Kendall – Perkins Park
Owensboro, KY

By Jerry Long
c.2026





Historical marker erected in 1975 by Commonwealth of Kentucky. Marker is in Owensboro, Daviess County, Kentucky, on the right when traveling west on West 5th Street.

History Owensboro Parks And Recreation 1815-1990
Evan Ray Russell (Owensboro, KY: Progress Printing Co., Inc., 1990) pp.110-111:

Chapter 3 – KENDALL-PERKINS PARK

Kendall-Perkins Park (formerly Douglas Park) located on West Fifth Street, serves primarily as a neighborhood park, although its facilities and the special programs held there also constitute use as a community park. Existing facilities include: swimming pool with bathhouse and wading pool, two lighted tennis courts, two lighted basketball courts, picnic shelter, playground equipment and other support facilities.

Kendall-Perkins is another good example of an overly developed five-acre park. Dedicated in 1975 it does receive good usage from the immediate neighborhood and hosts the annual Dust Bowl basketball tournaments each summer.

This area in 1906 was a small park on West 5th Street between Maple and Vine Streets; Vine later became Orchard Street. It was used by Negro families. Privately owned by J. A. Tennas, the park was named in honor of Frederick Douglas, a former slave abolitionist. In 1973 it was renamed Kendall-Perkins Park in memory of Joseph W. Kendall and Joseph P. Perkins, two contemporary citizens of the Owensboro Community. These men gave years of unselfish, tireless devotion to the neighborhood children.

On February 7, 1917, eighty-five black citizens of Owensboro delivered a petition and a request to the city commission in regular session stating:

> We the undersigned colored citizens of City of Owensboro, wishing to express our appreciation of the fact that you are anxious to do what you can for the betterment of our race and that you fully realize the importance of playgrounds for the children and how necessary it is to have good environment for their proper development and believing that you will comply with our request to have city convert into a playground and park the lot that you now have on the North side of 5th Street between Maple and Vine Streets for colored people for the purpose herein set out. We hope you do as requested and hope that it will meet your approval for which we the undersigned express our thanks in advance.
>
> Signed by W.H. Williams and 84 others. [City Owensboro Commission Book for February 1917].

The request was honored by the city commission and a motion passed to grant the request.

An eighty-foot by thirty-foot swimming pool was built in 1952, according to Addie Talbott, who was playground supervisor. The pool was renovated and updated in 1974.

An ordinance August 1, 1955, by the city commission appropriated $1000 to build a public rest room at Douglas (Kendall-Perkins) Park.

Two lighted tennis courts and a lighted basketball court were built in 1976 with a 50% cost-share grant from the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Total cost was $20,254. Mayor Waitman Taylor negotiated the project.

Regular parks department programs were developed and carried out by the program director and playground supervisors. A special annual event called the "Dust Bowl" athletic event was originated in 1973 by Jerry Davenport. It has continued and grown each year. Many people have contributed to the bowl's success, particularly those who served on the 1985 Dust Bowl Board: District Judge Robert Gobel, Ridley Sandidge, Jr., James Bush, Mary November, Doretta Bush and Jerry Davenport.

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 24 September 2026, p.7A:

How long has Kendall-Perkins Park been there?

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

When I drive past a place, like Kendall-Perkins Park for instance, I always wonder things like “who were Kendall and Perkins” and “how long has this park been here.”

Fortunately, I have the time to find out.

The 2-acre park at 1201 W. Fifth St. has been there 120 years — since 1917 — under several names.

According to city histories, a man named J.A. Tennas allowed Black families to use his property as a park beginning that year.

In 1917, 85 Black residents went to City Hall and petitioned that the property be turned into a city park.

It was named for Frederick Douglass, who was known as “the most important leader of the movement for African-American civil rights in the 19th century.”

And that name held until 1973.

That year, the city decided to change the park’s name to honor two local men — Joseph Nathaniel Kendall and Joseph Price Perkins.

Both had made great contributions to local life.

Kendall had graduated from Western High School and Kentucky State College, back when schools were still segregated.

He was an All-American halfback at Kentucky State, served in World War II and taught in city schools for 17 years.

In 1935, he played in the College All-Star Game against the Chicago Bears, according to his obituary.

Kendall was a football coach at Western and an assistant football coach at Owensboro High School.

He died in November 1965 from injuries sustained in a traffic accident a month earlier.

Perkins taught in city schools for 43 years after earning his degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

The school says it was “the nation’s first degree-granting Historically Black College and University.”

When Perkins returned to Owensboro, he was Western's basketball coach and assistant principal.

His obituary says he also taught at Foust Middle School.

Perkins died in Cincinnati in 1988.

He was 82.

The park that bears their names has been the home of the Dust Bowl basketball tournament since its inception in 1973.

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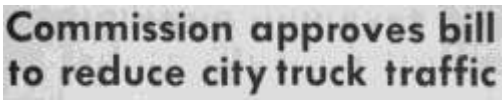
Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 8 February 1917, p.2
At a meeting of the Owensboro City Council on 7 February 1917:

Spare the Trees

The council voted to allow the colored people of the city the use of the city's property on West Fifth street for a play ground. Mr. Mischel suggested that some way ought to be provided to protect the young trees in this park. Mr. McDowell stated that he believed colored people would conduct themselves properly, and that no steps had been taken to protect trees in any of the other parks. [ed. note by J. Long – by 1930 the play ground had been named "Douglass Park.]

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Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 25 August 1973, p.1B:



[at Owensboro City Commission meeting of 24 August 1973] **….** Mayor Waitman Taylor read a letter which had been mailed to him by Mrs. Addie C. Talbott, of 717 Hocker St., concerning a plan to rename the city's Douglass Park in memory of the late J.N. Kendall. Mrs. Talbott requested that the city consider naming the park not only after Kendall, who died in 1965 after an automobile accident, but also after Joseph Price Perkins.

Mrs. Talbott explained that Perkins has "worked as a supervisor and director in Douglass Park for more than 30 years. I am personally aware of his efforts, above and beyond the call of duty, to provide wholesome recreation, enjoyment and Christian guidance."

Commenting on the move to make the commemoration while Perkins is still alive. Mrs. Talbott suggested, "Let's give him his flowers now."

Taylor said he had no objection to renaming the park Kendall-Perkins Park, but suggested that a two-week delay be observed before moving ahead in order to give individuals who wish to comment on the proposal a chance to voice their opinions. After the renaming, a monument will be placed in the park in commemoration of its namesakes**….**

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<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 8 September 1973, p.11B:

City commissioners delay shelter location decision

By Jack Lyness, Messenger-Inquirer

[at Owensboro City Commission meeting of 7 August 1973] **….** The commission unanimously voted to rename Douglass Park, on West 5th Street, Kendall-Perkins Park in honor of the late Joseph N. Kendall and Joseph Price Perkins. Kendall was a coach at Western High School and Owensboro High School who died following an auto accident in 1965. Perkins is a retired school teacher who spent his summers working with young people in Douglass Park for more than 20 years. [Mayor Waitman] Taylor said a plaque will be erected in the park commemorating both men**….**

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 24 May 1975, p.1B:

Perkins, Cravens pools open today

By Art Kaul, Messenger-Inquirer staff



Mrs. Joe N. Kendall and Joseph P. Perkins view the commemorative marker at yesterday's dedication of Kendall-Perkins Park on West 5th Street. Also dedicated yesterday was the Mary Lee Cravens Pool.

Kendall-Perkins Park and pool and Mary Lee Cravens Pool – developed at a cost of nearly $400,000 – will be open to the public for the first time today.

The Owensboro Board of Commissioners yesterday formally dedicated the recreational facilities, naming them in honor of three educators who contributed almost 100 years of service to Owensboro's youth.

A lease with the federal government also was approved yesterday by the board enabling Lock and Dam 46 – named Peter B. English Park to be - used for recreation starting June 1.

About $100,000 was spent to develop Kendall-Perkins Park in the 1200 block of West 5th Street. A refurbished pool and bath houses will be available to the public free. Tennis and basketball courts are provided.

The name of the park was changed to honor two city educators – Joseph Nathaniel Kendall and Joseph Price Perkins. The park formerly was named in honor of 19th Century abolitionist leader Frederick Douglas.

A committee in 1973 recommended that the name of the park be changed to commemorate local blacks who have contributed to the city's development, City Systems Analyst David Kelly said.

Petitions with about 350 signatures asking that a plaque be placed at the park to honor black leaders were presented in 1973 to the commission, Kelly said.

Kendall's widow told a small gathering at the dedication ceremony that "I appreciate this moment. It brings back a lot of memories of my husband."

A graduate of Western High School and Kentucky State College (1939), Kendall was a high school all-American and was named football all-American at Kentucky State in Frankfort. He taught in the Owensboro school system for 17 years and was football coach at Western High. He died in 1965.

Perkins said he is "very, very thankful" for the honor bestowed upon him. He taught in city schools for 43 years after receiving a degree in 1926 from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He was a Western high basketball coach.

Cravens Pool, in the 2700 block of West 5th Street Road, was built on land donated by the Owensboro Board of Education. It is adjacent to Cravens School.

The city received $144,000 from the federal government and added another $144,000 of municipal funds to build the $288,000 pool, Taylor said.

Miss Cravens had taught in city schools for 33 years when she died in 1956. "She e loved nature and was very helpful to the poor and disadvantaged," Taylor told a crowd of students from Cravens School who attended the dedication.

She began her teaching career in 1923 at Woodrow Wilson School and in 1937 became its principal. She was principal of Robert E. Lee School from 1948 to 1956.

An admission charge of 75 cents for adults and 50 cents for children under 15 years old will be charged at Cravens Pool, Parks Director John Mills said.

The lease with the U.S. Department of Army allows the city to use the 11-acre lock and dam site for a park while paperwork is completed to deed the property over to the city.

City Commissioner George Greer said he believes the city will receive a deed to the property sometime before the one-year lease ends. Until that time, the property can be used as a park.

However, the lease prohibits making any permanent changes in the land until it actually belongs to the city. The park will be used as a picnic area, Greer said.

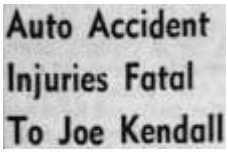
The mayor also asked Mills to develop procedures for the use of buildings at the park. He suggested that those agencies requesting office space in city hall might be able to use the buildings at the park.

A policy of not allocating any further office space in city hall was approved earlier by the commissioners because they said the amount of space is limited and has to be reserved for municipal purposes.



Joseph Nathaniel Kendall

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 27 November 1965, pp.1A & 8A:



A former Western High School and Owensboro High football coach died Thursday night. Joseph Nathaniel Kendall, 56, of 823 W. 8th St., died at 7:15 p.m. Thursday at the Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital.

Kendall was injured Oct. 23 in an automobile accident near Garfield, Ky. He and his brother, Sam, and a son, Joe Victor Kendall, were enroute to a homecoming celebration at Kentucky State College when the accident occurred. Both the brother and son have been released from the hospital but Kendall had been hospitalized since the accident. Death was attributed to a blood clot in the lungs.

Born in Owensboro on March 2, 1909, Kendall was graduated from Kentucky State College in 1938. He starred as a football halfback at State and was named to the All-Time, All-

America Negro grid teams in 1934, 1935 and 1936. He played in the College All-Star game against the Chicago Bears at Chicago Stadium in 1935.

Kendall began his teaching career in 1938 at Harlan Rosenwald High School. After serving with the armed forces during World War II, Kendall returned to Harlan where he taught until 1948, serving as principal of the school in 1945 and 1946.

Taking the coaching position at Western High School in 1948, Kendall began a career that produced one of the most outstanding coaching records in Kentucky. His teams featured wide-open football and consistently ranked among Kentucky's top Negro high school elevens. All-state football players produced by Kendall included Don Hayden and James "Dickie" Moore, both of whom started their careers under Kendall at Western before moving on to win all-state honors at Owensboro.

Kendall also coached baseball and basketball at Western.

After Western and Owensboro High consolidated in 1962, Kendall moved to OHS and served as a Red Devil assistant grid coach from 1962 until 1965.

He was a member of the Fourth Street Baptist Church.

Survivors include his wife, Mrs. Mary Lee Kendall; four sons, Joe Victor, Herbert, Charles and Samuel Eugene Kendall, all of Owensboro; three daughters, Marylin, Retha and Theresa Kendall, all of Owensboro, and one brother, Samuel Kendall of Owensboro.

The body is at the Haynes Funeral Home.



Grave in Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 16 July 2007, pp.1C & 3C:

'ONE OF THE FINEST'

Late Western High standout to be inducted into College Football Hall of Fame

By Scott Hagerman, Messenger-Inquirer

Some men are unforgettable for one accomplishment in life.

Joseph Nathaniel Kendall aimed for more than that. And he met the challenge.

Kendall, an Owensboro native, left a mark on his community that is still being felt. A firm believer in exhibiting a strong sense of character, of doing the right thing and being a positive example, his lessons continue to be passed down by those he had contact with, even more than 40 years after his death.

"He was a tremendous human being," said Whaylon Coleman Sr., a former educator who played football for Kendall at Western High School. "I always felt that anytime I asked him for advice, he would freely take the time to answer and guide you. And I never saw him belittle anyone. Never."

Before Kendall left his mark on the world as a role model, however, he found recognition as an athlete.

In the mid-1930s he was the quintessential multithreat for what is now Kentucky State University. He played quarterback and running back, punted and also played on defense.

He led the Thorobreds to the 1934 national championship for black colleges and finished his career as a three-time All-American. And even those accomplishments may understate his skills.

He was the "most accurate and dangerous pass thrower Negro football has known," wrote sports writer Paul Jones about Kendall in 1937. "No back before or during his time can boast a record such as his. He sent his passes away when as many as six defenders were trying to down him.

"At twisting, squirming, dodging and ducking, he was a master, and all of his passes found their mark."

This weekend, more than 70 years after his career concluded, Kendall's gridiron feats will again be remembered when he's inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Ind.

"My dad didn't talk a whole lot about his playing," his daughter, Retha Kendall-Leak said. "He talked about the sacrifices you have to make to be successful. That's what he stressed."

Kendall excelled at basketball and baseball. But his exploits on the gridiron were widely known while he was still playing at Western. He was named to the 1933 high school All-American squad.

But his playing days seemed uncertain when he went to a trade school in Paducah following graduation to study culinary arts.

Fate, however, intervened shortly after he arrived.

"One of his instructors saw him play and called the president of Kentucky State and said `You need to see him, he can throw and kick,' " recalled Leak of the story she had heard told. "He went off to college with two white shirts and one pair of pants. He washed a shirt every night so he would have a clean shirt."

The legend of "Tarzan" was about to be born. At 6-foot-2, 200 pounds, Kendall had the size to overwhelm opponents with his strength, and his speed was mentioned in almost every game report.

But what foes feared most was his passing ability.

"Fans who have seen Joe Kendall, Thorobred sharpshooter, toss the oval to his playmates claim that you are to see the classiest tosser of a lifetime," wrote the Atlanta Daily World.

In an era when offenses weren't known for their versatility, Kendall was operating out of a predecessor to the run-and-shoot. While the Thorobreds' defense was keeping most opponents off the scoreboard, Kendall was driving them to consistent scores, which made several games blowouts.

When not directing scoring drives, Kendall was changing games with his kicking ability. He was known for booming punts – with either leg.

"He's a great punter, one of the finest of the year," Jones wrote in naming the all-time black football team as of 1937, on which Kendall was selected at halfback.

During Kendall's career, Kentucky State posted a 29-7-3 record while playing what was widely regarded as a formidable schedule.

He also got to test his skills against the top professional players of the day when a black All-Star team played the Chicago Bears in 1935 at Soldier Field. Billed as one of the greatest sporting events in history, it was the first time a black team had played against an NFL squad.

Kendall, who served a two-year tour in the Army, graduated in 1938 with a history degree. Unable to pursue a professional career, he was hired that fall as a teacher and coach at Rosenwald High School in Harlan.

Kendall's coaching philosophy mirrored his playing style. Wide open.

"He had a tremendous knowledge of football at every position," Coleman said. "He knew what everyone needed to do. And he didn't go by a playbook. He drew up his own plays.

"He was very fun to play for."

Kendall wasn't just a success on the gridiron at Rosenwald. By 1946, he had become the school's principal.

A few years earlier he had married the former Mary Lee Rhodeman, with whom he had seven children, Joseph, Herbert, Charles, Marilyn, Samuel, Retha and Theresia.

But while Kendall had made a home in Harlan, Owensboro remained home. In 1948 he returned to be the head football coach at Western.

"He was a heck of a coach," said Jack Hicks, longtime coach and administrator at Owensboro High School who coached with Kendall in the 1960s. "They won their league year after year."

Western's success was partly attributable to Kendall never losing his passion for a wide-open playing style.

"They were liable to throw on fourth-down-and-20," Hicks said. "They ran the hook-and-ladder."

But it was soon evident Kendall, competitive as anyone, cared about much more than wins and losses.

"He was very interested in the community, like the town and community were his kids," Leak said. "The kids looked up to him, and he kept them on the right path. He helped them become good citizens. And if a kid needed something, a pair of shoes, he'd buy them for them."

To his players, he was much more than a coach.

"He was your father away from home," Coleman said. "He looked out for you. And you didn't get in trouble in the classroom because you would have to answer to him."

And the lessons didn't end when school let out. He spent a great deal of time around kids as a summer recreation director for the city parks department.

"He corrected you when you needed it, whether it was in school, on the playground or just walking down the street," Coleman said. "He never looked the other way."

One of Kendall's lessons imparted to kids in the community was having humility. A trait he exemplified.

"We used to hear stories about he could run the ball, kick with both feet, but looking back through high school, I can't ever remember him bragging about what he did," Coleman said. "I remember one statement he always made: Never toot your own horn, let someone else blow it for you."

Kendall backed up his teaching with actions when Western and Owensboro high schools consolidated in the early 1960s and he went from a head coach to assistant.

"He went to Owensboro to a lesser role, but he accepted it and fit right in," said Hicks, who was an assistant on the same staff. "He handled it very well. He was a nice person."



Owensboro's Joe Kendall, a standout football player at the old Western High School and at Kentucky State University, will be inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame this weekend at South Bend, Ind.

Kendall was headed to Frankfort for homecoming festivities at Kentucky State in the fall of 1965.

After years of being known for riding around town on his bicycle, he had only in recent years begun driving. And it had been a nondescript trip until outside Hardinsburg in Breckinridge County the car went off the side of the road and crashed into a large tree.

Kendall and his brother, Sam, both suffered a broken leg. His oldest son, Joseph, had a broken nose. But it appeared none of the injuries would require more than an extended hospital stay.

"We all thought everything was going to be fine," said Leak about her father's recovery.

After almost six weeks of recuperation, Kendall's family was preparing for him to be released to come home. But on Nov. 25, 1965, Thanksgiving Day, Kendall died from complications brought on by a blood clot. He was 56.

The loss was felt throughout the community.

"He was so well respected," Coleman said. "I said, `Lord, a good man has gone.' "

Herb Parker, sports editor of the Owensboro Inquirer, wrote that Kendall "leaves behind a legacy of talent, skill and sportsmanship. The sports world will miss him as a coach. Our young people will miss him as a friend."

Kendall's influence on the community remained strong after his death. And his efforts were recognized in 1975 with the dedication of Kendall-Perkins Park.

"We decided to look around the African-American community and see who were the individuals who had the biggest influence," said former Owensboro Mayor C. Waitman Taylor Jr., of how Kendall, along with Joseph Perkins, was chosen for the honor. "A lot of individuals said how much he had supported them, and how he set a good example that people looked up to.

"I was delighted with the choice."

Leak expects three or four generations of Kendall's descendants to make the trip for this weekend's induction ceremony. She sees it as another opportunity for her father's lessons to be passed on.

"I'm very proud of everything I learned from my dad," she said. "And that legacy he left just keeps growing."

Some men aren't meant to be forgotten.

Notable Kentucky African Americans Database (NKAA):
https://ukscrc001.net/nkaa/items/show/1653



Kendall, Joseph Nathaniel "Tarzan"
(born: 1909 - died: 1965)

Joseph N. Kendall was born to Stephen Kendell and Theresia Moore Kendall in Owensboro, KY, Oct. 2, 1909. In July 2007 he became the first Kentucky State University inductee into the College Football Hall of Fame, located in South Bend, IN.

Kendall was considered one of the greatest passers in college football and a good all-around player. In addition to playing quarterback, he was a running back and punter (who punted with both feet) as well as a defensive player.

In 1934 he led Kentucky State University to a national black college football championship and an undefeated season. In 1935, he led the team to an Orange Blossom Classic victory. During Kendall's college football career, Kentucky State had a 29-7-3 record.

The Pittsburgh Courier named Kendall a First Team All-American three times between 1934 and 1936. He was inducted into the Kentucky State Athletics Hall of Fame in 1975. He was also selected for the African American All-Star team that played against the Chicago Bears in 1935, the first time that an African American team played against an NFL team. Kendall was also a good baseball and basketball player.

He served in the Army for two years, then graduated from Kentucky State in 1938. His original higher education plan had been to go to Paducah, KY to study culinary arts, but once people saw him play football, they encouraged him to enroll and play for Kentucky State.

After college he was hired to teach and coach at the African American Rosenwald High School in Harlan, KY; in 1946 he became principal of the school.

In 1948, he returned to Owensboro to become the football coach at the school from which he graduated, Western High School. The Kendall-Perkins Park in Owensboro is named in honor of Joseph N. Kendall and Joseph Perkins.



Grave in Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, section G, lot 391

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 2 May 1969, pp.1A &2A:

As Exemplary Citizen

Perkins Receives Liberty Bell Award At Law Day Program

Joseph P. Perkins, a teacher in the Owensboro City Schools for 36 years, received the Liberty Bell Award of the Owensboro - Daviess County Bar Association Thursday night.

The award to Perkins was made at the Law Day dinner where Judge Bert Combs, of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals, and former governor of Kentucky, spoke on the crisis in American courts today.

The annual award is made to recognize outstanding service performed in keeping with the spirit of our Constitution, imposing upon citizens the duty to strengthen and safeguard the "blessings of liberty" for selves and succeeding generations.

Perkins is a living example of that purpose, said John Beard, association president and toastmaster, citing the efforts of Perkins to educate his six children in today's world where it seems

that some parents are too busy to know their children and only hope that someday a child will follow their footsteps.

The six children of Mr. and Mrs. Perkins are teachers, Beard noted, and they helped work their ways through college as their father had worked for his education in the depression years.

Noting Perkins' service as a teacher, assistant principal and basketball coach at old Western High School, Beard related how Perkins worked as a waiter and at other jobs to supplement his income in the days when Negro teachers were paid only 80 per cent of the salary paid other teachers, a salary that in 1936 was cut to $50 a month.

Perkins also found time, with three fulltime jobs, to serve as a scoutmaster and as a deacon of the 4th Street Baptist Church and now is on the Judge's committee on juvenile delinquency and a playground supervisor as he lives a life that is an example of purpose and an example to his family, Beard related.



Liberty Bell recipient – Joseph P. Perkins, Foust Junior High School teacher, left, received the Liberty Bell award of the Owensboro-Daviess County Bar Association Thursday night. The award was presented by John Beard, association president, center. At right is Judge Bert T. Combs, principal speaker at the Law Day observance dinner.

In accepting the honor, Perkins declared that there is a need today recognize the family as the basis of society, for once the family is broken, society is broken.

"Law and guidance should start in the home and must start in the home if society is to progress," Perkins said. "Truth and honesty are outgrowths of the home."

Perkins said he has been a "servant to my family," a "family strong enough to hold its own."

Commenting on the award to Perkins, Judge Combs said, "Men like Mr. Perkins will advance the cause of civil rights and remind us that men are created free and equal, as the Constitution declares, and that we are as good as our neighbor and to recognize that our neighbor is as good as we are."….

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 8 May 1969, p.2D:

EDITORIAL AND OTHER COMMENT

Joseph P. Perkins Given A Richly Deserved Honor

A father who has been an example to his children and to many hundreds of children was deservedly honored by our community when Joseph P. Perkins received the Liberty Bell Award of the Owensboro-Daviess County Bar Association.

The award is given to "recognize outstanding service performed in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution, imposing upon its citizens the duty to strengthen and safeguard the blessings of liberty for themselves and succeeding generations," its sponsors explained.

And this is what Perkins, a teacher at Foust Junior High School and one-time assistant principal at the old Western High School, has done as a teacher, a community worker and as father to his six children.

His own life, marked by hardships, the toil of holding down as many as three jobs at one time, is the story of a man who obtained formal college training and then set out to teach others. Like many fathers, he hoped his children would follow in his footsteps. And it can be no small measure of satisfaction for Perkins that his wife completed her college work and is too a teacher : and that their six children all have completed college and embarked on careers in education.

But Perkins' example hasn't been limited to his family or the children in his classes or on the teams he coached. He also has been a scoutmaster and scout leader, still serves the scouting program and is a deacon in his church. Perkins also is a member of the Judge's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and serves in the summer as a playground supervisor at Douglas Park.

In today's world, it seems at times that parents are too busy with their businesses and professions and with community service to be close to their families. Yet, as the honoree stated on accepting the award, the family is the basis of society and law and guidance must start in the home if society is to progress.

The selection of Joseph P. Perkins as the Liberty Bell recipient this year is recognition of the inspiration he gives to his family, his students and his community.

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 2 June 1972, p.12B:

Reception To Honor 3 Black Teachers

"The last decade has evidenced great improvements in the balance of educational forces between the black and white communities, and yet we have a way to go before arriving at a just balance," said Joseph Price Perkins, one of three black teachers who will retire today from the Owensboro Public School System.

Integration played role in bringing about educational improvements for black boys and girls, according to Perkins.

"With more and better understanding between the two groups we can arrive at a just balance."

Perkins; his wife, Mrs. Florence Perkins; and Mrs. Christine Robinson Smith, all black retiring teachers, will be honored at a reception from 3 to 6 p.m. Sunday at the Community Recreation Center, 5th and Elm Streets, Owensboro.

Natives of Owensboro, Joseph Perkins Sr. and his wife, Florence, have shared many parallel experiences outside their teaching careers. They were classmates at the former Western High School; are members of Fourth Street Baptist, where they are Sunday School teachers and Baptist Training Union leaders; and are active in their church music program.

Mrs. Perkins has served as church organist 28 years and Perkins is a long-time member of the choir. He was the church clerk three years, has been a deacon 10 years and is currently a member of the church building committee.

The Perkins have six children, all of whom are engaged in the teaching profession.

Mrs. Perkins, the daughter of the late S. L. Barker, who was principal of the former Dunbar and Western High Schools, attended the Teacher Training School of Wilberforce (Ohio) University and received her bachelor's degree from Brescia College. She has done graduate work at the University of Kentucky and Indiana University and received a certificate in library science from Kentucky Wesleyan College.

A primary teacher at Western and Dunbar Schools 18 years, Mrs. Perkins has served as librarian nine years at the following schools: Seven Hills, Mary Cravens, Washington, Mary Mitchell and Franklin.

Perkins attended Kentucky State College in Frankfort and received his bachelor's degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He has done graduate work at the University of Kentucky and Tennessee State College. From 1929 to 1966, he taught at the old Western School, serving as a mathematics football and track coach, dramatics instructor and principal. Since 1966, he has taught mathematics at Foust Junior High School.

Active in community affairs and organizations, Perkins has been a Boy Scout troop master 15 years and playground manager at Douglas Park 25 years. He is assistant Grand Master of the UBF Lodge, president of the J.N. Kendall Kentucky State College Alumni Club and a member of the Volunteer Bureau and local juvenile committee.

In May, 1969, Perkins was awarded the Liberty Bell plaque by the Owensboro-Daviess County Bar Association for good citizenship, professionalism, his exemplary life as a churchman and his value to the community. He also is a recipient of an oratory medal from Lincoln University….

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 12 April 1974, p.1B:

Retired schoolteacher

Public housing body names new member

Joseph Price Perkins, a retired black school teacher with 41 years' experience in local schools, was appointed to the Owensboro Public Housing Commission yesterday.

Mayor Waitman Taylor made the appointment at the Board of Commissioners meeting, explaining that Perkins fills two requirements for the job – he is a Republican and a member of a minority group.

The state statute which established the public housing authority stipulates that the commission include representatives of both political parties.

Perkins replaces George More Jr., a Republican on the commission. More moved to Indiana and thus lost eligibility for the body.



Joseph Price Perkins

That the appointee be a member of a minority group was a personal commitment made by the mayor more than a year ago. Taylor said that because Owensboro's public housing projects include a sizeable black population, he thought a black should be included on the commission.

Perkins, 68, retired from teaching in 1972. He was teaching at Foust Middle School at that time. The city honored Perkins last summer by renaming Douglass Park Kendall-Perkins Park after him and the late Joseph Kendall.

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 27 March 1988, p.2C:

Joseph Perkins, former teacher, dies



Joseph Price Perkins

By Marty Payne, Messenger-Inquirer

Joseph Price Perkins, a teacher in the Owensboro city school system for 43 years, died Thursday night in Cincinnati. He was 82.

Kendall-Perkins Park in the 1200 block of West Fifth Street in Owensboro was named after Perkins and another local educator, the late Joseph Nathaniel Kendall. It was dedicated by the Owensboro Board of Commissioners in 1974. The park was formerly named Douglass Park in honor of 19th century abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass.

Perkins received the Liberty Bell Award of the Owensboro-Daviess County Bar Association in 1969. The annual award was given to recognize outstanding service performed in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution, which imposes upon citizens the duty to strengthen and safeguard the "blessings of liberty" for themselves and succeeding generations.

The award was presented to Perkins in recognition of his service to the teaching profession, the community and dedication to his family.

Perkins received a degree in 1926 from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He had been a teacher, assistant principal and basketball coach at the old Western High School, and taught at Foust Middle School, where he was teaching when he retired in 1972.

Perkins raised six children, all teachers, and they helped work their way through college just as their father had done during the Depression years. He had to work three full-time jobs to supplement his income in those days when black teachers were paid less than other teachers, which at that time was cut to about $50 a month. He also served as a scoutmaster and as deacon of the Fourth Street Baptist Church.

He later served on a committee on juvenile delinquency and as a playground supervisor.

After his retirement Perkins served a couple of four terms on the Owensboro Municipal Housing Commission from 1974 to 1982. He also was a member and vice chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Development.

Perkins moved from Owensboro several years ago to be with his children, a funeral home official said.

Obituary

CINCINNATI - Joseph Price Perkins Sr., 82, of Cincinnati died Thursday, March 24, 1988, at East Galbraith Health Care Center, Cincinnati. He was born in Owensboro and was a retired teacher, assistant principal and basketball coach at Western High School; he also taught at Foust Middle School. He was a member of Fourth Street Baptist Church, Owensboro. (Story, this page.)

Survivors include his wife, Florence Ellen Barker Perkins of Cincinnati; two sons, Lorenzo Barker Perkins of Pontiac, Mich., and Albert Thomas Perkins of Vallejo, Calif.; (another son, Joseph Price Perkins Jr. died Oct. 7, 1976); three daughters, Sherrie Perkins Turner, Cincinnati, Marcia Jean Perkins, Los Angeles, and Phyllis Elaine Perkins Baker, Detroit; eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Services are at 1 p.m. Wednesday at Fourth Street Baptist Church, Owensboro. Burial in Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro. McFarland Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

History of Owensboro, KY Facebook website:

House at 731 Center Street was home to three historic figures – Samuel Barker, longtime principal of Western High School; his son-in-law Joseph Perkins, educator and community

activist; and Joe Perkins Jr, one of the original Freedom Riders who survived the 1961 KKK bus bombing in Anniston, Alabama. The Barker-Perkins home sits adjacent to the historic Center Street Baptist Church which was established by former slaves in 1879. Both buildings were landmarks of the racially diverse Owensboro neighborhood known as Snow Hill which in 1894 stretched from Sixth Street, south to the old Fairgrounds and from Center Street, east to Leitchfield Road.

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 2 June 1994, pp.1A & 2A:

Kendall-Perkins Park to open

Loss of pool still angers some area residents

By Greg Kocher, Messenger-Inquirer

The newly remodeled Kendall-Perkins Park opens Friday, but hard feelings remain over what the surrounding West Fifth Street neighborhood lost.

The park, rebuilt over the past nine months at a cost of $557,000, no longer has a swimming pool. Instead it has a "water-play area" – a multicolored structure that squirts water at the twist of valves – for those with the 50-cent admission.

City officials said the old pool was in poor condition, and declining use did not justify replacing it with a more expensive pool.

Phil Hoskins, the city's director of community services, said the new park is designed to better serve young children and families.

But David Kelly, who learned to swim at Kendall-Perkins, said the former pool was not only a place to splash and dive, but a place to excel. Last year Kelly presented Owensboro City Commission with a petition of about 500 people who opposed the city's plans to remove the swimming pool.

"When we lost the pool, we lost a very valuable skills-building, self-esteem-building place. You don't replace that with a wading pool," Kelly said.

Poor children have little else for recreation, Kelly said, and "you can't occupy them by watching water spray."

Neighborhood resident Alfred Thompson said he and others were surprised and disappointed to learn that it will cost children 50 cents to use the wading pool.

"I was shocked that there was going to be a charge," said Thompson, who was involved in the planning of the park's reconstruction. Some kids may not be able to afford that nominal charge, Thompson said.

With the loss of a full-fledged swimming pool, Kelly said he thought the children would be able to enjoy the wading pool without paying.

"I never heard that a fee was being charged for that activity," Kelly said.

Cyndi Sturgeon, parks and recreation director, said the admission charge will "help recoup some of the cost" of two staff people to supervise activities at the park. The staffers aren't certified lifeguards, Sturgeon said, but they are certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Sturgeon said she heard no complaint about the charge when she told residents about it at a meeting at the H.L. Neblett Community Center some weeks ago.

At Combest and Cravens pools, the city charges admissions of $1.50, or $1.00 per child accompanied by an adult.

Thompson also questioned why the pool will only be open three hours daily, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Hoskins said those hours are "not uncommon" for a facility like Kendall-Perkins, where a free-lunch program feeds about 100 children during summer weekday afternoons.

Hoskins said the hours could be expanded if there is demand. "We can always change that," he said.

Despite the criticisms, most people agree that the park is an improvement.

The Kendall-Perkins renovation is the first phase of the Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza project, which hopes to grow minority-owned businesses and pride in a section of town that has been plagued by crime.

The plaza will extend along Fifth Street from Orchard to Maple.

Kendall-Perkins will be the plaza's centerpiece.

"I think it is an asset to the community and is very attractive," said Addie Talbott, a member of the Plaza Project committee. "I'm hoping it will be enjoyed and utilized."

Thompson said the park is the talk of the West Fifth Street neighborhood.

"I'm sure it's going to get lots and lots of use," Thompson said.

Ribbon-Cutting set for Friday

Kendall-Perkins Park on West Fifth Street reopens Friday with a 3 p.m. ribbon-cutting.

The park has been off limits since last fall when a Henderson contractor began reconstruction and renovation work.

The park now has two lighted basketball courts, a new children's playground, a "water-play" wading pool, a picnic shelter and new restrooms. Tennis courts will be constructed later this summer.

The Rev. Herman Floyd, who was involved with the planning of the reconstructed park, will speak. Alma Randolph will sing.

After the ribbon-cutting, children and families are invited to enjoy the pool for free. Refreshments will be available. If it rains, the activities will be rescheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday.

The pool will be open daily from 1 to 4 p.m. through the summer.

