

Kenton County Historical Society

Newsletter No. 1

August 1978

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SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER THE LICKING RIVER.

Bridge Fell 70 Feet into Licking River

In the 1850's, a man by the name of Kilburn sketched "the principal features" of Covington and Newport for an illustrated publication of the day. A collection of Mr. Kilburn's printed sketches was purchased by the Tuesday Club in 1915 and given to the Public Library of Covington. The prints are now in the Kentucky and Local History Collection of the Kenton County Public Library. Two of the artist's sketches are presented here.

Covington's first City Hall and Court-house stood at the corner of Third and Greenup Streets. The cornerstone was laid on June 24th, 1843.

The ground level housed the Mayor's office, the Council Chambers, the Archives, the Fire Companies, and "other municipal purposes". The main level consisted of a large hall where public assemblages could be held. The wooden gentleman topping the structure was the product of a subscription drive in 1844. The statue represents George Washington, who won over Daniel Boone despite the local newspaper's support of the latter.

The second scene is of the Newport and Covington Bridge, which was put under contract in early 1853 with the stipulation that it be completed within the year.

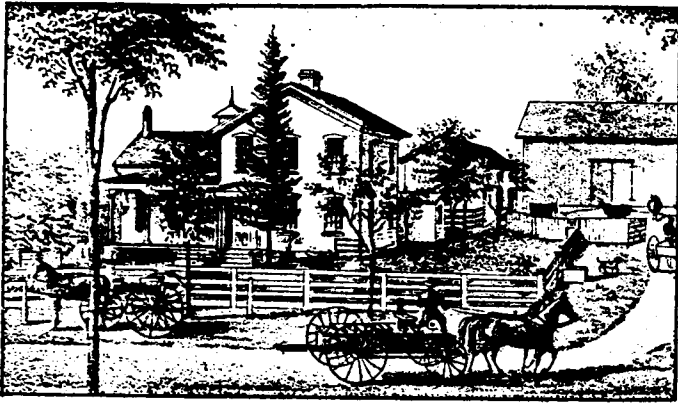
It was a happy occasion when Mayor Bushrod Foley of Covington was the first to cross the bridge in late December of 1853. However, about three weeks later, both cities were taken by surprise when their elegant new bridge took a plunge into the Licking. The Covington Journal of January 21, 1854 ran an article "A Great Work in Ruins!"

"On Monday evening last, at 5 o'clock the iron bars connecting the cables and the right-hand anchor of the Newport and Covington Suspension Bridge, on the Newport side, gave way, and the entire structure fell with a tremendous crash into the Licking, a distance of 70 feet!

The bridge in its descent, turned bottom up twisting the cables as if they had been so many light cords. The towers were not injured; indeed, all the mason work remains perfectly firm..."

Reconstruction was completed by June of 1854. However, the newspaper noted "The accident which befell the Licking bridge has unsettled the confidence of some persons in the principle of suspension for works of this character".

The Society has arranged for two sketches to be reproduced on note cards. They are currently available at the Hallmark Gallery Shop, 12 West Pike Street. Proceeds from the sale of the cards will be used by the Society to further develop and preserve our area's rich history.



THIS OLD HOUSE

The history of a county is reflected by the history of its residents and, for that reason, Pat Wolcott and Marilyn Fuchs have prepared a color slide presentation featuring the old homes of Kenton Co. with a brief history of the families who built them. It is called, "This Old House". In May of 1978, "This Old House", was the Historical Society program for the community. It was held at Grace Baptist Church in Independence and attended by 125 people. A second slide presentation will be one of the Society's spring programs in 1979.

There are a number of log homes, restored by the owners, that retain such features as original window glass, large cooking fireplaces and exposed log walls. Pictures taken in the 1880's have been reproduced and are compared with pictures of the homes as they look today. Through interested county residents, pictures of houses razed years ago were obtained and copied. Examples are the Sanford home that stood where the Ft. Mitchell Shopping Center now stands, the original Bartlett Graves home on Commonwealth Ave. in Erlanger and the Buckner home at the corner of Turkeyfoot Rd. and Dudley Pike. The earliest home still standing dates back to 1817 and most are pre-Civil War.

This one hour presentation of 90 slides is available, for a small fee, to any club or organization interested in county history. The second slide program is nearly completed and, again, will feature 90 slides.

Mrs. Dorothy Wieck has graciously agreed to respond to the genealogical letters of inquiry received by the Society.

ORAL HISTORY

The Oral History Committee generally has sought elderly citizens with the background to narrate local history from the earlier part of the Century. Various areas around Covington have been described: West Covington by retired Rev. Walter Haupt; the West End (Irish) by Mr. William Farrell; Riverside Drive-Greenup Street by Mrs. Pearl Seymour and Mrs. Karl Snyder Schramm; Lewisburg by Mr. Ambrose Becker; and, Eastern-Wallace Avenues by Mr. D. H. Hubbard, retired principal of the District school. Mrs. Mary Andrews has interviewed Mr. Vincent Keller, retired Superintendent of Devou Park and persons involved in the promotion of the once popular Devou Bands entertainment programs. Finally, Mr. Ralph Murray has made preliminary contact in order to conduct a series of interviews in connection with the Old Latonia Race Track.

Appropriately, the Oral History Committee has not ignored "out in the county." Mr. Ben Beers and Mr. and Mrs. James Worster have described the Independence-Erlanger sections. Mr. Willard Benson has provided a detailed account of county agricultural programs. Mr. Chester Mullins briefly told of his old farm mill hauling route and Mr. Robert Elliot, described old time farming in the area.

Generally, those interviewed have offered a wealth of background information. In a session at St. Charles Nursing Home, Miss Eileen McCarthy, student of Duvenec, briefly narrated her painting and teaching career. Two gentlemen very well known to early country music, Mr. Ballard (Pappy) Taylor and Mr. Bert Layne described times, travels and music. Mrs. Schramm, mentioned above, possesses items passed down to her by her father, Sam Snyder of 8th and Greenup Streets, who fought in the Civil War. She has evidence that an ancestor was Aid-de-Camp to General Washington.

On April 21-22 Mike Averdick and John Boh attended an Oral History Conference and Workshop at Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Ky. Members of the Governor's Oral History Commission were present, and experienced interviewers gave workshops and participated in conferences.

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 Financial Report of
 Income and Distribution
 Sept. 1, 1977 to Sept. 1, 1978

INCOME

Individual Memberships(86)	\$430.00
Institutional Membership(1)	15.00
Contributions	8.00
Project Sales	<u>138.50</u>
	<u>\$591.50</u>

DISTRIBUTION

Postage and Stationery	\$100.00
Bookkeeping Supplies	20.18
Project Supplies	<u>184.93</u>
	<u>\$305.11</u>
CASH BALANCE	<u>286.39</u>
	<u>\$591.50</u>

HISTORIC SITES

The Historic Sites Committee, chaired by John Burns, was organized in February of 1978. Its first goal was to save and restore a wall-sized advertisement for Bull Durham Smoking Tobacco. The faded sign, which came to light when a neighboring building was demolished, has been judged by a leading local commercial artist to be one of the finest and best preserved of its type in the Ohio Valley. It is located at the intersection of 8th, Banklick and Craig Streets.

The owner of the building on which the sign is located was contacted and gave oral permission for the society to restore the sign. Accordingly, the James Brown Foundation of Louisville was contacted with the hope of securing financial aid for the project. We were eventually advised by the foundation that such financing did not fall within its priorities.

It was then learned the American Tobacco Company of Richmond, Virginia was again marketing Bull Durham Tobacco. We have written that organization for financial assistance. To-date we have not received a response.

INVITE
 A FRIEND
 TO
 JOIN

CEMETERIES

The state project of locating and copying all cemeteries in each of the Kentucky counties has been extended for an indefinite period. There had been two year deadlines, but two years have passed and most county chairmen are still finding long-neglected burial sites. Therefore, this will be a continuing project.

Cemeteries in Kenton Co. have been copied at random and printed by individuals and organizations in the past, but, unfortunately, Kenton Co. is about 25 years too late because builders and individuals have obliterated a great number of private plots. In few instances the tombstones were removed to another cemetery, either Highlands or Independence, but in the majority of cases they were just plowed under, thrown into a nearby gully or broken up for stone walks.

The cemetery committee has been able to locate and record 90 small family plots thusfar. There are about 10 more that are too overgrown for summer research. Committee members are: Virginia Reynolds, Dorothy Dewar, Helen Dewar, Sue Hutsell, Joyce Sanders, Barbara Wilson, Marilyn Fuchs, Russell Schleyer, Jim Kiger, Edna Soete, John Boh, Lee Haynes, Lois Schoborg and Pat Wolcott, Chairman.

Copies of the cemetery records will be sent to Frankfort, printed and then placed in the library of each county as a reference aid.

family files

Again to the credit of Pat Wolcott and Company, a "Family File" has been established. It is located in the Kentucky and Local History Collection of the Kenton County Public Library. Family genealogies from the files of Margaret Hartman, Pat Wolcott, and the Kenton County Public Library form the basis of this new file. This file now contains better than 150 family files.

Over the coming years, a good selection of families will be represented in this file. As genealogical letters of inquiry are answered by the Library and the Society, the letters and replys will be added to the file. A card index to the file has been prepared by the reference librarian.

Library

The library committee has received a number of fine donations over the past year. Contributors have included D.L. Ringo, A.M. Farney, R. Ashcraft, M. Hartman, K. Vercouteren, and F. Richards. To mention a few of the more interesting gifts: Latonia Christian Church Golden Jubilee, 1898-1948 Souvenir Program and History, Brief History of Slavery in Boone Co., Kentucky, 1957, and Florence, Boone County, Ky., 1958, by the Boone County Historical Society, Shinkle Methodist Church Centennial Anniversary 1867-1967 Souvenir Program and History, City of Covington Sesqui-Centennial, 1965 Souvenir Program and History, Big Bone Lick Historical Association Brochures, 1949, German Churches of Covington, 1977, by Karl Vercouteren, Allison and Rose Funeral Home, Inc., A History, early CCH and Holmes yearbooks, and a Cincinnati Centennial Newspaper, 1888. These and other items have been placed in the Kenton County Public Library so that they can be preserved and made accessible to all interested parties. All items presented by the Society to the Library will be so marked.

A joint effort of the Society and the Library is the development of a photograph collection depicting earlier days in Kenton County. Several photographs have been donated to the Society, but most are only loaned for copying purposes. The members of the Society find the photographs. Paul's Photography Studio of Covington makes a negative and an 8"x10" print of each. The library purchases the negatives and prints at cost for inclusion in the Kentucky and Local History Collection. The photographs are presently being accessioned and catalogued by Linda Bailey, Reference Librarian. The Library has filed a proposal with the Kentucky Department of Library and Archives requesting \$2,500 for the development of the photograph collection.

Pat flies the coop

It is with genuine regret that we note that our most active Society member is moving to Owen County. It's not that anything is wrong with Owen County, it's just that we'd like to keep Pat for ourselves, here in Kenton. Pat will remain active in our Society, so all is not lost. Her new address is:
Route 3. Sugarhill Farm, Owenton, Ky. 40359

Timberlake

The Thornton-Timberlake residence on Stephenson Road in Erlanger was honored in May by the installation of a Kentucky Historical Highway Marker. The House was built in 1814. The marking of the house was a project of the Woman's Club of Erlanger. The lady most responsible for this achievement is Mrs. Harry Carl, Sr., Chairwoman of the Timberlake Committee. The house may be toured by arrangement with the Woman's Club of Erlanger.

Programs

A number of fine programs were given during the year:

Mr. Earl Clark presented a two part program on "The Development and Decline of the Streetcar System of Northern Kentucky". His program included many rare slides.

Ms. Joyce Sanders hosted a reception at the historic Albro House of Seminary Square in Covington. Refreshments were served along with a little history of the area.

Dr. A.C. Poweleit presented a fine program based on his new book, "A Bicentennial of Physicians of Northern Kentucky".

Mr. Rick Wolnitzak presented a program on the Architectural Survey of Covington, which was completed last year.

Mr. Don Barlow presented a paper entitled, "Northern Kentucky and the Mexican War", based upon newspaper accounts of the day.

Mr. Reginald Smith presented a program on the function of the N. Ky. Convention & Visitors Bureau, especially with regard to their role in the Main Strasse development.

Mrs. Pat Wolcott and Mrs. Marilyn Fuchs developed the most successful program of the year with the first installment of "This Old House", a slide program with commentary on the historic county homes. The next two installments will be held during the coming Society year. They are eagerly awaited by all.