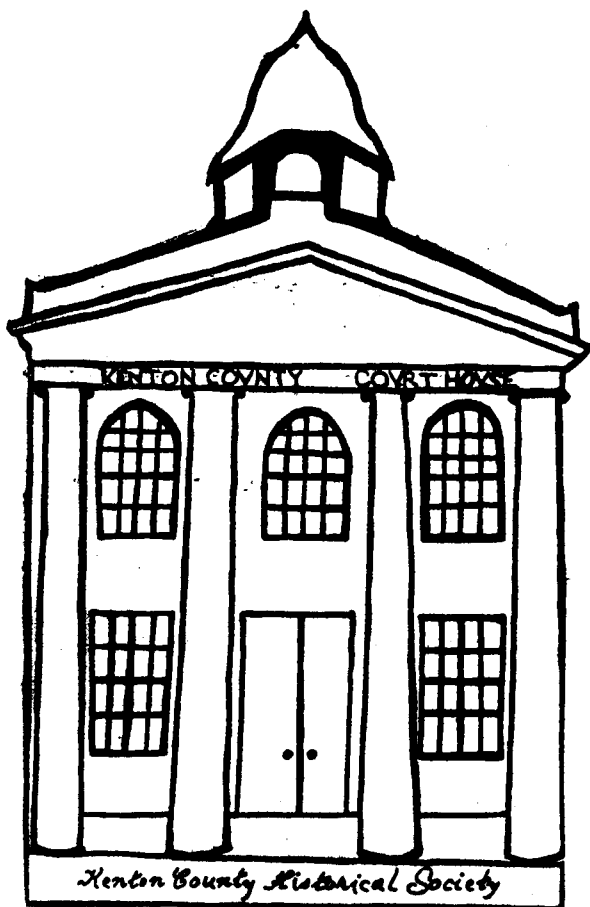


KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
(organized in 1977; non-profit;
member, Historical Confederation
of Kentucky)



April 1993

Kenton County Historical Society

P.O. Box 661
Covington, Kentucky 40300

REVIEW

April 1993

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

On Tuesday, April 13, 7:00 p. m. at the Kenton County Public Library (Erlanger branch) Mr. Greg Hartel will give a...

NARRATED SLIDE PRESENTATION ON THE LIFE OF ERNIE PYLE. Ernie Pyle received the Pulitzer Prize for outstanding reporting from the front lines in World War II. He gave people back home a first hand view of the experiences and the feelings of the front line soldier. The title will be, "ERNIE PYLE--THE MAN AND THE LEGEND."

Mr. Hartel's presentation will recall Pyle's career and achievements through use photographs from the Ernie Pyle archives, and excerpts of human interest from the writings of "one of Scripps Howard's most famous newsmen."

Tuesday

April 13

7:00 p. m.

Kenton County Public Library

Erlanger branch (next to Krogers)

THE PROGRAM WILL BE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; IT WILL BE SPONSORED BY THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION.

Kentucky Preservation Coalition
Spring Meeting
April 23rd, 1993

The Spring Meeting of the Kentucky Preservation Coalition is planned for April 23, 1993 in Covington, and is co-sponsored by the City of Covington. The theme of the conference is Cultural Diversity and Historic Preservation.

Speakers will include Dr. Lee Shai Weissbach of the University of Louisville and Claudia Watson of the Montgomery County Historical Society in Dayton, Ohio. Dr. Robert Wimberg, author of *Cincinnati Breweries* will lead into our Friday night entertainment at the Oldenberg Brewery in Fort Mitchell. There will be tours, food, entertainment, and even a beer museum! Other speakers will give presentations on the influence of various ethnic and cultural groups on Kentucky architecture and landscapes. More detailed information will follow soon, so **MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW**, and plan to join us on **April 23, 1993** in Covington!

If you are interested in presenting a paper on the influence of any of Kentucky's ethnic groups, or if you have questions, please contact Leah Konicki at 606-292-2111 or Alexandra Kornilowicz-Weldon at 606-581-1335.

Also scheduled for April 23 is the Covington Business and Financial Assistance Conference, co-sponsored by the City of Covington, the Kentucky Job Service, the Kentucky Finance Authority, the Chamber of Commerce of Northern Kentucky and the Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitors Bureau. For registration information, call Anita James at 606-292-2183.

Co-sponsored by the City of Covington

LOCAL CIVIC ADVOCATES AFFECT RAILROAD MODERNIZATION (1927)

"The future of the city lies in the western hills and the city now has two routes, the Dixie Highway and the Highland-pike, which leads off 19th-st. The Highland-pike will become an important artery out of the city."

--A. C. Simrall quoted in The Kentucky Post (May 21, 1927)

The Covington city commissioners seemed ready to pass a street-railroad track intersection-elimination ordinance which did not include also the grade intersection at Nineteenth street. Therefore Simrall and others wanted the Commissioners to revise it. He argued that the railroad needed the cooperation of local citizens in raising the tracks and in building underpasses and overpasses, which was part of a larger scheme. "If it were not for the new terminal project in Cincinnati we would never have heard of the grade crossing elimination"(K. P., May 21, 1927).

From the outset the grade crossing elimination at Seventeenth and Madison was acceptable. Madison avenue was a main thoroughfare south. There the Chesapeake and Ohio trains impeded streetcars as well as trucks and automobiles. And during the racing season fans were delayed trying to reach Latonia for post time. Thus as plans evolved the Kentucky Jockey Club agreed to make its "annual donation" to the worthy cause of grade crossing elimination. Likewise the streetcar company was to pay a portion of the thirty-five per cent cost for the work at Seventeenth and Madison, as a recent state law required from the city (K. P. May 6, 1927).

The Seventeenth street crossing involved the C & O tracks which entered Covington in an east-west direction over the Licking river, then crossed Madison near Seventeenth before cutting sharply north toward Cincinnati. After completion of construction of these tracks from Eastern Kentucky (1888), the C & O interests sold off control of the Kentucky Central (originally the Lexington and Covington railroad). A few years later the expanding Louisville and Nashville railroad acquired the KC. Therefore elimination of the grade crossings at Nineteenth street and in Latonia involved more the L & N ownership which was not (on the surface) then involved in the proposed ordinance. The city was dealing with the C & O which wanted to reduce the incline to the bridge and alter the track levels on both the Covington and Cincinnati ends in order to insure smoother passage of its trains. But as Simrall and others surmised, both railroads eventually found other improvements, insisted upon by concerned citizens, to be acceptable

The various civic clubs centered mostly in Covington lobbied for revisions in the ordinance through the singular voice of a publicity committee. The Covington Industrial Club was the leading organization in the protests. One of its members, R. C. Stewart, president of the Stewart Iron Works (southwest corner of Seventeenth and Madison), had a special interest in details of the project near his factory (K. P. May 28, 1927). A. G. Simrall, an attorney and president of an insurance and real estate company bearing the family name, had been involved in governmental affairs for several decades. He had played a part in the development of Ft Mitchell beginning about 1892 (John Blakely, Christopher Gist Papers, vol. 6). He had been president of the Covington Commission Government League (K. P. January 31, 1914). In the the 1920s he developed a section located on the north side of the Dixie Highway in what is now Ft Wright through the Barrington-Woods Realty company (K. P. June 6, 1927). Although his family had been prominent Wallace Woods residents in Covington, A. G. Simrall then resided in Ft Mitchell (Gastright, History of Wallace Woods, and street directory).

As early as 1919 the talk of eliminating grade crossings in Covington involved mention of it as a larger project for "improvement of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky railroad terminals." The crossing at Pike and Russell was especially dangerous, even worse when trains blocked the path of fire engines in the heart of the business district (K. P. January 22, 1919). At least one improvement occurred. About 1921 a new C & O passenger depot at Pike and Russell was constructed to replace the inadequate wooden one which was located on the south side of the diagonal tracks, on the east side of Russell (K. P., October 10, 1924, also Sanborn map).

On May 5, 1925 The Kentucky Post reported: railroad officials were working to develop a new union depot to help consolidate facilities which were scattered, disjointed, but also congested. "Four" railroads were involved in a \$50 million project in Cincinnati which would also include new freight facilities, a new "belt" line around the city, a new bridge, and reconstruction of the existing C & O bridge. Congestion in the Mill Creek valley was bad. The volume of coal hauled from West Virginia and eastern Kentucky had increased "60 per cent in the last 10 years." 600 freight cars were passing through Cincinnati daily.

On May 6, ¹⁹²⁷ the newspaper reported: Covington had passed a first reading to eliminate all grade crossings (but this then meant terminating some through-streets); the "existing bridges at Eleventh street and at Robbins street will be

enlarged; the city will have a two year option to purchase the existing C & O bridge structure which will be converted for vehicular traffic. City officials are authorized to negotiate with Kenton county, the state of Kentucky, the city of Cincinnati, Hamilton county, and the state of Ohio for "joint purchase." On May 10 the newspaper reported: Simon Billeter, president of the Industrial Club, wants the railroad to be required to provide switching tracks for existing factories, and to attract new businesses. John Klette, counsel for the Northern Kentucky Automobile Association, argued that the railroad should be required to pay all the costs of grade crossing elimination.

On May 12 the newspaper reported: with regard to industrial switches A. E. Stricklett, city solicitor, responded that the city is now "powerless," but factories can negotiate for switches. William Hoppenjans explained that until recently it was not known that switches were excluded, but now Maurice Galvin, counsel for the C & O, has stated that they would cost \$1 million which the railroad is unwilling to spend. However, the city should not pass on its demands, Hoppenjans recommended. On May 14 The Post editorialized: "for 25 years Covington businessmen have bemoaned the Pike-st crossing." But since the railroad has "agreed to wave the 35 per cent clause and pay for the improvements," completely (north of Seventeenth), why should there now be this insistence on industrial switches.

On May 18 the newspaper reported: Greg Hughes (Optimist Club) complained that the improvements meant (some) streets would be "impassable" at the tracks. John Klette proposed an overpass at Twelfth street. R. C. Stewart from the Iron Works and R. J. Dibowski from Wadsworth Electric proposed imposing a smoke ordinance on the railroad. Klette, Ed C. Walker, and Roy Steinfort (Real Estate Board) advanced the argument that an engineer should be hired to review all the plans for the city. On May 19 the newspaper reported: by unanimous vote the city commissioners appointed city engineer William Stewart to review the plans and report back on June 2nd. Hoppenjans complained that the railroad has failed to file all of its plans, but Galvin insisted that plans had been distributed, the railroad invited scrutiny, and a further 60 day delay would be very damaging. On May 21 the newspaper reported: that the civic organizations were threatening a referendum; Simrall was pressuring for the Nineteenth street amendment.

On May 25 the newspaper reported: the city engineer was working on having Twelfth street remain open either by

"viaduct or by subway for traffic." He was also trying to reduce the "heavy grades" at Fifteenth, Robbins, and Pike and to have built an underpass at Johnson (Near Craig). On May 27 the newspaper reported: Stewart was working on a "3 or 4 per cent grade" (instead of 7) at Pike street. It is now believed that the railroad will accept the city engineer's recommendations.

On May 28 the newspaper reported: the civic organizations' representatives have scheduled a meeting with the L & N. Their stance is also to insist upon the Twelfth street construction and to eliminate the requirement that the city pay for "removal of water lines, sewers, or wires incidental" to the projects. Also the engineer is now working on keeping Tenth street open, still another threat. On June 1 the newspaper reported: the L & N's stance will soon be known; the engineer will make his report. At this time a threat that the C & O would move its maintenance shops out of Covington was in the air which caused railroad employees to write urging the commissioners to pass the ordinance. But Galvin then assured everyone that the shops would not be re-located. On June 2 first reading was passed with vote on final passage scheduled for next week. As The Post also reported, desired alterations in the Robbins and Elventh street specifications were not made, and Ninth street would be closed. But there would be an "underpass" at Tenth and one at Johnson and Sixth at Craig.

On June 8 the newspaper reported: another delay will be requested because of exclusions from the ordinance--no industrial switches, no Nineteenth street provision yet, and none for Latonia. Klette commented that this ordinance was "100 per cent" better, while Simrall again disavowed concern about the C & O threats. On June 9 the newspaper reported: some want a delay; more details for the Seventeenth and Madison intersection had been worked out; it was claimed that the L & N was working on a proposal for Nineteenth street. At session Galvin dramatically presented a petition with "15,498" signatures, and the ordinance was finally passed.

On June 10 The Post reported: a referendum still threatened. But then there was another development: The Kentucky Post itself had argued in an editorial on June 11 that when Covington buys the original C & O trestle (for a vehicular crossing) and pays \$2 million, the railroad would be wise to re-invest "\$400,000 to \$500,000," the estimated cost for industrial switches, which would bring the railroad more business. On June 12 the newspaper reported in glee: "Covington may get industrial switches after all." On June 14

it reported: work would commence on the C & O improvements in a few days; the referendum has been dropped; the L & N had made favorable overtures regarding the Nineteenth street crossing (with the city possibly having to pay 35 per cent). Klette urged that plans be advanced for Latonia including closing off Southern avenue and building an underpass at Caroline. Forrest Alvin of the Wadsworth Electric company moved that the committee of advocates be thanked for getting "\$350,000" more improvements than were contained in the "original ordinance." Of course, in Latonia several grade crossings remain to this day, including at East Southern (downtown Tenth is closed; Eighth street has an underpass).

Carl Condit in his The Railroad and the City. A Technological and Urbanistic History of Cincinnati (1977) has explored how the reconstruction of the local railroad facilities seemed to climax with the opening of the Cincinnati Union Terminal in 1933.

According to a surviving partner, when the new First National Bank building opened (circa. 1906) at the southeast corner of Fourth and Walnut in Cincinnati, the law firm of Galvin and Galvin took the eighteenth floor in the rear overlooking the river into Northern Kentucky. After graduation from law school, John Galvin (1862-1922) had entered into partnership with Charles Barrington Simrall, "a prominent corporation lawyer," and counsel for the Cincinnati Southern railroad. John Galvin himself was to be Mayor of Cincinnati in 1909 (interim) and 1918-1921. Sometime after Simrall's death in 1901 Maurice Galvin (1872-1940) entered into formal partnership with his brother and mentor. For many years, up to his death, Maurice Galvin lived at the northwest corner of Fifth and Garrard streets, Covington. By the time the grade crossing ordinance was passed, his friend, and former Democratic Kenton County Circuit Judge (resigned), Frank M. Tracy (1773-1947), had become Galvin's law partner.

Not only were John and Maurice Republicans and sons of a Covington blacksmith (an Irish immigrant who married a Cincinnati native). Maurice's first wife, Grace, was the sister of L. B. Wilson, a well-to-do banker, theater proprietor, organizer of WCKY radio station, etc. And when it seemed that Covington would be unable to exercise the two year option (stipulated in the grade crossing ordinance) to purchase the original C & O trestle, Wilson proposed that he and his associates organize a holding corporation until the situation improved (K, P. July 5, 1929). (John Boh)

Kenton County Historical Society
P. O. Box 641
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