

BRACKEN COUNTY

*Nora Heikey*

Bracken County was formed in 1796 from parts of Campbell and Mason Counties. It is situated in the northern part of the state on the banks of the Ohio River and is bounded on the North by the Ohio River, on the East by Mason County, on the West by Pendleton County, on the South-west by Harrison County and on the South-east by Nicholas County. It consists of 130,560 acres of land with 96.5% of this listed in farms. The land is high and the surface rolling and hilly, the richest land is in the Eastern part and the rest back from the river is strong oak land that produces large quantities of the famous fine "Mason County Tobacco".

Bracken County derived its name from two creeks, Big and Little Bracken, and these creeks were called in honor of William Bracken who settled on the banks of one of them in 1773 and is supposed to have been killed by the Indians at an early date in the settlement of Kentucky.

The population of the County in 1920 was 10,210 with foreign born whites constituting only 1.1% of the entire population. The early settlers of the county consisted of many distinguished families from Virginia and Pennsylvania who introduced the customs of their former homes into this new settlement.

The altitude of the county range from 480 to about 925 feet above sea level.

The principal towns of Bracken County are Augusta, the former County Seat, Brooksville, the present County Seat, Germantown, Powersville, Foster, Milford, and Bradford. Interesting is the fact that the County seat was at first called Oxford and was located one mile east of Brooksville. It remained here only a short time before it was moved to Augusta.

375 ✓  
Augusta is the largest town in the County with a population of approximately 1,800.. The descendents of the early settlers know of no special reason why this name was selected for the colony.

Augusta is located on the banks of the Ohio River nine miles from Brooksville, the County seat, on highway 19.

The altitude range from 480 to 925 degrees above sea level.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad connect Augusta with Cincinnati, Ohio and Maysville, Kentucky. A taxi service is accessible to Brooksville, the County seat. Many miles of highly surfaced road lead throughout the County and soon the Mary Inglis Highway will be completed and will pass through Augusta from Newport, Kentucky to Maysville, Kentucky.

There are two hotels in Augusta, The Parkview and the Riverside Inn. The Parkview is located on highway 19. It is associated with the AAA Club and the AHA Club. The hotel and dining room are modern in every respect. The rooms rent for \$1.50 and \$2.00 per night. Patrons wishing garage storage are directed to nearby garages. Meals are served for \$.50, \$.60, and \$.75. Mr. Bennell J. Kruell is manager. The Riverside Inn has approximately 15 rooms, ranging in price from \$1.00 to \$2.00. Cars are also directed to nearby storages.

Augusta has a mild climate typical of the Northern Kentucky River valley.

375 ✓  
Captain Philip Buckner was one of the early settlers of Augusta. He was a Virginian who took an active part in the Revolutionary War, furnishing large quantities of money. In return he was given Land Office Treasury Warrants for this section of

Kentucky and part of Ohio. One grant alone in Fayette County was for 7,000 acres and another was for 28,000 acres with its northern border the Ohio from Bracken Creek to Lawrence Creek and its southern border the North Fork of the Licking. It included Germantown, Brooksville, and Berlyn, and the present site of Mt. Olivet. Philip Buckner's first trip through what is now Bracken County was in 1781, but with his family went on down the river to what is now Louisville, then Beargrass, Kentucky. Soon he returned to Virginia and interested others in his new enterprise. Then with his family, servants, and other Virginians returned to the present site of Augusta and made a colony, giving 600 acres of land for the city to be erected on and vested the title in Trustees. He was an engineer and the lots are today as they were marked off then. Philip Buckner purchased at public auction two squares and donated one to the city for educational purposes, and the other for a court house. Commissioners were appointed to draw an accurate plan for a court house on this lot and a fine old colonial building was completed in 1800. This building was razed to the ground in 1936. At present the lot remains deeded to Bracken County by Philip Buckner and is unoccupied.

In 1799 Bracken Academy, one of the best literary institutions in the West, was established. The General Assembly of Kentucky, of which Philip Buckner was a member, donated 6,000 acres of land for educational purposes. They sold the ground and used the proceeds for the Academy. In 1822 it became the first Methodist College in the world. Rev. Martin Ruter, DD, and Rev. Jas. S. Tomleson DD, were among the first presidents. Rev. Henry B. Bascom

(afterward a Bishop of the Methodist E. Church South), and Rev. Burr H. McCown, DD were among the professors. The library contained 25,000 volumes. This building was destroyed by fire January 29, 1852 but was rebuilt in plainer style and at present the modern high school is located on this lot.

On Sept. 1862 a battle was fought at Augusta between 125 home guards under Col.(Dr) Joshua Taylor Bradford stationed in brick houses and about 350 of Col (Dr) Basel W. Duke's regiment in the streets and they were forced to burn nearly all the buildings in two squares in order to dislodge the home guards who soon surrendered.

At present Augusta is a pretty residential town with many modern homes. The social life is centered about its many clubs of whom the Red Men, DAR, Masonic Lodge, Garden Club, Odd Fellows, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Rotary Club, Twentieth Century Club, and some social and literary clubs are outstanding. The Rotary Club have a dinner meeting every Monday evening at seven o'clock at the Parkview Hotel.

There are ten grocery, one dry goods, and three drug stores, 3 restaurants, 2 confectioneries, and two garages in the city. The Liberty and Farmers Banks are located here and serve the citizens and farmers of this section. Augusta has a good fire department, post office, and city building. The citizens regret that their chamber of commerce is inactive at present. There is a Methodist, Christian, Baptist, Nazarine, Catholic, and Presbyterian Church here. The Presbyterian Church was the first one built here, in 1815, followed by the Episcopal Church in 1820.



The Knodler Memorial Library is a source of pride to the residents of Augusta. It was donated to the city by Philip Knodler of Chicago, Illinois in honor of his parents who were residents of this city. It is a brick building located on highway 19 at the entrance to the city. The city donated some books and others were secured through public subscription. The exact number of books is unknown as they have never been numbered. It is opened to the public every Friday afternoon and evening.

The Bracken Chronical, edited and published by Mr. J. A. Thompson, is the only publication in Augusta/ It has been in the Thompson family since 1891.

Farming is the chief industry in the county and some of the fine blue grass tobacco comes from sections near Augusta.

The main industries of Augusta are centered around its automobile and mechanic specialities Company and its shoe factory.

The L. V. Mark Shoe factory located on Fourth street employs approximately 175 persons. Mr. R. J. Kaufman has been in the shoe business for a number of years and is now the capable manager of the plant.

The Neider Factory, located on Seminary Avenue employs 45 persons. It manufactures thousands of machine specialities and small parts for automobiles.

The Kentucky Mutual Telephone Company and the Kentucky Power and Light have an office here and serve the community. The city is also served with pure water from a modern system.

The Oedon Theatre, located on Upper Street, has an evening

and matinee show for a fee of twenty-five cents. The high school has a gymnasium and basket ball is enjoyed throughout the winter season. The river provides an excellent bathing beach. A lot, consisting of two acres of ground, is located on Main Street. It is deeded by Philip Buckner to Bracken County and is unoccupied. At present there are tennis courts here, but the DAR and the Garden Club have petitioned Commissioner Bailey Wooten to establish this square as a public shrine and these two clubs will assist in beautifying the lot.

Augusta has one of the two city high schools in the County. Graded schools are located throughout the County at Stonewall, Sheridan, Neave, Milford, Lenoxburg, Foster, Zion, Chatam, Petra, Powersville, Johnsonville, Berlin, Bladstown, Ohio Valley, Willow, Oakland, Germantown and Brooksville. Milford and Germantown also have County High Schools.

It is interesting to note that the land on which Augusta is built was at one time a large burying ground for the ancients. A post hole can not be dug without turning up human bones, which were of all sizes. There is no tradition among the Indians that any town was located or battle fought here. A scientific writer in William Gibbs Hunts' Western Review published in Lexington in February 1820 makes repeated allusions to this cemetery. He tells of a clay rattle formed into the shape of a parrot or cockatoo's head. He had two bracelets that were taken from the left arm of a female skeleton found here.

Page 7

The cyclone of 1858 and the flood of 1907 took many of the old landmarks from Augusta, but some old interesting homes are still to be located. The lot where the Len Weiltneir house is built was one of the first lots sold in Augusta after the city was incorporated in 1797. The F. C. McKibben home on Front Street is one of the oldest houses in town. The Marshall home located on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad is a good log house. The dormitory buildings of the Augusta College are now used as residents. The building occupied by C. R. McNamer dates back to 1850. It was used for the first Chesapeake and Ohio station in Augusta. The home of Mrs. Marion Lauderback on Riverside Drive is an exact duplication of the Old Kentucky Home.

About 1860 Augusta promised to be another Rhine for wine. Abraham Baker built a wine cellar and planted a vineyard on the land now owned by Louis Hafer, one mile from Augusta. The cellar cost \$22,000.00 and was sufficiently large that a four horse team and wagon could be turned in it. However, an insect killed the vineyards and thus ended the wine industry in this County. Today the Baker and the Bendal Cellars stand as a memory to this enterprise.

Augusta does not have sufficient industries to care for its residents not engaged in farming. They have made attractive offers to many concerns in an attempt to have them locate here. The river with a good harbor and the railroad furnishes accessible exports and imports facilities. Labor and housing are adequate and reasonable.

Brooksville, the second largest city in the County, and the County Seat, was named in honor of Squire David Brooks, who was in the Legislature at the time the County Seat was moved from Augusta to

Brooksville. Before this it had been called Woodward Cross Road.

The population of the city is approximately 600.

The altitude of the County range from 480 to 925 feet above sea level. The highest point in the county is near the Court House which stands in the center of Brooksville.

Brooksville is located in the central part of Bracken County on highways 10 and 19.

There are no railroads in Brooksville at present. Formerly there was a branch line here, but it was discontinued when the tobacco warehouses was absorbed by Maysville. The Blue Ribbon Bus Line provides Brooksville with communication to Maysville, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio. The principal highways, Ky. 10 (the <sup>old</sup> Led Buffalo Trail) and 19 radiate from here thus placing the city on a direct route with the capitals of the bounding counties. With the advent of automobiles and the excellent roads, Brooksville is no longer handicapped by transportation means.

There are two hotels in this city. The home and the Central both located on highway 10 in the central part of town. The home is operated by Mrs. J. T. Brooksing. There are six rooms in this hotel and they range in price from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per room for one night. There are no private baths with any of these rooms. A parking space for automobiles is provided back of the hotel. Meals are served here. Breakfast \$.25 and lunch and dinner is \$.40. The central hotel is operated by Mrs. H. W. Moore. She has six rooms for rent. The single rooms rents for \$1.00 per night while a double room rents for \$1.50 per night. There are no private baths at this hotel, but the entire building is steam heated. Garage accommodations



may be had at nearby garages. No meals are served here but there is a restaurant in the adjoining building.

There are no tourist camps near Brooksville.

The climate here is even as the county is in the heart of the temperate zone.

Until approximately 1839 Brooksville was called Woodward's Cross Road in honor of the early settlers, among whom the Woodward's, Stephan Taylor, Isaac Bay, the Galbreths and Jetts were prominent, having large land grants here at an early date.

In 1839 Squire David Brooks, who was at that time a member of the Legislature succeeded in having the County Seat moved from Augusta to Brooksville. A Court House and jail were erected here and a small town grew up. Interesting is the fact that the first jail consisted of a two story log building. The prisoners were kept in the lower floor and the jailer lived on the top floor. The prisoners were put in jail through a trap door from the upper apartment, and the jailer placed his bed over the door to keep the prisoners in. In 1870 this court house was replaced by a new building which served the need of the County until 1914 when the present new brick building was erected.

The early settlers of Brooksville were Virginians and at present nearly all the population of Brooksville is native born white.

This is an agriculture county, the chief crops being wheat, corn, tobacco, livestock. Formerly there were two loose leaf tobacco warehouses here but they were absorbed by Maysville. Thus ended the branch railroad here, due to insufficient exports to keep the railroad in operation. There is a flour mill here. There are

Page 10

sufficient dry goods, grocery, hardware, and drug stores to supply the people's needs.

There is one bank in Brooksville, the First National, and a post office,, which are located directly opposite the court house.

There is a theatre in Brooksville at the intersection of Kentucky 10/ It has a matinee and evening show, and the nominal fee of twenty five cents is charged. At the high school in Brooksville there is a gymnasium and basket ball is enjoyed throughout the winter months.

One weekly publication is located in Brooksville, The Bracken County News. It is located in the central part of town.

There is a city high school in Brooksville, just back of the court house. It is a modern brick building.

John G. Fee, at the age of 21 had an argument with his father who was going to sell a negro slave and her small child. At the sale John bought the slave but his father refused to give him a bill of sale and the slave was put in jail. John was taken from the State, but soon returned to Kentucky in Lewis County and went on to Madison County. <sup>Carriss</sup> Chas. M. Clay gave him the land for Berea College and he built it for negroes and white alike. After his death it was for whites only. This man spent his early childhood in Bracken County.

Approximately four mile from Brooksville at the intersection of Kentucky 10 and 19, Captain Philip Buckner is buried, on one of his plantations. It has been marked by the Government with a Revolutionary Marker and the D. A. R. is erecting an iron fence around the enclosure. His wife Tibitha Daniel Buckner lies by his side.

Due to Brooksville's location in the central part of the County with no nearby railroad or river connection it has few inducements for industrial expansion. This is strictly an agricultural section.

Germantown, the next largest city is located on the Mason-Bracken border-line and will be included in Mason County. It has a population of approximately 400.

Foster is located in the Northern part of the County on the banks of the Ohio river. It has a graded school. The children are transported to Augusta to high school. A post office is also located here.

Milford is located in the southern part of the county near the Harrison County line. It has a post office and graded and high school.

These cities are typical country towns with sufficient general stores to supply the needs of the community, but since the advent of automobiles, the people shop in the larger cities and the stores in these towns are steadily becoming less important. These towns have no attractions for industrial expansion because they are strictly farming sections.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BRACKEN COUNTY

Collin's History of Kentucky Lewis Collins Published in Maysville, Kentucky by Lewis Collins and J. A. and U. P. James, Cin., O. in 1847. Pages used - 209 and 210

Pick Ups Published monthly by United Power Service Company and its subsidiaries. Chicago, Illinois May, 1929 edition. Page 1.

The Headlight Published Oct. 2, 1897 It was a periodical devoted to the interest of Railroad and Railroad centers. The entire pamphlet, is devoted to Bracken Co.

The Bracken Chronicle Published in Augusta, Ky. by J. A. Thompson Editions of March 26, 1936 and April 9, 1936. Editorial on Old Timer Talks by J. W. Crumbaugh.

The Bracken County News Published in Brooksville, Kentucky April 16, 1936.

Mrs. Mary Armstrong Lauderback, Augusta, Kentucky. She is a member of the D. A. R. and is the great grand daughter of Philip Buckner, founder of Augusta.

Mr. W. T. Breeze, Brooksville, Kentucky. He has written some papers on Bracken County and is a merchant in Brooksville.

Mr. Louie Weber, Augusta, Kentucky. He is the owner of a shoe repair shop in Augusta. He takes an interest in gathering old documents, and relics. He has in his possession a buffalo skull that Dr. Funkhouser believes is thirty thousand years old.

Mrs. Lucy Wilson, Augusta, Kentucky. She is assistant Librarian of the Knoedler Memorial Library.

A paper on Bracken County, Kentucky. Published by the Kentucky Opportunities Department of Associated Industries of Kentucky.

Date of publication not on paper.