

HISTORY
OF
PADUCAH PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND RECREATION
Paducah, McCracken County, Kentucky
August 1, 1978

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The Story of Paducah, by Fred G. Neuman (1927)
Paducah Public Library - Reference Department
Commissioners Minutes, City of Paducah
Deed Records, McCracken County Court Clerk's Office
Case File Records, McCracken Circuit Clerk's Office

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PADUCAH PARKS AND THEIR LOCATION

BARKLEY PARK, 2nd & Park Ave.
BLACKBURN PARK, 10th & Caldwell
BOB NOBLE PARK, 28th & Park Ave.
BROOKS PARK & STADIUM, 25th & "C" St.
CALDWELL PARK, 14th & Park Ave.
CAMPBELL PARK, 14th & Langstaff
CHERRY PARK, Hillcrest Ave. & Magnolia
FOREST HILLS PARK, Highland Blvd.
KEILER PARK, 30th & Broadway
KOLB PARK, 6th & Broad Street
LANG PARK, 17th & Fountain Ave.
MINI-PARK, 12th & Clay Street
PADUCAH SOUTHSIDE PARK, 11th & Adams St.
RIVERFRONT PARK, Foot of Ohio River
STUART NELSON, Hwy 60 W & Nelson Pk. Ave.

History of PADUCAH PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, and RECREATION
August 1, 1978

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HISTORY OF PADUCAH PARKS AND RECREATION
"Recreational Facilities No Accident"

Prevalent in the minds of the founding fathers of Paducah was the need for a gathering place for all citizens to get away from workaday strife and worries.

Paducah, in infancy, struggling through many battles of our country's civil wars, was even so the scene of street fairs, traveling shows, house parties and general picnics.

By 1856, Paducah's stage of growth resulted in the filling of Articles of Incorporation and the first mayor was elected. The very next Fourth of July, a circus came to town and set up on Broadway between 7th and 9th Streets on vacant grounds used for picnics and gatherings. Today, this area lies between the Broadway Methodist Church and the A&P Food Store.

As the city limits of Paducah grew, show grounds and picnic areas had to be relocated from 7th & Broadway; to 9th & Tennessee; to 12th & Trimble; then to 16th & Harrison; 12th & Pine Street; 22nd & Jackson Street; the Court House Lawn; and finally progressing with the times located on a 10-acre plot then known as Fisher Gardens, sometimes called Bellview Gardens. This large park was located in Fisherville, and stretched from 7th Street south of Husbands Street, incorporating a small lake with swimming and rowing, a dance pavilion, target shooting, and other sports of the times. This park was located opposite the Cooper-Whiteside Intermediate School (formerly Franklin School) on South 6th Street. In the early 1900's the Fisher Gardens entire park area had been eliminated, the lake filled, structures razed, and made into a residential section.

There were various other small park-playground areas and several memorial-decorative type park areas, some of which are still in existence today--the names having been changed through the years. These were all forerunners of our present day recreational facilities.

By 1904, the Board of Aldermen (City Fathers) appointed a PUBLIC PARK COMMITTEE, whose duty it was "to investigate and locate several pieces of ground suitable for Public Parks". Thus, bearing witness that Paducah's recreation facilities in 1978 are no accident, but the results of planning and doing, sorting, eliminating, decisions, hard work, and expense of our forefathers for over 100 years of trial and error.

In 1906, a Board of Park Commissioners was appointed to "oversee" (manage and maintain the City's public parks and playgrounds) with annual reports to the City Council of the progress, maintenance, expenditures, and any income, with recommendations for improvements and annual maintenance for budget purposes.

As early as 1901, the City Council gave the Park Committee authority to have some repairs made at Yeiser Park. They allowed compensation of \$25.00 to hire someone to keep the grounds clean, a meager sum by today's standards. Yeiser Park was located between Yeiser Street and the Ohio River in the presently undeveloped

section with the exception of the new fire station recently completed. Tremendous advancements are being made by the Riverport Authority, who purchased that area from Urban Renewal to be developed into an industrial park. But at one time, after the demise of Yeiser Park, the area was strewn with residences, bare remains of which are still visible today (1978) from bits of old home foundations, apple trees, and perennial flowers, which have withstood the elements all these years.

Other favored grounds included the first Fair Grounds located on the Old Mayfield Road about a mile from Guthrie Avenue. There was horse racing along beside the same route we travel today for a mile where the road curves southwestward toward Eden's Hill, from which General Forrest took his stand when the calvary marched from Mayfield to Paducah. This first fairgrounds was razed in 1899 and turned to Agriculture.

Later, the West End Fair Grounds drew many visitors to the City to witness swiftly running horses. This track, half a mile around, was located at 29th & Jefferson Street, so, horse racing continued at the turn of the century. Possibly, a fleet runner established the best record here at West End Fair Grounds, making the mile in 2 minutes 10 seconds flat. This mark was hung up in 1918, two years before the West End track was abandoned.

Today, we have the Carson Park Fair Grounds and Race Track located at 301 Joe Clifton Drive, along with Floral Hall, all of which are used extensively to the delight of the Carson family. Annual fairs and harness racing are still held at Carson Park. Several horse shows are held each year and, periodically, exhibition auto shows are staged at Luther Carson Park. But, year-round, many show horses and pleasure horses are stabled and trained there. Although Carson Park is within the city limits of Paducah, the property still belongs to the County of McCracken.

Fred G. Nueman (1927), The Story of Paducah: "A natural sandbar on the Illinois shore of the Ohio River, opposite the City of Paducah, furnishes an opportunity for natatorial sport and is widely popular. While the sandbar had been in the process of forming for nearly a score of years, it was not until 1921 that suitable lockers and other conveniences were provided". Today (1978), there is still a sandbar beach opposite the downtown waterfront but not as extensively used as it once was. This is due, in part, to the ecological use of natural resources which gives us, today, Kentucky Lake and Barkley Lake.

Neuman (1927), The Story of Paducah: "Formal opening of the Lake View Country Club, two miles beyond the city limits of Paducah on the Lone Oak Road, occurred September 1, 1926. Four leading civic clubs - the Lions, Rotary, Exchange, and Shrine - were guests the first week. The club house and grounds represented an investment of more than \$150,000. Like the Paducah Country Club, Lake View Country Club maintained a modern club house, golf links, bathing pool and other features for the diversion of its members". The Lake View Country Club is still in existence today (1978), still located at Lone Oak Road on Lake View Drive, but in more recent years, the name was changed to "ROLLING HILLS COUNTRY CLUB."

Rolling Hills, a private club, supports an 18-hole golf course, lighted tennis courts, swimming pool and club house with all the familiar conveniences for its members.

Neuman (1972), The Story Of Paducah: "The Paducah Country Club, built in 1912, skirts the city on the western boundary and took place of still an older pleasure resort which stood in Wallace Park". The Country Club of Paducah is still in existence today (1978). It is bounded by Pines Road, 39th Street, Country Club Lane and Central Avenue, with the entrance on Country Club Lane. The plaque in the main lobby of the Country Club of Paducah reveals that it was built in 1912, burned in 1955 and was rebuilt in 1956. It is a private club, embracing a 9-hole golf course, swimming pool, lighted tennis courts, club house, and fine food with good family service. The new 18-hole golf course, located on Blandville Highway, should be open for play in the fall of 1978.

PAXTON PARK GOLF COURSE, located at 3100 Jackson Street, has its entrance at the intersection of Highway 45S (Lone Oak Road) and Jackson Street (Alben Barkley Drive or Blandville Road). Paxton Park consists of approximately 300 acres of land. This is the site for the popular Irvin Cobb Tournament and many other golfing events. The property embracing Paxton Park was purchased through contributions of Paducah citizens to a fund for such purchase, the drive being spearheaded by Edward J. Paxton, assisted by Sam Livingston. In 1940 the property was deeded to the City of Paducah for a municipal golf course and named Paxton Park Golf Course. It is operated by a five man committee appointed by the Mayor, ratified by the Board of Commissioners of Paducah. The Paxton Park Committee men serve four years without compensation and the City of Paducah expends no monies nor receives no monies. But all income-expense falls to Paxton Park Golf Course as an entity unto itself.

HOOKS FIELD at 8th & Terrell Streets was opened as baseball grounds May 29, 1927. The grandstand seated 1500 fans and the field proper was 400 feet square, featuring semi-professional baseball. Hooks Field was, also, the site of circuses and other community events. Hooks Ball Park has been converted to business establishments within the last 25 years, but baseball did not become extinct in Paducah with the passing of Hooks Field. The history of professional baseball in Paducah will be found under Brooks Stadium of this report.

LABELLE PARK, established about 1890 to replace the Fisher Gardens, became the chief entertainment center and was located about a mile west of the City Limits of Paducah at that time. LaBelle Park boasted rolling hills, well kept lawns, a lake for swimming or canoeing, apple trees, a dance pavilion, and a casino. The ball diamond was located where now stands Albritton's Drug Store (Broadway at 23rd Street). The lake behind the ball field was filled and is today (1978) residential. Beyond the lake was the dance hall, then, there was a theater which stood on top of the hill in the general vicinity of today's Immanuel Baptist Church and Clark Elementary on Buckner Lane. The street car ran out Jefferson Street, under the viaduct at Broadway (Buckner Lane-Lone Oak Road juncture), around and past Albritton's and up to the top of the

hill in the general vicinity of today's Immanuel Baptist Church and Clark Elementary on Buckner Lane. The street car ran out Jefferson Street, under the viaduct at Broadway (Buckner Lane-Lone Oak Road juncture), around and past Albritton's and up to the top of the hill where it stopped and made its return trip. In those days, five cents (\$.05) was the fare and for the great sum of fifty cents (\$.50) one could spend the day seeing all the sights, riding every available loop-'t-loops, stuffing on hot dogs, popcorn and soda pop, visiting the animals, and pitching the hoop to ring a bottle and take home a cupie doll. Alighting from the street car at the top of the hill, LaBelle Park was to the right, and some present day Paducahans remember many interesting attractions on the park grounds. Included were swings and see-saws for the children, more adult games for parents and teenagers (such as: horse shoe pitching, a form of croquet and impromptu ballgames), as well as, other seldom seen curiosities as alligators and monkeys. In a large field toward the back of LaBelle Park, but this side of our present Country Club of Paducah, families in buggies, on horse back and other conveniences left their hacks for all-day picnics, frolic and fun.

LaBelle Park was renamed WALLACE PARK about 1904, when baseball diamonds were added with bleacher seating capacity of 2500; and a first class brand of minor league baseball was staged by Kitty League players whose best years were 1904 to 1908.

Much expense and many man hours have been spent through the years to establish and maintain recreational facilities for Paducah. Most of the early recreational sites have been transformed in to residential districts. Today, the City of Paducah, under the direction of Parks & Recreation, Jack Whaley, Director, embodies 14 PUBLIC PARKS, 4 ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, 14 SUMMER PLAYGROUNDS, and 3 SWIMMING POOLS (see complete list and locations on page i).

Only four of these present day parks were located by the Public Parks Commission since the turn of the century, those being: BOB NOBLE PARK, LANG PARK, KOLB PARK, and CALDWELL PARK. However, the intriguing history of KEILER PARK, STEWART NELSON PARK, BARKLEY PARK, and BROOKS STADIUM & PARK all date back to those early years of Paducah's infancy and dreams. The remainder of today's recreational facilities have been attained during our present era.

Noble Park is the larger of Paducah parks with a municipal swimming pool, lake, tennis courts, bike trails, amusement center, concessions, and over 100 acres with many picnic shelters, jogging trails and amphitheater. Lang Park is a memorial type neighborhood playground park, sporting several items of playground equipment and swimming pool. Caldwell Park is a small memorial type park with several items of neighborhood playground equipment. Keiler Park is a much larger picnic-playground type park, with picnic shelters and playground equipment. Stewart Nelson Park is the second largest public park and it incorporates ball diamonds, concession stand, go-cart race track, many picnic shelters and playground equipment, and consists of approximately 75 acres. Barkley Park is a fair sized memorial type park with tennis courts and picnic shelters

their locations are listed in this brochure, including the Riverfront Park and Paducah Southside Park.

Of the more notable purchases made by the Public Parks Committee is present day "BOB NOBLE PARK", located at 28th & Park Avenue (also known as Hinkleville Road or Highway 60W).

Back in the early 1900's, when it appeared that the City's main entertainment center, Wallace Park, was destined to the same fate as Fisher Gardens (and other preceding public parks because of the expanding city limits) the Park Commissioners bought "114 acres more or less, except a small triangle of land allowing for the Thompson Avenue-Hinkleville Road intersection" (deed of record, McCracken County Court House). The purchase price for this future park property was \$25,000.00 as quoted from Fred G. Nueman, (1927) The Story of Paducah.

This public park property was originally tabed "Forest Park" for obvious reasons. It was a dense forest. The Public Park Board's foresight in purchasing this new playground acreage was confirmed and supported because all structures in Wallace Park were in fact razed about 10 years after this new purchase. "However, this large wooded area called "Forest Park" lay unimproved for a decade until Captain Robert H. Noble donated \$10,000.00 towards its improvements with the understanding that the city match the figure. Prompt acceptance of Captain Noble's generous gift was followed by the Board of Park Commissioner renaming the grounds "BOB NOBLE PARK". A concrete wall was constructed in front, along with an ornamental entrance, and a heavy wire fence was placed entirely around the grounds" (Neuman, 1927 - The Story of Paducah).

Many improvements have been made through the years. A new stone wall was constructed in the 1930's along the area fronting on the Hinkleville Road (Highway 60W). The stone wall was built by W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) labor, with the City of Paducah furnishing the materials. This stone wall has been demolished within the past couple of years to make way for the widening of Highway 60W, interconnecting the new Interstate Highway 24 west of Noble Park. But, the ornamental entrance still stands. Also, a new wire fence surrounding the back area was constructed by W.P.A. workers in the early 1930's. In the 1960's, a stone wall was constructed along Thompson Avenue (now H.C. Mathis Drive), utilizing West Kentucky Vocational School students labor with the City of Paducah furnishing materials. This stone wall still stands today and it replaced once wire fence and hedgerow. The Thompson Avenue (H.C. Mathis Drive) entrance archway to Noble Park carries a memorial to L.L. Nelson, Park Superintendent, 1930-1948.

The City of Paducah actually contracted for Forest Park (Noble Park) from Wadsworth Improvement Company (Ben Weille, President and Don Wilcox, Secretary) on February 24, 1913 and paid the notes annually from 1913 through 1920. The notes being paid in full for the full purchase price, title was acquired from Wadsworth Improvement Company, and deed filed of record in 1921, June 13, in the deed records of McCracken County Court Clerk. Almost immediately that same year, the City of Paducah contracted with the American Park Builders Landscape Architects of Chicago to design

Noble Park.

A dam near the rear of the park made possible the large lake that was stocked with fish. The attractive bandstand overlooking this body of water was brilliantly illuminated and lights were scattered throughout the park, which added to the beauty of the night scene. The park was especially popular as picnic grounds.

The tablets on either side of the archway were placed at the entrance in 1926, and the inscription on the dedicatory tablet, written by Irvin S. Cobb, was an expression of Paducah's appreciation of Captain Noble's gift. These plaques are still in their place of honor, today, at the archway entrance to "Bob Noble Park".

✓ Back in the early 1900's, there was a moonshine still located in the "gully" behind what is now the amphitheater in Noble Park. The trail through "the woods" was accessible mostly on foot or on horseback for fast get-a-way. A few brave souls ventured into the backwoods, in their buggy, but the swamp (which is now the lake) had to be skirted by buggy and that was the long way around, and more dangerous. Because of the isolation of the "park" area and the density of the woods, coupled with the "moonshine business being operated there for so many years", and the results of mixing moonshine from a fruit jar and "outlaws" who found shelter in the woods, there were so many muggings that the young folk called it "Monkey Wrench Park". The story goes that no one entered "the woods" to visit the still without the protection of a monkey wrench.

Where the Noble Park Administration Office now stands, was once the caretaker's home. When Roy Nelson became the first caretaker in 1930, he obtained a crew of about 15 W.P.A. workers and traveled to Marshall County where they tore down the old "jail house", a log cabin of times past, and hauled it log by log to a site in Noble Park. The log cabin was reconstructed to it's original state by Mr. Fike, father of Carl Fike, who was a park employee for 35 years or more. The log cabin still stands, today, behind and to the right of Noble Park Administration office. This log cabin Mr. Nelson used as a museum, collecting household and farming antiques, and war items of days gone by from local residents. This "log cabin museum" he used as an historical show-place, allowing teachers to bring school children through the museum for "history" study. Later, when the log cabin began to deteriorate, he moved the museum pieces to display cases in the swimming pool lounge for one and all to see. After his death, these museum pieces were sold. So today, the "log cabin", once Marshall County's jail, still stands as reassemblage of the past. A stark reminder that the early settlers carved a home and a town from the rich abundance of earth's forests and clay.

Where the swimming pool now stands, once cows and hogs stood in wait for the slaughter, for the old "slaughter house" is the location of the present garage and equipment storage building behind Noble Park Administration Office.

A golf course, eliminated in the 1940's, was in the area behind the softball diamond at that time. Its present location

would have been in the general area beyond the Arts & Crafts Building and Croquet Court. This 9-hole golf course was reached by the same route past the Khoury League ball diamonds and through the archway leading to the Community Center. This golf course is one of the little known items of recreational history, but, the authentic story comes from one man who played golf there; one who helped keep the greens; one caddie; and one man who watched his father play golf there.

The property in this area, now designated "Anna Mary Baumer Field" marked by an archway opposite the tennis courts, was at one time owned by the Flournoy family, later sold to the Baumer family. The Baumer Brothers Dairy was in this location after the advent of the Illinois Central Railroad Shops because the Baumer Dairy property was located where the ICRR needed to locate. Therefore, the Baumer Brothers Dairy was moved further out of town, in the general area of our present day Noble Park extending back to include the Community Center (once recognized as the Girl Scout House). But prior to this time, troops of Boy Scouts used the area for campgrounds and ballgames with Mr. Carl Fike, working with many of these groups in camping, crafts and clean-up detail. There was, also, a ball diamond in this general "Anna Mary Baumer Field" area which was moved forward toward the street in the 1930's and, today (1978), incorporates our Khoury League, Pony League and Colt League, providing baseball for boys ages 7 to 16 years old. Little League baseball also prevails at Barkley Park for both boys and girls. John Shepherd, acting president of the Paducah Little League, is one of many who have contributed many volunteer hours and much money to develop the first amateur baseball program for boys (ages 9 to 12 years old), and he is still actively involved in sports for youth.

The Noble Park Lake, which in the very early 1900's was just a "slough", was concreted by W.P.A. workers in about 1936. But, the dam was constructed way back in the early 1920's to contain the water for a lake and it was stocked with fish at that time with fishing allowed. Today, the lake is still stocked with fish and fishing allowed for the "young folk" and "senior citizens". And of course, these past few years ducks have been added for the grace and beauty they add to the lake, as well as, the delight of young and old alike. Ducks are not this recently a new addition to the lake, but, some seasons ago, they became extinct because of the unhealthy condition of the waters. Thus, the draining, dredging and reconstruction of the lake, dam and surrounding waterfront was necessary in 1974, with the aid of the Army Corps of Engineers. With the reconstruction and draining of the lake, a pump was installed to supply fresh water. Then, in 1975, the lake banks were rip-rapped by park employees and a link fence installed to keep debris out of the lake.

The duck house on "Duck Island", which stands in the midst of Noble Park Lake, is still maintained and beautified for the convenience and welfare of the ducks. It adds to the splendor of the lake, delighting and amazing spectators.

The bandstand, extending out into the water, is still intact

after all these years and is maintained by the Parks Department. From here, Jack Whaley, Parks Director, can be seen braving the winter elements each morning to "feed" the ducks their daily rations.

Noble Park, today, still maintains its original look from the entrance side, but many improvements have been made throughout the park these past few years. New roads and culverts, new picnic shelters, playground equipment, and new relief stations have been built to better serve the citizens of Paducah and surrounding areas. The new restrooms and dressing room facility (costing \$55,960) was completed in 1978 with the assistance of a federal grant.

At one time, there was a foot bridge extending the breadth of Noble Park Lake, but deterioration of the structure resulted in the removal of the foot bridge several years ago. However, future plans include the possibility of building a new bridge across the lake. Hopefully, the new foot bridge will be a "swinging bridge" across Noble Park Lake.

The municipal swimming pool in Noble Park was constructed in the later 1930's by W.P.A. labor. The pool was 100' by 200' when originally built. The swimming pool was in such a hazardous and run-down condition by 1971-1972 that it cost \$350,000 to reconstruct and repair. At that time, the size of the pool was reduced to 90' by 165', which is olympic size. The Noble Park Swimming Pool was opened to everyone, regardless of race, color or creed some 20 to 25 years ago; and today remains the largest municipal swimming pool in Paducah. There is a plaque inside Noble Park Swimming Pool lounge area which reads in part: "MUNICIPAL SWIMMING POOL and BATH HOUSE - 1971, Parks, Playgrounds and Recreation Department of the City of Paducah aided by the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, with gratitude and commemoration to our Vietnam veterans and in memory of SP/4 Roger Hornsby, son of Commissioner John W. Hornsby, Jan. 13, 1947 - Mar. 8, 1969....." and naming the Board of Paducah Parks and Recreation, the City of Paducah Board of Commissioners and City Manager, along with Mayor Robert Cherry. This special commemoration was made in consideration of the special fund-raising efforts put forth by Commissioner John Hornsby, who served six terms (1962-65 and 1970-77) with the City of Paducah City Commission.

The old tennis courts are located beside the swimming pool in Noble Park - opposite the covered croquet court. Renovation to the four old tennis courts was completed in July 1978, at a cost of \$14,563. New tennis courts were added east of the entrance gate on Park Avenue in 1977 with a federal grant of \$100,000.00.

FUNLAND in Noble Park is leased by Grover Carlton Watkins from the City of Paducah. Funland is an amusement center with numerous rides, a miniature train, concession stands and employing a sizeable number of local persons. Mr. Watkins builds most of the rides seen at Funland and even sells some of his rides to surrounding towns.

All these recreational facilities found in BOB NOBLE PARK are the 1978 results of the Parks, Playground and Recreation Department

of the City of Paducah. All of which began way back in 1913 when the Board of Commissioners, City of Paducah, through their appointed Public Parks Committee, first signed an agreement to purchase this parcel of land now known as Bob Noble Park.

It is interesting to note that Capt. Bob Noble (Robert H. Noble) is buried in the municipally owned Oak Grove Cemetery which lies less than half a mile from the park named in his honor. Capt. Bob Noble is buried in the large Noble family lot along with 32 other Noble's and relatives. There is no elaborate memorial to Bob Noble on the headstone. There is a 10' monument with simply NOBLE in the center and two names underneath - John C. and Elizabeth - but no dates. The headstone beside Bob Noble reads: "W.Y> Noble (1860-1947)" and his headstone reads simply: "R.H. Noble (1855-1937)", but for generations to come he will be known as Captain "Bob" Noble.

In days gone by, recreational areas obtained their names from the person from whom the property was purchased or in honor of some Paducah notable or generous soul, not unlike the manner in which we confer titles, today. For instance, Noble Park; Lang Park; Kolb Park; Caldwell Park; Keiler Park; Stuart Nelson Park; Barkley Park, and Brooks Stadium and Park were all named for either the property owner or for a person who had contributed in one way or another to Paducah's history and growth.

LANG PARK was once known as Fountain Park, located on Fountain Avenue (North 17th Street) between Monroe and Madison Streets, surrounded by a circular drive. At one time there was a fountain there. But today, we have a "fountain" on Fountain Avenue at 17th & Broadway, promoted by the Civic Beautification Board.

Lang Park, formerly Fountain Park, was established prior to 1901 when it cost \$160.00 to "fence in" Fountain Park. A nominal figure for water main was laid to Fountain Park that same year after it was fenced in, and that must have cost a pretty penny. But, months later, the fantastic sum of \$1,000.00 was expended to "improve" Fountain Park, which incidentally had been renamed "LANG PARK" one month prior.

LANG PARK was named for the Lang Drugstore family. Lang Park is still in its original location between Monroe and Madison Streets on Fountain Avenue. It also incorporated reminders of another Paducahan, the Tilghman family. A statue of Brigadier General Lloyd Tilghman stands some 8 to 10 feet tall on a 6 foot pedestal in the center of Lang Park. The statue was erected by two of his eight children to honor their war fearsome father in 1909. It seems this was one general who could not resist the bugle call, for off to battle he'd go whenever his rights and principles were challenged, which were numerous during our country's early civil wars.

The general's wife did not go unnoticed because in her honor still stands Paducah Tilghman High School. But, the first high school, "Augusta Tilghman High School" (now Jetton Junior High) was named in her honor because she donated the property for the then first high school. In fact, the old frame building behind Jetton (then Augusta Tilghman High School), once a residence, was still

being used in 1924 as the school cafeteria. An interesting note is that the old Tilghman homestead still stands, today, at 7th & Kentucky Avenue, across the street from Hannan Supply; and is being used as an office building.

KOLB PARK, located in the northeast corner of 6th & Broad Streets, was bought by the City of Paducah in 1912 from Louis C. Kolb at an unusually low figure. In token of his low selling price the park was named in his honor. Kolb Park contains a swimming pool, several pieces of playground equipment, and ball courts; and has been used these many past years as a picnic and playground area for Paducah's southside residents. Confirming, again, our "city father's" foresightedness in "Paducah's future recreational needs".

Here again, we have the Kolb family, long time residents of Paducah from the days of it's early recorded history.

CALDWELL PARK, located at 14th & Park Avenue was, it is believed, purchased from S.B. Caldwell in 1901. It is a triangular park area, housing five pieces of playground equipment. In the center of Caldwell Park stands a 6' statue of Almyr Sherrell Edwards, a soldier of renown who died in 1892. But, many statues were moved from their original sites after the 1937 Paducah flood, thus, we assume the reason for the Edwards statue being placed in Caldwell Park. The original site of Almyr Sherrell Edwards has not been researched, nor his ancestry. However, the citizens of Paducah erected many monuments to their soldiers, with appropriate inscriptions. One of the inscriptions on the Edwards monument reads: "Responding to the call of his state and in the enforcement of her laws, he met a soldier's death. As a tribute to his memory and to perpetuate his name, this monument has been erected by the citizens of Paducah". His name and identification inscribed on the east side of the monument reads: "ALMYR SHERRELL EDWARDS, Co. G.3, Regt. Ky. S.G., June 29, 1872 - July 13, 1892", and on the north: "And thus this man died, leaving his death for an example of a noble courage, and a memorial of virtue not only unto young men but unto all his nation".

KEILER PARK, located at 30th & Broadway, across the street from Avondale Branch Post Office, was so named for Leo Keiler, whose father, John Keiler, laid the plans many years ago for Keiler Park. This would also have included the property where today stands First Baptist Church. The Keiler property was extensive and even in the early 1900's was being used for park purposes, unofficially, but with the sanction of the Keiler family. However, a part of the history of Paducah's business leaders involves the Keiler family. In 1927 the Columbia Theatre, the first of which was built in 1834 on South 2nd Street between Broadway and Kentucky Avenue, was opened following several preceding theaters. The Keiler family is still prominent in Paducah businesses and is still involved in the Columbia Theatre, as well as, many and varied business interests in the community, following through with the original wishes of John Keiler, through his son and grandson. Mrs. Leo Keiler and son, Jack Keiler, donated the "Keiler Park" property to the City of Paducah and built the brick wall and entrance columns along the Broadway footage.

Then, Mrs. Leo Keiler planted the dogwood trees and evergreens to enhance the beauty and tranquility of Keiler Park. Today, there are several pieces of playground equipment, three picnic shelters, restrooms and an intriguing footbridge over the "creek". Keiler Park is in continual use by children and parents to the delight of Mrs. Keiler. The plaque at Keiler Park, in its place of honor on the right entrance pillar, was placed there on December 23, 1930; and carries no historical or commemorative inscriptions, but by its very simplicity is eloquent.

But, Keiler Park was but one of the civic and cultural generousities of the Keiler family; for in 1923, the Keiler family donated \$5,000.00 to improve and drain the "hollow" back of Augusta Tilghman High School to prepare it for suitable athletic grounds. Later, the stadium was built for a total investment of \$30,661.00; but, because of the liberality which started the ball rolling from which the athletic field resulted, it was honorably named "Keiler Field".

STUART NELSON PARK, located about a half mile west of Noble Park on Highway 60W, was in existence way back in the early 1900's but it was not called Stuart Nelson Park at that time. One Paducahan tells the story that back in 1909, when he was 9 years old, he can remember riding on a load of tobacco and passing by the road which still today leads to Stuart Nelson Park. At that time, there was a big yellow sign designating it's use. "It was a sanitarium for people with communicable diseases such as small pox, and only doctors or authorized persons were allowed entrance. But, that was in 1909 and after medicine and hospitals progressed through the years, this sanitarium area was torn down in the early 1930's and made into a recreational area.

Stuart Nelson Park was named for Stuart Nelson, son of Dr. and Mrs. William Stuart Nelson of Paducah. Dr. Nelson, a black doctor, practiced many years in his home town of Paducah; was a doctor of some renown who lived out his life here among the people he loved. His son, Stuart Nelson, was recently deceased in Washington, where regrettably, his obituary carried no mention of his home town. However, Stuart Nelson was born and lived his boyhood in Paducah. Then, after completing his studies at Howard University, taught at Dillard University, Washington.

Stuart Nelson Park was dedicated in the 1940's to honor a home town boy, who made a place for himself in the field of education; and whose father before him made a place for himself in the field of medicine. Stuart Nelson was in Paducah for the dedication of Stuart Nelson Park and the celebration of a black park. But, a few short years later Stuart Nelson became integrated making it a park for everyone alike - for which we give thanks.

Today, Stuart Nelson Park entrance (opposite Houser Greenhouse on Highway 60W) is embraced by a 12' red brick pillar on either side of the roadway entrance. On each of the entrance pillars is a plaque bearing the honorable title, "STUART NELSON PARK". About a half mile through the entrance, which is Stuart Nelson Street, there is another entrance marked by tall brick pillars through which begins the journey through "STUART NELSON PARK" proper. The

park incorporates many acres of land and the curving roadways through shaded areas reveals picnic shelters and well kept greens. Stuart Nelson Park, also, sports a caretaker's home, ball diamonds, tennis courts, concession stand and playground equipment. Eventually, it is hoped that Stuart Nelson Park and Bob Noble Park will be connected by roadways, making the parks all inclusive.

BARKLEY PARK is located at 2nd & Park Avenue across from the site of the old Lourdes (Riverside) Hospital which, ironically, was the base hospital during the battles of the 1860's here in and around Paducah. The park area was also the site on which practically a whole warehouse full of empty and bottled whiskey were dumped because prohibition had just been enacted by congress. The story related by a man who worked at the old Friedman-Keiler Bottling Company, located where the old International Shoe Factory (now razed) stood on North 2nd Street, is that the bottles and all were shoveled into spring wagons and hauled to the deep ravines in the general vicinity of today's Barkley Park. Then dirt was shoveled over the "whole sheebang". This swampy area on the Ohio River and the gullies were eventually land filled and, today, form Barkley Park. Some digging, years ago, unearthed a few of the "very old whiskey bottles", but permission was never granted for total excavation.

BARKLEY PARK, so named for Paducah's own V.P. Alben Barkley, who was not only a senator, congressman, leader, debater, Democrat, lawyer, writer, humanitarian, and of course, Vice President of the United States of America; but he was quite an orator and undisputed politician. Not only is Paducah's history full of Alben W. Barkley, but United States history and government, also.

On the sidewalk at the entrance of Barkley Park is a place embedded in concrete which reads: "THIS MARKS THE NORTHERN LIMITS OF ANCIENT BOUNDARIES OF THE CHICKASAW NATION. - THE UNCONQUERED RACE."

According to the plaque mounted at the entrance of Barkley Park by the Kentucky Historical Society, Kentucky Department of Highways in 1965, this same BARKLEY PARK was the site of FORT ANDERSON, Union fortification built in 1861 by General Charles F. Smith, "manned by 5,000 troops. Jump off for Grant's Mississippi Valley Campaign. Fort was attacked March 25, 1864 by CSA General Nathan B. Forrest's forces. Col. Albert P. Thompson, CSA of Paducah killed. CSA burned riverfront warehouses. Next day USA troops under Col. S.G. Hicks burned homes in range of the fort."

In a fenced-in enclosure surrounded by walkways in the approximate center of Barkley Park proudly stands "Locomotive No. 1518, the last "Iron Horse" owned by the Illinois Central Railroad Shops which built or rebuilt engines for many years until 1960. In fact, the "Illinois Central Railroad" has been said to be "THE" industry of Paducah and rightfully has a place in Paducah's history. The Locomotive No. 1518, the last "Iron Horse", stands in a place of honor in Barkley Park, it's final resting place.

The memorial plaque at the site of "the ole Iron Horse" in Barkley Park reads in part, ".....a steam locomotive donated by Illinois Central Railroad to its employees past and present.....the

last Iron Horse owned by ICRR.....maintenance funds provided under leadership of the Western Kentucky AFL-CIO Area Council and sponsored in 1964 by the Paducah Parks, Playground and Recreation Department of the City of Paducah....."

Even though the general area of Barkley Park is thoroughly loaded with history, many of us think of it as the "Alben W. Barkley Park - native son", of whom we are all proud. Those who find peace and tranquility in the picnic shelters; those who make good use of the tennis courts; and the children who participate in the Little League softball programs in Barkley Park, are numerous. Everyone is welcome to visit this memorial park overlooking the scenic Ohio River.

BROOKS STADIUM, located at 25th & "C" Street, is a longtime dream of hundreds of Paducahans---the result of careful planning and diligent work on the part of a relatively few persons, and the cooperation of numerous civic-minded individuals, especially Polk Brooks.

Desiring to see professional baseball in Paducah, the Paducah Baseball Association was organized in 1947, and raised money to build Brooks Stadium. The association was composed of Polk, Wells Heath, Dr. Harry Wolfe, Sam Livingston, Henry Weil, Louie Kirchoff, Ray Jacobs, R.E. Peters, Sam Sloan, Charlie Wilson, Bill Carson, Ralph McRight and Hubert McRight. When Polk Brooks was appointed president, it was decided to name the park after him.

The association sold stock at \$10 a share to raise the \$75,000 to \$85,000 needed to buy the 22 acres for the park and for construction materials. The concrete fence around the outfield was Brooks' Idea. It has solid concrete panels with steel mesh reinforcements and steel H-columns that were hoisted in between. This type fence was cheaper at the time than a concrete block fence, and it lasts longer.

In 1948 arrangements were made with the Milwaukee Braves to furnish Paducah with players. The first year of play (1949), the Paducah Chiefs were in the Mississippi Ohio Valley League with Hillman Lyons of Mayfield as manager. Some of the teams in the league, at that time, were Springfield, Ill., Manton, Ill.; Paris, Tenn; Mt Vernon, Ill.; Vincennes, Ind.; Centralia and West Frankfort, Ill. The Paducah Chiefs changed to the Kitty League in 1951, becoming a farm club for the St. Louis Cardinals, and remained in the capacity until their last year---1955. The spring and summer days of the late 1940's and 50's were the heydays of the Paducah Chiefs with an average of 1,500 fans turning out to spend their leisurely afternoons at Brooks Stadium, drinking 25-cent beer and eating "red hot dogs" that cost 15 cents. Although the Paducah Chiefs won the pennant the last year, the Kitty League championship flag was not to fly in Paducah as modern technology began to take it's toll on the live ballgame audiences. Since more people relied on their TV sets for entertainment, smaller towns, such as: Mayfield, Fulton, Union City and other teams in the Western Kentucky area could not support themselves. Brooks expressed the feelings of the association when they dissolved the league by saying, "Everybody hated it when we had to give it up. We hated to

get out of baseball."

After the Chiefs left town (with several of the players making Paducah their home), use of the stadium fell considerably and, thus, funds to keep it in shape were difficult to come by. The City of Paducah purchased the Brooks Stadium, with the stipulation that if professional baseball ever came back to town, the field would be made available. The stockholders of Brooks Stadium received about \$12.50 per share return for their investment, upon the sale to the city. The stadium, which was one of the finest Class "D" parks in the country, began to deteriorate steadily upon the death of professional baseball. Weeds grew through the cracks in the concrete grandstand, the box seats were all torn out, the bleachers along the foul lines were removed, the batting cage and the scoreboard disappeared, and even the old press box was blown off the top of the stadium. There were no organized ball programs conducted at Brooks Stadium until approximately 1960, when the slow-pitch softball league was organized with some games being played at Brooks Stadium and other games were played at Blackburn Park and Stewart Nelson Park. Numerous activities were held at the stadium, including: Jaycee Jr. League football games, gospel singing, and motorcycle races. The stadium was rented to Lone Oak High School for their home football games, as the school did not have a home field. Then, representatives of the Paducah American Legion Post 31 baseball team came to Brooks about revitalizing the once beautiful park. Paducah Tilghman High School and Twin States baseball teams also used the stadium for their local games. Thus, the controversy between baseball and softball arose, which brought on the idea of constructing all adult softball fields at Stewart Nelson Park.

In December 1966 the City of Paducah Board of Commissioners passed a resolution, authorizing the City to apply for a grant to assist them in the acquisition of an additional 16 acres at Brooks Park. Congressman Frank Stubblefield announced on January 25, 1968, that approval had been given for the Parks and Recreation Department to acquire the land adjoining Brooks Stadium, and bounded by the Elmwood Court Housing Authority. Under the agreement of the contract of purchase, the acquired land was to be used for open-space park, such as: park and recreational purposes, conservation of land and other natural resources, or historic and scenic purposes.

Through the efforts of Polk Brooks and other interested citizens, and at a considerable cost to the Paducah Parks and Recreation Department, the Brooks Stadium has again regained it's respectful place as one of the best amateur fields in the state of Kentucky; and remains an asset to the community.

There is an interesting, though unrelated, story about Polk Brooks, for whom the park was named. It is reported that back in the late 1930's and early 1940's, many Kentuckians left the "farm" for "butter and eggs" money in the Detroit automotive industries. Among those Kentuckians was Polk Brooks. The men folk, returning home for visits whenever possible, formed car pools for the trip. In those days the cars were without heat, and the side curtains

were made of isinglass. The car pools and frequency of the trips "home" finally resulted in a 'jitney' service spearheaded by Polk Brooks. Although the fare was small, the need was great, and in the mind of this businessman called Polk Brooks, the teller of this story felt that the birth of "Brooks Bus Line" began back then. So, today (1978), the Brooks Bus Line is indeed one of the 'prides' of Mr. Polk Brooks.

But much greater, is the pure delight Polk Brooks has in "Brooks Stadium and Park." He is its ever watchful parent. Although the maintenance of Brooks Stadium and Park is delegated to the Parks and Recreation Department, Polk Brooks still voluntarily donates his time to the overseeing and smooth operation of Brooks Stadium.

RIVERFRONT PARK is located at the downtown Ohio River waterfront. The riverfront has been the place of embarkation and debarkation of men and supplies since 1778 when General George Rogers Clark made Paducah (then Pekin) a part of our country's history. Today (1978), the riverfront is more widely used for pleasure craft than ever before. The Paducah Marine Ways keeps the port of Paducah active in commerce. But, because of the great interest of Paducahans and visitors in the waterfront, for purely scenic pleasure coupled with the increasing interest in water sports, the waterfront has been named "RIVERFRONT PARK."

The Paducah Park Board, in conjunction with the City Beautification Board of Paducah, with the assistance of the City Engineering Department, have in the past few years built steps and sidewalks on the first and second levels, planted trees, and cleaned up the area, generally. These departments obtained a Federal Grant under Mayor Dolly McNutt's term to improve the Riverfront Park. Previously, only a few boat ramps existed, but to date, there are boat ramps all along the waterfront for pleasure craft and fishermen. Light posts have been added, and within the past few weeks a boat dock has been erected to help in the safe launching of boats and passengers.

The Summer Festival is held at the waterfront two weeks during the year and a stage platform has been erected for this event. Sounds of calliope music can still be heard drifting across the water as steam driven paddle boats, such as the Louisville Belle and the Mississippi Queen, dock here occasionally.

Riverfront Park is, truly, a part of Paducah's historical past.

Jack Whaley had worked for several years as Paducah Parks, Playground and Recreation Department's Recreational Director before Dolly McNutt, the Mayor of Paducah in 1963, appointed him Director. Today, in 1978, the Parks Department is responsible for care; maintenance; and supervisory staffing of all thirty of the City's parks; playgrounds; recreational centers; summer playgrounds; three swimming pools; nineteen tennis courts; 35 blocks of boulevards; waterfront; the Jaycee Civic Center; and Oak Grove Cemetery.

These many recreational facilities are the outgrowth of Paducah's founding fathers' foresight in instigating long-range planning for "the next generation", bearing in mind that our

country would eventually expand such extent that increased recreational facilities would be a necessity.

The many and varied recreational facilities of today, therefore, were not born accidentally; but the thought and planning began 100 years ago.