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Strolling the Sidewalks of Paris

by Kay Steele Faulk

Horses, History and Hospitality—all with a capital H—are the words used most to describe Paris and Bourbon County, Kentucky. Horses—because Bourbon County is home to more than 100 Thoroughbred horse farms. History—because the area is rich in historical artifacts lovingly preserved by residents who recognize their significance to a superior lifestyle. Hospitality—because Bourbon County people are known for their warmth and welcoming attitude toward newcomers and strangers.

Said to have more historic structures than any other county in Kentucky, Bourbon County offers residents daily glimpses of the past that serve as constant reminders of the flow of time and the impact each era has on the future. These reminders have forged a strong commitment in county residents to preserve their green space and clean environment for future generations. This commitment is evident in the area's strict planning and zoning laws, stringent criteria for new industry and residents' willingness to fight for thirty long years to ensure that features making the Paris Pike unique are preserved while providing the much-needed 4-lane link to Lexington.

Believed originally to have been a path forged by bison, once present in large numbers, the Paris Pike becomes Main Street, winding through the heart of downtown and leading to the Bourbon County Courthouse, purported to be one of the most beautiful in the state. Topped by a magnificent dome that features murals depicting the county's four farming

seasons, the courthouse was completed in 1905 and cost a mere \$170,000. Nearby on Courthouse Square is Duncan Tavern built in 1788. Today, the tavern houses a museum and genealogical library.

Other structures of historical interest include the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse, site of one the largest outdoor revivals ever held, and the Colville Covered Bridge, one of only thirteen left in the state. These structures evoke all the romance, charm and mystique associated with 19th Century Kentucky. As does downtown Paris, which looks much the same as it did over 100 years ago now that the brick-and-mortar phase of the Downtown Renaissance Program is completed.

Colorful brick-lined sidewalks, turn-of-the-century light poles, new water and sewer lines, underground utility cables and façade updates turned downtown Paris into a thriving commercial district that draws shoppers from across the region. The Downtown Renaissance Program is a grassroots effort to pool talents for the common good. It also is a prime example of the spirit of cooperation that exists among Paris's many groups and organizations whose members care passionately for their town.

The second phase of the Downtown Renaissance Program is underway and will concentrate efforts to help develop economic opportunities throughout Paris. "The whole idea is to make our town people friendly so that we draw the types of development that will contribute to our high quality of life," said Lynn Layton, owner of Loch Lea Antiques and coordinator of the Downtown Renaissance program. "We're proud of the

transformation that has taken place downtown, and we invite people to come stroll the sidewalks of Paris."

Lynn expressed her amazement at the number of people from all over the country who have visited her shop since 9-11 and told her in passing that they couldn't go to Paris, France, so they came to Paris, Kentucky. However, the area's old homes, friendly atmosphere, small-town feeling of safety, beautiful landscapes and the fact that it doesn't take all day to run errands prove irresistible to many and they long to return for a lifetime!