



Bessie Allison Doerr: Ludlow Legend



Bessie Allison Doerr, 1931

by David E. Schroeder

Sarah Elizabeth "Bessie" Allison Doerr is a name few in Ludlow remember, but she left a legacy that still survives today. Bessie was born around 1889 to John Allison and Jeanie Buchanan Allison. Both her parents were born in Scotland. John Allison immigrated to the United States in 1880 and resided for a short period of time in New York City. He then made his way west to Ludlow where he worked for the Southern Railroad. Around the time of his daughter Bessie's birth, John began a livery and undertaker business. As an undertaker, Allison formed partnerships with several area businessmen, the last partnership with the Rose family which resulted in the firm Allison

and Rose. John and Jeanie Allison's daughter Bessie graduated from Ludlow High School in 1902 when few women had that opportunity. Soon after, she was working at the Cincinnati General Hospital as a nurse. Here she met a young medical intern by the name of Charles Edward Doerr. Doerr eventually joined the United States Army and became a surgeon stationed at Ft. Thomas. On September 29, 1908, Doerr received orders to report to Ft. Myer, Washington D.C. on October 1, 1908 for a new assignment. Not willing to be separated, Charles and Bessie married in the family home on Elm Street in Ludlow on September 30 and travelled to the nation's capital that evening.

Charles Doerr eventually served in the Medical Corps in the Philippines. He reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Bessie travelled with her husband on the adventure to Asia and here their first child was born in 1912 – a daughter named Allison Doerr.

The United States entry into World War I in 1917 resulted in Lt. Colonel Doerr's assignment as Commander of the army hospital at Camp Humphrey in Washington D.C. Bessie

Upcoming LHS Events

SPRING GROVE TOUR

Sun, Oct 5 • 1 PM • Spring Grove Cem.
LHS Members are invited to join us for a tour of Spring Grove Cemetery to view the gravesites of key Ludlow historical figures.

FREE for LHS Members

WALKING TOUR

Sat, Oct 18 • 1 PM • Ludlow Tavern
Join us for a walking tour of historic Ludlow, KY. We'll meet at the Ludlow Tavern and depart for the tour at 1 PM. Attendees are encouraged to come early to enjoy a treat from the lunch menu!

Suggested Donation \$10

RIVER CITIES TRIVIA

Tue, Nov 11 • 7-9 PM • Hotel Cov.
LHS is hosting a night of River City based trivia in Hotel Covington's Knowledge Bar (see what we did there?). Show off your knowledge of the region's history! Bring a group of friends! Take home bragging rights!

FREE for All

remained home in Ludlow. In September of 1918, influenza began to spread throughout the United States. It was especially prevalent in Washington D.C. where many returning soldiers from Europe were stationed. In one month, the hospital at Camp Humphrey treated 1,800 influenza sufferers. One of those who contracted the disease was Lt. Colonel Doerr who died on

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Ludlow Schools: Building Tomorrow



Pictured left: Rendering of planned renovations to the Ludlow School campus. Courtesy of REH&A Architect, Crestview Hills, KY. Construction began in 2024 and is planned to come to completion in 2026

by Dr. Jason Steffen, Superintendent

In the fall of 2023, the Ludlow Independent School District began the most ambitious building project in its 155-year history. With a combination of \$28 million in state funding, along with local bonding money, the district began a \$39 million renovation and building project that would touch every inch of the school campus. This project would build a new high school cafeteria on Oak Street; and a new addition on Adela Street that would house both schools' offices, new district-wide library, band room, and multi-purpose room. In addition to the two new buildings, every classroom was to be completely renovated, including all new plumbing, electricity, walls, windows, and technology. Also included in this project was a complete renovation of the auditorium, the kitchen and elementary cafeteria were also to be reconfigured to serve both elementary and high school students, new roofs would be installed on most of the buildings, and the elementary gym was to be renovated. With this project,

the campus would be updating all areas of the school buildings built in 1915, 1931, 1957, and 1999, to become state-of-the-art classrooms with all the modern convenience and technology to provide a world-class education for our students. In the summer of 2024, the two new construction buildings began rising from the ground, and the top floors of the elementary and middle school buildings were renovated. During this past school year, the top two floors of the high school and the auditorium were completed. This past summer, the 2nd floor of the middle school, first floor of the elementary school, and the elementary gym were completed. Over the past 18 months, 65 classrooms have been renovated and much of the overall work has been completed, but more is still to come. The start of this current school year marked a milestone in this two-year project, as every student started the school year in renovated classrooms. In the coming months, the current phases of renovation/construction will be finishing up with the renovation of the

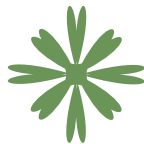
basement science classrooms, new elementary art room/performance area (old band room), and renovation of the current high school offices. The goal is to complete the major renovations to the campus by the beginning of 2026. Although the current renovations are starting to finish up, there are several new projects that the board of education has identified to upgrade in the coming year or two. The need to replace the original high school gym floor and renovation of the high school gym locker rooms are tentatively scheduled for 2026. The high school gym was constructed in 1970 and still has the original gym floor, locker rooms, and boiler system. These current projects have transformed the Ludlow Schools campus and will make Ludlow Schools the most modern facility in our region to better serve our students and our community. And future projects aim to enhance our offerings and opportunities for our students. At Ludlow Schools, we are truly "Building Tomorrow". ■

October 3, 1918. He would be among one of the 50 million people who died worldwide in the pandemic. His son, John Charles Doerr had been born less than a few months before his father's death. Lt. Colonel Charles E. Doerr's body was returned to Ludlow where funeral services were held in the Allison House on Elm Street. He was laid to rest at Highland Cemetery in Ft. Mitchell. Bessie Allison Doerr was left a widow with two small children. Eventually, in the early 1920s, Bessie, her parents, her children and a sister moved into the beautiful old Fleming Home (1878) on Kenner Street in Ludlow. Here she began plans to move on with her life. Bessie decided to carry on the family tradition of public service and became active in the community and Ludlow Schools. Bessie Allison Doerr understood that education was the key for her

children's success and those of her neighbors and became determined that Ludlow would have excellent schools. In 1920, with the passage of the 19th Amendment, American women earned their right to vote. Four years later, Bessie decided to run for a seat on the Ludlow School Board. She became one of the first women in Ludlow and Northern Kentucky to be elected to public office. Not only did she win, but she led the ticket and became the president of the board. Bessie worked tirelessly on plans to construct a new Ludlow High School to meet the needs of the rapidly growing post-war population. Contracts were accepted for the new 16-classroom Collegiate Gothic Style structure at the corner of Elm and Adela Streets in June 1931. Bessie addressed the crowd at the cornerstone laying and was full of

pride on April 30, 1932 when the building was dedicated.

The joy surrounding the new high school was soon dampened by the deaths of her mother and father in 1933. Bessie continued to live in the family home on Kenner Street and remained active at the school and the First Presbyterian Church. She died in the Kenner Street house on September 26, 1970. Bessie was survived by her daughter Allison Ballantyne and her son Dr. John Charles Doerr. She was laid to rest next to her husband in Highland Cemetery - 52 years after his death. A few blocks from the family home still stands Ludlow High School and in the lobby is a bronze plaque bearing the name Bessie Allison Doerr, President, Board of Trustees of Ludlow Schools. A fitting memorial to a woman of strength and courage. ■



RUTH BAMBERGER

FUND FOR SUSTAINABLE PRESERVATION

by John Hall, LHS President

Ruth Bamberger is a long-time member of the Ludlow Historic Society and the former President of the LHS Board. The Ruth Bamberger Fund for Sustainable Preservation was established in 2023 to honor Ruth's passion and dedication for climate-friendly strategies and solutions and her love of historic preservation. The goal of the fund is to promote and encourage sustainable preservation through energy efficient features by way of small grants, advocacy and education. ■



Pictured: School buildings from Ludlow's past.



Message From the First Female Mayor of Ludlow

Dear Neighbors,

As the first woman to serve as Mayor of Ludlow, I want to once again extend my heartfelt gratitude for the trust you have placed in me. This is not just a personal honor, it is a milestone for our city. Ludlow has always been a community built on resilience, inclusivity, and progress, and together we are writing the next chapter of our story. I am humbled to be a part of this journey with you.

Over the past several months, I have seen firsthand the strength of our community. Whether it's neighbors volunteering their time, local businesses investing in our city, or families coming together at community events, the pride we share in Ludlow is evident. These are the building blocks that will help us create the kind of city we want for the next generation. I am also excited to share that the Mayor's Office at the City Building will soon feature artwork from two remarkable artists with deep ties to Ludlow, David Mack, graduate of Ludlow High School in 1990 who has gone on to make an international name for himself, and Jeff & John Winkle, graduates of Ludlow High School in 1988, whose creative studio has long been part of our community. They have generously agreed to showcase some of their pieces. Their art will bring a creative and inspiring touch to the office, and I hope it will serve as a reminder of the talent that has always flourished in Ludlow. Pictures of the artwork will be shared soon on my Facebook page, follow me at *Mayor Sarah Thompson – City of Ludlow* to see them.

In the months ahead, I encourage you to become even more engaged in the life of our city. One of the best ways to do this is by joining or forming a civic club. These clubs are vital to Ludlow's continued growth, providing opportunities to connect with others, contribute ideas, and bring positive change to our neighborhoods. When residents give of their time and energy, our entire community benefits.

We also have wonderful opportunities to celebrate together. This fall, we will gather for our Fall Festival, a chance to enjoy the season with friends, family, and neighbors. Soon after, our annual Holiday Parade will bring joy to our streets and remind us of the traditions that make Ludlow special. These events are more than just celebrations, they are a reflection of who we are as a community, and I encourage you to take part.

I also want to remind you that the doors of our City Building are always open. Please do not hesitate to stop in with questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Building a stronger community requires all of us to play a role. As I often say, we must be willing to give in order to get the city we want. By working together, through dialogue, volunteering, and shared responsibility, we can ensure Ludlow continues to thrive.

Thank you again for your support and commitment. It is my privilege to serve as your Mayor, and I look forward to all that we will accomplish together.

With gratitude,

Sarah Thompson, *Mayor of Ludlow, KY* ■

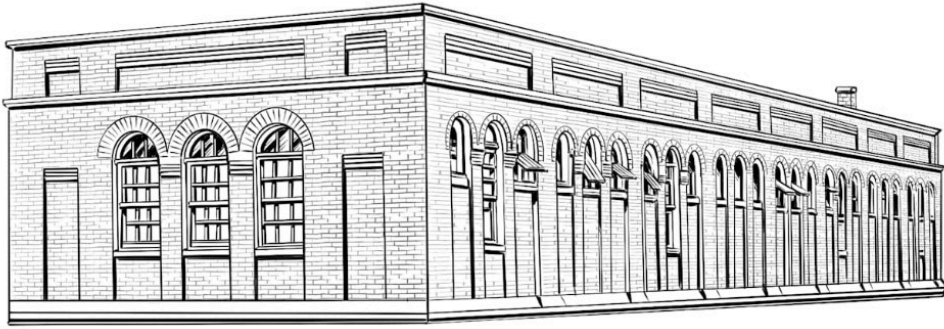
About The Mayor

I've called Ludlow home since I was 2 years old. I grew up on Ash Street in Section 8 housing with my family relying on food stamps to get by. My mom set an incredible example for me when she earned her social work degree in 1997, which allowed us to move into a house after I graduated from Ludlow High School in 1999.

Life hasn't always been easy, but I've learned the value of perseverance and hard work. It took me 17 years to earn my own degree while raising my two sons. My husband, Aaron, and I have been married for 24 years. Together we've worked hard to build a stable, fulfilling life for our family. We are proud homeowners here in Ludlow, and recently our oldest son became a Ludlow homeowner as well. Our oldest graduated from Ludlow High School in 2021, and our youngest will graduate in 2026. By profession, I'm a Payroll Manager and I've always cared deeply about our community. After serving on City Council, I stepped into the role of Mayor, becoming the first woman in Ludlow's history to hold this position. For me, being Mayor isn't just about policy or city business, it's about neighbors, families, schools and the sense of community that makes Ludlow so special. I'm proud to give back to the town that has given so much to me and my family, and I want every family in Ludlow to feel the same sense of possibility and opportunity that I was given here. ■

Ludlow Railyard Storehouse Progress Continues

by Andy Wartman



Rendering of the Ludlow Railyard Storehouse, Courtesy of Ludlow Heritage Museum

The restoration of the Ludlow Railyard Storehouse represents a transformative preservation project for Northern Kentucky's railroad heritage. Abandoned since the late 1990's, this "Industrial Romanesque" brick and stone building is the last surviving structure from Ludlow's once-vast railyards, originally constructed between 1889 and 1892 after a devastating fire destroyed the earlier wooden facilities. The storehouse, notable for its arched clerestory windows and enduring brickwork, served as both office space and storage for railway parts, supporting the operations of the Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Texas Pacific Railways, later Southern Railway, and now owned by Norfolk Southern Railway.

In January 2022, the Ludlow Heritage Museum secured a long-term lease with Norfolk Southern, enabling the museum to rehabilitate and repurpose the storehouse as its new headquarters and exhibition space. The restoration is a multi-phase process, designed to preserve the building's historic character while adapting it for modern museum use. The project's estimated cost is \$3.5 million, relying on private funding, grants, and community support. **Phase One** (*now*

complete) began with site cleanup and stabilization, including debris removal and assessment of the original masonry and windows. **Phase Two** (*now completed*) focused on fundraising, historic research and planning, including achieving local landmark status to help retain original features such as exposed brick walls and wide doors. **Phase Three** (2024–2026) is the major construction phase, encompassing a complete exterior restoration with critical roof repairs, masonry work, and replacement of historic windows to ensure weatherproofing and structural integrity. The roofing project is particularly vital, as it protects the building from further deterioration. Campaigning and collaboration with public and private organizations allowed the museum to successfully raise funds specifically for this purpose. The Museum recently solicited Requests for Proposals for interior and exterior renovations which will modernize the facility with new mechanical systems, bathrooms, a catering kitchen, exhibit infrastructure and lighting which will prepare the space for museum collections and community meetings. The final phase, scheduled for 2029–2030, will be to rehabilitate the lower level, once

connected to lower-level tracks that are now buried, to make it accessible for additional displays and storage. Site improvements have included seeding of a newly landscaped acre of grass, enhancing the grounds for outdoor gatherings and community engagement. This green space complements the building's renewed role as a cultural and educational hub.

The project's digital presence is anchored by the new Ludlow Rail Yard Storehouse website (www.ludlowstorehouse.com), which provides updates, historical context, and opportunities for involvement. Additionally, the newly formed National Railway Historical Society of Northern Kentucky – Cincinnati (www.nrhsnky.org) that supports the Ludlow Rail Yard Storehouse and the community's rail history advocacy, STEAM educational programming, and preservation efforts. A highlight of the storehouse's revitalized community role is the annual "Stuff The Caboose" campaign, running from November 1st to December 13th. This holiday initiative, in collaboration with WLWT Channel 5, features visits by local radio hosts and culminates with Santa Claus arriving via the Ludlow Fire Department. The campaign invites the public to donate toys and essentials, filling a historic caboose with gifts for families in need.

Through these combined efforts, the Ludlow Rail Yard Storehouse is poised to become a vibrant center for heritage, education, and community service, ensuring legacy of Ludlow, Kentucky for future generations. ■



Community Calendar and Announcements

FALL FEST

Sat, Oct 4 • 4-8 PM • C.P. Reeves

Enjoy Live Music, Food, Raffles, Games and more with your neighbors to kick off the fall season!

WALK AND TALK AND TRASH

Sat, Oct 8 • 6 PM • City Plaza

Meet at City Plaza to join your neighbors in a clean-up effort!

LUDLOW SCHOOLS CLOSED

Oct 10 & 13

CARS & COFFEE - Trunk or Treat

Sat, Oct 12 • 2-4 PM • City Plaza

Join us for a special edition of Cars & Coffee featuring a Trunk or Treat! Don your best costume and stop on by.

LUDLOW CLEAN UP DAY

Sat, Oct 18 • 9AM-1PM • Ash & Traverse

Free disposal of unwanted items like yard debris, mattresses, tires, etc. for Ludlow Residents. Must show ID.

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET; DAY OF THE DEAD

Sat, Oct 25; Sat, Nov 1 • Ludlow Tavern

CHEERS TO TEN YEARS

Sat, Dec 13 • Ludlow Tavern

TRIVIA, VINYL NIGHTS

Thursdays • Second Sight Spirits

Spend your Thursday evenings at Second Sight for Trivia or Vinyl Nights, alternating weeks.

LIGHT UP LUDLOW & BROMLEY

Sat, Dec 13 • City Plaza

Save the date for this year's Christmas Parade, culminating in a community gathering at City Plaza.

LUDLOW HISTORIC SOCIETY

4th Wednesdays • 6:30 PM

Ludlow Historic Society meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month in the basement of the City building and are open to the public!

CITY COUNCIL

2nd & 4th Thursdays • 7:00 PM

City Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Thursday of every month in the City building. Open to the public.

URBAN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

3rd Thursdays • 7:00 PM

UDRB meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month in the City building and are open to the public.

AVAILABLE FOR RENT

Community Center • 808 Elm St

Don't forget about the Ludlow Community Center for your upcoming events! Check out our Facebook page!

FACES AND PLACES PHOTO DRIVE

KCPL - Covington Branch

Donate your historical photos to the Local History and Genealogy Dept. at the Kenton Co. Public Library.



CALLING ALL GREEN THUMBS

You're invited to be part of Ludlow Historic Society's next Garden Tour, coming June 20, 2026! Showcase your garden's beauty and creativity while inspiring neighbors and visitors alike. Join us in celebrating our community's charm and love of gardening—Ludlow residents interested can email LHS for more info! ludlowhistoricsociety@gmail.com

Have an event you'd like included in the Ludlow Express Community Calendar?
Email ludlowhistoricsociety@gmail.com.

This issue of the *Ludlow Express* is made possible by the continued support from our friends...

LUDLOW COFFEE

630 Elm Street, Ludlow, KY
Open M-F 6A-12P; Sa 8A-12P



RUTH BAMBERGER
FUND FOR SUSTAINABLE PRESERVATION

The *Ludlow Express* is presented by the Ludlow Historic Society. Become a member today!

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Julie Wartman

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Logo art courtesy of Jeff & John Winkle

Membership Options

Annual Individual \$25

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Scan the QR code to visit our website and join LHS, make a donation to historic preservation, access back issues of the *Ludlow Express*, and more.

