LATONIA SPRINGS

by Dr. Joseph Gastright

In the summer of 1829, Ralph Letton told his contractor to hurry the work on the hotel at Latonia Springs. Letton had families at Cincinnati waiting to occupy the rooms and begin to take the waters. Letton was proprietor of the Western Museum in Cincinnati. He had purchased the land on the 4th of July from William Curry who had inherited rights to the parcel of land on his father William's death in 1811.

However, the division of the family's 425 acres was not completed until 6 April 1826. The land was part of a 600 acre parcel made to Joseph Davis in 1785.

Hydrotherapy or "taking the waters" was a widely prescribed medical treatment in 1829. Daniel Drake, Cincinnati's most respected physician, had published a review of Kentucky's mineral water spas in 1828. He described the medical benefits of the springs, but warned that the gambling, and profligate living at some springs were liable to be more dangerous than was beneficial. He mentioned a newly discovered spring, "only four miles from Cincinnati", which was located in a healthy place and which "had attracted considerable attention".

On 30 July 1832, Ralph Letton sold his 57 acres with the hotel to Elisha Morgan for $8,000.00. Morgan, who realized the importance of high quality appurtenances, constructed a 50 room hotel, three stories high with 100 foot piazzas running the full length of the building. In back, he constructed a "large and splendid ballroom... for the person whose mind is tinged with romance". In 1833, the dreaded Cholera epidemic made the spas of Kentucky financial as well as social successes.

Rich Southerners fled the heat, yellow fever, malaria, and
worst of all the cholera, for
the dozens of Kentucky spas. The
spas north of the Mason Dixon line
could not accept the required
domestic slave, and Kentucky blos-
somed as the social center of the
South. Trading horses, political
opinions, and marriageable daugh-
ters were the significant business
at the Latonia Springs, with a
side trip to Cincinnati to buy
some manufactured goods.

The Latonia Springs were prob-
ably named after the goddess
Leto, or in her Roman guise, Latona.
She was the mother of Apollo and
Diana, and in Greek mythology, she
was tied to a famous incident in-
volving water, "Latona and the
Rustics". In the early 1840's,
Doctor Stephen Mosher, an Eastern
physician, purchased the springs
from Morgan's heirs. The springs
thrived in the period prior to the
Civil War under Mosher's direction.
In 1866, the springs were sold to
Messrs. Walker and Gibson of the
Gibson House in Cincinnati, who
set up daily omnibus transportation
to the springs.

For a time, Latonia Springs
thrived without the southern trade,
but during the 1870's the old
magic waned, and the owners in-
stalled "amusement devices" to
attract business. A murder near
the springs in 1879, roused the
memory that the site was "at one
time, one of the most popular sum-
mer resorts in the state" but also
the reality of "a delapidated
wreck of its former prosperity".

Frank Northcutt, a local res-
ident, attempted a revival of the
springs in 1880. In 1882, the
Latonia Agricultural Association
developed a fairgrounds in the
Milldale section of South Covington.
The fairgrounds, named
after the springs, developed into
a nationally famous race track.
In 1893, a small six block section
in the middle of Milldale incor-
porated as the sixth class city
of Latonia. Latonia began to
annex the surrounding unincor-
porated sections of Milldale, and
in 1899 became a fifth class city.

The Latonia Springs did not
thrive and in 1891, Frank Wolf tang
leased the acreage to two former
Cincinnati residents as the site
of a dairy farm. Herman Summe and
August Ratterman later purchased
the land and used the spring
water to cool their product.
Sometime about 1910, the springs
ceased to flow and Summe and
Ratterman built a modern milk
processing plant on 20th Street
in Covington. For many years a
picnic ground and later a tavern
survived on the site of the old
Latonia Springs Hotel at the
corner of Highland Pike and the
3-L Highway.

PROGRAMS...

5 May 1981 Mr. Jim Kiger will be our
guest lecturer. Mr. Kiger will discuss
the history of Northern Kentucky
breweries.

2 June 1981 There will not be a
meeting.

6 June 1981 The society plans a
trip to the Blue Licks Springs and the
site of the Blue Licks Battlefield.

7 July 1981 Mr. William Martin,
Director of the Northern Kentucky
Community Center, will discuss the
center's history, its successes and its
failures.

4 August 1981 Summer Break

1 September 1981 The Kentucky
Historical Society will present a
slide presentation on an aspect of
Kentucky history.

6 October 1981 Mr. Don Sanders will
discuss the history of navigation on
the Ohio River.

3 November 1981 Officer Henry E.
Mormon will discuss the history of
Covington's Police Department.

From the Daily Commonwealth (31 March 1881)
Mud Roads
A good text for a road speech in the
Legislature:
"The roads are not passable, Not even
jackassable; And all who would travel
'em, Must turn out and gravel 'em."
The following is taken from the surname file in the Kentucky and Local History section of the Kenton County Public Library. You are invited to send your queries and offers to exchange information to Mrs. Bailey, reference Librarian, Kenton Co. Public Library, 5th and Scott Streets, Covington, Ky. 41011


BRUNS FAMILY---need information of any Bruns family of Cov., KY. who came from New Areusberg, Hanover, Germany. (will exchange information) Joyce.


CHILDERS---Need information. Mrs. Virginia Hanks, 801 S. Willow St., Ellensburg, WA. 98926.


COOMER FAMILY OF ADAIR AND LEE COUNTIES KY.---Need information and will exchange info. Mrs. Lisa Koogler, 105 Parkview St., Lebanon, Ohio 45036.


DANIEL, Peter---B. (c 1765). Early resident of Campbell Co., KY. Need information. Patricia Ruff, P.O. Box 138, Greenwood, Del. 19950.


DEATON, John---B. c 1805 in VA. Lived in Breathitt Co., KY. Married Malinda Watts in 1825 in Perry Co., KY. D. Dec. 13, 1877 in Breathitt Co., KY. Children: Brantley (Bryant), Issac, William (Toney), Matilda Bowling Belcher, George, Edward, Jemima Hensley, Elizabeth (Betsey), Alexander, Joseph, Jackie (John), Lewis, Alfred, Thomas. Would like to know John's and Malinda's parents and where they were born. By Donna Deaton, Box 237 A. RR T, Butler, KY. 41006.

DECKER FAMILY OF BUTLER AND PREBLE COUNTIES OHIO---Need information. Mrs. Lisa Koogler, 105 Parkview, Lebanon, OHIO 45036.


DEMOS, Peter---B. 1668 in KY. (probably in Bracken Co., KY) Need information. Adele Henley, P.O. Box 4333, No. Las Vegas, Nev. 89030.


GOODSPEED---(All early Connecticut) Need information. Margie Gard Gray, Rt. 3, Box 505, Appleton, WA. 98602.

GRAY---Lewis, Nicholas, Mason Counties, KY. (1850-1855) Need information. Margie Gard Gray, Rt. 3, Box 505, Appleton WA. 98602.

GREEN(E) FAMILY OF LINCOLN AND GARRARD COUNTIES, KY.---Need information. Mrs. Lisa Koogler, 105 Parkview St., Lebanon, Ohio 45036.


GREENWOOD, Miles---B. c 1854 near Alexandria, KY. Need information. Mrs. Chas. Rice, no. 8 Quincy Ct., Pittsburg, KAS. 66762.


GULLEY---Need information. Frank J. Guley, 297 Constance Place, Harrison, Ohio 45030.


GUY FAMILY OF CAMPBELL COUNTY, KY.---Originally from Maryland. Interested in any Guy family of Campbell Co., KY. which originated in Maryland. Will exchange information. Mrs. Lewis Doren, 2700 Birch Dr., Richmond, IND. 47374.


more next time...