

Aloma Dale Williams Dew

By Jerry Long
c.2025



Historian – Aloma W. Dew



Aloma Dale Williams, daughter of Noah Joseph Williams & Edna Earl King, is a native of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. She married Lee Allen Dew (1931-2018) on 22 July 1973 in Owensboro, KY. She has a bachelor of arts in history from Murray State University and a Master of Arts degree in American history from Louisiana State University. She has served as president of the League of Women Voters and the Daviess County Historical Society. She was a member of the Preservation Alliance of Owensboro – Daviess County, Inc., and the Speaker's Bureau for the Kentucky Humanities Council. She served as chairwoman for the "Always A River" Heritage Festival; Owensboro Human Relations Commission; Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission; Kentucky conservation organizer of the national Sierra Club; Kentucky Commission on Women; committee for the removal of the Confederate Statute from the Daviess County Courthouse lawn; and co-chair for the Daviess County Bicentennial Committee. She has piloted a local African American oral history collection.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 1 September 1974, p.5C:

Life in Owensboro during Civil War topic of local woman's history thesis

What was life like for women in Owensboro during the Civil War? This question serves as the focal point for a major historical study being undertaken by Mrs. Aloma W. Dew of Owensboro, a part-time instructor of history at Kentucky Wesleyan College.

A graduate student in history at Louisiana State University, where she studied with the Pulitzer Prize winning historian, T. Harry Williams, Mrs. Dew has been working on the subject of women in Owensboro during wartime for four years.

In seeking material about women in Owensboro, she has searched the holding of libraries in Owensboro, Evansville and Louisville, as well as such specialized libraries as the Mead-Johnson Medical Library in Evansville and the Kentucky Library at Western Kentucky University.

In addition, she has worked in records at the Daviess County courthouse and has visited in several cities, including the Filson Club in Louisville and the Shaker Museum at South Union, Ky.

There will be at least five chapters in her book, being written to complete requirements for a master's degree from Louisiana State.

"I plan to have chapters on health and medicine, religion and education, home life and economic problems, the military side of the war in Daviess County as it affected women and the life of slave women and free blacks," Mrs. Dew said.

The main problem with research of this nature," she continued, "is finding materials directly relating to Owensboro. Many letters and other materials exist from women in Kentucky during the war, but none relate directly to Owensboro."

What she needs to make her research complete are materials relating to Owensboro.

"If I could find a diary, or letters, dealing with Owensboro the study could be more thorough," she added.

Mrs. Dew plans to present a paper, entitled "'From Cramps to Consumption: The Health of in Owensboro, Ky.," at a meeting of the Southeaster Poplar Culture Association at Birmingham, Ala., in October. She also will present a similar paper at a meeting of the Missouri Valley History Association in Omaha, Neb., in March 1975.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Williams of Utica, Mrs. Dew is a graduate of Daviess County High School and Murray State University and a candidate for a master of arts degree in history from Louisiana State University. She also has studied at the University of Durham in England.

Mrs. Dew has taught history English in Harrisville and Cadillac, Mich., and later taught for two years at Apollo High School in Daviess County. She is a member of the Daviess County Historical Society, the Southern Historical Association and other professional groups.

She and her husband, Dr. Lee A. Dew, professor of history and chairman of the department of history and political science at KWC, have two children, Stephanie and Hillary, and live at 2015 Griffith Place East. Owensboro.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 4 June 1978, p.12A:

College Closeup – Aloma Williams Dew, of 2015 Griffith Place E., recently received the master of arts degree in history from Louisiana State University.



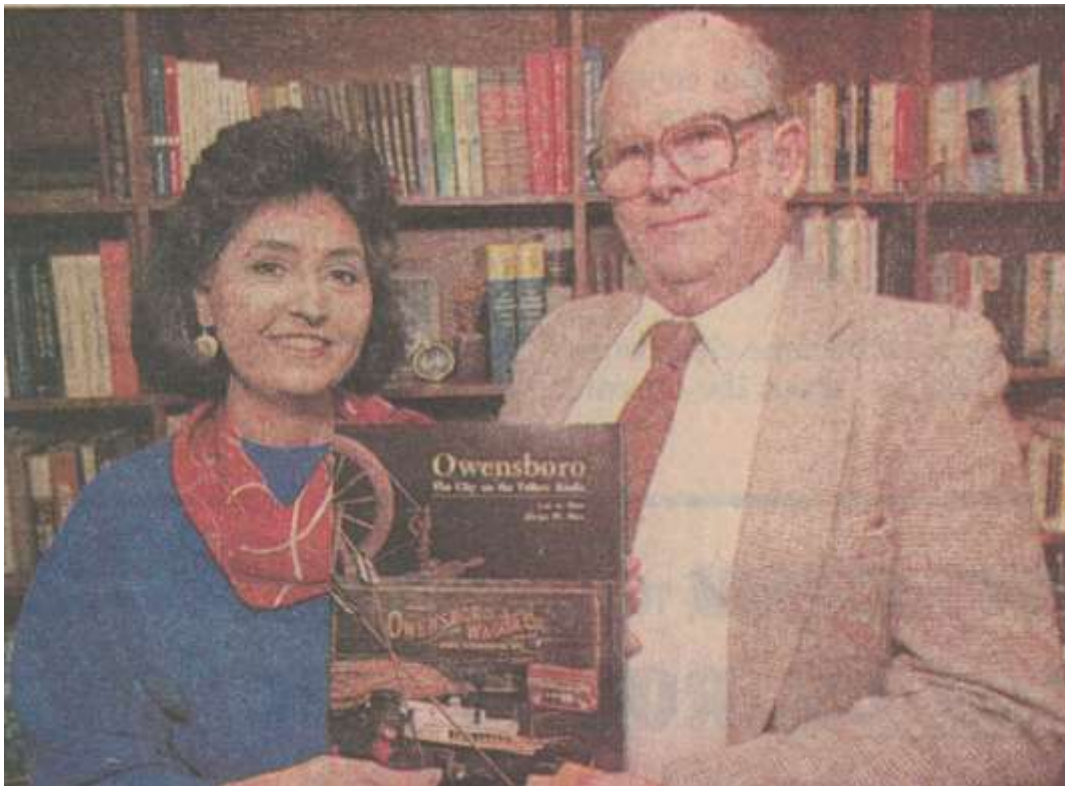
Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 4 March 1979, p.2E:

Column of Joe Ford, Director Owensboro Area Museum

Congratulations are in order for Aloma Williams Dew on the publication of her fascinating account of the Civil War in Owensboro. The story in the Kentucky Historical Society Quarterly, "The Register," is titled "Between the Hawk and the Buzzard." The 14-page feature article includes little-known facts concerning events that occurred here during that tragic conflict.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 27 December 1987, pp.1A & 9A:



Aloma Dew, left, and her husband, Lee, have written a history book about Owensboro that is due out this week.

**Owensboro a survivor,
local historians say**

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Winds of international economic change blew more than 1,500 jobs out of Owensboro in the mid-1980s. But community leaders say the storm clouds have parted and it's time to rebuild.

That's something Owensboro is good at – surviving – said Lee and Aloma Dew, husband and wife, historians and authors of a new book on Owensboro history.

The most important element in "Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks" is Owensboro triumphing over adversity time after time, they said.

"Anyone whose roots are in Owensboro should take pride in this book," Dew said. "It has a real sense of roots, place and pride. This is a very positive history."

But it looks closely at the city's past to explain what the community is today.

Owensboro rarely got the breaks when change came to America, the Dews said.

Even in the beginning, there was something to overcome.

In 1815, the year Daviess County was established, America was moving west. The War of 1812 was over and the frontier was booming. Owensboro was larger than its neighbor - Evansville, Ind. It should have seen prosperity.

Instead, Dew said, 20 years later, Evansville became a city and Owensboro was still a village.

A Kentucky banking scandal had created financial instability in the state. "Poor old Owensboro languished while people moved on to the states north of the Ohio River," Dew said.

"The city has suffered from trying to be what it can't be," Mrs. Dew said.

"Owensboro's booms have come in obsolescent industries," Dew said. "Whiskey, wagons, buggies and vacuum tubes. The booms were followed by collapse. But they were confronted, and Owensboro survived."

Dew is chairman of the history and political science department at Kentucky Wesleyan College. Mrs. Dew teaches there. She's a past president of the Daviess County Historical Society. He edits the organization's quarterly magazine.

They've been researching Owensboro history for the past 15 years. "Local history has just been legitimized in the last few years," Mrs. Dew said.

"The subject is as vast as the people," Dew said. "What we hope to do is stimulate people's interest in Owensboro history."

Working on the book together was fun, they said.

"We're two different personalities," Mrs. Dew said. "He goes to airports an hour and a half early. I skate through five minutes before the plane leaves. I need a deadline. He's a self-starter. We pool our perspectives."

Owensboro has been a progressive city, they said.

"It was the second city in Kentucky with its own electrical plant, yet there was bitter resistance to paving the streets," Dew said. "We were on the cutting edge of technology at the turn of the century."

They note that Owensboro had the largest privately owned buggy manufacturer in the world. Light bulbs from Owensboro lighted the PanAmerican Exposition in Buffalo, N.Y., where President William McKinley was assassinated. And Owensboro was a promising auto production center until mass production in Detroit killed regional automakers.

"Owensboro was more technologically oriented at the turn of the century than it is today," Dew said.

And, Mrs. Dew said, Owensboro was never a stereotype of a Southern town. In fact, city wasn't even Southern until the end of the Civil War, she said.

"In the post-Civil War years, Owensboro became more Southern and more Democratic," Mrs. Dew said. "It was Henry Clay Whig before the war. Most Owensboro people were pro-slavery and pro-union."

But, Dew said, Owensboro did not like Abraham Lincoln. "Lincoln got seven votes in Daviess County."

"When the war was over, the union had changed," Mrs. Dew said. "Owensboro had been under martial law and black soldiers were stationed in Owensboro. Owensboro voters became a solid Democratic block."

"We think we've done a good introduction, an overview of Owensboro history", Dew said. "There are countless subjects that still need to be written on." "We never intended it to be complete," Mrs. Dew said. "It's a starting point."

The Ohio River is a central theme in the book. It's in the first and last paragraphs.

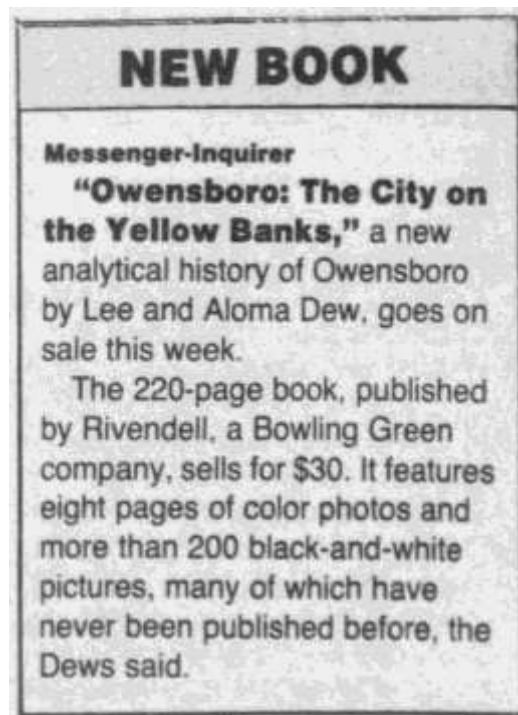
"Most people don't appreciate the value of the river," she said. "I read where a politician said he would trade the river for an interstate. That river has a value most people don't realize."

"We tried to focus on the things that make Owensboro unique," Dew said. "We didn't do the things that every city has."

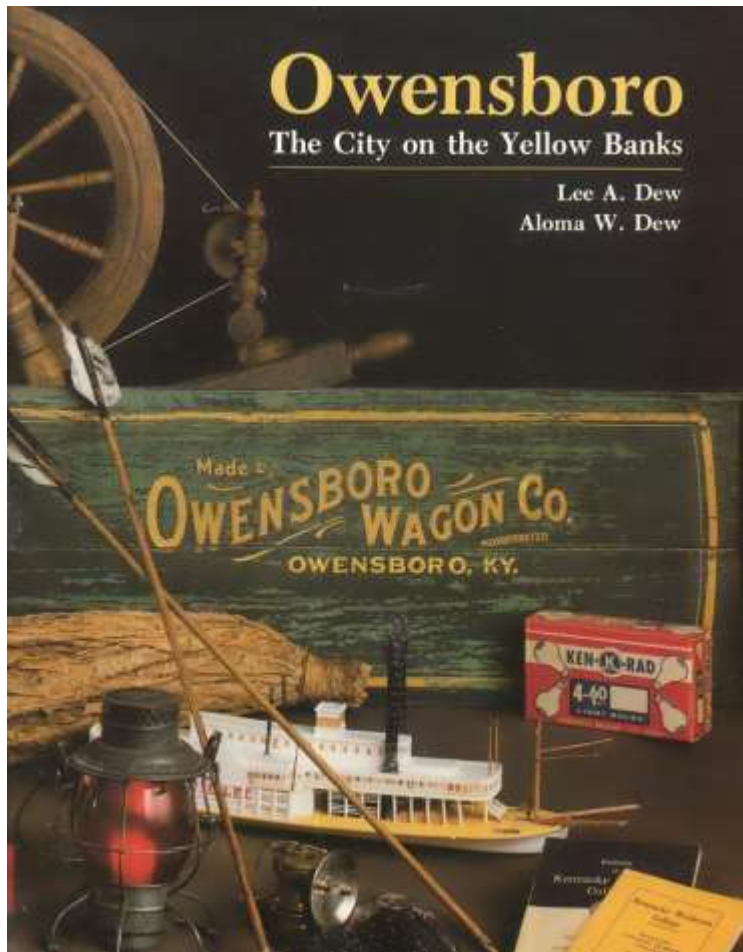
The book begins with the first Europeans to visit what is now Owensboro – Spaniards in the 1580s. And, of course, there's Bill Smothers, the original settler, who Mrs. Dew has a habit of confusing with Tom Smothers, the comedian.

There are tidbits such as the fact that, at one time, Owensboro had a saloon for every 55 adult males.

"We're not muckraking," Mrs. Dew said. "We're not in the National Enquirer School of History."



**Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks, Lee A. & Aloma W. Dew,
Rivendell Publications, Bowling Green, KY, 1988, 240 pages:**



Lee and Aloma Dew

About the Authors:

Aloma W. Dew is a native Owensboroan and a graduate of Daviess County High School and is an adjunct instructor in history at K.W.C. She holds a bachelor's degree from Murray State and a Master's from L.S.U., where she wrote a thesis on the history of Owensboro during the Civil War.

She has five published papers, and has made several presentations to history societies. A past president of the Daviess County Historical Society, she is much in demand as a speaker to civic and community groups.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 9 September 1993, p.1D:

Just Dew-ing It:

Aloma Dew's actions filled with love for the earth

Article by Lori Eckenberger, Messenger-Inquirer

[article not transcribed here]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 16 September 1994, p.1B:

Plaques expound on river's impact

By Karen Owen, Messenger-Inquirer

A few yards from the spot where Owensboro's first schoolteacher washed ashore more than 170 years ago, city officials unveiled six plaques Thursday marking the Ohio River's role in local history.

One of the new panels at Smothers Park commemorates Susan Tarleton, who survived a riverboat accident near here about 1820. It tells the story, as local historian Aloma Dew put it, of "how our first schoolteacher drifted into town, literally."

The riverfront marker project has been talked about for years, Dew told about 50 people at the park on Thursday. "This is a real dream come true for us."

Five of the markers were financed with a \$7,500 grant to the city from the Kentucky Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The sixth was paid for by the Daviess County Historical Society with some of the \$2,500 a New York man willed the group about two years ago, member Shelia Heflin said.

The historical society's marker recalls the 1937 flood. The others cover the Civil War's impact, early education and industry, entertainment along the river and the arrival of the railroad.

"All these things are tied in with our lifeline, the reason we're here at all" - the Ohio River, said Dew, who with her husband, Lee, wrote the text on the markers and selected the drawings or photographs on them.

Getting the grant for the project is "fairly significant," Lee Dew said. The Humanities Council frequently funds speakers and other types of programs, he said, but "it's fairly unusual for them to sponsor something that is physical, tangible."

The council looks for projects that will serve a variety of people, particularly in areas that aren't being served already, said Owensboro member Jeff Fager. "We recognize this is a place all sorts of people come."

The new markers are made of laser-engraved porcelain. "This is the Lexus," said Lee Dew, referring to the luxury car. He then gestured to a more traditional bronze highway marker near the park's gazebo. "That's the Model T."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 17 October 1995, p.2D:

Faculty Notes

Aloma W. Dew, lecturer in history at Kentucky Wesleyan College, presented a paper at the ninth annual Women's Studies Conference at Western Kentucky University recently. The theme of the conference was "Women and Education: Old Pathways and New Directions."

Dew's paper, "Political Activist or Southern Belle: A Comparison of Two Southern Women's Views on Suffrage in 1895," addressed the debate over the question of votes for women and included the opinions of two Kentucky natives, Josephine Williamson Henry of Versailles and Anna Robinson Watson of Memphis. The paper was part of a yearlong celebration of the 75th anniversary of the passage of the women's suffrage amendment, which was approved in 1920.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 9 January 1997, p.4C:

Coming Sunday

As part of the Messenger-Inquirer's coverage of the 200th anniversary of the settlement of Owensboro, local historians Lee and Aloma Dew will write a series of 12 monthly columns. Inside Sunday's Perspective section, Lee Dew kicks off the series with a column that explores the life and character of Owensboro's founder - Bill Smothers.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 21 June 2013, p.2A:

Daviess County Fiscal Court

At its meeting Thursday at the Daviess County Courthouse, Daviess Fiscal Court took the following action:

.... Approved appointing Aloma Dew (co-chair), Lee Dew (co-chair), Amelia Stenger, Shelia Heflin, Glenn Hodges, Wesley Acton, Sarah Patterson, Forrest Roberts, Jerry Long, Ed Allen, Grady Ebelhar, Nancy Bradshaw, Kathy Olson, David Zachary, Larry Worth, Shirley Trunnel, County Commissioner Jim Lambert, David Smith and Ross Leigh to the Bicentennial Committee.



Members of Daviess County Bicentennial Committee, 2013-2015: front row, left to right: Sister Amelia Stenger, Aloma Dew, Lee Dew, Wesley Acton, Jerry Long. 2nd row, left to right: Kathy Olson, Nancy Bradshaw, Sarah Patterson, Shirley Trunnell, Isaac Settle, Shelia Heflin, Forrest Roberts. Back row, left to right: David Smith, Whaylon Coleman, Ed Allen, Jim Lambert, Glenn Hodges, David Zachary, and Grady Ebelhar. Not pictured: Ross Leigh. Photo by Wendell Thompson.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 6 November 2015, pp.1C & 3C:

County history book signing Saturday

By Bobbie Hayse, Messenger-Inquirer

Several authors of the book, "Daviess County Kentucky 1815-2015: Celebrating Our Heritage" will be at The Bakers Rack in Wesleyan Park Plaza on Saturday for a book signing and discussion of the county's history and bicentennial.

The event is from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is free. Books will be available for purchase for \$42.50 each. Daviess County Bicentennial coins will also be available for \$10 each.

Aloma Williams Dew, a co-chair on the Bicentennial Committee, said on Thursday that more than 24 people from around the community contributed to the book, which was developed more than two years ago.

This is the first compilation of Daviess County history since 1883, she said, and is a topical history, not a chronology.

It was a combined project with an authors' committee and the Bicentennial Committee.

"It's got some good information," she said. "We've tried to include things that were not necessarily in earlier (historical compilations)."

Ed Allen, former superintendent for Daviess County Public Schools, wrote a chapter devoted to the development of the schools in the county.

Allen, born and raised in Daviess County, spent several months researching and writing for his contribution to the book. He traveled to Frankfort a few times and spent a lot of hours in the Kentucky Room at the Daviess County Public Library, he said.

"One of the things that surprised me were how many one-room schools there were as late as the 1920 out in the county," he said about his research. "At the turn of the century, there were about 100, including white and African-American."

How the districts were organized in the early days also was of interest to him.

He gave a lot of credit for the consolidation process in the 1920s and 1930s to the superintendent during that time, J.W. Snyder, who Allen said "really got the ball rolling."

"Consolidation would never had happened if there hadn't been better roads and transportation available, so that was interesting to learn," he said.

Jerry Long, a library associate assistant in Kentucky Room, wrote a 12-page historical chronology of 200 of the county's most historically significant events.

A few of those include the actual establishment of the county, and the first known church – Bethlehem Methodist Church – in the county, and presidential visits. In recent years, the closing of several significant institutions such as General Electric, and the dedication of the Owensboro Convention Center were also added.

"In relationship to the civil rights, there was a noted suit in 1883 about African-Americans and schools, and that helped to significantly improve the quality of African-American schools here," Long noted.

Civil War events such as the Battle of Panther Creek and the burning of the Daviess County Courthouse in 1865 were also listed.

Long spent about two months doing research "going page-by-page of every published history in the county looking for events that really, really stood out," he said.

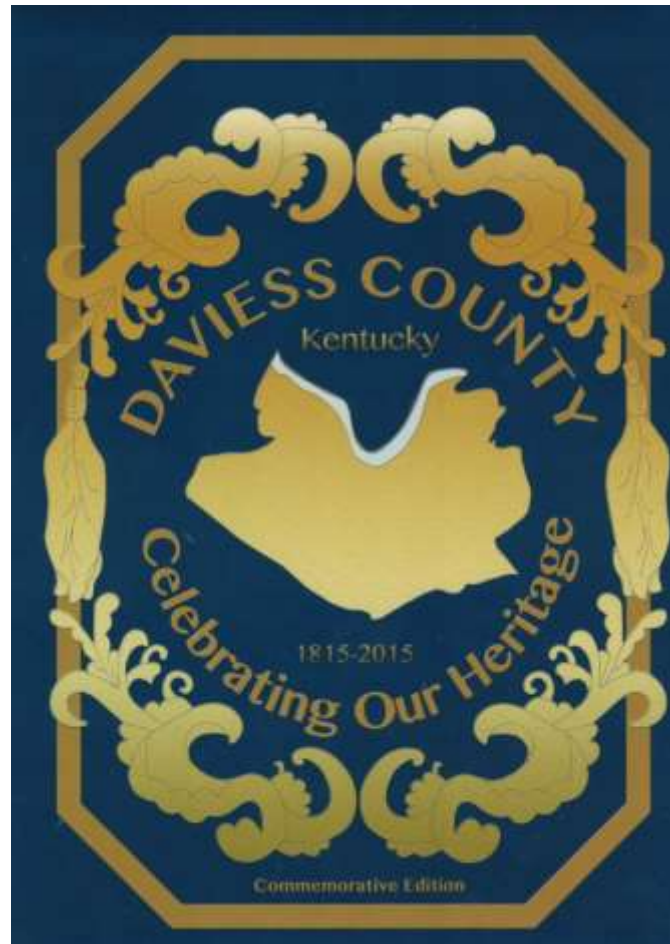
He said this book is important because it's a part of the county's history that everyone is being asked to honor and celebrate.

"That's what we're recognizing, and all of the great historical events that have took place, and the accomplishments," he said.

There will also be another book signing from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 5 at the Owensboro Antique Mall.



Daviess County, Kentucky: Celebrating Our Heritage, 1815-2015,
co-authored with committee , M. T. Publishing Company, Inc. Evansville, IN, 2015:



Contributing Author

Aloma Dew: Retired teacher and adjunct lecturer in History at Kentucky Wesleyan College, former chair of Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission and Kentucky Commission on Women, Sierra Club Regional Organizer, author.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 31 May 2015, pp.1B & 3B:

Daviess County celebrates 200 years

By Stephanie Salmons, Messenger-Inquirer

A brief shower early Saturday afternoon gave way to sunshine and blue skies as crowds gathered on the Daviess County Courthouse lawn to celebrate the county's 200th birthday.

Daviess County was carved out of Ohio County by a Jan. 14, 1815, act of the General Assembly, but the act didn't become official until June 1 that year.

There was music — including a couple of rounds of "Happy Birthday," performances, face painting and balloon animals, cake and more.

Shortly after 3 p.m., county leaders opened a time capsule buried on the courthouse grounds during the 150th birthday celebration in 1965.

The 135-pound stainless steel capsule held a number of relics, some of which were to be displayed after the capsule was opened. Mementos from the past included, among other things, letters to the citizens of Owensboro in 2015.

Daviess County Judge-Executive Al Mattingly read several aloud, including one from former Mayor J.R. Miller.

"To Whom it May Concern: The expression which is flowing freely throughout the nation, 'politics in Kentucky are the damndest,' is in my mind, at least, a fair statement. Political factionalism in Kentucky held the state back for years," Miller wrote in the 1965 letter.

"I'll tell you," Mattingly said following the ceremony, "reading those letters in the time capsule, the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Mattingly said when he ran for judge-executive, he didn't realize the county would be celebrating its bicentennial during his term in office, "so it's pretty cool."

Being able to celebrate the milestone not only provides a sense of history, Mattingly said. It's "a sense of where they came from, where they are today and hopefully ... where they're going to go in the future."

Other than the brief "sprinkle" early in the afternoon, Karen Porter, marketing manager for the Daviess County Bicentennial Committee, said the celebration has "just been wonderful."

"I think everybody that's here has had a great time, and people that aren't here are going to be sorry because we've had so much fun today."

Celebrating the bicentennial is a way for the community to come together and celebrate Daviess County, she said.

"These days, people don't have neighbors like they used to, and people are kind of separated a little more," said Porter. "So this is a great way to bring people together, and I think I will find when we get into the time capsule, that it's a real connection to those people 50 years ago (and) what they were thinking ... It gives you a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the people that came before us and all the different things that they did to make this county so great."

Bicentennial co-chair Aloma Dew said 200 years is "quite a lot of history."

"We're hoping this event makes people want to know more about their history, about the people that came before and what they did. I would like to think it would inspire those of us who are still here to think of what we can do to leave Daviess County a better place for the next 100 years."

According to Dew, the bicentennial will continue to be celebrated with activities throughout the year.

Starting Monday and continuing through June, the downtown post office and the Whitesville post office will begin using a bicentennial post mark. Also on Monday, free post cards will be available at those postal locations and birthday cake will also be served.

Joe Berry, vice president for entrepreneurship at the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp., portrayed county namesake Joseph Hamilton Daveiss.

"The Bicentennial Committee felt it would be an interesting history lesson and a good way to kind of tie the past to the present and into the future by having him, in costume, as the master of ceremonies for the day," Berry said.

Berry said it's an honor to be asked to participate in this event.

"The county only turns 200 once and it's something we're all lucky enough to be here for, to be alive during this time, and particularly at a time when there's so much progress and so (many) positive things happening in Owensboro," he said. "It's a nice commemoration of how far we've come, so I'm certainly very honored to be a part of it."



Left: Aloma Dew, left, recipient of the 18th annual Athena Award, accepts the award from Amy Jackson of First Security Bank at the annual awards luncheon Wednesday at the Owensboro Convention Center, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 February 2016, p.1A.



Right: Women of Honor – Aloma Dew talks at her home in Owensboro. A retired teacher and environmental activist. Dew received the 18th annual Athena Award in 2016. Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 March 2018, p.1A.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 23 August 2020, p.5A Editorial page:

Time for a better,
brighter and more
inclusive future



Aloma Dew – In My View

Knowledge of our history is important in becoming our better selves. Never satisfied, always striving for a "more perfect union" has been the goal of the leaders of this country from the

beginning. It can be uncomfortable, it is hard, it is messy — this becoming a better nation where all are created equal and treated equally under the law.

When we do not know our history, including local history, and when our minds are fixed on some ideal from the past, we can not form that better society. We become stuck in a certain time and set of beliefs which will not allow us to grow and be our better selves. That is the challenge facing us at this moment.

The Aug. 1 rally at the Daviess County Courthouse showed that clearly — waving Confederate Flags, singing Dixie, pretending that lynchings, Jim Crow and discrimination did not exist here; pretending that a prominent Confederate statue does not reflect the time in which it was erected — 1900 during the height of white supremacy — believing that white skin gives us some privilege, is simply to ignore historical facts.

There were atrocities on both sides during the Civil War. Owensboro, a border town in a border state, contributed troops to both the Union and Confederacy. There was a Union gunboat at the foot of Frederica all during the war and the courthouse was burned by Confederate guerrillas. Large numbers of Blacks enlisted in the Union army, taking great risks but fighting for that "more perfect union" all had been promised.

But as soon as the war was over and the river was open for traffic, the town went back to normal business. One resident said she did not care which side won, just that the war was over. But by 1876 with the disputed Hayes-Tilden election and the deal made with the Compromise of 1877, Reconstruction ended, Hayes became president and the New South emerged with the old leadership, and white supremacy reigned.

Here there were lynchings of Blacks on the courthouse square. Blacks were not allowed in white businesses, schools and restaurants. They were told to keep their place. Many were essentially re-enslaved as sharecroppers or janitors and maids. Not until the 1960s did some beginnings of equal rights come to our town with the Civil Rights movement.

And always there was the Confederate statue to signal that though the war was lost, the battle of who is in control was won. By the time that statue went up, Owensboro had become more Southern in attitude than it had ever been. There were myths of a lost cause, of a romantic way of life, of a white society with cheap black labor, and even for the poorest whites, there was someone to look down upon.

Until we can accept each other as our neighbor, brother and sister, as our churches preach; until we can judge each other by our abilities rather than the color of our skin; until we can make Owensboro a place all our children may want to return; until our city projects a diverse and welcoming atmosphere for all; until the statue is moved to a more appropriate place where it can be explained and put into context with all of our history, we can not pretend that we are a welcoming city.

I had ancestors on both sides of that conflict. I have studied and taught Civil War and Southern history for many years, and it took a long time for me to see the statue for what it represents, especially to our Black citizens.

It is hard to give up the idealized past, the stories passed down through our families, the pride of being Southern and to recognize the privilege we have partly because of the unpaid or poorly paid labor of others. I do not want history erased, I want people to know their history, to study it, evaluate it, accept that we still have a way to go for that "more perfect union."

History is there to teach us to grow and change as we have deeper understanding and write new chapters. I urge Daviess Countians to become less romantic about the past, and more realistic

and reasonable. It is time to lay the glamorized past to rest and to move into a better and brighter and more inclusive future.

Aloma Williams Dew, historian and environmentalist, is a former adjunct lecturer in history at Kentucky Wesleyan College, with an M.A. from Louisiana State University in Southern History, Civil War and Reconstruction. With husband Lee Dew, she was co-chair of the Daviess County Bicentennial committee. She is a native of Owensboro and former chair of the Kentucky Commission on Women.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 23 November 2022, pp.1A & 2A:

**Dew receives 2022 Liberty Bell Award
Honor bestowed by Daviess County Bar Association**

By Karah Wilson, Messenger-Inquirer

Owensboro resident Aloma Dew was named the 2022 recipient of the Liberty Bell Award, an honor bestowed by the Daviess County Bar Association.

Jeanie Owen Miller, a retired administrative law judge, said the bar association is happy that the reinstatement of the award was given to Dew.

“We have been giving this award for decades, but with COVID, it was not given for several years,” Miller said. “... Dew has worked all of her adult life to educate the community about the many women and minorities that have dedicated their lives to ensuring equal rights under the law.”

Dew is a retired lecturer and history teacher at Kentucky Wesleyan College and has spent time teaching the democratic system of government.

She served as co-chair of the Daviess County Bicentennial Committee, has co-authored books on life in Owensboro and Daviess County and has received numerous awards for her educational efforts.

“While on the bicentennial committee, we got a plaque for the Black soldiers who were joined up here in Owensboro,” she said. “That was a great accomplishment.”

That led to her and her husband being asked by the city to create historical markers for Smothers Park, English Park and several at Kendall-Perkins Park.

“We were really trying to be inclusive and get everybody’s history, but there’s still a whole lot to be told,” she said.

Dew said she is more active in the American Association of University Women (AAUW) today and sits on the board as the club’s historian for the Owensboro chapter.

“I’ve worked a lot on various projects that we’ve had, with the latest one being tours of people buried at Elmwood Cemetery,” she said.

Dew worked on the brochure and map for grave sites at Elmwood Cemetery of women who worked for equal rights.

While at KWC, Dew created a class centered around American women’s history.

“Right now I’m in the process of writing a book about an important Kentucky suffragist named Josephine Henry,” she said. “I’ve written about women in the Kentucky Encyclopedia. The environment and women are two of my main efforts.”

In 2020, she was instrumental in efforts to place a memorial on the Daviess County courthouse lawn commemorating the passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

“The AAUW worked very hard to get a memorial for Louise Gasser Kirtley,” Dew said. “She was the first woman attorney in Daviess County, she was the first woman state representative from here. She was a whole list of firsts.”

Dew said she received the award during a time where she felt like the work she was doing in and for the community didn’t matter to anyone.

“It cheered me up after my thoughts of feeling that I have wasted my life because nothing was happening,” she said. “I’m very humbled, because I know there are a whole lot more people out there who have done a whole lot more than I have.”

Dew’s husband, Lee, was a previous recipient of the award, as was her mentor, Clara Oldham, who received the award in 1997.

“It’s reaffirming, and I feel like it’s given me new energy,” she said. “I felt like I hadn’t been doing enough, so now I have to get more serious. I feel honored.”



Aloma W. Dew – Local History Bibliography

- “From Cramps to Consumption: Women’s Health in Owensboro, KY. During the Civil War, Aloma Williams Dew, The Register, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY, Vol. 74, No.2, April 1976, pp.85-98.
- “Owensboro, Kentucky During the Civil War: A Woman’s Perspective”, Aloma Williams Dew, Murray, KY, 1978, 109 pages. MA Thesis at Louisiana State University. Copy in the Kentucky Room, Daviess County Public Library, Owensboro, KY, library call #KR 973.7 Dew
- “Between the Hawk and the Buzzard”, Aloma Williams Dew, The Register, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY, Vol. 77, No. 1, Winter 1979, pp.1-14.
- “Daviess County: From Buckskin to Beethoven”, Aloma W. & Lee A. Dew, Back Home in Kentucky, Clay City, KY, January/February 1984, 12 pages.
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Introduction to book
Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks,
Lee A. & Aloma W. Dew,
Rivendell Publications, Bowling Green, KY, 1988:

One cannot write, or even think, about Owensboro without including the Ohio River. Its presence is responsible for the founding of the town, and much of its history has been shaped by this powerful, fluid ribbon throbbing through time and history. The broad Ohio, curving past the high yellow banks where Bill Smothers built his cabin, symbolizes so much about Owensboro—it is the thread that runs through our history, and with strength and determination continues rolling into the future pulling us with it.

It was the river that brought people, news, entertainment, and luxuries to this town. It was also the river that brought Union gunboats, blockades, competition, challenging new ideas, and, sometimes, people too willing to exploit its resources because of the river. Change is a truth of history, but the river has been our constant—always there, flowing ever onward—sometimes calm, sometimes turbulent, often the cause of adversity.

Owensboro's history is of a town overcoming adversities. Whether the banking crisis of the 1820's which inhibited growth, or the collapse of the vacuum tube business, Owensboro has

struggled to overcome the traumas in its economic life. It is a history of problems—the sectional controversy of the Civil War in which Owensboro was a microcosm of the problems which split the nation, a border city in a border state beset with guerrillas and Union troop occupation; the problems of slavery and families divided by politics. In recent decades the city has been confronted with the collapse of major industries and the realization that the old ways are gone and new approaches must be taken; of grappling with concerns for jobs which often seem at odds with concern for the environment and the high quality of life in the mid-size town. But the city of Bill Smothers, Tom Pettit, Roy Burlew, and Frank Sheehan keeps its faith in the future, keeps growing and prospering and developing sources of pride. This tenacity is a source of profound hope for the future. This resilience is Owensboro's "tap root". . . it is this which we share in common with those who went before, it is this anchor upon which we rely.

Roots—that is one purpose of this book, to define the community roots, to help us know what happened before us. the strengths and weaknesses of our predecessors; their accomplishments, sometimes against great odds. Roots—to help us know who we are and where we have been, to give us a sense of time and place so that we can plot our way into the future, together as a community, secure and proud of our history.

As Owensboro enters the last years of the decade of the eighties, it faces many new economic and social challenges and finds itself in a time of change and decision-making about the direction of the future. We have attempted to chronicle the major changes and decision-making of the past, as part of the road to the future.

Countless historians have warned that without a clear understanding of the past we can only repeat our mistakes over and over again. Let it not be said of us that "no one cared except some reporters and photographers and a few historically-minded persons" It is our fervent hope that this book will inform, enrich and inspire; and serve as a vehicle to build pride, based on knowledge, of Owensboro's past, to strengthen that tap-root connecting our past with the future. We are not antiquarians, submerged in the past, glorying only in its accomplishments. We see a knowledge and appreciation of the past, with all its mistakes, as essential for developing the future which must bring changes.

But change can be brutal. Faster than Owensboro's history can be recorded, it has been destroyed by bulldozers wearing the badge of Progress. Many of the illustrations in this book depict an architectural past that is now gone, preserved only in faded photographs and fading memories, memorialized with asphalt as parking lots. Masterpieces, which represented so much about the kind of people who built them and lived in them, have fallen to the wrecking ball and "no one cared. . ." except for a diligent few working in the community to save our brick and mortar past so that each new generation can marvel and look with pride at how we once lived and worshiped and the skill and beauty of forgotten craftsmanship. We are indebted to those who labor in our museums and archives, the efforts of the Preservation Alliance, Daviess County Historical Society, Downtown Owensboro, and the various neighborhood groups working to save their small corners of the past from oblivion. And to those who have recorded the past in newspapers and books, we are indeed grateful.

We sometimes fail to grasp that history is not just events of 100 years ago, 50 years ago, but yesterday, this morning; it is not just a collection of antiques, names and dates, but it is the actions of people in a community today which becomes tomorrow's history. The historian Tacitus suggested that the purpose of history is to record good actions, lest we forget, and to remind us that what we do or neglect to do will be held up to the perusal of tomorrow's historians.

The preparation of this book has been a labor of love and the realization of a long-time goal to co-author a history of our community. We believe it can serve to set us on our course and to instill an honest pride in our past as Owensboroans. Many of you will find omissions or less depth than you might wish in the treatment of some subjects. Be assured that this is not a comprehensive work and it is indeed selective and subjective in the topics covered. There is much left to be researched and written by historians, students, and others with a hungering for information. Because time and space did not permit including everything, we have tried to give our readers a sampling, an appetizer, if you will. We certainly intend to continue in our quest to find out more about this city on the Yellow Banks.

This book could not have been written without the help and advice of many people—from students who helped us with research to all those people who supplied us with photographs. Our publisher, Philip Henry, was always enthusiastic and encouraging, even when we supplied him with much more copy than he had requested. Invaluable aid was given by our research assistant, director of the Kentucky Room of the public library and former student, Shelia Brown Heflin and her colleagues, Bettie Spratt and Charlene Greer. We are also indebted to the authors of sidebar essays, who graciously contributed their knowledge and talents to provide information which enriched our text.

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The photographs came from a countless number of sources, including the Owensboro Area Museum, Owensboro Tourist Commission, Owensboro Daviess County Library, Downtown Owensboro, Inc., Miss Elizabeth Gasser, Mr. Tom Laswell, the General Electric Company, Mr. Don Raines, Mr. Ray Russell, the Daviess County Historical Society, the Owensboro Riverport, Mr. Hubert McFarland, S.W. Anderson Company, the Owensboro Parks and Recreation Commission, Dr. Richard Weiss, the Kentucky Wesleyan College Archives, The Filson Club, Judge David Brodie, the Owensboro Chamber of Commerce, Southern Tank and Manufacturing Company, Mrs. Nora Coleman and the Owensboro Independent Schools. Other materials were furnished by Dr. Bill Chandler of the Owensboro schools and Mr. Joe Overby of the Daviess County schools, by Sr. Ruth Gehres, president of Brescia College, and by Richard Weiss of Kentucky Wesleyan College.

The large number of photographs in the book would not be possible without the support of our business sponsors, whose financial commitment made this book possible. Their stories are told in Chapter 12, and are not only an important part of the economic history of Owensboro today, but will serve as a valuable resource for future historians.

A special thanks goes to our typists, Mrs. Peggie Greer and Miss Carol Bart, without whose patience and skill the manuscript could never have met its deadlines.

And to all the others who have aided this project through their support and encouragement, we say a special "Thank you!"

— Lee and Aloma Dew
Owensboro, Kentucky
September, 1987

