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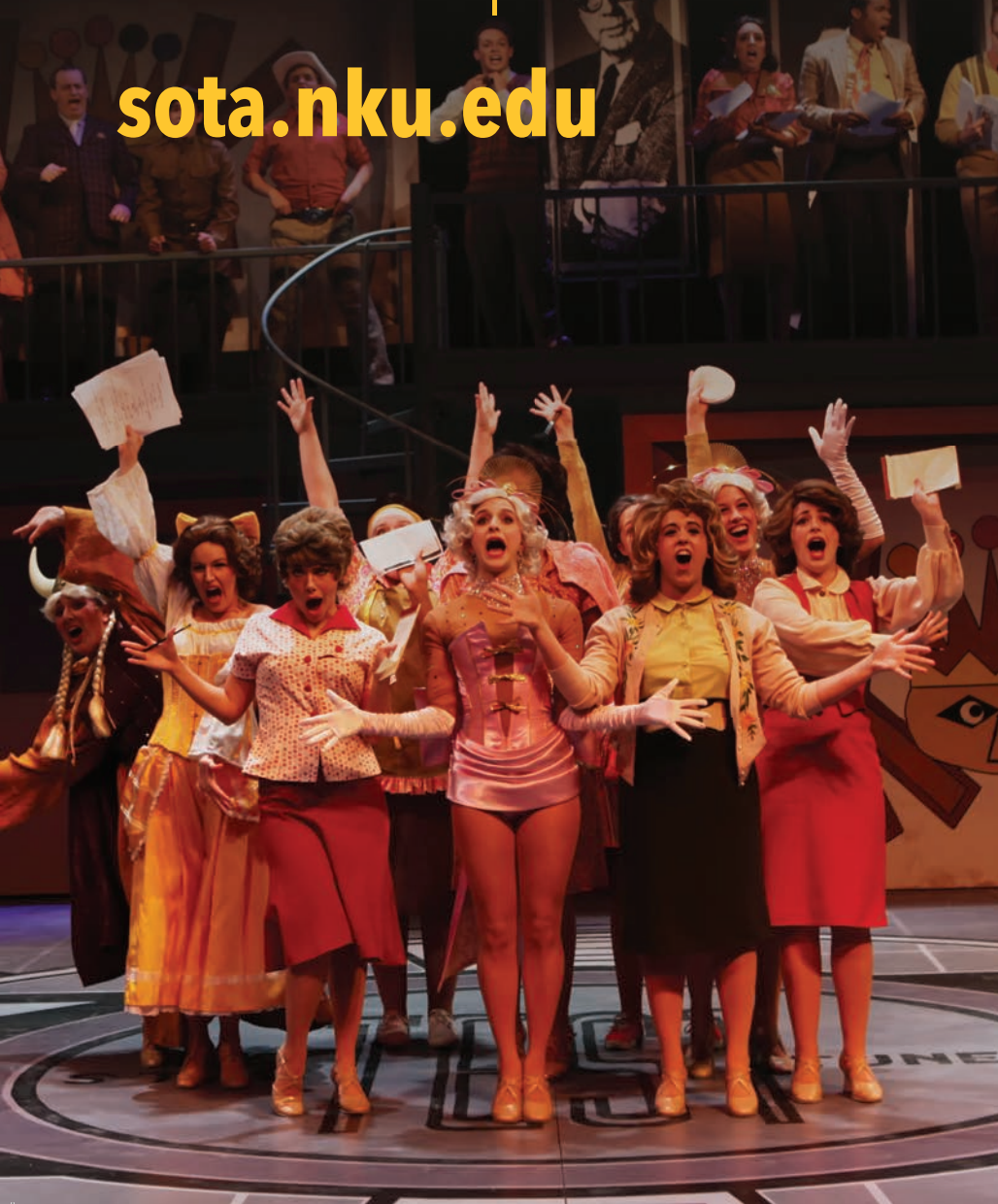
**INSIDE:** 2015 Annual Report

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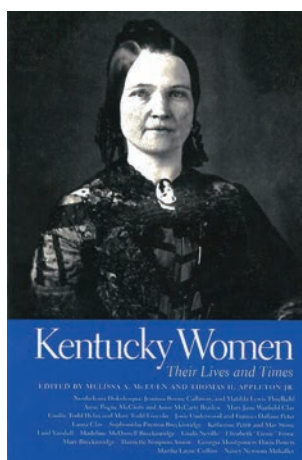
**Josephine Clay**  
Turning Dreams into Reality  
By Maryjean Wall

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## Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times

Edited by Melissa A. McEuen & Thomas H. Appleton Jr.

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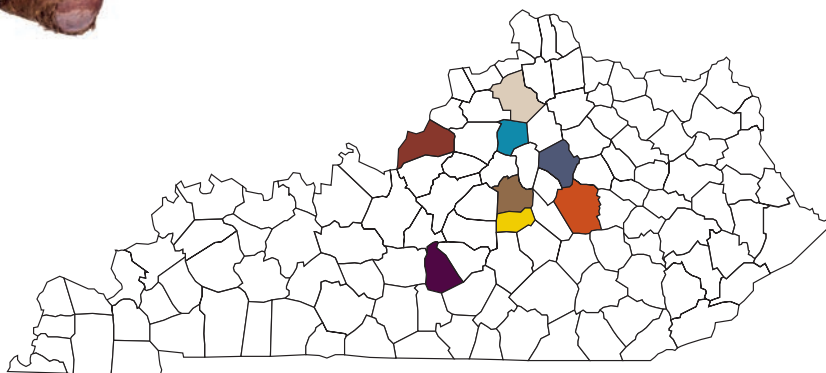


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By Georgia Green Stamper

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# Kentucky Women

When we think about well-known Kentuckians from the past, images of Daniel Boone exploring the frontier, Abraham Lincoln in a log cabin, Henry Clay negotiating a compromise, or Harland “Colonel” Sanders and his infamous 11 herbs and spices instantly come to mind. Often overlooked are the women who played a pivotal role in the development of our beloved Commonwealth.

Kentucky’s history is resplendent with strong, independent, and intelligent, women who often used interesting and inventive ways to make their mark. You can read about many of Kentucky’s influential women in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, published by The University of Georgia Press and edited by Melissa A. McEuen and Thomas H. Appleton Jr. Excerpts from the book begin on page 17. From the famous — Mary Todd Lincoln and Madeline McDowell Breckinridge — to the lesser known — Matilda Lewis Threlkeld and Enid Yandell, these women each played an important role in helping to shape the Kentucky we know today.

Did you know that Josephine Clay, a pioneer in the Thoroughbred breeding industry, was also a novelist, a poet, and a real estate maven? She was a woman far ahead of her time, who never let her gender keep her from achieving her goals. Maryjean Wall shares this fascinating story on page 10.

Known for her headstrong determination at an early age, Linda Neville was well educated and raised to believe that because her family had been given much, it was their duty to help those who were unable to help themselves. As an adult, Neville became involved in the women’s suffrage movement along with many civic and charitable organizations. Her extensive charitable work led to her being known as “The Lady Who Helps Blind Children See.” Read more about her story on page 8.

How many are familiar with the story of Jane Crawford, who survived abdominal surgery on the frontier? Well-known Danville native, Dr. Ephraim McDowell removed a 22-pound ovarian tumor from Mrs. Crawford before the invention of anesthesia. Her heroic story is on page 5.

And last, but certainly not least, Lois Mateus shares with us her Conversations Around the Kitchen Table on page 15. In a world dominated by the 24-hour news cycle, smartphones, and social media, she reminds us of the importance of gathering around the kitchen table for great food, stimulating conversation, and connecting with each other.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Kentucky Humanities* and the stories we share. We want to hear your Kentucky stories as well. If you have a story to tell, please contact our editor, Marianne Stoess, [Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu](mailto:Marianne.Stoess@uky.edu).



**Ben Chandler**

*Executive Director*

*Kentucky Humanities Council*

*Ben Chandler*

# Yes, they too were Kentuckians

*A look at some well-known, and not-so-well-known, people in Kentucky history*

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## Jane Crawford

By James C. Claypool

1763-1842 • Green County, Kentucky

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Jane Todd Crawford was born in 1763 in Virginia. She married Thomas Crawford in 1794, and 11 years later the couple moved to Green County, Kentucky, settling in a remote farming area located on the Blue Springs Branch of the Caney Fork of Russell Creek. The closest hamlet was Greensburg, and there were no surgeons in town at that time. In 1808, Jane's abdomen began to swell, and it appeared that she might be pregnant with twins. Jane thought otherwise and wrote to Dr. Ephraim McDowell, a prominent physician who lived in Danville, Kentucky. McDowell had studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh's School of Medicine in Scotland under some of the finest surgeons in the world. He wrote back that if, as he thought, Crawford had an ovarian tumor, he would be willing to operate, but there was a real danger of infection and she might die.

Crawford resolved to take the chance. On or about December 20, 1809, Jane, who was 47 at the time, mounted a horse and headed on the dirt road for Danville, Kentucky, some 60 miles away. The journey was arduous and the weather was cold, but this did not deter this strong-willed pioneer woman from completing her journey.

Arriving in Danville, Crawford headed to Dr. McDowell's two-story clapboard medical office located on South Second Street. McDowell's examination of Crawford confirmed that she was not pregnant and that she did have a large ovarian tumor that, if not removed, would certainly kill her. Popular superstition of the times held that cutting into the body released the body's "humors," and this should never be done. Nonetheless, since abdominal surgery was the only way to save Crawford, McDowell resolved to perform the operation, no matter what the risks.

It was Christmas Day, and word had spread that the doctor was going "to cut into the Crawford lady." A group of men were soon gathered in front of McDowell's office resolving to hang the doctor if the patient died. McDowell had other things to worry about. Anesthesia had not yet been discovered, and he was about to perform an experimental

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*"If the doctor lets that Crawford lady die, we're going to hang him right here in his own front yard."*

— *Anonymous*

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and perilous operation. McDowell, aided by assistants who held Crawford's arms and legs down for 25 minutes, successfully removed a 22.5-pound cystic ovarian tumor from the patient. McDowell later noted that Crawford, who was fully dressed and conscious throughout the operation, passed the time reciting Psalms.

Twenty-five days later, Crawford, who had recovered fully, mounted her horse and returned to her home in Green County. The operation, the first of its kind, established McDowell's reputation in the field of abdominal surgery, though he profited little from it. He did the same procedure 11 more times and only one patient died from it. McDowell, who passed away in 1830, would not be recognized as a pioneer in the field of abdominal and gynecological surgery until several years later. The hospital in Danville now bears his name, and his medical office and the brick apothecary he operated next door are historic sites. Jane Crawford died in 1842, a little more than 32 years after her historic operation. The road that took a brave Kentucky woman to and from Danville, Kentucky, in 1809 (today a paved highway designated Kentucky Route 61) fittingly has been renamed the Jane Crawford Highway Trail.

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Adapted from James C. Claypool's book, *Our Fellow Kentuckians: Rascals, Heroes and Just Plain Uncommon Folk*, and the subject of a talk offered by Claypool through the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.



## Two new members join the KHC Board of Directors



**Jeffery Clymer**

Jeffery Clymer and Betty Sue Griffin were elected to the Kentucky Humanities Council board of directors at the November, 2015 board meeting. They will each serve a three-year term, with a second three-year term optional. As members of the 23-person volunteer board of directors, Clymer and Griffin will help set council policies, award project grants to community organizations, and participate in fundraising to help the Council meet the growing demand for its programs.

Professor Jeffery Clymer has worked in the University of Kentucky's Department of English since 2004, currently serving as the department's chairperson and the acting associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He is also a member of the Gaines Center for the Humanities Faculty Advisory Committee. Prior to his arrival in Lexington, Clymer was a faculty member at Saint Louis University.

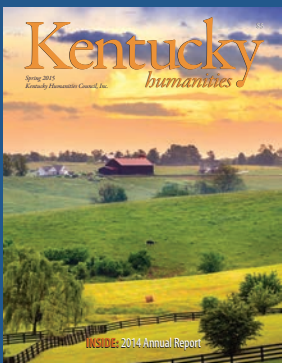
Clymer earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Illinois and a Ph.D. in English from Duke University.

He is the author of two books and has had numerous journal articles published. Clymer's research interests include: Colonial through 19th century American literature and culture, 20th and 21st century American literature and culture, race theory, and African American and Caribbean literature and culture.

Dr. Betty Sue Griffin is a professional motivational speaker and activist, addressing audiences across the country. Her presentations, drawn from her eminent careers as an educational administrator, teacher, consultant, business and community leader, serve as a road map to help others recreate their own success. She is the CEO of The Griffin Group, a professional education and corporate coaching agency that assists clients, ranging from universities to school districts from private to public sector foundations and corporations.

A native of Danville, Kentucky, Griffin completed her undergraduate study at Fisk University and holds a master's of education and a doctorate of education from Oregon State University. She also completed postgraduate work at Wharton, Harvard, Stanford, Howard, and the University of Texas at Austin through the Executive Leadership Institute sponsored by The National Forum for Black Public Administrators and The Ford Foundation.

Dr. Griffin served as professor and chairperson of the Division of Education and Human Services at Kentucky State University (retired); was a tenured professor of education at Oregon State University (retired); served as a member of Southern Association of Colleges (SACS) Accreditation teams; served as a visiting scholar at Stanford University; was selected as participant in the National Forum for Black Public Administrators; and served as assistant to the vice chancellor of minority affairs at the University of Kentucky. She has served on numerous boards and commissions throughout Kentucky and the region including the Governors Long Term Policy Research Board, where she served as chairperson and member, and the Lexington Urban League.



## Keep Your Subscription Coming!

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## Kentucky Humanities Council and Kentucky Book Fair join forces

The Kentucky Humanities Council presents



Since its establishment in 1982, the Kentucky Book Fair has been the state's premier literary event. Created as an annual celebration of the works created by some of the Commonwealth's most esteemed writers, the Kentucky Book

Fair provides a unique opportunity for nearly 200 regional, state, and national authors to connect with thousands of readers one-on-one and share their love of books and reading. The two-day event annually attracts more than 4,000 patrons and authors from across the state to downtown Frankfort.

Previously operated by a nonprofit independent board of volunteers, the Kentucky Book Fair will now be operated by the Kentucky Humanities Council, in partnership with the Kentucky Book Fair board and the many volunteers who have made the book fair a must-attend event for the past 34 years. The Kentucky Humanities Council will present the 35th annual Kentucky Book Fair on November 5, 2016, from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., at the Frankfort Convention Center. The sixth annual Children's Day will be held on Friday, November 4, from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., also at the convention center.

### Author Submissions

Author signing at the Kentucky Book Fair is by invitation only. The book fair's author selection committee will choose authors and titles from those submitted for consideration. All titles must be received no later than May 15, 2016.

All titles submitted for consideration must be in publication by September 30, 2016. To submit your title(s), complete author/book submission form (found at [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org)) and send the form along with two copies of the book (or manuscript, if in pre-production) to Kentucky Book Fair, P.O. Box 715, Frankfort, KY 40602. Please include with the submission your mailing address, phone number, and email address, plus the retail price of the book.

For complete information about submitting your book for consideration, visit [kyhumanities.org](http://kyhumanities.org) or contact Brooke Raby at [brooke.raby@uky.edu](mailto:brooke.raby@uky.edu) or 859.257.5932.



### Pulitzer Prize Centennial

This year marks the 100th awarding of the Pulitzer Prizes. In celebration of 100 Years of Excellence in Journalism and the Arts, the Pulitzer is partnering with individuals and organizations to host events across the country.

The Kentucky Humanities Council has been awarded a grant from the Pulitzer Prizes Centennial Campfires Initiatives for events to be held in conjunction with the 35th Annual Kentucky Book Fair. Special events scheduled for the 2016 Kentucky Book Fair will include two Kentucky Pulitzer Prize winners — Maria Henson and Joel Pett.

Maria Henson, journalism professor, associate vice president and editor-at-large of *Wake Forest Magazine*, won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing for her series about battered women in the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

Joel Pett, editorial cartoonist at the *Lexington Herald-Leader* since 1984, won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartoons.

Events include:

- "Master Class" with Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Maria Henson
- Press event & social reception with Kentucky Pulitzer Prize winners Maria Henson & Joel Pett
- My Morning Newspaper & Coffee
- Campfire chats with the authors
- Keynote address from Pulitzer Prize winner, Joel Pett
- Interview and Q & A with Pulitzer Prize winner, Maria Henson

# In Search of the Humanities

## The Lady Who Helped Blind Children See

By James Duane Bolin

**L**inda Neville (1873-1961) had the best liberal arts, humanities-based education any young woman — or young man, for that matter — could have wanted in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Lexington, Kentucky. After all, her father, Professor John Henry Neville, taught classics at State College in Lexington, and her mother, Mary Payne Neville, could trace her heritage back to the first non-Native settlers of the Bluegrass.

Dr. Payne taught Linda and her sister, Mary, Greek and Latin at home, a French governess was brought in to teach French, and the girls went to an aunt's private school to learn history, German, mathematics, and other essential subjects. No doubt about it, Linda Neville was immersed in the humanities. The one great lesson she learned from her parents, however, went beyond the traditional humanities curriculum.

Her father taught her the greatest truth of any humanities education. "As long as I retain memory of anything," he said, "the only solid, the only unalloyed pleasure I have ever found, I have in doing what I could to help forward the young." "For one lesson that my 80 years have taught me is this," he continued, "that if a man works for himself the fruit of his work, like Dead Sea apples, will turn to ashes upon his lips." Both daughters, but especially Linda, never forgot her father's humanities philosophy. Serve others.

Ask any group of native Kentuckians this question and they will usually round up the usual suspects. Who is the greatest Kentuckian? I pose this question to students in my History

of Kentucky class. I suppose one's response to the question depends on how you define the term "great." After all, the term has been attached to only a handful of individuals in world history — Alexander the Great, Peter the Great — and no Kentuckians that I know of, except, of course, Muhammad Ali, a native Louisvillian, who proclaimed of himself, "I am the greatest!" But I ask this question from time to time to my university students as well as to fourth graders in public schools in western Kentucky.

When I ask fourth graders the question, "Who is the greatest Kentuckian?" they invariably suggest ... Daniel Boone, Abraham Lincoln, James Harrod, Isaac Shelby, George Rogers Clark, and maybe Happy Chandler or Alben Barkley. My university students include these names as well, but sometimes add Henry Clay and Harland Sanders. Don't laugh. When I played on a basketball team in the Philippines the summer of 1978, Filipinos in Manila and Mindanao knew only two Kentucky names when they found out that I hailed from the Bluegrass State — Colonel Sanders and Muhammad Ali. Kentucky Fried Chicken had built restaurants in Manila and Ali had just fought Joe Frazier in "the Thrilla' in Manila." Somehow they knew that he had been born in Louisville.

A common trait of the lists generated by Kentucky fourth-graders and university students is that they are composed of all males. No women! Only rarely does a Martha Layne Collins or Laura Clay or Madeleine McDowell Breckinridge or Mary Todd Lincoln (or once, Ashley Judd!) break into my students'



lists of greatest Kentuckians. Perhaps these male-dominated lists tell us more about our state and the written history of our state than about the students who suggested the names.

All I know is that the students have never heard of the individual that I might place at the top of the list. I write the name, Linda Neville, on a white board, and the silence in the classroom is stunning. Fourth-grade faces scrunch up and in unison the students mouth the timeless question, “Huh?!?” And then I tell them about Linda Neville, someone that I myself knew little about until my history professor friend, Dr. Thomas Appleton, told my son Wesley and me about her over dinner one evening.

Born in Lexington in 1873, Neville studied at home as a child and then graduated from Bryn Mawr College, near Philadelphia, with a humanities degree in classics. After college she learned of the dreaded eye disease, trachoma, which afflicted more than 33,000 residents of eastern Kentucky. Neville learned that untreated trachoma caused blindness, so she devoted her considerable energies and resources to found the Kentucky Society to Prevent Blindness and to establish 11 clinics in mountain hollows in eastern Kentucky. A decade before her death in a Lexington nursing home in 1961, Neville saw the disease eradicated, and the last of Neville’s clinics, no longer needed, closed.

One little boy, cured of the disease and his sight restored wished to thank his benefactor. He had never learned her name, but he wrote her a letter anyway and addressed it to “The Lady Who Helps Blind Children See, Lexington, Kentucky.” The postman apparently figured out that the letter was meant for Linda Neville because you can find it among her papers in the University of Kentucky’s Special Collections today. Helping children see! Not a bad legacy for Linda Neville, a great Kentuckian by any measure.

So, what does the story of Linda Neville have to do with the humanities? Well, everything. Her life and career illustrated what it means to be fully human. As her parents taught her, the humanities teaches us above all else that the most fulfilling life is a life lived in service to others. The humanities teaches us all to see.

Duane Bolin teaches in the Department of History at Murray State University. Bolin’s chapter, “Linda Neville (1873-1961): ‘The Lady Who Helps Blind Children See’” has been published in Melissa A. McEuen and Thomas H. Appleton, Jr., *Kentucky Women: their Lives and Times* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 251-273. For more from *Kentucky Women*, turn to page 17.

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The Kentucky Humanities Council will present the 35th annual Kentucky Book Fair on November 5, 2016, from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., at the Frankfort Convention Center in Frankfort, KY. The sixth annual Children’s Day will be held on Friday, November 4, from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., also at the convention center.

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### Kentucky Chautauqua

Since its inception in 1992, Kentucky Chautauqua® has brought to life more than 70 people from Kentucky’s past - both famous and unknown. Chautauqua performers travel to schools and community organizations throughout the state delivering historically accurate dramatizations of Kentuckians who made valuable

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### Kentucky Humanities Magazine

First published in 1994, Kentucky Humanities magazine has grown in size and substance, but its goal has not changed. It is still serious about telling Kentucky’s story.

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# Josephine Clay

## Turning Dreams into Reality



Image courtesy of Henry Clay Simpson Jr.

By Maryjean Wall

**H**istory has neglected Josephine Clay of Lexington, a Victorian feminist who encouraged women to turn their dreams into real possibilities. A novelist, a poet, a pioneer among Thoroughbred horse breeders, and a real estate maven, she modeled a way for women to step beyond gender barriers.

A woman's "only limitations lie within herself," she informed a women's conference in Toronto in 1903. Josephine spoke from experience, after breeding scores of winning horses while also raising and selling an eventual Kentucky Derby winner. Horsemen accepted her within their clubby world and occasionally she spoke with authority for the entire horse business. This occurred in an era when women largely lacked a public voice.

"It is a notable distinction for a lady to carry off the blue ribbon as a breeder of thoroughbreds in a field where there are such a host of able gentlemen competitors..." a newspaper observed in 1896. Still, it remains a history mystery why and how this woman

slipped from public recognition in the years following her death in 1920 at the age of 85.

Josephine, born in 1835, was not included in the *Kentucky Encyclopedia*. In a state known for feminists like Laura Clay and Madeline McDowell Breckinridge (related to Josephine through marriage), Josephine faded from historic memory despite the recognition her contemporaries gave her as a woman ahead of her time.

"She was the harbinger," said a great-grandson, Wood Simpson. "She flung open the doors of the men-only clubs in Lexington and stepped inside with maybe a little smile on her face, enjoying it, the moment. I think she used to wear a pistol on her hip when she rode fences at Ashland, and I believe she was the only woman allowed in the Lexington Club." Simpson wrote and directed a documentary about his great-grandmother titled "Josephine Russell Clay, Bluegrass Queen of the Sport of Kings" (Post Time Productions, Lexington).

Professor Lindsey Apple, author of *The Family Legacy of Henry Clay: In the Shadow of a Kentucky Patriarch*, believes Josephine Clay might have been a complex person. She must have been, for she managed to spend a lifetime outside societal norms without society overtly ostracizing her. That in itself would have been remarkable; complexities, however, defined Josephine's life.

Both her father, William Henry Russell of Lexington and later of Missouri, and her second husband, John Morrison Clay of Lexington (Henry Clay's youngest son) were eccentric and complex. For example, John modified Henry Clay's blue and yellow racing silks to include a snake on the jockey's cap with the words, "Don't tread on me." John was "the target of many jokes and comments of contempt so common in Lexington at the time," Apple noted in an email. Perhaps the logo on his jockey cap was John's way of telling society he really didn't care what it thought.

The gossip about this odd couple slowed neither John nor Josephine in the horse business, perhaps because John was a talented horse trainer and perhaps because the two worked with equine bloodlines that everyone else would have liked to access. The wise knew better than to ostracize John or Josephine. The bloodlines of their horses were so influential that they appeared in the pedigrees of prominent Thoroughbreds well into the twentieth century.

Josephine took up operation of the stud farm, Ashland, immediately following John's death in 1887. Society would have expected her to shut down the breeding operation upon the death of her husband but instead she carried on, steadily increasing the number of horses at Ashland. She certainly knew the business. She had managed the farm and trained the horses for months at a time when John was away at the horse races in the Northeast. Letters from John to Josephine reveal how much he relied on her financial advice, most notably for the prices he should put on the racehorses he hoped to sell at the races.

Josephine worked alongside John without ever revealing how much she might have controlled the actual operation of the breeding farm while he was alive. One way she tried to stay in the background was the way she referred to herself: Mrs. John Clay, never as Josephine Clay.

"Even after her husband died she did everything in his name," said James M. Clark, executive director of Ashland, the Clay family estate. "I think it was a veil in order for her to keep going."

Foregoing the use of her first name was as far as Josephine bowed to convention. Family stories tell of the risqué marketing strategy she adopted in order to interest horsemen in purchasing her Thoroughbred yearlings. Her practice was to walk into that smoke-filled horsemen's headquarters, the Phoenix Hotel at Lexington's city center, and sit down to join the men at their poker games.

Waving aside the cigar smoke at the Phoenix undoubtedly took considerable fortitude. But so did everything Josephine did to maintain Ashland in the top echelon of the nation's leading stud farms. Her life's work with racehorses was "pre-eminently not a feminine occupation," Josephine acknowledged. Yet she



Image courtesy of Henry Clay Simpson, Jr.

**Following the death of her first husband, Josephine married Henry Clay's youngest son, John Morrison Clay.**

carried on. She could have added that from the time she was a young girl, she had lived her life in an unorthodox way.

Her favorite pastimes growing up on the Missouri frontier were fencing, shooting, and engaging in horse racing with her six brothers. In 1849, her father took her by wagon train to California. Along the way, she had to fight off a Native American who snuck into camp one night and tried to steal her banjo.

Her father also took her to Mexico, no easy journey in 1851. They traveled by steamship to Acapulco then continued overland by wagon to Mexico City.

Her first marriage, to Henry Clay's grandson, Eugene Erwin, saw her widowed during the Civil War. She had married at Fulton, Missouri, followed her Confederate husband to Mississippi and lost him during the Vicksburg campaign. None other than a sympathetic U.S. General Ulysses Grant gave Josephine and her daughter a written pass to cross Union lines and return to Missouri. She carried the Confederate battle flag of the Sixth



**Josephine Clay was known to walk into Lexington's Phoenix Hotel and join the men in their poker games. The Phoenix Hotel was located in downtown Lexington at the corner of Limestone and Main.**

Missouri with her. She was pregnant with her fourth child who would die in Missouri, shortly after birth.

Josephine's private marriage to John Morrison Clay in 1866 in Lexington (they did not invite family or friends) marked the second time she married into this well-connected family. Fourteen years her husband's junior, she caused a small scandal by moving into Clay's home at Ashland on Tates Creek Pike (within view of Henry Clay's home) prior to their marriage. She must have realized she was marrying a drinker, a man who suffered from depression and a participant in a notorious street fight one Christmas day. This apparently did not intimidate the woman who, as a child, had ventured into the West, and returned from the Civil War a person determined to "paddle her own canoe," as she once wrote. She did not care what others thought.

Apparently she was successful in bringing her husband to cease his drinking at home. But she did not succeed at this when John left home for months on end to visit the racetracks. His reputation for over-indulging remained intact among the racing crowd.

As a respite from John's drinking and long absences from home, Josephine undoubtedly found consolation in the horses at Ashland. People thought it odd that she talked to her horses but to her this must have seemed natural as she bonded with the animals. She would walk into their pastures and they would come over to her, nibbling at her straw hats. She once remarked that she did not mind seeing the hats ruined; they only cost her 25 cents.

John Clay's greatest achievement occurred during the War and prior to Josephine's arrival in Lexington. He took several racehorses northeast in 1863 and sold a colt he had named Kentucky as part of a package deal with a filly for \$6,000: a very high sum at the time, worth approximately \$116,634 in today's dollars. Kentucky, sired by the esteemed Lexington and whose mother was Magnolia, a highly valued broodmare at Ashland, developed into arguably the best racehorse in the United States. He never was defeated.

Magnolia was one of three thoroughbreds given as gifts to Henry Clay. John had inherited these and other horses following his father's death in 1852. Magnolia was so successful in producing winning offspring that she acquired the moniker, "Empress of the Stud Book." Ashland Stud might never have gained its recognition as a leading stud operation without Magnolia — or the other two from this triumvirate, the mare Margaret Woods and the stallion, Yorkshire.

Under John's care, a son of Margaret Woods, named Star Davis, sired many successful racehorses including Day Star, winner of the 1878 Kentucky Derby. Josephine had been in residence at Ashland on Tates Creek for more than a decade by the time Day Star came on the scene. He was the first of two Kentucky Derby winners bred at Ashland; the other was the 1890 winner, Riley, born a few months before John's 1887 death.

Ashland bloodlines figured in still another major winner on the world stage: Iroquois, winner of England's Epsom Derby in 1881.

The great unknown is how greatly Josephine was involved in the choice of mating that resulted in Day Star or Riley. She certainly was an authority on bloodlines and her contemporaries knew this well.

Skedaddle, a daughter of Magnolia (and sired by Yorkshire) was Ashland's most successful broodmare for long after Josephine took over operation of the farm. During the Civil War, Confederate General John Hunt Morgan and his raiders stole Skedaddle from Ashland. John Clay paid a ransom to have the filly returned. At the time of Skedaddle's death in 1889 at age 29, Josephine, as Mrs. John Clay, was listed as her owner.

When assuming John's work upon his death, Josephine described herself as an "incompetent doing her best to continue the traditions of great men." But she was far from incompetent, after years of possibly serving as the real power behind operation of Ashland. She was merely bowing slightly to conventions when she uttered this humble remark.



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**Skeedaddle (left) was Ashland's most successful broodmare under Josephine's direction of the farm. The Slashes (right) was one of her many foals.**

When she was not tending to her horses, Josephine found time to write. Her female characters always were strong, independent women like herself. She published her first book in 1873 under the pen name of Ojos Morenos. The book consisted of two stories, "What Will the World Say?: A Novel of Every-Day Life," and "Only a Woman." In 1893 she published her second book, *Some Little Angels Still Left: A Novel*. In 1899 her third novel, *Uncle Phil*, appeared, and included cameo experiences of her adventures in Vicksburg during the war. Her fourth novel, *Frank Logan*, appeared in 1901. She also penned *The Sport of Kings* in which she wrote about a woman disguising herself as a man to ride and win a horse race. Speculation is that Josephine was writing about herself and referencing an occasion when she may have disguised herself as a male jockey to ride a race for John.

She also wrote annual sales catalogues describing the pedigrees of her sales yearlings. Her biographer (and great-grandson), Henry Clay Simpson Jr., wrote in *Josephine Clay, Horsewoman of the Bluegrass*, that these catalogues differed from those of other farms in their "creative design, the level of background information about the horses being sold, and stories from the history of racing."

Fifteen years following her becoming sole owner of Ashland Stud, Josephine dispersed her Thoroughbreds in 1903. She credited Henry Clay and John Clay in the sales catalog. The sale took place at a time the Thoroughbred sport was collapsing, due to successful efforts of Progressive Era reformers to shut down horseracing in most states. She did not receive a lot of money for her horses.

Ashland on Tates Creek eventually was sold for development as Chevy Chase. During her lifetime, Josephine had invested in

downtown real estate that brought her income in addition to that brought in by her horses.

Simpson Jr. "rediscovered" Josephine's success in the horse business when, on a visit to Lexington in 2003, he read her scrapbook. He made the decision to research more about his great-grandmother and, with the encouragement of his mother, Louisiana Simpson, wrote Josephine's biography. This was the first most modern Kentuckians had heard about Josephine. Even today, ask about Josephine and the most frequent answer is, "Who is she? Never heard about her."

Simpson wrote in an e-mail that Josephine's close family had been aware of her success but honored her wishes to remain low-key about her achievements. Perhaps this was one reason Josephine has been forgotten to historical memory.

Eric Brooks, curator and site manager for Ashland, has still another theory. "I think there are probably less tangible reminders of Josephine," Brooks said. "With Laura Clay and Madeline McDowell Breckinridge women got to vote so their life's work was a success. They also wrote voluminously in papers and books. Josephine's writings never were popular, even when she wrote. Very few copies of those books exist ... They were never widely distributed."

Clark, at Ashland, suggested Josephine's husband might have been another reason she was forgotten. Eccentric and a fool about town, John did not handle business well. Undoubtedly he found it difficult being the son of Henry Clay. People might have wanted to forget him quickly. Memory of Josephine might have been a casualty of that process.

Nonetheless, Josephine's obituary in the *Lexington Herald* of March 30, 1920 summed up a remarkable life: "In the passing of Mrs. Clay, Lexington loses perhaps the most remarkable woman of her generation, a writer of prose and poetry, a successful business woman, fearless and intrepid in spirit ..."

Regardless that she soon slipped from public memory, Josephine's contemporaries got it right.

## About the Author

Maryjean Wall, Ph.D., is a graduate of the University of Kentucky in the Department of History. She has taught American and Kentucky history to university students and is the author of two books: *How Kentucky Became Southern: a Tale of Outlaws, Horse Thieves, Gamblers and Breeders*, and *Madam Belle: Sex, Money, and Influence in a Southern Brothel*. She was the longtime horse racing writer for the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and has received multiple awards for her writing.

# Conversations Around the Kitchen Table

By Lois Mateus

**T**he Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit *Key Ingredients: America by Food*, sponsored by the Kentucky Humanities Council several years ago, got my husband and me thinking about the connections between conversation and the food we produce, prepare, and present at our table.

This exhibit was a provocative and thoughtful look at the historic, regional, and social traditions that merge in everyday meals and celebrations. It examined the evolution of the American kitchen, table manners and eating habits, as well as emerging controversial technological innovations of the food industry.

The sheer sensory experience of the *Key Ingredients* exhibit helped the viewer better understand ourselves and humanity by encouraging us to stop and think how and why we break bread and quench our thirst together.

Many people can close their eyes and picture the family dining table where they grew up. Mother in an apron, father at the head of the table, napkins in place, children's hands just scrubbed, steam rising from the green bean casserole, and even the dog and cat listening intently to what is being said. This ideal was once so strong and deep in our culture and psyche that when experts talk about the value of family dinners, this is the Norman Rockwell image they always summon.

Food, back then, was in many ways the center of our lives. The family meal was where many of us learned to talk in a civilized way. The conversations at each meal were lively, warm, close, and permeated by a sense of love and well-being. Often we had guests to turn our minds to new subjects. In my home, it was as simple as a noon meal my mother cooked for the farm hands, or the preacher and his family on Sunday, or a supper meeting of the historical society or a homemakers group.

There were also Sunday dinners at the grandparents' where extended families — aunts, uncles, and cousins came together to share grandmother's bountiful food along with news and gossip of the week. The family would gather to transmit wisdom,

argue, conspire, forgive, and challenge. Those predictable, reassuring meals were as much a ritual as Sunday worship.

What I remember most about Sunday meals at Mama Prather's farm is not so much the wonderful food, but that the men ate first at the main table, the children ate in the kitchen or on the enclosed back porch, and the women ate last, after feeding everyone else. An older cousin taught me that far more interesting than playing outside with my cousins after lunch was to quietly sidle up to the aunts' table to eavesdrop on their gossip and grab an extra bite of dessert, which by that time no one noticed.

The dining experiences we loved as children are not only representative of our heritage but also memories that sustain the body and soul throughout life. The dishes we knew and loved at home add tremendous meaning to our lives, no matter how long we live and how sophisticated our tastes become.

The food and farming traditions of my Mercer County childhood have had tremendous effect on the way I approach food and entertaining. Although my cultural and gastronomic horizons have expanded to most points on the globe, I've never forgotten my roots, how I was taught initially to cook and eat correctly, and what it's like to share a table where honest sustenance, constant conversation, and lots of love make most other facets of life seem almost negligible.

Growing and preparing food at home is a fundamental passion for my husband and me. Comfort comes in cooking at the end of the day. Unwinding over food and conversation is an important ritual in our lives. We are well matched in many ways, but the compatibility for which we are most grateful is our love of gardening and gathering together to break bread and be with friends. We love to entertain. Inviting an interesting group of people, planning the meal, gathering the ingredients, chopping and stirring in front of the stove is a respite from the rancor of the daily grind.

Ours are occasional gatherings, preferably every four to six weeks. We offer good food and drink and a style of conversation and listening different than the normal dinner-party mode



In 2006, the Kentucky Humanities Council brought the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit *Key Ingredients: America by Food* to Kentucky. The exhibit focuses on the connections between Americans and the foods they produce, prepare, preserve, and present at the table.

where, for courtesy, you have to switch your attention and topics every few minutes to the person on your other side, conversation which can easily lurch from awkward chat to addled oblivion, or even worse, boring proselytizing.

Conversation of that sort can be perilous at meals. Dorothy Parker, once seated by a dullard incapable of conversation, said “I wonder if my hostess would think it strange if I asked for a pack of cards.”

We thought about calling our suppers salons, akin to Madame de Stael’s lively gatherings where a hand-full of people engage in “big talk.” Her salons were named after the room in which they were held, but we soon discovered we like the kitchen table best. Initially, we went for big provocative subjects, like *The Great Game: the struggle for Empire in Central Asia*, or the fallout from Kentucky politics in the first half of the 20th century, but we soon learned that no matter what the pre-gathering instruction was, our evenings, infused with a cocktail hour and lots of good Kentucky bourbon, were going to be talk about travel and sex, politics and ethics, history and hear-say, the kind of conversations that amuse and amaze, leaving us something to chew on the next morning.

Warmed by wine and conviviality, and acknowledging the rules of civility that make conversations possible, sparks are struck, connections made, new avenues suggested. What seems impossible in daylight hours comes to fruition in evening conversation, as thinking suddenly comes to life. We have, in the exuberance of an evening, founded new political parties, identified better candidates, invented imaginary avant-garde blogs, and dreamed of establishing a commune on our farm for literary-type widowed ladies.

Our suppers aren’t yet perfect. Some guests listen more than talk, some just aren’t interested in food. But some of the gatherings when people share what often is not shared, remain in the memory, a culinary bacchanal of human warmth and authenticity. Conversations

can be incubators of new ideas, often fueled by the kind of questions you wouldn’t normally think to ask, to arrive at a conclusion you hadn’t thought of before, a story worth repeating tomorrow.

A conversation cannot just consist of anecdotes, it should engage in a shared thought that others can embrace. Fyodor Dostoyevsky claimed it doesn’t matter what people say, only how they laugh. Jane Austen, wanting you to read books, said you cannot make good conversation if you read only newspapers.

In this day of constant online communication, conversation is becoming a lost art. Face-to-face conversation, for thousands of years the core of human interaction, is being pushed to the sidelines. We are losing out on one of life’s greatest, and most useful, pleasures and, sadly, people are becoming bewildering tolerant of it.

Shared food with conversation is an antidote for the alienation and malaise that currently infect so much of our country. Since mankind first gathered around a fire, people have come together to talk over things they care about and believe in. Eating is participation in the process of nature; and enjoying the company of new people and breaking bread together contribute to a sense of well-being and friendliness.

Our conversations around the kitchen table never fail to remind me of the description of heaven as a celestial banquet, the supper of eternal life, and a proclamation of the abundance of being.

## About the Author

Lois Mateus and her husband, Tim Peters, are patrons of the Kentucky Humanities Council through their Tallgrass Farm Foundation ([www.tallgrassfarmfoundation.org](http://www.tallgrassfarmfoundation.org)). The couple regularly hosts “Conversations Around the Kitchen Table” at their farm in Mercer County. Mateus, a former member of the Kentucky Humanities Council board, chairs the advisory board for the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky.



# Kentucky Women

## *Their Lives and Times*

Melissa A. McEuen and Thomas H. Appleton Jr.

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In an essay published in 1992 to commemorate the bicentennial of Kentucky statehood, the historian Margaret Ripley Wolfe demonstrated how, for too long, women constituted the “fallen leaves and missing pages” from published histories of Kentucky. “Their stories need telling,” she insisted, “for their legacy matters to present and future generations.”<sup>1</sup> Happily, during the last two decades, scholars in diverse disciplines have heeded Wolfe’s clarion call. Significant, pathbreaking monographs and articles have enriched our understanding of women’s experience in the Bluegrass State. We hope our volume, *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, recently published by The University of Georgia Press, will hasten the day when a comprehensive history of women in the commonwealth will be written.

In the meantime, students of Kentucky women can be grateful for the recent work of such excellent biographers as Melba Porter Hay, Yvonne Honeycutt Baldwin, Melanie Beals Goan, Catherine Fosl, Catherine Clinton, and Lindsey Apple. Valuable scholarly articles have appeared from Nancy Disher Baird and Carol Crowe-Carraco on motherhood in late antebellum Kentucky, Deborah L. Blackwell on Eleanor Marsh Frost and Appalachian reform, and Randolph Hollingsworth on the idea of womanhood in pioneer Kentucky. One is grateful, too, for the insightful memoirs of Linda Scott DeRosier and Bobbie Ann Mason in which they reflect on their childhoods in rural Kentucky.<sup>2</sup>

As we imagined this volume of essays, our goal was to fashion a

history as varied and diverse as Kentucky itself. It features women with well-known names as well as those whose lives and work deserve greater attention. The list of contributors is also marked by diversity, with established scholars alongside those currently securing their places in academe with exciting, new interpretations of Kentucky’s past, the southern experience, and women’s history. In debating which women should be profiled and who should be invited to contribute an entry, we considered “the art of the possible.” Some women merited an essay but could not be included because there were no accessible primary sources on which to rely or there was no expert available to undertake the assignment. In our judgment the essays that follow are both grounded and groundbreaking. While we recognize that students of Kentucky history, women and gender studies, and southern history, as well as scholars in those disciplines, will likely be our primary audience, we are confident that the profiles in this volume will inform and delight nonspecialists as well. Above all, we hope that our collection inspires continuing and sustained research in the fascinating stories of Kentucky women.



<sup>1</sup> Margaret Ripley Wolfe, “Fallen Leaves and Missing Pages: Women in Kentucky History,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (hereafter *Register*) 90 (1992): 65, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Melba Porter Hay, *Madeline McDowell Breckinridge and the Battle for a New South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); Yvonne Honeycutt Baldwin, *Cora Wilson Stewart and Kentucky’s Moonlight Schools* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Melanie Beals Goan, *Mary Breckinridge: The Frontier Nursing Service and Rural Health in Appalachia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Catherine Fosl, *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Catherine Clinton, *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Lindsey Apple, *Cautious Rebel: A Biography of Susan Clay Sawitzky* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997); Nancy D. Baird and Carol Crowe-Carraco, “A ‘True Woman’s Sphere’: Motherhood in Late Antebellum Kentucky,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 66 (1992): 369-94; Deborah L. Blackwell, “Eleanor Marsh Frost and the Gender Dimensions of Appalachian Reform Efforts,” *Register* 94 (1996): 225-46; Randolph Hollingsworth, “Mrs. Boone, I presume?: In Search of the Idea of Womanhood in Kentucky’s Early Years,” in *Bluegrass Renaissance: The History and Culture of Central Kentucky, 1792-1852*, ed. James C. Klotter and Daniel Rowland (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 93-130; Linda Scott DeRosier, *Creeker: A Woman’s Journey* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999); Bobbie Ann Mason, *Clear Springs: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1999). Since 1982 Kentucky’s state historian, James C. Klotter, has published three valuable critiques of recent scholarship on the commonwealth. See in particular “Moving Kentucky History into the Twenty-first Century: Where Should We Go from Here?” *Register* 97 (1999): 83-112; and “Charting the Path of Twentieth-Century Kentucky: Current Courses and Future Directions,” *Register* 113 (2015): 171-200.

# Matilda Lewis Threlkeld

1799-c.1885

## Searching for Kentucky's Female Frontier

Craig Thompson Friend

Stand by a cabin on Kentucky's western plateau in 1808 and watch the enslaved black girl preparing the new ground. Her name is Matilda, she is nine years old, and she has only recently arrived as part of a larger migration group led by her owner, Randolph Lewis. In the distance is the Tennessee River, and beyond are the Chickasaw lands from which occasional raids are made on the American settlement at Eddyville and the farms cropping up in Kentucky's westernmost territory. As Matilda pulls rocks and weeds from the soil, she is watched by an elderly slave couple hoeing the ground nearby — Sarah and Frank, who have acted as her parents since leaving Virginia.

Despite her youth, Matilda's story is like that of so many other African American women who came to Kentucky before her. Whites' decisions to move westward directly affected slaves' lives. A few years earlier, when Robert and Ann Cabell Harrison decided to transfer their Virginia plantation to Kentucky in two separate migrations, an observer noted, "Tomorrow the negroes are to get off and I expect there will be great crying and morn-ing [*sic*], children Leaving there [*sic*] mothers, mothers there [*sic*] children, and women there [*sic*] husbands." Historians have made much of white women's distress at leaving kin networks behind as their husbands dragged them westward, but they did have husbands and in most cases children to mediate their loneliness. Their trials pale in comparison to slave women's anxieties about leaving behind not only extensive kin networks but husbands and children as well. For many black women like Matilda, life on the Kentucky frontier was a truly solitary experience.<sup>1</sup>

While most black women saw their families disrupted by migration, there is evidence that some managed to sustain family. Molly, slave to Benjamin Logan, brought her three young sons to Saint Asaph in 1776. Five years later, Peter Durrett and his wife arrived

as part of Joseph Craig's household. Fanny, Betsy, Nisey, and their children accompanied seven slave men in an advance group for John Breckinridge's plantation in the 1790s. In most cases, the ability of a family to remain intact depended largely on the generosity of the owner. Of course, children who accompanied their mothers did so because they assumed the slave status of their mothers and, consequently, were property of the mother's owner. Slave women also negotiated with masters to either avoid or join a migration so as to stay with their children or husbands. "You mention Old Tener she is a nother shak bag," wrote a Virginia relative to new Kentucky settler and slave owner Polly Breckinridge in 1801, "the Lazy slut that went out [to Kentucky] last was so intent on going that she made her self out to be pregnant."<sup>2</sup>

Having family, then, was a significant achievement for an enslaved black woman; it was critical to developing a sense of stability and security. Given the fragility of life on the frontier, slave women constructed new families, even if they successfully migrated with a husband or children. In 1795, as he met with Shawnees, a white man recognized an African American woman who had been taken captive years earlier. He tried to secure release, but she refused to leave without the four children to whom she had given birth while living among the Shawnees. The negotiator claimed that "She wo'd rather live w white people," but her actions demonstrated that she wanted to live with family.<sup>3</sup>

Like most other black women, Matilda migrated to Kentucky without any family. Early in 1808 she traveled down the Ohio River with three white families and more than 20 slaves from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley to Kentucky's westernmost Livingston County. Although her father was part of the migration group, it seems her mother was not. Her father was Charles Lewis, the brother of her owner, whose act of miscegenation in 1799 had apparently brought shame on his family. Whether the slave woman with whom he slept

had died in childbirth or been sold off is unknown, but she quickly disappeared from memory. Matilda assumed the slave status of her mother and became a ward of the slave community on Randolph Lewis's plantation. When the Lewis brothers decided to relocate en masse to the western frontier, she left behind a mother she never knew and traveled with a father who did not care.<sup>4</sup>

She found a new mother in Sarah, who held significant status and most likely was the matrifocal center of a small slave community: Matilda, Sarah and Frank, and three other blacks occupied the Lewis farm. We should not be surprised to find strong women within frontier slave families. Slave owners displaced slave men's authority over family, deprived them of the type of power that emanated from property ownership, and refused to acknowledge them as fathers. Not only did children stay with mothers, but their mothers were often the only immediate family they knew. Additionally, slave women outnumbered slave men in preparing frontier Kentucky's new grounds, digging ditches, hoeing, weeding, and working the fields. West African women traditionally cleared new grounds for agriculture, including uprooting trees and removing rocks, but cultural tradition carried less weight in trans-Appalachia: instead, because female slaves cost less than male slaves and therefore were more expendable, owners hesitated little to put enslaved women to hard labor in dangerous frontier circumstances. Given the obstacles constructed against black male authority and the number of enslaved women, a picture of relative gender equality among blacks emerged in Kentucky, allowing for women such as Sarah to become family

and community leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Still, while Matilda and other black women toiled hard in the fields, they also were expected to be domestic laborers. In contrast to Native American women, who produced and reproduced out of a spiritual understanding of the balance of genders, and to white women, who performed domesticity to sustain the patriarchal structures they inhabited, black women had to abide by the gendered regimens dictated by their owners. Their chores — producing cloth and clothing, dairying, cooking and serving meals, household cleaning, and child care — kept them in contact with white families, and specifically the white women who oversaw their work. Their domestic work made them critical members of the farm family, black and white. One enslaved man complained in 1778 that “we have no women to wash for us, on Sundays we stalk about without being able to talk to any one.” Women's domestic skills not only empowered them within the households but also provided a bit of independence as well. For three years William Hardin left a slave woman tending his Green River farm. Hunters regularly visited the cabin, delivering meat to her while she prepared their skins for trade: “She had nothing to do but to dress the deer skins. . . . She got to be an excellent hand.” And a few years after her arrival in Kentucky, when she had honed her domestic skills, Matilda became a hired-out domestic servant, making additional money for her owner and herself. Because of their talents, black women became vital to whites' development of the frontier.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unknown to Polly Cabell Breckinridge, October 12, 1804, Breckinridge Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Ellen Eslinger, *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 190-91; Helen Deiss Irvin, *Women in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 2, 7; Craig Thompson Friend, *Along the Maysville Road: The Early American Republic in the Trans-Appalachian West* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 36; Gail S. Terry, “Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811: The Cabell-Breckinridge Slaves Move West,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (1994): 455; Boynton Merrill Jr., *Jefferson's Nephews: A Frontier Tragedy* (1976; Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 85; Marion B. Lucas, *History of Blacks in Kentucky, Vol. 1: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1992), 20; Mary Hopkins Cabell to Polly Cabell Breckinridge, August 12, 1801, Breckinridge Family Papers.

<sup>3</sup> John Dabney Shane interview with John Graves, c. 1840s, Draper Manuscript Collection, University of Wisconsin, Madison (hereafter DMC), 11CC122.

<sup>4</sup> Merrill, *Jefferson's Nephews*, 49, 85; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 190-91.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen Eslinger, “The Shape of Slavery on Virginia's Kentucky Frontier, 1775-1800,” in *Diversity and Accommodation: Essays on the Cultural Composition of the Virginia Frontier*, ed. Michael J. Puglisi (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 180; Frederick C. Knight, *Working the Diaspora: The Impact of African Labor on the Anglo-American World, 1650-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 47-48; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 500-01; Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 533; Merrill, *Jefferson's Nephews*, 208-9, 417.

<sup>6</sup> Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 178-79; Michel Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 44; Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 196, quote on 670; John Dabney Shane interview with Col. John Graves, c. 1845, DMC 11CC125.

To read more about Matilda Lewis Threlkeld, see “Searching for Kentucky's Female Frontier” in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, pp. 8-32.

# Mary Jane Warfield Clay

1815-1900

## *Wifely Devotion, Divorce, and Rebirth in Nineteenth-Century Kentucky*

William Kuby

The case of Mary Jane Warfield Clay offers a compelling example of both the challenges and rewards of women's history. Public knowledge of Clay's life derives primarily from the memoirs of her estranged husband, prominent emancipationist Cassius Marcellus Clay, who wrote of their 1874 divorce with great bitterness. Cassius Clay's narrative depicts Mary Jane as a cold and selfish wife, whose greed and laziness led to the deterioration of a forty-five-year marriage and whose financial ineptitude caused great angst for her abandoned husband. A close examination of the few personal documents left behind by Mary Jane, however, paints an entirely different picture. Mary Jane's personal writings reveal her to be a woman beleaguered by her absent husband's debts and fighting to achieve financial stability for her family as Cassius pursued his political ambitions. While her husband spent seven years in Saint Petersburg as American minister to Russia, Mary Jane reared the couple's children; withstood attacks from Confederate troops; oversaw the construction of White Hall, the family's Richmond, Kentucky, estate; and increased her family's income through the cultivation and rental of land. This is hardly the story of an idle plantation mistress.

Although we do not have a firsthand account of the divorce from Mary Jane, we know enough about her role in the marriage to question the unflattering portrayal that her husband provided. Her writings suggest that her devotion to marriage and family took precedence over all other personal interests and affairs. While she displayed no particular affection for bookkeeping, the construction of ponds, or the sale of cattle, she embraced these tasks, and many others, during her husband's absence, with the consistent goal of providing for her family. When disagreements and rumors of Cassius's infidelity pushed her to a breaking point, she gave up on her marriage, leaving Richmond in 1868 for an independent

life in Lexington. In truth, she had already lived as an independent woman in her years as head of White Hall. As a female divorcée, however, she lost any financial claims to the estate, and she left her reputation vulnerable to public attacks by her ex-husband. In many ways Mary Jane was fortunate; she had inherited sufficient income from her family to live out the rest of her years comfortably. But her story nonetheless reminds us of women's legal and financial dependence in nineteenth-century Kentucky, and it reveals the unsteady social position that divorcées were forced to occupy.<sup>1</sup>

Mary Jane Warfield was born in Lexington in 1815 into a family of strong women. She was the second daughter of Elisha Warfield, a medical doctor and breeder of thoroughbred horses, and Marie Barr Warfield, who managed a market-garden business and oversaw the family's land and slaves. Mary Jane had six sisters: Ann Elizabeth, Ellen, Rebecca, Julia, Caroline, and Laura.<sup>2</sup> The Warfield parents valued the education and the intellectual development of their children. They sent the young Mary Jane to Shelby Female Academy, a new institution for young women in Lexington, also attended by Mary Todd Lincoln.<sup>3</sup> Given that only a few thousand women had the opportunity to receive more than four years of formal education in this era, Mary Jane's access to schooling illustrates both the Warfields' upper-class status and their belief in the necessity of education for their daughters.<sup>4</sup>

In 1831 the sixteen-year-old Mary Jane met the twenty-year-old Cassius Marcellus Clay, then a student at Lexington's Transylvania College. Clay was instantly smitten with the young woman, and a brief courtship ensued.<sup>5</sup> Yet Clay's writings indicate that another woman occupied his mind at this time and that his interest in Mary Jane — though strong — was not exclusive.<sup>6</sup> Not prepared to commit to lifelong romance at age twenty, Clay left Kentucky later in 1831 to complete his undergraduate education at Yale University, where he devoted himself to antislavery causes. Though he was legally unable

to free the slaves his father had entrusted to him, Clay and his brother Sydney emancipated all of the family's unentailed slaves shortly before Cassius began college; he would succeed in liberating his remaining slaves in 1844. Clay graduated from the university with honors, and on February 22, 1832, he spoke out publicly against slavery for the first time in a ceremony commemorating the centennial of George Washington's birth.<sup>7</sup>

After his graduation from Yale, Clay returned to Kentucky to enroll in the law school at Transylvania.<sup>8</sup> He also rekindled his nascent romance with Mary Jane, making many visits to the Warfield estate to call on the attractive and affluent young woman.<sup>9</sup> If Clay had not at first been certain of his compatibility with Mary Jane, he was soon convinced that she was the match for him. Years later, Clay would reflect on the young Mary Jane's charms, recalling her fair, smooth skin, her long auburn hair, and her large gray-blue eyes. He would also emphasize her beautiful singing voice, noting, "She was the best amateur-singer I ever heard; and, as I have been familiar with the voices of Jenny Lind, Lucca, Patti, and all the most celebrated singers of my day, I venture to say that hers was, in compass and tone, unsurpassed." Though his perceptions of Mary Jane would evolve as he aged, the young Clay believed her to be "the most amiable of women," and he valued her ability to command the attention of crowds. He was thrilled to learn that Mary Jane harbored equally strong feelings.<sup>10</sup>

Not all observers approved of the burgeoning romance between Cassius and Mary Jane. After witnessing flirtation between the young couple, Mrs. John Allen, the mother of Clay's brother-in-law Madison Johnson, voiced her disapproval. Calling Cassius aside, she implored, "Cousin Cash, I see that you are much taken with Mary Jane. Don't you marry her; don't you marry a Warfield! There are the Misses W. W \_\_, E. B \_\_, C. H \_\_, and E. R \_\_, fine and cultured women of large fortunes and good families, but in all these things you are at least their equal." She then exhorted, "You can marry one of them, who will make you a good wife, and you will be happy."<sup>11</sup> One wonders why Mrs. Allen felt so strongly that Mary Jane's family name made her an unworthy bride. Elisha Warfield's financial success suggests that it was not monetary wealth that rendered the Warfields unequal to the Clays.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this warning against the Warfield family derived in part from distrust of Mary Jane's older sister Anne, whom Clay referred to as "a scandalmonger" who "terrorized all of Lexington" with an inclination for gossip and a vindictive attitude.<sup>13</sup> Or possibly Mrs. Allen's concern derived from an understanding of the power that Maria Barr Warfield held within her household, and a corresponding anxiety that Mary Jane would take on a similarly dominant role in her marriage to Clay. Whatever the case, Cassius would later claim that Mrs. Allen had been correct to caution him against the union.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For seminal works on nineteenth-century divorce, see Jane Turner Censer, "Smiling through Her Tears': Ante-bellum Southern Women and Divorce," *American Journal of Legal History* 25 (1981): 24-47; Glenda Riley, *Divorce: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Norma Basch, *Framing American Divorce: From the Revolutionary Generation to the Victorians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Loren Schwenger, *Families in Crisis in the Old South: Divorce, Slavery, and the Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 2; Betty Boles Ellison, *A Man Seen but Once: Cassius Marcellus Clay* (Bloomington, Ind.: Author House, 2005), 25, 33-34.

<sup>3</sup>Ellison, *A Man Seen but Once*, 25. The Shelby Female Academy was more frequently called Ward's Academy, in reference to its director, Dr. John Ward. See Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1987), 37.

<sup>4</sup>Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln*, 37. While Baker provides no statistics for Kentucky, she notes that only a quarter of the teenage girls in Massachusetts were still in school in 1860. One can assume that the number of female teenage pupils in 1820s and 1830s Kentucky would have been even lower.

<sup>5</sup>H. Edward Richardson, *Cassius Marcellus Clay: Firebrand of Freedom* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 15-17.

<sup>6</sup>Cassius Marcellus Clay, *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches* (Cincinnati: J. F. Brennan, 1886), 62-63.

<sup>7</sup>Richardson, *Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 17-24; David L. Smiley, *Lion of White Hall: The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay of Kentucky* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,

1962), 66, 71.

<sup>8</sup>Ellison, *A Man Seen but Once*, 32. As Ellison notes, Clay did not pursue a comprehensive legal education, but instead he enrolled in a six-month course. He never applied for a license to practice law.

<sup>9</sup>Clay was not alone in this endeavor, as Mary Jane had a number of suitors at the time. Richardson, *Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 26.

<sup>10</sup>Clay, *Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 65-68.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>12</sup>On the significance of wealth in nineteenth-century southern courtship, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 217-22.

<sup>13</sup>Richardson, *Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 26-27; Clay, *Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 64.

<sup>14</sup>Clay, *Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 549. On courtship and gendered expectations within marriage in the Old South, see Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Steven M. Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Jane Turner Censer, *North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984); Charlene M. Boyer Lewis, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 59-86; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 199-225; Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 37-94.

To learn more about Mary Jane Warfield Clay, see "Wifely Devotion, Divorce, and Rebirth in Nineteenth-Century Kentucky," in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, pp. 59-80.

# *Emilie Todd Helm & Mary Todd Lincoln*

*1836-1930; 1818-1882*

*“We Weep Over Our Dead Together”*

Angela Esco Elder

A lifeless slip of paper delivered the news. “Atlanta, Ga.,” the telegram read. “Mrs. General Helm is in Griffin. Find her and send her up in train today. The General is dead.” After receiving the message, Emilie Todd Helm, wife of Confederate brigadier Benjamin Hardin Helm, felt so heartbroken that, she recalled, the “days and weeks after I scarcely remember at all.” She was a twenty-six-year-old mother of three children under age six. She had been married just seven years, and now she was a Confederate widow. Eighteen months later, lingering wartime hostilities also made a widow of Emilie’s older sister, Mary Todd Lincoln. Mary’s husband famously died in 1865, when an actor slipped behind him, raised a gun, and pulled the trigger. In the crowded backroom of a boardinghouse, Mary’s heart broke before a hushed assembly as she wailed for her husband to “take her with him.”<sup>1</sup>

The Civil War wrecked many American families but made particularly harsh work of the Todds. Of the fourteen children, eight sided with the Confederacy and six with the Union. Two Todd boys were killed, and the rest were left with deep emotional wounds. Two Todd sisters, Emilie and Mary, had to mourn dead husbands and dead brothers. In their respective sections, Emilie and Mary were war widows and public figures, having survived the bloodshed to walk as human embodiments of sacrifice. Everyone in the nation had to pick up the pieces and march on, but as famous widows, Emilie and Mary had to don their dark uniforms and perform their roles on a public stage.<sup>2</sup>

The Todd sisters were but two of two hundred thousand white women widowed by the war. Mary, somewhat infamously, became a diva of grief, inconsolable and insufferable. This essay focuses pri-

marily on her sister Emilie’s very different “career” as a Confederate widow. While her quick tongue, famous family, and stint as a visitor in the Civil War White House make her a fascinating figure, Emilie’s experience as a young widow in a war-torn Confederacy is a broadly typical example of a Confederate widow who performed her part perfectly. “Mother” to her husband’s “Orphan” Brigade, organizer for the United Daughters of the Confederacy, author of unpublished Lost Cause fiction, unswerving puffer of her husband’s memory, Emilie achieved a kind of professional fame as a widow — and through her we can more clearly see the society that created her role, built her stage, and applauded her performances. Ultimately, it was Emilie, not Mary, who became exactly what her society demanded she be. Seven years married, she would be for almost seventy years the public widow of Benjamin Hardin Helm. Suffering like hers would be rewarded, not merely by her region but, ironically, by her nation, who found room not only to pity and thank her for her sacrifice but also to erect on the foundation of such southern suffering a narrative of national reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

By the early 1830s a grand brick home on Main Street in Lexington, Kentucky, swarmed with Todd babies, toddlers, and teens. Emilie was the eleventh of fourteen children born into the family, and her birth on November 11, 1836, brought the number of children living within the Todd home to nine. The fourteen-room house was more hive than home, buzzing with the comings and goings of siblings, guests, and slaves. Quick tongues, fiery tempers, and rowdy antics burst forth daily, and in a sea of children attempting to distinguish themselves, Emilie always had her beauty. “I think you were too young to remember it,” Elizabeth Norris wrote, describing the time when Emilie and her good looks “turned the City of Lexington

upside down.” While out with her enslaved nurse, a young Emilie strayed into the street and disappeared. “The day dragged slowly with untold agony” for Emilie’s mother, while Emilie’s father, the police, and Lexington’s men made every effort to find her. Late in the afternoon, Emilie’s father discovered her in the house of a childless couple. “The man and his wife were considered good people,” Norris explained to Emilie, “but your uncommon beauty overcame his sense of right.”<sup>4</sup>

One week before Emilie’s seventh birthday, her older sister married Abraham Lincoln. Mary, a self-described “ruddy pine knot,” was not as pretty as Emilie, but then her betrothed was no looker, either. Abraham’s gangly frame and misshapen face were the subject of common comment; even Mary’s sister Frances called him “the plainest man” in Springfield, Illinois. The couple had met in the Springfield home of eldest sister Elizabeth, and over the course of two years they courted, got engaged, got disengaged, courted, and got engaged again. On November 4, 1842, just hours after their most recent decision to wed, they took their vows in Elizabeth’s parlor. In the rush of events, the cake turned out poorly and rain beat loudly against the windows throughout the ceremony, but in spite of it all, Abraham slipped onto Mary’s finger a ring engraved with the words “Love is Eternal.” Together, they made a home in Springfield and immersed themselves in Abe’s political career.<sup>5</sup>

When discussing their marriage, Mary acknowledged their “opposite natures.” Mary had a feisty personality, a penetrating

yell, and an ungovernable temper. Abraham had his uncouth appearance and underdeveloped manners. She could be physically and emotionally abusive, he emotionally absent. And yet Mary and Abraham, for all their individual faults, complemented each other in ways few others could. She smoothed out his country appearance and polished his manners. He tolerated her wild moods and unstable emotions. For better or worse, they grew together as a pair. As Abe joked, “My friends, this is the long of it,” he said, pointing to himself. Then, with a hand on Mary’s head, he would add, “And this is the short of it.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1846, four years into the Lincoln marriage, the Prairie State’s voters elected Abraham to the U.S. House of Representatives. Mary and Abraham packed their belongings and their two young sons and began the lengthy trek to the nation’s capital. Along the way, they planned a visit to the Todd home in Lexington. It was a cold November day when they arrived at the brick house, a home Mary had not seen in seven years. For Abe, both the house and the people within it were new. He had met Mary’s father but none of his other Todd relatives. Then again, Mary had yet to meet her two youngest sisters as well. When she left home, Emilie was the second youngest of the family, just three years old. Now Emilie was ten and caught up in the excitement of the preparations for the Lincolns’ arrival.

Crowded in the wide hall with the rest of her family, Emilie watched as the door burst open and Mary glided in, carrying her youngest son Eddie. “To my mind she was lovely,” Emilie recalled.



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With “clear, sparkling, blue eyes, lovely smooth white skin with a fresh, faint wild-rose color in her cheeks; and glossy light brown hair, which fell in soft, short curls behind each ear,” Mary seemed nearly angelic. Despite being awestruck by her older sister, Emilie had quite a different opinion of her new brother-in-law. “I remember thinking,” Emilie said, “of Jack and the Beanstalk, and feared he might be the hungry giant of the story, he was so tall and looked so big.” With a full black cloak and a fur cap with ear straps, little of his face could be seen.

“Expecting to hear the ‘Fee, fi, fo, fum!’ I shrank closer to my mother and tried to hide behind her voluminous skirts,” she explained. Abe, after shaking hands with the adults in the hall, retrieved Emilie from her hiding place, lifted her high into his arms, and exclaimed, “So this is little sister.” His voice and smile banished her fear of the gentle giant. “I was always after that called by him ‘little sister,’” Emilie remembered. Emilie never knew Mary without Abraham, and of all Mary’s many sisters, Abe was especially fond of Emilie.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I refer to historical figures in this essay by last names, unless their spouses also appear in the narrative. In those cases, notably Benjamin/Emilie Helm and Abraham/Mary Lincoln, I use their first names for clarity’s sake. This essay keeps all spelling and phrasing quoted from documents in original form, except for occasions when punctuation has been converted to modern-day notations for clarity. Readers may also notice that within some quotations Emilie’s name was spelled differently; I refer to her as Emilie for consistency. Despite her lengthy career as a Confederate widow, little has been published about Emilie Helm. Only one biography, just fifty-two pages long, has been published in the eighty years since her death: Dorothy Darnell Jones’s *Emilie Pariet Todd Helm: Abraham Lincoln’s “Little Sister”* (Lexington, Ind.: Deer Trail, 2007). Other studies on the Lincolns and the Todds, such as Stephen Berry’s *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, a Family Divided by War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), and Jerrold M. Packard’s *The Lincolns in the White House: Four Years That Shattered a Family* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2005), include valuable discussions on Emilie and her relationships with Abraham and Mary. Her widowhood has not been analyzed. Elizabeth Dixon, quoted in Catherine Clinton, *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 245; Emilie Todd, undated Civil War reminiscence, Emilie Todd Helm Collection, Kentucky Historical Society (KHS), Frankfort. Unless otherwise indicated, all primary source materials noted in this essay, including correspondence, diaries, and newspaper clippings, are contained in the KHS collection.

<sup>2</sup> The loyalties of some of the Todds shifted throughout the war, the Copperheadism (if not treason) of Margaret Todd and her husband, Charles Henry Kellogg, being a key example. See Berry, *House of Abraham*. The topic of Civil War pensions is the only aspect of Civil War widowhood that historians have explored in detail. For excellent articles on Civil War widows, the pension system, and financial support, consult one of the following: Jennifer Lynn Gross, “‘Good Angels’: Confederate Widowhood in Virginia,” in *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*, ed. Catherine Clinton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jennifer Lynn Gross, “And for the Widow and the Orphan’: Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance,” in *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas*, ed. Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Jennifer L. Gross, “The United Daughters of the Confederacy, Confederate Widows, and the Lost Cause: ‘We Must Not Forget or Neglect the Widows,’” in *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single*,

ed. Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 180-94; Robert Kenzer, “The Uncertainty of Life: A Profile of Virginia’s Civil War Widows,” in *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, ed. Joan E. Cashin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> The number of women widowed by the Civil War is difficult to determine. J. David Hacker provides the most recent number, suggesting that approximately 750,000 men lost their lives in the Civil War, and that if 28 percent of the men who died in the war were married at the time of their death, the resulting number of widows would have been 200,000. J. David Hacker, “A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead,” *Civil War History* 57 (2011): 311. A map illustrating the tremendous numbers of widows created by the Civil War can be found in J. David Hacker, Libra Hilde, and James Holland Jones, “The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns,” *Journal of Southern History* 76 (2010): 65.

<sup>4</sup> Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1987), 45, 74; Elizabeth L. Norris to Emily Todd Helm, March 7, 1895, in Elizabeth L. Norris Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

<sup>5</sup> An excellent book on the twists and turns of Mary and Abraham’s engagements is Douglas L. Wilson’s *Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Carl Sandburg and Paul M. Angle, *Mary Lincoln: Wife and Widow* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), 43; Frances Todd, as quoted in Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln*, 83; Clinton, *Mrs. Lincoln*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> The “long of it/short of it” joke is one Abraham would use in many different circumstances, including with fellow politicians and speakers. It was perhaps most amusing, however, with his wife, whose differing heights and shapes made quite an impact. Mary Lincoln to Eliza Stuart Steel, Chicago, May [23, 1871], in *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, ed. Justin Turner and Linda Turner (New York: Knopf, 1972), 200; Abraham Lincoln as quoted by Daniel J. Ryan, *Lincoln and Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and History Society, 1923).

<sup>7</sup> This story comes from Emilie’s daughter’s book on Mary Lincoln. Historians should read this text with a critical eye, as it was written and published decades after the war. Emilie carefully crafted the image of the Todds and Lincolns that she showed the world in the postwar period. Some stories in this book, when compared to other sources and historical fact, ring true; others do not. Katherine Helm, *The True Story of Mary, Wife of Lincoln* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928), 99-100.

To read more about the Todd sisters, see “We Weep Over Our Dead Together” in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, pp. 81-98.





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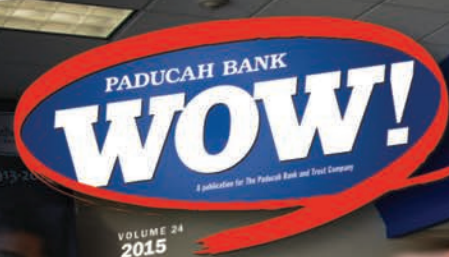
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# Enid Yandell

1869-1934

## Kentucky's Frontier Sculptor and "Bachelor Maid"

Juilee Decker

**E**nid Bland Yandell was born on October 6, 1869, in Louisville. She was the eldest child of Louise Elliston Yandell (1844-1908) and Lunsford Pitts Yandell Jr. (1837-84), a surgeon, Civil War veteran, and medical professor. The future artist was followed by siblings Maud, Elsie, and Lunsford Pitts Yandell III. Family influence in the field of art may be attributed to the passing of a torch from mother to daughter, as dilettante arts were practiced by young girls of her status. However, a female was not assumed to be a serious practitioner but rather a dabbler in paint — that is, one with a fancied interest even if skill were present. A second track of familial influence came from the technical side, that is, the dexterity of working with one's hands — requisite for a sculptor's craft — which Enid later attributed to her father's surgical skill.<sup>1</sup>

Within three years of undertaking serious art studies, Enid's fame as a talented daughter of Kentucky was established thanks to her achievements in the field of large-scale sculpture associated with the Columbian Exposition. Yandell traveled to Chicago in 1891 to take up a position at the fair, an international exhibit aimed at attracting tourists and showcasing achievements in arts, science, and industry. Enid worked alongside other young female sculptors who had been assigned tasks of reproducing works designed by male contemporaries, such as Lorado Taft. At the same time she also completed works on commission, most notably the sculpture of Daniel Boone she created for the Kentucky State Building at the exhibition, on commission from the Filson Club, Louisville's historical society. The suggestion to sculpt Boone as the emblem of the state originated with Enid, who knew and corresponded with Col.

Reuben T. Durrett, a lawyer and amateur historian who served as the first president of the Filson Club, an organization dedicated to preserving Kentucky history through the collection of genealogy and rare, unpublished materials. In May 1892, after working for a year on projects related to the Women's Building, the artist corresponded with Durrett, who fancied having a large-scale sculpture of Kentucky's male founders in the city — a desire that he had expressed to Enid on more than one occasion. She remarked,

Perhaps I have discovered a plan for the accomplishment of your pet scheme, now mine also, of having a statue of [George Rogers] Clark made and put in one of our parks. The different states are having figures of their great men made to go in their State buildings and Kentucky can boast of greater forefathers than any of them. Now should the park Commission join with the Fair commission they could have Stat[u]es of Clarke [*sic*], [Daniel] Boone, etc. made in Staff and sent to the fair, then afterward they could be cast in Bronze and marble and donated to the parks. . . . Now this is the time to arrange this thing and as the time is short it should be done as quickly as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Durrett agreed with Yandell's suggestion and established a subscription fund through the Filson Club to pay her to create a statue of Daniel Boone.<sup>3</sup> Yandell, having learned firsthand how states were marketing themselves at the fair, applied what she had observed to her native state and, more broadly, to her own sculptural practice, thereby creating an opportunity for herself.

Through her work in Chicago, Yandell associated herself with the image of a Kentucky frontiersman and, further, with such

ambition, persistence, and accomplishment of pioneerism that she thrived as a sculptor in the male-dominated genre of public statuary. This notion was not lost on her contemporaries or the press, who often associated Yandell with the entire state of Kentucky. Just as Boone was emblematic of the frontier and, specifically, Kentucky, Yandell was emblematic of the female sculptor and of the Kentucky sculptor, even though she left the state as a teen and only returned for brief visits. Her ties to the Bluegrass State remained strong, however, even until her last significant commission, the Pioneer Monument at Harrodsburg, which she designed in 1924.

Throughout her life, Yandell was celebrated as an accomplished artist and praised also for her philanthropic work, particularly related to World War I. Little is known about her private life, though details emerge through her association with close companions Jean Loughborough and Laura Hayes, who coauthored with Yandell a semiautobiographical narrative of women's work at the World's Fair titled *Three Girls in a Flat*, and the Baroness Geysa Hortense de Braunecker, who lived with Enid in Paris from around 1895 through 1902. From 1891 on, Yandell seemed to live the life of a "bachelor maid" — a single woman in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who operated independently of men and managed her own business affairs. The term was officially applied to Yandell in 1949, fifteen years after her death, though her status as an unmarried working woman in the field of sculpture would have made the association apparent to her contemporaries after her first departure from Louisville to take up artistic practice full time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "How an American Girl Has Astonished the Art World," clipping in the Filson Historical Society (Louisville), Enid Bland Yandell (1870-1934) Papers, 1875-1982, Mss A/Y21b/Folder 105 (hereafter FHS Mss A/Y21b/Folder #).

<sup>2</sup> The Filson Historical Society, Reuben T. Durrett (1824-1913) Added Papers, 1883-1910, FHS Mss A/D965c/Folder 97.

<sup>3</sup> FHS Mss A/Y21b/Folder 59.

<sup>4</sup> Enid Yandell, Jean Loughborough, and Laura Hayes, *Three Girls in a Flat* (Chicago: Bright, Leonard, 1892); FHS Mss A/Y21b/Folder 23; the term "bachelor maid" was popularized by Constance Cary Harrison in her novel, *A Bachelor Maid* (New York: Century, 1894); Melville O. Briney, "Enid Yandell, Louisville's Gifted Bachelormaid," *Louisville Times*, July 28, 1949, 16.

To learn more about Enid Yandell, see "Kentucky's Frontier Sculptor and 'Bachelor Maid,'" in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, pp. 196-218.

# Madeline McDowell

## Breckinridge

1872-1920

### *A Sense of Mission*

Lindsey Apple

**D**espite the fact that she could neither vote nor hold political office until the last year of her life, Madeline McDowell Breckinridge became Kentucky's foremost Progressive Era reformer. Like many other young women at the beginning of the twentieth century, she sought the means to use her abilities more actively than women traditionally had been allowed to do and found it in the new reform movement. She worked to alter the poverty that characterized not only the Appalachian region of the state where she first saw it but also the underbelly of her prosperous and elitist hometown of Lexington. Though her reform mentality developed in her family's sense of noblesse oblige, she introduced a method called "scientific charity," also called the case-work approach, to Kentucky. Madeline Breckinridge revolutionized education, limited child labor, and helped create a juvenile-justice system. Lobbying for better health care, particularly in the treatment of tuberculosis, a disease that had reached epidemic proportions in the commonwealth, brought her national recognition. Through all these reforming efforts she demanded more responsible and responsive government and revealed an eye for detail that few male politicians had shown. Best known for her role in formulating a plan to convert Kentuckians to the cause of woman suffrage and for serving as an officer and tireless spokesperson of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), Breckinridge merited a lion's share of the credit when Kentucky ratified the Nineteenth Amendment.

Considered one of the most liberal of southern woman suffragists, Breckinridge actually represented the border-state

mentality. Rather than reject her heritage, she chose instead to use or manage the traditions and skills taught in her youth to accomplish important reforms. Like many Progressive reformers in the South, she sought to blend tradition and progress, yet she used methods singularly and in combinations that added a feminist dimension to Kentucky politics.<sup>1</sup> This descendant of the statesman Henry Clay came very close to filling the shoes of her illustrious ancestor, an accomplishment historians and nineteenth-century moralists smugly suggested could not be done by those who followed him.<sup>2</sup>

Madeline McDowell's youth gave little indication of the reforming zeal that would characterize her as an adult. Born on May 20, 1872, in Franklin County, she moved at age ten to Ashland, Henry Clay's stately home just east of Lexington. Her father, Maj. Henry Clay McDowell, had raised horses at Woodlake in Franklin County, but he purchased Ashland, he said, because it had been such an important part of his wife's youth. The granddaughter of Henry Clay, Anne Clay McDowell had been orphaned as a child and spent a great deal of time in her grandparents' home.<sup>3</sup>

The move placed Madge, as the family called her, in the social center of the Bluegrass region during her most formative years. Since frontier days Lexington had styled itself the "Athens of the West." Because of the rich soil it was a prosperous town, for a time larger even than Cincinnati and Louisville. Landowners bred thoroughbred horses in an era when horses were as important for transportation as for sport. Lexington was also a commercial center. Mules, pork, and hemp for rope and cotton bales anchored the southern trade and filled the coffers of the wealthy.

Though horse farms were not plantations, Lexington's elite patterned their society after that of the American South. Madge could easily have grown up to be a refined society matron. In the best sense of the term she did.<sup>4</sup>

Madge received her formal education at Miss Higgins' School and Miss Butler's Day School, Lexington girls' schools that emphasized social skills more than academic ones. Though not finishing schools in the traditional sense, they taught young ladies the manners and conduct required in Bluegrass society. The girls learned to dance, serve tea, and converse politely. They also studied the lives of famous women such as Marie Antoinette and Mary, Queen of Scots, though more as models of style and grace than for their historical roles. Mark Twain labeled the South's fascination with honor, valor, and romance as "Sir Walter's Disease." Young women studied literature and poetry; they saw the beauty in the world around them and were protected from all that was ugly or base. The husband of one of Madge's many Clay "cousins" called it an education in "King Arthur and rainbows."<sup>5</sup>

Lexington's gentry also provided opportunities for the McDowell daughters to develop and exhibit social skills. As with the planter class of the South, a social season brought together the "right" young men and women. Cotillions, kermises, luncheons, and

other events highlighted the time. Young women learned to avoid controversy in conversation, hopefully even in thought, and honed other skills intended to make them charming hostesses or guests. There was a purpose to it all more important than entertainment. Society matrons spoke of acceptable matches and "good" marriages. Young women had to be accomplished enough to attract an acceptable male, then to oversee his home and rear children to accept the same values they practiced. When Elizabeth Murphey Simpson claimed in *The Enchanted Bluegrass* (1938) that Lexington had an abiding interest in pedigree, she was not writing about thoroughbred horses.<sup>6</sup>

Most young women moved directly from their fathers' homes to those of their husbands. Others well into the 1920s could teach or hold minor positions, at least until they married. Upper-class women had servants, though it took some effort to manage them properly. Lexingtonians, at least those of the gentry, expected things to remain very much the same. As in the South, women were placed on a pedestal where they would be admired. Barbara Welter's cult of true womanhood has been shown to be a myth rather than the reality of southern life, but that is not to say that the traits of domesticity, piety, submissiveness, and purity were not the bases for a young woman's education.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carey Olmstead Shellman, "Nettie Peters Black, 1851-1919," in *Georgia Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Ann Short Chirhart and Betty Wood, vol. 1 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 313; Sara Alpern, Joyce Antler, Elizabeth Israels Perry, and Ingrid Winther Scobie, *The Challenge of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 7-8; Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Martineau to Reverend Samuel Gilman, June 12, 1835, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries, Lexington; *Lexington Observer and Reporter*, May 15, 1858. See David S. and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Henry Clay: The Essential American* (New York: Random House, 2010); Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: Norton, 1991); Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937); Sara Bearss, "Henry Clay and the American Claims Against Portugal, 1850," *Journal of the Early Republic* 7 (1987): 168-69. The elite citizens of Lexington enjoyed noting the failures and shortcomings of Clay's descendants. Many descendants felt a great deal of stress because of that pressure. See Lindsey Apple, *Cautious Rebel: A Biography of Susan Clay Sawitzky* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 22, 63, 73, 119, 126, 212, 239; and Lindsey Apple, *The Family Legacy of Henry Clay: In the Shadow of a Kentucky Patriarch* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 168, 172-74, 179, 238. The author's interviews with family members revealed a strong sense of responsibility to live up to Henry Clay's reputation and a belief that family members were always being compared to him to their detriment.

<sup>3</sup> Anne's mother died in 1840; her father, Henry Clay Jr., died in the Battle of Buena Vista in 1847. Anne spent time in Louisville with a relative and at Ashland.

<sup>4</sup> See James C. Klotter, "Central Kentucky's 'Athens of the West' Image in the Nation and in History," in *Bluegrass Renaissance: The History and Culture of Central Kentucky*, ed. James C. Klotter and Daniel Rowland (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 11-35.

<sup>5</sup> Jo Della Alband, "A History of the Education of Women in Kentucky" (Master's thesis, University of Kentucky, 1934), 154-55; Gladys V. Parrish, "The History of Female Education in Lexington and Fayette County" (Master's thesis, University of Kentucky, 1932); Anne Goodwyn Jones, "Southern Literary Women as Chroniclers of Southern Life," in *Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South*, ed. Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila L. Skemp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 356; Susan Clay to Mrs. Charles D. Clay, August 15, 1927, Henry Clay Memorial Foundation Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Murphey Simpson, *The Enchanted Bluegrass* (Lexington, Ky.: Transylvania Press, 1938), preface.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-74.

To read more about Madeline McDowell Breckinridge, see "A Sense of Mission" in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, pp. 219-250.

# Mr. Bear

By Georgia Green Stamper

Last week, I tagged along with my youngest daughter, Georgeann, to the Kentucky side of Cincinnati. Her young children, Annelise and Hudson, made the jaunt from Lexington with us. At five and almost three, they are now almost exactly the ages my two older daughters were when Georgeann was born. Strapped in the backseat in their state-of-the-art car carriers, with a movie playing on the DVD player and iPads loaded with games clutched in their hands, the children didn't make a peep on the 70-mile trip. Quite a contrast, I thought, to the long car trips of my young motherhood when I had only my imagination to keep the children entertained and separated in their minimally restrained seats.

But the moment we hit the six-lane traffic of I-75 — a stretch of city driving that puts me on edge — Annelise began to screech in a voice edged with panic. “Mr. Bear! Mr. Bear! Mr. Bear! Hudson is grabbing Mr. Bear!”

I turned around to investigate, and sure enough, there was Hudson with a big old grin on his face pulling as hard as he could on Mr. Bear's head while Annelise held on to his body for dear life. Like a member of the family, Mr. Bear has been her near constant companion since she was an infant. Hudson is never allowed to touch Mr. Bear unless Annelise gives him permission for the occasional cuddle. (This is in no way a deprivation since their household has a few hundred stuffed animals lying around. Okay, that's an exaggeration but not a large one.)

*Déjà vu.* Staring at my grandchildren pulling at opposite ends of Mr. Bear's fragile body, I was transported back to 1977 on this same stretch of Interstate highway. Mother was with me then, sitting in the front passenger seat where I was now, and an infant Georgeann was cradled in her arms in those pre-safety-seat days. I was at the wheel navigating unfamiliar urban traffic to pick up my husband at the Greater Cincinnati Airport.

My five-year-old daughter Shan was in the back seat with Bear whom she never left at home. A plump half-pillow, half-plaything, he was handmade from a cloth cut-out, a craft notion popular in that era. The girls' other grandmother had found Bear's blue front and back body images at a fabric store, sewed his exterior edges together, and in the process, stuffed him full of foam pieces. The result was a rotund pillow-bear.

My mother-in-law had made a similar stuffed animal for our middle daughter Becky when she came along, but Becky could not be persuaded that her brown Dog was as fine as Shan's blue Bear. And so, as I-75 widened from two lanes into many lanes, and the lightening fast traffic converged and diverged from all directions. Becky, a few

months shy of her third birthday, grabbed Shan's Bear by the head.

A frantic tug of war broke out, punctuated with shrieks and sobs. Mother, holding the baby in the front seat, could do little to intervene in the battle. I, of course, couldn't cross multiple lanes of traffic to pull onto a shoulder if our lives had depended on it. My admonitions to JUST STOP IT! were ignored. (Where was Dr. Spock when you needed him?)

Tension was escalating in both the front and back seats of our car when suddenly the girls, in unison, let out a bloodcurdling scream. I nearly lunged into an eight wheeler in an adjacent lane. What had happened? Had one of the back doors swung open despite being locked? Had someone fallen out of the car into the path of the semi-trucks?

Bear's decapitation is what had happened. His head was in Becky's hands, his body in Shan's, and his foam innards were flying all over the car like popcorn on steroids. Bear had lost his mind — and I was not far behind him.

Then, as both girls sobbed inconsolably in the back seat, Mother began to laugh and laugh until tears ran down her face.

“You might as well,” she said.

Mother's laughter restored both Bear and me to sanity. Within a few days, we had him re-stuffed and his head reattached with heavy thread. He soldiered on for many more years until his skin completely gave way to ravel and gaping holes. Then, we let him go to that special place in our hearts where we forever hold all of those we have loved.

Last week, my hand darted into the backseat in time to rescue Annelise's Mr. Bear before his body gave way. But I heard my mother's voice echo across the decades to remind both Georgeann and me that you have to keep a sense of humor when dealing with the day-to-day challenges of parenting young children. You might as well laugh, she would say. I would add that it sure beats losing either your head or your mind.

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## About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a seventh generation Kentuckian. A graduate of Transylvania University, Stamper is a former high school English and theater teacher and speech team coach. Her published works include *Butter in the Morning* and *You Can Go Anywhere*. She also writes a bi-weekly column, “Georgia: On My Mind,” for *The Owenton News-Herald*. She has been a regular commentator for NPR member station WUKY affiliated with the University of Kentucky and a popular member of the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.

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