

The Kenton County Historical Society



December-January
1991 - 1992

Kenton County Historical Society

P O Box 641
Covington, Kentucky 41011

R E V I E W

December-January 1991-1992

ANNOUNCEMENT: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

On Wednesday evening, January 22, 7:00 PM, at the
Kenton County Public Library, Covington,

Dr. Paul Knepper will lecture on....

**THE KENTUCKY PENITENTIARY BUILDING IN FRANKFORT
(BUILT 1798-1800) AND KENTUCKY STATE PRISON HISTORY.**

Not only was the Kentucky state penitentiary one of
the first prisons in the United States; Kentucky also
fashioned what were then considered pioneering
methods in its corrections programs. Dr. Knepper
will also detail aspects of the Frankfort prison which
lasted until severely damaged by the 1937 flood.
Corrections strategies old and new will be discussed.
Dr. Knepper is coordinator of the Justice Studies
program at Northern Kentucky University.

THIS PROGRAM WILL BE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Wednesday evening
January 22nd
7:00 PM
Kenton County Public Library
Fifth and Scott streets
Covington

There will be a very brief business session for the
general membership before the program.

AUNT NELLIE'S FARM KITCHENS-227 WEST SOUTHERN
Covington, Kentucky

Many people would remember it as the Liberty Cherry and Fruit Company, which appeared first in the 1916 Covington directory (northwest block of Eighteenth and Madison, near the Stewart Iron Works). Before Morris Bettman started Liberty Cherry in 1914, the Bettman-Johnson Distillery on Sycamore street was engaged in similar production (1910 Cincinnati directory). In 1917 Bettman offered his plant at its new location (Second and Madison, southeast corner) to the government for war emergency (vegetable processing) as the largest cannery in Northern Kentucky. A couple years after the 1937 flood, Liberty Cherry relocated away from the perilous Ohio river to the former Yates-Lahner lumber yard (at the railroad tracks in Latonia), 227 West Southern avenue.

In 1918 Edgar Bettman was President and Treasurer; Henrietta Reedy, Secretary. In 1943 Arthur Bettman was President; Thomas Bell, Vice-president; Henrietta Reedy, Secretary. In 1961 Beatrice Foods purchased Liberty Cherry, followed in the 1980's by American Brands, and then Aunt Nellie's Kitchens. Yet, according to plant manager, Frederick Good, the Liberty emblem is still used; and both the Aunt Nellie's and Thriftway or IGA label, for instance, may come from the same production line. Now, only Gray and Co. in Oregon is a larger producer than Aunt Nellie's.

The Covington plant processes and packages glace fruit (for fruitcake) and maraschino cherries (for retail and industrial uses), and also mince meat product. Cherries come from Oregon or northern Michigan, are machine pitted at Traverse City, Michigan, and are processed and packaged in Covington. Pineapples imported from Mexico, rather than the more delicate Hawaiian variety, better withstand processing. Citron, a type of tree melon, comes from Puerto Rico. Bettman's original crew hand pitted cherries; now things are mechanized, batches are larger, and the operation multiplied, even without the cherry pitting.

There is no chemical formula, only a "feel." Cherries are 25% impregnated with syrup which also forces water out (it takes more than a day), then packaged and sealed to avoid contamination. Glossy fruit is 75% impregnated (corn syrup has replaced sugar in processing) but can be packaged dry (tamper proof) because the syrup is a preservative. Syrup is constantly recycled after purification. Besides first processing waste under the floor (of its newer, spacious, temperature controlled redwood warehouse), the company pays the Kenton County sewage district a surcharge. On the other hand, Harry Welte (retired) could recall when raw waste was dumped into the Ohio River. The plant manager observed that despite great concern maraschino cherries present no greater danger than jello from food coloring. In the future the company will have to invest in larger labeling in order to carry required nutritional information (the company now makes no claims).

The average factory worker service in 1991 was 18 years, office worker 23, with a total of 70 production and office personnel. Beatrice Foods brought in the teamsters union which has worked out quite well, according to Good. Marketing is now handled by the parent company office. Over-the-road trucking is preferred to bureaucratic railroad dispatching. According to Welte, in the old days materials and products were trucked between the railroad depot at Pike and Washington and Second and Madison.

A final note: The former plant at Second and Madison may soon be demolished in order to further modernize Covington's new RiverCenter area. It was last occupied by Premier Industries. Old maps suggest that the main building was originally constructed for the Argonaut Cotton Mill which the Covington street directories listed at this site from 1892 to 1914. (John Boh)

JAMES C. WARE

Northern Kentucky attorney and former State Senator James C. Ware, we sadly note, passed away on November 6, 1991.

In recent years Mr. Ware was legal agent for the Kenton County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation. In 1980-81 he served as President of the Kentucky Historical Society in Frankfort. Lately he spoke in favor of the proposed new Kentucky History Center (to be considered this session by the General Assembly), which would be a major collection, research, exhibit, and preservation center in the state capital.

James Ware's father, the late Orrie Ware, achieved great prominence in Northern Kentucky business and politics including positions of leadership as Kenton County Circuit Court Judge, and U. S. Congressman.

While a State Senator from Northern Kentucky, James C. Ware was chosen President Pro Tem in the Senate, and due to this office assumed the role of Acting Governor of the State on a number of occasions.

May he rest in peace.

A REQUEST

Our Secretary and Programs Chairman, Andrew Lutes, has found it necessary to resign. We are looking for someone especially to help with program arrangements.

THE KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership is \$5.00 per person. Participation is open to anyone interested in state and local history. This society was originally organized through the efforts of the Kenton County Public Library and many other groups and individuals. Your support and participation is greatly appreciated.

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P. O. Box 641
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