

# Berea: A Look into the History of Race in Housing

## Historical Perspective

The City of Berea has a rich history that began more than 250 years ago and continues today as Berea strives to foster and encourage diversity. Important historical events that Berea's founders waded into included the slavery debate, civil rights, interracial education, and housing. The fact that Berea has taken stances in the past to help preserve individual rights speaks highly of commitment and courage of the City, both then and now.



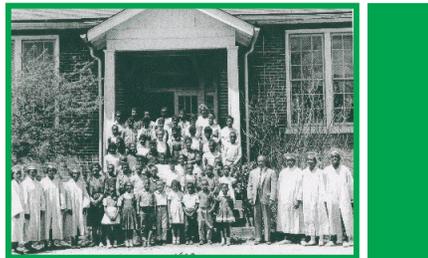
Black and White Students in Early Berea

In 1853, Cassius Clay, a large landowner, offered a tract of land in the Glade to Rev. John G. Fee, who named it Berea. With the help of missionaries, a church, a school and tiny village were established. It was primarily known for its racetrack, lumber mill, and anti-slavery sympathizers. As Berea became a center for abolitionists and was seen as a threat, prominent Madison County slave owners drove Fee and supporters from the state in 1859.

## Vision of a Unified Community

After the Civil War, the Fee family and other exiles returned to Berea to re-establish their vision of an interracial school and community. In January 1866, the Berea Literary Institute opened its doors. Many former slaves moved their families to Berea because of opportunities provided for education, employment, and land ownership. The college sold town lots on the condition that families live next to others of a different race.

The 1900 census cited 12.8 percent of all Madison County farms as black-owned, compared to 4.8 percent statewide; most of these were in the area surrounding Berea. The achievements of this noble vision were halted in 1904 when the Kentucky Legislature passed the Day Law forbidding interracial education. Berea College chose to focus on the education of mountain whites. Disillusioned and denied education and economic opportunities they once had, many black families began to move away.



Middletown Consolidated School

Interracial communities located at Middletown, Farristown, and Bobtown had been hubs for black businesses, schools, and churches which began to decline as Berea's residential areas became segregated by laws, customs, and economic pressures.

## Events Defining Berea

Key points which have shaped and defined the city are:

- 1853 – Berea community founded.
- 1882 – L&N Railroad was constructed through town.
- 1890 – City of Berea incorporated town, previously governed by the College.
- 1897 – Berea College Forest, oldest managed forest in KY.
- 1904 – Day Law enacted to bar interracial education.
- 1904 – Water and electric were brought to city residents.
- 1933 – City passed ordinance to segregate housing.
- 1940 – U.S. Army Depot creates new employment.
- 1957 – Berea Rubber Plant began hiring.
- 1960- 80's – College closed its commercial ventures of the bakery, candy kitchen, and laundry; divested of fire department, hospital, local schools, and The Berea Citizen paper.
- 2004 – College sold water and electrical utilities to the City.



Farristown Missionary Baptist Church

## Historic Properties



**Fairchild Hall** (Ladies Hall) Berea's oldest brick residence for women (1871)

**Dixie Park** (1925) was the first subdivision, platted and constructed to include more than one hundred lots.



Monument to politician Cassius Clay and Rev. John G. Fee located at Clay-Fee Homes

**Clay-Fee Homes** built by the Berea Housing Authority in 1968 was Berea's first income-based housing.

**Hope Estates** and individual houses were sponsored by Habitat for Humanity.

**Church of Christ, Union** (1853)  
**Home of "Red" Foley** – musician  
**Boone Tavern Hotel** (1909)  
**Tate Building** (1929), early hotel