

DRIVING TOUR of AFRICAN AMERICAN SITES IN BOYLE COUNTY.

EASTERN TOUR:

Begin at Grayson Tavern. Turn left down E. Walnut St.

E. Walnut St. was home to many African American families, the three-story brick **United Black Federation Hall**, and the original **Willis Russell Home and School** (later owned by Benjamin Tibbs, directly across from St James AME Church), the **Willis Russell Memorial Cabin**, and the **Bright Funeral Home**.

St. James AME Church, 124 E. Walnut St., was organized in 1872-3 after a schism with the Colored Methodist Church. Property was purchased on Walnut St. in 1877 and the original Gothic Revival church was built in 1882. It was altered to the Colonial Revival style in the 1920s. Further additions and alterations have allowed the building to survive in its original location. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.

Willis Russell Memorial Cabin, 106 E. Walnut St. Situated on the old Wilderness Trail, the Willis Russell Memorial Cabin was long thought to be the schoolhouse where Willis Russell, a free black man, lived and worked. Recent research indicates that the original late-18th century cabin was located where the middle of three apartment buildings now sit, across the street from St James AME Church, and was willed to Russell by his owner, Robert Craddock, who gave Russell his freedom, an excellent education, and the cabin. Russell is considered Danville's first African American teacher, and the cabin is a reminder of his role as an educator of African American children in Danville's early years.

Bright Funeral Home, 203 E. Walnut St. Originally at 120 S. 2nd St., Bright Funeral Home, owned by Joseph S, Bright, had been purchased for \$945 in cash. The Bright family owned and operated the business until 1948, when it became Johnson-Bright Funeral Home.

At traffic light, turn left onto Wilderness Road, known years ago as **McGrorty Avenue**, a black neighborhood. The area near the post office was called "**Foggy Bottom**".

Continue on Wilderness Road and East Lexington Ave to KY-2168. Turn right then take the first left onto Waterworks Road. At "The Farm" and Lynch Lane, bear left.

Meauxtown was a settlement located on Waterworks Rd., 0.9 miles off Lexington Rd, where the road turns a right angle in front of a stone house.. It was a cluster of black-owned houses and farms, without any stores, churches, or schools. There was a cemetery with 3 known burials. The settlement was probably named for John Meaux, of Mercer County, who freed his slaves well before the Civil War, and provided many of them with land.

Return to Lexington Road (KY-34) and turn left, then after 0.8 miles, turn left onto Stony Point Road.

Immediately on left note **Stony Point Predestinarian Baptist Church**, which incorporates former **Stony Point Colored School**. There was also a cemetery, with five known burials from 1925 to 1940.

Continue on Stony Point Road 0.8 miles.

Wells Landing Road on the left was a significant African-American settlement. Black people living along Wells Landing Road would often cross the lake in boats to attend church, or lodge or social events in **Davistown**. Although located in Garrard County, Davistown has had an historic connection with Danville and Boyle County. Many families from Davistown were married or later lived in Danville, and vice versa.

At end of Stony Point Road, turn right on to KY-34 and go 1.3 miles.

Turn left on to Old Lexington Road, then take the first left, Kemper Lane.

After 0.4 miles, take Little Needmore Road on left (**Christian Hill Baptist Church** was near this intersection) and go as far as you dare.

(Little) **Needmore**, originally a 20-25 acre settlement, should not be confused with another place called Needmore on US-150 between Danville and Perryville. This community once contained a general store, several residences, and a large cemetery with 10 known and many unknown burials. The community ran east more than 0.7 miles to Clark's Run, which was crossed by a swinging bridge. By 1980, most families had moved away.

Return to Kemper Lane, then turn left onto Goggin Lane (KY1805) enjoying the countryside.

At end, turn left onto KY-52, Lancaster Road. After 1.4 miles, turn left onto Clifton Road. From this intersection note 0.3 miles on the right, Hedgeville Baptist Church on KY-52. This is **Hedgeville**, where many African American families from Clifton did their shopping. It contained a store which catered to black customers, but there was little else there.

Travel 1 mile up Clifton Road.

Located on the left are the **Clifton Baptist Church, Clifton Colored School, and the Clifton Cemetery**. The vine-covered building was the school, and was later occupied by members of the Doram family, prominent in this area. Clifton was established after the Civil War and named for the cliffs along the nearby Dix River. From about 1885 to 1945 Clifton was a busy farming community, growing mostly tobacco and hemp. Clifton Road was built through the northeast part of Boyle County in early days and remains a main route to Herrington Lake. Remaining buildings, the Clifton Baptist Church, the school, and the cemetery have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Return to KY-52 and turn right. Continue 3 miles to junction of KY-52 and US-150. Turn right at light toward Danville.

After about 1 mile, at 460 Stanford Rd., is the **John W Bate Middle School**. Formerly Bate High School, the genesis of Bate School was a one-room schoolhouse opened in 1871. In 1907 a large brick two-story building was constructed. The Danville Colored School was renamed Bate High School in 1925 in honor of Principal John W. Bate. With integration in 1964 it became Bate Junior High School. A new building was constructed behind the site of the old school in 1978. This is now John W. Bate Middle School. It was one of the first middle schools in the state designed to meet the needs of adolescents.

Turn left onto **Martin Luther King Boulevard**, originally Green St. The name was changed in 1988 to honor the civil rights leader. Its east end contained many African American residences and the original site of what is now the Second Street Christian Church. On the right, note the **Doram Sledd House**.

Doram-Sledd House, 233 E. Martin Luther King Blvd. -- This home was built about 1845 by Dennis Doram (1797-1869). The grandson of Revolutionary War soldier General Thomas Barbee, Doram was born into slavery but freed by Barbee's will at the age of 31. Dennis married Diademia Taylor (1810-1883) who was emancipated in 1814. They owned hundreds of acres of land in Danville and at Clifton, and were the wealthiest African Americans in Boyle County. Members of the Doram family lived in the house from 1845 to 1929, when the Spillman family purchased the home. Gertrude Spillman Sledd (1890-1991) graduated from Wilberforce University and later earned her Master's Degree from the University of Cincinnati. Most of her teaching career was spent at Bate.

Continuing on MLK Blvd, at So 2nd St., note the **Second Street Christian Church** on northeast corner.

The **Second Street Christian Church** began when a group of African Americans left their previous church in the late 1800s. and moved to a location on Green St about 0.2 miles from Stanford Avenue. That building was sold and the congregation held services on Main St. for a time. In 1927 they purchased the New Mission Baptist Church, which had been erected 1908-1914, and is notable for both its Romanesque Revival architecture and the fact that it was constructed using hand-made concrete blocks made in a mold purchased from Sears Roebuck. The church is still in use today.

Turn right then left at light onto West Walnut. Note **First Baptist Church** on southwest corner.

First Baptist Church, 200 W. Walnut St. The oldest Baptist church for African Americans in Danville began in 1846 when 123 black members left the white Baptist Church to form their own congregation. Under several names and locations over the years, First Baptist has always been a leader in the religious, social, and educational lives of African Americans in Danville and Kentucky. The church has been at the corner of Second and Walnut Streets since early in the 20th century. A fire destroyed the building on December 26, 1966, and the current church was constructed in 1967.

Continue on West Walnut through 2 traffic lights. At the corner of W. Walnut and Church Sts., note a one-story tan building. This was the site of the pre-Civil War "**Concord**" **Presbyterian Church, school and possible cemetery**.

Turn left College Street, then go to the end. Turn left onto **Russell St.**, running west of South 4th St., the site of many middle class African American homes.

Home of **Prof. John William Bate** (509), Built in 1870, this was home to John William Bate (1854 - 1945), the son of John Bate, a slave owner, and Nancy Dickerson, a slave. John W. Bate lived here from 1899 until his death in 1945. John W. Bate took his first teaching job in one of Danville's one-room African American school houses. He transformed the school into an accredited standard high school where he was principal and teacher for 59 years.

Though no longer extant, 520 Russell was the home of veterinarian **Dr. Thomas Madison Doram** (1871-1941), the first degreed African American veterinarian in Kentucky and the second in the US. He was the grandson of Dennis and Diademia Taylor Doram. He received his degree from the McKillip Veterinary College in 1899. Within two years he had moved back to Danville where, in addition to his veterinary practice, he was part of the Central Kentucky Funeral and Embalming Company and an active member of the Republican Party.

Turn right down S. 4th St. to Bate St. then turn right, and note **Smith-Jackson Funeral Home** on left.

Smith-Jackson Funeral Home, 446 Bate St. This business was owned and operated as a partnership between Ashby Jackson, the original owner, and John W. Smith. They ran the business on S. 2nd St. from 1939, when Smith bought a half-interest, until 1945, when Smith bought the business outright. The funeral home was later moved to "Crutchfield House," an historic home on Bate St., where it is still in operation today.

Passing through their entry road, return to S. 4th St. and turn left onto Fackler St. This whole area of Danville, including Fackler, Dillehay, Oak Streets and others, housed many African-Americans.

Continue on Fackler, crossing S. 3rd St. , to S. 2nd St

Turn left and return to Constitution Square.

WESTERN TOUR:

Begin at Grayson's Tavern. Head West on Walnut Ave, and turn right to head south on S. 2nd St.

On the left, just past MLK Blvd was the "**Colored Division**" of Kentucky School for the Deaf.

On the right across from last KSD building was "**Club Hollywood**", a major nightspot for African Americans.

Neighborhoods -- Fackler, Dillehay and Oak Streets were traditionally African American neighborhoods. Oak Street, which was partially closed in 1986 and completely removed in 2005, was once home to several families. All these streets were affected by urban renewal. Other African American neighborhoods included S. 3rd, Irish Court, McGrorty, Bate, Russell, Fern, Fryes Lane, Southern Ave., 7th, Rowe, Cowan, Fairview, Green (now MLK), Walnut, McGrorty, Duncan Hill and Randolph Hill. Foggy Bottom was an area between Walnut and Main.

Some of these streets did not experience urban renewal. **Rowe St.**, between N. 5th St. and N. 7th St., was another historic African American neighborhood. There were many interconnections between the Rowe and Doram families. The neighborhood was changed dramatically by Urban Renewal after Centre College purchased much of the area.

On left is Bate-Wood Homes, the "colored" housing project built in the 1950s.

Batewood Homes, just south of the Kentucky School for the Deaf on 2nd St., named for J. W. Bate and the Rev. J. E. Wood (1867-1929), was originally a segregated public housing project for African Americans. The first units were built and occupied by 1953.

On right, at Clark's run, site of "**Swingland**" club, another nightspot, originally the Wallace Fisher VFW Post.

The first road on right after Clark's Run is **Randolph Hill**, once a major African American neighborhood.

Turn left to **Duncan Hill Road**.

The "**Red Top Club**" was down over the hill, where the road turns sharply to the right.

Continuing to the left turn, note on the left, the paved area behind the first house. This was the parking lot for the **Ponderosa Club**, one of the most active, and longest-lived African American clubs in Danville.

Duncan Hill Rd. -- Duncan Hill was a well known residential, commercial, and sometimes notorious entertainment district for African Americans in Danville.

Hilldale Cemetery, Duncan Hill Rd. -- Hilldale is the largest cemetery in Danville traditionally used by African Americans. Still in use today, it contains at least 3,800 recorded burials dating back to 1869. Older tombstones probably indicate re-internments from earlier grave sites. In 1962 the city of Danville took over operation and maintenance from the Hilldale Cemetery Society of Danville.

Continue past Hilldale Cemetery, past **Hope Full Gospel Church**, to end of road and **Foag's Park Baseball Field**.

Foag's Park, at the end of Duncan Hill Road was also known as Davis Park, Sportsman's Park and Old Fort Park, was owned or leased by African American farmer Gene Kinley, who rented space for ball games, track meets, festivals, and picnics. The 4th of July picnic was a highlight of the summer for many years. The park was in use until the 1980s.

Return to S. 2nd St. and turn left toward Hustonville Road.

Turn south on Hustonville Rd. (US-127) and continue 3.2 miles.

Turn left onto E. Meigs Lane.

Meigs Cemetery, E. Meigs Ln., Junction City, with 5 known and possibly several unknown burials, was established as late as 1897, when the first recorded burial is noted. David Meigs was born about 1829 and all known burials are Meigs family members. The cemetery is maintained by the city of Junction City.

At end of E. Meigs Lane, turn right.

At junction of KY-300, note Simpson Lane on left where the **Shelby City Colored School** and **Shelby City Colored Baptist Church** were once located. The church was also located, at one time, just north of the intersection of US-127 and KY-300.

Continue south 0.7 miles, and turn left onto Short Acres Road to **Shelby City African American Cemetery**.

The **Shelby City African American Cemetery**, 370 Short Acres Road, located just over the county line in Lincoln County, was reportedly Gov. Isaac Shelby's slave cemetery, although names buried here also include two other nearby plantation owners, the Warren and the Givens families. The cemetery contains 179 known burials, including several Civil War veterans, a World War I "Harlem Hellfighter," and a casualty of World War II.

Return to junction of Simpson Lane, KY-300 and Old Hustonville Road.

Shelby City, now merged with Junction City, was one of the communities whose significant black population lived within a majority white community. At one time, Shelby City had a black-owned boarding house, a black baseball team that played Danville frequently, and an **AME church**. The former AME Church, across Shelby St. from Farmer's Bank, was founded by Wallace Fisher from Danville, and ceased to exist in the 1970s as the black population of Shelby City declined, although the building is still used as a church.

Turn left onto Shelby St., KY-300. Continue west on KY-300 for 1.6 miles, then left onto Worldstown Road, 0.4 miles to **Worldstown Cemetery**, now just a small cluster of trees on the ridge to the east.

Worldstown, located west of Junction City on Worldstown Rd., was a black community separate from any white communities. It was never very large, but it did have a cemetery with 34 known burials, now mostly destroyed and bulldozed into a nearby farm pond.

Return to KY-300, and continue west 2.1 miles on KY-300 then turn left onto Persimmon Knob Road.

At junction of Persimmon Knob Road and Fitzgerald Road, note former locations of **Persimmon Knob**, also known as **Zion Hill**. There was once a sawmill, a country store (located near the present-day fire tower), a restaurant, a school, and an AME Church. The cemetery has 115 known burials and many more unknown. Everything is gone now except the cemetery which has had recent burials.

Return to KY-300 and turn left to Wilsonville. After 2.1 miles, turn left onto AME Church Road.

Here are located the **St James AME Church** (sometimes called Parksville Methodist), **Wilsonville Cemetery** and the **Wilsonville Colored School**. Numerous abandoned houses and cellar holes indicate the Wilsonville settlement. Wilsonville developed along the Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad, which probably employed many of its residents. The church was extensively altered in the twentieth century and remained in operation until recently. The school building has been vacant since the early 1960s and faces deterioration from neglect. Long-time teacher, Ella Mae Marshall, taught at the school from 1932 to 1962. The cemetery is still in use. The community was named for Charlie Wilson, a freed slave who had been given the land by his former owner.

Return to KY-300 and turn left. Continue through Parksville, taking KY-34 to Mitchellsburg, 3.2 miles.

On the left, Old New Pike was site of Colored Church, cemetery and school.

Mitchellsburg, located at the junction of KY 300 and KY 1856, is a small unincorporated town that once included an African American community within a majority white settlement. After the Civil War, Mitchellsburg contained a school, a church, and a cemetery with 46 known burials and many unknown ones. As of 1983, there was only one black family left here. Much of the African American settlement was located along present-day Scrubgrass Road.

If you continue on this road and US-68, 5.1 miles, then turn left onto Ward's Branch Road, you will come to the **Aliceton** community. Aliceton was an African American community within a majority white settlement. At one time it contained a colored church, possibly Presbyterian, a school, and a cemetery with five known burials.

Turn right onto KY-1856 toward Perryville. After 4.2 miles, at the junction of KY-1856 and US-150, turn left.

After 0.3 miles, turn right on to R. L. Sleet St., for the the Amelia Sleet Burton Colored School, Perryville Baptist Church, and the Perryville Springhill Cemetery.

Amelia Sleet Burton Colored School, R. L. Sleet St. Amelia Sleet Burton began her teaching career at the age of 16 in 1935 in this two-room schoolhouse that served black children in the Perryville area from the early 1800s until its closure in the 1960s. She went on to teach 29 years in Danville, where she was the first African American teacher at the all-white Jennie Rogers Elementary and was instrumental in the process of desegregation. She received Kentucky's first Distinguished Teacher Award in 1983. Restoration of the building began in 2014 and it was renamed in honor of Burton.

Perryville Springhill Cemetery, R. L. Sleet St. Established in 1910, this cemetery contains 382 documented burials, although there may have been more burials there before the cemetery was formally established.

Perryville Baptist Church, W. 1st St. Perryville Baptist Church was formed when members of the First Baptist Church of Danville, also known as the "Colored Baptist Church," separated from that congregation during the ministry of Isaac Slaughter in the late 19th century.

At end of R. L. Sleet St., turn right onto W. 1st Street to North Jackson St (KY-1920). Continue north 0.3 miles on KY-1920 to Hays-Mays Road (road sign is not visible until after the turn).

Stop at 1.2 miles, where the road crosses Doctor's Fork and note a dirt road lading into the Perryville Battlefield Park. **Sleettown** was along this road. When descendants of Warner Sleet returned to Boyle County after the Civil War, they settled where one of the deadliest battles of the war had been fought: the site of the Battle of Perryville. The three original families were soon followed by others and the settlement grew and prospered. Before long there was a church, a store, a restaurant, and other businesses. Many of the men worked as sharecroppers and their wives managed the households. Eventually a slow migration to nearby Perryville in the early 20th century led to a gradual decline that the Great Depression worsened, until Sleettown no longer existed. The land where it once stood is now part of the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site. A walking map to the remaining structure (visible from the road) is available at the battlefield. Return to downtown Perryville on KY-1920, and turn left, through Perryville, 4 miles, to Needmore.

Turn left onto Needmore Road, then left onto Old Schoolhouse Road.

Going up the hill, on the left were the **Atoka Baptist Church** and the **Atoka Colored School**. At the end of the road, on private property, is **Atoka Cemetery** with 44 known burials. Atoka is also called Needmore in some records, but early maps call it Atoka. Return to Needmore Road, turn right, and then left again, onto US-150.

New Deliverance Church is 3 miles on the right, just past Hughes Lane. This church was an outgrowth of the **Church of God of America**, which was located on West MLK Boulevard, but burned in 2010.

Continue on US-150, passing by Boyle County High School and Centenary Methodist Church.

Turn right onto Beech Street. Continue to the end of Beech, then turn left onto West Walnut. This is the heart of West Danville. Shortly after turning onto West Walnut, **Danville Bethel Baptist Church** is on your left.

Danville Bethel Baptist Church, 309 Cowan St., was organized by Rev. E. B. Coleman in 1925. The first building was built on land he and his wife Maggie donated to the church. New buildings were erected in 1962 and 2013.

Continue to end of West Walnut St.

The field to your right is the **Danville "Cubs" ball field**, and the street on your left, Fairview, originally led to the **Meadow Lane Cemetery**. Baseball provided the African American community an opportunity to cast aside cares and worries and get together socially. The local African American league flourished through the 1970s. The Danville Cubs' home field was at the Lebanon Pike Park in West Danville. Head east on West Walnut, then turn right onto Cowan St. Stop at Kilby Lane (formerly Meadow Lane) and note the wooded area to the left of the house at the end. This is **Meadow Lane Cemetery**.

Meadow Lane Cemetery, was variously known as Locust Grove, Lebanon Pike, or Fairview. The first known interment was Susan (Penman) Davis. It is the earliest known documented African American cemetery in Boyle County, with burials dating from 1869 to 1953. The cemetery fell into disrepair and was the site of several community-based clean-up efforts after 1992.

At the end of Cowan St, turn left onto KY-34, Lebanon Road.

As you pass through the Centre Campus, note Pearl Hall on the left. This was the site of the original **N. 7th St.**

N. 7th St. was the site of the first Urban Renewal project in Danville. Many African American homes were torn down, displacing about 60 families. By 1961, Centre College had purchased much of the land that was 7th St. for dormitories.

Return to Goldsmith House.