

HERITAGE SPOTLIGHT



Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

WHAT An historic road and the archaeological sites along it.

WHERE Bourbon, Fayette, Fleming, Mason, Nicholas, and Robertson counties in Central Kentucky.

WHEN Prehistory, and history to the mid-twentieth century.

SUBJECT An overview of the history and archaeology of the Maysville to Lexington Road and its corridor. Three companion spotlights (*Heritage Spotlights 2, 3, and 4*) discuss the results of archaeological research carried out at a variety of historic-era Bourbon and Fayette county sites due to improvements made to this historic road.

ONLINE Access each Heritage Spotlight by visiting <http://transportation.ky.gov/Archaeology/Pages/default.aspx>

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SPOTLIGHT NO. 1

RIBBON OF HISTORY THE MAYSVILLE TO LEXINGTON ROAD

A. GWYNN HENDERSON AND NANCY O'MALLEY

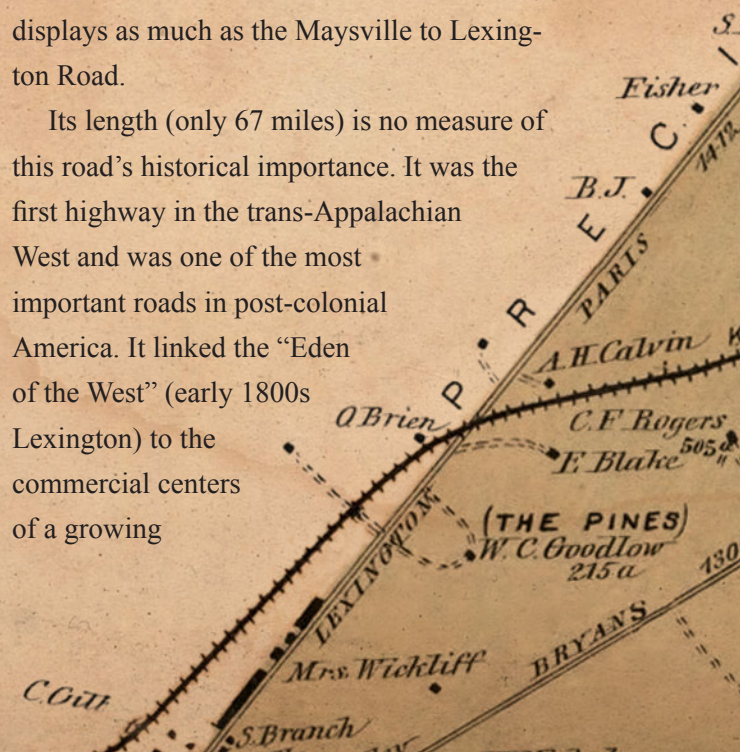
Today's roads and highways are built to be safe, efficient. We rarely notice them until they put obstacles in our path - an accident, a detour - or unless we encounter a particularly bad stretch with potholes and bumps. Travel on modern roads has become so effortless, we measure it in time rather than distance.

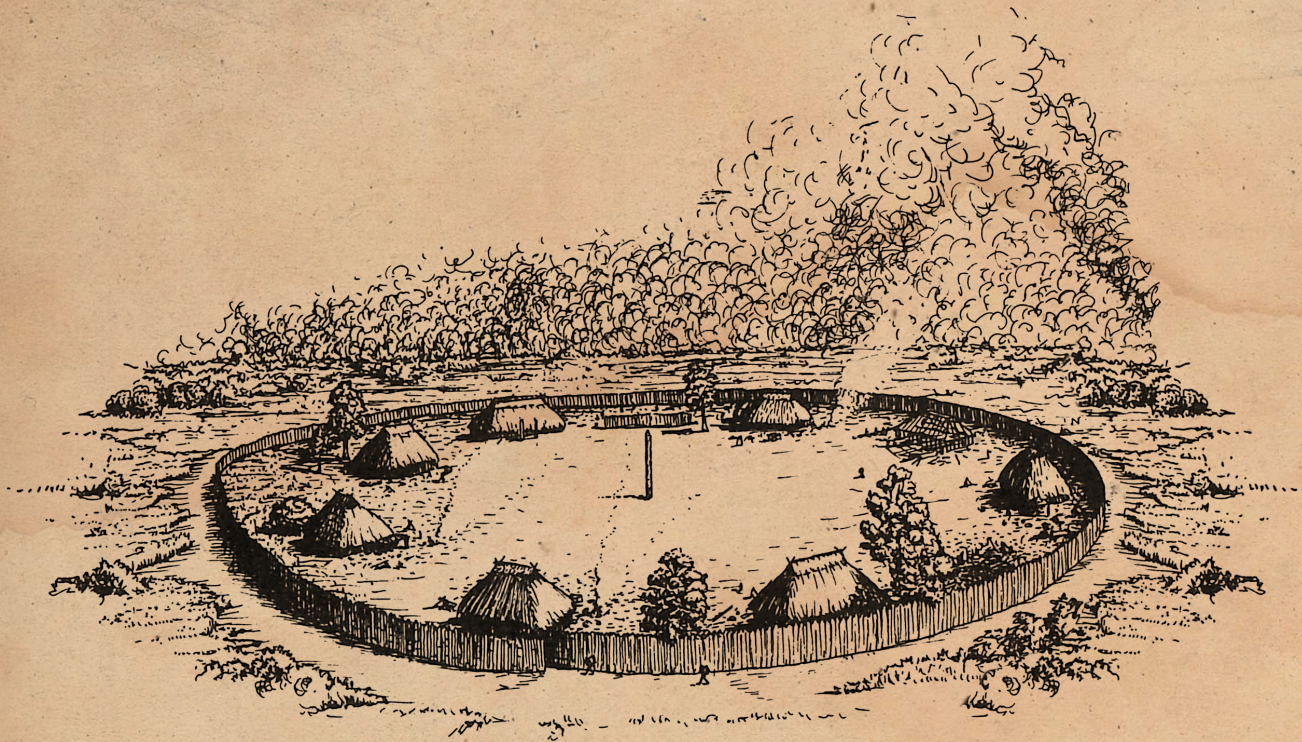
However, roads and their roadsides - the space that sits next to the roadway and extends to the visible horizon - are much more than routes to get us quickly from here to there. They are a special kind of landscape, and they hold their own complex history. "Blue highways," towns bypassed, and curves straightened reveal the history of engineering, modes of travel, and commerce between communities and regions. Roadsides contain the tangible links to local histories and heritage. Moving through these landscapes, we pass by ancient

Native American camps, mounds and villages; late eighteenth-century homesteads and inns; and nineteenth-century farmsteads and forgotten communities. In a very real way, highways and their roadsides are ribbons of history.

All Kentucky roads display a certain amount of historical character. None, however, displays as much as the Maysville to Lexington Road.

Its length (only 67 miles) is no measure of this road's historical importance. It was the first highway in the trans-Appalachian West and was one of the most important roads in post-colonial America. It linked the "Eden of the West" (early 1800s Lexington) to the commercial centers of a growing





A network of overland trails linked prehistoric central Kentucky farming villages, like the one shown here built in the late A.D. 1300s. Travel between villages was important to native groups. By visiting relatives and attending ceremonies in other villages, people maintained social and cultural ties.

nation. Debate swirled around it as two powerful politicians, Senator Henry Clay and President Andrew Jackson, argued over the federal government's role in maintaining regional infrastructure.

But at its core, the Maysville to Lexington Road was as a lifeline for rich and poor, farmers and businessmen. And it was a constant travel companion for locals and visitors alike.

HISTORY AND THE MAYSVILLE TO LEXINGTON ROAD CORRIDOR

The Maysville to Lexington Road starts at the Ohio River. After climbing the steep bluff at Maysville, it extends southward through the rolling Outer Bluegrass. The road begins to trend southwestwardly as it enters the rough Eden Shale Hills past Mayslick. For 20 miles, it winds through steep-sided hills and narrow valleys, emerging just before Millersburg. It continues on through the gently rolling Inner

Bluegrass countryside to Paris before ending in Lexington.

Like all roads, the Maysville to Lexington Road has been anything but static. During its long history, it has changed from trail, to trace, to turnpike, and finally, to highway.

Trail

In prehistory, there was no Maysville, no Lexington. There were no roads as we think of them today. There were only trails. Buffalo, deer, and other herd animals pounded out

Below Senator Henry Clay and President Andrew Jackson battled over many issues during Jackson's presidency. In this 1834 political cartoon, Clay appears to have the upper hand as he wrestles to sew shut Jackson's mouth. But in 1830, Jackson vetoed Clay's bill, which crowned him the victor. His veto was an ironic one. On Jackson's trips home to Nashville, Tennessee, he had to travel the same miserable Maysville to Lexington Trace as everyone else.

some of these trails as they moved from lick to lick and to rich grazing spots. Native Americans, who lived in the region for thousands of years, likely walked these trails, too. But native peoples would have traveled other paths, ones made by human feet threading across the landscape to campsites, villages, and mounds. Sections of old animal trails are still visible west of the current road between Blue Licks and the Fleming County/Mason County line.

Trace

The arrival of European settlers in the late 1700s marks the beginning of the Maysville to Lexington Road as we think of roads today. They knew it as the Limestone Trace.

People traveling to central Kentucky came down the Ohio River on flatboats and stopped at Limestone Landing (present-day Maysville). After transferring their belongings to wagons or pack horses, they followed the Trace inland to Lexington.

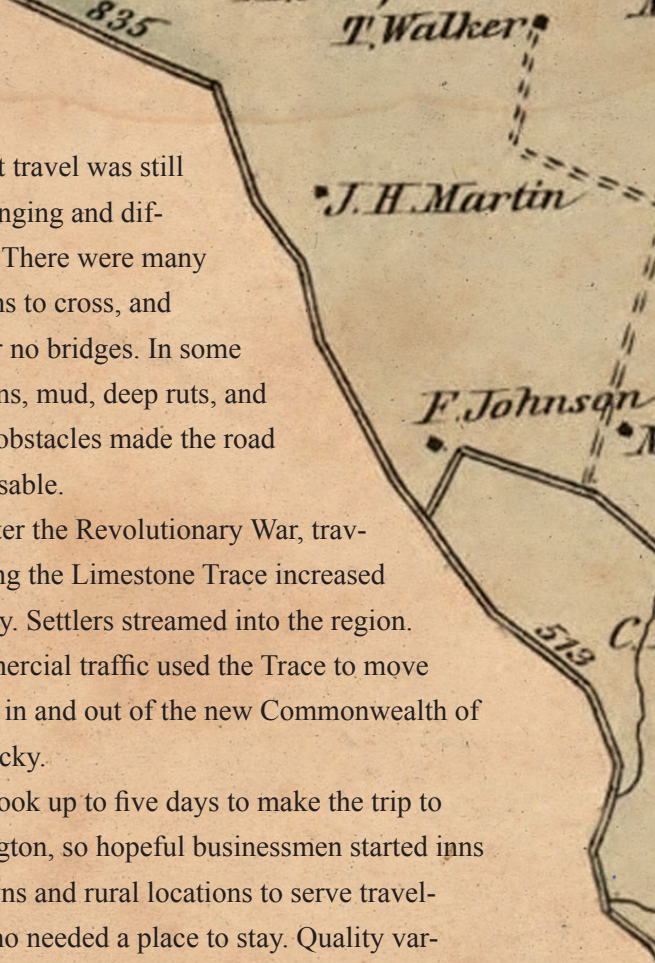
The Trace established the Maysville to Lexington road corridor. Its route was straightforward but sensitive to the local topography. Travelers looked for the most resistant surfaces, the lowest gradients, and the shallowest river crossings. With increased use, trails became wider and the vegetation receded.

But travel was still challenging and difficult. There were many streams to cross, and few or no bridges. In some sections, mud, deep ruts, and other obstacles made the road impassable.

After the Revolutionary War, travel along the Limestone Trace increased sharply. Settlers streamed into the region. Commercial traffic used the Trace to move goods in and out of the new Commonwealth of Kentucky.

It took up to five days to make the trip to Lexington, so hopeful businessmen started inns in towns and rural locations to serve travelers who needed a place to stay. Quality varied widely. Some inns had very simple, even primitive, accommodations. Others were more luxurious.

Small, rural inns were numerous along the unimproved Trace. Most were simply local householders who held tavern licenses. These documents allowed them to charge travelers for a meal and a bed in their own homes.





THE COFFLE GANG.

This 1864 image shows an early nineteenth-century slave trader leading a coffle gang. In 1822, Rev. James H. Dickey witnessed a coffle gang on the Limestone Trace. "I discovered...about forty black men, all chained together....Each of them was handcuffed, and they were arranged in rank and file. A solumn sadness sat on every countenance, and the dismal silence of this march of despair was interrupted only by the sound of two violins...."

Turnpike

Plans for turning the Limestone Trace into a turnpike with a hard surface were developed as early as 1817. They met with little success until 1827.

A bill introduced by Senator Henry Clay (and passed by the U.S. Congress) authorized the federal government to buy \$150,000 of stock in the Maysville, Washington, Paris, and Lexington Turnpike Road Company. President Andrew Jackson vetoed the bill. He argued that federal investment in state road projects was unconstitutional. The Kentucky State

Legislature and private subscribers had to come to the rescue.

Fayette County surveyors James Darnaby and William Ellis, Jr. were appointed to survey the old Limestone Trace and suggest realignments and improvements in its route. Completed in 1827, their map shows the location of private houses, inns, road junctures, and other landmarks between the towns and villages along the route. Many sections of the 1820s road alignment from Paris to Maysville are still visible today as a linear depression to one side or the other of the current road.

It took four years for Irish emigrant laborers working for Irish road contractors to build the Maysville to Lexington Turnpike. Applying John McAdam's new method, they built an all-weather, broken stone "macadam" roadbed. It was the state's first.

Quarry masons supplied stone from roadside quarries for the road pavement and bridge abutments. Other laborers, known as "turn-pikers" cleared the road corridor of trees and obstacles; cut down hills and filled in depressions to create a level roadbed; and built a curb on either side. Using heavy cast iron sieves

called *mortars*, they sized the rock and then spread the 2 ½ inch-diameter stones across the roadbed to the prescribed thickness. Workers finished the first segment, between Maysville and Washington, in 1830.

As five-mile sections were built, the turnpike company erected toll houses and began to collect tolls from travelers. Toll keepers, often of Irish origin, manned the toll houses and lived on the premises. The 67-mile long Turnpike featured 13 tollgates and six covered bridges when it was finally completed in 1835.

The new Turnpike represented an immense leap forward - in travel time, ease of travel, and transportation efficiency. It quickly became a major commercial route. People and vehicles moved thousands of tons of goods along it between Kentucky and points east. Stock traders drove herds of livestock along the road to distant markets.

Three stage lines served the route. The trip between Maysville and Lexington included stops every ten miles to change horses. Initially, passengers paid one or two dollars for their journey. After the road was macadamized, stagecoaches could make the trip in about 10 hours. This put most of the small rural inns out of business. Better-quality taverns and hotels remained in the larger towns. They catered to travelers from higher social classes.



Archaeology In the Road Corridor

The Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor is no stranger to archaeology. One of the earliest archaeological projects carried out anywhere in the Commonwealth took place within it. For several months in the late 1800s, archaeologists excavated at a prehistoric farming village on Fannie Fox's farm in Mason County.

This connection continues. As recently as 2011, archaeologists investigated an early nineteenth-century inn alongside the road in Bourbon County.

In Kentucky archaeology's early years, mainly universities carried out grant-supported research projects. Grants still support some research. However, most archaeological work in the Corridor today is linked to federally funded or licensed projects. For example, before construction can begin on subdivisions, industrial parks, gas pipelines, or highways, archaeologists working for companies and universities must search for sites and investigate the most important ones.

Famous and ordinary people are part of the Maysville to Lexington Road's history.

Top to bottom Portrait of Henry Clay, circa 1818; portrait of Andrew Jackson, circa 1824; early 1800s carpenter; seamstress, circa 1850



Humans have traveled across and within the Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor for millenia. Trails were the routes for much of human history. Trace/Turnpike/Highway travel developed only recently.

Beginning in the mid-1850s, a rail line between Maysville and Lexington competed for business with the stagecoach. Trains took over mail delivery. Travelers liked the more comfortable and faster railroad cars. Eventually, the railroad put the stagecoach line out of business.

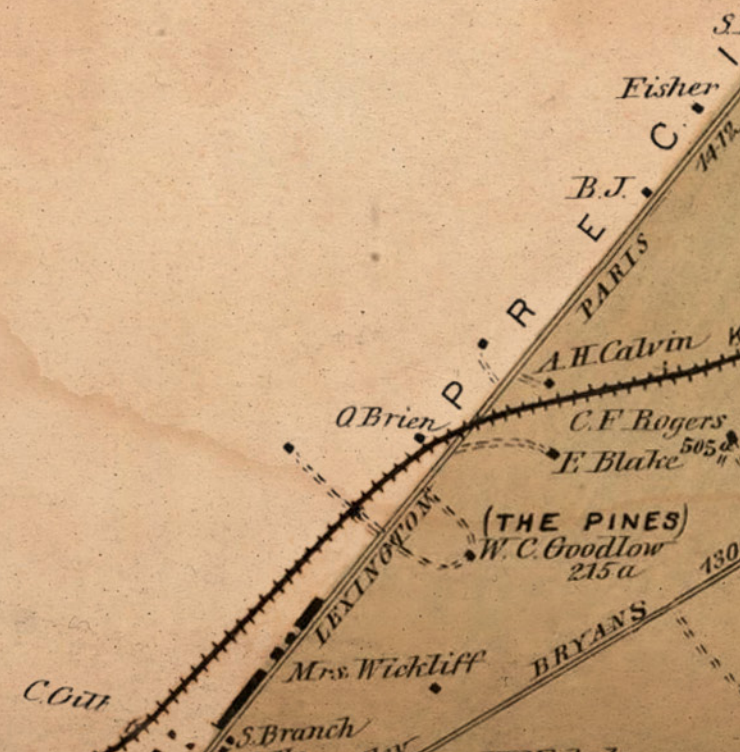
Highway

At the turn of the twentieth century, new machinery and road surfacing methods developed. The Maysville to Lexington Road kept up with the times. Engineers improved the old macadam surface. They used water-bound macadam in 1918, and the next year, they sealed the road with hot asphalt oil. Later projects created a surface that could handle heavy motorized vehicles.

Increasing traffic through the twentieth century exposed road alignment problems dating back to the 1827 survey. A long-term program of road improvement began in the 1920s. Sections were realigned. Curves were straightened; steep grades were lowered, and bypasses were built. Many of these changes created closed cul-de-sacs or bypassed road segments. Today's traveler can still see some of these orphaned loops, which detach from and reattach to the main road. It is ironic, however, that other evidence of the early automobile

road corridor - relic gas stations or motel buildings - is nearly absent.

Highway reconstruction was difficult. The Paris to Lexington segment, known as Paris Pike, was slated for improvement as early as the 1960s. Protests and lawsuits prolonged this work until the 1990s. After extensive planning, design, and much public review and input, an award-winning parkway opened to traffic in December 2003. Context-sensitive design practices retained the historic character of the original road. Many of the original segments and stone fences remain. The highway design also significantly increased the safety of the now divided four-lane Paris Pike.



ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE MAYSVILLE TO LEXINGTON ROAD CORRIDOR

There is more to the story of the Maysville to Lexington Road than what is written in history books, however. There are stories written in the ground. These stories are the focus of archaeology.

Archaeological research sheds light on aspects of the road itself: its changing location and its many different construction methods. Archaeology also produces information about the lives of those who once lived and worked along the road. These lives rarely appear in history books.

Ancient Native Americans did not write. They left traces of their lives where they camped or built their villages; where they hunted or planted their crops; or where they buried their dead. Letters and journals provide us with insights into the lives of famous people who occasionally traveled the Maysville to Lexington Road. We know little about the “regular” folks who lived and worked next to or within sight of the road, and who traveled it each day.

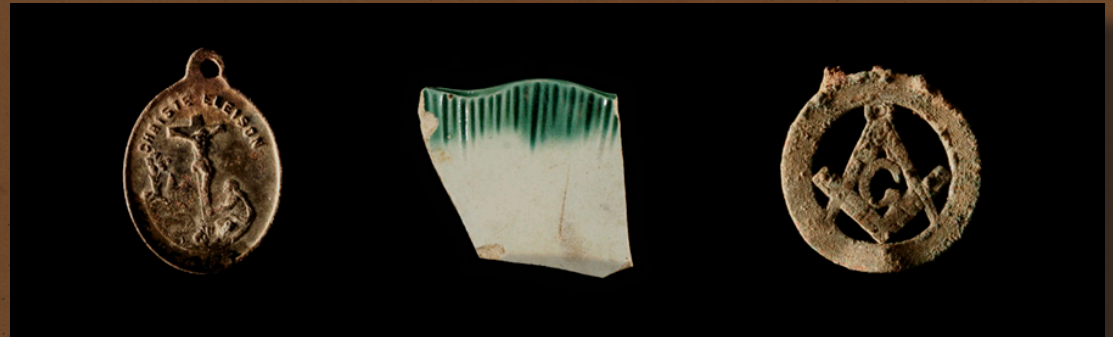
Archaeology pulls into focus the lives of Irish macadamizers, not-so-wealthy farmers, slaves, “inn” keepers, postmasters, butchers, and laundresses. By combining archaeological and historical research, we gain a richer and

Historic Archaeology

To learn about long-ago peoples and cultures, archaeologists study *artifacts* (objects made or modified by humans) and artifact patterns. *Prehistoric* archaeologists study past peoples who did not leave behind written records. In Kentucky, they investigate the ancestral camps, towns, and mounds of today’s American Indian peoples.

Historic archaeologists study groups who did leave documents behind - like maps, diaries, letters, books, wills, and tax documents. In Kentucky, they study sites where Euro-American and African-American people lived and worked. These include farmhouses and townhouses; businesses and inns; and industrial sites like potteries and iron furnaces. More often than not, though, the written record for these people is very limited. The artifacts they left behind at the places they lived and worked tell their stories best.

Within the Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor, most archaeological research carried out before roads are built is historic archaeology.



Archaeologists have recovered hundreds of personal items at the historic sites investigated along the Maysville to Lexington Road.

Left to right Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows (Catholic religious medal); fragment of early decorated plate rim; metal Fraternity of Freemasonry pin

deeper understanding of the past, and a broader appreciation for the ribbon of history that is the Maysville to Lexington Road.

ROAD CORRIDOR SITE SNAPSHOT

For this snapshot, we have defined the Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor as a three-mile wide strip. It extends along US Highway 27/US Highway 68 from the Ohio River edge at Maysville to just outside Lexington at Interstate 64/75. It consists of the road at its current location, the land that lies next to it

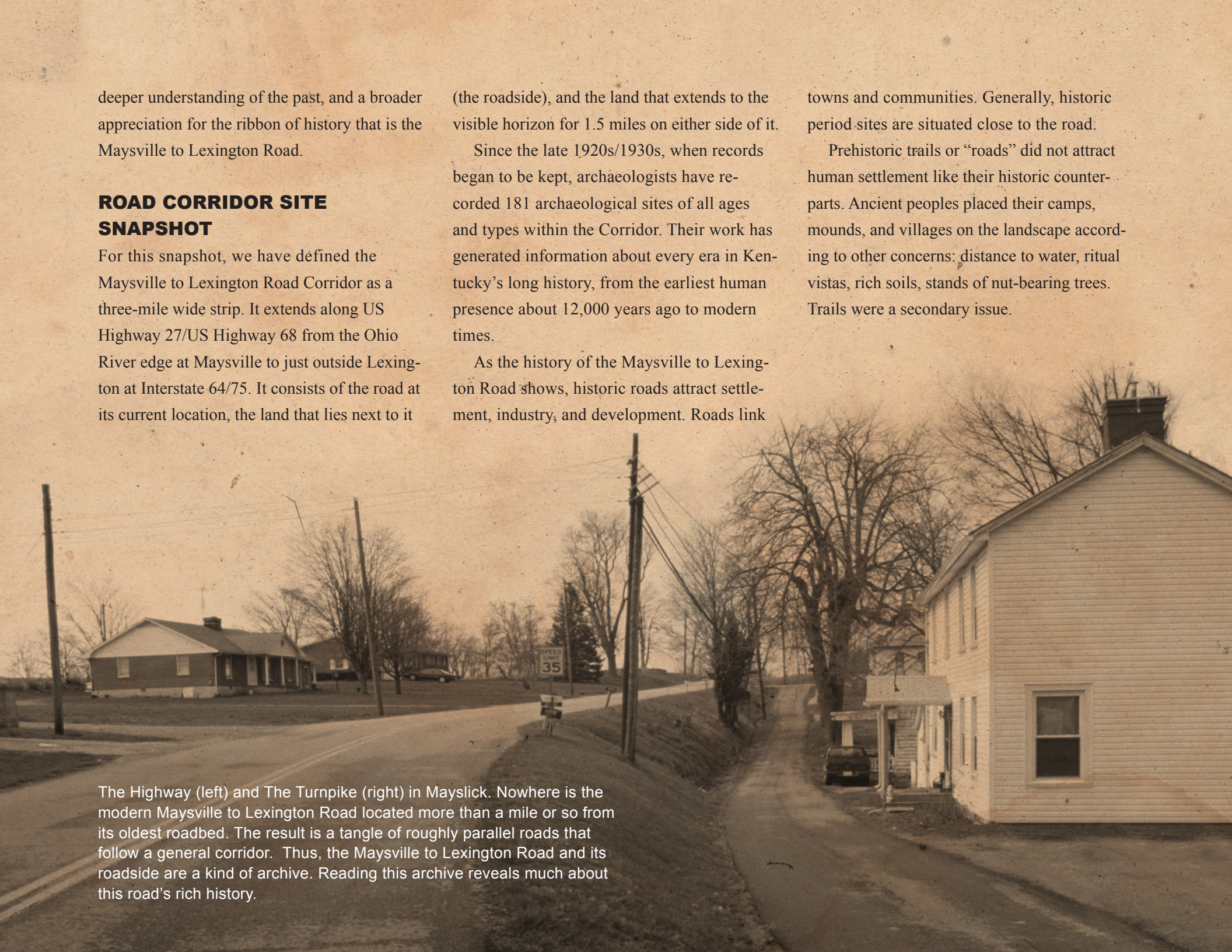
(the roadside), and the land that extends to the visible horizon for 1.5 miles on either side of it.

Since the late 1920s/1930s, when records began to be kept, archaeologists have recorded 181 archaeological sites of all ages and types within the Corridor. Their work has generated information about every era in Kentucky's long history, from the earliest human presence about 12,000 years ago to modern times.

As the history of the Maysville to Lexington Road shows, historic roads attract settlement, industry, and development. Roads link

towns and communities. Generally, historic period sites are situated close to the road.

Prehistoric trails or "roads" did not attract human settlement like their historic counterparts. Ancient peoples placed their camps, mounds, and villages on the landscape according to other concerns: distance to water, ritual vistas, rich soils, stands of nut-bearing trees. Trails were a secondary issue.



The Highway (left) and The Turnpike (right) in Mayslick. Nowhere is the modern Maysville to Lexington Road located more than a mile or so from its oldest roadbed. The result is a tangle of roughly parallel roads that follow a general corridor. Thus, the Maysville to Lexington Road and its roadside are a kind of archive. Reading this archive reveals much about this road's rich history.

Below The most intensively examined section of road right-of-way starts at the Licking River Bridge at Blue Licks and continues southwestward to outside Lexington at Interstate 64/75.

Archaeologists surveyed along Paris Pike - the section between Paris and Lexington - in 1987. In the early to mid-1990s, and occasionally until 2005, they excavated several historic sites along this section of highway. Archaeologists surveyed the right-of-way between Blue Licks and Paris in 1995 and again in 2003. They carried out more work at sites in this section in 2011.

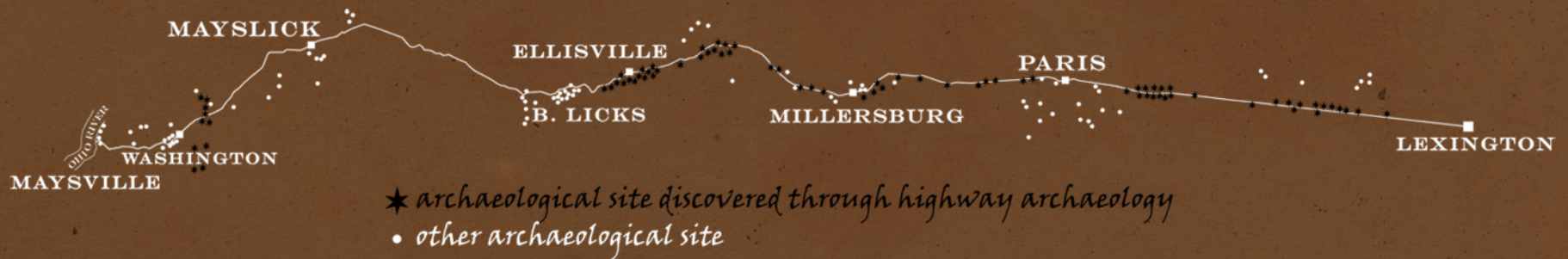
No highway archaeology has been carried out yet within the historic road right-of-way between Maysville and Blue Licks.

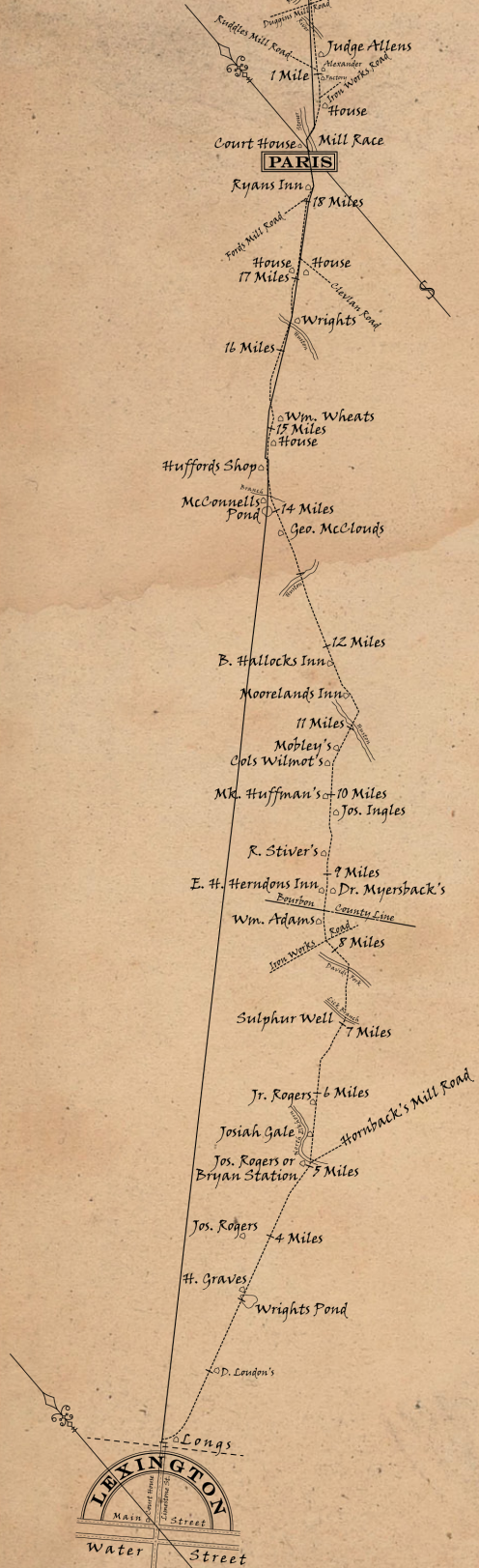
Highway Archaeology

Highway archaeology gives archaeologists the opportunity to discover and study new sites they likely would not have the chance to examine otherwise. This is something that did not begin in Kentucky until after Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Within the Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor, most archaeological work has been closely linked to or dependent on highway improvements proposed by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. These include removing dangerous curves, updating the current road, or building new roads. Nearly one-half of all recorded archaeological sites within the Road Corridor have been documented because of these projects. Without them, we would know much less about Central Kentucky's rich and varied human history.

Highway archaeology has one major drawback, however. The "ribbon of history" examined is only as wide as the road right-of-way. This means investigations take place only within the road's actual footprint.





If maps of these trails had ever existed, they likely would have shown the trails crisscrossing the Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor. And had these trails actually paralleled the later road, it would have been a happy accident. That's because the best places for human travel across difficult landscapes are the same. Whether on foot, by horse, in buggies or stagecoaches, or in automobiles and trucks, it's about getting there.

Prehistoric Period Sites

Archaeologists have found sites dating to all of Kentucky's prehistoric eras within the Road Corridor. They include mounds, campsites, and villages.

At Blue Licks, there is evidence of the very earliest people. They arrived at the close of the Ice Age and hunted the now-extinct animals that came to the springs. Sprinkled across the Corridor are numerous hunter-gatherer campsites. A few mounds and earthworks, as well as examples of camps and villages built by their hunter-gatherer-gardener descendants, occur within the Corridor. Several farming villages of the

latest native groups and the places they once grew their crops also lie within it.

Historic Period Sites

The Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor can be considered a long narrow historic archaeological site. The inns, domestic centers of farms, small industrial sites, cemeteries, and vanished communities represent diverse, intensive, specialized activity areas within it. These sites date mainly from the late 1700s to before the first half of the twentieth century. Most saw their major period of use in the 1800s.

William McConnell's fashionable stone farmhouse once stood near the Trace southwest of Paris. Built in the late 1700s, the family lived there for nearly a century. Their house, the foods they ate, and the dishes they used reflect the McConnells' upper middle class lifestyle. For a short time in the early 1800s, Thomas Current and his son Eli ran an inn in their hewn log home alongside the Trace northeast of Paris. This prosperous family and their slaves provided tea, hearty pork dinners, and wine to weary travelers.

Left The Paris to Lexington section of Darnaby and Ellis' 1827 Survey Map for the "new" turnpike. The surveyed Turnpike route outside Paris follows the Trace closely for a little over four miles. At McConnell's Pond, it diverges sharply from the Trace for the remaining 14 miles to Lexington.

The now-vanished community of Monterey was sandwiched between the old Trace and the new Turnpike. Its history is inseparable from that of the Maysville to Lexington Road. Located southwest of Paris, Monterey was home to whites and blacks, and laborers and businessmen during much of the nineteenth century. Franky Robison, a free black woman, owned property there in the early 1800s. The house she owned faced the old Trace. Less expensive cuts of meat and dishes reflect her family's modest means. John Foote, an Irish toll keeper, and his family



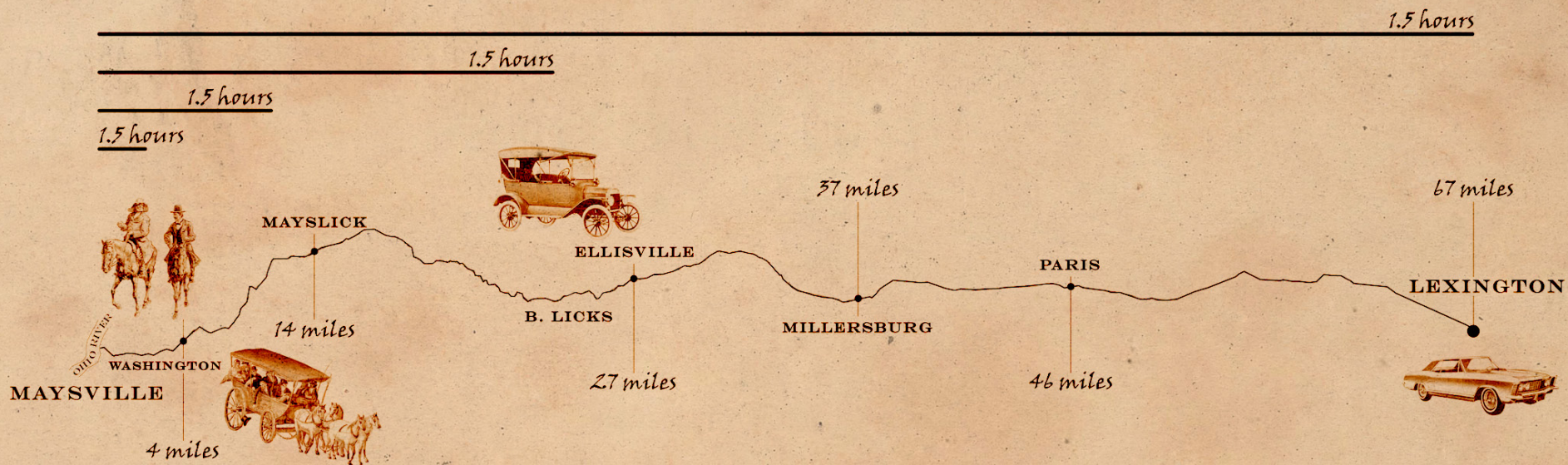
The Turnpike Company built toll houses every five miles along the road. The toll gate keeper repaired the road. His wife kept the gate. Tolls were collected from dawn to well into evening. The Company used toll monies to repair the road, pay the toll gate keeper's salary, and perhaps, provide a dividend to company stockholders. The estimated amount of road wear or damage caused by a vehicle or animal determined the toll price.

Why Investigate These Sites?

When the Kentucky highway department uses federal funds to build or improve roads, it must follow federal laws. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is the main one. Planners must consider if and how road building might damage or destroy important archaeological and historic resources 50 years of age or older.

Years before road construction begins, archaeologists walk within the planned location of the new road. They document prehistoric sites and historic sites, structures, and bridges. They report these sites to the Office of State Archaeology at the University of Kentucky, which maintains the archaeological site files for the state.

Archaeologists document every site they discover. They analyze the artifacts and write up reports of their findings. Only the most important sites are investigated in greater detail. After their work is finished, archaeologists curate the artifacts and all project documents and photographs. This way, future archaeologists, scholars, and exhibitors can research or display these materials.



lived in Toll House #10 when the Turnpike was new. Later owners used the structure as a warehouse. The Moore's, who were African-American tradespeople, ran their blacksmith business in Thomas Anderson's old blacksmith shop next to the Turnpike from the mid-1850s until before 1880. Postmaster and Freemason Willis Dorsey built a new frame house in Monterey in 1849. Aspiring to higher social standing, the Dorsey's ate expensive cuts of meat from dishes that reflected their true financial status.

COMPANION SPOTLIGHTS

Highway archaeologists have investigated a variety of historic period sites within the Maysville to Lexington Road Corridor. These sites include early nineteenth-century inns, the homes of nineteenth-century middle class farmers, and the community of Monterey. We invite you to turn to Heritage Spotlights 2, 3, and 4 to learn more about these fascinating Bourbon and Fayette county sites.

Above Road improvements shortened the time it took travelers to reach Lexington. In 1800, they spent 40 hours on the Trace. Thirty-four years later, Turnpike travelers reached the city in a mere 10 hours. Travelers on the Road in 1920 arrived in three and a half to four hours.

Today, it takes Highway travelers about an hour and a quarter to travel the route. As shown here in relative terms, someone leaving Maysville in the 1920s got only as far as Ellisville in Nicholas County in the same amount of time it takes us to reach Lexington today.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IT

If you want to learn more about the Maysville to Lexington Road or about Kentucky archaeology, read these University Press of Kentucky publications:

Karl Raitz and Nancy O'Malley, *Kentucky's Frontier Highway: Historical Landscapes Along the Maysville Road*, 2012

R. Barry Lewis, *Kentucky Archaeology*, 1996

Nancy O'Malley, an overview of Kentucky prehistory in the 2nd edition of James C. Klotter's *Our Kentucky: A Study of the Bluegrass State*, 2000

James C. Klotter and Freda C. Klotter, *A Concise History of Kentucky*, 2008

You also can find information on the web. For an illustrated historical record of American highway development, visit Carl Rakeman's Transportation Painting Collection (www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/02janfeb/exhibition.cfm). These paintings relate the story of America's westward expansion.

To learn more about Kentucky archaeology, watch the *Kentucky Archaeology Video Series*

(www.heritage.ky.gov/kas/pubvids/arch-series.htm) or visit the Kentucky Archaeological Survey's web page (www.heritage.ky.gov/kas/kyarchynew). To access the most recent two-volume summary of archaeological research in Kentucky, *The Archaeology of Kentucky: An Update*, edited by David Pollack (2008), visit this Kentucky Heritage Council web page: www.heritage.ky.gov/siteprotect/archofky.htm.

Permanent displays in many of Kentucky's museums, most notably the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort, present information about Kentucky's ancient past based on archaeological research conducted in the state.

Visit an exhibit about the Maysville to Lexington Road and the archaeology conducted along it, **Road Life: Sites and Scenes Along Kentucky's First Highway**, at the Hopewell Museum in Paris (February through June 2013) and the Kentucky Gateway Museum in Maysville (June through September 2013).



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Karl Raitz and Nancy O'Malley's book, *Kentucky's Frontier Highway: Historical Landscapes Along the Maysville Road*, provided much of the content for this Spotlight. Also consulted were the Kentucky Archaeological Site Survey files at the Office of State Archaeology in Lexington.

Design by Hayward Wilkerson.

Map sections pages 1,3,6 and 13 from *Atlas of Bourbon, Clark, Fayette, Jessamine and Woodford Counties, Ky.* (1877), Philadelphia: D.G. Beers & Co. Drawing page 2 by Jimmy Railey, used with permission from the Kentucky Heritage Council. Political

cartoon page 3 by David Claypoole Johnston. Coffle gang engraving page 4 first published in Anonymous, *The Suppressed Book About Slavery* (1862), New York: Carlton. Henry Clay portrait page 5 by Charles Willson Peale, Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection. Andrew Jackson portrait page 5 by Thomas Sully. Engraving of black carpenter page 5 from Wilma A. Dunaway, *Slavery and Emancipation in The Mountain South: Sources, Evidence and Methods*. Seamstress photograph page 5 from University of California, San Diego. Page 7, ceramic fragment photograph by J. David McBride. Photograph page 8 by Karl Raitz. Map illustration page 10 based on a map in Cecil Harp and J. Winston Coleman, Jr., "The Old Lexington and Maysville Turnpike," *Kentucky Engineer*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1941), pp. 13-16. Toll house painting page 11 by William Ward. Image of musician and dancers on

page 13 adapted from a lithograph by George Lehman.

All other photographs and illustrations by Hayward Wilkerson.

On page 4, quotation originally in *Western Luminary*, Lexington, October 4, 1826. Quoted in John W. Coleman, Jr.'s *Slavery Times in Kentucky*, pp. 145-146 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940).

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