

## **Facts, Facts -- More Facts**

by Tom Chaney

Late last year saw the publication of a new book all about Kentucky -- and I do mean **all**. *Clark's Kentucky Almanac and Book of Facts, 2006* is a compendium of information about the Bluegrass State.

Its 770 pages are guaranteed to provide you with more than you ever wished to know about Kentucky. Want to make a Shaker lemon pie? Turn to page 403. Want to know who lived in Paris (Kentucky, that is, not France) and invented gas masks for World War I? See a note about Garrett Morgan on page 432. Want to get in touch with Representative Terry Shelton? His home phone, his Frankfort phone, and his email address are on page 94.

The finest section of the book is the Foreword by Dr. Thomas D. Clark who died this past year. This is certainly one of the last pieces Dr. Clark wrote about his adopted state. It is as ever lucid and fresh, summarizing the history of the state in a few pages. It ends thusly: "Collectively Kentucky has undergone fundamental changes which may be symbolized by the construction of a single family house in a new suburban rural community, alongside a decaying tobacco barn, all of this giving a fresh connotation to Stephen Collins Foster's deep spiritual lament."

The book is a good blend of the old and the new, of the rural and the urban, of Native Americans and modern technology.

There are chapters on each county. The one on Hart County is particularly well written by Virginia Davis, Director of the Hart County Chamber of Commerce. One of the editors of the *Almanac* told me at a reception last December that the Hart County piece is the one they use for an example of what a county description should be.

The *Almanac* is full of state and regional maps.

Following a "State Profile," the book continues with the year's top news stories, a summary of the history of Kentucky, and a compendium of information about state government and politics.

I particularly liked the section, "Historical Documents," by Ron Bryant. He describes the *Kentucky Gazette*, the first newspaper west of the Allegheny Mountains. Of interest is the text of Kentucky's constitution as amended to 1980. I do not think I had ever read our state's Bill of Rights.

The section on the federal government provides useful thumbnail sketches of the state's congressional officers as well as a discussion of the federal military installations in Kentucky.

Two of the strongest points of the *Almanac* are the sections on tourism and the arts.

Kentuckians have ever been adept at enticing flatland tourists to our state -- bidding them farewell with a satisfied touristy smile and an empty wallet. The regional guide to both historical and recreational tourism is exceptional.

The arts are, of course, closely related to tourism. It is both startling and heartening to see the mass of the arts of the entire state treated in one segment. Arts organizations have, in the past half century, put Kentucky on the nation's cultural map in music and theatre as well as the plastic arts of sculpture and painting.

All told, this book is invaluable for the Kentuckians who would be informed about their native land, as well as the visitor within our gates.

The plan is to issue a new edition annually. The current *Almanac* is available at your local bookseller for a mere \$19.95 cover price.

And, Oh, yes! It is a proper almanac. There is an "Astronomical Calendar" for those who plant and reap by the signs of the Zodiac.

*Tom Chaney can be found telling stories, smoking pipe-weed, and occasionally selling books at*

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