

# Mark Ray

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## **Anchorage, Kentucky** **Insisting on Its Own Serenity**

By Mark Ray

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In the Lerner and Loewe musical *Brigadoon*, a New York hunter stumbles across a Scottish village untouched by the ravages of time. He quickly falls in love with (and in love in!) the village and makes it his home before the curtain falls.

Had that New Yorker visited Kentucky instead of Scotland, he might still be living along Evergreen Road, Shady Lane, or Creel Lodge Drive in the village of Anchorage. To residents and visitors alike, Anchorage is a real-life Brigadoon. In fact, conjure up your favorite small-town image—Mayberry, Lake Wobegon, your grandparents' small town—and you'll find echoes of it in Anchorage.

Incorporated in 1878, Anchorage is a community that has withstood the twin tests of Time and Progress, entering the twenty-first century just as gracefully as it left the nineteenth. As the writer Hewitt Taylor said in 1936, "In a restless world it insists upon its own serenity."

That serenity is part of what attracted Kevin Grangier to Anchorage last year. A native of southern Indiana and a graduate of Western Kentucky University, Grangier had left the area a decade ago to experience life in Los Angeles. There, he founded Carry On Communication, a public relations firm that now has a presence in Los Angeles, New York, Washington, Chicago, Miami—and Anchorage.

"After years of visiting three or four cities per week and traveling every three or four days, I needed some kind of grounding," he said. He found what he was looking for in a 10,000-square-foot home on 11 acres that he purchased last year. "It's truly a magnificent property," Grangier said.

His Anchorage home is a convenient stopover between the coasts, but it's also the perfect place to entertain friends and clients. "It's a great opportunity to bring people to see Kentucky and see the landscape and see what the state's all about," he said. "Everybody walks away with a great impression of Kentucky."

In many ways, Grangier is following in a long tradition of prominent businesspeople who've called Anchorage home. More than a century ago, successful distillers like Isaac W. Bernheim moved here from Louisville. Today, the community is home to restaurant magnates John Schnatter, founder and chairman of Papa John's International, and David Novak, CEO of Yum! Brands, Inc.

But it was railroads, not restaurants, that gave Anchorage its start. Like many communities, Anchorage grew up along train tracks. Landowner and surveyor Edward Dorsey Hobbs helped bring the Louisville and Frankfort Railroad through the area in 1849, and for years the community was known as Hobbs Station. By 1868, it had been renamed Anchorage, after a nearby estate of the same name owned by retired riverboat captain James W. Goslee. (According to legend, the anchor that hangs in the center of town came from Goslee's ship, the *Matamora*).

Train service expanded in 1901, when a new interurban line connected Anchorage with then-distant Louisville to the west and Pewee Valley to the north-east. That line made Anchorage an increasingly popular place for wealthy Louisvillians to build summer homes, where they could escape the heat, crowds, and disease of the city.

Rail service brought more than people to Anchorage. It also brought money. According to Samuel W. Thomas' 2004 book *The Village of Anchorage*, taxes generated by the Southern Pacific Company's Anchorage headquarters financed significant expansion of what is now Anchorage School.

Founded in 1911 as the Anchorage Common Graded School, the school is one of the key reasons families move to the community today. The K-8 school boasts of small class sizes, high student achievement, and an extensive array of extracurricular activities. "Because of our small class sizes, students tend to get the attention they need and thus perform well on national and state tests," said Superintendent Larry Harrison. "We're the first district in Kentucky to have met 2014 proficiency goals."

Harrison said the school relies on parent volunteers to work in the school office, help out in classrooms, and run special programs like the Junior Great Books Program. "It's not unusual to have a physician come in on her Thursday off to volunteer in her child's classroom," he said.

The school district—whose boundaries roughly mirror those of the city—also relies on a significantly higher tax rate than surrounding communities, but parents don't seem to mind. Many would probably be paying private-school tuition if they lived in other communities. According to Harrison, roughly two-thirds of Anchorage students go on to private or parochial high schools after leaving the school. (The district is responsible for educating residents through the twelfth grade, so it contracts with the Jefferson County Public Schools to teach those students who choose to attend a public high school.)

Kurt and Kristen Sauder decided to move from Middletown to Anchorage in part because of the school's reputation. "You almost get a private school setting, even though it's a public school," Kurt Sauder said.

As director of men's ministries at Southeast Christian Church, Sauder didn't think his family could afford to live in Anchorage, although they'd often dreamed of living there. Through a fortunate confluence of events, however, they were able to buy a home at the mere-mortal end of the housing spectrum. "We just felt like the Lord opened the door for this to happen," he said.

The Sauders' Realtor, Julie Pogue, said their story demonstrates a unique feature of Anchorage. Rather than being a community of cookie-cutter, monolithic homes, Anchorage includes everything from cottages to condos to mansions fit for a king. "And everyone gets the same benefits," she said, in terms of education and police and fire protection.

Pogue, whose husband is a pilot for UPS, moved to Anchorage from Texas 11 years ago. Although she's a fourth-generation Houstonian, she would never go back. "I would never live anywhere else," she said.

Anchorage's small-town feel, as well as the limited supply of houses, keeps demand high. "I sell a lot of things the day they hit the market," Pogue said. "Lots and lots of my clients came to Louisville on a weekend, bought a big home in a big subdivision, and later decided to move to Anchorage."

To Pogue, the community's charm lies in its residents. "The people are really what makes it special here," she said. When neighbors see children walking to school—the district has no buses—they stop and offer rides. When a family buys a house, someone from the fire department come by to show them the safest way out in case of an emergency. When a child takes a tumble, a doctor may well sew him up on his kitchen table.

Long-time resident John McGarvey, agrees that neighbors are just more neighborly in Anchorage. "It's a place where a new police officer will stop you to say hello because he hasn't met you yet," he said.

McGarvey, managing partner of Morgan & Pottinger, is both a resident and the city attorney. In that role, he's one of many residents who work to preserve Anchorage's unique charm. "One of the challenges of government is to use its powers to manage the inevitable changes," he said. "We can direct [change] to some extent."

Directing—or preventing—change is a thread that runs through the community's history. Almost as interesting as the impact transportation and education have had in Anchorage's growth is the impact they didn't have, as Thomas' book explains.

In 1874, for example, the grounds of Anchorage's Forest Academy almost became the home of the state's new Central University. Before that could happen, however, the city of Richmond convinced the state to locate the university there; it eventually became Eastern Kentucky University.

In 1930, the town board hired a consultant to develop a new road plan for Anchorage. This plan, which was never adopted, called for right-of-ways of up to 100 feet and roads that would accommodate four lanes of traffic.

Finally, in 1966, residents helped defeat a bill in the Kentucky House of Representatives that would have merged the Louisville, Jefferson County, and Anchorage school districts. The 1974 court-ordered plan that unified the Louisville and Jefferson County districts left the Anchorage district untouched.

And so Anchorage remains a community not so much stuck in the past but stuck on it, a place that's surrounded by Louisville but that hasn't surrendered to it, a community where—as William Faulkner wrote—“The past isn't dead; it isn't even past.”

Soon after he bought his home in Anchorage, Kevin Grangier launched a massive four-year project to renovate the antebellum mansion. “I'm really going out of my way to make it authentic,” he said.

That statement could be Anchorage's motto.