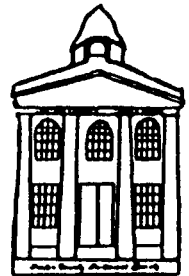


THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY'S 200TH BIRTHDAY  
JUNE 1, 1992

The Kenton County Historical Society



1792  
*the Celebration*  
1992  
Kentucky

July 1992

**Kenton County Historical Society**

P.O. Box 641  
Covington, Kentucky 41011

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R E V I E W

July 1992

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**ANNOUNCEMENT: PROGRAM**

On Tuesday evening, July 7th, 7:00 PM. at the Kenton County Public Library, Erlanger Branch, Mr. Michael Flannery will make a presentation on...

**JOHN URI LLOYD:  
THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF AN ILLUSTRIOUS HERETIC.**

Lloyd's contributions in the fields of chemistry, pharmacy, and literature will be explored. The speaker will show both the local as well as the national impact of Lloyd's work.

Mr. Flannery is Assistant Professor of Library Services at Northern Kentucky University, and he once was Assistant Librarian at the Lloyd Library in Cincinnati. The Lloyd family name is associated also with a park near Crittenden in Grant County, Lloyd High School in Kenton county, and of course the city of Florence, the location for much of John Uri Lloyd's story telling.

Mr. Flannery will use slides as visual aids. There will be a brief business meeting beforehand. The meeting and program will be free and open to the public.

Tuesday evening

July 7th

7:00 PM

Kenton County Public Library, Erlanger branch

Erlanger (across from Van Leunen's, next to Krogers)

**KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Organized in 1977 under the sponsorship of the Kenton County Public Library and others for the purpose of collecting, organizing, preserving, and displaying local and state history. Membership is available at \$5.00 per person per year.

## FROM THE STEAMBOAT ERA TO MODERN FACTORIES

"Because of the steamboat, villages along the Ohio River grew quickly into towns and some--Paducah, Covington, Newport, Henderson, Owensboro, and Louisville--into cities. Steamboats...even created their own industry, to build, outfit, repair, and operate them."

--"Steamboats," The Kentucky Encyclopedia, 1992

In 1826 Cincinnati had six foundries, and two steam engine builders; soon there were three more steam engine builders. By 1831 Miles Greenwood's Eagle Iron Works was established and eventually manufactured tea kettles, ornamental iron work, steam engines, punching presses, hardware, locks. Before the Civil War "the foundries and machine shops were turning out locomotives, steamboats, castings, and hardware, sugar mills, saw mills and flour mills, threshing machines, pumps and edge tools at a lively rate." Lane and Bodley and the Western Machine Works lead in wood working machinery. The Buckeye Works of Alexander B. and Edmundson Latta made "all kinds of lathes and machinests'tools." And in 1852 A. B. Latta (a resident of Ludlow, Ky) developed in Cincinnati "the first practical steam fire engine" (Frederick Geier, The Making of the Machine Tool Age--the Tool Builders of Cincinnati).

In 1831 in Covington John McNickle from Pittsburg established the Covington Rolling Mill with plans for rolling and splitting iron and for manufacturing nails. In 1831 a flour mill was producing 40 barrels daily, also by steam power. To provide its own machinery, it was noted that the Covington Cotton Factory had its own machine shop (Smith, Beginning at the Point).

Raw materials were transported. In 1851 the Licking Rolling Mill was consuming annually 175,000 bushels of coal, 3,000 tons of pig iron, 1000 tons of other raw metal in order to produce iron bars, iron sheets, and other material and hardware (Charles Cist, quoted in The History of the Cincinnati Machine-Tool Industry, A Dissertation by George A. Wing).

While the origins of Cincinnati's leadership in machine tool making can not be pinpointed in the era of great steamboat (and steam engine) building, growth there

can be detected. The demands for constant improvements in steam engine workmanship caused mechanics, in turn, to dedicate themselves to improved precision tool making. Then after the Civil War, when steamboat building was in decline, "capable mechanics and energetic young men" generally displaced the older industrial leaders with new shops, new organizations, new applications. By 1900 Cincinnati had begun to earn its reputation in machine tool making (Gier).

By 1873 in Covington iron and steel production found a new home at the Mitchell-Tranter Rolling Mill which lasted under succeeding owners (interrupted by closings etc.) until about 1907. In the 1904-05 Covington business directory can be found under "machinists"--the Anthe Machine Works (northeast corner Stewart and Russell), the H. J. Averbeck Co. (58 East Second), the Sebastian Lathe Co. (southeast corner Third and Philadelphia); under "iron foundries"--the Dean Waterman Co. (70 West Ninth), Germania Supply (Second street and the C. & O RR Bridge), the Insurance Foundry (south of Fifteenth, West of Madison), Star Foundry (221 Main), the Western Foundry (southwest corner Third and Bakewell); under "iron and steel"--the I. Droege Jr. shop (16 Pike); under "jail works"--the Covington Architectural Works (northeast corner of Ninth and Washington), Stewart Jail Works (southwest corner of Seventeenth and Madison); under "iron and steel manufacturing" Republic Iron and Steel, Mitchell Tranter Works.

In 1926-27 the Covington business directory includes these factories and shops: "Machine tool Manufacturers"--Avey Drilling Machine Co. (25 East Third), Wm. Barker Co. (337 Pleasant); Precision Truing Machine and Tool Co. (23 E, Third). Willard Machine Tool Co. (southeast corner Third and Madison); "machinery"--R. A. Jones Co. (southwest corner Fifteenth and Kendall), Roman-McLaughlin Machine Co, Inc. (south side of Second between Court and Greenup); "machinists"--Anthe Machine Works (407 Madison), Averbeck Machine Co. (110 East Second). John Gunthier (309 40th street), Tony Sehlhorst (311 Bakewell); "Iron Works"--Stewart Iron Works, Frank F. Decker (125 West Thirteenth); "Iron foundries"--Insurance Foundry Co., Inc. (south side Fifteenth, west of Madison), Martin Foundry (Third street and C & O Railroad Bridge). Star Foundry (231 Main). And the Kelley-Koett Company (manufacturers of X-ray tables, etc.) and other such manufacturers often had their own machine shops.

But the new century did not see the demise of steam power. In 1891 in Covington (at the present site of the Holiday Inn) the Houston-Stanwood-Gamble co. started manufacturing steam engines and boilers. In its heyday the company sold to rural outposts (such as in Mexico and Puerto Rico) to power sugar mills, etc. In the U. S. the company's boilers heated large buildings and commercial laundry operations.

Charles R. Houston, long time president, had been foreman and superintendent for Lane and Bodley (foundry and steam engines), an old Cincinnati company name that pre-dated the Civil War. Born in Kentucky, Houston lived most of his career in the 600 block of Philadelphia street. The son of a Cashier for First National Bank in Cincinnati, James B. Stanwood had been a Director of the Cincinnati Technical School which joined the University of Cincinnati in the College of Engineering. Stanwood, a "mechanical engineer," became Vice-president. The son of the co-founder of Proctor and Gamble, James N. Gamble was financial backer.

According to Ralph Robke, Sr., who worked there during its last years (1926-1940?), Houston-Stanwood-Gamble had a large capacity and a good engineering department. The machine shop could fabricate brass bearings, valve parts, etc. The foundry could cast steam engine blocks, fire boxes, large flywheels. The boiler department could fashion and assemble 3/8, 1/2, 5/8 inch sheet metal into large boiler tanks. They even had a patent for a "smokeless" boiler. When Robke enters the Quality Inn Riverview with its "pilot" room and other steamboat references, he is reminded that Houston-Stanwood-Gamble was located a block north of there.

\* \* \* \*

The Covington Bagging Factory lots started at a point 130 feet west of Philadelphia, ran west 190 feet from that point, then south at right angle 838 feet. Thomas Woodhouse Bakewell and succeeding owners also owned the lots due north of Second street for access to the river. Later in the 1850s the Globe Mill and Bagging factory claimed to possess over 3 1/2 acres. In 1873 Mitchell-Tranter purchased "the old bagging factory" described then as fronting 455 feet of Third street. From 1891 Houston-Stanwood-Gamble's office was located on lots between the Mitchell-Tranter site and Philadelphia street. The company then expanded there and on the east side of Philadelphia where the Western Foundry Co. had been, and then the remainder of the block over to Bakewell street for its boiler works. In 1914 the company purchased old Mitchell-Tranter property immediately west of its office-machine shop-warehouse complex and remodeled it for a larger machine shop.

(John Boh)

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

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