

Kenton County Historical Society

P.O. Box 641
Covington, Kentucky 41018

R E V I E W

April 1990

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING FOR MEMBERS, FRIENDS, GUESTS, PUBLIC:

Elizabeth Chavez, Programs Committee Chairperson, announces that on Tuesday Evening, May 1, Terry Hulse, Supervisory Special Agent for the Covington FBI since 1984, will speak on the history of the Covington Resident Agency which covers thirteen Northern Kentucky counties. Mr. Hulse will also comment on the role of the FBI for the future.

Before the talk there will be a short business meeting. The program is free and open to the public. The program is sponsored by the Kenton County Historical Society which is dedicated to collecting and preserving local history.

Tuesday Evening
May 1
7:00 PM
Kenton County Public Library
Fifth and Scott Streets
Covington

Bromley Month

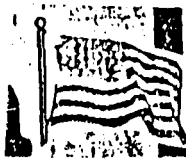
County Commissioner Dick Combs revealed to the Ludlow-Bromley Historical Society that Kenton County Judge Executive Clyde Middleton has recognized Bromley's 100th anniversary by proclaiming the month of May "Bromley Month" in Kenton County. Bromley received its charter on May 23, 1890. Combs has also contacted Frankfort. John Burns, a member of the Kenton County Historical Society and the Ludlow-Bromley Historical Society encouraged Combs (also a member) to seek these honors.

History Day

On April 7th Xavier University and the Cincinnati Historical Society co-sponsored the 5th annual Cincinnati History Day, a district contest in line with National History Day. The local contest was open to the schools of 8 southwestern Ohio counties, with the various entries being judged by history professionals and other interested members of the community. Two of the approximately 55 judges were Charles King and John Burns representing the Kenton County Public Library and the Kenton County Historical Society, respectively.

Kenton County's Birthday

Kenton County officially began on April 30, 1840. The legislation establishing the county was passed in January, 1840. On Monday, April 30, 1990 the County will be 150 years old.



BROMLEY'S 100th ANNIVERSARY AS A CORPORATE ENTITY

The year of 1890 was a banner year for Kentucky's General Assembly. The amount of legislation enacted that year was of near record proportion, yet it is one particular act of May 23rd that is of special interest to us in this centennial year of Bromley's incorporation. It was on that date that the General Assembly approved "AN ACT to incorporate the town of Bromley."

The community's history though, dates much further back than the time of its incorporation. Such early-day explorers as Christopher Gist and Simon Kenton trod the very ground upon which the city is built, and Simon Girty and his Indian companions passed here a number of times. George Rogers Clark regularly patrolled along the local riverfront with his heavily-armed galleys, while the celebrated Mike Fink poled his fleet of cargo-laden keelboats along the willow-lined shore.

In 1756 23 years-old Mrs. William (nee Mary Draper) Ingles, who is recognized as being the first white woman in Kentucky, traveled the Bromley site as a prisoner of the Shawnee Indians. She and an elderly Dutch woman companion later made their escape while at Big Bone Lick and once again traversed the local site as part of what has been called one of the most remarkable, hazard-filled flights of all time.

In time, large tracts of Kentucky land were awarded to various individuals who, in turn, were encouraged to help see that this western frontier became a settled and prosperous part of the new nation. One of those receiving such a land grant was Prettyman Merry. He was given a tract of some 2,000 acres extending from the west side of modern-day Covington to near the tiny stream of Dry Creek, and encompassing much of the Bromley site

A short time after Merry received his generous grant of land, a small plateau just inside Bromley's present-day western boundary was chosen to be the site of a large brick home, known locally as the "Landmark." Today, the 18th century structure is said to be the oldest home still standing in Kenton County.

During all this time there was a growing number of isolated farms and homes being established on the land west of the Landmark. Finally, in 1846 George Anderson, who lived at the mouth of Dry Creek, called for a meeting to be held at his home for the purpose of organizing a group to build a turnpike from Dry Creek's mouth to the ferry landing at Israel Ludlow's farm (present-day Ludlow.) The eventual outcome of this was construction of the Covington and Dry Creek Turnpike, or Lower River Road as it eventually became known.

Two years after the Anderson meeting another crucial point in Bromley's history was reached. That was in 1848 when a large portion of the original Merry estate was acquired by Charles Collins, a native of Bromley, England. Collins promptly platted a town on the property and announced that he was naming it in honor of his native English borough.

Growth came slowly for the newly-established community, but it did come. Homes and stores were built along Turnpike St., now known simply as Pike St., and ferry service across the Ohio was insupervised. Within 13 years though, the storm that was America's Civil War broke across the land. Bromley and Ludlow residents promptly called a mass meeting and left no doubt as to where their sentiments lay. They spoke out loudly and clearly in favor of the Union, and called upon their representatives "to vote for the Union first, the Union last, and the Union always."

By the end of 1861 a local training center known as Camp Bromley was receiving scores of recruits, and when a Confederate force under General Henry Heth penetrated the surrounding hilltops swarms of local men rushed to help fill the ranks of the 41st Enrolled Militia. Union gunboats patrolled up and down the river, ever alert to any possible Confederate move down the surrounding hillsides and onto the flat Bromley and Ludlow terrain. So too, were the gun emplacements of the Kirby Smith Battery placed so as to be able to pour a withering volume of fire onto the flat land that would later be covered by the waters of the Lagoon Amusement Park and by modern-day Bromley.

These proved to be wise precautions, for it was later revealed that Bromley lay in the direct path of a proposed Southern attack on Covington and Cincinnati. This fact came to light when General Lew Wallace, commander of the local defense line, wrote that Confederate General Heth told him during a chance post-war meeting that his proposed plan of attack was to strike north toward the Ohio River and then swing eastward through the communities of Bromley, Ludlow and West Covington.

Despite their eventual order to withdraw, one group of mounted rebels were determined to enter Ohio before beginning their southward flight. Accordingly, the small group rode into Bromley and used the local ferry to cross the Ohio. After a brief time on the river's north bank they returned to the hilltops to rejoin their command which was then preparing to begin their retreat. Members of the small band, probably because of their shabby dress, were never recognized as being Confederate soldiers, and it was not until several days later that Union officials learned of their escape.

After the war ended there came a period of modest growth and prosperity for the community. Still, a number of local farmers who had migrated from the Old World still held to the European custom of wearing thrifty, water-resistant wooden shoes when working in their fields--and chances are that their shoes were locally made. Indeed, those wooden shoes made by Bromleyites John Heist and John Dues could easily match or exceed the quality of those of the best of the world's shoe makers.

By the start of the 1890s two of the most popular gathering places for the local men were Bill Weber's saloon and George Hackstadt's blacksmith shop. Here, they swapped fish stories, exchanged the latest gossip and talked politics. One of the most common topics of discussion concerned the benefits and the drawbacks of having their community incorporated. A vast majority seemed to heartily favor incorporation and succeeded in convincing the state legislature of the righteousness of their cause. On May 23, 1890 the General Assembly gave all Bromley reason to celebrate, as it passed "AN ACT to incorporate the town of Bromley, in Kenton county." The act provided for the election of a board of 5 trustees, a police judge and a town marshal, and set the first Monday in June as election day. In addition, the trustees were given the power to enact laws for the governing of the city, and the power to levy a tax of no more than 12¢ on each \$100 worth of taxable property.

A few days later, on June 9th, the new city's first municipal election was held, and resulted in Frank Falser, George Puck, Fred Hackstadt, Henry Weber Sr. and Lee Aspey being selected as the 5 trustees. Nicholas Grimmeissen was elected treasurer, George Noelker became city clerk, Fred Kranz was named tax assessor, James Gardner Sr. was selected to be the first city marshal and Seal Richardson was chosen as police judge. A short time later, Mayor Thomas J. McFieal of Ludlow administered the oath of office to the newly-elected officials. Bromley's corporate status was now a fact. . (John Burns, Director)

Membership

Recent renewals (at \$5.00 per year per person) include John Burns, Albert Spiry, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Moffett. And Mary Kaiser of Lombard, Illinois recently took a lifetime membership (\$100.00). Please note that at the March meeting a resolution was passed setting a lifetime category for married couples at \$150.00.

Historic Sites Markers

Ceremonial unveiling of these three markers is now pending: for Una Merkel (actress born in Covington); for the Slave Escape across the Ohio River from the Foot of Main Street in Covington; and for the First City Hall. However, dates have not yet been set.

Thanks to one of our members the Kenton County Historical Society has been honored by recognition in a letter sent from one of Kentucky's best known sports enthusiasts: "Information has come to me from Ralph Murray that a historical marker was placed at the site of the old Latonia Race Track by your society, (Paragraph) I am so glad that the rich historical past of Kenton County is being preserved for future generations of Kenton County and other Kentuckians by these memorial markers. (Paragraph) I sincerely hope that your society can keep up the good work. (Paragraph) I send assurances of my respect and esteem to you and all the other members of the Kenton County Historical Society. (Signed) Sincerely yours, A. B. Chandler"

Publications

Three volumes of collected historical papers are being bound in soft cover binders. Soon copies will be available for sale in this the county's sesquicentennial year. They include research papers done by members and friends over the past decade or so. Eventually we hope to put together volume IV, and we already have another original work by one of our members. At our March meeting, Ted Harris presented the Historical Society with a paper entitled, "Isaac Black is the name: The story of Isaac Black, lawyer, political, civil rights, and education activist."

The Historical Confederation of Kentucky (HCK)

The Historical Confederation of Kentucky, an affiliate of the Kentucky Historical Society, was established to support local history groups. The Kenton County Historical Society is in the Northern Region which includes Boone, Kenton, Gallatin, Owen, Grant, Pendleton and Campbell counties. Groups in these counties will soon be contacted about participating in a regional meeting in 1990. You may recall that a few years ago the Kenton County Historical Society sponsored such a regional meeting with the theme "Rivers and Rails."

4-90

Happy Birthday, Kenton County

April 30, 1990



May is "Broomley Month"

Kenton County Historical Society
P. O. Box 641
Covington, Ky 41012

Kenton County Birthday, April 30, 1990 (150th)
Covington Birthday, February 8, 1990 (175th)
Bromley Birthday, May 23, 1990 (100th)

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