



TOWN BRANCH TRAIL

A trail through Lexington. A trail through history.

Newsletter: Volume 2 July 2001

www.townbranch.org

OUR HOTTEST NEWS **Let's celebrate our new status!**

We are pleased to announce that in March of 2001, Town Branch Trail, Inc. was officially granted tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation by the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Any donations to Town Branch Trail, Inc. are tax-deductible, and may be sent to:

**Town Branch Trail, Inc.
155 Constitution St.
Lexington, KY 40507**

also included a plan for the fort to have a gate and draw-bridge over the Town Branch.

In addition to being the site of Lexington's first blockhouse, Town Branch was also used to determine the layout of the town. Instead of orienting the layout to the compass points, the early trustees of Lexington chose to align the city to Town Branch. Along its banks (an area that is now in the proximity of Vine Street) they built a 165-foot wide elongated commons area.

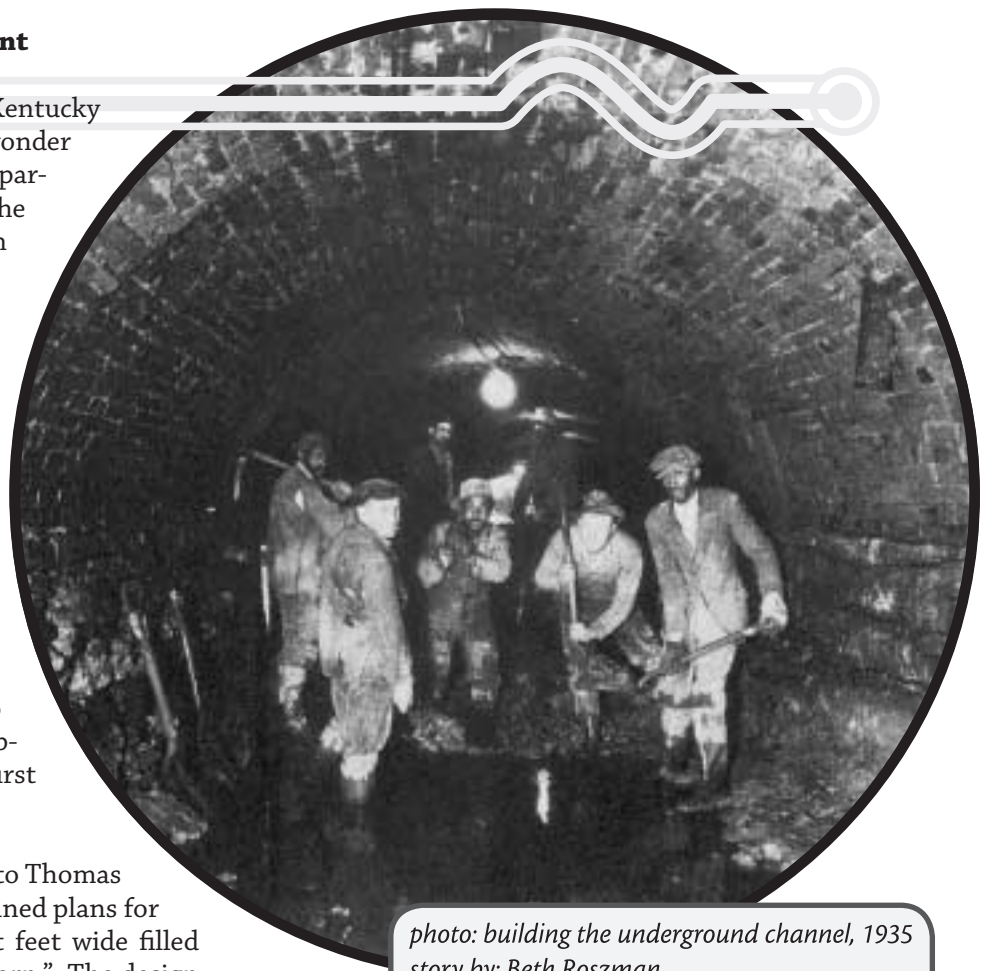
In 1884, G.W. Ranck, an early Lexington historian, wrote that, "Lexington's natural water supply is one of the most remarkable features of the place." So, although a visitor walking or driving through downtown today might see no trace of the once flowing, sunlit waters of Town Branch, it indeed played a major role in the development and prosperity of Lexington, Kentucky.

• TOWN BRANCH HISTORY **A Key to Lexington's Early Development**

Lexington is the only major city in Kentucky not located on a river, and you might wonder how a prosperous city grew from an apparently waterless area. Now hidden under the pavement of downtown, the Town Branch of the Elkhorn was the most important waterway in the settlement and subsequent development of early Lexington.

In 1779, Colonel Robert Patterson settled his small group of brave pioneers on the banks of a stream that soon became known as Town Branch. They constructed a blockhouse on the creek that was situated between two slopes on what is now the corner of Mill and Main Streets. The Town Branch provided the settlers not only a fertile valley for a crop and water supply, it also was incorporated into the design of a subsequent fort that was one of Lexington's first buildings.

A 1781 letter from Colonel John Todd to Thomas Jefferson, then Governor of Virginia, outlined plans for a future fort that included "a ditch eight feet wide filled with water from the Town Branch of Elkhorn." The design



*photo: building the underground channel, 1935
story by: Beth Roszman*

• WHAT ARE OUR COMMITTEES DOING?
A summary report from each of our committees



Public Relations Committee Report

The Public Relations/Communications committee has been concentrating on increasing Town Branch Trail’s visibility in the community by participating in local events. We have had tables at the Arbor Day celebration at the Arboretum, at May Fest at Gratz Park, and at Founder’s Day at McConnell Springs. We will have a presence at the Central Kentucky Harvest Festival on June 30 and at the Bluegrass 10,000 Runner’s Expo on July 3. We will have a booth along the July 4th parade route, and will even have a float in the parade! We have begun work on developing a comprehensive media package (see the Finance and Fundraising report), and will be researching and writing historical vignettes for use in our newsletters and local print media.

This committee has need for volunteers for a variety of tasks. If you are available to sit at one of our event booths to hand out information and take names and addresses for our mailing list, please contact **Zina Merkin at zina@qx.net or 268-2508**. If you can assist with our mailing list/database, also contact Zina. We would also love to have volunteers to help us in building the float or to walk with us in the parade. If you are interested, please contact **Yvette Hurt at yvettehurt@hotmail.com or 223-7698** and **Boyd Shearer at townbranch@outrageGIS.com or 255-9293**.



We are building exciting and unique maps for our plan!

the project area (from Rupp Arena to Masterson Station), we have chosen to work through the process in sections that are clearly defined by such boundaries as Cox Street (future Newtown Extended), the CSX Overpass, South Forbes Road, and New Circle. Each section has multiple challenges and opportunities to address. Tempering the ideal with the possible, we have laid out potential trail locations based upon the need for adaptive re-use and redevelopment in adjacent areas. The success of this project will depend in large part on the symbiosis of public/private and for-profit/not-for-profit entities working together with a shared interest. We have reached the halfway mark in our progress from downtown to the west. Our work should be finished by August 1, 2001.

The following time-sensitive issues require our immediate attention:

- The Lexington Center Corporation has a \$45 million renovation underway that could be a terrific benefit to the trail if we can work together.
- The city government has debated the closing of Vine Street in front of the Lexington Center. The re-working of pedestrian access to Triangle Park and the LCC has been central to the debate. Our interest in connecting urban pedestrians to the trail makes this a very significant opportunity.
- The extension of Newtown Road across the creek and Manchester Street is a long-term project that has been in the works for years. We have made some initial contacts



Visit our website at townbranch.org

Trail Planning Committee Report

Over the last few months the Trail Planning Committee has been meeting to flesh out a “schematic” trail design for the project area. Because of the scope and complexity of

regarding the trail, but must keep “checking in” to make sure the trail’s potential is not cut off by a small “cost-effective” culvert over the creek.

- We are focusing on the land-use potential for the old landfill at Old Frankfort and New Circle Road. Because the landfill has not been “closed” properly up to now, millions of dollars will be spent to contain its edge beside the creek and to cap the landfill itself. Due to its location, public ownership, and lack of suitability for redevelopment, this is a golden opportunity for passive green space in general, and a significant link in the chain for the Town Branch Trail.

Finance and Fundraising Report

The Town Branch Trail Project has submitted applications for two grants, one from Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government and one from the state Department for Local Government. The first, a \$10,000 grant from the city, will be used to research and create a multi-media package (printed handouts, website, CD-ROMs, slide presentation, and video clips). This media package will detail the natural and historic features of the Town Branch Creek and its riparian areas, the environmental problems that must be dealt with, and the positive impact the proposed greenway would have on downtown and the community as a whole. This grant has been approved and Town Branch Trail’s consultant, Boyd Shearer (townbranch@outrageGIS.com), has begun work on the multi-media package.

The second grant, a \$5,000 proposal submitted to the Department for Local Government’s Community Rivers and Streams Program, is being sought to produce a 15-30 minute educational video about Town Branch for use by middle-school students in the Lexington/Bluegrass area. Town Branch Trail will seek the assistance of educational consultants to target the “core curriculum” guidelines of current public school policy (KERA) to create subject matter which is stimulating and easily integrated into teachers’ lesson plans. In addition to the video, a traveling display board with photographs and information about the Town Branch Trail Project will be developed. This display board can stand alone in a variety of venues or accompany the video to schools. We hope that the video will be widely used in central Kentucky schools.

The state’s Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources allocated \$50,000 to be divided among Town Branch and three other urban projects. We will use our share to develop interpretative signage for the trail. Signs will explain the history of the creek and the changes wrought by the settlement and growth of Lexington over 200 years. Through this link to the area’s past, we will communicate information about the wildlife of the stream and streamside areas, the relationship of a creek to its watershed, and the dynamics of native and invasive plants. We will also highlight efforts

to rehabilitate the creek. The grant comes from funds Kentucky will receive for recreation and conservation projects under the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA).

Environmental Quality Committee Report

The Environmental Quality Committee organized a creek walk this spring to observe the stream and its surroundings before the leaves obscured the view. A dozen intrepid waders hiked Town Branch between New Circle and Rupp Arena on a bright March morning. We were astonished at the amount of refuse dumped along the banks, eroded from the adjacent landfill, and washed down storm drains into the creek. We were also struck by the serenity of the creek, which in much of this section flows more than ten feet below the surrounding city.

The committee is compiling evaluations of the channel, the water, and the natural habitat both in the stream and along the banks. We are combining this information along with own observations to identify the environmental concerns that are most vital to creating a trail and restoring the nearby environment. We have met monthly since December to consider issues such as bacterial contamination of the creek, the status of the old landfill (which the city plans to cap), the sewage plant, state and federal water quality programs, and the stream channel and flow. We are also discussing approaches to cleaning up trash, improving streamside vegetation, coping with polluted runoff from streets and lots, and forging partnerships for educational projects.

WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

Greenways are conservation-recreation corridors that recover, protect, and enhance natural and cultural resources. Town Branch Greenway will be a walking, running, and biking trail from downtown Lexington, through its western suburbs, into the countryside, following the waterway on whose banks the city was founded — Elkhorn Creek’s Town Branch.

FEATURED GREENWAY LINKS

http://www.railtrails.org/RTC_Active_Pages/Conference/main.asp

Third International Trails and Greenways Conference, in St. Louis, Sept. 26 - 29, 2001.

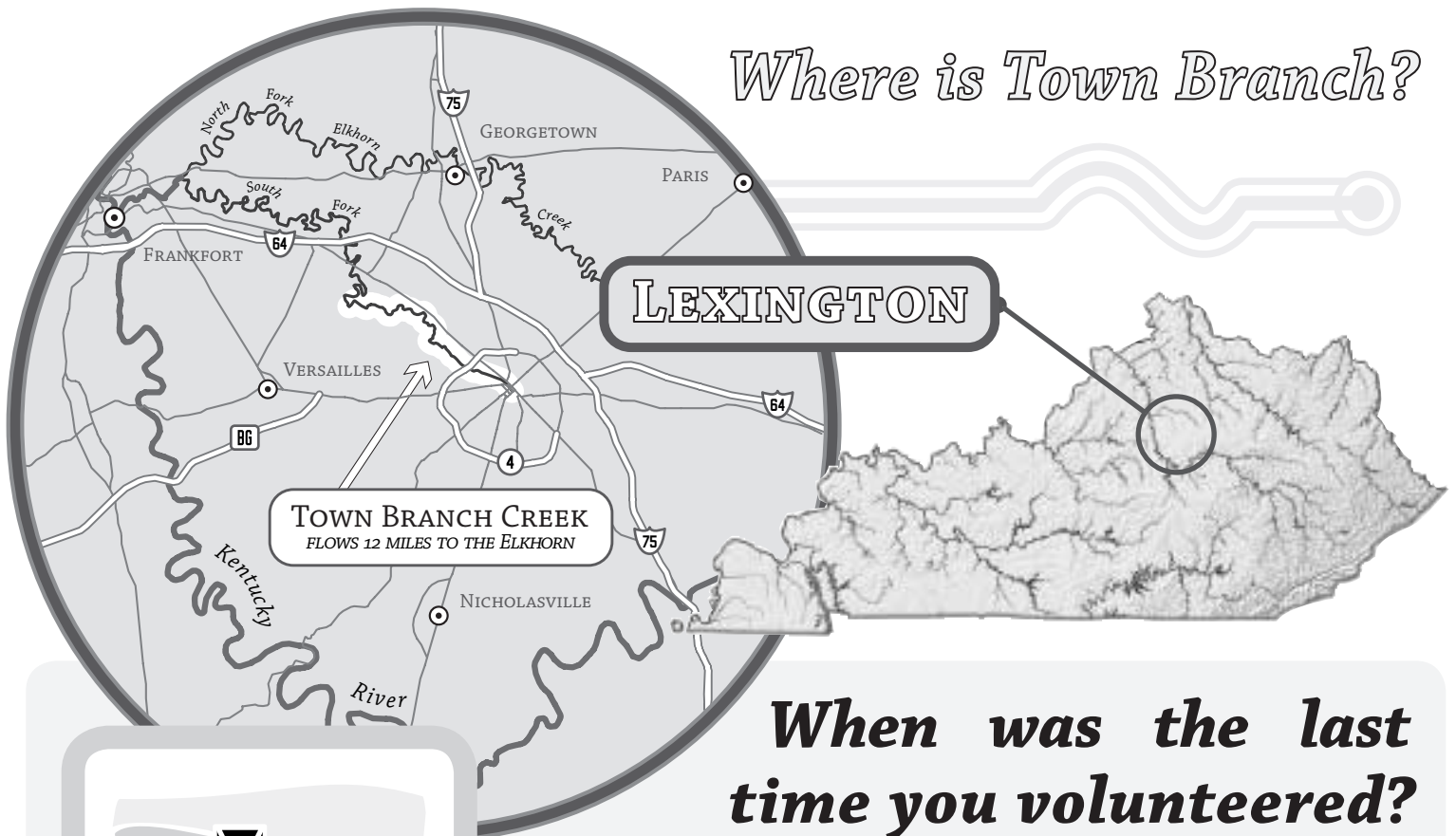
<http://www.rcdi.org/index.html>

Find out about the B & O Trail in Indiana.

<http://www.indygreenways.org/site.htm>

While you’re checking out Indiana, get maps and other information about greenways in Indianapolis.

Where is Town Branch?



When was the last time you volunteered?

We need help building our 4th of July parade float and staffing our many exhibits! Read inside for more details!

Volunteer now!

Trail Planning — Van Meter Pettit, 258-9253

PR & Marketing — Zina Merkin, 268-2508

Environmental Quality & Fundraising — Yvette Hurt, 223-7698

Mapping & Multimedia — Boyd Shearer, 255-9293



TOWN BRANCH TRAIL, INC

155 CONSTITUTION ST.
LEXINGTON, KY 40507

WWW.TOWNBRANCH.ORG