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Facts About Owensboro

City of Owensboro

This growing city is located on the south bank of the Ohio River, at what was known to the early boatmen as the "Yellow Banks." The survey of the first plat of the town was recorded in 1816 and the town was named "Rossgboro."

In 1817 the name was changed to Owensboro, in memory of the Late Colonel Abraham Owen, who was killed at the battle of Tippecanoe. Owensboro was incorporated in 1866 and Captain E.S. Ayres was elected Owensboro's first Mayor; however, he died shortly after taking office and was succeeded by S.D. Kennady.

The city seal was also adopted in 1866. It appropriately bore a representation of a tobacco leaf, symbolic of Owensboro's strong economic ties with the rich agricultural land that surrounded the city, also Daviess County's main cash crop.

The Kentucky Constitution (as amended in 1891) revoked all charters of cities when it divided cities and towns into six classes based upon population. The City operated under the Mayor-Commission form of government until 1954 when the present system was put into effect. Owensboro has grown from a population of 229 (1830 Census) to 54,138 (2000 Census).

Mayor Tom Watson is serving as Owensboro's 35th Mayor.

Second Class City

The Kentucky Constitution divides cities and towns into six classes, based upon the population of the city, as follows:

- First Class (100,000 or more)
- Second Class (20,000 to 99,999)
- Third Class (8,000 to 19,999)
- Fourth Class (3,000 to 7,999)
- Fifth Class (1,000 to 2,999)
- Sixth Class (999 or less)

Owensboro became a Second Class City in 1944.

Owensboro's History and Development

From *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (University Press of Kentucky, 1992) article by Lew A. Dew.

Owensboro, the county seat of Daviess County, is located on the Ohio River at US 60 at US 231, on the edge of the Western Coal Field region of the state. The site was called Yellow Banks by travelers as early as 1776. William Smeathers made the first permanent settlement there around 1798. In 1816 the town was surveyed and platted; the Kentucky legislature named it in honor of Colonel Abraham Owen, who was killed at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Located in a rich agricultural region, Owensboro, a port city, became a commercial center and enjoyed steady growth in the years before the Civil War. The city's strategic location on the Ohio River made it the object of Union occupation early in the war. On January 4, 1865, Confederate guerrillas commanded by Captain William Davison burned the courthouse in retribution for billeting black Union troops there. After the war, Owensboro was well positioned to become a major tobacco processing and shipping center for Green River tobacco, and the distillery boom in the 1880s made it known for the quality of its bourbon whiskey. By the 1890s it was a major industrial town, with flourishing wagon and buggy companies, foundries, brick and clay plants, and tobacco factories. Three railroads linked it to markets, and numerous packet lines offered connections by water. The towing industry opened opportunities for shipping grain and coal to markets throughout the Ohio and Mississippi systems.

By 1900 Owensboro was the site of an electric light bulb manufacturing plant, which later, as Ken-Rad, expanded into vacuum tubes for radios and television sets. By the 1960s, the Ken-Rad plant, then owned by General Electric, employed more than 6,000 people and was the keystone of an industrial boom that made Owensboro the third largest city in the commonwealth. Other industries, including meat packing, grain shipping and processing, distilling, tobacco products, steel, chemicals, plastics, and electronics, employed not only country residents but also citizens of surrounding counties.

By the 1970s, following a national trend, manufacturing jobs began to decline as a percentage of total employment, and Owensboro developed a broader economic base of service industries to complement the traditional "smokestack" jobs. The city became a regional banking, medical, cultural, commercial, and retail center for a growing trade area. Its two hospitals attracted patients from many counties. The building of the Audubon and Green River parkways made it much easier to do business by truck. Although rail service declined, the development of the Owensboro Riverport enabled many industrial shippers to operate their own barge-loading facilities, capitalizing on the city's primary transportation resource, the Ohio River. By the late 1980s, Owensboro's economy was a mix of manufacturing and service industries, of traditional and high technology activities.

Agriculture remains a major source of wealth. Owensboro is a major tobacco market for both burley and dark air-cured varieties, and is the home of the Pinkerton Tobacco Company, manufacturer of a variety of consumer tobacco products. The Field Packing Company markets

meat products over a wide area, and grain companies process and ship corn and soybeans by rail and barge to customers throughout the nation. The distilling industry has declined, but the Glenmore Distillery Company still operates a major bottling and shipping facility in Owensboro.

By the late 1980s tourism brought an estimated \$50 million per year to the city. Conventions were attracted to Owensboro by the Executive Inn Rivermont and other motels. The Owensboro Area Museum contains historical exhibits, Indian and archaeological relics, and a variety of other displays. The Owensboro Museum of Fine Art features a permanent collection of both European and American art as well as traveling exhibits and special programs. In the 1980s the Owensboro Symphony Orchestra appeared on Kentucky Educational Television and gained a statewide audience. The River Park Center, completed in 1992, gives the orchestra a permanent concert hall, as well as a smaller auditorium for chamber concerts and other performances. The center is the home of the Bluegrass Music Association and features performances designed to appeal to a great variety of musical tastes.

The self-proclaimed "Barbecue Capital of the World," Owensboro holds the International Barbecue Festival each year in May.

Brescia College (now Brescia University) was founded in Owensboro in 1950, and Kentucky Wesleyan College moved from Winchester to Owensboro in 1951. Owensboro Community College (now Owensboro Community and Technical College) was founded in 1986.

The population of the second-class city was 50,329 in 1970; 54,450 in 1980; 53,549 in 1990; and 54,138 in 2000.

Community Profile

Owensboro is the industrial and cultural hub of western Kentucky. Located along the southern banks of the Ohio River, Owensboro is the third largest city in terms of population in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Owensboro is located 32 miles southeast of Evansville, Indiana; 123 miles north of Nashville, Tennessee; 109 miles southwest of Louisville, Kentucky; 203 miles southeast of St. Louis, Missouri; and 205 miles southwest of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Owensboro is known as a city of festivals. Each year, the world famous International Bar-B-Q Festival and the Summer Festival draw thousands of spectators and participants from across the country and around the world.

Owensboro enjoys the luxury of a diverse economic base. As an example, more than 47,000 people earn their living in Daviess County, but the county's ten largest private companies are responsible for less than 15% of the total employment.

What's ahead? The work of state and local officials to provide a new link to the north is paying off as work has begun on a new four-lane bridge from Owensboro across the Ohio River into southern Indiana. The new span will cost more than \$100 million and be a direct route to I-64 in Indiana, which provides a link from St. Louis to Louisville.

In addition, the Mid America Airpark was officially opened for business in August of 1995. It is a 450-acre industrial park adjacent to the Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport. Five companies are currently located in the airpark.

Owensboro-Daviess County also has 145 acres available for industrial development in the Pleasant Valley Industrial Park.

Climate

Between moderately cold winters and warm, humid summers, Owensboro-Daviess County experiences a wide temperature fluctuation. The annual mean temperature is 57.2 degrees Fahrenheit, with extremes of 107 degrees in 1936 and 1944, and a low of minus 21 degrees in 1951. In the winter, the average temperature is 39.6 degrees, and in the summer 76.9 degrees is the estimated average. Temperatures are generally highest in July and lowest in January. The average annual rainfall for Daviess County is 44.27 inches.

Health Care

Owensboro Medical Health System (OMHS) is committed to providing health education, prevention, early intervention and wellness programs in addition to high-quality, cost-effective inpatient and outpatient services. At all locations, OMHS offers state-of-the-art technology with a medical staff of 130+ physicians representing a wide range of specialties. This not-for-profit regional health care provider serves 13 counties in Kentucky and southern Indiana. The main hospital, located at 811 East Parrish Avenue, is licensed for 469 beds. The mission of OMHS is to heal the sick and to improve the health of our community.

The HealthPark, which opened in October 1998, is the most recent facility established to assist with the second part of the mission statement-to improve the health of our community. Located at 1006 Ford Avenue, the HealthPark includes a health and fitness center, a diagnostic center, a health resource center, outpatient therapy services, a chapel and physician offices. Another facility owned and operated by OMHS is the Convenient Care Center at 608 Frederica Street. Open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., the Convenient Care Center offers high-quality minor emergency services.

RiverValley Behavioral Health provides mental health, substance abuse and mental retardation/developmental disability services in a seven-county area. It opened a new office in Owensboro in 1998 in the Cigar Factory Complex. The remodeled lower level of the complex contains the agency's offices for outpatient therapy, case management, DUI education, prevention center/library and administrative services. RiverValley also provides residential programs as well as inpatient treatment for children ages 5-18 at RiverValley Behavioral Health Hospital.

Communications

Daily newspaper service is provided by the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer.

Seventeen radio stations serve the Owensboro-Daviess County area.

The Owensboro market is served by all four major television networks--WEHT (ABC, Channel 25), WTVW (Fox, Channel 7), WFIE (NBC, Channel 14) and WEVV (CBS, Channel 44). Adelphia Communications provides cable service.

Telegraph service is provided by Western Union.

Owensboro currently has two U.S. Post Offices, plus several branch offices throughout the city.

Owensboro Municipal Utilities provides a fiber optic network to link local businesses to the Internet.

Transportation

Local scheduled air service and charter service are available at the Owensboro Daviess County Regional Airport. The airport has two concrete runways (5,000 and 6,500 feet), and the longer runway has a full instrument landing system that provides all-weather capabilities. Plans are underway to extend this runway to 8,000 feet. Passenger service, airfreight, flight instruction, aircraft maintenance, hangars, and fuel are provided by full service fixed based operators. Scheduled airline service is provided by Northwest Airlink, which has daily flights to its major hubs in Memphis, Tennessee, and Detroit, Michigan.

Owensboro-Daviess County is surrounded by an excellent highway system. The Audubon Parkway, William Natcher Parkway, U.S. Highways 60, 231, and 431 all provide direct access to the area.

Four of the 31 common carrier trucking companies serving Owensboro maintain local terminals. CSX Transportation provides Owensboro with main line rail service and piggyback facilities. The Owensboro Riverport Authority provides barge, rail and storage facilities.

The City of Owensboro operates a citywide bus service.

Taxi, rental car, and luxury limousine services are available.

Education

Two public school systems, Owensboro Public Schools and Daviess County Public Schools, plus the Owensboro Catholic School system comprise the K-12 education system in the community. Heritage Christian and Majesty Christian operate Christian schools providing education from preschool to middle school and preschool to high school, respectively. The Triplett School offers private education for kindergarten through high school.

Owensboro is home to two four-year liberal arts colleges—Brescia University and Kentucky Wesleyan College. Each has an enrollment of approximately 800 students. Owensboro Community and Technical College is one of 13 colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and is one of the fastest growing colleges in the system. Western Kentucky University offers extensive undergraduate and graduate programs at its Owensboro campus. Murray State University also offers classes in Owensboro.

The Business and Industry division of Owensboro Community and Technical College offers the Work Keys assessment tests which can be used to determine individual skills levels for certain jobs. Free training for individuals to improve their scores and improve their employability is also available.

Daymar College in Owensboro is a private career college that offers a wide variety of training and degrees.

Kentucky Postsecondary Education Fact Sheet

Daviess County



General Population Data

	County	State	US
Total population	91,545	4,041,769	281,421,906
Median household income	\$36,813	\$33,672	\$41,994
Percent living in poverty	12.3%	14.3%	11.9%
Percent eligible for Medicaid	16.2%	17.5%	N/A
Estimated percent who do not have medical insurance	10.7%	13.8%	14.2%
Percent of registered voters who voted in the November 2004 election	67.8%	64.7%	88.7%
Unemployment rate 2004	5.0%	5.3%	5.5%

Highest Level of Education

Less than a high school diploma or GED	19.8%	25.8%	20.3%
High school diploma or equivalent	37.1%	33.4%	28.6%
Bachelor's degree or above	15.5%	15.6%	22.3%
Number of additional bachelor's degree holders needed in this county for it to be at the US average			4,598

College Readiness

	County	State
Average ACT Score	21.5	20.9
Percent underprepared in one or more academic subjects	42.9%	48.2%
Percent underprepared in math	26.6%	34.7%
Percent underprepared in English	27.3%	24.5%

Educational Pipeline

Public high school graduates in 2004	957
Kentucky Adult Education enrollments in fiscal 2005	2,607
GEDs awarded in fiscal 2005	134
Number of students from this county who entered postsecondary education in Fall 2004	882
Number of students from this county who earned a bachelor's degree in 2004-05	397

Notes:

Total population, median household income, percent living in poverty, and estimated percent who do not have medical insurance are all from the 2000 US Census.

Percent eligible for Medicaid is based on unpublished 2005 eligibility data from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Medicaid Services, and US census data.

Percent of registered voters who voted in the November 2004 election is from the State Board of Elections.

Unemployment rate 2004 is from the Kentucky Office of Employment and Training.

Employment by Sector information is 2004 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The self-employed and certain other workers are not included, and some data have been withheld due to BLS confidentiality rules.

Employment by Sector

	County	State
Agriculture, Mining & Other Nat. Resources	277	26,378
Manufacturing & Construction	8,767	346,875
Retail, Wholesale, Transportation & Utilities	9,018	368,755
Finance, Professional & Business Services	5,348	276,576
Education & Health Services	4,331	210,961
Government	7,941	289,987
Leisure, Hospitality and Other Services	5,608	206,240

Undergraduate Enrollments

Institution	Alumni	Fall 2004 Enrollment
University of Kentucky	3,299	428
University of Louisville	461	198
Eastern Kentucky University	349	66
Kentucky State University	13	4
Morehead State University	45	6
Murray State University	975	204
Northern Kentucky University	43	12
Western Kentucky University	2,155	678
Kentucky Comm. & Tech. College System	4,821	3,515
Independent Colleges & Universities	4,036	598
Total from this county	16,197	5,709

Financial Aid to Students from This County

Financial Aid Type	# Awards	Dollars
Federal Pell Awards	2,164	\$4,850,611
Federal Loans	1,626	\$7,310,900
Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships	2,033	\$2,613,618
State Need Based Grants	1,484	\$2,102,127

Highest Level of Education information is from the 2000 US Census for those aged 18 and older.

College Readiness information is based on ACT or equivalent scores by 2001 and 2002 high school graduates who entered a Kentucky postsecondary institution in Fall 2002.

Public high school graduates in 2004 is from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Kentucky Adult Education enrollments in fiscal 2005 and GEDs awarded in fiscal 2005 are from Kentucky Adult Education.

Financial Aid to Students information is from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority.

All other information is from the Council on Postsecondary Education.



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