property deeds became settled out of Virginia, one of the primary questions Kentucky had to settle with Indiana concerned the "irregular" parcel of land that, depending upon weather between drought and flooding, either became barren or lay below water. The land parcel became a sort
of "no man's land." In traveling south from Indiana, one would experience leaving Indiana soil, passing over a stream, then a stretch of "land," then the Ohio, then Kentucky. The people of Kentucky and Indiana wanted the Ohio River as the boundary for its state line and argued for almost a century to have the orphan property as their own.

At first, the boundaries remained the same when Henderson County came from Christian County. So, whatever boundaries Christian County claimed, Henderson County inherited. In original Virginia documents, the boundary between Kentucky and Indiana read as follows:

That the boundary of the State of Kentucky extends only to low water mark on the western or northwestern side of the river Ohio, and does not include a peninsula or island on the western or northwestern bank, separated from the main land by a channel or bayou, which is filled with water, only when the river rises above its banks, and is at other times dry (1980) \(^{50}\).

In the few years that followed, sometimes the land flooded and sometimes it remained dry. More disputes arose as to state ownership of the tract. Then, on January 27, 1810, when the Legislature of Kentucky met again, this time it passed a decision stating:
That each County of this Commonwealth calling for the river Ohio, as the boundary line, shall be considered as bounded in that particular by the State line, on the northwest side of said river, and the bed of the river and the Islands thereof, shall be in their respective counties holding the main land opposite thereto within this State, and the several county tribunals shall hold jurisdiction accordingly (1980).

Fine for Kentucky; bad for Indiana. The state brought suit against Kentucky in the United States Supreme Court, stating that the Ohio River ran south of Green River Island and that only a bayou separated it from her mainland on the North. Kentucky claimed that the water between the island and the mainland on the North was a portion of the Ohio River, and the low water mark of the river was on the portion’s northern shore of the river.

Indiana wanted the wasteland and so did Kentucky. The parcel had little-to-no development on it and it often became flooded with the Spring rains. Finally, after much debate and long proceedings, the Supreme Court made its decision. On May 19, 1890, the Court stated its interpretation of the law:

Our conclusion is that the waters of the Ohio River when Kentucky became a state flowed in a channel north of the tract known as Green River Island, and that the jurisdiction
of Kentucky at that time extended, and ever since has extended, to what was then low water mark on the north side of that channel and the boundary between Kentucky and Indiana must run on that line as nearly as it can now be ascertained after the channel has been filled (1980).

Not well known and long-since forgotten as a Supreme Court decision, the division of land north of the Ohio River that Kentucky now claims as its own, has often remained as a source of some ill-feelings between its two peoples. Those feelings become amplified each year as one of Henderson's thoroughbred race tracks, James C. Ellis Park, often called Dade Park by the locals, opens its race season. That long-disputed tract of land has become the home of the race course and has opened its gates to thousands of horse bettors since its 1922 construction. Each year Kentucky receives tax revenues from the operation of the Kentucky race track that would, by only the distance of a few hundred feet, go toward advancing Indiana taxes from the proceeds of an Indiana race track. A single Indiana rural road forms the northern boundary between the state of Indiana and the Kentucky race track of James C. Ellis Park. Still, in present-day times, northbound travelers leaving Kentucky and entering Indiana become confused when they see the Indiana state marker almost two miles into Indiana soil.

Hendersonians had a fascination with the river, with its trade and play, and provided for shore land in building several parks along its city limits. An argument
of some sort has always seemed to persist whether land would be used for river commerce, or by its natives for recreation, fun outings, and relaxation. Several of its business locations acted as park locations because of the picturesque river traffic views.

Transylvania Park, located near the center of the newly developing town, served as a hub of almost all its religious, social, and governmental functions. A natural mound once rose in the center of the park and its congregation built a church, the Union Church, on it. All religious denominations prayed and sang there. Off to the side and away from the church, officials carried out legal public hangings. In good-weather days, visiting circuses would pitch their tents in the park and treated the town to all the sawdust delights and wonderments of entertainment. During the Civil War, all those entertainment delights vanished from the park, as Union soldiers often used the grounds for camping and training purposes.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as the area experienced tremendous growth in agriculture and industry, Henderson made its mark as the world's largest strip-tobacco market, with its Ohio River waterfront and main streets constructed one-hundred feet wide; Evansville claimed itself as the world's largest hardwood trading center, bustling with sawmills and woodworking plants. Steel production also thrived in the Hoosier city, with neither economy needing the other that much for its growth and prosperity.

Three valued commodities in Kentucky easily marketed out of the state were
salt, hemp and dark-leaf tobacco. Salt licks abounded; hemp was used to manufacture rope and fabric for farm and sailing equipment; and the world, it seemed, desperately desired tobacco. Tobacco became a regal weed, not only in the States, but abroad in England, though several European and some African nations placed their name on the delivery list. Tobacco possessed so much value that it often replaced money for trading throughout the area (1887).

In 1801, the Kentucky legislature designated Henderson, because of its early settlement status, as a state inspection depot for tobacco export. Until then, farmers had stripped their own tobaccos, bundled them, and brought them to market, sometimes stuffing the tobacco bundle centers with low-grade tobacco qualities. They brought their wares on stem to Henderson whereby the tobacco workers stripped, inspected, then bundled them for shipping.

Tobacco stemmeries and warehouses sprang up all along the Henderson Riverfront, with people proclaiming it as the center of "the tobacco district," which included western Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Missouri. The town's merchants began branch offices and constructed plants in each of those states, as well. Henderson was seeing over twelve million pounds of tobacco pass through its warehouses annually. It would peak at forty-million pounds in the 1920's. As far back as the mid 1800's, Henderson claimed the prize of being the wealthiest city per capita in the world, second only to Frankfurt am Main, Germany (Merrill, 1985). By the beginning of the 20th century, the district grew more than one-half of the total tobacco crop in the United States, and one-sixth the total
crop for the world. In short time, just before World War I, Henderson reported the highest per capita representation of millionaires of any world city.

Other Hendersonian loved the wealth of the land below its fertile topsoil, as they set out mining its abundant supplies of precious coal. Soon Henderson County became an important coal center. Mining coal in the county represented a fairly easy task because much of the coal lay on or near the surface on several farmlands because of the numerous coal outcroppings that existed along the Ohio River banks. Starling reports that as far back as 1826 miners scooped coal at the mouth of Sugar Creek, just above the water works, near 14th Street, loaded on boats, and floated down to the town. Up to the year 1850, this mine furnished Henderson with most of the coal it used. The Henderson Coal and Mining Company came together in October 1875 (1887). Dozens of other small coal mines, either by shaft or by slope, sprouted up around Henderson county. As the turn of the century neared, Henderson sparkled as one of the very few towns with its own utilities, gas, water, and electricity, for home and business purposes. Its frontier days were fading rapidly and the town began to blossom with the advancement of national and world technology.

The Henderson Gas Company first came into existence as a mean of manufacturing illuminating gas for businesses and a few homes. Two-years of a pipe-laying project allowed Henderson to gaslight its streets for the first time on March 10, 1860. This first attempt at using gas in a citywide system proved ineffective, if not dangerous. Gas leaks occurred frequently and workers made
constant repairs, but most Hendersonians fought against its further development. After six years of repairs and new piping, the system came into full use around the city. Soon, gas lamps lit around almost all the manufactories, including tobacco stemmeries. Soon gas mains connected street lamps along a majority of Henderson homes (1887).  

The work on Henderson Water Works Company had trickled for several years, with slow improvements, slow grading of properties, and slow pipe-laying. A cause for hastening the matter of quicker works development took only a matter of one or two fires, especially in the tobacco district areas, for the townspeople to see the value of having a pressurized water source near their place of business. One of the major boasts of Henderson always had been the width of her streets, one-hundred-plus-feet, in many areas throughout the town. Designed for good commerce, for sure, but what is more important, the gaping-wide streets provided a firebreak if there was a fire.  

On July 1, 1876, water flowed through the new pipelines. The water mains lay under all the principal streets while other mains snaked a path towards sparsely-developed area roads. By now, a pressurized waterworks system, supplied by a water reservoir located on a tower, protected the greatest portion of the city against fire. The system had enough pressure capable of throwing an inch-thick water stream above any roof in the city. In addition, stand pipe pressure, nearly double that of the reservoir and remained on standby in case of heavy or multiple fires (1887).
On August 18, 1896, Henderson came into the modern age of industry by generating electricity from its own power plant, located at 4th & Elm Streets. The occasion brought people from miles around to witness the historic milestone as one-hundred, fifty-four street lights became lit by just the flip of a switch. The event marked Henderson as one of the first Western Kentucky cities to own and operate its own electric power plant (Arnett, 1976).

More mills, specialty businesses, and general shops began operation in Henderson during this development period. Cotton and woolen mills became great plants, spindle looms of fabric in tons, and becoming a major supplier of fine cotton and wool for the rest of the country. Flour and hominy mills came into operation. Saw mills, woodworking mills, buggy manufacturing, foundries, and brick manufacturing engaged in filling orders from the townspeople. True to the hearts of many Hendersonians, industry leaders built distilleries and breweries to complement the town's industry. All this business appeared quite ambitious by comparison to the simple first-known Henderson grist mill owned by Captain Dunn and his wife, Hannah, in 1796 (1887).

As the leading townspeople worked hard, they quickly learned to live life in the most comfortable of dwellings. Out of all this industry came some of the finest homes in America belonging to those who ran the business and commerce of Henderson during those tobacco-rush days. Hardly any tobacco producer became rich; while those on the periphery of the business, the merchant suppliers, exporters, and importers, achieved enormous wealth. Architectural styles
glamorized their owner's fantasies and desires: Victorian, Italianate villa, Georgian, Romanesque Revival stone, several of them constructed on Henderson's highest hills from which their owners could look out onto the mighty Ohio and virtually watch their fortunes come floating up and down the waterway. Some families built housing for their workers who worked in their plants and factories. History would take note of the family name as it did the houses in which the families lived: Dixon, Soaper, Hart, Ingram, Barret, Holloway, Cabell, Wilson, Shelby, and Powell. Lazarus Powell, who, in 1851, became the first of four Kentucky governors from Henderson County, owned one of those magnificent homes. Many of the families left long-lived reminders of their presence as many of today's streets and even other towns in Kentucky bear their names (1985).

The Barret family spearheaded tremendous social projects in the development of Henderson. Few would dispute that during the 19th century the Barret family owned more Henderson property than any other family. Their ownership did not lie just in monetary wealth. The family fostered many businesses in Henderson that became the town's economic lifeblood. Barret brothers Alexander, John, and William held rein on many phases of the tobacco and other industries, including railroads, merchandising, backing, woolen and cotton milling, real estate, farming, and numerous charities secular and religious as well as educational (1985).

Another Barret, James, built a stately twenty-four-room home lacking for nothing. With stained glass windows imported from France, marble fireplace
hearths, a mural with gold leaf border around the living room ceiling painted by a French artist, all woodwork in cherry, walnut, and mahogany, parquet floors, and solid brick walls sixteen-inches thick, the house had become a showplace of grandiose proportions (1985). 62

A Favorite Daughter of Henderson, Lucy Furman, lived on Powell Street. Furman became an author of novels, based mostly on life in and around Henderson (The Stories of a Sanctified Town), moreover of eastern Kentucky where she taught school for many years at the Hindman Settlement School. In her later years, she became involved at the national level in the Anti-Steel Trap League, an organization dedicated to halting the use of steel traps in snaring fur-bearing animals (1985). 63

Archibald Dixon, the statesman who held several positions in legislature, including various offices, as a representative, Kentucky and U. S. Senator, and Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky, built a bold, yet gracious two-story house that he gave to his daughter, Rebecca, as a wedding gift. She married a young man who had become an attorney and politician, John Young Brown. Brown rose to political fame as a U. S. Representative and went on to become governor of Kentucky. Townspeople, during this period, called Rebecca "the most beautiful woman in Kentucky." Ironically, eighty years later, another Governor John Y. Brown would marry a queenly beauty (1985). 64

The Wilson family left its stamp on Henderson with Young E. Allison, grandson of James Wilson. Allison founded Henderson's first newspaper, The
Chronicle, and later edited papers in Evansville, Indiana and Louisville, Kentucky. "Allison wrote librettos, stories, memoirs, and poetry. 'The Derelict,' that completed Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Fifteen Men On A Dead Man's Chest,' is Allison's work. 'The Old Piano' is a reminiscence about the first piano in Henderson, an instrument that Allison's mother brought from Virginia in 1815 (1985)."

Some of the people who lived in those homes, and who changed a bit of history, came from lesser stations in life. One of the homeowners, Professor J. Maurice Bach, who emigrated from Switzerland, came to Henderson to play organ for the First Presbyterian Church and to perform duties as the musical director for the Henderson Female Academy. Bach led the two-hundred-member German Singing Society. The organization hired a janitor to keep their Liederkranz Hall clean (Handy, 1941). The jobber turned out as William Christopher Handy, known as W. C. Handy, later known as "Father of the Blues," and composer of the "St. Louis Blues," at least forty other Blues songs and over twice as many spirituals. Handy wrote in his autobiography, Father of the Blues:

A German singing society of several hundred voices was one of the glories of Henderson at that time. I was so impressed by the work of Professor Bach that I angled for a janitor job in order to study the professor's methods and at the same time hear the men sing. In this way I obtained a postgraduate course in vocal music, and got paid for it,
winning my way into his good graces and hungrily snatching up every musical crumb that fell from the great man's table (1941).

Handy had spent many hours, not only hearing the church choirs singing, but also visiting the waterfront of Henderson wharves as workers unloaded tobacco bails. There he listened to the Blacks singing some of the songs they'd heard all up and down the rivers Ohio, the Mississippi, the Tennessee, as well as songs he had heard along the many sorted roads and rails he traveled, from his native Florence, Alabama. As he had cataloged many spirituals in his brain from his Florence childhood church days, with his Methodist preacher-father, Charles, he began to sense the "soul" that lay in their singing. He lived the fiber of his future lyric, "I hate to see de evenin' sun go down (1941)." Though Handy didn't write any songs in Henderson, living there gave him time to reflect upon experiences through which he passed "life" he had seen and heard. From those experiences, he felt he could set down their "soul" in a music that represented the characteristics of his race:

Many things happened in Henderson, and all of them seemed to work out to a purpose. A young man named A. O. Stanley danced at the barbecue. Later he became a United States senator. Carl Lindstrom, the twelve-year-old
child prodigy, cornet soloist in the famous Gilmore Band of which John Philip Sousa had been a member, heard me play and came and exchanged observations about the instrument he and I both loved. I joined a band under the direction of the brilliant David P. Crutcher. Most of all, I met Elizabeth V. Price, a Henderson native whom I married (1941).  

Handy's love for music was apparent when he was quite young. He saved his money performing odd jobs to buy a guitar. His father's famous quotation, upon seeing his son with the guitar, still echoes in jazz concerts around the world:

"Son, I'd rather see you in a hearse. I'd rather follow you to the graveyard than to hear that you'd become a musician (1941)."  

In my high school days, I was a member of the Henderson City High School band, one-hundred-strong. In those days, critics recognized the band nationally for its excellence, most-often winning superior-ranked state trophies in competition, and being invited to perform in parades all over the country. In 1962, with the full one-hundred piece band backing me, I soloed, playing Handy's "St. Louis Blues," on electric guitar. If spirits can "roll over in their grave," I am sure the spirit of Charles did when I played the song. If that statement is correct, I would hope that the spirit of W. C. smiled a little.

Earlier, Mary Towles Sasseen, a Henderson school teacher, lived in one of
those Henderson houses, now known as the "Mary Towles Sasseen House," although she never owned it. Sasseen had an idea of making the mothers of her students seem special by having them design cards as gifts for their mothers. She set aside the date, April 20, 1887, her mother’s birthday, as the first date of celebration, to be known as "Mother’s Day (1985)." If Sasseen composed with a Louisville school teacher, the package of Mother’s Day package might have joined. Patty Smith Hill, living in Louisville, with her sister Mildred, would compose and write a child’s song entitled, "Good Morning To You" in 1893. That little ditty would become the universal "Happy Birthday To You." Since then, a "tiff" has existed between supporters for Mary Towles Sasseen, or Anna Jarvis. Jarvis announced plans for a Mother’s Day celebration in 1907, then seven years later, persuaded a senator to introduce the bill that brought the day into national observance. Thus, most offspring credit Miss Jarvis with the idea of Mother’s Day. However, Miss Sasseen published a booklet of Mother’s Day ideas, in 1893, fourteen-years before Jarvis’ announcement and twenty-one-years before the senate passed the bill, based much upon the way she had instructed her students to give her their homemade card and to "kiss mama before school and before going out to play." Wise is the person who does not mention a Jarvis-Mother’s Day connection while visiting Henderson.

John James Audubon, one of the most famous of Hendersonians, a renowned naturalist, ornithologist, and world reknowned painter became a reluctant contributor to the growth of Henderson. His love of nature and the study of
wildlife, especially birds, always lured him away from the industrial sounds of the city. Yet, he had to make a living. So, he constructed a mill on the bank of the Ohio, on what today is Audubon Mill Park, located near the edge of Henderson's river dock, at Second and Water Streets. Today, the street, Second Street, replaces the name of Mill Street. In Audubon's day, the street led from Henderson's east end to Audubon's Mill river location. Audubon built his little log cabin at the opposite end of the street, possibly in hopes of staying away from all the bustle of river life.

Audubon painted his bird studies life-size. When he felt ready to have his paintings consolidated into a book, he found that no publisher in America did engraving the size Audubon's paintings demanded. He traveled to Europe with his drawings, first to Scotland, then to London. The Robert Havell & Sons Engraving struck four-hundred, twenty-five plates, from which two-hundred became published in his book, "Birds of America." The Historical Society houses the original work in the Art Museum of New York. Their detail remains rich and stands as a standard to artistic achievement in nature drawings (1887).

Grand styled plantation-type homes abounded around Henderson. The Soaper family built "Bienvenue," on Zion Road, leading out of Henderson at Second Street, at the turn of the century. The Soapers began their fortune in tobacco and later expanded their wealth into other Henderson ventures (1985).

One of the town's houses in the Depression era came to national fame. Owners of a beautiful showcase house had begun renting an apartment there. A
young man and his lady companion came to rent from the owners. The tenants were model renters, never causing noise or disturbances. Not even next door neighbors knew of their presence. Only after the owners received a knock on their door, then told the story of their renters, did the owners know they housed an FBI Most Wanted fugitive, George "Bugs" Moran (1985).
CHAPTER TWO

Media flourished in Henderson, each adding its own taste of character to the little rivertown’s bustling business. Entertainment, in one simple form or another, rolled out and embraced the vitality of Henderson’s commerce. Townspeople saw a changing world as visiting showboat entertainment troupes came fashionably dressed from singers to dancers; men in black-face played banjoes and danced jigs while their spangled costumes appeared as tiny mirrors shining back at spectators. Opera troupes appeared, with actors and actresses performing plays from the classics to local folklore. From their entertainment world came news of the development of other territories, cities, and communities.

Starling’s work suggests that a few Henderson shops printed leaflets and notes for town business meetings on a regular basis. Media in Henderson were growing in the town just as rapidly as media in the larger, more established metropolitan cities. By the end of the 19th century, the town began to possess at least one outlet for every medium: theater, newspaper, and, moving into the 20th century, movie houses, radio, and television. Henderson’s population never exceeded more than two-thousand in the first half of the 19th century. By that tenet, and for the time, the town should not have had even one of the mediums
centered in its core businesses. Yet, variety, meaning choices, seemed to match the development of each medium as it immediately became available to the public. Because of nearby Evansville, and because of several avenues in travelling back and forth across the river, Henderson would quickly become a satellite of Evansville's commerce in media trade.

One-on-one communication had been a way of life for Henderson's population. Reading and writing were tasks left to those who needed such skills in their business. In other cases, when the necessity for communicating occurred, one-on-one communication, merely talking and listening became the answer. The vitality that much of the riverboat traffic had brought to Henderson seemed to cause an explosion of yearnings for "the latest" from the next century of modern necessities and conveniences. The riverboats had done their delightful destruction to Henderson's status quo; for whenever a new product or invention came along Henderson wanted it, too.

Henderson redefined the word "Boom" on a daily basis. It had become a boom-capital of tobacco, with boom-construction and boom-growth. Even the Ohio had sprung a life of its own with the riverboat boom. For with that life sprung a new medium; not only of trade, but of news, of entertainment, of communication of how other parts of the country lived. Though not often considered a medium of communication, the steamboats brought along with their billowing smokestacks and water-slapping paddle-wheelers every nuance of the outside world news to Henderson. Henderson responded in kind by loading its finest in tobaccos,
alcohols, lumbers, and livestock onto the paddle-wheelers headed up or downstream. The boat people indulged Hendersonians not only in the commerce of trade, but in the commerce of communication. As time turned toward the 20th century, and for what seemed like overnight, the rest of developing media came to Henderson: first clashing, next fighting, coming to reconciliation, and then prospering. Slowly, at first, the media would come floating to Henderson.

In 1811, the "New Orleans," built in the same year it docked at Henderson, the paddle became the first steamboat down the Ohio River. Only two other steamboats existed at the time, the "Clermont," a creation of Robert Fulton, and the "North River," which floated on the Hudson River. Soon, the riverboats, "Comet," "Vesuvius," "Ætna," "Enterprise," "Charley Bowen," "City of St. Louis," "W. F. Nisbet," "Southland," even the "Henderson," the twenty-fourth steamer on the Ohio, and the ever-famous "Robert E. Lee" of story and song, were but a few of the over 2,500 riverboats that came through the Henderson-Evansville riverports at their peak in the 1830's-1960's decades (1886). Notably, J. Prentiss, of Henderson, built a twenty-five-ton steamship, the "Pike," for trading between Louisville and St. Louis (1887).

One of the grandest of all showboats was Swallow & Markle's "The Floating Palace," which with its bells, chimes, and calliope whistlings represented the epitome of an entertainment steamboat. Its handbills exclaimed "Mirth, Melody, and Minstrelsy," "Up-to-date comedians, wonderful dancers, cultivated singers, brand-new specialties," "Lighted by electricity, cooled by electric fans," and, if that
were not enough enticement, "Nothing like it ever seen before, sweet singers, pretty girls, elegant costumes, and gorgeous new scenery," along with assuring "safe, comfortable seats," and, most importantly, "moral and refined" entertainment. It floated as a monstrous "alcazar" upon the Ohio, with a seating capacity of twelve-hundred (Graham, 1952).

Possibly more daring than prudent, E. A. Price brought his classically trained performing entourage down the Ohio on his "Price’s New Floating Opera" boat, complete with nightly performances of Shakespeare. In any river town along the Ohio, including Henderson, a person can only imagine seeing these performances for the first time. According to Graham, the acts were so foreign to most onlookers that major degrees of criticism were never present, merely because most of the town’s folk did not understand all the high-English. Instead, they tended to think of the performances as "novelties (1952)."

Even William Chapman’s "Floating Theater" became well known along the Ohio, bringing artistic drama into an otherwise "arts-free" frontier. The "Theater" became one of the first "family" showboats to dispel the unsavory reputations of earlier boats that berefted monies from visited river communities. The showboat often exchanged its ticket fee for tradable goods ranging from a peck of potatoes, or yams, two gallons of fruit, or a side of bacon. Children and Negroes could attend at half price (1952).

By the mid-century, possibly the most colossal showboat undertaking began with the Gilbert Spaulding and Charles J. Rogers' "Floating Circus Palace." The
length of the boat stretched out some two-hundred feet, by thirty-five-feet in width, and towered above the water as a double-decker. The "circus" pushed along the river with a sidewheeler steamboat attached to its side. Its crew amounted to around one-hundred, while boasting a twelve-piece brass band that played background music to dramatic performances, vaudeville acts, and minstrel shows. The crew lived aboard the boat, along with trained horses and other animals. More remarkable, it had a seating capacity of thirty-four-hundred, with room outside for those who wished to remain as standees at half-price (1952).

A parade downtown occurred with almost every arrival of a steamboat. Townspeople could hear the boat's calliope for miles away, and, with work or conditions permitting, would come running to see what treats in store had landed at Henderson's pier. As soon as the showboat became docked at the foot of Second Street, its performers and minstrels would dress in their performing clothes, load show wagons, form line-and-column, and march through the heart of downtown Henderson, playing loud and marching proud. Squads of local boys and boat workers passed out playbills along each parade route. On weekends people packed picnic baskets and came down to the parks near the riverboats. There they ate fried chicken and listened to calliope and minstrel music.

Showboats offered fun entertainment with jazz bands from the South, banjo and trumpet players, dance hall ladies, gamblers, and people taking on all dares. One could find no finer place, no finer time in losing his fortunes to a poker game, or to a roulette wheel. For the fun of it, even for business, one could board an
excursion trip and go down the Ohio to the Mississippi River and on to New Orleans; or, travel up the Ohio to Louisville or Cincinnati and the various rivertowns in between.

The boats brought goods from as far north as New York and as far south as New Orleans, the major ports for goods, and from world trading centers. They brought mail. They brought news of all the latest developments in the big cities all up and down the Ohio and from countries afar. Most importantly, they brought people. Onlookers would line up along the shores of each state to watch, to wave, just to see these mighty mammoths navigate the Ohio waters. The locals sold their tobacco, wood, and whiskey to the boaters; and the boaters would, in turn, sell the wares they'd obtained from parts of the country both up- and downstream: Champagnes replacing whiskey, perfumes, Java coffees, lemons and limes, oysters, medicines, even plantation sugar replacing sorghum as a sweetener. Could not a Hannibal, Missouri, writer experience a field day reporting of such daily antics?!

The *Columbian* gave the first salutary try at reporting some of those events, personalities, and, yes, antics as the first regularly printed newspaper of Henderson in 1823. For the first time, Henderson would have an ongoing record of its daily life and growth. It would perform most of the reporting duties needed to get news to the townspeople of Henderson County. Published by William R. Abbott, and aided by printer Josh Cunningham, the *Columbian* brought news of not only local news, but of foreign lands, as well (1887).
A major selling point of the Columbia newspaper appeared regularly in the form of "Abinadab's Letters." Knowledgeable readers accused Abbott of being the gossip-wielding pen of Abinadab. Abinadab knew everyone in town. It appeared that Abinadab knew everything about all things. The reporter possessed a sharp wit, a keen sense of social balance, and an insightful eye on the rights of cause, much as did Abbott. Abinadab delighted and terrorized the townspeople with his biting editorial "letters." He recounted touching human interest stories about those locals who went out of their way to help others, while, with the same pen-strokes, he damned those who took advantage of others' plight in seeking a higher station in life for themselves. For whatever the content and aim of Abinadab's letters, an eager audience of readers impatiently awaited each publication. "His pen-pictures of men were so perfect, a mistake in placing the victim was impossible (1887)." According to Arnett, the paper often reprinted news from the New York Evening Post, with news only two months old (1976).

The Columbia brought with it the beginnings of a Henderson historical record-keeping legacy. By publishing a daily edition, the paper kept a true history of the town's progress, as well as its foibles. Every indication pointed to an ill-time for the newspaper. Possibly the $3.00 per year subscription seemed steep to those who felt they saw all the news they needed just by walking down Main Street on a busy afternoon. Stemming from the Columbia came the short-lived South Kentuckian.

Several attempts at publishing an ongoing newspaper in Henderson kept
street corners busy: The Courier, Commercial, Tri-Weekly Sun, Daily Times, Sentinel, and Free Lance made their brief presence known to the community. In all likelihood, the papers did not reach the emotional fiber of Henderson. By the time the Henderson News Reporter set up its presses, the town and times were ready for it.

The Henderson News Reporter came into Henderson wearing the printed appearance of an aberrational layout. Colonel C. W. Hutchen and E. W. Worsham established the paper. Its fare existed as a somewhat emotional venture, often cited as a beacon overseeing the community. Its biting editorials and hard news features, often highly emotional and poorly reasoned, stood in sharp contrast to the news types Hendersonians were used to reading. Its editorials of 1861 often barked at the citizens of Henderson to take heed:

Capitalists [the Union] will not relax their purse strings before the establishment of the Southern Confederacy, which we believe will be born about the fourth of March next (1887).

Most certainly several believed in Southern causes and many felt Northern compassions. The paper's views and strong secessionist stance during the Civil War made its suspension of publication a "somewhat military necessity." Judge J. F. Simmons bought the paper and moved to Sardis, Mississippi (1976).
As newspapers came to Henderson in the late 19th century, so did the influence of Samuel Morse and Alexander Graham Bell. Henderson received its telegraph and telephone service in 1881 through the Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company, a service providing initially for the interconnecting of ninety-one customers. Remaining true to the idea of free enterprise, a second company, the Home Telephone Company came into existence at about the same time. Again, its city fathers were running the gambit of not allowing Henderson to be a "one-of-a-kind" shop in its "luxury" enjoyments. For "high society" citizens having at least one telephone became a necessity. The Hendersonian who wished to really "be on call," as Arnett describes, subscribed to both phone companies. The town's callers usually placed one company's telephone in one area of the house and a second company phone in another area, with a phone list of each company's subscribers. Finally, to survive each other, the two companies merged in 1928 and became consolidated under the title, Southern Bell Telephone (1976).

By 1885, Henderson claimed ownership of three solid newspapers: The News, The Journal, and The Gleaner. Benjamin Harrison, Malcolm Yeaman and E. L. Starling, and C. C. Givens were their respective publisher-editors. Remaining amazing enough, in that the town had three newspapers at about the same time, were the editors who hoped that their limited number of subscribers might be able to read, much less buy two or more papers (1976).

The News would lead the ranks of print media as the vanguard newspaper
for Henderson. Benjamin Harrison served as publisher and editor of the paper, guiding its printing niche in reporting the horror of the Civil War in less emotional tones than did the Reporter. With Kentucky considered a border state, and Henderson County and City caught in the breach of supply routes, Evansville to the North, Louisville to the East, the Henderson area saw captures and takeovers by Union and Confederate soldiers occur almost daily. Usually, no organization existed in those armies; instead, they were guerrilla bands that marauded and despoiled at will when they came upon a village or town. Word would come from those villages and towns and, the following day, the Reporter would have its latest headline and story.

Henderson remained one of the few towns during the Civil War, though not caught up in its bloodletting, that lost out just the same. Before the War, its commercial business stirred from sunup to sundown as its people filled the downtown streets. One found life's fun and full activities anywhere he or she looked. Though no shots rang out in the night, the War slowly killed the downtown trade. People began to fear the potential of what they heard from travelling visitors. They saw the first of those potential fears come true when the town's river trade all but came to a halt. The showboats ceased to bring their cargo of merriment that had caused townspeople to picnic and dance and play and sing along the shores at their approach.

During the height of the Civil War activities involving Henderson, it appeared that each day a new band of marauders, Union or Confederate, entered the city
limits, ran out the opposing army, then started its own reckless, mindless search for spoils. Townspeople, unless finding it absolutely necessary, stayed away from downtown Henderson. Starling notes, that many of those days during 1864, "Henderson, commercially speaking, was as dead as a post, and one could walk six squares [city blocks] during the middle of the day without meeting, and, perhaps, without seeing a human (1887)."

Harrison unflinchingly printed the news as it affected the townspeople. His newspaper printed stories of both armies with all their looting, their pillaging, and their abuse of the local people. He showed no mercy to those guerrilla bands who caused harm to the city. Throughout the War, The News printed stories that directly influenced its readers, and, whenever possible, indicated the town's and surrounding areas' progress.

The Journal came in November and first appeared in December 10, 1883. The paper found organization by a stock company, then, in June 1884, John A. Lyne and Starling L. Marshall bought it. The paper became the flagship paper of the city and its official weekly organ for Democratic Party viewpoints. Its first editors were Malcolm Yeaman and E. L. Starling, the source of much of this work's Henderson history.

Love of work became the fuel that drove Clarence Christian Givens to the newspaper business. At seventeen, he worked for a year at Sebree, Kentucky, mostly to learn, though helping to print the Sebree Sunbeam. Afterwards, Givens moved to Henderson to assist Thomas L. Cannon, who, then, published the above-
mentioned Sentinel. Givens then moved to Providence, where he established the Gleaner. He wanted still more. He moved to Madisonville, Hopkins County, Kentucky, and opened his Gleaner to that market. Starling noted of Givens, "By determined industry and square dealing, he registered the largest number of subscribers ever claimed by any paper in the county," a statement made by area newspaper editors most often describing Givens. Soon, he expanded his newspaper page columns from eight to nine columns and brought in steam presses. Givens soon purchased his competitor, the Times, and consolidated the two newspapers. In short time, he moved his newspaper to Henderson, thus inaugurating the weekly Gleaner with his brother George's help, to run head-on with the Journal (1887).  

For years remaining, the Gleaner grew in popularity and in circulation. The Journal, however, kept its readership, based largely on the integrity of its content. By 1904, Lynne suffered failing health and lapsed publication of the Journal. The Journal needed help. It needed new blood. The call went out across the area and country that the paper lay on the verge of bankruptcy. Someone needed to save it by rescuing its circulation and raising its dignity in the Henderson community again.

Leigh Harris, a sprightly and intriguing young reporter in Pekin, Illinois, would answer the call. He had been working for the Pekin, Illinois, Times, had become its City editor at age sixteen, and had grown just enough financially to secure some farming and real estate interests. In closing out his early teens,
Harris had attended Bradley Polytech Institute, played semi-pro football, and had to give up the love of sport due to injuries of his right hand. Later, doctors told him he had a heart murmur that kept him from fighting in World War I.

With those options closed to him, Harris went to work for the Peoria Star, in nearby Peoria, Illinois. Often, his boss ordered him to the neighboring town of Canton to “invade” the circulation area of the town’s newspaper, the Canton Daily Register. Harris was good at his job, good enough for the Register’s publisher and editor, Clarence E. Snively, to take note and offer him a job. Soon, Harris had virtually “punched his way out” of Peoria, after striking his boss in frustration, and moved to Canton. Snively’s job offer seemed fabulous to him, but paled in comparison to the real opportunity Harris sought, the hand of Jane; called Jenny, by some; Jinx by others; the daughter of the publisher and editor, Snively, by all.

For a short time, they moved back to Peoria, long enough for Harris to write brokers around the country asking for the whereabouts of a newspaper he could buy at little-to-no-cost. Brokers in New York responded by offering two locations of which they knew. Because of the climate, Henderson, Kentucky, won out in the Harris family’s heart and mind.

In 1909, Harris, his wife Jane, and their two toddler daughters, Pat and Francele, moved to Henderson to take on the challenge of running the bankrupt Journal, a newspaper that ran a tab of $500 per week loss. His first duty: write the paper’s creed. After agonizing over his immediate thoughts for the paper, he set out to define its mission. Harrison’s first published editorial avoided all the written
cliches' one would normally expect to read from a new owner, publisher, and editor. His rather laconic proclamation humbly stated a simple promise to Henderson readers:

"I have come to Henderson to run a newspaper."

He saw life on its simplest terms: family, fellowman, and community. Harris felt these terms expressed the core values of the majority of his readers. He often sought to "remind" his readers of those terms by writing editorials under the nom de plume, "Ima Watchin" and "Billy Pennyrile." Townspeople often accused the Journal's mysterious writer, one who seemed to know all the town's gossip and secrets, as being Jane. Jane never wrote a word for the paper; she only proofread and edited the paper. Harris remained firm about the editorial page. He knew he could voice the total of Henderson's concerns on one page: Henderson's politics, town programs, economic affairs, and its humanitarian needs. Harris, along with his wife, Jane, published the new Journal only as an afternoon paper in its first issues. Later, the two toiled day and night to gain readership by publishing newspapers mornings and evenings.

One of the first incidents that propelled Harris into the limelight and lantern light of the community came about through his writings of the "Night Riders." Essentially, the Night Riders consisted of a band of tobacco farmers who refused to accept the Tobacco Trust Association prices for their tobacco yields. The Trust
offered four-cents per pound. The farmers wanted much higher prices. They called sellout people "Hillbillies," those who did not join their fight and who were able to sell their tobacco at prices more than those offered the association farmers.

The Riders became a threat to rural farmers outside the association because they came on property at night, masked, burning barns, beating, and shooting at farmers. Harris saw the situation as a mob-rule conscience and sought out someone who would tell him more about the inner organizational leaders of the clan. In time, Charlie Pence, a Night Rider, would give him names. Harris, in turn, began to write scathing editorials, first publishing the wrongdoings of the Riders, then publishing names. Soon, the Night Riders lost their secrecy, their power to instill fear in those who opposed them, and went out of existence (Armstrong, 1974). 92

The crusade against the Night Riders permanently planted Harris and his paper as the soul of Henderson's thoughts and feelings toward itself. The incident marked an end to Henderson's pioneer thinking and a beginning to a modern way of thinking for the 20th century. Harris aided in the formation of other needed projects: a tuberculosis association — the disease ran throughout Kentucky at the turn of the century — securing a building for a hospital, bringing in the county's first farm agent, Charlie Mahan; a Red Cross chapter, a War Bond committee, a health center, and countless other community-related drives, causes, and needs (1974). 93

It took nine months for both newspapers to realize that they could provide
better coverage and increase their circulation if they consolidated. With George Givens inactive, C. C. Givens joined with his Gleaner with Harris' Journal. The papers became the Henderson Gleaner-Journal, providing both morning and evening publications. Then, in 1915, Harris bought out Givens, and in 1929, moved the operation out of its Main Street location and into a building designed as a newspaper house, on North Elm Street (1974). 94

Harris made the paper grow and prosper by going to almost any event to report its news. He seemed to have unlimited power of drive, often staying up into the wee hours to finish a story, only to lie down for a few hours, then to rise again to work as though he had a full night's sleep. When Jane wasn't attending the girls, she continued her duties for the newspaper. The two became powerhouses in getting the paper on the streets. Harris always seemed to consolidate his work, his product, and his method of doing business. Even many years later, he sat down and wrote out only one check, an entire payroll, to be taken by the bookkeeper to the bank for cashing. In turn, the bookkeeper brought the money back to the paper office and properly disbursed the employee pay. The bookkeeper, my mother, Carolyn, never gave the "single check" philosophy of Harris a doubt, once remarking, "That's the way Harris wanted it, and that's the way I did it. Harris had his quirks, but he was a fine man and a man of principle (Drury, 1992). 95

A few years later, another newspaper came to Henderson, one of lesser significance, yet of greater importance to Henderson's black community, the
Henderson Communicator, Henderson’s black-owned and operated newspaper. Published and edited by Charles Thompson, the entire family, Lewis, Leona, and Mattie, published the paper, starting on June 6, 1936. Its editions made the streets every Saturday for the next twenty years (1976). 96

The Communicator acted as a "voice" within the voice of Henderson by providing its readership with exacting viewpoints of Henderson’s black community leaders and followers in deciding future ideals while negotiating present-day ordeals. More than any task, the newspaper brought black families into unification of their living standards: religious, educational, and social within the Henderson culture. Indeed, the black community virtually provided "muscle" for the town and most assuredly helped the town grow.

Throughout the 1920's, Henderson’s economy steadily prospered. Later, due to the combination of the Depression and the removal of Henderson’s twenty-nine tobacco factories, the hometown economy began to falter. England wanted to produce tobacco leaf from its own colonies and imposed a one-dollar per pound tariff on all U. S. tobacco. The move financially ruined the Henderson tobacco farmer.

World War I had severely crippled the sale of tobacco. England had initiated its huge tariff on all foreign-grown tobaccos. A paralyzing blow hit the Tobacco Empire of Henderson, an empire that placed all of its economic eggs in a dark-tobacco basket, when the overseas tobacco market crashed. Great Britain continued to manipulate its tariff on dark-leaf imports. Henderson’s rail system had
flourished in handling war supplies through those troubled years, but the town
could not bounce back as before, never prospering as it had during its tobacco
days. Inflation had swept the area into unrealistically high prices and the cost of
living became threatening to all but the most well healed. Tobacco once had
brought the world to Henderson. Its train system now rolled the world through it
to points beyond.

Even ferries hauled the first new railroad cars. Almost all railroad
endeavors, especially those that approached waterways, met with disdain from the
river commerce people. The boat people saw canals as the answer to Kentucky's
future in the business world. Monies spent on digging waterways into the state's
interior went farther rather than laying rails, they contended (1886).

No one could have predicted a depression. Inflation, maybe; a recession,
most likely, but a depression could not happen. It did. It happened essentially to
the one-crop — tobacco — town of Henderson, Kentucky. In 1929, traffic all but
stopped on the Ohio and rails slowed down to a puff. Tumbling deeper into
economic fall, Henderson's economy soon bent over in exhaustion.

Meanwhile, Harris fought to keep the depressed economy of Henderson
afloat by helping to bring in new industry: Betty Maid Dress Company, Bear Brand
Hosiery, American Chrome, Atlas Tack, Atmospheric Nitrogen, Osborn
Manufacturing, Tri-State and Kusan Plastics Companies. Even in all the disparity
of Henderson's "glitter days," Harris sought to get a bridge built to Evansville from
Henderson's 12th Street river bank. Unlike many, Harris did not fear an economic
connection with Evansville, and, to the contrary, felt the move would strengthen both communities. (Others wanted the bridge to begin at the North of town, near the Dade Park area; a move that would eventually win out.)

Then, in July 3, 1932, a two-lane bridge spanned the river, on Highway 41, with a paved highway connecting the two communities of Henderson and Evansville. Again, the communities had a whole new argument. Tobacco and hardwoods no longer pounded their issue differences. Now the matter constituted of a far more serious nature. Now the provincial tempers had a chance to flare in attempting to name the bridge. For the next thirty-five years, the two states would squabble over a name. Everyone, except the legislators, thought well of the construction and truly honored the structure by merely calling it what it was, "Bridge." If the traveler in Indiana headed south into Kentucky, he or she called the bridge the "Henderson Bridge." Likewise, to the northern-bound traveler headed toward Indiana, he or she called the bridge the "Evansville Bridge." For everyone, "bridge" described how one would get to the other bank of the Ohio River.

For years, traffic mounted. In no time, a steady stream of traffic came and went on the single bridge connecting the two states, the two cities, the two cultures. By the 1960's, both communities realized the necessity for either a new bridge, or additional bridge. Because of the enormous amount of unpredicted traffic, construction began and ended in 1965 on a second bridge, a side-by-side twin to the original. With a bill splitting construction costs between the two states,
50-50, Kentucky wanted the bridge named "Audubon Memorial Bridge," in honor of John James Audubon. Indiana said 'no' to the proposal. Most determined and undaunted in its challenge to win this time around, Indiana pushed a bill through both legislatures to name the bridges the "Bi-State Gold Star Vietnam Memorial Bridge." Only the legislators seemed relatively happy with the name. The locals who use the bridges could not have cared less. They call the bridge "the twin-bridges," at best, or simply, "bridge," referring to their means when "the twin-bridges" were the "bridge." The good local citizens concern themselves more with the bridges' mean, not their moniker.

The Great Depression had hurt the land badly. Then, just as the Henderson area began seeing some of its better days, fate struck at it again. On January 5, 1937, cloudy skies let loose a gentle rain that continued, and continued, and continued even more until, after eighteen-days, as much as twenty-one inches of precipitation, either rain, snow, or sleet, had fallen on the Ohio Valley Basin. From the West at Cairo, Illinois, to the East at Wheeling, West Virginia, an unprecedented weather system remained over the area for the eighteen-days and poured down onto the land what seemed every drop it contained. The country would know this disaster as the Great Flood of '37.

Mother Nature reigned as Queen of the Land, while the Ohio River became its King and all bowed to its magnificent powers of destruction. The river broke its banks and rose to an unbelievable flood level of 53.909-inches, placing almost all area property under water. Except for its low-lying farm lands and surrounding
towns and cities, Henderson was the only town on the Ohio that stayed above water. Ironically, the bridge that spanned the Ohio, the one structure that, in any flooding condition, would ensure safe travel, led to nowhere, meaning, once the traveler passed the Indiana side of the bridge, land and roads lay under water. The Ohio River lapped against the Henderson downtown Water Street curbside, but never did the town-proper go under water. Since that date, the locals have often uttered the phrase coined by the editor and publisher of the Henderson Gleaner, Mr. Leigh Harris, "Henderson -- On the Ohio, but never in it (1949)." 98 The Ohio became so swollen, it poured into the Wabash River, over forty river-miles away, which, in turn, continued its flooding task, further flooding the Mississippi.

All forms of emergency and rescue crews came to the aid of the area people. Simple daily life of having food, shelter, and clothing became premium. In Henderson County alone, six-thousand people fled twelve-hundred lost homes. Destruction mounted on much of the livestock and all the farmlands. For many, every possession they owned floated down the Ohio River.

For the first time in Henderson and Evansville community history, a real humanitarian bonding cause existed. The tragedy brought the two cities together as they never had been before. No longer did the differences of German Northern industrial notions compete with Southern agrarian ones. As did they help each other with whatever either had, so did other drier and more fortunate cities, from all over the country, help the river towns along the Ohio River.
In about two month’s time, the area began drying out and rebuilding. The Ohio River returned to its channel; trains ran; roads became passable. Now, land needed attention. A tobacco community, for sure, but also a farming community with various crops, the farm lands had been under water through the flooding. Serious topsoil erosion plagued many farmers. Farmers needed pumps and machines to empty flood waters caught in low-lying parcels of land. Henderson was having to take a closer look at itself to assess its flood damaged history to ensure a “higher and drier” economic and social future. It still depended upon other communities for its livelihood, even with its lands less threatened by floods. For now, that future looked glum.

In the early days of the Henderson Gleaner-Journal publication, many Kentuckians simply did not read because their work day did not permit time for reading, not the greatest provisional pool of proficient readers. Not that the implication states that its population was illiterate; it wasn’t. Many of its workers functioned quite well in their jobs. They successfully fulfilled their duties without knowing pertinent issues of health, family, and community as described in newspapers and pamphlets.

The late 1930’s showed a tally sheet that caused alarm throughout the state of Kentucky. Only seven-in-eight students went to high school; there were over fourteen-thousand cases of tuberculosis with only eight-hundred hospital beds; one doctor served nearly twelve-thousand patients; and over three-hundred communities in the range of two-hundred to two-thousand in population had no
water system. In 1943, the Committee for Kentucky formed, known as "Kentucky on the March," to turn the tally sheet around. Subcommittees formed all over the state. Henderson formed its own County and City "marchers" and Harris reported its progress on a daily-basis in his paper.

Of the Henderson sub-committee branches of agriculture, education, health, housing, and welfare, only a few sewer lines, a dental clinic, and summer recreation areas came to fruition. By 1948, voters passed a bond to build a three-million-dollar light plant, thus ensuring industrial expansion for the Henderson community and an open invitation for further growth (1974). 99

Coincidently, in 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an executive order that established the Rural Electrification Administration. The next year, Congress approved the Rural Electrification Act. Henderson county farmers scrambled to sign a petition to get the service to the area. In October 1937, Frank Street became the first Henderson resident to receive rural electric power in the state of Kentucky. The Kentucky marker reads:

FIRST KENTUCKY CONSUMER
RURAL COOPERATIVE ELECTRICITY
Here in Oct. 1937 Frank T. Street became first member-consumer to receive rural electric cooperative power in Ky. Energy was provided by Henderson RECC, first rural electric system in state to be energized. Cooperative electricity has
provided a more stable and diversified economy and a higher standard of living in rural areas.

Through wars, depression, economic slumps and regenerations, drought, floods, "Little Chicago" gambling and nightclubs, and financial drives that affected the Henderson community, Harris never let up on the needs of its citizenry, until the death of June in 1951. Though he lived another five years, many who knew him said his spirit died with his wife. The operation of the newspaper passed from Harris to his youngest daughter, Francele Harris Armstrong, who had served as an editor and as a writer on the paper with her "Gleanings" column.

January 15, 1954, the newspaper ownership consolidated, becoming the *Henderson Gleaner and Journal* (paper, 1954). The paper condensed its daily printing to one morning edition, and, holding to a long-ago decision, which had become a family tradition, did not publish on Mondays. Armstrong wanted to assure the Henderson community of the paper's commitment. She printed the following creed to its readers:

An editor should get up angry in the morning and never go to bed at night content; an editor should be able to chronicle defeat, but never admit it; he should feel news through the pores and injustice through his heart; he should plant his feet solid on the Earth, set his sights in the clouds; should
sponsor every worthy cause with unselfishness, and never acknowledge the fact of self (1954).  

In years to come, Armstrong took up the standard her father had borne so diligently for Henderson. Armstrong was "homegrown" in Henderson, schooled at Barret Manual Training High School and then went on to Northwestern University where she garnered the highest of academic accolades, graduating Summa Cum Laude. She also won over one of her professors, James W. Armstrong. She began editing for the Gleaner-Journal in 1950 and took over the full operating control of the paper as its publisher in 1954. She championed dozens of causes: roads, health, education, vocation, and recreation. Together, she and her husband pulled at the heartstrings and purse-strings of Governor A. B. "Happy Chandler and Senator William Sullivan to begin committees making way for a northwest extension community college of the University of Kentucky.

Of her many "Gleanings" columns, Armstrong found a way of reaching out into a community satisfied only with high schools and would rise to the occasion, with Mayor Hecht Lackey, to make the town see that a college was necessary to keep Henderson's youth from fleeing to bigger cities. One cause in particular resulted as a fundraising for a black swimming pool in Henderson. (More discussion of that effort is in the Theater section.) For immediate concerns, Armstrong tackled road issues, publicly crying out for better ways to get commerce into Henderson, provide for easier access throughout the city, and provide for
neighborhood and business road improvements. In many ways, she inherited this issue that its beginnings with her father's crusade for roads and rail systems into Henderson. Rails became the lifeblood of the city when the river wreaked havoc on its trade. Even C. C. Givens had fought for a good and reliable Henderson rail system in his many Gleaner editorials.

In 1960, Walt Dear moved to Henderson to assume the publishing duties of the paper. In Arnett's book, Dear says:

A newspaper should be controversial . . . [it should contain] several letters to the editor, although they may differ from the position of the paper and even with each other. [The] newspaper belongs to the reader . . . to stay informed, as a shopping guide, as a marketplace for his business, and . . . as a medium to stimulate his interest in the community . . . the problems and issues facing it.

Dear has always believed in the philosophy of the newspaper as a link between citizen and government, seller and buyer, neighbor and neighbor. He has placed the Gleaner at the forefront in ventilating community issues involving government, civic organizations, and school improvements. From the time he first came to Henderson, Dear moved the paper into an enviable position as a top-ranked newspaper for its circulation size. In later years, his Dear & Associates
corporation bought several newspapers in Western Kentucky, trussing and streamlining their operation into today's modern operation. As president of Dear & Associates, Steve Austin is publisher, Ron Jenkins, editor of the Gleaner. The paper stands as another symbol of media commitment by Hendersonians. With its newspaper growth and stability, Henderson has prospered because its citizens have felt that, more than any news, its most vital news comes from its community neighbors, even news of its neighbors across the Ohio River.

From Henderson's earliest days of business and social interests, the town always looked across the river to its Indiana neighbors. So odd, the geographical positioning of the two towns, that on Henderson's west shore, Evansville stood more than eight miles away upstream; to Henderson's north, Evansville lay only across the river, then a delta's jump. Though Henderson citizens have always had a concern of losing its identity to the larger Evansville, they have also seen the advantages of having access to its city and its people. Boats, more than any other available access made some of those ties a little easier.

Ferry boat services came into being at both points on the Ohio and Green Rivers between the Kentucky and Indiana shores. For those who wished to conduct nearby business with either shore, a boat seemed impractical. Ferry-use seemed to fill the need. When the weather cooperated, the means performed its function ideally. In rainy, snowy weather negotiating the dirt roads leading up to the docking areas became impossible. Then, too, the river never stayed at one level, either rising or falling. Operators constructed crossing from Henderson to
Mount Vernon, Scuffletown, and Evansville, Indiana, across the Ohio, and at Spottsville, Bluff City, Masons Ferry, Hamilton’s Ferry, Curdsville, Davis Ferry, and Delaware, Kentucky across the Green. For a brief time, and for those who dared, interurban cars traversed the Ohio between the two cities. On July 28, 1912, the Evansville-Henderson Traction Company incorporated. The company leased the tracks the Illinois Central Railroad on which other rail cars had ridden before the L & N, the Louisville-Nashville Railroad, bridge opened. Rails ran down the bank to the low water level where they joined a floating cradle 150-feet long. Operators edged two cars, one for passengers, one for freight onto this cradle, which then locked into position against the ferry. Trolley wire ran to the ferry and up on a revolving drum mounted above the cradle that took the slack up. The operator reversed the procedure once on the opposite shore. The Evansville-Henderson Traction Company interurban system briefly thrived as one of the few interurban ferries ever operated in North America and the only one that operated on the Ohio River (1976).

On a normal trip the ferry required about twelve-minutes of the total forty-five minute run, but many runs were not normal. The operators had trouble keeping the night runs on course until they installed a dinner bell on each side of the river. They found the sound more effective than lights since the sight and reflection of the lights always remained as a straight line, while the sound of the bell would wane if the ferry got off-course and went either up or downstream from its landing site. So, on trip-by-trip voyages, day-by-night excursions, Henderson
saw a way of connection to its neighboring cities. It would not give up in reaching out to them, nor would it stand still on its own laurels. The town never seemed content with the status quo. If the nation did or had it, Henderson wanted to do or have it.

Showboat music constantly reminded its people of the music they had heard from the last docked show. At any time, when a showboat had departed the shores of Henderson, its people would leave its banks, either whistling or singing the tunes the showboats had brought for them to hear. If they could whistle, or sing, they repeated the songs. Some would return to their homes to play the lingering melodies on their piano, or banjo, or guitar. Some lucky ones wound up their "Victrola" and heard some of the songs again in recorded form.

John P. Bailey, of Sebree, Kentucky, had no time for the insolence of record speeds. Increasing the speed of his cash register key had become the only battle he wanted. Bailey had followed the flow and excitement of the dance band era of the late 1930s and early 1940s, with its record-buying popularity, and opened Bailey's Records, located on 315 Second Street, between Green and Elm Streets, in Henderson. He really cared less what CBS and RCA were doing to the record business other than hoping that whatever the "bigwigs" decided, his record buyers could play. In those days, the shop carried all speeds, all types of records, and most of the accessories that complemented the enjoyment of good music. His business would not last to see the "Grand Confusion Days" of stereo and tape.

The shop served as Henderson's record depot of the latest in music
releases. When it first opened, it sold the only type and speed of record available, 78rpm records, both by singles and by albums. As did the technology change, so did its stock change by supplying 45 and 33⅓rpm records. Hendersonians kept up on the latest releases. As Charles Knight, a one-time assistant and owner of Bailey’s pointed out, “The record industry looked nothing then like it does today. When a song came out, it stayed around forever, it seemed; nothing like today, where a song comes out now, and tomorrow, it’s an ‘oldie (Knight, 1992).”

(Francis Craig and His Orchestra, with their 1947 recording of “Near You,” ranks as Billboard magazine’s all-time longest-ranking hit single, maintaining the Number One position for seventeen weeks (Associated Press, 1947.)

The record business prospered in Henderson. Even during the war its townspeople seemed to have at least a dollar to buy a record. New record singles generally sold for around $.90, while used records, those records that played earlier on jukeboxes and traded back by cafes and restaurants, cost a dime. An album price ranged from $2.00 up to $7.00, depending upon the label and artist. To some degree, buying records became just about the best substitute for going out on the town. Gasoline remained a rationed war item. It appeared far less troublesome merely to buy a few records, “roll back the carpet,” and have one’s own nightclub in the parlor. In tuning into a radio program, one might hear the latest recorded hit by an artist, and away the listener would go, to Bailey’s Record Shop to pick up the recording.

Long-play album sales began to pick up and people liked their length of
The store stocked, or obtained, almost any late-released record and remained available. Henderson radio station WSON often used Bailey's as an ancillary record pickup station on songs people requested, yet not offered as demos by the record companies who kept the station stocked on their latest releases.

Soundproof listening booths lined one wall of the shop, allowing the prospective buyer an "audition" before buying a particular record. Even though all ages walked into and bought records at Bailey’s, usually, its largest sector of customers was teenagers. They would come into the store as friends, pick out a stack of records, and head for one of the booths, only to come out an hour or two later after listening to the stack of records. Sometimes, they bought; other times, they didn’t.

Bailey’s primarily dealt in Zenith products. Zenith radios and phonographs became its choice when customers wanted to buy a radio or record player. Though the store had no service repair, it did stock “loaners” for those who had purchased radios and record players from them until a technician repaired their model. Or, if the "Victrola" at home worked well, a customer might be in the store to pick up a new packet of osmium needles for their player.

Bailey’s also had its "dark side." The store served as an amusement center for local business establishments, selling juke boxes, pinball machines, and, yes, outfitting slot machines out of the back door. Many of the town’s parents were aware of Bailey’s business and often cautioned their offspring to go into Bailey’s
only to shop for records and not be browse past the pinball machines and jukeboxes, and never to go near any slot machines they may see. Bailey's also sold blank record discs for those who liked recording their own music (1992).

I have asked several people who are old enough to have known about, or could remember a record player/recorder/public address/radio machine called a "Recordio." It, perhaps, processed more magic than any machine I've ever had the opportunity to operate, enjoy, and, in time, probably destroy. My parents had such a machine. It employed every mean of capturing and playing back sounds of the post-war era, in the mid-1940s.

A "box" of an electronic-filled machine no larger than 2' X 1½' X 1½', the Recordio served as an all-in-one record player of 78s, a public address system, an AM radio, and, most of all, a recording lathe for record cutting. The machine did not stand as a console, but rather as a portable, with a matching front plate that snapped onto the rest of the machine to protect the knobs, dials, buttons, and speaker in transport. Leather handles appearing on either side and one on its lid. A tan cloth-like material covered the machine with distinctive central strips that ran across its top from front-to-back, in Gucci-fashion.

Its desk stand microphone allowed live recording, from off-the-air radio programs, or from a blank disc. Naturally, any standard 78rpm record played on the machine. Its felt-covered platen rested on top and in center of the machine. At either side rested two tone arms: a light, flimsy tone arm on one side played pre-recorded records, the other, a massive tone arm, cut grooves for making home
recordings. Its front plate consisted of a lightly grey-tinted AM radio dial, with four red push buttons below it. Below them, three dark brown knobs controlled the ON/OFF/volume, tone, and tuning. Its 6" X 9" speaker had a magnet mounted at its back the size and weight of a Buick Roadmaster and produced no lesser quality sounds. In turning on the Recordio for listening, I could flip on the ON knob, then after spending the day outside playing, coming in to wash for dinner, eating, then afterwards wishing to hear the radio, its tubes might be ready to produce its first sounds. At least it seemed that long by comparison to today's "instant-on" transistor electronics.

Its "volume unit meter," the VU meter, glowed a soft green incandescence when all the tubes heated up for operation. It reminded me of looking at a keyhole. Put into the Recordio's recording mode, the keyhole vibrated opened and closed, according to the volume level going into the works of the machine. At a sound's quietest point, the keyhole remained fully open. When the audio level "peaked," the keyhole squeezed shut, even overlapping slightly. At all other playback times, the keyhole remained a motionless keyhole, with its constant green glow radiating a mysterious calming comfort, especially while listening to it in the dark.

The sounds from that Recordio are the first radio sounds I recall. I had no idea of who Jack Benny, or Arthur Godfrey, or who Hugh Edward Sandefur were. They were merely voices, big voices. Friendly voices that made me laugh, made me feel good, made me feel as though I were not alone, even though I was the
only one in the room listening to their voices.

The Recordio allowed me to hear music, an internal magic that had me singing along with its sounds even when I did not know what I sang. The Recordio played Christmas music, while my mother held me, comforting me from crying because I had chapped cheeks from playing outside, as we watched my father struggle with putting REAL glass-spun "angel hair" on the Christmas tree. The magical machine produced a music that sparked my parents into instant dancing right before its Buick-sized speaker. It brought visiting friends of my parents to sit and dance before it when they gathered for a party, to either record their party or to play the latest Dorsey, Miller, and Goodman releases. The "Recordio" also brought me "Sparky" and talking trains.

I have no recollection whether the present came as a Christmas or birthday event, but somehow, I ended up with the Capitol record album, "Sparky and the Talking Train (Capitol Records, DC-119, 1947)." Recorded in 1947, the album consists of three 78rpm records. Its cover depicts a doll-like, red-headed little boy with a spaghetti-yarn-styled hair running to the forefront of the picture. In the background, smiles a blue train that closely resembles a sideways salt shakered locomotive at a train depot. There's nothing remarkable about this album, except for the fact that it probably may be one of the greatest-recorded and produced albums of all time (strictly my biased opinion). Possibly more remarkable, my parents allowed me to play the album, unassisted. One problem remained; I could not read and did not know how to count numbers. I was only
"three . . . something."

My parents devised a simple method for allowing me to enjoy Sparky and his sonic bliss of train talk. I did know my colors. On each of the records’ six sides, my parents stuck a piece of tape on their label, then colored the tape with a different colored crayon. On the inside of the album cover, my father drew a "listing" of colors. I followed the story and its record changes by matching the color patch on the record to the color list. No doubts remain in my mind that the engineers of Capitol never intended for its records to play and play and play, as were those of Sparky's.

Forty years later, upon hearing the album, I get the same chills I first saw pop up on my arms as a child. I still have the "playable" album of "Sparky." On the inside cover, the colors still remain, including the wild and erratic crayon colors I drew by tracing the empty record sleeve holes while listening to Sparky.

The story unfolded to the spite of all his bullying school friends, neighbors, and even his parents ridiculing him for thinking that trains can talk, save his father, the train, the conductor, the whole load of passengers, and the day, because the train does talk to Sparky to let him know that its twenty-one miles to the next town, even though the conductor says to his father that its only fifteen miles, and that the train tells Sparky that its right-front wheel on its locomotive is loose and that a serious wreck will occur if something isn't done immediately, to which Sparky pulls the emergency cord even though his father is trying to get him to sit down, while the conductor is yelling at him, and he pulls the cord anyway, stopping the train,
and his father and the conductor go to look at the right-front wheel on the locomotive and sure enough, it's loose, and would have come off in only another mile or so. Whew.

The phonograph allowed us to hear the music long after the band had packed up and had left. It sang for us when we couldn't, and played for us when we had no instruments, offering us sounds that emulated or heightened our emotions. It brought to us, not only as music, but the sounds of Earth. Those sounds took many forms, fitting any age group, playing for their ears only. Anyone started, enjoyed, and stopped the music at any convenient time and comfort in our listening parlor. For others, the call for music and excitement came from other places outside the home.

Henderson bustled. The city had opened itself to virtually every entertainment advancement known to any part of the country. For whatever New York or Chicago did, only a day, maybe weeks, or months separated Henderson's acquiring the same product or service as part of its daily life. Music, gaiety, entertainment had come by boat, by rail, and by road. The town enjoyed its brightest hours under the sun with its amusements. Entertainment came homespun, as well. Taverns and inns most assuredly had their version of entertaining troupes. Even with contrasting points of view concerning dance, some religions prohibiting it, while area private schools teaching it, social dancing abounded in Henderson. Starling points out that, in 1856, Henderson did not have a formal public hall. His comments do state that Mrs. McReady, accompanied
by Mademoiselle Camille Urso, a little prodigy of musical science, then only sixteen-years-old, delighted a large audience of Henderson people, using the dining-room of the Hancock House, because there was no public hall in the city (1887)." 107 Later, Henderson's first hotel, Spidel House, had not only a dining room but a public hall for meetings and entertainment. Recitals set the stage for the display of several local and distant performing artists. Beyond the natural musical abilities of some, the riverboat shows no doubt spurred many citizens a shadowed approval to perform publicly. In just a few years, the railroads, three of them, would supply the town of Henderson with just about any travelling act on the road. Stopover acts soon called Henderson the "Best Show Town" in the area (1976). 108

With the river acting as the flow of lifeblood for the east-banked community, Henderson's townspeople built the town's industry and homes along the Ohio's shores, snuggling up against the river. The arrangement, from its earliest drawings by Samuel Hopkins, in 1797, made Henderson extremely rectangular, four blocks deep by twenty-five blocks in length. Leaving the river, from west-to-east, Water Street, with its expansive tobacco dock width came first, followed by Main, then Elm, then Green Street. North-south streets, beginning in the town's center at, appropriately enough, Center Street, spread twelve blocks either side of Center, with First, Second, and in many cases, Third Streets complementing the town's hub of activity. Fourth Street was next to the L & N Railroad to the North and Washington Street to the South was too residential for many of the parades. The
streets of Main and Second saw most of the town's industry and activities, including its entertainment, becoming the "Broadway" streets of the city. From the town's earliest days to the present, almost every parade or public showing has traveled those two streets as part of a primary route.

A square formed around Henderson's "Theater District," at Main, First, and Second Streets serving as the springboard streets for theater, with the Gabe Opera House construction on First Street, between Main and Elm Streets, by 1883. Too, there existed a theater at First and Main, connected to the Barret House hotel. Directly across Central Park, on Main, people called the Park Theater one of the most luxuriously built theaters in the West, at least west of the Alleghenies and south of Chicago. In just over one hundred years of settlement, the town was supporting a family-style opera house and several theaters. Though Henderson history certainly records the theaters and entertainers of its earliest days, the wonder is if the townspeople really understood the wealth of entertainment it had. With its river, trains, and even roads, touring troupes from all over the country travelled through Henderson to perform. The Hendersonian who saw a play or stage show at the Gabe House or at the Park Theater became equivalent to seeing the same act in New York or Chicago. The larger cities may have had more of it, but none had any better. Before 1900, both the Park and the Barret Hotel burned down. On the site of the Park Theater, the Grand Theater took its place, though not as luxuriant, but as noted by several critics, its acoustics were perfect (1976).
The theaters of Henderson steadily replaced the riverboat shows that once played to seasonal dockings in the town. Without really knowing or understanding the process, Hendersonians had become spoiled in seeing some of the finest entertainment the country had to offer for the times. Booking agents touted every act they had on their lists to all the theaters around. Even the musically inclined natives of the area bypassed the agents and sported their own talents at public hall managers with their recital auditions (Hayes, 1992).

Natives had set certain "standards" of dress in attending its gala events, as well. The phrase "dressin' up to go downtown" became synonymous with dressing up in one's "Sunday-go-ta'-meetin'" clothes. Added to the look, the lack of a tan helped "upgrade" one's status in the community: less of a tan meant one worked indoors and usually behind a desk or counter, as opposed to the farming fields and tobacco warehouses. Regardless of vocation, people simply dressed up when they had business downtown, especially if they were going to see the theater. From homegrown to "big city," a Henderson audience gleefully awaited the next showing of virtually any kind of act it deemed as a show, dressed in their best and ready for anything to happen.

Putting the theaters through their acoustic paces were musicals and plays with names such as the New York Metropolitan Opera Company, George M. Cohan, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin; and stage names, such as Lillian Gish, Jane Cowl, and Eva Tanguay. "Al G. Field and his 'Minstrel Men'" offered a parade at noon, ending in concerts, right at the intersection of Second and Main Streets.
Buffalo Bill and his "Circus and Wild West Show," and George White's "Scandals" brought crowds by the droves. Even Henderson's local chorus club led by J. M. Bach, with performances at the Liederkranz Hall, located on the building's second floor that faced the northeast corner of Second and Elm Streets, drew many crowds who applauded in delight with each performance. A few of the other Henderson talents included the "Elk's Minstrels," "Freid Klauder Finn's Dancers" and their recitals, the Henderson Choral Club, and the Henderson Music Club. Townspeople often came in great numbers causing shows to sellout into standing room only situations. Even Central Park became the setting for traveling circuses, including bareback riders, jugglers, and clowns as each circus set up tents and constructed crude thoroughfares that passed one tent leading to another (1976).

At the entertainment height of Henderson's theaters and parks, another show played at another park, Menlo Park, in New Jersey. On April 14, 1894, Edison gave the first public showing of a new invention, the "Kinetoscope," the precursor to present-day motion picture entertainment (AP, 1894). On August 18, 1896, Henderson street lamps pierced the darkness with one-hundred, fifty-four carbon arc lights with electricity supplied by its power plant at 4th and Elm Streets, the first-known, self-generated electricity west of the Alleghenies (1976).

With electricity to light the night, Henderson sported its own first-effort movie houses in arcades: the "Savoy," the "Nickelodeon," and the "Lyric." Only five years after Edison had demonstrated his "Kinetoscope," the arcades of Henderson
gave way to movie houses. Even the "East End" theater, located several miles from downtown Henderson, had its special audiences of filmgoers. The "East End" movie house, with its hard, straight-backed wooden bench seats, quickly shared company with two major downtown movie house gems, the "Princess" and the "Grand." (Hayes, 1992). The "Grand" shone; in their plush decor, they filled the role of how movie palaces posed as the theatrical icons of "glitter, glamour, and sparkle." As the scarce movie industry struggled to become established, live entertainment often kept the theaters open and operating when audiences did not watch films.

Each theater outfitted the downstage area with hooded footlamps to "spotlight" the talent, yet to keep from blinding the audience with their glare. When a new film came to the theater, management lowered a screen on a "flyer" and into viewing position (Ezell, 1992). Audiences loved live stage shows and became accustomed to the stage presentation of talents. That pictures shown on a screen moved continuously amazed audiences. Story, plot, and to a lesser degree, drama needed little attention by a Hollywood producer in making a successful film in the industry's earliest days. Action, any form of movement, gave film the title and allowance called "movies," and that "movement" repeatedly brought audiences coming back for more.

Movie operators often thought the movement and action audiences saw on their silent screen needed an extra "something" to break the silence that blanketed the house. Beyond the occasional polite yelling and screaming at a silent screen,
movie houses were quiet; yet their audiences came for excitement. Several converted dance halls and theaters had available musicians, often sitting down in front of the stage while the motion picture played. No actual record exists when the first motion picture received the aid of musical accompaniment, but the situation allows for the "natural" mental picture of a musician or two impatiently waiting to begin their stage show as soon as the film ended. While the film ran, the musicians most likely "tuned" up their instruments while playing to the action on the screen, possibly even making fun of the medium that posed as a threat to their performing job. Soon, whole pieces of music accompanied films, with suggested or improvised musical scores to pace along with the film.

Soon, all around the country, movie operators hired local musicians, either a small band, or merely an organist or pianist to play along with the changing images on the screen, thus setting an aural "mood" to support the action on the screen. In this crudest sense, a "film score" came into existence, a mood-setter for scenes. In Henderson, one spectacular production of Griffith's, "The Birth of the Nation," had Johnny Huhlein's Orchestra seated in the orchestra pit down in front of the Grand Theater screen playing the film's accompanying "film score." For such spectacles, a film score, with all music sheets for almost all symphony instruments, came shipped side-by-side with the reels of film. Henderson theaters often employed local talents for lesser productions, usually a single piano and played by Mrs. Walter Melicent Quinn, sounding the only music at several of the theaters (1976). Not all movie houses were as fortunate to have such quality
instrumentalists perform during shows.

Even in Hollywood's earliest days of creating moods by music, the film studios wanted ways of getting rid of "local" bands, pianists, and organ players. The studio heads could not depend on the quality of the local performer; therefore, they could not predict if the local player added or took away from the impact of what happened up on the screen. Studios began to package their own music, along with their own films. Using the Edison invention of the phonograph, a few of the theaters around the country equipped their houses with some type of audio system. Other theaters hastened their efforts to add sound. Even though the sound system could not exactly account for the quality of sound its theatergoers enjoyed at least the attempt to control it.

In some of film's later pioneering experiments in silent film, motion picture companies shipped accompanying sheet music packages for musicians to play as the film showed. Within the package, a script indicated exactly which record belonged to which reel of film. Each record listed a playlist rundown sheet for each film reel segment of film. Although no lip-synch capabilities were capable with the operation, at least sound provided emotional ranges for what audiences saw on the screen. In theory, the "mood" of a particular segment of film guaranteed in offering a heightened impact on its audience. Studios and theater owners tried all sorts of experimentation, both trying to keep from paying local musicians money. What did become clear to the studio magnates is that the theater audience wanted sound; it wanted music; and it wanted voices.
In little time, Henderson's Grand Theater wired its walls with cables and installed speakers behind its screen to take advantage of the Hollywood Warner Brothers' invention of "Vitaphone." The process exploited sound recorded on discs by linking the film projector mechanically to a gramophone. With sound, the movie houses could capture an even greater lure of moviegoers and the Grand wanted to be the theater in Henderson that caused the long lines outside its doors (Ezell, 1992). 117

"The Jazz Singer," though a silent film, became the first motion picture that contained sections of sound: music and voice. Henderson soon came to know the song, "Mother, I Still Have You" as no other because they could see and hear Al Jolson sing it (Associated Press, 1927). 118 The song became the first song written specifically for a motion picture track. Jolson became a nationally known film star whose blackened face shone in minstrel tradition, wearing a straw hat and white gloves and all movie audiences left their respective theaters singing, "Ma-a-a-a-mmy, oh Ma-a-a-a-mmy."

Henderson audiences could hear his words as they saw him sing them. At other times, audiences might hear his words just before or after they saw his mouth shape the words on the screen (Clark, 1973). 119 The process of Vitaphone did not marry a soundtrack to the film; instead, phonograph records created the sound. Preparing to show Vitaphone movies, the projectionist loaded film reel Number One in the projector. Behind and away from the projector's hot arc lamp housing, a turntable platen jutted out, connected to the motor gears of
the projector. In operation, the two machines became synchronized in movement.

Each film reel had at its beginning an "academy leader (1973)." To load a film for sound synchronization, the operator placed the beginning film strip of reel Number One with the number Eight, often called the "cue ball," in the projector's aperture, locked the film into place and finished threading the rest of the projector's sprockets. Next, he placed record number One on the rear-loaded platen. On each record, a painted white dot indicated the record's beginning. The projectionist merely had to place the stylus of the tone arm exactly on the dot. Theoretically, the film and record were now in "synch," and ready for play. When the projector began, the film and the record turned over their gears and sprockets, and by the time the first picture came into the projector's film gate, sight and sound were up to speed and ready for showing. As this stage of delivery arrived, theory often waned in practice.

Not every projectionist possessed the ability, nor agility, nor artistic concern for placing the stylus exactly on the white dot of the record, much less exactly the correct record. Not all projection booths allowed accessible though guarded space from operator movements around the projectors. An occasional bump against the turntable and the film sound became hopelessly out of synch. If the floor of projectionist's booth consisted of wood, a heavy operator could easily jar the stylus just by walking past the projector. Too, when the film broke and the projectionist had to splice the film together, a further unplanned malady sprang forth: However many frames of film the operator took out in the splicing of the film, he had to
replace that space with the same number of frames when he edited the film back together or the same out-of-synch condition occurred. Visions on the screen could offer quite a display of psychedelia to the audience when it saw a cowboy pull a gun from his holster and shoot, put it back, only then to hear the gun go off in the theater; or, to the converse, to hear the gun go off, then see the cowboy draw his gun and shoot. The situation became nerve-racking as the projectionist had to wait for film cues to play one record on one projector, while looking ahead at the script to see what music played with the film reel on projector two. As the typical film progressed, film and record piles seemed to materialize all over the projectionist's booth. In all, the situation presented itself as a nightmare to the projectionist whose main job it was merely to keep a picture on the screen. He toiled while hand-feeding the burning carbon arc rods inside the projectors, readied the second projector with the next reel of film with its next record, assembled a new "show," the splicing of coming attractions, featurettes, and cartoons together, and tried to keep the stack of reels and records straight by matching them to the correct projector and reel. Henderson had its share of "Vitaphone" movies (1992).

The Princess staged its showings just east of the Main Street corner on Second Street. Its setup and surroundings gave to the customer the very basics of entertainment: wood bleacher seats, popcorn, and a screen. The theater housed one of the first "Vitaphone" sound systems of the town and the Grand Theater, located between First and Washington Streets on the west side of Main
quickly brought the process up to date. Finally, progress in camera-building, projectors, and soundtracks brought movies to a new plateau.

In its pioneering days of theaters, Louis Hayes owned the premiere Grand and Princess Theaters of Henderson. He came to operate another, the Kentucky Theater. A Louisville group, the Principal Theater Corporation, merged with Hayes and formed the Kentucky Theater. In 1928, they leased the Masonic Lodge building on Second Street between Main and Elm, just down the street from the Princess Theater. Leon Pickle, managed the theater, as he had the Grand Theater. Smith Ezell came along as the theater’s projectionist, running every show, seven days a week. No other operators availed themselves at the time. As audiences found their way to the Kentucky, business became profitable enough for the group to sell the theater to Warner Brothers, who, in turn, sold out to Paramount Pictures. Motion picture companies made it a common practice to buy into local theaters all around the country to ensure the renting and showing of their films. In the next few years, all theaters in Henderson ran by Malco Entertainment, a theater film distribution group based in Memphis, Tennessee (1992). 122

The Kentucky brought with it a new sense of theatergoing. While films remained as its chief source of entertainment, it bridged the new with the old by offering live stage show acts. Though the concept of the theater centered on the film showings, Henderson still loved its live acts. Musicians, jugglers, animal acts, comedians, all sorts of novelty acts, many of whom often preceded a motion picture for the same evening’s entertainment bill, packed theater audiences who,
for the price of one admission ticket, received two types of shows. There were always plenty of live acts for review. Everyone in the audience always wanted to sit close to the stage. The Kentucky's diminutive stage held diminutive acts; with each act attempting to present itself in the name of flamboyance.

The seats of the theater snuggled near the apron of the stage in creating an intimate setting between performer and audience. The only way for the theaters in Henderson to get their audiences in to see their shows were by running two evening shows. On any given "spectacular" presentation, audience lines would snake down the respective block from the location of the particular theater, down to the nearest corner, and down toward the next block. The situation became a way of life: arrive early, stand in line, and talk with one's neighbor while inching foot-by-foot toward the theater entrance. These theatergoer lines stood year-around in all kinds of weather, day or night, and on weekends.

Nearby Camp Breckinridge, with its thousands of GIs, added to the audience count by arriving in shuttle buses from the camp located next to Henderson County, near Morganfield, Kentucky. The theater operators seized the opportunities of these times to hire temporary help from the concession stand to go out onto the street and sell popcorn and colas to its awaiting crowd. In all, the town probably came to know its neighbors by standing in theater lines as it did by seeing the same people during a business day.

Once in the cavern of the Kentucky, the audience walked under a faintly lit dark blue dome that hinted of being lit by gentle sparkling stars. Tiny lamps clung
in mounts to each theater wall and mistily marked the theater’s dimensions. Above the auditorium an aura of stars and gentle clouds created by tiny ceiling lights that peeked down on its audience through drilled holes. Small lights mounted to the sides of the auditorium and hidden by crown molding softly glimmered behind a slow-moving shutter that created whiffy cloud patterns on the ceiling that mixed with the stars. In all, a soft dark blue aura covered the ceiling and created an extremely stunning vision as its colors met the royal crimson stage curtains of the stage. Stage lights lined its apron at floor level, with their metal shades shielding the glowing light from the audience’s eyes. Seats were deep-cushioned, tiltable for maximum body comfort, and equipped with arm rests. For its day, it gleamed as a modern showpiece, with its soft red velvet curtains, deep-cushioned wide seats, and not a bad seat in the house. From the first step of the motion picture patron made inside the Kentucky Theater, “entertainment” became the goal of Hayes, Incorporated.

Smith Ezell worked as one of the town’s first projectionists. He operated the projectors at the Princess, the Grand, and later, the Kentucky and Kraver Theaters. All four of these theaters clustered tightly into a small section of Henderson’s downtown, with the Princess and Kentucky just doors down from each other between Main and Elm Streets on Second, while the Grand and the Kraver were just a little over a block apart on Main. Ezell had worked many years as an operator. His forte in describing a better operational procedure by the theaters usually involved some point of argument of what management could do
better, followed by a volley of curse words aimed at no one in particular. He also displayed compassion when, upon seeing a child obviously without any money, he'd buy him or her a ticket to see a movie. Ezell bought many tickets in his career for children to see the movies he worked.

In 1934, the Grand Theater burned down. Then, Mr. Leon Pickle acted as general manager, while Ezell was the theater's projectionist. Ezell had lived in an apartment over the theater. Bystanders noted the two gentlemen always kidded around with each other. After the fire, Ezell, in attempting to lighten the tragedy, joked that Pickle had lost everything in the fire, including the popcorn. Pickle looked at Ezell and said, "In case you haven't noticed, your bed burned up in that fire, as well," meaning, that while Pickle had lost a business, Ezell had lost his home (1992). Henderson now had only two movie houses.

Later, the Princess also burned. Ironically, refurbishing of the Princess Theater began at the start of World War II. With a new interior, it received a new name, the "Kimmel," in honor of Henderson native, Husband Kimmel, admiral and navy commander at Pearl Harbor during the war. Some people alleged that Kimmel had been negligent in his command, thus allowing the sneak attack against the American fleet to be a success by the Japanese. Though it no one found proof, some townspeople felt that the burning of the theater came as a result of revenge for Pearl.

In the years that followed, Ezell had many people ask him if the movie houses needed additional help in filling their projectionist shifts. A cashier at the
Kraver Theater, Carolyn Drury, asked Ezell this question and as a result, Carolyn’s husband, William, then working at Delker Brothers, began apprenticing under Ezell. As performance replaced learning, Drury left the furniture-building business and began concentrating on running movies (1992).

With my mother selling tickets and my father showing movies, the motion picture houses soon served as my baby sitter of sorts during the days and early evenings of my life. I saw virtually every film that came through Henderson, the Westerns, the love stories, the action and adventure, the horror, and all the animated features of Disney. I saw almost all of these films from the balcony or from the projectionist’s booth at the theaters, an experience that impresses me more now than it did then.

Popcorn. Better than money to a kid in a theater. I felt myself as wealthy as any Henderson kid in the theater. I had access to unlimited supplies of popcorn as an operator’s son. A sense of nobility filled me, and with good reason. As I got older, my parents trusted me to go downstairs from the projection booth on my own. I took an empty carbon arc box my father gave me and headed downstairs to the concession stand. The concession operators filled the box with fresh-popped popcorn, easily four times the size of a regular popcorn box and it was free. Theater patrons paid ten-cents for a regular serving. Naturally, to go with the popcorn, I ordered two free colas to accompany the heaped popcorn carbon arc box, one for my father, one for me.

The only other needed sign of nobility, besides a fully loaded carbon arc box
of popcorn, was having a good seat in the theater, one that did not have a tall person sitting in front of me, blocking my vision to the screen, or a seat that had people talking all around during the films. I worried about neither. I sat in the projectionist’s chair when my father didn’t need it. The projectionist’s chair stood on a platform that allowed the projectionist to look out into the theater to see the progress of the film, just in case something went wrong with the projector or film. As memory serves, and in this instance I probably exaggerate, it took at least five-minutes for my wee body weight to sink down into its plush cushioning to settle. In front of me, on the projectionist’s table, lay a list containing a complete rundown of the whole show: the trailers of coming attractions, the double feature titles, and the latest cartoon show, all for my easy reference.

I often donned earphones to muffle the sound of the projectors to hear the movie better, better probably than anyone in the house. No child in Henderson lived in those moments of glory better than I: best seat in the movie house, unlimited supplies of popcorn and cola, and, at no cost. I became extremely popular and made friends quickly, quickly, that is, when they found out that I could get them into the theater with me, gratis. After all, I was the son of the Cashier and Operator of the movie houses, a most-hallowed and distinctive title for a brat of my tender age. I did not pay to see a movie before I was nine-years-old, after my father left the movie houses and began working for WEHT television.

Every studio had its own opening logo, its own special way of opening a motion picture. Each studio opened with their logo, a special fanfare written just
for their studio accompanied its unveiling. Some logos and fanfares became synonymous with the studio, whereby when the audience saw the "appearance" of the logo and heard its fanfare, the studio became apparent without reading the name. Some of the more popular openings: Twentieth Century-Fox studios opened with a large "20th Century-Fox" logo that had spotlights trailing across a night sky. Universal Studios depicted an airplane circling Earth, revealing the studio name; Warner Brothers depicted a shield with "WB" in its center; Paramount films opened with a picture of Japan's Mt. Fuji; Columbia Pictures opened with its "Miss Columbia," with her lit torch; RKO Studios opened with an antenna perched on a globe with radiating signals spelling "R-K-O;" and J. Arthur Rank Studios opened with a majestic warrior hitting a gong that played movie houses, as well. Projectionists often used the movies' opening to check for focus and to adjust the volume level by how loud the fanfare sounded in the theater.

J. Arthur Rank films opened like no other studio. As the picture began, it opened silently with only a full-screen empty scene of a sweat-laden warrior-type man standing next to a huge gong. The studio's intention of this grandiose display acted as an attention-getter. It served, not like the other studios, to "humbly" begin a motion picture of "exciting" content. Audiences immediately could see that the warrior had gladiator strength as he lifted his pillar-like mallet to ring the tremendous disk. Usually, when the mallet struck the gong, the sound gently rang throughout the auditorium, then the body of the movie began.

My father had operated the projectors for only a small amount of time. On
this particular evening, the projectionist, my father, threaded a J. Arthur Rank film for showing. He had never seen a J. Arthur Rank film, let alone had run one. He was young, new, and slightly inexperienced, as he threaded the film through the projector, tracing its path to make sure that his procedure for loading the film had been correct. He started the projector motor and the film started. The situation represented the attempt of trying to get sound from a radio, phonograph, or television, only to have a switch or knob in the wrong position, then suddenly be blasted by the extremely loud sound when the operator corrected the situation.

Drury stood at the projectionist’s window peering out into the theater and onto the screen. He placed a hand on the projector lens to check the focus of the first few frames of the film. It is only during these first few seconds an operator has the opportunity to check the projector focus of the film. Drury made the necessary quick focus adjustments. All ran well except he could hear no sound coming from the screen. This film was not "behaving" like all the other films he had shown, he thought. The other films had displayed sweeping logos and used huge orchestras that played loud fanfares. As those first seconds ticked by nothing but silence filled the cavern below the projectionist booth. He reached over to the amplifier and turned up the volume a bit. Still no sound. He inched the volume knob a few more notches. Nothing. Another notch. Still nothing. By now, the volume knob was at its highest just as the warrior’s fully-thrusted mallet swing completed its mighty arc and rung the gigantic gong. The mallet ring blasted from the screen as an explosion. People screamed in terror, reared back
in their seats, cupped their ears, and grasped onto anything within reach. The audience looked like cartoon characters, exaggerated in posture and facial expression, and people from the streets came running into the theater, thinking devastation, wondering, perhaps, if an oven in the concession stand blew up. People reported the rattling of windows all up and down the street from the theater. In the next instant, Mr. Pickle came running up into the projectionist's booth, soft-spoken anyway, to tell my father, "I think it's a bit loud."

For those in the audience, particularly those seated in the front rows of the theater, the sound of the gong far exceeded the film that followed. Understandably, the audience soon forgot the nature of the picture, but would often remark later, "Well, I don't remember the movie, but what about that gong?!" Time-after-time my father noticed, as he peered down from the projectionist's booth, seeing people cup their ears when they saw the beginning of a Rank film that displayed the sweat-laden warrior, his mallet, and that gong (1992). 125

The Kraver Theater often served as the host theater in town for stage show, charity benefits, and touring specialty acts. The theater had an enormous stage, forty-five feet deep and ninety feet wide, with plush velvet red curtains at its apron. Behind the stage and downstairs, a large area of rooms served as prep areas and contained seven dressing rooms for various talents. Only the largest of theaters in the largest cities had anything comparable. Audiences filled the Kraver to see such acts as: "Aunt Ide and Little Clifford," "Aud Rhoads and his Tennessee Tomcats," stars of the "Grand Ole Opry," "Pee Wee" King, "String Bean,"

James W. Pressley worked as assistant manager for both theaters. His job often called on him to do battle with the scheduling of films and having to book live stage acts for the theater. The Kraver, because of its large stage and its plentiful live acts, served a double duty task of running films and showing live acts. Its movie schedule ran a continuous turnaround of showtimes for film categories: Sunday-to-Monday, drama; Tuesday-to-Wednesday, action and adventure; and Thursday-to-Saturday, Westerns and Whodunits. Pressley could almost predict with certainty that the Kraver crowd would carry the operating expense of the Kentucky Theater.

When a big-budget film, known as an "A" film, came to Henderson, it generally ran at the Kentucky. On a later repeat visit to the town, this time appearing at the Kraver, the film would usually bring less crowds. Likewise, when a low-budget film, known as a "B" film, appeared at the Kentucky, it rarely sold to good crowds. Pressley never could point to a particular reason, but audiences at the Kraver seemed less demanding in their movie viewing; while the audiences who attended the Kentucky most often dressed up and seemed to use the "A" movies as their public sophistication. The audience-types seemed to matter not, for when a moviegoer wanted to see a film, usually one theater had some type of attractive film on their showbill. In either case, the movie houses made their profits (Pressley, 1992).

"In looking back," said Pressley, comparing the Henderson movie houses
to television, "I have seen similarities in the power of a simple, low-budget film to draw more people as opposed to showing a "classic" period film and television when it airs a simple, low-budget situation comedy as opposed to an educational program; the better films had a following, they just didn't have the numbers (Pressley, 1992)."

Even the Henderson City municipal services recognized a profit by having at least one of its buses situated every night at the corner of Main and Second Streets, just about equidistant between the Kentucky and Kraver Theaters, every night at 11:00pm, just to load up the late-night theatergoers to take them home after the last film showing. Usually, as many as three and four taxi cabs awaited outside the theater for those wishing to go straight home and not suffer passing over a bus route. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, popcorn sales for each theater easily and often topped over $30,000, at ten-cents a box (Pressley, 1992).

"Kingston, the Magician" appeared as one of the attractions at the Kraver Theater. Used as a crowd-pleaser, he tried almost anything to excite crowds for his stage shows. His engagement had him signed to appear during the midsummer heat of Henderson. Once Kingston announced that he would get in a car, race toward the theater, drive up onto a ramp located in front of the Kraver, and leap over three women volunteers lying in the middle of Main Street in front of the Kraver Theater. Naturally, the excitement caused many Hendersonians and others in the surrounding area in wanting to witness the spectacle.
After he had selected the girls, had them to lie down in a row, Kingston then hopped into his car and drove two blocks up to Fifth Street and turned around toward the girls lying in the street. His foot mashed down hard on the accelerator. By the time he had driven the two-block distance, some say he was doing at least 70-80-mph when his car hit the ramp and went flying over the prone girls. While Kingston occupied his time with safely in cleaning the girls, he thought nothing about the thousands of people who had gathered around the ramp area to watch the feat. As Kingston’s car became airborne, hardly anyone paid any attention to the girls. Suddenly, they faced a wingless two-ton 1939 Chevrolet that headed back to Earth. At first, the estimated twenty-thousand spectators scattered, then ran, then panicked (1992).  

On occasion, freelance film companies came to Henderson and approached Pickle about producing a home movie of Henderson’s townspeople. For an extremely inexpensive proposition, the rewards promised great returns on the dollar. Though the idea seems far-fetched today, its basis seemed quite simple for the times: a tremendous amount of Hendersonians worked downtown and was constantly on the streets; people shopped at several downtown stores, or were just outdoors during the bright and sunny typical Henderson summers. Why not merely mount a camera on the back of a flatbed truck, wander through the streets of downtown Henderson, and as the truck passed by with its camera, have the people wave and smile? Then, after developing the film, editing it, and readying it for show, offer it to Hendersonians as a paying theater audience.
The idea worked. Hendersonians eagerly paid to see themselves, family members, or neighbors on the big silver screen. No "A" picture made more money for the Henderson hometown theaters than did the "home movies" of its townsmen seeing themselves on the magical screen, the same screen on which they saw their favorite actors, such as John Wayne, Cary Grant, Katherine Hepburn, and Grace Kelly. These films were automatic audience sellouts and guaranteed to run many times over.

One of the town movie fanatics, especially of Westerns and Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, saw every film of theirs that came to town. The middle-aged man wore guns and holsters to the Kraver. Typically, when the movie’s action became intense, he drew his guns when the outlaws on the screen drew theirs. Then, the gunfight began, they of the West, he of the Kraver, to help Roy and Dale out of another stalemated predicament. After the film, he holstered his six-shooters, ambled up the aisle, and exited into the night while singing "Happy Trails."

He saved his money to travel to Louisville where Rogers and Evans were performing. He found out the hotel name where the two icons were staying and asked their manager if he could see them. The manager said "no." To which John turned and said, "Oh yes he will. Just call him and ask him." The manager called the Rogers suite, and Rogers answered by replying, "Send him on up, we know him." Rogers and Evans took Lynch along as they went out to eat. That evening John came back on the train to Henderson, thinking that if there is a Heaven, he had just seen a major portion of it (1992).
Both theaters ran news reels. Usually several weeks old, their moving pictures seemed new, offering a confirmation to what Hendersonians had read or heard just a few days ago. The audience saw the face of a celebrity, or the occurrence of an event with their eyes. They heard the voices and sounds of the newsmakers. The movie screen made the sights and sounds real for them. Even during the war, the theater audiences felt more patriotic when it ran the National Anthem and people rose from their seats, placed their hands on their hearts and recited or sang the superimposed lyrics at the bottom of the screen. The anthem usually preceded a film clip of some Hollywood star asking for a united support in buying war bonds, or offering tips on rationing food and gasoline, or asking those who could to volunteer for military work. The theaters connected Hollywood's glitter to the Henderson houses of movie fantasy, bringing home the nation's needs to its "common man" people.

Much of Pressley's job was making sure that no two films drew the same type of audience. In an interview, Pressley remarked, "You couldn't have a 'shoot 'em up' playing at both theaters. The Kraver would win every time. The Kraver theater became more of a "people's theater" for audiences who wanted to see those westerns but did not want dressing up to see them. The Kentucky, on the contrary, seemed to cater more to "well-to-do" audiences who wanted to see some "high class" film. The Kraver had overalls-wearing patrons from the town and outlying areas, while the Kentucky never did. Rarely did the Kraver crowd mix with the Kentucky crowd (1992)."
For some Hendersonians, even the Kraver Theater seemed too dressy. Many held jobs that required either long hours or dirty hours, or both. At the homestead of these workers were families who still wanted movies, regardless of age or content, as entertainment. They just wanted to leave and get out of the house and go as a family unit for an evening. Somehow, all the inconveniences of an outdoor movie, the invasion of mosquitoes, other flying insects, fogged windshields, rain, or sound from a tiny four-inch car speaker, offered little consequence to being out in the open, watching a film on a huge white screen, no matter where the screen. With the success of the nation's first drive-in movie lot in Camden, New Jersey, in 1933 (Associated Press, 1933), drive-ins in Henderson seemed natural. They were; all four of them: the Audubon, the Starlight, the Hi-Y, and the Southside Drive-in theaters.

Pickle sought to branch out from the Kraver operation by opening the Audubon Drive-in, in 1949. In an all-out effort to ascertain the Henderson community's response to a drive-in theater, to come as they were, to sit for four hours in their cars, with children in back seat proximity, Pickle opened the Audubon in late fall. He deemed it necessary to let Henderson people know a drive-in existed in the town and he thought early personal recommendations would be good publicity. The underlying psychology prevailed in getting people out of their houses, regardless of what they wore, to sit in the comfort of their own car, and save money on baby-sitting fees by having their children along with them.

The showbill built a fare around a more light-at-heart show fare for the early
hours, and then, as the children nodded off to sleep, the more adult fare could follow. The drive-in held "Carload Nights," inviting the car, and not the occupant as a ticket-buyer, no matter how many people rode or bundled into the car. Car trunks and flatbed trucks were fair admissions for those who rode in or on them. On regular admission nights, the more adventurous and enterprising used the trunk of their car to sneak a few more people for the price of the driver and passenger. Somehow, it didn’t seem to matter that the tail end of the car skimmed only inches off the ground as it entered the theater grounds.

For the teenagers, or for those experiencing the dating process, the drive-in offered a whole new realm into the rites of amorous passage: the closeness, the coziness, and the convenience of a date sitting or cuddling beside the driver. A new art form, in the nature of "car dating," sprung up everywhere, known as "submarine races." After all, in 1949, a drive-in theater, one in which pictures showed on an outdoor screen while viewers sat in the comfort and privacy of their car seemed to many like a luxury at best, a novelty at worst. Its worst came to the concession stand patrons who, after meandering past countless rows of cars and blinded by the concession stand’s bright lights, had to meander their way back, arms loaded with tasty bounties, back through night’s darkness to the same row, the same car.

Preparation for a grand opening proceeded full-tilt to ready the grounds of the drive-in. Graders mounded dirt in gently sweeping rows that would allow the front end of a car parked at the row’s apex to elevate, thus allowing easy viewing
of the screen over steering wheels and dashboards of the cars. Workers performed the erection, positioning, and painting of the giant screen. Down in front of the screen, a playground for the children became a delightful focal point of excitement during intermissions. The playground displayed an assortment of slides, swings, and crawl-around obstacles such as rings and monkey bars. A miniature locomotive gleamed as a real treat for the kids as it roared around the playground and through a tunnel under the screen's base that also served as the drive-in's storage area. The operator checked the projectors for image centering, frame cropping, and focus. Crews adjusted and piqued the audio system with its audio feeds to each of the ground's car speakers. Concession people stocked the concession stand with all kinds of quick-served foods, including the necessary staples of popcorn and colas. Ovens, grills, and cookers stood by to deliver any size order in a minute's notice. Last, came the films, all of which needed cutting and assembling for a four-hour show, including trailers and cartoons.

Because almost all drive-in theaters show second-run movies, crowds were never as rushed to see a film as those who enjoyed first-run status at walk-in theaters. For the drive-in patron, the major attraction in going to a drive-in seemed to stem from not having to dress up for the occasion. For the theater owner, the major attraction for making money at a drive-in centered on operating and maintaining a well-stocked concession stand. All stood poised and awaited the most reliable element of its operation: darkness.

With the scene set, Pickle opened the Audubon Drive-In in September 1949.
A chilling cold front had just moved through Henderson and the temperature was dropping rapidly. As darkness closed in, so did the weather. A snow began to fall, gentle at first, then swirling. People couldn’t even drive their cars without slipping and sliding around in the mush that still had a relatively warm earth under the newly fallen snow. Meanwhile, the concession stand workers had prepared to feed for what seemed all of Henderson an abundance of hot dogs, popcorn, hamburgers, and colas.

As the show began, people began to leave. No one really knew just how bad the snow would become and most felt that being marooned at a drive-in theater seemed unlikely. Pickle, in seeing the massive exodus, announced on the PA system to all the patrons that the concession stand would offer free foods and colas to those movie buffs who would stay through the show’s running. In truth, Pickle was attempting to stall that exodus at the theater gate where the driver of one car after another paused at the ticket booth demanding his or her money back before leaving.

For those who stayed, hardly anyone saw the show. The snow completely filled the night sky. Somewhere between the arc lamp light of the projector reaching out to the giant outdoor screen, movie images played on trillions of snowflakes that failed to reach the screen. Inside cars, people saw a glimpse of images on the screen in between windshield swipes of the car’s wiper blades. For the older audience, the scene became a ruse. For the young lovers, the event became an arena for “advanced” submarine tactics. For the very young, the show
was a disaster, no choo-choo rides (Drury, 1992).

The Starlight Drive-In followed in 1953. To any local's knowledge the screen of the Starlight became the first drive-in screen to accommodate Cinemascope. The owner and operator, Moscow Miller, saw Cinemascope films as the wave of the future and he did not want the opportunity to pass. He promoted his drive-in as one of the latest, greatest drive-ins in keeping with the changing times. Of all the drive-in theaters of Henderson, including neighboring Evansville and surrounding areas, only the Starlight has survived through the decades of audience entertainment priorities.

The Hi-Y Drive-In received its name because of its proximity to Highway 41. At the north end of town, the highway split into two directions; one road continued as Highway 41, leading to Evansville; the other road became Highway 60, leading toward Owensboro. The drive-in's location rested off to the side of the road junction "Y" in the road. Set up much like the Audubon Drive-in, its kiddy entertainment had fewer rides and amusements, but made up in playground exercises for live entertainment. Local bands often performed down in the playground area before a show, or during intermission. Just weeks before his death, Hank Williams and his band played at the Hi-Y, performing a mini-concert on the roof of the concession stand. Again, the theater's enticements rewarded its sellout crowds.

Construction of another drive-in came in 1955. It lasted but for a short time and even today locals have a difficult time in recalling its name as either the
"Southside," or the "Sunset." Located at Henderson's far-south fringes of town, the drive-in served as an outpost drive-in to its patrons. A single battery of loudspeakers served the entire grounds of the drive-in. The setup defeated the purpose of the secure confinement of the patrons' cars by not being able to roll up their car window with their own car speaker. Worse, the drive-in came late to Henderson with television already having a foothold on Henderson's entertainment attention. As quickly as the theater prepared for business, so did it go out of business. Henderson simply offered too many alternatives, too many different outlets for the same thing to the same people. Besides, television now offered everyone new entertainment, without ever having to worry about what they were wearing, without having to put gas in the car, without having to leave the house.

Analogous to the modern term, "broadcaster," yesterday's theater projectionist was an "operator." The word seemed to define "one of importance, one who keeps the theater audience entertained and coming back for more." The word "projectionist" did not explain properly the role of an operator, nor did it do the individual justice. Without an operator, no show played, no one heard sound, no door opened in a theater, nor did the chain come down from the drive-in lot entrance. Besides housing some sort of concession stand, the only other form of business a theater performed was the showing of film. To show a film, an operator performed a myriad of tasks, ranging from going to the post office to pick up the latest film from the distributor, bringing the film back to the theater, mounting each reel on a workbench of reel rewinds, and assembling a complete
show. The routine repeated until all feature films, show trailers, and usually an added cartoon showed. At the end of the run, the operator reversed the process and delivered the film back to the post office only to pick up the next series of films.

In house, the operator set up and maintained the projectors and sound equipment. This meant not only keeping a running inventory of carbon arcs and vacuum tubes on hand, but also having some relative knowledge in electricity and electronics. His day sometimes started hours before or hours after a showing to check out, replace, and add new equipment. He had to check out the screen for any warping, or patch any holes from sailed popcorn boxes from eager kids who yelled for their cowboy hero as he fought a villainous cattle rustler. He often rewired electrical circuits in the theater, re-fused the circuits, changed light bulbs, and swept the floors. In short, if no one ate it, the job belonged to the operator.

Outside, weather permitting or not, crowds gathered before the ticket window opened. Depending on the nature of the film, crowds often occupied an entire block face, wrapped around it, and trailed down that side of the street. It was not uncommon for theater patrons, while standing in line, to break line and go into one of the stores to do shopping, only to return to their saved spot and to await their turn to buy a theater ticket.

The Kraver became known for its assistance in charities, moreover serving as a special fundraising center for various community needs. One in particular, its "Cartoon-A-Thon" for the March of Dimes, brought mounds of dimes to the
organization. In those days of the 1950s, one saw a cartoon sandwiched between feature films as the only way of seeing the animation. The act of seeing more than one cartoon did not exist, nor did the act seem thinkable. Today, on any Saturday morning, one can turn on the television and see a slew of back-to-back cartoons that last for hours.

In the early part of the year, usually in February, the Kraver held its cartoon festival. In so doing, the theater showed a solid morning of cartoons, followed by a western. Life could promise nothing better for a kid in Henderson on those special Saturdays. The special showing started at 10am, though crowds of Henderson kids would begin assembling at around 8am. Within an hour, the crowd of Ked-wearing kids wrapped around the block of Main, to Second, then pointed back in a loop toward Main Street. Hundreds of kids impatiently waited for the Kraver doors to open. To be first in the movie house; to buy popcorn, candy, and a cola; and to run to the best seat in the house, the row of seats up front and next to the screen, stood as the ultimate challenge of any Henderson kid. Legends were born of popcorn-cola-carrying kids able to grab the perfect seat for the upcoming cartoon fusillade. During the Western movies, the challenge remained with the front row audience to sail their emptied and flattened popcorn boxes at the screen, hopefully to hit the villain in the face.

I describe the above to point out a wonderful theater experience when I was a child. My father was an operator for the Kraver during those cartoon festivals, so I was able to tag along with him, for free. Moreover, I knew exactly when the
show would start, because I was with the man who would start it. A half-hour before show time, I walked with my father, past the howling horde of hyenas, and proudly took my place in a cushioned projectionist chair.

For the wild-at-heart kid wanting to experience the screen’s full excitement, he had to sit exactly in the front row, middle. The screen appeared as a mountainous wall of grainy images that loomed so large one’s eyes could not follow all the action without the aid of turning one’s head at the same time. Naturally, by the end of such a four-hour show, kids left the Kraver with a sore neck, but satisfied.

As each show time neared, the doors opened to the public a half-hour before show time. The operator took his place perched high in the projectionist’s booth. In the small cubicle barely housing two massive 35mm projectors, a slide projector, a small audio console, and a work bench, he instantly became a DJ by loading up a stack of records onto a turntable to begin playing a list scratchy music with song titles, recording artists, and record labels no one had ever heard, nor wished hearing again. The secret in keeping public discontent at a minimum was to play them at a volume so low the music didn’t matter, just that, on occasion, one could hear music.

Downstairs, in the theater dome, magic took place. The concession stand, the very first vision beyond the ticket taker, stood as a sentry before the gates of Babylon in bestowing ceremonial rites of passage to enter its darkened confines. The popcorn popper spilled out freshly popped kernels of popcorn as its aroma
filled the theater. No one in the audience escaped its wondrous odor. No child passed the perfectly built, clear-glassed candy case, conveniently engineered to display at junior eye level, every candy bar and stick made in the United States, if not the Universe.

As the 1950's dawned, the Kraver Theater made town history in another, far more important aspect. It played a significant social role in the Henderson community, if not the state of Kentucky by becoming integrated, at least to a degree. Kentucky lived then under the tarnished "separate, but equal" stigma of segregation. Only the Kraver provided blacks with motion picture entertainment. The Kentucky had always been a "white house" only. The Kraver's acceptance of blacks created a veiled separation of theatergoers: more whites and "upper crust" went only to the Kentucky, while the Kraver invited anyone with enough money to go through its turnstiles.

The Kraver did protect itself from complete damnation by some community racist whites. Within the theater, two audiences existed: white audiences sat downstairs in their six-hundred, twenty-seven seats, while black audiences sat upstairs in their one-hundred, fifty-six seats in the balcony. The ticket booth of the Kraver, a tiny niche of a box set off to the corner of its entrance, even had two glass windows with one ticket cashier selling tickets from both side-by-side windows: one for whites, one for blacks. Upon buying a ticket, the black wheeled to the left, the white to the right to enter the theater. The black negotiated a flight of stairs and came into the balcony of the Kraver. Whites continued straight ahead
into the theater and immediately selected their seat. In spite of separated social appearances, blacks saw virtually every film white audiences saw. They just saw the films on a "higher plane," as often as insiders related the small joke. In truth, and with the position of the balcony a little above mid-height to the theater's screen, viewing and sounds were better than the downstairs white section.

About the only facility of which the town of Henderson did not have two or more was a swimming pool. Throughout the years of Henderson's hot summers, its citizens repeatedly read newspaper accounts of the same sad story of black children who had drowned while swimming in the Ohio River. The town leaders, particularly the black leaders, wanted an end to the routine sadness. Each year the problem seemed to worsen and haunt the community.

During the summer of 1953, Hecht Lackey campaigned for election as mayor. Black leaders invited Lackey to speak to the blacks of the community, to state his stand on issues and to gather the black community's requests. Of all the pressing issues raised, the black community wanted most a swimming pool for its young. The drownings in the Ohio River had to stop. Lackey, guardedly responded by telling the truth: "I can't say what I can do for you. I do not know as of yet how the town's funds are situated, nor do I know of their contents. What I do promise, is this: as soon as I am mayor, your people and its causes will be at the top of my list (Lackey, 1992)." His plan needed some sort of inauguration for a fund-raiser. But what, and what was more important, how?

Lackey approached Francele H. Armstrong, then executive editor of the
Gleaner and Journal, who served as advocate, activist, and righter of wrongs, with the idea of fundraising the black swimming pool, and she quickly took up the lance to spearhead the project. She had written one of the first biographies of W. C. Handy, the black man who had become the international "Father of the Blues," and one with Henderson roots. She called his New York home to ask for his appearance and he accepted. Leaders began calling her the "mother of the idea (G-J, 1953)." 135

The task of organizing an event lay in the hands of Henderson's community leaders, mostly white leaders. Some wanted a big massive banquet of Henderson people to celebrate Handy. The black clergy leaders strongly advised against it, saying that the white citizens might not perceive the cause with good intentions and that such an idea may cause more harm than good. Armstrong continued to call various town leaders, asking for their support and commitment to the project. She served then in several capacities on the two committees to get Handy to Henderson as part of the black swimming pool fundraiser. With contacts made around the city, the citizen-leaders met at Douglass High School, the only black high school, located in the predominately black section of town.

Clergy, politicians, socialites, almost every town organization, pledged their full-thrust of support for the swimming pool cause. Armstrong had commitments from Governor A. B. "Happy" Chandler, Leon Pickle, general manager for Malco Theaters (owners of the Kraver), Henderson Mayor Otis Benton, the Soaper Hotel, Democratic and Republican candidates, H. B. Kirkwood, Mrs. Ora K. Glass, Mrs.
Goldie Alves, and various clergy, notably the Reverend A. Bell of Norris Chapel, one of Henderson's most courageous and insightful black leaders, along with Reverend T. R. Brown of First Baptist Church (1953).

When the ink dried on the dozens of note pages, a final decision made Tuesday, October 27, 1953, "W. C. Handy Day." By the time various committee members responded, their numbers alone could have filled the Kraver Theater for the appearance of the 79-year-old Handy. The itinerary called for a gala of music performed by Barret High School, Douglass High School, Hopkinsville Attucks High School, the Barret High School Choir; a parade down Main Street; talks and banquets at the Hotel Soaper; and a climactic evening lecture and performance from Handy at the Kraver Theater.

Upon Handy's arrival, and as the day began to unfold, Handy leaned to Armstrong in a crowded meeting area and asked in his gentle voice, "Where will my people sit in your theater?" "Why, where they always do, in the balcony at the back of the theater," responded Armstrong. "No, I think my people should be able to see and hear the performance as well as your people," came the voice of the elderly trumpet player (1992). All of a sudden, an eerie thought traveled from one white mind to the next: The fundraiser was for blacks, yet the cause severed the black population from any true enjoyment and experience of the event. Throughout the day, the talks, music, and almost all the gala had occurred outdoors or in schools. Until now, whites had assumed the Kraver to be a natural place for a concert because it had the best stage and had always allowed blacks.
No one had given any consideration that the upstairs balcony only held one-
hundred, fifty-six ticket-holders, with no standing room. Assuredly, more than one-
hundred, fifty-six blacks would want to witness such a famous Negro as Handy, 
one who had lived in Henderson and one who had lived "the black kind of 
existence" as had they. What could the organizers do? Where would one find 
extra seats for blacks, unless the downstairs were . . . . No one had given any 
consideration to, dare they think, integrating the audience.

That October night, the Kraver audience saw the backslapping, heard the 
accolades, and endured the flowery solos and speeches before seeing the reason 
they were there: William Christopher Handy. For the climax of the evening, the 79-
year-old black trumpet player, blind from glaucoma, nearly shuffle-walking and 
assisted by an aide, stepped up on the stage of the Kraver, and played the first 
bars to his immortal "St. Louis Blues," to a fully integrated audience. As far as I 
can determine, that evening's event marked the first occasion of an integrated 
theater audience in Henderson, and possibly Kentucky before the enacted national 
integration laws in 1957.

Though I was only eight, I pieced together in later years the significance of 
the evening. For that night, I saw the entire program from the Kraver's 
projectionist booth high above the crowd, not missing the sight of a single well-
groomed head, nor the sound of a sweet blues note, or of the feeling of a magical 
charm in the theater. The gala had as much "show" in the audience as it did upon 
the stage. For that night, I saw W. C. Handy perform one of his last concerts
before his death in 1957. The evening also had another great significance: the Kraver never played to such a packed house of live entertainment again; WEHT television had just signed on the air a few weeks prior. Only the medium's infancy kept away what would otherwise consist of a battery of reporters, mini-cams, remote microwave trucks gathering up the story in full color and in stereophonic sound.

In the summer days of the early 1950s, no house enjoyed air conditioning. Houses sported screen doors and open windows. People sat out in chairs and swings under the shade of porches, or under a nearby elm or maple tree. They sipped tea or some ade drink while they saw, knew, waved, and talked with their passing neighbors. People spoke to and had concern for each other's well-being. Downtown strollers walking down Second Street took an hour to get from Elm Street to Main Street. One stopped to talk to or respond to the people they met. One might not know the name, but they always identified the face of the next-met person on the street. After the usual, "You related to . . . ?" a conversation usually ensued. As easily, each storefront had in its window just enough enticement of its wares that a passerby just had to walk in, see for his or herself, and do a little socializing with the store owner or manager.

Life in Henderson existed in simplicity and in trust. Only a few home owners felt a need to lock the doors to their homes when they left them vacant. One walked down a city block and heard their favorite radio program, uninterrupted. Each house often tuned to the same program, with the radio owner
having the radio volume loud enough to hear outside on the porch. The stroller never missed a moment of the program’s excitement.

In the late fall came Halloween and a time for Hendersonians to carve pumpkins and stock up on candies for the trick or treater kids. It seemed that the entire town came to celebrate the occasion by dressing up in its wildest costumes and to parade up and down its downtown streets. The spectacle of disguised people would take on the colorful appearance of a Mardi Gras, Henderson-style and size. I have never heard of any town doing anything quite like this. For the square of city blocks that comprised Main Street to Elm, with First and Third Streets acting as its sides, Second Street served as an axis for paraders. They turned left and headed down Main, turning left to First, left to Elm, and back around to Second Street. When they reached the corner of Second and Main Streets, they turned right, heading up Third Street, passing before the Kraver Theater, then back to the intersection of Second and Main Streets to start the sojourn over.

It seemed that almost everyone turned out to see either the parade of impostors, or to be one of them. The wise ones got to the parking places along the above-mentioned streets early so they could see the glitter all evening long. The parked cars became staging areas for their owners to rest for a while, to grab a soda, or bite to eat, then start out parading again. For the motorists, the event became a modified tailgating venture.

Even store owners did not seem to mind the soaping and paraffin markings
on their windows. Some store owners allowed students in school contests to compete against other schools in drawing out Halloween scenes in soap and paraffin. Little school goblins and witches produced whole murals on them. Almost all would sign their name, or include their initials somewhere on the storefront glass. Some owners, however, did mind and could never seem to get into the festivities. They glazed their windows with kerosene so that soap and paraffin markings would not stick. The kids, not deterred, merely went to another storefront window. By late evening, only the store sign, hanging high above the soap- and paraffin-carrying crowd, depicted exactly what the store sold as a business. One sure could not tell of its wares by what it had in its window.

A feeling of openness filled the air. Along with that openness, the air often carried a glorious smell of baking bread from Wolf's Bakery, located at the corner of Second and Elm. When the Hendersonian smelled that aroma in the air, the day turned glorious, regardless of any unrequited solutions to their troubles. Its wondrous odor permeated and wafted through the air until one's saliva glands bathed one's taste buds causing the casual stroller to blurt out, "Lunchtime!"

Lunchtime came at exactly 12-noon, and it wasn't too difficult for the Hendersonian to know when noontime came, either. The Delker Brothers Furniture Company blew its deep-throated whistle as the hands of its clock shook hands with each other at their usual meeting place just below the clock's number, "12." Out in the distance, a stroller could easily hear the Audubon east-end whistle from either the Atlas Tack Company or from the Period Tables Company. Soon,
all the whistles in town sounded, making lunchtime an official time for eating.

Downtown Henderson, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, showed only traces of its illustrious strip-tobacco port past. Few tobacco warehouses still existed, while most either had been torn down, remodelled into another form of business, or suspiciously burned to the ground by a fire. None of the paddle-wheelers floated up- or downstream, rather coal and steel barges replaced the sight of those once mammoth belles on the river — all passing, none stopping. The notarization written on Henderson by her ancestors cried out of its rough and shaky beginnings: The fiber of adventure into unknown territories, the romance of exploring virgin lands, the harshness of existence, the simplicity of deed, the parallel progression into "modern times" with the rest of the nation left Henderson standing in mystery. The town was one of the most energized river towns along the Ohio River, one of tremendous world trade worth, one demanding the utility of every advancing stage of entertainment and media. Suddenly, the elements that once gave the town its drive, its importance, and its identity, no longer served the few, but came demanded by the masses. The town demanded entertainment; it demanded news; it demanded a voice beyond print.

As publisher of the Gleaner-Journal, Leigh Harris created a certain family feeling about the newspaper in the Henderson community. Armstrong, in following Harris, vowed to continue that tightly knit association. Its focus centered on Henderson news, some state, and snippets of world news. Unless directly tied with Henderson, neighboring Evansville never received mention. It seemed that
Evansville, with its own newspapers, needed little attention paid to it by Henderson. A sense of community and identity prevailed through both newspapers.

As mentioned, life in the area presented a picture to make even Norman Rockwell envy, at least for those who believed in living the Rockwellesque form of life, and which caused a serious puzzlement. No one could ever quite put a finger on the "why" and "how" of the period when Henderson backed away from its community pride during the late 1930s and early 1940s. It had certainly suffered more than its share of hardships from a ruined tobacco economy, followed by a depression, then covered with 1937 Ohio River flooding. It might have been sheer frustration that prosperous times seemed to evade the town that caused the town's spirit to falter. The recent times had been hard and many yearned for the showboat days of romance, frolic and gaiety. The Henderson-Evansville area became anxious for entertainment, for excitement, and for lighthearted fun. Nearby Camp Breckinridge housed thousands of soldiers looking for some of Henderson's past glitter. Henderson sensed an importance lost; its people no longer came to the town for fun, and fun is what it wanted. The area created for itself another Mecca for Entertainment; this time, a Mecca for Vice.

Virtually every known form of gambling and all of its fallout began to take place in and around Henderson. One-by-one, every store seemed to have a back room sometimes called, its gaming room. Oscar Duncan's became an important place to gamble. Although, all of my life I have heard about a particular card game
that occurred at Duncan's, the largest single bet of a poker hand outside Las Vegas, over $500,000, I have never had anyone offer the names of those involved in the liquor store's back gaming room. If one wanted to gamble, he or she needed only a few dollars and a recognizing nod from behind a jarred door to enter almost any Henderson nighttime establishment.

Slot machines abounded just about anywhere that offered room enough for one to pull its handle. Slots filled lobbies of hotels, various shops, even restaurants. Even Brownie's, a little cubbyhole style of a diner situated near two schools, patroned mostly by high school and elementary students from across and down its street, had slot machines. Instead of eating lunch, the kids stood in line to tackle the odds that the "one-armed bandits" had in store for them.

In the past, the dislocated, or relocated land (depending upon the viewpoint of a Kentuckian or Hoosier), the same property settled by the Supreme Court, suddenly became quite appetizing as a potential area for entertainment. The area later had another name, "The Strip." In August 1939, the Club Trocadero opened and began fulfilling that entertainment potential. Built on Highway 41, the highway connecting Henderson to Evansville, "the strip" would become a haven to the night-life seeker. The Club Trocadero became the first lure to that wee-hour seeker of excitement.

The Club Trocadero never skimped on its appointments. Its atmosphere glittered with excitement. Its elegant appointments, colorful lights, mirrored balls suspended from the ceiling, hardwood dance floor, crowned band area, well-
stocked bar, even tastefully adorned eating tables radiated an aura of luxury that not even the best of the showboats of the past possessed. Billed by management as the "Jewel of Midwest Nightclubs," the "Troc" offered its customers the Best of the Best: best location, best drinks, best food, best dance bands, best floor dancing, best variety.

Located just on the north side of the bridge, between Henderson and Evansville, the Club Trocadero stood on 14,000-square-feet of land. Built for a complete evening of diversion, the club could easily accommodate over 200 couples, with room for all who chose either to eat, drink, or dance. Dance the customers did, to some of the biggest dance band names: Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Harry James, Gene Krupa, the Mills Brothers, and Woody Herman, to name a few, while other lesser-known bands always rotated their gigs around the nationally known bands. Acts and road tours changed every week. The bands usually arrived from larger city engagements on their way to play another city. For them, no engagement fared any more important than that of playing the "Troc."

Drinks cost 35-cents and their demand caused their flow readily, steep and stout, while their owner had vowed no watered-down drinks. Ice-cold beer sold for 25-cents. Steaks came served and graded prime, with a perfect 20-ounce New York strip steak costing the customer $3. Exotic foods from all over the country and world filled the menu of the Club Trocadero. Whether plain and down-home, or exotic, if a customer requested food not listed on the Trocadero menu, the Troc had the food the next time the patron came. The grand performance of the Club
Trocadero did not stop with just the culinaries. Elaborate floor shows, Sunday afternoon "tea dances" for children, and even an ice revue was a part of its ongoing schedule of entertainment.

Everyone looking for fun and action came to the "Troc." As the nation prepared for World War II, training soldiers on leave or furlough from Camp Breckinridge, came in busloads to the club. The Strip represented a central socializing ground for Hoosiers and Kentuckians alike. With the combined flow of customers from surrounding communities, Henderson business began booming again.

Oddly, the owner did not care for people dancing the jitterbug, the latest dance-craze across the country. The dance strained the standards of the club, the owner thought, as the flailing dancers appeared crude and distasteful with their kicking and stomping around. After all, the Club Trocadero presented itself as a first-class establishment, built with dignity and pride. On the other hand, the club also had a back room, a gaming room for gambling, and pride had nothing to do with it.

Although no means of investigation ever revealed the amounts of money that went into and came out of the club Trocadero, evidence from as many as sixty-five other nightclubs that began operating in the decade of the 1940s, with many of them located along "the strip," appears to indicate that money flowed freely. Names such as "The Dells," the "Kentucky Tavern," the "101 Club," the "Commando Club," "Pearsons," the "Kasey Klub," the "Edgewood," the "Happy
Hour," the "Midway," and the "Cloverdale" soaked up the overflow that could not
fit into the back room of the "Club Trocadero." Most new clubs did not feel
obligated to present such a dignified atmosphere to roll dice (1976). 136

In the Troc days, there were notorious gamblers, such as "Titanic" Thomas.
He once made a bet at the Hotel McCurdy that he could throw a key into a door's
keyhole across the room. He won the bet, according to later stories. He made
another bet that he could hit a golf ball a mile. With the bet made, he went to a
frozen lake in Wisconsin, teed up the ball, and hit it the mile he wagered. He bet
on throwing a dollar bill across the Ohio and won (Tolbert, 1992). 139 The luring
fingers of gambling games appeared to have no limit in finding their way into the
wallets of bettors.

In short time, the Strip became known as "Little Chicago." The Strip and
Chicago seemed to occupy the same type of newspaper stories: vice, payoffs,
gambling, muggings, illegal liquor, prostitution, and corruption. Complaints from
both sides of the river mounted, as citizens' groups formed to put a halt to the ugly
blemish that bruised the reputation of the area. Local police forces, on both sides
of the river, stood accused of taking kickbacks as the State police began
investigating their police departments. The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board
became involved in checking questionable records. Articles appeared in the
Louisville Courier-Journal, stating eyewitness cases that countered the counterings
of accusations held by the nightclub owners of wrongdoings. The trouble in
Henderson, though, remained the trouble of concerned Henderson citizens who
decided to make the scab of scandal recede in at its front door.

Some of the first trials against the nightclub owners turned out as folly as some of the first grand juries saw no vice “problem.” With further investigations and cleanups, more and more of the citizenry inaugurated a unified front. The Henderson County Good Government League, a group of Hendersonians tired of the slow-paced actions of the local government, took charge of letting other citizens know just how extensive the graft and corruption had gotten. The local chapter of the League of Women Voters also joined in the fight. Soon, the Internal Revenue Service started rummaging through tax returns; Camp Breckinridge officials placed Henderson off-limits; and, on January 18, 1952, the Federal Bureau of Investigation confiscated more than 400-hundred slot machines and gaming devices in Henderson County and destroyed them. In the next few years, many more gambling devices and establishments came to a halt.

With much of Henderson’s notorious gambling filth swept away, the community looked forward to cleaner horizons. Many of the town’s citizens came to the forefront as Henderson bonded and became a stronger, more self-respecting community again. Lackey became mayor of Henderson, and as a reform mayor, began a calculated path of clearing out the Mecca of Vice that had so haunted the area. The Gleaner-Journal aided in his quest by publishing names and organizations that supported the avenues of vice. With the loss of gambling monies, the economy of Henderson waned. At least, in the eyes of Henderson citizens the slowed economy had become an honest one.
WSON, another public voice-in-service to Henderson signed on the air December 17, 1941. The station belonged to the Lackey brothers from Paducah, Kentucky. Their father, Ernest, served as mayor of Paducah and after his term in office, oldest son Pierce became mayor. The youngest son "Dutch," served as mayor of Hopkinsville. There were seven Lackey brothers with four of them going into broadcasting and three of them becoming mayors. (As mentioned earlier, Hecht became mayor of Henderson. The "Guinness Book of World Records" notes the Lackey father, Ernest, and his three sons, Pierce, Frederick Ernest "Dutch," and Hecht as a family of mayors.)

Pierce, the oldest of the Lackey sons, after serving as Paducah’s mayor, saw broadcasting as a promising medium. He not only saw broadcasting as a coming medium for reaching vast audiences, he also saw broadcasting opportunities by airing stations in much smaller markets to serve as informational beacons. Lackey wanted radio stations in communities that possessed little in the way of sharing news with their citizens. Pierce started the Paducah radio station, WPAD, in 1930, with a friend who was a soft drink bottler. Soon afterwards, Pierce bought him out. Pruett, Pierce’s younger brother wanted to enter broadcasting, so the two of them began WMAY in Mayfield, Kentucky. The Lackey broadcasting chain began to grow in the late 1930s and in following years radio stations in Paducah, Mayfield, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, and Henderson, Kentucky became a part of that chain. In 1939, Pierce brought his younger brothers, Dutch and Hecht to Hopkinsville to help operate radio station WHOP that
began airing in 1940. Pierce underwrote the station with Hecht as general manager and Dutch as sales manager. Dutch and Hecht moved from Paducah to manage and operate the Hopkinsville station.

Before coming to WHOP Dutch had worked with an engineering firm and, until Pierce’s request for help, had no concern for the radio business. Later, to give Dutch more authority in operating the station, Pierce gave him ten of one-hundred shares of station ownership. Pierce put Dutch in charge of WHOP when he and Hecht decided to start a new radio station in Henderson. Dutch carried other duties besides his meager ownership, including sales managing, sports announcing, and copywriting. He noted that the payroll at the station allowed for only a very limited staff, including the pay of engineers the minimum $30 per week. The station’s chief engineer, Ben Smith, received almost $40 per week (Lackey, 1991).

A typical and small wooden-frame box-of-a-house became the home of radio station WHOP. They gutted out rooms, filled with records and turntables; then snaked shielded cable and wires through the studwork of the building; they erected a tower; and soon, WHOP went on the air, in early January 1940. Dutch and Hecht often shared the early-morning responsibilities of signing the station on the air. So brutal were those cold January mornings in the station that Dutch once remarked to Hecht, as he took his turn at the radio console to sign the station on, "If my child so much as ever turns a radio on, I’m gonna knock him in the head (Lackey, 1991)." In fairer-weather memories, Hecht became quite popular as
an announcer because he announced with accuracy, articulation, and quickly read through the local news (mentioning every local citizen he could). He came to know just about everyone in town, including a Hopkinsville girl, named Rebecca Woodruff.

Woodruff and her friends were in high school at the time. One day, while just chatting, they had the notion to go out to WHOP and take a look at the new radio station. The ground was still muddy due to construction still going on around the premises. As Woodruff and her girlfriends walked into the building, she saw Hecht standing beside a desk, holding reams of newscopy. She fell in love at first sight. Because she played and taught piano, she asked if she could bring her more promising students to the station to play and perhaps air piano recitals. Dutch and Hecht thought the idea merited at least an audition. The Lackeys asked Woodruff to continue to play music for the station and she began to accompany several of Hopkinsville's would-be talents for various radio programs the station aired. In short time, and though the piano recitals did not receive that much attention, Woodruff's music did. She also received the attention of Lackey. Eighteen months later, they married.

As WHOP prospered, the Lackey Brothers considered expanding to other vistas and soon their choice narrowed between Clarksville, Tennessee and Henderson, Kentucky. The format that worked for WHOP, they reasoned, would work for almost any small radio station in Kentucky in the 1940's. The brothers selected Henderson because they thought nearby Evansville would supply its radio
station with a huge following and sponsorship. The Lackeys wanted Henderson radio to have the same sounds, the same programs, and the same religious aura about them as they established a loyal radio audience. The station aired many preachers, sometimes two or three per day, and it played big band music from transcription records: big, sixteen-inch records that often contained fifteen-minutes of program per side. Dutch described the station as operated by Hecht in the following manner:

We always had a standby musician and singer, "Goober P. Nutt," who would play on the air, not even waiting for the dime to drop, and we had three or four country bands; on occasion, we had Grand Ole Opry stars who happened to be in the area to appear on the station’s air. We even had, what we called, "Starvation Box Beaters," a group of banjo players who played anything to get on the air. We had Dink Embry, who wanted to work for us and often played with Goober. He served his term in the Army, then came back to work in a restaurant. Katherine Peden, who was running the station at the time, wanted me to hire him as our Farm Director. Embry knew as much about farming as a whore knew about Sundays; still we hired him because just about every farmer knew Dink, from playing with Goober and
doing a Saturday night radio show at the old theater. So, essentially, what he didn’t know about farming, the farmers taught him. When he went on the air, he seemed quite knowledgeable (Lackey, 1991).

As makeshift sports announcers, Dutch and Hecht made sure their radio fans heard all the action of the games they called. Once, in calling a game between Hopkinsville and Bowling Green, they were not so fortunate. The stadium did not have broadcast booths at the high school field and, added to the cold, the game they called became fog-shrouded. They couldn’t see the players that well, let alone their jersey numbers. They had to step atop a garbage disposal unit that stood at the 15-yardline to see the playing field the best they could. So occasionally, when all the action and scoring were down field, they had to ask a nearby fan who made the last pass reception or scored the last touchdown. Their radio fans never knew the difference, unless they just admitted they couldn’t see a play.

Working at WHOP, Hecht kept noticing a local Hopkinsville girl who often played piano for various talents. She worked as a part-time secretary on occasion, by keeping some order in an otherwise disorderly bookkeeping array. Soon, Hecht and Becky fell in love and eighteen months later, married. Hecht and Becky, after a brief honeymoon, came to live in Henderson, Kentucky, and to begin a new radio station, by which the Lackey Brothers wanted the station call letters WHEN, the
first letter, "W," denoting a broadcast station east of the Mississippi River.

Before Henderson station WSON, each station of the Lackeys used the first three letters of the town the station served. As they applied for the license to the station, another station in Hartford, Connecticut used the call letters, WHEN. In breaking with Lackey tradition, Lackey then considered the last three letters of Henderson and requested WSON as the station’s call letters. The FCC approved the call letters. Interestingly, the "SO" portions of the call letters were the last assigned by the FCC to any broadcast station because of their resemblance to the "SOS" international distress code. The commission wanted to avoid confusion (Lackey, 1991).

Owned and operated by the Lackey brothers, WSON signed on December 17, 1941, a week after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Hecht, in beginning his Henderson operation, and knowing of the growing pains Dutch and he suffered in Hopkinsville, decided to build, for what some called elaborate studios, a radio station from the ground up, rather than converting some type of office building into a radio station. From the very beginning, the newlyweds fell in love with the town. They found the people open, friendly, and willing to help them ease the fledgling radio station along. They began building the radio station at the east end of Henderson’s Second Street, on Zion Road.

For a radio station, the architecture of the station seemed ambitious, with two large studios, control room, technical room, and storage areas. Each studio easily held enough room for a small stage of talent, with well over thirty chairs for
an audience for any one live presentation. At the time of the Lackey’s arrival, apartments remained scarce, since some troops and workers from nearby Camp Breckinridge and employees from an ammonia plant had taken up most of Henderson’s available apartments. They decided to add a small upstairs apartment over the studios of the station. Mrs. Hecht Lackey, Rebecca, recalled those early days:

Hecht and I were married on September 16, 1940. We didn’t really have a home and the station was still being worked on. We lived in the Kingdon Hotel for three months while they built it. When we were finally able to move into the radio station, we had our living quarters with three rooms above the station. Later, we expanded the little apartment to five rooms. I did secretarial work for the station for a year. Times were tight enough that while I was pregnant and ready to give birth to our first child, I worked at the station until 5pm that evening, only to go to the hospital after work to have Hecht, Jr. The times were "blue:“ a new station, the war had just broke out; we had building debts, a new son, and an economy with not anyone knowing what would happen. We lived over the station until 1953 (Lackey, 1991).
Lackey knew he needed solid assistance to help him launch the radio station and to get Henderson broadcasting off to a good start. He requested that Ewing Graham, a long-time friend from their Paducah days, and his wife, Martha, to come back from Beaumont, Texas and help him run the station as its sales manager. Lackey told him he was building a station in Henderson and wanted him; did he have any interest in returning to Henderson? Ewing and wife Martha returned to Kentucky, delighted at the prospect of coming back to Kentucky. Kentucky had always been home to them and though their family remained in Paducah, the hundred-miles plus trip for occasional family visits would be closer than Texas. They also had a waiting job in Henderson and with close friends. Martha recalls:

We came back in November 1941. The station was still under construction and in no time the war broke out. There we were, standing in the middle of mud at the radio station on a bleak and rainy afternoon, wondering just where the day would take us. Ewing was called to the military and served two years. I filled in for him, selling time and copywriting in his absence and when he returned, he worked at the station for the next thirty years (Graham, 1991).  

One of the foremost feelings Lackey had about radio, one he felt most
obligated to support, came from his commitment to community service. Lackey had gained invaluable experience as a general manager and announcer in Hopkinsville. He had seen the station's effects on its community, how the community came to rely on its news and announcements and on its neighborliness. "If a radio station cannot serve its community, it should not be," he once told wife, Becky. He would later think of the acronym, "We Serve Our Neighbors," to spell the station call letters of WSON. Lackey wanted to have the station air by October. One delay fostered another delay; October and November passed. The dark days of December seemed even bleaker to the young couple. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor just ten days before having the station up and running. Lackey immediately added the rather ambitious word, "Nation," to the "we serve our neighbors" acronym for future announcements to include, "We Serve Our Neighbors and Nation (Lackey, 1992)." 146

In late 1941, the times could not promote any harsher barriers to a broadcaster just starting out. No one knew whether the federal government soon would ban broadcasting, limit its use, take it over, or all three. For the Hendersonian in broadcasting, the predicament nurtured the same notion as planting a huge tobacco crop in a low-lying basin next to the Ohio River, or building a new tobacco stemmery. Operating on a tight budget, Lackey arose in early morning darkness, showered, put on a bathrobe, and went downstairs into the studio to sign the station on the air. After his newscast, he flipped the switch to join the Mutual Broadcasting Network, then headed back upstairs where Becky
had prepared breakfast, and after dressing, go to make sales calls on the community. Becky continued to operate as wife, breakfast preparer, and secretary for WSON. Even after son Hecht’s birth, and through his nursing period, Becky would continue to work at the station downstairs. Becky served as secretary for the station, while Martha served as receptionist.

The Zion Road location served the station well. Its two large studios ushered in hundreds of local entertainers, religious programs, social programs, and guest interview programs. As with any small community, a radio station seems to bring out local talents. The two forces bonded together in marriage: One small force serving the public with no-cost programming; the other force, having its enormous no-pay collective ego served. Dr. E. Keevil Judy of the First Baptist Church became one of the first ministers on WSON. As history bares out, the churches, with their ministers, their choirs, and their congregation members have always been eager to preach and sing for radio audiences as some of the seminal talents of radio. WSON aired its own versions of a "religious hour," with its "Ohio Valley Baptist Association Hour," each day through the week, at 9:30am, including other church services throughout the Sundays. Listeners affiliated with the churches seemed to attend the programs, either to participate or to witness "the service-oriented program." For those who thought they could sing, play an instrument, even tap dance, awaited their turn at the microphone. Becky had the laborious task of auditioning every so-called act that walked through the doors of WSON. One of the first groups who auditioned for Becky was Bob Berry and his
"Kentucky Pioneers," the first country band that played on WSON's air. Bob Berry, who lived in nearby Corydon, Kentucky, recalls some of those earliest country music days:

WSON used to have a lot of groups on Saturday. There was Art Gupt and the Dixie Playboys, with Jimmie Gatlin playing saxophone and George McCoy playing steel guitar even before Les Smithart started his group of the "Super-X Cowboys." There was "J. D. Polk and the happy-go-lucky Boys," along with "Janie and her Rythmn Aces." The "Kentucky Pioneers" at 2:30pm, with Jessie Grisham playing the fiddle, Elmer Chancellor doing the rhythm and I was playing steel guitar. We had four girls we called the "Pioneer Sweethearts," Birdie Lee Berry, Rebecca Kavenaugh, Opal and Dot Denton. Stan Walters had a quartet called the "Melodyaires." Doug Jones and "The Country Showboys," with Doug Jones on the vocals and played the rhythm guitar, Dick Smith played bass, Don Wilkerson was the drummer and singer, Billy (B. J.) Owens played lead guitar, Harold Snodgrass played and I played, sometimes fiddle, guitar, piano, and sang (Berry, 1991). 

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Being a small town, Henderson catered to country music. Fans appreciated the famous stars, but none of those stars seemed to match the magic of local bands and singers. Often, during a Les Smithart and His Super-X Cowboys Show, the station had a crowd that mounted to standing room only. While other groups and individual artists had their followers, no other band enjoyed more popularity than did the "Cowboys." The group played no less than ten-to-twelve stands a week. Smithart recalled some of his first days of playing music:

I came from Spottsville, along with my brothers Johnny and Wally, just down the road a ways from Henderson. A bunch of us boys would get together and fiddle, and pick and hum and strum until some of the good ol' boys started to noticing us. And over some time we settled down with Doug Oldham playing steel guitar, "Spider" Rich playing lead guitar, Wally playing rhythm guitar, "Rusty" Pendergraft playing bass, and me on the fiddle. We played little bars and taverns in nearby towns, like Poole; Spottsville; Owensboro, and Dale and Mt. Vernon, Indiana. We started getting a name for ourselves around the area and soon we were asked to come on the radio (Smithart, 1991).

An agency in Chicago handled Smithart and his "Cowboys" and got them
Hollywood connections with Gene Autry and Republic Pictures. Some of their music was used in the Republic films and as background to other features. Because of the connections, several recording artists of the day occasionally stopped by to play with them. Friendships aside, and according to existing contracts, artists could not perform without permission unless royalty payments went to their recording label. This situation made no sense to the recording friends of Smithart, who often dropped by the station when they were in the area. "Just don't tell anyone," they would caution Smithart, as they stepped up to the microphone, unannounced, and began to perform. Smithart added:

We had great times, a' hootin' an' hollerin', and though not too many people knew it at the time, we'd sneak on such country stars as Hank Williams, the real Hank and not his son, Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas, Jim Reeves, even the Everly Brothers before they became famous. My goodness, they had hair that came all the way down to there. What a sight; but, boy, could they ever sing. Since almost all of them at the time had recording contracts they weren't suppose to perform without some high-falootin' lawyer around to sign some papers, so we'd just not say who they were. Man o' live, we had ourselves a time (Smithart, 1991). 149

In three years time the station granted authority to increase its power to
five-hundred watts of power, as a Class III radio station, meaning sunrise and sunset hours of local time dictated its sign-on and sign-offs. Realizing that several local sporting events occurred in the night hours, Lackey requested an FM license. In another three years, WSON-FM aired as a sister station to its AM operation. Soon, as had the Gleaner-Journal, so did WSON become a voice to the community of Henderson. Sporting events, various social events, and special programs added to the total of WSON's service area by combining the two stations' operations out of the same building. During the daylight hours, the stations aired in simulcast, offering the same programming to both AM and FM listeners. As night approached, the AM station shut down and the FM station would continue its programming. Although the station took on several face changes it never altered its original aim of broadcast intent.

WSON audience members came to know the names of Dell McLachlan, Martin Scheafer, Hugh Edward Sandefur, Ewing Graham, Georgie Pete Dye, Brian Davidson, Eddie Duncan, S. H. Bernstein, Scott Chase, Jerry Tolbert, Gene Stewart, Charlie Blake, Bill Stevens, Mary Ruth Crafton, Dorothy Robertson McCormick, Jim Thacker, Jim Bates, and Fred Briggs, to name but a few, as though they were family members. Regular listeners knew the immediate family members of each of WSON's announcers, knew the grades and classes of their children, knew where their wife or husband shopped and ate, knew them on the streets of Henderson. Becoming network affiliated, according to WSON listeners, seemed to matter little in the way of keeping abreast of the World and of
Henderson.

With Mutual Broadcast Network affiliation the station did not need to originate all of its programming from the station. Its vast space became wasted and unused. Then, in 1953, management moved its studios to the smaller location at 121 N. Main Street where its programming began to center on local news, sports features, and recorded music. Its network provided the rest of its daily program schedule. The move also offset operating expenses for a new venture by Lackey, a television station, WEHT. In 1959, the station moved down the street to the second floor of the Soaper Hotel, located at Second and Main Streets. As FM began to strengthen with its extended-play music formats, in 1968 the station moved back to the Zion Road location to use the needed room to install automation playback for its FM programming; and in 1985 WSON moved to the third floor of the Citi Center Mall, with WKDO remaining on Zion Road.

One of WSON's announcers saw broadcasting from a different viewpoint:

I remember the day the rat got in the transmitter. This was an old-fashioned transmitter with kleistron tubes, and I was in the middle of something, announcing and playing records. Suddenly, there was this great bang! Then a flash. Next, came this awful smell of burnt flesh and fur. Apparently, a rat had gotten inside the transmitter, had touched a wrong cable, and caused an arc of power to go through this rat.
Well, not only did this fry the rat to smithereens in about a second, but it also knocked us off the air for the rest of the day (Briggs, 1991).

Fred Briggs, reporting for NBC News, recalled those early days of his working at WSON before his went to WGEM, in Quincy, Illinois to work with an old Army friend. Later, he worked in Louisville, Kentucky at WLKY, the ABC affiliate then. Briggs attended the University of Louisville's night classes and announced during the day. From Louisville, he went to Huntington, West Virginia, for two years, and then on to WSB, in Atlanta. NBC News saw his station news feeds, liked his on-air reporting, and hired him. Briggs was with NBC for twenty-five years and in total, was in broadcasting for over forty years. During all those years, his bases were in several cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland, San Francisco, West Germany. Reporters who became based in Europe, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa became the territory about which he or she was most likely to report. Briggs, based in the Boston area as director in charge of the Boston NBC News division, still went to some foreign bureaus from time-to-time. Of all his reporting tales, he still recalled the burning rat at WSON as a highlight in his career.

In leadership roles, William F. "Rusty" Russell became the first full-time WSON station manager. Although Lackey had been the original manager of the station for the first fifteen years, he became mayor of Henderson and placed

In later years, its network affiliation went to the best bidder: first to the Mutual Broadcasting Company, then to the American Broadcasting Company, and finally, in 1963, to Columbia Broadcasting System, featuring newsman Dallas Townshend. Townshend proved quite popular to WSON listeners. Many accused him of sounding as though he were a Henderson native. WSON-FM took on the challenges of gaining a more youth-oriented audience, as more and more stations found that FM stereo had become the choice of full-fidelity music-conscious fans. In 1971, WSON-FM began to meet those challenges by first changing its call letters from WSON-FM to WKDQ, and then by going stereo rock (1976). For 1971, by offering news and entertainment in its beginning stages the station became an important information outlet for all of Henderson. World and national news from its Mutual Broadcasting network, music from its local DJ's, and its local news, possibly some of the most insignificant new of all, the hospital news, by Hugh Edward Sandefur, the station began to represent the persona of Henderson.

Hugh Edward could only exist in a town such as Henderson. That statement entails the highest form of flattery. A remarkable man, Sandefur had compassion and feelings that reached to one's soul. As a child, arthritis struck Sandefur, though a discomforting disease in most; to him, joint locking and paralyzing. He became bedridden throughout all his adult life.
Sandefur squeezed much of his mobile life into his first twenty years. His peers knew him as bright and thought-provoking. The girls thought him handsome. Sandefur could sing as well as he played his saxophone. After high school, he entered college, and played sax for its jazz orchestra. He traveled abroad to Hong Kong on ocean steamers. He wrote poetry, stories, and composed music. After thirteen operations in fighting the torturous arthritic advances throughout his body, he remained rigid from head-to-toe, with only his hands and elbows movable. Most would resign to their fate and merely exist. Yet he fought the effects of his disease when others gave up.

He began selling magazine orders from his home by telephone. Ironically, he lived only about a mile from WSON. Slowly, a stream of visitors, including many of his high school friends, would arrive at his door either to fill orders or merely to chat. Sandefur had membership in the Henderson Methodist Church, which in turn, brought even more guests on regular visits. If one wanted to know what was occurring in Henderson, Sandefur not only had the information, he reported it. One of his long-time friends and admirers, Francele Armstrong of the Gleaner-Journal visited him often. Armstrong had the notion that Sandefur would make a good writer and reporter for the paper. She asked him to write its radio columns, as a critic, and fan. This he did. Soon, he started receiving letters concerning the radio column. The letters began branching out in interest, and soon, Armstrong asked to become a reporter for the paper. She furnished him with a typewriter, built on a table over his prone body while he lay in bed.
Sandefur's aid, Melicent Emily Wall, supplied him with typing instructions to increase his competency with the writer. Wall grew up in Henderson and attended the same classes as Sandefur. She taught commercial subjects when she was not helping Sandefur with his reporting. The letters, and soon, the phone calls began to increase in volume. Still more visitors began to rave about his columns.

The Lackeys had visited Sandefur on several occasions. Beyond calling Sandefur a friend, Lackey saw all the pluses of using him on the air at WSON. Sandefur had become well known and was well liked and on more than one instance did people say, "You can't walk away from Sandefur's house without feeling just a little bit better about yourself and life." Lackey did not wait too long in asking Sandefur to DJ music for his station, nor did Sandefur wait too long in responding. Almost immediately, WSON ran a cable to his house, at station expense, built a microphone rack where he could pull down, or push out of the way, the microphone for his broadcasts and a stand by light to let Sandefur know when his microphone was on. He used to type up his script of music for the day, and, almost on cue, Sandefur became not only a music critic for the Gleaner, but the "Master of the Stax of Wax" for WSON, and the envy of several stations in the area.

Lackey saw another great potential in Sandefur. Never had Lackey seen his proposal as charity; rather, he realized that Sandefur lived at the hub of Henderson news, just from the community sharing time to talk with him. Sandefur could report local news for the station. His frequent visits to the hospital to treat
his ailments made it natural for him to report hospital news to the community. He could call, or be called by, the police department for its overnight police report sheet, the Gleaner for any overnight local news that needed airing that morning. Eventually, with the added importance of broadcasting local news, Sandefur gave up reviews for the newspaper and concentrated solely on broadcasting. (In talks with Mrs. Lackey, she firmly stated that the Lackeys and Harrises were the best of friends, each supporting the other’s cause, a case not easily found when two media families compete against each other. Lackey stated that the two families always supported each other whenever they could, professionally; always, on a personal basis as friends. She further added that the same condition exists with Walt Dear & Associates.)

Sandefur began reporting other local news, along with the hospital news, births, and deaths of Henderson two times each morning. Each morning at 7:00am and 7:30am, Sandefur went on the air of WSON. Each morning during those times, no other media came close to capturing the numbers of audience he held from his home with its simple array of two telephones, a typewriter, and microphone. Sandefur manned each instrument from his bed, while locked in a paralyzed body but for his elbows and hands. A since-forgotten Hendersonian once remarked, "I subscribe to and read daily the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Louisville Courier-Journal and the Gleaner-Journal; don’t matter, until I hear Hugh in the morning, only then am I ready to start out my day."

Vicariously, Sandefur represented an institution, and everything in it, in the
name of not only survival, but of success. Many Henderson parents scolded their children when they did not want to do a chore by being reminded of Sandefur and his plight, and how he had overcome that plight to do the successful job he performed. Funeral homes offered their services of ambulances to take him to speak at Henderson schools, social events, sporting events, town events, anywhere his presence could offer a better way of reaching out to people or for reporting a story. On occasion, he played his saxophone at fundraising events.

Possibly no other radio voice in Henderson news remained as popular or meant so much to the community as did Sandefur's. Of his many compassions, he wanted most a school, someplace the handicapped youth of Henderson could learn to perform with their special needs. He worked diligently, as did his friends, to raise funds through civic and church funds. He lived to see the vocational school for the handicapped given his name, the Hugh E. Sandefur Training Center (1976).

Martin Scheafer, another DJ at WSON, also became a household name for the faithful listeners of the station. WSON listening faithful often remarked that Scheafer's voice seemed to be on the air, no matter what hour, even when the station was not on the air. Most listener's, in tuning their radio and upon hearing his voice just stopped tuning. They knew, without looking at the dial or waiting for a station identification, they tuned to WSON.

Scheafer did not impose on the listener with his radio voice. His voice, known as "pipes" in the broadcast business, resonated in the high-baritone range
and only slightly hinted of a Kentucky accent. His radio audiences felt comfortable with his announcing as he stayed away from the flamboyant and fast-paced delivery style of the days' many announcers. He was precise in speaking; with clear diction, rounded articulation, and a quick-paced announcing speed. Scheafer added another element to his announcing: he always smiled when he read commercial copy. "People can tell when you're sincere about a product, so long as you smile," he once told me. He, like Sandefur, seemed to know the correct pronunciation of every word in the English language, especially when it came to pronouncing the names of classical composers and their compositions. More so, Scheafer had a delightful sense of humor.

My first broadcasting experience began at WSON. I reported news for the program, "Wildcat Quarter," a fifteen-minute headline summary of the names and events that were newsworthy at the University of Kentucky and its community college in Henderson. I was a freshman at the community college. Scheafer operated the console in the master control room while I stationed myself in another studio with only a microphone and desk. A double glass window separated us while I worked my best in the adjoining studio to keep from stumbling and stammering through the university names and events. As I blundered through the each newscast, I could see Scheafer at his console just blankly gazing out a studio window. I never doubted for a minute that he was staring at some distant vacation island far away from the sound of my fractured announcing abilities. When I came upon a word I had trouble pronouncing, Scheafer bolted around in his chair.
and bent toward the dividing studio windows, peering down my script with a wrenched face of pained disbelief. His stunts got me so flustered I'd lose my place on the script, falter again, then stumble even more in trying to maintain some semblance of composure. Scheafer returned to his chair and began laughing, knowing he'd succeeded in breaking me up one more time.

Scheafer used his sense of humor to wreak havoc on all his fellow coworkers, why not me? His broadcast training gave him years of experience in keeping a straight face and an emotionless voice, no matter what the situation. He could tell or hear a hilarious joke and never hint of a smile or laugh. I was the opposite. Broadcasters call me, in the business, an "easy guff" meaning, I'll laugh at anything that I think is humorous, at any time, any place. On one occasion, I presented the "Wildcat Quarter" news and the whole segment went extremely well for me, with no stammering or stumbling. There were only a few minutes remaining in my show and I could feel myself becoming proud of my good job. As I was at the show's end, I noticed Scheafer rise from his chair in the other studio, still staring out of the window, while he reached for the fly of his pants and began unzipping his trousers. First, I forgot to go on reading, then I began laughing hysterically. I lost all sense of composure, continuing to titter and cackle. Meanwhile, listeners, if any remained by now, knew only that they had been hearing my news, followed by a long silence, then a sudden outburst of maniacal laughter. So much for professionalism, for "The Wildcat Quarter," and Drury's dreams for replacing Walter Cronkite.
WSON performed by design: producing and airing local radio listening enjoyment for the local community, and reporting Henderson's most intimate stories of hospital notices, births, and deaths on its Henderson Bulletin Board. The station produced radio plays, covered local sporting events, held recitals, and brought Sunday church services to shut-ins. Henderson has relied on WSON as much as it has on its newspaper, the Gleaner-Journal. Much credit for its success belonged to its simply stated function, serving its listeners. The station has never attempted to do anything other than what it does. From its first broadcast, WSON assumed the role of a long-time old friend, an invisible neighbor, who came to lean over the back fence for the latest news and happenings of the town of Henderson. While the conversation over the backyard fence went on a new medium came knocking at Henderson's front door.

While Lackey had been quite successful in giving Henderson a voice of local news and opinion to the community, he knew well of the larger broadcast business, of its developments, and of the upstart broadcast child of television. According to wife Becky, Lackey thought of television in the same fashion as radio since television could bring to Henderson watchers the faces behind the voices they so often heard on WSON. Television seemed a natural alternative to local expression as an extension of his radio endeavors. In the summer of 1951, he and wife Becky went to a Rotary conference in Mexico. On their trip back to Kentucky, Lackey stopped at Malco Theater Group, in Memphis, the same Malco Group that operated Henderson's theaters. He wanted to talk to the group about
the possibilities of bringing television to Henderson. Armed with broadcast and Federal Communication Commission information he had gathered in the last few years, Lackey presented his case for Henderson television to the Malco group. His case offered profitability for the Malco group and it offered a chance to cut any financial losses the theaters might suffer from nearby television stations that would no doubt surface. Lackey came back to Henderson with the group’s approval and then went on to Washington, D. C., and applied for a television license. He dutifully placed his application on the Commission’s heaping license pile. His application, however, read differently than the other applications; Lackey applied for a UHF television station, not a VHF license. Lackey had the foresight to recognize that a far-reaching VHF television station would serve little his purposes. Outside Henderson and Evansville, the area’s population dwindled to hamlets and villages. The lower powered UHF station would serve his interests well.

The Federal Communications Commission faced a broadcasting problem of tremendous proportions: People in smaller cities wanted the same opportunities of having television programs that the largest cities had. Yet, the television broadcast band consisted of only twelve civilian Very High Frequency, or VHF channels that would cause television signals to overlap from one city to the next. Technology in other radio bands remained limited. Thousands of returning military electronic technicians were home from World War II and eager to find work in electronics. Television applications continued to pile up on the Commission’s desk.
The Commission, as did the nation, stared upon the onerous birth of a new medium and how to accommodate it. The supply of available channels could not keep up with the demand of applications. In the years between 1948 and 1953, the Commission stopped its licensing of television stations to find solutions to the above problems. The stoppage order of licensing stations became known as the "Freeze." During those five years the Commission vacillated between making television all-VHF, adopting a new band of Ultra-High Frequency, or UHF as the television broadcast spectrum, keeping television markets either wholly VHF or UHF, or combining the two broadcast bands in all markets. With every balanced decision the Commission made, an equal opposition arose against it. In the early 1950's, technological improvements in the UHF band placed the new channel carrier at or near the qualities of VHF.

All along, Lackey had kept abreast of the latest developing news in the broadcast industry. The case he reported to the Malco group concerned itself with making the station an UHF television station, thus avoiding the deadlock of obtaining a VHF license. Toward the end of 1952, as the FCC "Freeze" began to thaw in allocating new television licenses, Lackey and his Malco associates became owners in one of the first UHF licensed television stations in the country, WEHT.

In 1953, most people in the country thought television belonged in major cities. Their daily routine for obtaining news consisted of reading the newspaper or listening to radio. For entertainment, either movies and social events served
their needs. Worse, many outlying newspaper companies in those days only printed once a week. Most outlying areas did not have local radio; and movie houses belonged to larger cities, not to small towns and villages. For the greater population of America television remained only a word they sometimes heard in conversation. To the contrary, Hendersonians knew of television almost ten years before the majority of the nation, as then WEHT, Channel 50 and WFIE, Channel 62 went on the air in November and December of 1953. Both stations immediately became network affiliated to CBS and NBC, respectively, and carried network programming, even its kinescopes, from their first day of their operation. Not even cities ten times the size of Henderson enjoyed the new medium of television, let alone two television stations, followed only three years later by a third station, WTVW, Channel 7. Only the wealthy of Henderson had purchased television sets before 1953, and at that, only to receive an occasional distant and snowy picture from such cities as Indianapolis, Louisville, and even St. Louis. The Henderson community at large remains unaware of the above FCC events to this day. For the most part, I saw no major stories relating to the FCC decisions in tracing through the Gleaner-Journal.

report that one station, a UHF, went on the air, becoming one of the first-line UHFs rests as a remarkable story within itself. To report that two UHFs and a VHF shared a market by 1956 made for almost unbelievable news. Yet, they not only survived then, but appear to be prospering even as cable television has invaded both sides of the river.

For one interested and eager to break into television ownership in the early 1950's, their thoughts had to border on obsession. The nightmare that existed for almost sixteen-years in the FCC fight to justify UHF caused hordes of potential applicants to drop out of license bidding. A total of eight pairings of UHF stations, beginning with WSBA, Channel 43, in York, Pennsylvania, began the deintermixture march of UHF television (Broadcasting, 1986). Even then, no one knew exactly what would happen in the television industry. Certainly one day to the next did not guarantee a station's licensed right to be on the air, nor to have monies to deposit in a bank. Only the true entrepreneurs, with ownership in other media or large companies, such as insurance or department stores entered into the game of the FCC gamble. Not counting extensive attorney fees, they are the only ones, besides the UHF viewers, who won in the end. By 1965, all but the faintest whiff of smoke remained from the long-drawn duel of television bands. Court suits had settled, or been settled by technology, more than any other force. Color had come to the networks and they gleefully passed their color signal into its viewers' sets. One more blow against motion picture houses.

The acronym, ADI, represents Area of Dominant Influence. Since both
cities of Henderson and Evansville live in proximity, the larger city, Evansville, receives the market name assigned to it by the Federal Communications Commission. If the location of one broadcast facility signal overlaps the service area of another broadcast facility in a much larger city, the market area takes the name of the larger city.

Television station, WEHT, stands on Kentucky soil less than four air-miles to its north, and across the Ohio River to Evansville television stations WFIE and WTVW. The physical location properties of the stations present a confusing and perplexing puzzle to the casual observer: Though the location of WEHT is Henderson, Kentucky, its license belongs to Evansville. Though the location of WFIE is Evansville, Indiana, its transmitter stands on Kentucky soil. The above situation labors as a point of irritation to the average Hendersonian and Evansvillian, not to mention neighboring smaller towns in the Evansville ADI, even today, some forty-years after WEHT first signed on the air. The mild explanation wanes in settling the ire of the market's natives.

What remains historically confusing is that WEHT signed on the air calling itself a "Henderson" station. The people of the Evansville-Henderson area first knew and called the facility a "Henderson" television station because its location is Henderson. Its call letters, WEHT, acronymously abbreviate "We're Evansville-Henderson Television." WFIE shortens "We're First In Evansville." As the market became recognized by regional and national advertisers, it made sense (plus, it was lawful) to identify the station as "WEHT, Evansville." Even today, ill Feelings
exist against WEHT when Hendersonians hear the station as referred to an "Evansville" station. Some Hendersonians feel WEHT has betrayed them for calling itself an "Evansville station," while Evansvillians think of Henderson’s WEHT as "acting 'big-city'" by calling itself an Evansville station. WTVW is the only station of the three pioneer Evansville market stations to exist totally in Evansville and truly be called an Evansville station.

The beginnings of those ill-feelings abide in market size. The potential national and regional advertiser looks at market size when considering the placement of an air buy for a station. Sales managers rely on the market size when attempting to sell his or her station and, with no market identity, such saying the station is in the "City of Henderson," a station’s sales suffer. Evansville ranks 89th out of two-hundred, fourteen market sizes, a long way from the lowest ranked station market, Miles City-Glendive, Montana, with its 10,000-households. Even it has a market name. Henderson does not.

WEHT received its license and signed on the air long before market sizes considerably smaller in size, outside New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, Detroit, Washington, D. C., Cleveland, Dallas-Fort Worth, the nation’s Top Ten stations, began licensing, let alone airing. With the station’s initial 1-kilowatt of power, it thought itself lucky to reach the outskirts of town. Its livelihood depended upon local recognition, local response, and local support. Though the station, town, and market size grew, that initial identification never changed with its townspeople. For the WEHT viewer old enough to
remember, even as the station presents a station ID: "WEHT, Evansville," the Hendersonian silently says, "located in Henderson." Today's youthful viewer could not care less the location of either station; especially in view of all the cable choices that now serve the area. Though the sources of those ill-feelings have faded, make no mistake: For the viewer, WEHT is a Henderson station; for the salesperson, WEHT is an Evansville station. Hendersonians who first saw the station in its earliest years have carried with them a bitter note of the way the station, WEHT, first called itself a "Henderson" station, then switched to calling itself an "Evansville" station, as though it sold out to appealing to its following. For some reason, the location of WFIE's tower and transmitter has never presented itself as a promotional problem, most likely because it has always identified itself as Evansville, Indiana.

Paul Harvey, the ABC News commentator, in 1962 reported an example of the towns' cultural differences as he visited the Henderson-Evansville area for Evansville's Sesquicentennial celebration:

"This visit today is originating from the studios of WSON, the tower that bridges the Ohio River, between Henderson, Kentucky, and Evansville, Indiana. Evansville is celebrating its Sesquicentennial and making big plans. Evansville and Henderson are as inseparable as coat hangers, and yet each jealously guards its own individual identity. Ho, ho, ho — you
ever try to wrap two watermelons together? But this week
it's being done. Everybody's having fun at the Big Show on
the banks of the Ohio. Page Two (Harvey, 1991). 155

To the town and service area of Henderson, Kentucky, television remains
unique in that the first television station, WEHT-CBS, quickly followed two months
later by WFIE-NBC, and WTVW-ABC, three years later, signed on the air as one
of the first fully network-complimented television markets granted broadcast
licenses after the 1948-53 Federal Communications Commission "Freeze." Suffice
it to note that Henderson had no outstanding worth in becoming one of the first
markets in the nation to receive and own television in 1953. Many cities in the
country were still awaiting radio, much less a weekly newspaper. Henderson, for
some reason, survived the impossible odds and had its newspaper, its radio, and
its television, one of every medium, while the nation, on the whole, had only
pockets of media choices.

In 1953, Henderson television readied its pictures with the struggle of
vacuum tube UHF technological experimentation. Ironically, the Gleaner-Journal
suffered its own technological growing woes the week prior to WEHT's sign-on.
The paper attempted to convert from its old flat bed presses to newer rotary
presses. Acting as a possible omen to a changing times' awakening, the paper
presses of the Gleaner remained untested at deadline time. Fearing the worse,
the Gleaner arranged to have its paper printed on a tested press. Its entire special
salute to Henderson’s first television station took place at neighboring Madisonville, Kentucky’s The Messenger. The new-look Gleaner arrived in the hands of Hendersonians a few hours late, but it arrived. Its difficulty in adjusting to new technology signalled a harbinger to the newer electronic media: plans will go wrong even when they are supposed to. 156

WEHT went on the air as Channel 50, at 3:00pm, Sunday, September 27, to be exact, with an inaugural show that lasted for an hour and a half. The engineers and production crew of radio station, WEOA, helped provide technical assistance for the skeleton crew of twenty-four WEHT staff members, headed in part by the Malco Theater Group, with Mayor Hecht Lackey as the station’s president. Virtually every piece of equipment in the building gleamed in olive drab. Virtually all of it was military surplus when bought. Two of WEOA’s cameras were used to augment the sole WEHT camera in its studio. Local and state dignitaries filled most of the inaugural program; along with them, film taken of the immediate area showed evidence of the station’s reach to prospective sponsors.

Though television had been around commercially for almost two decades, the medium had existed only in the large metro cities of the nation. Most of WEHT’s first employees came from one ilk of an unrelated trade or another. None was of the medium of television, with hardly a handful even familiar with broadcasting. They invented their role as they worked their daily challenges of keeping a picture on the air. They represented the first of a breed, each speaking the language and jargon of their past work experience. A secretary, for instance,
would have no concern for a "glitch" as would a program producer care for a "ledger;" neither knew of the terms "setting the pedestal," or "starving the beam," as the engineers did, nor were too many concerned with the tenets of journalism, other than what they read in their newspaper. Somewhere off to the side of the confusion, the announcer assumed he or she needed only to look neat and to speak the proper words in the proper amount of allotted time.

Some of its first skeleton staff included John Benham, Ruth Johns, Harvey Murphey, Lynn Stone, Wesley Lambert, Chet Behrman, Edward Betteg, Robert Cleveland, Carl Browner, Gene McLin, Brod Seymour, Curt Bradley, Bill Drury, Ulysses Carlini, Jimmy Stewart, Marye Klaser, Bob Berry, Howard Bright, Joe Sasse, Ray Fletcher, and Cecil Sansbury. This work lists some personal experiences in the following Appendices:

Appendix A: Ulysses Carlini.

Appendix B: Jerry Tolbert.

Appendix C: Chet Behrman.

Appendix D: William Drury.

The station, with its staff, programs, its transmitter, camera control unit, black-and-white camera, and converted (an extremely operative word for WEHT) black-and-white film projector stood poised to inaugurate a new era for an infant medium. The early television station sought to broadcast the visual attention of
a movie spectacle, the drama of a stage play, the sounds of a favorite radio program, and deliver the convictional authority of a newspaper, while trying to define itself as a solid business, and with a solid product. Its goal lay in making solid money, backed with managers, offices, departments, and, ultimately, business men and women, all compacted into one medium, that of television.

The station's first commercial came at 4:29:30pm for Starr & Thompson, a Henderson insurance company. Its first commercial program, "Concert in Miniature," aired from 5:15-to-5:30pm, for Farmers Bank & Trust Company of Henderson. At 5:30pm, Finke Furniture became the first Evansville commercial spot to air, while Ortmeyer Furniture became the first Evansville program sponsor of "Liberace," airing at 6:00pm. Film programs continued until sign-off at around 11pm. For the next month, including all the ironing out of technical and programming difficulties, sign-on began at 5pm and sign-off came at 10:30pm.

In the month following, the station saw two of the original staff leave and nine more added. WEHT began signing-on at 3pm, with studio programming that Hendersonians described as "radio with eyes," one set, one microphone, and one camera. Sara Wilkey instructed the audience on how to cook with "What's Cookin'?" followed by "House of Stewart," hosted by newcomer announcer Jimmy Stewart. Next, came "Over A Cup of Coffee" with Marye Klaser. Even though the show titles imply simplicity, the airing of each program took herculean efforts to prepare. For no sooner did one show end than did another begin, all within a studio space of but a few feet in distance from each other. The station also faced
another obstacle; WFIE television, located in Evansville, had just signed-on (Behrman, 1953).  

WEHT management saw little time for celebrating its first-to-broadcast standing and began concentrating on establishing its best-of-broadcast image in the community. Located in Evansville, WFIE signed on the air November 15 and offered a real threat of confusion as to which station offered more for the televiewer. For the Henderson people, the offering became the same as trying to decide whether to go to the Kraver or the Kentucky Theaters. Now there were two shows in town.

WEHT pressed on harder and announced that it would carry live Indiana high school basketball tournaments from Evansville's Central Gymnasium. Again aided by engineers of radio station, WEOA, WEHT began weekly telecasts of the series' games. Chesty Potato Chips sponsored the programs. When tournament time approached in the spring of 1954, the station arranged to rebroadcast the games from WTTV, in Bloomington, erecting a receiving antenna on the WEHT tower for that purpose, a remarkable and ambitious feat for its time.

The term "live" came to possess a multitude of meanings to the Henderson televiewer as years passed. When WEHT announced that it would carry "live" high school basketball programming, its staff became euphoric. They connected electronic links from an origin outside the station, brought it in, and sent it out as the event happened. From its earliest sign-on, television had striven to make as its forte in the immediacy of event coverage, anything but film and slides. An
announcement made the distinction by saying, "The following is a film presentation." In later years, the term "live," also meant "live on tape," even "live studio audience," in continuing to promote television's ever-present struggle to identify itself as an immediate medium. Though the taping of programs became common, an argument existed to promote that no tampering or editing occurred on the shows. The recording of the program people saw on their television set was a one-hour tapped program in real time and in front of an audience. Television wanted the same status enjoyed by radio, that it could repeat radio's "live" history and produce it better with pictures.

Now, just days after barely having a reliable signal, WEHT was moving outside its studios and was offering "live" entertainment to its audience. Even "real time live" shows could backfire. The television household merely wanted to see an entertaining show. Seeing a "live" program often meant witnessing the boredom of an event develop. "Live" meant seeing several minutes of poor entertainment that probably needed editing into a brief few seconds of good entertainment. If the audience did not care to sit through a developing live program, or for basketball, soaps, or movies, it switched channels until it found something it did like. Even worse, for a television station, it would turn off the set and either listen to the radio or read a newspaper.

Those seminal programs represented the genre of some of television's finest live programs. By today's standards, very few television stations would air those programs, even in their wee hour programming. For 1953 Henderson
television, they were golden and next to importance to anything shown on a silver screen. The programs were live and they were happening at WEHT, a place of shows and home for whom Hendersonians knew their talents existed as real.

One of the aspects of being in early broadcasting, one that the industry mentions rarely is the psychology that surrounded the would-be broadcaster. Performing as a broadcaster meant "putting on a show." There existed a carryover magic to the long-ago innocent sound of 'Spanky McFarland' and the Hal Roach "Our Gang" movie features. When Spanky looked at his "gang," the same gang that proclaimed that since school was out, there was nothing to do, he caused magic. He shouted, "Hey, let's put on a show!" Suddenly, the movie features depicted a bed sheet flapping from out of nowhere and draped over a nearby clothesline as a backdrop. The "gang" no longer wore jeans and overalls but showed up in costumes, and every kid in the neighborhood sat on bleachers of a theatrical back lawn. On cue, an off-screen orchestra played music just out of sight as 'Darla,' 'Alfalfa,' 'Buckwheat,' and 'Spanky' went through their song and dance acts. What fun, what excitement, and what power. The germ of that fun, excitement, and power lived in all the novice Spankys of broadcasting. That like-feeling, the sense of excitement by anyone standing before a camera, knowing, that whatever they did or said, thousands of moviegoers saw them.

A displacement in viewers' minds of the old Hollywood star system began to emerge. Until WEHT's sign-on, Hendersonians went to a theater and saw before them "stars" on a huge screen, acting out roles, people they knew they'd
never meet on the streets of Henderson. Sitting in their home with their "movie" screen reduced to only inches, and filled with people they often knew, there existed a chance of meeting their home stars with a smile and a handshake on Henderson streets. Without formal announcements of any kind, the television personalities Hendersonians saw on their television screens became "stars." Local stars began to merge with Hollywood stars in the viewers' minds, mostly because viewers saw both on the same screen. Countless viewers would call the station and ask to speak with either. Local announcers also became neighbors. They repeatedly said so: "Remember, neighbor, come on down and see why Philbert's saves you more; you'll be glad you did."

In short time, an announcer became an expert car buyer, physician, banker, meteorologist, taste-tester, furniture buyer, walking encyclopedia, master of the Popeil "Slicer/Dicer," and chef of the Ronco "Veg-A-Matic," those products and services he or she announced on the air because viewers believed the announcer used, had, or knew what he or she was selling. Announcers became an expert source of information to act as testament when asked by viewers for more information. The WEHT personalities became the first for Henderson to sell to the community and in many ways they became the most memorable.

Ego involvements hovered foremost as perks. Seeing one's own name on the credits of a program, or appearing before the television cameras made the fledgling broadcaster endure unusual hours and work for practically nothing. Regardless of their job description, one often performed several duties to get
through a broadcast day. A reporter would quickly run to the control room, after delivering his segment of the news, to direct the next portion of the newscast for the sports anchor, who, in turn, would replace that reporter so the latter could set up props for a commercial, the weather map, etc. (Drury, 1978) 158

In the minds of the area's citizens local personalities of television literally became transplanted movie stars. If a viewer recognized a person working in television at the local grocery store, the barber shop, a restaurant, he or she was a star. Before the local operation of television, a "star" was one who appeared on a forty-foot silver screen and came from Hollywood. Now, the person in the local grocery store, barber shop, or restaurant might be a star.

The star treatment filtered throughout the rank and file of the television station. When known that a particular office worker worked at the television station, that individual took on "star qualities" assigned by family, friends, and the public as one of particular importance. If a cola or candy vendor served the station's vending machines, he took the message back to his plant to tell his boss or buddies, "Hey, guess who I saw today. (S)He bought a Baby Ruth from me!" The vendor would become a celebrity among his coworkers.

Just as easily, all of that wonderful excitement broadcast personalities had could come crashing down by just the sight of a pink slip, the discontent of the manager, or of a personality getting fired. Never did a manager worry about a replacement of a worker, only that the next announcer would last long enough not to mess up as much as the last announcer in front of the cameras. What
managers did constantly worry about was how to obtain and keep sponsors.

From the very beginning of WEHT, the news of obtaining sponsors did not go well for Lackey, president and manager. Continuously, his sales force came back to the station with woeful stories of attempting to make sales on clients. The ill-news had little to do with their sales ability, rather the problem linked itself to and stemmed from Lackey's past political decisions as a reform mayor. In cleaning up vice and corruption in the Henderson community, Lackey had made friends and enemies. As mayor, Lackey had helped close down businesses that vendors served in the Henderson-Evansville area. Many still harbored a resentment for his moves against the gaming establishments, and thus their loss of higher paychecks.

One of those moves made by Lackey involved the shutting down of bars and taverns at midnight on Saturdays. The law was on Henderson books for decades, but no one observed it, overlooked. Lackey enforced the law and many did not like him, nor WEHT. Liquor distributors, soft drink and potato chip companies began canceling their buys as sponsors to WEHT once they found that Lackey ran its operation. Lackey resigned his position, rather than compromise his position as mayor and moral decisions as a person. He also did not want his fellow-investors to suffer financial losses from the television station because of his stand on past issues.

Salespeople began combing the area of WEHT's signal for merchants willing to buy time on the station. Though several merchants became intrigued with television's possibilities, the battle for the salesperson remained a steep
challenge. The sales force had to convince store operators on every advantage of their audience in seeing their wares and services on a television screen as opposed to either reading their message in print, or hearing it on the radio. Merchants often retaliated with, "Newspapers and radio are here to stay, television may not make it. We still need to see where it's headed."

At first reluctant to buy television time, merchants became interested in the prospects of selling television as a product. In the week preceding WEHT’s sign-on, twenty-three television advertisements appeared in the Gleaner-Journal. Scanning through the advertisements, the situation seemed as though virtually every major store, besides clothing stores, had become a television dealer. Hardware, furniture, auto service stores, tire stores, each had the latest television set to offer the customer. Radio repair shops became television dealers. Where only their store name and product or service used to hang, the words, owners and managers added "television" or "radio and television repair" to their logos and advertisements. Several dealers advertised television along with its store's specialty: hardwood stores sold televisions as "utility" receivers, furniture stores sold them as console "focal-points" of fine furniture, auto and tire stores sold them as "reduced from retail" items. Electronic shops sold not only television sets, but antennas, antenna wire, converters, and electronic accessories.

Various media congratulated WEHT in its sign-on. As mentioned, the Gleaner-Journal printed a salute to the station and expressed the great growth television would contribute to the community. In tracing the advertisement patterns
I found in the Gleaner-Journal over the new few weeks after the sign-on of WEHT, there is clear evidence that other media wanted to protect their interests. Periodically, the newspaper followed its congratulations by countless reasons why newspapers were superior to television. Even the Kraver and Kentucky Theaters placed ads with the paper congratulating the television station, while underneath the banner accolades they ran advertisements of the movies that played for the next few days.

Henderson became astir as the excitement of television picked up its pace. No more dressing up, no more admission fees, no more having to worry about show times, other than those described by the station. Once the whopping cost of owning a television passed, one's continual entertainment source seemed guaranteed forever, gratis. With Christmas only a few months away, a television set became the gift of choice. As Christmas came and went, it seemed virtually every Hendersonian had transformed at least one room in their house to accommodate the monstrous "set," as townspeople called the television receiver. Only a few days after Christmas, Hugh Edward Sandefur described in his Gleaner column of "the set":

In sixty short days, like the automobile, the radio, the electric refrigerator, and the pop-up toaster, it has become a necessity to a degree that often-precluded the Christmas purchase of such standard gift items as a tie for dad, a dress
Disillusioned downtown merchants began to understand how truly wondrous television was helping their business; people were staying away, saving their money, rather than buying, as store sales lay flat and refused to reflect the upward sales trends of a typical Christmas shopping season. Sales did pick up, slowly. Durable goods had suffered the most. Big ticket items represented a far step away from buying a new television set, though customers bought smaller items, something inexpensive, along with the addition of a new television set for the family living room. By contrast, many in the WEHT pioneer staff saw anything but "wondrous" about television. While the community assumed the WEHT staff had glamorous paychecks along with their glamorous jobs, the staffers often thought that any job was better than that of working in broadcasting. They were young though; aspects of little sleep, long hours, and low pay seemed only a temporary situation. The narcotic of racing against a clock to meet a program deadline, or seeing one's name on program credits or even hearing one's name mentioned by another announcer on the air seemed to replace hard cash.

For many in the staff, including the on-air personalities, the job of broadcasting remained as an obscure position. Announcers rarely called themselves "broadcasters," opting for, instead, the term "talent" when they first helped sign their station on the air in 1953. For in those early years, no one really knew just what the infant television industry was. Yet, they had enough suspicion
to understand its obligation, struggle, power, and magic of sending picture and sound through the air and into viewer's homes. For them, broadcasting existed not as a job, but endured as a mysterious love-affair.

Brod Seymour, whose real name is Seymour Brodsky, served as one of the first broadcasters at WEHT, along with Ulysses Carlini, Curt Bradley, Harvey Murphy, Jimmy Stewart, and Jerry Tolbert. Brodsky, in fearing the "foreign sound" of his name, twisted the names to make them sound more familiar to the Henderson ear. He came from Chicago, much as did Ulysses Carlini, to wade and work through the obscurities of the childlike medium of television:

"I thought the sound of "Ulysses" was one strange name enough at the station. "Brod" seemed to fit me, so I stuck with it. As we walked into the studios at WEHT we had no idea of what we were doing with this infant called 'television.' The most broadcasting any of us had done centered on radio. Now, we had to dress up, comb our hair, and wear neckties. We had to write news, commercials, do station breaks and ID's; we had to move props, set lights, and wire up microphones, all of this while still maintaining an appearance of just walking out of church. We'd stand before this box with a lens on it and pretend it was a friend we'd known all our life. It was scary and alarming, but it spelled fun all rolled into one feeling."
A so-called television job description generally stole its structure and content from an established job description. Though each person had a job title, the job, per se, took on the aires of the personality who filled the job. With the expectation from management that a worker might make a modest effort at his or her job, on top of the expected, a person working in the station formed his own job responsibilities, his own duties, his own lifestyle within the station. As long as operations remained smooth no one ever questioned the responsibilities of others.

The starting period of the station seemed like a particularly bad time. Management feared obvious mistakes getting on the air as well as the people it had hired behind the scenes. Employees always accused management of being afraid that radio personnel were poking fun at them. The front offices seemed to hire and fire people on a regular basis. Soon, a term emerged which seemed to categorize all the employment turnover quite effectively. The term became known as a "cattle drive." Most of the employees felt that way. When new management came in, operations stayed quiet for a week or two, then, all of a sudden, pink slips seemed to spray all over the station. The station let people go, sometimes wholesale. Whole regimes of personnel left the station. In those early days, when one person of any importance found a job in another city, he or she'd call back to the station, and soon, that local worker headed to the caller's station.

A point needs mentioning about the term, "cattle drive": As UHF television stations stemmed the tide of the FCC rulings, news of its operation, news of any kind, was likely to become the subject of national headlines in the trade
magazines. Though it will never be possible to verify the following statement, it appears that the term, "cattle drive," started at WEHT by its announcer, Curt Bradley. He performed various duties, emceeing shows, presenting commercials, and doing voice-overs for station breaks. He also hosted a kiddy show in the afternoon, called "Ideal Roundup." The set consisted of a one-sided "fence" piece that represented the edge of a corral. The show featured westerns and cartoons. The show's sponsor was Ideal Dairy Products. Its logo used a large "Q," with a check mark drawn through its middle, while its slogan signalled that Ideal's milk was "quality checked." Hence, his show name was "Cowboy Cheks."

Each day, as the show opened, Bradley as Cowboy Cheks, walked onto the scene dressed in a cowboy hat, checkered Western shirt, kerchief, jeans, and boots. Cheks pulled himself up onto the corral fencing, then began to count all the "buckeroos and buckereetas" out in "ranch land" who had brushed their teeth, done their homework, and minded their parents. Afterwards, he invited them then to "gather 'round the campfire" for a story of Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, "Whip" Wilson, Rocky Lane, or whatever Western film was available. As he began the story, the camera operator racked focus to make the picture blurred while the film began to roll and focus on its opening.

Management became dissatisfied with the time slot and with Cowboy Cheks, so it fired him. Bradley could hardly believe their words. "What about my show," one employee heard him say, "What about my kids, my contract with Ideal, what about my job?" Management did not respond. That fateful day, a
despondent Cowboy Cheks sauntered up onto the corral and told his "partnas" he would not be seeing them for a long, long time; that the trail boss told him he to head the herd out on a long "cattle drive" and would not be with the kids. The "Roundup" ended, but not the phrase. With so many regimes moving whole "herds" of its people to and fro, from one television station to the next, the term, "cattle drive" became synonymous with being fired. The phrase became an industry-wide term and one that I have heard at other television stations around the country.

A blessed relief to all on-air and film personnel, WEHT received its microwave and installed it on the station's tower. The microwave unit allowed the station to receive live re-broadcast transmissions of the CBS network without having to worry about kinescopes and film delays. All sorts of CBS network programming came into Henderson homes, live, for the first time. "Studio One," "Chrysler Corporation Presents," and "Playhouse 90" were among some of the first culturally oriented CBS programs that Hendersonians saw from New York. Schlitz Beer sponsored the live baseball games, featuring "Dizzy" Dean and Buddy Blatner. The station broke away from network to produce its own local Schlitz commercial to plug the local advertising distributors of the beer. Each commercial called for a new, cold beer. Toward the end of the game, no one at the station minded about the game and they most likely hoped for extra innings.

As management became initiated to the higher operating costs of a television station they explored every avenue in providing programming. Film
distributors hawked their film libraries consisting mostly of Hollywood's worst films, and stations such as WEHT bought them, but even in the excitement of watching pictures on a television screen, Hendersonians at least wanted programming that was interesting. One of the basis formulas that always worked for stage shows and for radio included the featuring of live local talent. Management at WEHT saw the local talent formula in a different light. Local shows, featuring local talent cost little; there were no license and title rental fees to pay. Local talent was accessible and always eager to perform before the cameras. WEHT searched for the miracle show that brought all elements together.

That miracle show went on the air of WEHT as "Hillside Hoedown," April 30, 1955. Many of its first programs aired live every afternoon from the cramped WEHT studio, between 4 and 5pm. With its popularity picking up almost immediately, the show aired for two hours on Saturday nights, from 9:30-to-11:30pm. The "Hoedown" idea bubbled in inexpensive entertainment formula of massive audience appeal. Virtually every radio and television station around the Kentucky area had their own "Hoedown"-type show of entertaining and entertained locals. The shows stood as electronic "home movies," with camera pans of the audiences, close-ups of beauty queens and of toothless, unshaven "ol' codgers."

The "Hillside" of the title comes from the location of the station. WEHT sits atop of one of the highest Northern Henderson County hills, on Marywood Drive. The "Hoedown" portion of the title described exactly what the show was about. Location of the station in proximity to the "Cradle of Bluegrass" music to the
Appalachians in the east, and with the nation's government seat of Country Music in Nashville to the south, made WEHT's "Hillside Hoedown" stand ready to act as a bastion against the city slickers of sophistication who threatened their "down-home" virtues of good entertainment. If a person could sing, or thought he could play an instrument, or even play spoons, as long as it resembled country, he or she ended up on the show.

The "Hoedown" ship, piloted by the country band, "Doug Oldham and the Dixie 6," carried "folksy" monikers signalling their occasion: Rusty "Rustyneck" Pendergraft, "Little" Jack Little, and William "Curly" Shelton, with the rest of the country band members of Roy McCarty, Bob Berry, and with Doug Oldham as the ship's captain. The band poured out a cornucopia of foot-stompin' sounds from its steel guitar, two fiddles, electric lead guitar, rhythm guitar, and bass. Regular guests, such as Junie Dee, Charles Bellemyn, Joe Penny, and Dee Austin sang solos and duets. "Curly" sang lead vocals for the 'Dixie 6,' and just about every other band member "did a something extra" when the time or song called for it. From 'hoedown' to 'heartbreak,' the songs of the show reached out to heighten the enjoyment of its television audience. Many country-loving Hendersonians were sure that no finer musical entertainment existed anywhere in the world than for the televiewing audience of WEHT's "Hillside Hoedown."

The program made the trade magazines, word went out, and often Nashville guests showed up with other regional country performers, but the show never had a famous country star during its entire length of airing. As far as local fans cared,
they didn't need them, nor could they find in the program rundown to put them. Besides, the "Hoedown" represented a chance to see local talent to many of its fans. The program seemed special to Henderson audiences and they resented any outsider talent who wanted to take advantage of the large viewing audience of Henderson to promote of their nearest appearance, or latest record release. To the contrary, local show talents attempted to act as famous country stars by having photographs made so they could sign autographs, or send them out in mailers.

From a mere television show, the show had become more important to the local than the station. People could see their neighbors on the "Hoedown."

The show represented, in many ways, a 'farewell' to Henderson hometown neighborliness. Because the station encouraged a "live" audience, people began showing up at the studio hours before the program aired. They bought the latest in Western wear, sported clean hairdos and fresh hair cuts, cowboy hats, and string ties. Even well-known conservative Hendersonians showed up wearing cowboy boots, gargantuan belt-buckled leather belts, and Western-cut suits. The event turned into spectacle, becoming a place to see as to be seen. The same socializing that had occurred forever on the streets of Henderson occurred in the parking lot of WEHT.

People brought guitars, banjoes, and "fiddles" with them to play in the parking lot, or in the halls of the tiny station, to "jam" while waiting for the show. Better yet, be discovered by one of the show's stars. Within a few months' time, the population of the audience made it virtually impossible to produce the show.
Into the wee hours, and long after the show had gone off the air, people would still meander through the station, either to go to the bathroom, buy a soda, or stay out in the parking lot to jam. The crowds kept growing; being at the station became the best spot in town for a Saturday night.

Finally, the station moved the entire production to Evansville and the Agoga Tabernacle. The building could easily handle the crowds. It offered good facilities for production, and it could provide well for all. Yet, the program stood in its own shadow of progress: CBS began expanding its programming into the later hours of Saturday nights and it wanted its affiliates to join it. This meant serious reconsideration by management of the "Hoedown." Another need to explore the program's viability came from examining its operational costs of renting out the Evansville Agoga building and handling the remote fees.

Joe Penny, one of the original performers of the "Hoedown," decided to attempt to reassemble the cast for a final reunion. In June 1992, the cast members of "Hillside Hoedown" held a thirty-five year "class reunion" and invited the public to come see them. Almost all the original band members were present. With them, a crowd of almost two-thousand fans — after thirty-five years — came to see and hear them play one last time. The event stands as testament to the popularity of the program, and to the following of its television fans.

One other program needs mentioning, even though it did not belong to WEHT: it's creator, producer, writer, artist, and talent did begin his television career at the station. Behrman began working for WFIE after working a few months at
WEHT's operation. He gave birth to the character "Uncle Duddley." Several programs aired that were aimed specifically at children's shows, both locally produced and syndicated. Many of the local shows became popular, but none captured the charm, nor following as did "Uncle Duddley." "Duddley" was a soft-spoken, elderly man who came before the cameras bespeckled and mustached, wearing a conductor's hat, white shirt, bow tie, and vest. He appeared as though he were a local train master, who began each daily noontime program by placing his lunch pail down on the bench before him, pulling out and placing little "Jerry, the Giraffe," beside a placemat, and then telling us how we should: behave our parents, be good to our brothers and sisters, say our prayers, eat the right foods, do well in school, go to church, and not to spill our milk and cookies on the floor while we watched his cartoons.

"Uncle Duddley" belonged in every viewer's home. He simply fit everyone's ideal of a grandfather, an "uncle," a father, or maybe a teacher. His manner of movement seemed to show every year of his alleged age, Behrmann was still in his 30s, yet his movements seemed easy on the eye. He shuffled slowly so even the youngest kid in the audience could follow the action on his or her television screen. With almost every line, or at the end of a teaching statement, he'd chuckle a shy, little giggle that sounded comfort to a child's ear.

Each day held its own special excitement. One day, he would draw a picture from just a simple line or two. Another day, he would show a little magic trick. On all days, he'd pull out a small reel of film, pull a strand of film down from
the reel, and suddenly, kids would be watching the cartoon he had just introduced. "Uncle Duddley" could take us anywhere he wanted, because the kids would love the voyage, and they would all be happy that they had come along.

Behrman took "Duddley" on the road, appearing at local benefits, shopping centers, various stores, visiting circuses — anywhere the station could get promotional "mileage" from his character appearance. Naturally, all of those times, along with his regular duties at the station as operations manager. Behrman, regardless of personal time, gave freely to perpetuate the character of "Duddley" for his little viewers — viewers who numbered in the thousands, viewers who "stole" the television set away from parents wanting to watch another channel, while "Uncle Duddley" was on.

On one occasion, a father requested Behrman to see a terminally ill little boy at a local hospital. Behrman, pressed for time as usual, made a mad dash into his makeup, left from the station in his car, and arrived at the hospital. He entered the little boy's room, and soon they were talking. After chatting longer than the doctor wished, Behrman got up to leave. As he reached the door, the little boy called out, "Uncle Duddley, Uncle Duddley!" "Yes?" Behrman asked. "I'm so glad they sent the real Uncle Duddley to me and not somebody dressed up like him; I would have been so disappointed." Behrman nodded, turned, and could barely make it past the door before he broke down in tears, then left for home. For a while, station duties could wait. A few days later, the little boy died. Some occurrences made local television worth every effort its people put into it. The
simple, yet stately sounds of country music, or one-on-one touching, star-to-
admirer, always left a stamp of approval for the local fan that could last a lifetime, even a short life.

In several television markets, the Evansville market was indicative of virtually all early markets: starting its programming with inexpensive films for routine, then gradually inserting live programming into the schedule to fill the broadcast hours to keep film costs down, then having some sort of "hit" local program, and finally, dropping most live programming and going with a network. Without ever being able directly to link WEHT (and respectfully, WFIE and WTVW) as model stations for later stations, the chances are great that the Evansville market, especially because of its small size, became one of those markets studied for its operational approaches. Almost had to be, there were not many other stations around in the industry.

WEHT advanced with the rest of the television nation, first vanguarding, then following, as larger markets with larger operating budgets passed it in electronic abilities. Its production techniques settled and become more refined. By 1956, WTVW, with its ABC network affiliation, joined the community and it had its full complement of network programming, an extremely lucky community, indeed.

Film gave way to tape, black-and-white would give way to color, and all the shenanigans of most local programming gave way to the sophistication of network broadcasting. In time, the station subscribed to graphics companies, to theme
music companies, and to promotional campaign companies. Viewers saw and
heard WEHT, as with so many other stations in the nation, just about anywhere
else, wearing different call letters and numbers, but appearing and sounding like
all other subscribers. The move was not a step down, but merely one that every
other station took in streamlining their station toward a better look, better sound,
and to have a packaged look of sophistication.

While WEHT and all the other television stations became more
sophisticated, so did the audience. Even without knowing it, the audience began
to know whether a program originated locally, whether they saw tape or film,
whether a commercial and its announcer were believable. In a little over twenty
years, Henderson got cable television from TeleCommunications, Incorporated.
Acting in the role of increasing television coverage, on top of its original three
network affiliates, an independent, and two education channels, cable brought the
Henderson community "24-hour" television of sports, news, weather, and movies
(1976).

In many ways, "community" survived best with eyes-to-eyes, handshakes,
and "howdies." One could read and hear about the community because people
paid attention to the news and not to the newsmaker, as television audiences so
often demanded. Instead, television began bringing us blow-dried, straight-
teethed, homogenized announcers, talent, and programs because they looked
good on camera. Ultimately, cable brought "more of the same" on more channels,
costing what used to be free, of program series now cancelled.
None of the those statements wreak as condemnation. To the contrary, this whole work depicts progress. As with virtually any improvements of life styles and standards found throughout this work, someone can easily say “the old way was better.” Doubtful. For one to make such a statement merely means that person has long-since forgotten how really bad some of those first herculean attempts were. To the contrary, television remains fun, exciting, and adventurous “new and improved” the media “mouse-traps” will invent and evolve for us in making further judgments with our billfolds and brains. The future remains unpredictable.

Nineteen, fifty-three marked the year that Henderson went indoors and stayed there; so did the nation. Of all the years I researched of media’s developments, none served more reminder to change’s significance than to that which happened across the country in 1953. Much of that impetus for change came from the “Freeze” of the FCC. Its expanded broadcast approval for television marked an end of monopolizing an audience’s attention on newspapers, radio, and motion picture houses. It appeared that television might severely reduce, if not replace all other mediums and bring the world to the Henderson and national family on a twenty-one inch, black-and-white screen. In just a few months of that one year, some of the headlines that surfaced were:

Internationally, the Korean War Armistice was signed at Panmunjom, bringing an end to the Korean War; Queen Elizabeth II was coronated as Queen of England in Westminster Abby, immediately knighting Sir Winston Churchill; Dag Hammarskjöld became secretary-general of the United Nations; Fidel Castro began
his countrywide revolution to overthrow Fulgencio Batista in Cuba; Josef Stalin had
died and Nikita Khrushchev became first secretary of the Communist Party, while
the Soviet Union began the first of its hydrogen bomb tests below the ground, Sir
Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norkay became the first the reach the apex of Mount
Everest.

Nationally, Dr. Jonas Salk had pioneered research in the treatment of polio
and announced an oral vaccine for its prevention; President Harry Truman
announced in his State of the Union address that the United States also had the
hydrogen bomb and Raleigh, North Carolina, became the site of the first privately
operated atomic reactor; Trans World Airlines began its first cross-country flights
with jetpower, while test pilot Scott Crossfield punched a hole in the sky, travelling
in access of 1,300-mph; Ohio dropped its border dispute technicalities and actually
became a state, and (Associated Press, 1953). 162

On the local front, the Henderson family sat in its TV furniture, eating the
first of its Swanson TV dinners while looking up the night's televiewing fare in the
first edition of TV Guide to determine when "Lucy" would give birth to "Little Ricky"
on "I Love Lucy." (The real Desi, Jr. is born in 1953.) If WEHT had not signed on
for the day, it read its latest newsprint from high-speed presses put into operation
by the Gleaner-Journal.

Television saw Hollywood become frantic, restructuring its studio priorities,
and introducing its first blockbuster wide-screen Cinemascope film, "The Robe,"
starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. Theaters offered audiences novelty
with its first 3-D effort with the immortal "Bwana Devil," a film we will never forget fast enough, followed by "House of Wax," starring Vincent Price in the first all-color 3-D film. Broadway could only produce the Arthur Miller smash hit, "The Crucible," and the magazine stand could only inaugurate the Hugh Hefner brainchild, Playboy magazine.

In 1953, the attitude of Henderson lay open and vulnerable to drastic changes in its media sources. Outside its city limits, past the circulation of its newspaper, and further out than the signal strength of its radio, media churned to find new and improved ways to satisfy its customer. At Murray Hill, New Jersey, General Electric Company engineers were perfecting their 1951 invention, the transistor. In three years, a satellite first entered Earth orbit. Media would find a way to follow it.

For the most part, the media changes that took place in the country had little-to-no significance to Henderson. Any news of the above events could read, or heard, or even seen as a newsreel in one of Henderson's theaters. For the first time, the above news came to Henderson from its very own television set. With the release of the FCC "Freeze," forty-three UHF televisions went on the air. Their signal penetration blanketed former "holes" of news by saturating their air with immediate signals from networks, which in turn gathered their stories from around the country and world. Turn-of-the-century Henderson had always seemed to have the best, the latest, and, in some cases, more than several choices from which to choose in its media, just like the nation's largest cities. It followed suit in the same
direction with its business habits.

Ancillary access to business sprang up all around the town and not just the country. Where television existed, so did all sorts of convenience stores, quick in, quick out, so no one could identify the person. Drive-in, drive-up stores began to flourish, with everyone remaining in their cars with no one talking directly to a neighbor on the street. Businesses ever-so-gently moved further and further away from the downtown business hub to stores that had no parking meters.

Whether the next phase of media metamorphoses will unite Henderson like the dynamite that once solidified the United Colonies west of the Alleghenies, or it will sequester even more of its citizens who choose to sit in front of their picture-producing electronic furniture, the strolls downtown to people-watch and to say "Howdy," the chatting with friends and neighbors on summer-shaded porches, and the marvelous smells of the downtown bakery will no doubt be excluded from its Grand Plan. The promise of something new in the town's tomorrows is just too tempting, too explosive to let it pass without a sampling of gentle human friction.

Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, the noted American writer, once made a humbling statement about us as a society: "We grew up founding our dreams on the infinite promise of American advertising." 163 Henderson has grown up on the infinite promise of "I hear the whistle, it's just around the bend... It's coming!" For over two-hundred years, it has found a way to embrace and make "it" its own. No signs of its stopping are on the water.
Appendix A

Ulysses Carlini.

I came from Chicago. I had taught speech and radio at DePaul University, in Chicago for three years. I was 28-years-old. I felt I was dying, I wasn't making any money as a teacher, and I wanted to get into the new industry of television. I just knew that something big would happen with this new medium and I wanted to be a part of it. I admit it; I'm a hambone. I've always liked opera, singing, and acting, even though my master's degree is in oral interpretation. I sent out application letters to just about every television station on the air at the time.

WEHT responded to my letter and said they needed a "writer." Starting pay was $75 per week. I responded by saying, "I don't care what you want me to do, let me in." So, I came to Henderson, packing my wife and four baby children. When I arrived, one of the first impressions I recall is that no one knew anything about anything. Management saw my credentials: big city, big university, a master's degree, a teacher of radio and speech, this person most likely knows everything about everything. With a name like Carlini, coming to Henderson, Kentucky, the people were immediately suspicious (chuckle) that I had ties to the Mafia. The fact, however, is that I knew nothing about television. That's the whole reason I came to Henderson was to learn about the business. I would spend the
next seven years of my life, not learning the business, rather, creating it.

Suddenly, I was not only writing the commercials, but I produced them, as well. I need to define that statement, a little. When I say I produced them, I mean that I had to build up a set, light it, run a microphone to the set, push a camera over to where I would be standing, have some available person to stand where I would be standing during the spot so I could focus it, set up the commercial props, rehearse for the spot, then stand there when it came time to deliver the spot, live. It was a one-shot deal. If I flubbed up, I flubbed up. There were no re-takes. If the spot ran a minute and 37-seconds, that's what it ran. If it were shorter than what the sponsor had paid, any kinds of facts, figures, anything, was repeated in the commercial until the proper time was filled. The pressure became enormous. At the end of the week, I actually had more overtime than I did regular work time.

Though I'm sure it happens in other businesses, it surely happened with us at the station. I'm talking about a bonding, a comradeship, a bonding like no other kind of business. On each program, we were three, to four, to ten people, all doing our particular part of a live production. You didn't have time to think about what you were doing, you just had to go by what you felt was right. When a time came for a certain cue, a certain movement, slide, or film piece, you prayed that the next guy was paying attention and knew exactly what you needed and when. Likewise, everyone else on the production depended upon you to make their part work. It was amazing. We actually saw the development of a sort of shorthand, abbreviated language, that came just by a look, a sound, or maybe no sign at all.
Yet, you just knew this or that move is exactly what the director had in mind. And, for some strange reason, this or that move turned out to be the very move the director prayed you'd do. When things went well, the studio was one of the most magical places in the world to be. When things didn't, the cursing, the stomping, the severely bruised egos would show, and within a blink of an eye, the once, purely professional, even-keeled and in-control person who once gently coaxed you through a camera move or cue, came exploding forth in a tirade, throwing objects across the studio, cursing at everyone, anything, looking for dogs to kick, children to smack. Then, in the next minute, with the steam let off, everyone looked at each other and began laughing about the whole situation.

The laughter became reciprocal: the madder one had been, the louder and longer one seemed to laugh. What fun, what excitement, what release. Then, in an instant, the laughing went silent and everyone began preparing for their next project on the next program. And, most likely, the cycle would turn over again. This pattern reigned supreme in the daily work-life of the station personnel, those of production, and became a way of life. The pressure, too, was the narcotic that made the adrenalin pump at double-speed.

In spite of all the show business luster I enjoyed, I needed money in order to feed my family. I couldn't ask management for more hours, I was already working more on overtime than my regular pay. So, I proposed to them to do a kid show which would feature me as a clown. I'd known of some simple magic tricks, tricks that would require little-to-no expense, and ones that could easily and
quickly be performed a live kiddy audience and for the television audience. Management said they’d give it a try. My wife sewed a clown costume for me and I came up with a clown’s face of makeup. Our next step up the ladder came in attempting to find a name, one that would be easily remembered, and one that the kids would like. We wanted to display a clown who was peppy, one with vitality, one who possessed the excitement of being able to do a trick for the kids, and one who was totally thrilled in knowing that he was about to show a forty-year-old scratchy black and white cartoon that not even Hollywood would blemish its screens, to the kids. We decided on "Peppo, the Clown," and that became the show’s name, as well. The show would air the following Sunday, and I was about to come into "big" money, at $30 per week, extra.

On Saturday night, I directed the "Hillside Hoedown." Then, on Sunday, I became "Peppo, the Clown," at 12-noon, on Sundays. This meant that I had to be at the studio by 10am to erect the set, light it, get all the commercial props in place, go pull down the cartoon feature for the day, then spend another half-hour getting into costume. No personnel were assigned to take care of the children who came to the program to be in the "peanut gallery," so I had to also take care of them, and to try in keeping them quiet, out of the way of the technical equipment, and out of trouble. On top of those duties, I had to prepare a run-down sheet for the director — the same job title that would be filled by anyone who just happened to be in the studio — so he would know what I was going to do next: either go to a commercial, show a cartoon, do a magic trick, or pan and talk to the kids in the
gallery. After the half-hour show, and somewhere around three in the afternoon, I'd collapse in bed at home. I'd lie down for a couple of hours, then head back to the station and start the week's duties all over again. That two-, three-hour nap was my weekend. On Monday, I started the grind all over again, putting in no less than twelve, fourteen-hours per day. That's not a complaint, it's just the way things were done and what was expected in those days (Carlini, 1992).
Appendix B

Jerry Tolbert.

I started at WEHT when I was 19, at $75 per week. Though I was new in the business and had been announcing at WSON since Jan. 2, 1949, when I was 15-years-old. The station wanted "kids" (low-paid ones) to work parttime. Martin Scheafer, at WSON, notified Virgil Diem, who was choir director at Barret High School, to keep an eye out for any kid he thought was talented in speaking. Martin hired me for what was suppose to be a twenty-hour work week and it quickly turned into a 50-60-hour week. I started at $35 per week. I announced for "Les Smithhart and the Super-X Cowboys." I did sports with Charlie Blake, who later, was manager of WIKY, in Evansville. As a kid, I guess my voice was pretty mature, and that's why they hired me. At least I could read. When WEHT wanted me, Hecht did not. I was established at WSON and he didn't want to lose my work. But Hecht was losing control of the money aspect of the situation. The FCC was allocating only a few stations at that time and the first channels that came available were channels 50 and 62. Lackey wanted a VHF channel and so he had to bring in other partners who might have better influence on Washington people to get a VHF channel. Herb Levy more or less headed up the power group.
Television, at that time, wasn't considered "the thing" in broadcasting. At that time, the permeating feeling had it that television may not be here to stay, but radio was. Though Louisville's Channel 3, WAVE was on the air, all we could receive around here was, at best, a snowy picture. But it was magnificent just to see a picture being sent through the air.

Ulysses Carlini was brought in from Chicago, as was Brod Seymour. Jimmy Stewart came down and hosted his afternoon show, "House of Stewart." It was hard to find announcers in those days. Most of them drank heavily, had no real family, and often travelled making their living by drifting from one station to the next. They were called, "drifters." Almost any station could find one. Some could never show their nervousness, though inwardly, they may have been eating up. Physically, they may have turned to alcohol, or had nervous conditions, and poor health. I learned a tremendous amount of announcing technique from them.

When the power people came into the station, Cecil Sansbury headed the lot and he brought in Roger Garret, sort of a program director. His secretary contacted me and suddenly I was faced with working for WEHT. They treated me like a king and offered me $75 per week. It was like found money. One of the first gigs I had was to announce "Stairway To The Stars." I got a separate $25 per show for that. Soon, I was making $125 per week and I was still in college. This was 1953. The money was a fortune. Later, I would do a cooking program in the afternoons with Nancy Thompson. I was known as "everyone's kid brother." I would wear an apron, a chef's cap, and I would get into messes, be Nancy's foil,
maybe she'd be mine.

I emceed "Stairway To The Stars," which originated from the Agoga Tabernacle in Evansville, Indiana. It seemed every man, woman, and child in the Tri-State showed up to perform on that show. Later, I did some announcing for "Hillside Hoedown." I figured whoever hadn't shown up for "Stars" could be found on the "Hoedown." I also did weather for the station. Most often, the chore seemed ridiculous, because all we really had to say was, "clear tomorrow." But, no, we had sponsors. We had to lengthen the weather segments to include every bit of weather that had happened all over the globe, if not the nation; then we had to focus in on our area and tell the audience what had already happened through the day, in terms of cloudiness and temperatures; then we had to offer some kind of a forecast for tomorrow. We even had to draw up our own maps. What a riot.

It never seemed to amaze me. In one minute, I'd be sweating, running around to find props I needed for a commercial. I'd have to dress the lights, move the camera into position, run mike cords around to the set, and get everything in order. Next, I'd have to run to the bathroom and put on makeup, comb my hair, put on a tie and coat, and appear as though I'd just stepped from the Waldorf-Astoria. I'd stand before the camera in all my glory, say my lines, and within a minute's time, I'd be standing in the dimness of the studio, taking off my jacket, loosening my tie, then sweeping the floors. I often thought, 'If they only knew.'

Sometimes the cops would bring in stag films they'd confiscated from raids and ask the station to repair the film with splices so they could view them later.
One of the duties I had, in doing live commercials, was to pour beer. One of our sponsors was the local brewery, Sterling Beer. I was told to go over to the brewery and when there, they gave me cases upon cases of beer to just pour beer out of bottles. The station salespeople and the brewery wanted me to just to get the right head on the glass when I poured the beer for the commercials (Tolbert, 1992).
Appendix C
Chet Behrman

My first job at WEHT was the station's program director. I kept a diary of the daily occurrences happening at WEHT. Even by spot checks, one can read in between the lines as to the station's and the individual's uncertainty of tomorrow. Behrman became one of the first WEHT personnel to "jump ship" and head to the Evansville competition station, WFIE. In those first months, I kept a diary of the my impressions, appointments, and sometimes, amazements. Included are the following comments I wrote:

Friday, Oct. 9, 1953 (Notes while still a writer at WFBM, in Indianapolis)

"Going to see Don Molony of WEHT, who is looking for a program director. WEHT operates on Channel 50 in Henderson, Kentucky, and is a CBS affiliate. He sounds like a nice fellow and we're going down to see him tomorrow. WEHT also covers Evansville, which is right across the river."

Saturday, Oct. 10, 1953

I talked with Molony and Mr. Hecht Lackey for about an hour. Molony said he wants the names of four references on me that he can contact quickly. He has told me he will contact me within a few days.
Thursday, Oct. 15, 1953

At 11:15am, Mr. Moloney called, saying, "When can you be here?" I told Maloney I would be there the first Monday of November. He said he'd like to have me at WEHT earlier, though I find it's almost impossible unless I can find a replacement.

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1953

At the station, shortly after 9am, a rush-day as usual, a half-hour of the "Arthur Godfrey Show" was ordered for alternate weeks, beginning December 16. "Place the Face" starts December 24. Mr. Lackey told me he is going to New York next month to see how soon we can get microwave. Our second "Over a Cup of Coffee," with hostess Marye Klaser, and Jerry Tolbert went a little better today.

Tuesday, March 16, 1954

I spent very little time with Mr. Crowley, our new bookkeeper. I suppose he felt neglected. Hal Rosch dropped in, still looking for a job. Mr. Sansbury, our Efficiency Expert, is very interested in him, but no one has given the go-ahead to hire him. Ulysses Carlini half-way accused Curt Bradley of stealing props, and both of them came into to see me, one-at-a-time.

Thursday, March 18, 1954

Telephone company started our new telephone system at the station. No switchboard anymore, only buttons on all the telephones. Very neat, as soon as everyone learns how to operate it. Sansberry has designed a new traffic system now. Well, we'll wait until he leaves then change it all back again. But, in the
meantime, he's spending a lot of the station's money. Stayed at the station until 10pm, dictating into the station's wire recorder.

Wednesday, March 31, 1954

Mr. Likeman, of Memphis, and Mr. Levy, called Bob Cleveland and me into the office late this afternoon and told us that as of tomorrow, Mr. Lackey is resigning. Mr. Levy and Mr. Sansberry are taking over the station, as president and general manager. This confirms rumors of the past week. They say Lackey wanted out. And Mr. Sansberry told me a long time ago that he didn't have an axe to grind.

Thursday, April 1, 1954

The newspapers have the story this morning. All of us gathered in the studio at 5pm as Lackey said goodbye. Seven people were laid off during the afternoon. Sansbury told me who they were going to be this morning: Bob Berry, Ed Bettag, Marye Klasr, Barney Loebe, Bob Stone, Virginia Sisony, and Bob Klin. Their reaction ranged from a shrug by Leob to a down-right anger by Berry. Berry told me later that she told them off, too. While Berry was talking to me this evening, Ted Nelson called her and offered her a job, she said.

Saturday, April 17, 1954

Going to the station for a couple of hours this morning. Tape recording all the booth work for 6:55pm-to-sign-off today and until 4pm tomorrow. Only one engineer on duty all day. No live shows.

Thursday, November 4, 1954
Last day at WEHT. Staff cornered me in the film editing room and presented me with a brief case with my initials on it. I didn’t say good-bye to Sansbury, or to Garrett. Joe Sasse says he’s going into the Army in two months. Behrmam noting his job at WFIE

I joined WFIE January 2, 1956, my first day at the station.

Friday, April 13, 1956

In thinking back on my early radio days, early for me, anyway, I begin to realize the value of the dairies I kept at that time. Radio has changed so much in character and will probably change even more in the years to come. I also realize that these are the early days of television. And these deserve even more to be recorded because I’m in the television industry at a comparatively early date when change is very rapid.

I already decided, that when these diaries became difficult to keep up, that I’d take lots of pictures and slides, but only a diary can record the day-to-day routine so important to future book writing. In the dairy, I want to concentrate more on television rather than on our very personal lives, though the latter will be involved, too. Only 446 commercial stations are on the air now. When Ted Nelson was manager, we had our staff meetings on Saturday mornings at Wick’s Restaurant, a little breakfast meeting. We would go around the table and compare notes for what was coming up the following week.

Saturday, April 14, 1956

Our usual Saturday morning meeting was held at Wick’s Restaurant. Ted
Nelson, Bob Beam, Marilyn Rose, Jack Rinehart, Jim Epp, and Paul Kelly. Nelson reassured us that NBC is going to stick with us. McIntosh with NBC was in town Thursday, Friday and today. So we're on our best behavior. McIntosh says that WGBF offered to bring in another UHF station into town if NBC would agree to affiliate with them. Ted quoted McIntosh as saying that NBC turned them down cold. The meeting broke up at 10am, 1pm before I was able to leave the station. Tuesday, April 17, 1956

Today, Broadcast Magazine came out with an article on a new video tape recording machine, by Ampex. I've been talking about this for three years and finally it's here. Ampex gave a private showing last Saturday and CBS bought three. They're showing it at the convention. Tape speed is 15ips and opposed to the 180ips of the RCA model, which still isn't officially released. RCA's is color, however, and Ampex is black-and-white.

Wednesday, April 18, 1956 (Behrman goes to Chicago for the convention.)

Up at 6am, arrived at the Conrad Hilton at 8:40am. Nelson met us in the lobby and all of us, including Jeanette and Marilyn ate breakfast in the coffee shop. We soon found out that Nelson hadn't made reservations for us and that the station was not paying for our expenses. The three of us had to walk over to the Congress Hotel a block away and register. Wearing Bob Dean's badge, I visited the displays downstairs and had a wonderful time. It's like a county fair, only everything's devoted to radio and television. In Room 419, we saw the video tape recorder. They were recording samples of WMBQ's programming and playing
them back. Everybody was talking about it. Color television was a big topic of conversation, too. When I first started at WFIE, I was sort of sharing a position with Marilyn Rose. An awkward situation. Nelson, in hiring me, had evidently promised Marilyn a "something" and he had to find a compromise. So, Marilyn and I got together and decided that she would take care of continuity and traffic and I would take care of programming and production. In that way, we would both share responsibilities. Marilyn intimated that she was thinking of leaving, so it was just a matter of waiting.

Saturday, April 21, 1956

Way-pushed for an improved traffic system in our Saturday morning meeting. Rhinehart and I got together in the observation booth above the studio, and at his request, I outlined my thoughts of changes for traffic and continuity. I said, of course I was just waiting until Marilyn left before I put my ideas of change into effect. Nelson noticed we were talking and later pumped Jack for the story. And Nelson briefly talked to Marilyn, opening the way for my changes.

Saturday, April 28, 1956

Nelson announced in a very brief meeting that WFIE will file a petition Monday with the FCC to change its Channel 62 to Channel 14. Switching channels with an Owensboro grant, in which Nelson owns a secret interest.

Thursday, November 15, 1956

A very rainy day, one of the few we’ve had thus far this fall. I had to wear a raincoat. Justine Clipware, my new secretary, had things in pretty good order
by the time I arrived. Today, "Uncle Duddley" telecast from the North Pole, a pretty nice set. Since the series remote was called off, the North Pole set will be used only today and tomorrow. Sales meeting in Nelson's office today; I may be in more of them in the future. I guess Nelson has only a month to go at the station, although no definite date has been announced. Marilyn was set up in another office to monitor WEHT. This is survey week, through November 21.

Friday, November 16, 1956

At 4:30pm, I appeared at Sears with Santa Claus. A big crowd of youngsters were on hand to welcome us from the North Pole. I stayed until 5pm, emceeing the affair while youngsters filed past and talked to Santa.

Saturday, November 17, 1956

Worked all morning setting up the Sears special show of Uncle Duddley this morning at 10:30. Jerry Graham was Santa. We gave Santa some gifts, awarded two bicycles, showed some Little Rascals films, cartoons, etc. Were suppose to join NBC network at 11:15, but AT&T was tied up with a closed circuit. I filled until 11:35 and gave up. But Sears was very happy with the show. At the station until 2pm. I packed everything into my briefcase, then came home for lunch.

Sunday, November 18, 1956

Spent the whole day monitoring television. WEHT from 1-to-5pm, WTVW from 5pm-to-sign-off. Bob Dean wants the records as part of a survey. We sneaked a look at the "Steve Allen Show" and the "Bob Hope Show" on 62, while features were running on 7. We knew we weren't missing any commercials.
Channel 7 is highly non-commercial.

Monday, November 19, 1956

Another busy day at the station. By 9am, folks are filing in and out with their problems. Traced and found a lost spot film, attributed to the confused jumble of items in the discrepancy report and discussed Sears Christmas promotional with Lee Browning. It was 1:45 before I got home for lunch.
When I first began to work for WEHT, one of the very first things I noticed was the size of the film, 16mm. I had spent years working with 35mm film and this film seemed like a piece of string. Even though the basic principle of film projecting and editing remained, tons more of it existed before my eyes. After all, in these early days of the station, film was the chief source of video, followed by network, followed by live studio work. Not only did the schedule change by the day, but by the hour. Never had I seen this much film all at one place.

Like many other new stations on the air, its directors and technicians did not know of academy leaders that start out a film's run. It counts down from a "picture start" frame to the number "2," then shows black for two-seconds, followed by the picture content. It seemed every time I loaded a film and flipped the standby switch to the control room, when it came time for showing the film, the director would immediately punch up the film, showing all the academy leader before it got to the picture. I began curing the station of those ills by cutting off the leader, replacing it with blank leader, and having them "take" the first picture that came up.

Film lived two lives: it either existed at the motion picture theaters in
projectors, or it somehow came rolled up in amateur still cameras. People, even station personnel, never seemed to understand that film is film, regardless of its housing. Automatic exposure settings incorporated into amateur cameras had not really come into vogue at the time. For anyone who cared, they referred to the little slip of paper that normally accompanied the roll of film they had purchased. They would read and use its exposure chart as a guide for taking pictures. The chart would show, for example, a country scene with a bright sun in the sky, with an illustration of a f-stop setting beneath it, such as "f-16: Sunny/Bright" would appear. Another illustration may show a darkened sky with the words, "f-4: Dim/Dark." The caring photographer would estimate the available light by referring to the chart, open or close the aperture of their camera accordingly, then click the shutter of their camera.

Because I worked with film at the station, and because I had run films at the theaters, station personnel naturally gravitated to me for their photographic questions. One such occasion happened whereby a guy came to me with his new camera. Having far more money than he had of knowledge in operating the camera, he posed his problem: "I'm going to take a vacation out West next week and I have this new camera. On what click should I set the f-stop setting?" I was amazed. The man was wanting me to tell him an exposure that, with one setting on his camera, would be the right one for every picture he'd take, in light or darkness. Without flinching, I looked him squarely in the eye and said, "f-8: Cloudy/Bright." I figured, that no matter the light conditions in which he shot
pictures with his camera, the best that could happen is that he’d have almost correct pictures. The worst that could happen to him would contain half over-, half-under exposed shots.

I have recalled vividly this story for years. As it turns out, I too had the same incident happen to me twenty years later when I worked for WAVE television in Louisville, Kentucky. Not only did the same incident occur, but the nearly the same question: "I’m going out West for my vacation; what should I set my camera on?” Without asking of the film type, I did not hesitate to reply, "Cloudy/Bright, f-8.”

One of the major duties I had came in screening newly arrived film. Film stocks included feature-length movies, kinescopes, soap operas, commercials and public service announcements. As the normal case prevailed, film shown at one station was packed up and shipped, called "bicycling,” to another station as it came off the projectors. One never really knew in what condition the film would arrive, so a screening always preceded its showing on the air.

On one occasion, I didn’t have time to prescreen a Charlie Chan late night movie. I put the film on the projector and, as the film neared its reel-change, I looked up to see the Lone Ranger chasing bandits across a Western prairie plain. We didn’t know whether to attempt to find the second half of the Charlie Chan film or to go look for the first half of the Lone Ranger film. Being that late at night, with maybe ten people watching, we decided to let the phones ring and continue with the Lone Ranger.
That incident wasn't the only source of embarrassment for the station. Once again I found myself strapped for time in my editing and screen job. The station aired a regular Sunday afternoon program, "This Is Your Navy," a promotional film, more or less, showing U. S. Navy ships all around the world, life as a sailor, and the various tasks and duties Navy men performed. As usual, the shows came to the station bundled in a package. None of them had a particular show date, so by selecting any one of them, nothing would be out of the ordinary. I picked one up, threaded the film, and went about other editing chores with my back to the projector.

As I edited other films, I could hear the soundtrack of the film. After the usual full-throated announcer had shouted all his majestic Naval propaganda opening, the sound died down to a "bluesy" melodical soundtrack. The opening scenes showed the night life of some city, with all its lights, traffic, and people going from place-to-place. And, at the time, I didn't think much of it. I just wanted to make sure the picture was alright, that the focus was sharp, and that the sound was good. From out of nowhere, I heard a voice on the film say, "So, you went into town and you got the clap."

I turned and looked at one of the monitors, and there was a sailor, with pants down, showing his "self" to a doctor who was treating him for venereal disease. Everyone in the station became transfixed. Fingers froze just inches away from buttons that would get the station out of trouble yet, no one could move. I wheeled toward the projector and tore the film in-two. Next, almost by
instinct, I reached for a Snader film (a film service of artist recordings, much like the "videos" of today), put it on the projector and rolled the film. As luck would have it, this Snader film had Peggy Lee singing, "They Can't Take That Away From Me."

The only call of complaint the station received came from a man who had just gone outside to get his son to come in and watch the program. The incident made the national trade magazines as a cartoon, depicting a couple watching television: the cartoon had the husband asking the wife what was on; her reply, "Aw, just another old VD film."

One of my proudest moments came in 1957, when the CBS network asked if I could go with CBS reporter Richard C. Hottelet, to Sturgis, Kentucky and to Little Rock, Arkansas, to shoot film of their high school integration turmoil. I was one of few in the area at the time that had a 16mm sound camera. Hottelet and I went to Sturgis, then went on to film and report at Little Rock. The film made the CBS Evening News, which at that time Douglas Edwards anchored. The network ran the entire roll of film, which even in those days not even local stations did. The segment lasted over two minutes. With little time for getting the "big head" and signing autographs from my coworkers, I was reminded of the pile of work on my work bench that still needed editing and viewing (Drury, 1992).
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Starling, E. History of Henderson County. Henderson, Kentucky. 1887.


WSON 50th anniversary audio tape supplied by wson of various personalities. 1991.

Yater, G. Two hundred years at the falls of the Ohio. Louisville: Heritage Corporation of Louisville and Jefferson County. 1979.
Reference Footnotes

1. Since many of the interviewees are in their 70's and 80's, an extensive exploration of Henderson history media makers could be forever lost. The loss, I believe, stands as significant because history overlooks them as a part of a pioneering media community. The date of each interview is footnoted.


6. 1887. 17.


8. 1850. 336-337.

9. 1850. 338.

10. 1850. 339.


12. 1917. 73-74.


14. 1917. 78.
15. 1880. 10.

16. 1880. 10.

17. 1922. 1107.


19. 1928. 121.


21. 1928. 114-120. (Summarized by the author from the Journal Continental Congress. VI:1076-7. 1082-3.)

22. 1928. 121.


25. 1928. 129.

26. Bodley, T. History of Kentucky. Vol. I. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company. 1928. 130. (This legislation is little-known. In my research only Bodley brings to light the tremendous significance of the Assembly’s outcome to Kentucky history. He writes: “Because of the exceeding importance of the conflict in Kentucky history, and because, so far as known, the successive steps concerning it appearing in the Assembly records have never been presented in any history of the state, extracts from the journal of the House of Delegates will here be given . . . .” He cites: Virginia State Library (Book) Journal of House of Delegates, pp. 4-87. The Senate Journal was reported missing from the Virginia State Library.)

27. 1928. 137.

28. 1880. 10-11.

29. 1887. 19.


31. 1887. 34.

33. Though some historians claim the above date as the town's "official" beginning, and it certainly had become a "town" by then, later incorporating in 1810, the City of Henderson Charter would not be signed until March 1, 1867.

34. 1887. 20-22.

35. 1976. 185.

36. 1887. 264.

37. 1887. 270.

38. 1887. 270-273.

39. 1887. 274.

40. Interview I conducted with Barry Bingham when I researched the early days of Louisville broadcasting, stations WHAS and WAVE, the first radio and first television stations, respectively, to sign on the air in the state of Kentucky. 1982.

41. 1880. 15.

42. 1887. 768.

43. 1976. 271.


46. 1887. 220.

47. 1886. 349.


49. 1887. 237-238. Starling's quotation of "*Sketches and Recollections.*" Written by General Adam R. Johnson, Captain Ollie B. Steele, and Colonel James H. Hollway. 1865. No known publisher and city is cited.

50. 1980. 319

52. 1980. 391.

53. 1887. 111-112.


55. 1887. 510.

56. 1887. 507-508.

57. 1887. 504-505.


59. 1887. 97.

60. 1985. 9.


63. 1985. 54.

64. 1985. 57.

65. 1985. 23.


67. 1941. 32.

73. 1887. 793-796.
74. 1985. 15.
75. 1985. 72-73.
76. 1886. 519.
78. 1887. 149.
80. 1952. 51.
81. 1952. 52-53.
82. 1952. 68.
83. 1887. 311.
84. 1887. 172-173.
85. 1976. 293.
86. 1887. 201.
87. 1976. 293.
88. 1976. 346.
89. 1976. 294-295.
90. 1887. 216.
91. 1887. 671-672.
96. 1976. 290.
97. 1886. 524.


102. 1976. 127.

103. Charles Knight interview. Knight worked at Bailey's Records for several years as an assistant to John Bailey. He later took over the business at Bailey's failing health and paid him a commission of the business. After five years, he returned the business back to Bailey. 1992.


107. 1887. 311

108. 1976. 179.


113. 1976. 345.

114. Interview with Mrs. Louis Hayes, the wife of the former and original owner of the Grand and Princess Theaters. She showed me a ledger that Mr. Hayes had kept of the opening dates of the various theaters in Henderson. Listed are the Grand and Princess Theaters opening in 1924, followed by the Kraver Theater, in 1924; the Kentucky, in 1938; the Audubon Drive-In Theater, in 1941. 1992.
115. Ezell, S. Interview with Smith Ezell, now 85, during the summer of 1992, one of the original projectionists at the Grand, the Princess, and later, the Kentucky and Kraver Theaters.


120. 1973. 536.


126. James W. Pressley interview. J. W. Pressley, one of the original managers who managed the Kentucky and Kraver Theaters, along with Mr. Leon Pickle, and who later managed the Hi-Y and Audubon Drive-Ins. 1992.


133. William Drury interview. One of hundreds of stories told to me by my father of the theater personalities in Henderson. The year of the telling is insignificant and is long after I had been working in broadcasting. 1992.

134. Rebecca Lackey (Mrs. Hecht Lackey) interview. Recalling the campaign days of Hecht, her husband. 1992.


137. 1992. The report of this conversation is verified by Pressley. Blacks sat anywhere in the Kraver they wished during the evening's fare. The event allowed for the first integrated theater audience in Henderson.


140. Dutch Lackey interview. 50th anniversary. WSON. (Audio tapes provided to me by WSON.) December 16-17, 1991.


143. Henry Lackey comments concerning WSON licensing during world war II. 50th anniversary program. 1991.


146. Becky Lackey, the wife of Hecht, Interviews. 1992.


149. Les Smithart interview. WSON 50th anniversary. 1991.


151. 1976. 304.

152. 1976. 298-299.

153. The respective channel numbers of WEHT and WFIE, Evansville, Indiana, as licensed by the FCC in 1953.


162. Associated Press. "Today in History." All the events mentioned are of 1953 vintage.


164. Ulysses Carlini interviews. Carlini was an original staff member of WEHT. 1992.


166. Jerry Tolbert interview. Tolbert was an original staff member of WEHT. 1992.

167. William Drury interview. Drury was the first film director of WEHT. 1992.