

Top 5 Historical Events in Louisville during the 1900's

During the last months of 1999, the Louisville Historical League conducted a community-wide contest to list the "Top 5 Historical events in Louisville during the 1900s". From the various submittals, a panel composed of noted historians George Yater, Sam Thomas, Allan Steinberg (LHL co-founder), and Nick Morris (1999 LHL President) determined which events most impacted the development of the community between 1900 and 1999. It was a difficult process to name the top 5 influential events, therefore for reasons of judging our contest, the panel noted 10 events. Steve Wisner served as contest chairman for the League. (The list is arranged by date of occurrence and not in any specific ranking of importance.)

Top 10 Events

- **University of Louisville:** the creation of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1907 provided undergraduate education and led to the development of the Belknap campus.
- **Bingham Enterprises:** Beginning in 1918, the Bingham family became the influential voices of Louisville news and opinion in the region and state. While the Courier Journal, WHAS radio and television were sold in 1986, the Bingham legacy continues in many forms, including the Crusade for Children.
- **1937 Flood:** This cataclysmic natural disaster altered Louisville's residential development pattern and led to the creation of a floodwall.
- **Louisville Area Development Association (LADA):** A private planning organization formed in 1943, LADA set forth the planning goals and principles that guided Louisville growth over the next several decades. Key individuals in its leadership were Wilson W. Wyatt, Kenneth P. Vinsel, Mark Ethridge, and Barry Bingham, Sr. It merged with the Chamber of Commerce in 1950.
- **Charles P. Farnsley (1907 – 1990):** Acknowledged as one of Louisville's more innovative mayors, Charles Farnsley was mayor of Louisville from 1948 to 1953. One of his initiatives was a funding strategy for the various arts organizations in the city, now known as the Fund for the Arts. Previously while in the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1938, he also had a role in passing the "Shively Law", which legislated how small cities were annexed.

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- **Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center:** Built in 1956, the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center has evolved into one of the country's premiere exhibition centers.. It has become a prime generator of tourism and convention business for the community, and also operates the Kentucky International Convention Center in downtown Louisville.
- **Interstate Highways / Urban Renewal:** Migration from the inner city to the suburbs was aided in the 1950s and '60s by the construction of I-65 and the Watterson Expressway. The federal government also impacted the inner city with Urban Renewal, which razed whole blocks and displaced residents.
- **Merger of the Jefferson Co. Board of Education and the Louisville Board of Education:** In 1975, the two school systems merged, forming the Jefferson County Public School system. This merger also involved court-ordered desegregation, which was implemented through busing.
- **Airport expansion / United Parcel Service hub:** Expansion of the airport (announced in June, 1988) opened new opportunities for business, and the location of a United Parcel Service (UPS) hub here made the city a major distribution center for the evolving internet commerce. While a tremendous economic development effort, it did displace hundreds of residents and businesses, and noise concerns are still an issue.
- **City / County Compact:** The City / County Compact was, and is an effort to more efficiently coordinate the activities and equalize local tax funding of the City of Louisville and Jefferson County governments. Negotiated in 1986, and renegotiated since, this Compact will remain in effect until at least 2008.

The Louisville Historical League is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the appreciation of our cultural and historic environment in the Louisville metropolitan area. The League holds regular monthly meetings on the third Sunday at 2 pm. Visit our website at "www.LouisvilleHistoricalLeague.org", or email us at LouHist@hotmail.com.