

## **COUNTRY MUSIC HIGHWAY CORRIDOR**

### **Heritage Tourism**

With a history that stretches back to the birth of the nation, Kentucky has a grand roster of historic sites waiting to be discovered. Here, visitors can walk in the footsteps of Daniel Boone and other early settlers. From the breathtaking mountaintops and secluded hollers to the wondrous waterways and off-the-beaten path communities, the Country Music Highway Corridor commemorates its thrilling heritage with museums, attractions, festivals and stories of days gone by.

One of the friendliest places on earth, Kentucky is also home to one of the most important historical sites in the country. Located in the far southeast corner of the state, the Cumberland Gap was a natural passage through the mountain barrier of the forbidding Appalachian Mountains. Once the gap was discovered, settlers began pouring into the region. Some of the area's earliest history is preserved at Central Park in Ashland which has Indian mounds dating from 800 BC to 800 AD.

Five miles south of Paintsville on US 23, Harmon Station was the first white settlement in eastern Kentucky. Mathias Harmon was one of the hunter-Indian fighters known as "Long Hunters" because of their long sojourns in the wilderness. In 1750 he and his men built a fortlike log hunting lodge on this site. In the late 1780s, they built a more permanent blockhouse.

No other person has influenced the legends and history of Kentucky more than Daniel Boone – woodsman, explorer, settler, tavern keeper and pioneer statesman. Boone raised his family, buried two of his sons and gave a daughter away in marriage in Kentucky. Daniel Boone is credited with discovering Elkhorn City and the Potter Flats area in 1767 while exploring routes to the Midwest.

From about 1775 through the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Scots-Irish people came from Virginia and settled in the hills of Eastern Kentucky. Mountain HomePlace on Paintsville Lake interprets this period of early mountain settlement. Walk through the split rail gate on to the grounds of a reconstructed settlement. Visit five original log structures and let costumed interpreters explain what life was like at a Scots-Irish farmstead in the 1800s.

During the Civil War, the Samuel May House in Prestonsburg became the site of the Battle of Ivy Mountain, the first major clash in Kentucky. The house was built in 1817 and is the oldest brick home in the Big Sandy Valley. A century ago it was the hub of a 300-acre farm. In Floyd County, the Battle of Middle Creek was eastern Kentucky's largest and most significant battle during the Civil War. It began the Union's efforts to drive the Confederates out of Kentucky. It also served as a stepping stone to the office of U.S. President for Colonel James A. Garfield. Just off lonely US 80 in the Breaks Interstate Park, a historic marker begins "Known but to God," and tells the story of an unknown dead Confederate soldier. The community of Elkhorn City made the coffin, buried him and painted a marker.

Coal mining has a strong heritage in the Country Music Highway Corridor. Coal mining in Appalachia began almost 200 years ago and visitors can see the tremendous mark it has left on Kentucky. Coal mining began in earnest and became a major industry after the Civil War. Today, visitors can visit several reconstructed coal mining camps and museums scattered throughout the region. The Van Lear Historical Society Museum in tiny Van Lear is located in the former Consolidated Coal Company office building. Displays include a model of a typical company town. Eastern Kentucky's first coal baron, John C.C. Mayo, built the Mayo Mansion and Mayo Methodist Church in Paintsville. The church features an organ donated by Andrew Carnegie and stained glass windows that are unique. On the way to Butcher Hollow, visitors can see the entrance to the coal mine where Loretta Lynn's father worked every day.

The Cumberland Plateau in Eastern Kentucky was also a major producer of iron for the nation. Large stone furnaces were built to process the pig iron and communities grew up around the furnaces. These early furnaces produced the bullets and cannonballs used in the Civil War. The communities around the furnaces have since disappeared but the large stone furnaces still stand. Two pig iron furnaces near Ashland are accessible to the public. One is the Clinton Furnace built by the Poage brothers in 1833. The other, Princess Furnace, was put into operation in 1864. The Buffalo Iron Furnace is located across from the picnic area at Greenbo Lake State Resort Park. Iron production there, as at many of the furnaces in the area, ended about 1875

Old cemeteries often help record history. The Dils Cemetery is believed to be the first integrated cemetery in Eastern Kentucky. More than 500 graves rest on the two-acre site on a hill overlooking Pikeville. Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers share their final resting place with African-Americans who lived many years as slaves. Hatfield-McCoy feud leader Randolph McCoy, his wife Sarah and daughter Roseanna are buried here.

The Martin County Courthouse in Inez is a proud testimony to hard-working Kentuckians. Built in 1939-41 with the help of the WPA, the courthouse was constructed from stones from nearby mountains and lumber from the county's forests.

Railroad buffs will be interested in the Elkhorn City Railroad Museum with more than 1,000 pieces of railroad memorabilia on display. Included are two cabooses, a velocipede, switchstands, meters, motor cars, antique uniforms and equipment.

The Big Sandy Heritage Museum in Pikeville preserves the region's history. Antebellum decades, farming, coal, floods, frontier era, transportation, illegal liquor, personalities, moving mountains and the famous Hatfield and McCoy feud are only a few of the displays.

The Hatfields and McCoys are two of the most famous names in American history. Glamorized by Hollywood and deeply imbedded in the history of Pike County, the Hatfield-McCoy feud still attracts national attention. The feud took place in Pike County and neighboring West Virginia across the Big Sandy. Pike County has developed a driving tour that visits places associated with some of the best-known events of this conflict, which began at the end of the Civil War. Deaths and time brought an end to the feud. The annual Hatfield-McCoy Festival each June celebrates this part of Country Music Highway heritage.

Large or small, historical sites are treasured as links to the region's heritage. In Louisa, the focal point for Cypress Inn Traders is the tree for which the antique shop was named. Planted in 1860, the cypress tree was brought to Louisa from the Botanical Gardens of Washington, D.C. Over in Greenup County, Bennett's Mill Bridge is honored as the only example of a wheeler truss bridge still standing. Built in 1855, the 155-foot covered bridge provided access over Tygart Creek to Bennett's Grist Mill.

Journeys along the Kentucky Music Highway Corridor are likely to reveal other unexpected historical discoveries. Days gone by are never really far away. The area's rich heritage and traditions are revered, and every community can point to its special past as a prime reason for what it has become today.

## **DESTINATIONS:**

Central Park, Ashland: 800/329-1007.  
Harmon Station, Paintsville: 808/542-5790.  
Samuel May House, Prestonsburg: 606/432-3528.  
Van Lear Historical Society Museum, Van Lear: 606/789-8540.  
Mayo Mansion & Mayo Methodist Church, Van Lear: 606/789-8540.  
Middle Creek National Battlefield: 800/844-4704.  
Dils Cemetery, Pikeville: 606/432-5063.  
Mountain HomePlace, Paintsville: 606/297-1850.  
Known but to God, Elkhorn City 800/982-5122.  
Martin County Courthouse, Inez: 606/298-2800.  
Cypress Inn Traders, Louisa: 606/638-7799.  
Elkhorn City Railroad Museum, Elkhorn City: 606/754-4554.

## **FESTIVALS AND EVENTS:**

- \* Van Lear Town Celebration, Van Lear, first full weekend in August: Learn about the coal mining history of this small town. 606/789-8540.
- \* Martin County Fair, Inez, second week in July: Celebrate regional heritage. 606/298-0917.

\* Summer Motion Festival, Ashland, first weekend in July: Includes annual Independence Day Parade honoring veterans and national heroes. 606/327-4424.

\* Annual July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration, Prestonsburg, July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend: Fireworks, patriotic displays. 606/886-2623.

\* Yatesville Lake Family Jubilee, Yatesville Lake State Park, Louisa, July: Family heritage celebration.

\* Hatfield-McCoy Festival, Pikeville, June: A unification of both families to celebrate their heritage along with visitors that are interested in learning about the famous feud. 800/844-7453.

\* Greenup Old Fashion Days, Greenup, Labor Day weekend: Just as the name implies, festival commemorates the past. 606/473-7200.