

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012

Bulletin

February 1998

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KCHS MEETING

DATE Tuesday February 10

TIME 7 PM

PLACE Baker Hunt Foundation
Second Floor
620 Greenup Street
Covington

PROGRAM Vintage Trolleys:
Past & Future

HISTORY DAY

March 14, 1998

Northern Kentucky University

9:30 AM Keynote speaker:

Dr. Joseph Gastright

The Suspension Bridge

Registration \$3, \$4 at the door

VINTAGE TROLLEYS A "NATURAL" TO FUSE SOUTHBANK PAST AND FUTURE

Do you remember riding Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky streetcars? Is it possible a vintage electric trolley system could be reintroduced to our area?

The Kenton County Historical Society is going to be treated to a fascinating slide show at the next meeting, "*A Nostalgic Trip Through Transit History*," depicting Cincinnati's horse-car era through streetcars to the present. Guest speaker Tom McNamara, recognized rail and transit historian, will narrate. Join us on Tuesday, February 10, on the second floor of the Baker Hunt Foundation for this fast-moving glimpse of local transportation as it evolved over the past century.

Appealing to both young and older audiences, this slide show will be followed by Cincinnati Street Railway's presentation to reintroduce a compact vintage trolley system into Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, along both riverfronts and in the city center. Tom Dunn and Bob Brodbeck of CSR will host this segment, describing the viability and economic benefits of the proposal.

In the December 30th Downtowner article, CSR describes the concept as a "natural" to integrate historic districts on both sides of the Ohio, fusing them with the wide array of attractions, shopping, dining and entertainment, and other urban services our region holds out to residents and visitors alike.

Come take a closer look at this intriguing idea to recapture our past by way of a quiet, attractive smog-free trolley system along our riverfront!

Reasons To Bring Back The Trolley System of Years Past

by Janet Schroeder and Bob Brodbeck

A tandem of jingle bells stir up delightful holiday images at Christmastime. How would you like to hear another bell in downtown streets all year long—the soft clang of a trolley bell?

Not practical, you say? Rethink it for a moment. Focus in on Fountain Square. A few select trolley routes on city streets, and a line along each riverfront would knit together our favorite places and let us conveniently rediscover them. The result would be:

No stop-start driving

No smog

No big price tag

No confounded hunt over and over again for a decent parking spot. Park once and go! A circulation system of several loops—the simplest of plans—couldn't be more practical.

There's actually a group here trying to get city governments, businesses and the public to consider electric trolleys in a very simple, compact system. Cincinnati Street Railway, Inc. is a local not-for-profit group promoting vintage electric trolley service for out city center. Over the past few years, the group has worked hard to build members, develop promotional materials, and make overtures to decision makers in Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport. You'd be surprised how positive the response has grown!

The Cincinnati Museum Center, Downtown Cincinnati, Inc., the Greater Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Cincinnati Preservation Association, the Over-the-Rhine Foundation, and the

Cincinnati Transit Historical Association are a sampling of Cincinnati Street Railway's (CSR) board membership. CSR's Action Plan is the product of engineers, architects, historians, transportation experts and marketing people...not just your usual trolley buffs.

CSR believes—and government and community leaders agree—that there is no comparable offering of attractions, dining and entertainment, and other services in the whole region as there are in the city's center. From the Cincinnati Museum Center, Findlay Market and Convention Center, through Mt. Adams, down to the riverfront, over to Covington's RiverPark, MainStrasse, and the Covington Convention Center presently being built, to Riverboat Row in Newport—the offerings can't be beat.

More growth is on the way: new stadiums, an aquarium, several emerging historic districts, and an expanded market for us all.

CSR's proposed trolley system would do just that: relink the key areas into a central core by way of a quiet, attractive, smog-free people-mover.

The trolley system would fit into the total metropolitan transportation plan, including current auto, taxi and bus services, and possible future light rail now being investigated by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments. The trolley system, one small piece in the area's giant transportation puzzle, would fit nicely in a downtown our size.

The trolley cars would run on rails in a handful of streets and

on private rights-of-way, powered by electric overhead lines—just as tram and trolley systems do in other major cities the world over. Electric streetcars (interchangeable with "trolley cars") would be refurbished authentic cars or newly-manufactured replicas of the Queen City's famous cream and orange line.

One of the proposed system's biggest draws is how adaptable it is to growth and change. It can be built in phases, supporting the businesses it serves—from the smallest entrepreneur to corporate. By providing an attractive and functional public facility, a trolley system would lower investment risk for developers and increase property values and real estate sales tax revenues. It would serve and spur development at the same time, as other urban trolley systems across the U.S. are demonstrating.

Besides the economic advantages, CSR boasts that the trolley system would recapture an important and fascinating part of Cincinnati's past. The fit would be seamless. Trolleys nicely complement the historic districts now shooting up on both sides of the Ohio River. In fact, they help integrate these neighborhoods into the Queen City's unique modern urban fabric.

Like San Francisco and New Orleans, this vintage system would be an attraction in its own right too, providing a fun and functional service for workers, shoppers, residents and visitors. Families would come to town to

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE UNIFORM OF MATHIAS SCHMIDT?



MATHIAS SCHMIDT

b. 1863 - d. 1941

Married to EMMA b. 1875 - d. 1933

His daughter was Loretta Schmidt Romp, granddaughter Eileen Romp Ruwe. Great Granddaughter Paula Ruwe Miller is trying to locate information about the uniform of her great grandfather, including the sword at his side. If you have any information, contact Paula Ruwe Miller at Beckley's Pharmacy, Latonia.

KCHS MEMBER PARTICIPATION

For 20 years the Kenton County Historical Society has focused on its mission to identify and preserve Northern Kentucky history.

As the millennium approaches, our mission becomes even more important before we lose the heroes and history which inform future generations. As the millennium approaches, we have more tools to gather the region's history more efficiently and completely.

Please consider how your time and talents will allow you to participate in this exciting and evolving venture. I have listed below several projects for your consideration. Use the tear-off application or phone me, Karl Lietzenmayer, 261-2807, to expedite our work.

- 1. Program Chairperson** - The main focus of each monthly meeting is the program which should inform us about some history in Kenton County: tours of historic homes, churches or businesses, a lecture or paper delivered, re-enactments of historic figures. We need someone to follow up on ideas, make arrangements for meeting rooms, etc. **We also need members of the Society to offer program ideas to the Program Chairperson.**
- 2. Photo Coordinator** - Photo collection housed in Kenton County Public Library. Coordinator will collect and identify photos of known persons with Northern Kentucky roots, their homes, old street scenes of our area, attempt to identify events, persons, and locations on unmarked photos and judge the historical significance of the photo, create ways to motivate citizens to search their attics and drawers for historic photos.
- 3. Oral History Coordinator** - Record conversations with our elderly citizens about the past which would inform our sense of history and culture.
- 4. Staff for Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine** - Editors to read papers, develop rapport with the "movers and shakers" of local history in all 13 counties. Assistants for bi-annual mailing to 730 subscribers; labeling, bundling, counting and delivering to Covington Post Office.
- 5. Keyboarding** - Enter papers into computer to produce a disk for publication use, indexing back issues of NKH Magazine on disk. Members living anywhere in the country could do this through mail or internet.
- 6. Volunteer Coordinator** - Recruit volunteers (through *Bulletin* or other) for above and future jobs. Follow up and match volunteers with jobs.

I am able to volunteer in the following areas. Please send information. No(s)._____

I would like to discuss further the following areas before committing. No(s)._____

Name _____

Address _____ Phone () _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

take a ride just for the fun of it, and to see their city center straddling both banks of the Ohio River as it grows into the 21st century. Just as Tall Stacks offers a co-mingling of past and present, vintage trolleys would beckon residents and visitors suspending time in the heart of town and along our riverbanks.

When you take a close look at the CSR trolley proposal, it mirrors community traits we're



known for: common sense, thriftiness, small-town charm and graciousness, and fun. We could conserve painlessly, using only the change in our pockets (or a transfer) to hop on board! Think of the lessons trolleys would provide---both historic and future looking---for our region's young and old.

Who would operate and maintain the trolley system? While that remains to be worked out, CSR hopes to build a consensus in the coming year and generate start-up funds from private and corporate supporters to initiate the project's promotion and design work. To this end, CSR, has already formally proposed a feasibility study that will quantify the economic benefits of the proposed system and provide financial backers with lots of bang for their buck (and a price tag with no surprises).

You may have seen the group's bright and colorful "Deja vu - Bring Back the Trolleys!" posters here and there in the city. If you have a storefront or public display for it, you may call 287-7013 to inquire about displaying one. Brochures, a slide show and speakers are also available to promote the trolley proposal, according the CSR President John Niehaus.

CSR also has the poster on sale at the gift shops of the Cincinnati Museum Center, the Main Library and Sharon Wood Historic Village. This is a fun way for us to support the cause and help this proposal become reality.

The poster will no doubt become a collector's item once the trolleys start rolling.

If you have access to the Web, you can find out much more information--including maps of possible routes plus an on-line survey--at the CSR website at address <http://www.binarysky.com/csr>. Open the page with the clanging trolley bell, and satisfy your curiosity! You may also e-mail Cincinnati Street Railway at CSR@BINARYSKY.com or write c/o Volunteer Dept., Cincinnati Museum Center, 1301 Western Ave., Cincinnati 45203.

Let's bring back the trolleys!

Janet Schroeder and Bob Brodbeck are trustees on the board of Cincinnati Street Railway.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Inclosed is my check for \$10.00 to cover my membership for 1998 in the Kenton Co. Hist. Soc.

I like the new layout for the bulletin. But the contents are not very interesting. In fact, it is boring. More history, genealogy and an effort to make the members feel a part of what is going on is NEEDED. Look at the Grant Co. & Pendleton Co. bulletins.

Mary Lou Cain

Editor's note: The Kenton County Historical Society and its Bulletin belong to the members. Participation by the membership is encouraged and is the best way to feel a part of what is going on.

We are dependent mostly upon the membership for historical articles and papers to be published in the Bulletin. If you have or are working on an article or paper that would be of interest to KCHS members, please contact me.

Many thanks to Betty Foster for her services as Circulation Manager for the Magazine and Society.

We also thank the following volunteers who responded so enthusiastically and are willing to take on important KCHS jobs:

Carol Wenger, Circulation Mgr.
Caden Blinco, writer of a news column for the magazine
Florence Huff and Emily Dwertman, Bulk Mailing
Emily Dwertman, typing historical papers onto computer disc.

German translator needed
Mother of God Cemetery, Latonia., would like to get early Board minutes translated from German. Anyone familiar with written German script, please contact the Society.

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P. O. Box 641
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Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"