

# Six Trips to Times Past

Get a glimpse of the people who first settled the Bluegrass region and the times that shaped them.

by Alice H. Davis

**1** “History is who we are in the Bluegrass,” says Kay Berggren, president and CEO of the Kentucky Tourism Council. She believes that history is not only an important part of what people are, but also what the area will be. Get an overview of this area’s rich heritage at the **Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History** in Frankfort, 25 miles northwest of Lexington. The center, opened in April 1999, features a permanent exhibition showcasing 12,000 years of state history as well as memorabilia from such famous Kentuckians as bluegrass pioneer Bill Monroe and actor George Clooney.

These dolls are part of an exhibit at the Thomas D. Clark Center.



To get a more personal look of the Bluegrass, seek out restored homes and communities. On Gratz Park, a city square just north of Lexington’s downtown, are two historic homes: the **Hunt-Morgan House** and the **Bodley-Bullock House**. The Hunt-Morgan House is a Federal-style house built in 1814 by the first millionaire of the new west, John Wesley Hunt. Also housed there: Civil War artifacts belonging to John Hunt Morgan, a Confederate general and cavalry officer. The Bodley-Bullock House, built in 1814, was the home of General Thomas Bodley and sculptor Walter O. Bullock. Used for meetings and other special events, the house is open for tours by appointment.

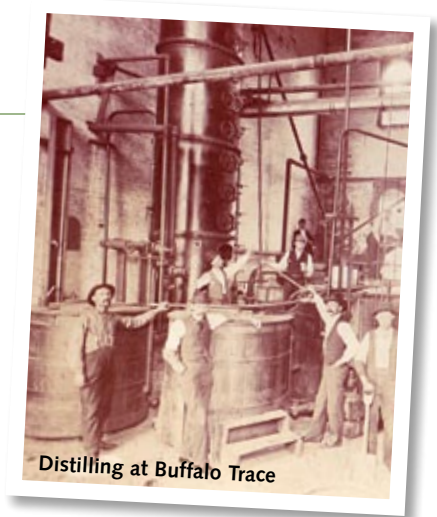
In Lexington’s downtown, just west of Rupp Arena, is the **Mary Todd Lincoln House**, girlhood home of the wife of President Abraham Lincoln. It was the first house museum in America to honor a first lady when it opened as a museum in 1997.

From her father’s home, Mary Todd Lincoln traveled about two miles east to Ashland, home of family friend, Henry Clay. Ashland is now a National Historic Landmark and houses the **Henry Clay Memorial Foundation** and a historic house museum. The 18-room mansion and 17 acres of wooded parkland around it were owned by Clay, a 19th-century statesman and orator who represented Kentucky as both a congressman and senator.

**3**

Visitors interested in a glimpse of a more “spirited” Bluegrass area can find it in tours of local bourbon distilleries and vineyards. Kentucky produces 95 percent of the world’s bourbon; most of that is produced in distilleries within 50 miles of Lexington. The Kentucky Distillers Association established the **Bourbon Trail** to give visitors a close-up look into the 200-year-old history of America’s only native spirit. The trail features stops at seven distilleries in and around Lexington, offering history, samples, and other production details, says Eric Gregory, association president.

Wine, along with bourbon, is also the subject of tours by **Wine and Spirits Circle Tour of the Bluegrass**. Included in a tour are two vineyards, one in Midway and the other, Kentucky’s largest, in Lawrenceburg.



**4**



Re-enactment participant

Those interested in the Civil War and its history will find battlefields and forts aplenty. The **Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site** is a museum and park on the 300-acre battlefield which was the site of the state’s largest—and bloodiest—Civil War battle. (Each fall the site is the scene of a massive re-enactment of the October 1862 battle.) The **Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park**, 23 miles southwest of Lexington, was once a former Union Army supply depot and training camp. The **Civil War Fort at Boonesboro**, in Madison County 22 miles south of Lexington, watched over the Kentucky River and is said to have been built by African American soldiers.

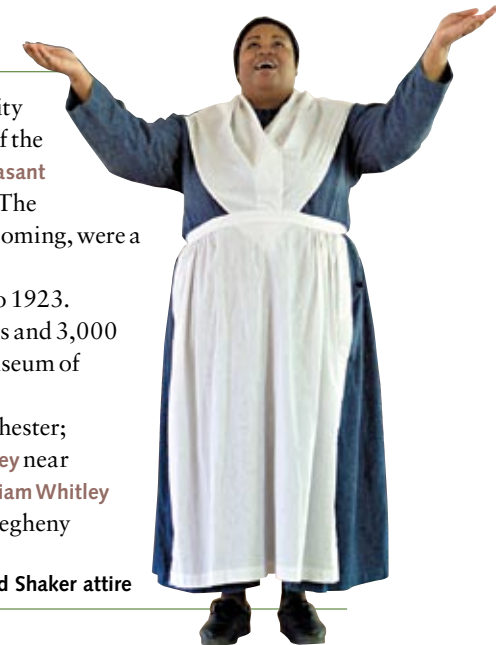
**5**

Venture outside Lexington to see the largest restored Shaker community in the United States. A 25-mile drive south over the limestone palisades of the Kentucky River into Mercer County takes a visitor to **Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill**. Visitors step back to the early 19th century and into another world. The Shakers, known officially as the Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Coming, were a communal society that chose simplicity in both their work and personal lives. A group of as many as 500 Shakers lived on the 4,000 acres of farmland from 1805 to 1923.

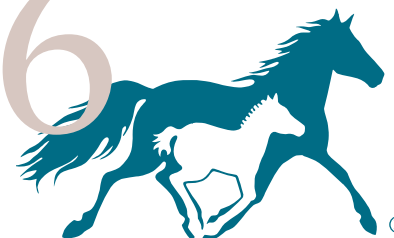
Restoration began in 1961 at the village, which now includes 34 restored buildings and 3,000 acres of farmland. It features an inn, dining facilities, meeting space, and a living museum of Shaker life led by costumed interpreters and craftsmen.

Other historic homes outside Lexington include: **Holly Rood Historic Home** in Winchester; **Pleasant Retreat**, the restored and furnished house of **Kentucky Governor Williams Owsley** near Lancaster; the **Orlando Brown House**, a Greek-revival home in Frankfort; and the **William Whitley House State Historic Site**, a state-run historic site of the first brick house west of the Allegheny Mountains, in Stanford.

Music interpreter Donna Phillips in period Shaker attire



**6**



What visit to Bluegrass history would be complete without horses? The **Kentucky Horse Park** in Lexington is the only park of its kind. Set on 1,224 acres of historic horse farm, the park features nearly 50 different breeds of horses at work and two museums. The **International Museum of the Horse** is 52,000 square feet of exhibits on the history of the horse and its relationship to humans; and The **American Saddlebred Museum** is dedicated to Kentucky’s oldest native breed of horse.

FOLK DOLLS COURTESY OF THE KENTUCKY HISTORICAL SOCIETY; MARY TODD LINCOLN COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; COURTESY OF BUFFALO TRACE DISTILLERY; CIVIL WAR REENACTMENT PHOTO BY CLAY JACKSON; SHAKER PHOTO BY JEFF ROGERS; KENTUCKY HORSE PARK LOGO © KENTUCKY HORSE PARK

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Portrait LEXINGTON'S BLUEGRASS REGION



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HISTORIC SITES

Learn more or plan a visit to some of the Bluegrass' museums and restored homes.

Above, clockwise from top left: Liberty Hall; the John Hunt Morgan House; the Orlando Brown House; Ashland, Henry Clay's estate

- American Saddlebred Museum [www.americansaddlebredmuseum.org](http://www.americansaddlebredmuseum.org)
- Ashland: The Henry Clay Estate [www.henryclay.org](http://www.henryclay.org)
- Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park [www.campnelson.org](http://www.campnelson.org)
- Hunt-Morgan House [www.bluegrasstrust.org](http://www.bluegrasstrust.org)
- International Museum of the Horse [www.imh.org/museum](http://www.imh.org/museum)
- Kentucky Bourbon Trail [www.kentuckybourbontrail.com](http://www.kentuckybourbontrail.com)
- Kentucky Horse Park [www.kyhorsepark.com](http://www.kyhorsepark.com)

- Liberty Hall and the Orlando Brown House [www.libertyhall.org](http://www.libertyhall.org)
- Mary Todd Lincoln House [www.mtlhouse.org](http://www.mtlhouse.org)
- Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site [www.perryville.net](http://www.perryville.net)
- Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill [www.shakervillageky.org](http://www.shakervillageky.org)
- Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History [www.history.ky.gov](http://www.history.ky.gov)
- Wine and Spirits Circle Tour of the Bluegrass [www.bluegrasswineandspirits.com](http://www.bluegrasswineandspirits.com)