

County history compiled for festival

A Brief History of Crittenden County
By Braxton McDonald

In the year 1961, Crittenden County was getting ready to have a big celebration, which would be known as the Frontier Festival. It would take place for three days in the fall, Sept.14, 15, and 16. A gathering of history was started for the whole county. From all the information gathered, a small booklet was made titled Crittenden Frontier Festival. It is a treasure if you have one. There is a lot of our history recorded in this little booklet. Braxton McDonald compiled a brief history of the county which is very interested and informative. Here is his article.



Brenda Underdown
County Historian

Forgotten Passages

James Armstrong, first settler

Soon after the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Fincastle County, Va., was divided into three new counties. One of these was named Kentucky. Four years later Kentucky County was divided into the counties of Fayette, Jefferson and Lincoln, the county of Lincoln composing the western part.

When Kentucky became a state in 1792, Logan County was formed from the western part of Lincoln County, and in 1796 Christian County was formed from the western part of Logan County. Just two years later, in 1798, Livingston County was formed from the western part of Christian County. At the time of the formation, Livingston County composed all that vast area from Christian County to the Ohio River and what later became the Jackson Purchase. About a dozen counties were formed from this area, includ-

ing Crittenden County.

It was found that a site on Livingston Creek in what is now Crittenden County was the center of the settled portion of this new territory, and a seat of government was established there in 1799 and named Centerville. A courthouse and jail were built, and a Government Land Grant office established. The town grew rapidly for a few years, soon reaching its peak of about 300 population. It soon declined just as rapidly, however, as new counties were formed from the mother county of Livingston. When Caldwell County was established in 1809, Centerville lost the seat of government to Salem.

James Armstrong, a native of South Carolina, was the first actual settler in the territory of what is now Crittenden County. He went to Russellville in 1785 by pack horse. There he found that all the best land had been entered, and he and his faithful horse ventured into the great new unsettled territory of western Kentucky.

After his claim was established about midsummer of 1791, Mr. Armstrong brought his family from South Carolina to live in their new home in the wilderness. By this time other families were settling in the territory, and between 1785 and 1800 about 60 families were settling in the territory.

Area Grew Rapidly

In general these early settlers were of English, Scotch and Irish descent. They were true American citizens, intelligent, patriotic, courageous and deeply religious.

From 1800 to 1840 the area grew very rapidly in pop-

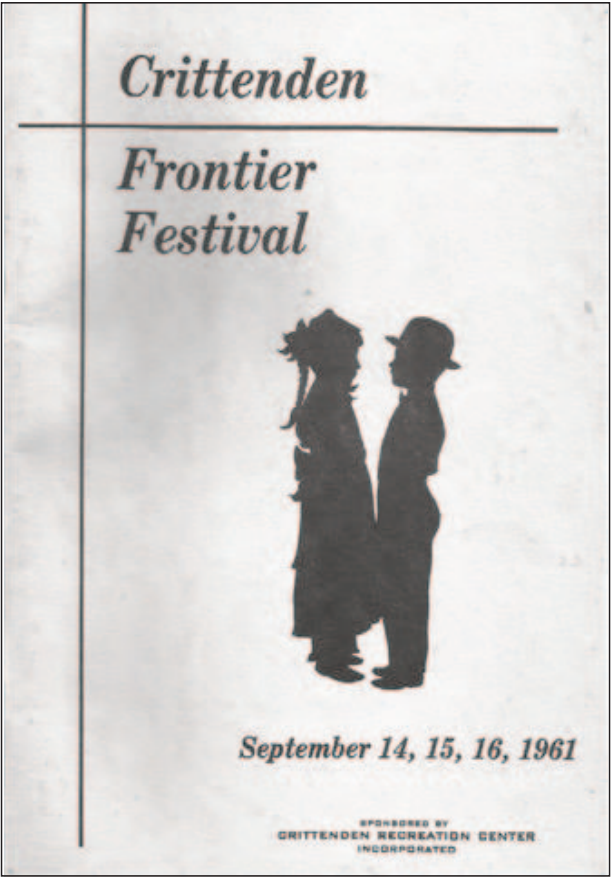
ulation. By 1840 nearly 10,000 people lived within the 800 square mile area of Livingston County.

There were only three voting precincts, and it was over 30 miles distant from the remote eastern and western sections. The people of these far off sections conceived the idea of a division, and this grew into some shape when the time came for the legislative election in 1840, when Joseph Watts, a divisionist, was elected.

The next election was a very hot contest between the Divisionists and the Anti-Divisionists. The campaigning was vigorous, the issue being debated at public gatherings throughout the county. At the polls the eastern and western sections won over the center by the election of Dr. John S. Gilliam. Dr. Gilliam was returned to the legislature in 1842, and it was through his earnest efforts that the legislature passed an act approved Jan. 26, 1842 which established the new county of Crittenden to take full and legal effect on the first day of April, 1842.

Since its formation, Crittenden County has been fairly evenly divided between the two major political parties. At first the Democratic party out numbered the Whigs. In general, however, for several years before the Civil War very little interest was shown in politics. Primary elections and County Committees were unknown, and sometimes one candidate would run for two or more different offices.

The presidential election of 1854, however, infused new life into politics as the great issues leading to the war developed. From this great interest and concern, four political groups became recognized in the county. They were the Democrats, the Conservative Democrats, or Union men,



This small history pamphlet was prepared for the event. It is full of many interesting history articles, facts and stories of happening, and businesses that were in the county, plus pictures and articles on some of the historical people that helped form our county. Braxton McDonald wrote many of the articles in the pamphlet.

the Whigs, and the Know Nothings.

Reconstruction after the war

In general just before the war, the Democrats dominated the elections, but by the election of 1862 the elections were dominated by the Republicans. Crittenden County was thus caught squarely between the ideals of both the North and South during the great war. During the middle and latter periods of the war, guerrilla parties from both sides entered and ravaged homes, took property and livestock and in some cases killed sympathizers of the opposite side.

Being the type of people they were, all these heartaches and disasters of war were taken in stride, and they set about immediately to the great task of the rebuilding of Crittenden County.

Reconstruction was a great task because of the comparative lack of wealth and resources available. Basic with the ideals of the people, im-

provement of the churches and schools were started almost immediately.

Marion took a great lead in education in Kentucky when it established the Marion Academy right after the Civil War in 1868. The academic courses were extensive and were conducted in such a way as to bring great credit and respect to Marion and to Crittenden County.

Population increased rapidly and agriculture became the major industry. The development of the mineral resources received impetus, and soon the fluorspar areas were humming with activity. Within 30 years after the Civil War, the population had risen to nearly 13,000 and the school census of 1892 shows 4,505 white children and 404 colored children of school age in the county.

First Mining

In area, Crittenden County contains 391 square miles. In general it is a dissected plateau. The surface is generally broken,

high and rolling. The area is very completely faulted and is in the center of one of the richest deposits of fluorspar regions of the world.

Crittenden County is rich in minerals. The first mining in the county was done by the Mound Builders, as is proven by the items of ornaments they made of fluorspar. (Tolu area)

The first mining done by the early settlers was at the time Andrew Jackson, who owned many acres in the Hurricane District, where he mined ore and set up a blast furnace. At this time, he found fluorspar and lead but not knowing the value of it, threw it into the dump heap. Lead and zinc have also been produced and some coal is found in the northern part of the county. (Bells Mines)

Facts About Our County

The county is largely bounded by three rivers, namely the Ohio and Trade-water rivers on the north and east, and the Cumberland River on the south.

Five major creeks drain the county. These are Crooked Creek, Hurricane Creek, Camp Creek, Piney Creek and Livingston Creek.

The highest point in the county is the peak of Wilson Hill Near Marion, with an altitude of 843 feet. The lowest point is 330 feet at low water on the Ohio River at the mouth of Deer Creek.

The Flynn's Ferry Road and other roads of the county, for over 100 years, was the leading Kentucky route for frontiers who settled the states of Illinois, Indiana and Missouri.

(Brenda Underdown is chair of Crittenden County Historical Society and a member of Crittenden County Genealogical Society. Much more local history can be found at OurForgottenPassages.blogspot.com.)

Free LBL app offers digital recreational access

Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area has a free mobile app, making it easier to explore LBL's trails, plan visits and see sched-

uled activities in the recreation area.

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Crittenden County Board of Education Proposed Tax Notification

The Crittenden County Board of Education is proposing a general fund tax levy of 51.8 cents on real property and 52.3 cents on personal property.

The General Fund tax levied in fiscal year 2026 was 51.6 cents on real property and 52.1 cents on personal property and produced revenue of \$2,727,346.49. The proposed General Fund tax rate of 51.8 cents on real property and 52.3 cents on personal property is expected to produce \$2,888,173.76. Of this amount, \$467,836.43 is from new and personal property. The compensating tax for 2027 is 50.2 cents on real property and 50.2 cents on personal property and is expected to produce \$2,794,826.36.

The proposed rate is expected to generate more revenue than received in the preceding year. The general areas to which revenue of \$160,827.27 above 2026 revenue is to be allocated are as follows: Cost of collections, \$6,433.09; Building Fund, \$80.41; Instruction, \$154,313.77.

This information is published pursuant to KRS 160.470. The proposed tax rate is not subject to recall under KRS 132.017.

The General Assembly has required publication of this advertisement and information contained herein.

NOTICE OF PASSAGE AND SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE

ORDINANCE NO. 26-O-009 AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO ELECTRICAL INSPECTION FEE SCHEDULE

Notice is hereby given that the Fiscal Court of Crittenden County Kentucky, at a special called meeting held on July 30, 2026, at 4:00 o'clock p.m., gave second reading and passed and adopted an Ordinance relating to the Ordinances of the Crittenden County Fiscal Court, which Ordinance had been given its first reading at its regular meeting of the Fiscal Court held on July 16, 2026, at 8:30 o'clock a.m. A summary of the Ordinance is as follows:

This Ordinance repeals Ordinance 15-006 and establishes the inspection fee schedule for residential and commercial construction.

The full text of the Ordinance is on file in the Office of the County Clerk in the County Administrative Office Building, Industrial Drive, Marion, Kentucky, where it is available for public inspection.

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