

# Kentucky's Segregated Parks

In 1942, Henry Ward, a congress person from Paducah, sponsored a law in the Kentucky legislature that segregated urban park systems in five of Kentucky's largest cities. The law mandated that, "all public parks established and maintained for the recreation, pleasure and welfare of the colored population shall be held, managed and controlled by a Colored Park Board of Commissioners of the city wherein the parks are located." Although many cities across the Commonwealth had segregated parks prior to 1942, Henry Ward's legislation was the first law under segregation that gave power and resources to black communities to organize and develop recreation and leisure programs appropriate for black communities.

Louisville was the only city that was exempted from the State law. The largest black park in Louisville was Chickisaw Park, established in the 1920's. All of the largest black parks, Chickisaw in Louisville, Stuart Nelson in Paducah, and Lexington's Douglass Park still exist today. Only Cherokee State Resort Park was closed because of integration in the 1950's.

## Cherokee State Resort Park

Kentucky's only segregated state resort park was Cherokee State Resort Park. After opening Kenlake State Resort Park on Kentucky Lake in the mid-1940's, the State Parks Department built Cherokee State Resort Park a few miles down shore. With a beach, a boat house, ten cottages, a restaurant, and a full-time staff of over 15 people, Cherokee State Resort Park was the first and only black resort park in Kentucky. A 1952 Kentucky State Highway map touted the park as, "the finest Colored vacation site in the South."

