

RADCLIFF

Compiled by Paul W. Urbahns

PRE-RADCLIFF HISTORY

The area that we know as Radcliff today was once known as the Mill Creek area of Kentucky. The historical significance of the area is best shown by the first map of Kentucky published by John Filson in 1784.

Mill Creek is depicted on the map and drawn with detail and named indicating this early use of the placename. One of the contributors to Filson's map was one Col. Daniel Boone. Local histories record that both Daniel and his brother Squire Boone, who later settled in Corydon, Indiana, spent quite a bit of time in this area. This fact is attested to by the Boone family cemetery located on Fort Knox just a few short miles north of Radcliff.

Thomas Lincoln, father of the 16th President, purchased his first **farm on Mill Creek**, and his mother and sister-in-law spent their last days in the area. The **Thomas Lincoln farm was located at the Southern Border of Radcliff** with the family members buried in the historic Mill Creek Lincoln Memorial Cemetery on Fort Knox. This cemetery was the original site of the **Mill Creek Baptist Church founded in 1782** as a community meeting house and served by circuit riding ministers of both the Methodist and Baptist.

Thomas Lincoln and family, including Little Abe, passed through our area during 1814 on their way to Indiana. The Lincolns migration was by way of a road, known today in Radcliff as Spring Street. A marker denoting the passage was placed a few years ago in downtown Vine Grove through which the same road passed.



About the same time, Coleman Lewis constructed the first section of **Radcliff's oldest standing structure, the Haycraft Inn which was located on the old Louisville-Nashville Turnpike now known as South Wilson Street**. The inn, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Structures was one of three located in Northern Hardin County and

used extensively during the days of stage coach transportation.

The Louisville-Nashville Turnpike, one of America's first hard surface roads, was began in 1825, but by 1840 only five miles of the road had been completed in Jefferson County and only 15 miles in Hardin County. The roadbed was constructed by cutting limestone rock to the shape similar to that of a railroad spike then hammered into the ground to form a base eight inches thick. On top of this successive layers of pounded stones were laid to give a surface coat of an additional four inches.

Local residents tell of the exploits of Frank and Jesse James spending the night in the barn of John Finley Hobbs just South of the Haycraft Inn. Meanwhile, just north of the Inn, William Dyer purchased five acres of land from the Haycrafts for construction of a General Store and Blacksmith Shop. This settlement was known as Dyer's Crossing during the late 1800's when the **Mill Creek Baptist Church relocated from the Mill Creek Lincoln Memorial Cemetery area on Fort Knox**. Today Dyer's Crossing is the intersection of Hwy 1500 and South Wilson Avenue in the Rogersville area of southern Radcliff.

Birth of Radcliff

It was Horace McCullum who actually named Radcliff in 1919 when he subdivided lots along Wilson Avenue and sold them at auction to the highest bidder. McCullum named the new community after his friend Major William Radcliffe, head of the Quartermaster Corps at the newly established Camp Henry Knox. After selling the general store which he had opened in the new town, McCullum no longer played a role in the development of the town into Kentucky's fastest growing city.

The next significant step in Radcliff's history happened during the 1930's when Fort Knox expanded and dislocated the towns of Stithton and New Stithton causing various residents and businesses of those communities to move to Radcliff. During World War II, thousands of soldiers trained at Fort Knox and spent their leisure hours at the USO in Radcliff.

Hardin County Water District #1 was formed in 1953, and became a reality in 1955 with the sale of bonds to finance the project. Today the water district is the principle source of fresh water to all Hardin County. Radcliff's Fire Department was established in 1955, with Joseph B. Hutcherson named the first Fire Chief. The Radcliff Civic Club was also organized that year with the

city being incorporated in March 1956, as a Sixth Class City. Radcliff Police Department was formed with officers paid on a fee basis. Population was estimated at 800.

Population growth of Radcliff over the years has been nothing short of amazing. Starting with 800 in 1956, the Census Bureau reported populations of 3,381 in 1960, 8,821 in 1970 14,519 in 1980, and is now estimated in excess of 21,000 making it the largest city in Hardin County in just over thirty years of growth.

STATISTICAL DATA AND BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE RADCLIFF, KENTUCKY

1919 -- (Fall)- Horace McCullum subdivided land along Dixie Highway one mile west of New Stithton. At a Christmas party that year, he named the community after his good friend, Major William Radcliffe, from Fort Knox.

1932--Rapidly expanding Fort Knox absorbed New Stithton, which sent most businesses and residents into Radcliff. Population--238

1942--Large USO building constructed by US Government along 31W.

1953--Hardin County Water District 1 formed, H C Davis, Will Brown, T Brown Logsdon named Commissioners.

1955--As a result of a \$325,000 bond sale, public water system became a reality. Radcliff Civic Club (later to be first "City Council") formed. Radcliff Fire Dept. formed, Joe B Hutcherson is the first chief.

1956--City of Radcliff is officially incorporated; and it's designated a 6th Class city--Population-800. Earl Brown, W E Duvall, Dewey Hargan, Vestor White and Elmer Hargan are appointed as Board of Trustees; Elmer Hargan is named Chairman. Radcliff Police dept. is formed, officers are paid on a per fee basis.

1957--New Post Office established in Radcliff. Planning and Zoning Commission established. Radcliff Elementary School opened. First town board election held, Earl Brown, Kenneth French, Marion Logsdon, Guy Berry, & H. W. Waldman elected. Waldman named by board as chairman. Population estimated at 2,100.

1958-- 19.9 acres purchased from Federal Government for what is now the City Park.

1960--Post Office moved to location at corner of Spring and 31W. Census Bureau gives report of Population--3,381.

1962--Radcliff reclassified by General Assembly as 5th Class City.

1963--Radcliff Police Department reorganized, fee system abolished, salaries established, 24 hour dispatch established.

1964--Sanitary system became operational. 31W rebuilt..West Lincoln Trail Blvd surfaced. A huge community celebration marked the two new roads, and the sewer system. Estimated Population--5,000; Radcliff reclassified again to status as 4th Class City.

1965--Chamber of Commerce organized, first president-Samuel Myers.

1967--Industrial foundation formed.

1969--Control Data constructed 40,000 square foot industrial facility; North Hardin High School opened.

1970--Parkway Elementary School opened. Census Bureau reports Radcliff official population as 8,281.

1972--UARCO opens in Control Data facility.

1973-- Sanitary system is expanded. Contract for new City Hall-Police Station and Fire Station are awarded.

1974-UARCO expands their plant to 80,000 square feet...double their original size.

1975--Radcliff is designated "All Kentucky City", "Outstanding Achievement in Community Development". Fire Department occupies it's new home; New City Hall-Police Station (now just City Hall) is opened.

1976-- Census estimates Population 12, 376

1978--Contract for David S Colvin Community Center awarded.

1980--Census shows Radcliff at nearly 19,000..2nd largest City in Hardin County.

1988--New Radcliff Police Station/District Court Facility ("Joseph B Hutcherson Hall of Justice"), named after Mayor Hutcherson, is dedicated.

1990--Census Bureau makes it official..21,000 plus, surpassing Elizabethtown.. University of Louisville Urban Studies Center says Radcliff is fastest growing City in Kentucky.