



# Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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## I Bet You Didn't Know

*Tidbits of Northern Kentucky History*

By: Robert Webster

I bet you didn't know about this unusual spot in nearby Pendleton County. Located about five miles east-southeast of Falmouth, about a mile from Route 22 and not far from the Bracken County line, lies the town of Bachelor's Rest. This small village was allegedly named for a group of bachelors who, day after day, sunned themselves on benches in front of the general store.

So familiar was the unofficial town's name to the area that on May 16, 1870, when the town received its first post office, the suggestion of Bachelor's Rest as the name of the town was easily accepted. In 1887, when Sarah Mains was named post master, "Mains" became the official name of the post office. In 1903, the town's post office closed permanently.

Though the small group of unmarried men and the general store are long gone, the unusual town name of Bachelor's Rest still exists today, even appearing on DeLomme's 1997 atlas of the state.

*Kentucky Place Names, Robert M. Rennick*

## Latest News

### Bulletin Gets A New Look

This issue introduces the new design and layout of the KCHS Bulletin. We hope you enjoy the new look and expanded size of our popular publication.

There are several new features in the Bulletin. First is the "I Bet You Didn't Know" column, featuring trivial facts about some part of the region (not just Kenton Co.). Next is the "Latest News" column (you are now reading it). Here you'll find the most up-to-date news or important headlines. A "Looking Back at the Headlines" feature (always on page 10) relives newspaper headlines from a randomly chosen date from the past. Our logo (the Kenton County Courthouse) has been moved from the front flap, allowing us to present a different illustration on the cover of each issue. This photo will likely coincide with the "feature story" of each issue.

Several popular features of our old format will remain intact. The "Upcoming Programs" section will remain on page one. The "Then and Now" photo comparison and our "Mystery Photo" feature also remain (always on page 11).

We hope you enjoy the new KCHS Bulletin. We also ask that you continue to email us with your comments, compliments and suggestions. Thank You!

Robert Webster – Bulletin Editor

## Upcoming Program

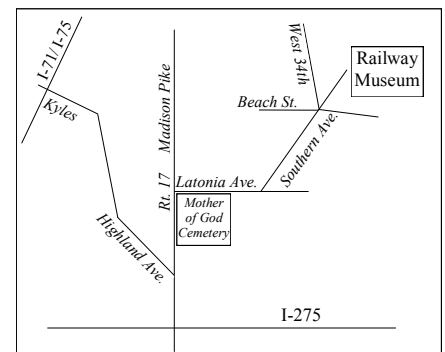
Wednesday July 12, 2006

7:00PM till dark

Join us for a guided tour of the Railway Museum of Greater Cincinnati, located at 315 W. Southern Avenue in Latonia, Kentucky.

Tour old locomotives and various other cars including a switcher, a post office car, and more. There is a \$3.00 donation per person.

Directions are shown at right, but feel free to contact the museum directly for additional information. Their website is: [www.cincirailmuseum.org](http://www.cincirailmuseum.org).



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**ARTICLES FROM BACK ISSUES ARE INDEXED ON OUR WEBSITE!**

# The Lookout House

By: Craig Schneider and Robert D. Webster

Most long-time residents of the area are well aware of the rich history of Northern Kentucky's fine dining, drinking and gambling establishments. At one time, Dixie Highway from Covington to Erlanger featured nearly a dozen wonderful restaurants. Among the favorites were the Old Mill Grille, Blue Star Tavern, White Horse, Town and Country, Hearthstone, Dixie Tea Room, Retschulte's Five Mile House, Oelsner's Colonial Inn, the Golden Goose and perhaps the most popular, the Lookout House.

The Lookout House was located along the eastern side of Dixie Highway, just north of Kyle's Lane. Today, a seven-story office building and parking lot stands on the spot of the once famous eatery. Over the course of its long history, the Lookout House was nationally known for its excellent gourmet dinners, spacious gaming rooms and high-class entertainment. Before being the victim of a dramatic fire in 1977, the popular business stood proudly, under the leadership of several different owners, for nearly a century. The business saw its greatest popularity from the early 1930s through the 1960s, but in order to tell its complete history, we have to begin in the mid 1800s.

## Rush's Tavern

The earliest information concerning the property dates back to around the Civil War era. Betsy Rush built a one-story brick structure on property along the Covington-Lexington Turnpike, just about a half-mile north of the road leading to Mr. Kyle's home and orchard. Known as Rush's Tavern, it was mainly used as a stopover spot for men bringing livestock for sale into Covington. After a night's rest, they would finish their difficult trip into town with their cattle, make their sales during the morning and afternoon hours, then return to the tavern for another night of rest before heading back to their farms in the more rural parts of the county. It remains uncertain if Rush's Tavern existed before or during the war, but we know of its existence by the early 1870s.<sup>1</sup>

## Civil War Outpost?

At the onset of the Civil War, Union troops were quite aware of the possibility of attacks by rebel forces from the south near and around the city of Cincinnati. A complex plan of forts and smaller fortifications was erected on the hilltops of Northern Kentucky [see *NKH, Volume XII No. 2*]. From these elevated posts, troops were able to watch over every major transportation route in the area, including the Covington-Lexington Turnpike, now known as Dixie Highway. In some cases, troops "took-over" people's homesteads in their effort to secure the perfect location for these large forts and smaller batteries. There have been numerous claims by researchers that Rush's Tavern was one of those places seized by Union troops and that a tall tower was erected alongside the existing brick structure. From this tower, troops had a bird's-eye view of the area, aiding in their plan to secure all of Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati from certain demise.<sup>2</sup>

In support of previous researchers who claim that stories of a Civil War tower is just 'folklore', it is true there is no photographic evidence. Adding to their claim is the fact that there is no mention of any military outpost or lookout tower at the site on the official Civil War map showing the military defenses of Cincinnati, Covington and Newport dated 1877. Contradicting their belief, however, are several published documents supporting the military tower. In an article titled, *Old Lookout Tower Has Many Memories*, written for the *Kentucky Post* on May 24, 1931, the author states, "The first lookout tower on the site was erected during the Civil War, when the advantage of the high ground was noted by military authorities. After the war, its use was continued, both as an observation tower and for the more practical purpose of a key point in regional surveys."<sup>3</sup> In a Jim Reis article for the *Kentucky Post* dated April 12, 1999, it is stated, "...the term 'lookout' dates to the Civil War, when a tower was placed on a hill above what was then called the Lexington Pike. The tower gave a

commanding view of the area and became a tourist spot after the war.”<sup>4</sup> In a May of 1964 *Cincinnati Post* article interviewing one Christine Fromandi, it is reported that only folklore stories detail a tower on the site during the Civil War. Fromandi explained that the term “Lookout House” was not adopted until 1886, when Aloise Hampel purchased and remodeled Rush’s Tavern. In an interview given by longtime resident, John “Tang” Steffen, to local historian Chester Geaslen, it was stated, “...the war was fought in the 1860s and the tower wasn’t built until 1886.”

While this writer cannot prove the existence of an early tower used by Union troops, I can easily prove that a lookout tower of some type existed well before Hampel built in 1886.

### **After the Civil War**

After the war ended, Rush’s Tavern reopened to serve the many needs of the thirsty and the weary traveler. By 1875, however, new ownership had taken over the familiar drinking and boarding establishment. What we find next is certain proof of an existing tower on the site, well before Hampel bought the property. Between April and June of 1875, the *Ticket*, a popular Covington-based newspaper, reported on three different occasions, that picnics were being held at the “Lookout House on the Lexington Pike, three miles out (south) of Covington.” The three organizations using the facility that year were the Turners, the German Workingmen’s Society and the Knights of Pythias.<sup>5</sup> On November 25, 1876, the *Ticket* stated, “There’s a zoo at the Lookout House, so our good friend General James McIlvaine (most likely a new owner of the popular establishment) informs us.” The newspaper went on to say that the zoo included “two French performers, some wild ducks, a guinea hen and lots of things.” The short article concluded quoting McIlvaine, “Drop out and see us one night and see what a fine place we have. Walkin’s good any time before 10pm.” Sometime prior to 1877, the facility changed hands again. On July 27, 1877, a *Ticket* story stated, “The Mozart Singing Choir will hold its annual picnic at the Lookout House, Henry Hilbert proprietor.” Several weddings and other social events were also reported at the site. Sometime prior to October 6, 1882, it seems that the business changed hands once again. On that date,

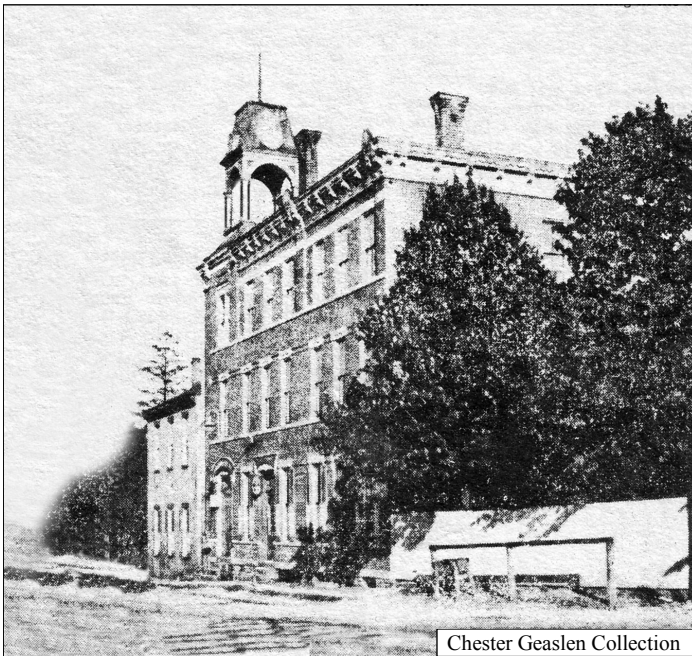
“Four burglars entered the saloon and residence of Joseph Pieper at the Lookout House on the Lexington Pike and robbed the safe of its valuables.” The article went on to say that among the items taken were, “\$22 in mutilated silver coin, \$30 in old coins, \$140 in green backs, \$100 wrapped up in an old election ticket, \$65 in silver change, \$15 in gold, an opened-face silver watch,” and several items of jewelry.<sup>6</sup>

Further evidence is found in 1883, when Lake and Company’s *Atlas of Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties* uses the term “Lookout House” when marking a structure on the site. One other article clearly supports the fact that an early tower existed on the site prior to 1886. In a *Kentucky Post* report dated May 24, 1931, in which then owner Bill Hill was interviewed, it was stated, “Hampel realized the value of the tower, still standing when he bought the place, so when he built the pavilion now used for dancing, he topped it with a new observation tower, more sturdy than the old one, which was torn down.”

It’s true that only some of the above articles mention an actual tower by name, but from the existing one-story brick structure, no extraordinary view could have been made of the area. The articles do confirm the use of the term “Lookout House” well before 1886. It seems odd to this researcher that one would use the term “Lookout House” for a structure from which one could not look out. Obviously, some sort of tower existed there before Hampel built his!

### **Outdoor Beer Garden and Dance Pavilion**

A better-documented history of a business on the site begins in 1886. In that year, Aloise Hampel, a German immigrant, purchased the land on which Rush’s Tavern and the subsequent Lookout House businesses stood. He constructed several new buildings on the property, including a three-story brick house, a slaughterhouse, and a long, underground passageway used as a natural cooling area for storing cut meat in the days before refrigeration.<sup>7</sup> The original structure that housed Rush’s Tavern was said to have been left standing. Hampel demolished the original tower and constructed a large, sturdier cupola-style tower atop the main building. From this new tower, visitors could “look out” and enjoy a



*Aloise Hampel's Lookout House with cupola, built in 1886*

panoramic view of much of Northern Kentucky. An outdoor beer garden and dance pavilion was added in the rear of the building. In 1887, this business was simply known as Hampel's Outdoor Beer Garden and Dance Pavilion, but the popularity of the observation tower convinced Hampel to later change the name to "The Lookout House."<sup>8</sup> Across from the property, the Steffen family owned ponds from which the restaurant harvested winter ice to keep their drinks cold. Hampel ran a successful business at the Lookout House for many years. He and his restaurant were "famous for fine food and excellent accommodations for a quarter of a century..."<sup>9</sup>

During the early life of the Lookout House, Northern Kentucky was mainly composed of small, rural communities, connected by a series of toll roads in various standards of repair. The location of a business was crucial for its survival and the Lookout House was only a short journey away from the homes of some of Northern Kentucky's wealthiest citizens. There was a tollhouse located right next to the restaurant, at the intersection of Sleepy Hollow Road and the Lexington Pike (Dixie Highway). Steffen's Ponds were attractive for boating and fishing during the summers. Two of the area's largest cemeteries, St. Mary's and Highland, were established just to the south and later, St. John Cemetery in Ft. Mitchell became the third major cemetery on the Pike. The

Lookout House was situated roughly half way from these three cemeteries and the city of Covington. Besides the busy traffic of farmers with their cattle, this meant a steady business from people returning from funerals. On a hot summer day, a cold beer was a welcomed respite from riding the five or six miles on a dusty road.<sup>10</sup>

### **Bill Hill**

Aloise Hampel died in 1912 and his children sold the Lookout House property to Bill Hill, a well-known Madison Avenue saloonkeeper for \$25,000. Under Hill's management, the business flourished as a popular drinking and boarding establishment. The place became more widely known still in the Greater Cincinnati area.<sup>11</sup> Very few visitors who came to Bill Hill's on a bright, clear day failed to ascend to the top of the platform remark on the grandeur of the view.<sup>12</sup> Bill Hill's Lookout House suffered greatly after Prohibition laws in 1920 but remained open until 1933, when it was sold to Jimmy Brink.

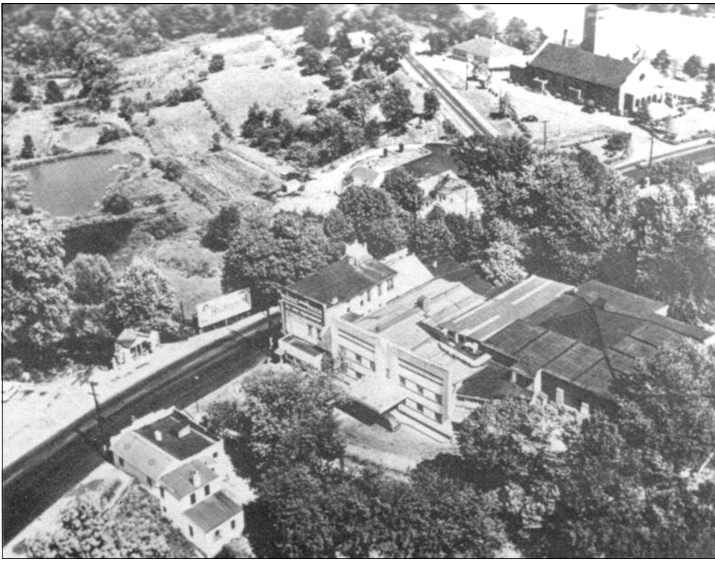


*A view of the main dinning room at Bill Hill's Lookout House*

### **Jimmy Brink's Lookout House**

Brink really put the Lookout House on the map. He immediately converted the place to a Las Vegas style gambling, live entertainment and restaurant complex.<sup>13</sup> Under his ownership, the popular spot was extensively remodeled several times. Mixing gambling and alcohol was illegal at the time and much of the Lookout House's newspaper headlines were about the periodic crackdowns by local and state officials. Brink was brought up on charges many times. In one particular instance, he was brought before the Kenton County Grand Jury where he claimed the gambling had taken place in a building





*A 1952 aerial view of Jimmy Brink's Lookout House.  
Note Saint Agnes Church in the upper right corner,  
Steffen's ponds in upper left.*

next to his restaurant, therefore he wasn't responsible for breaking the law. Brink's attorney, Bert King also claimed the dice and chips that were seized in a raid in that building next to the restaurant were missing. King suggested, "The very men who are asking you to send my client to the penitentiary took the dice and chips home to be used for themselves."<sup>14</sup>

Brink's strong influence in the area suggests that organized crime was certainly present at his restaurant. Nicknamed "Mr. Big," it was said, "everyone bowed to the Brinks ... and it was political suicide to get on the bad side of them." If Jimmy did not approve of a certain local candidate, that person was expected to accept it and drop out.<sup>15</sup> A fine example of Brink's influence occurred in 1951. A Covington man wrote to the special Senate Crime Committee, claiming he could prove Brink's involvement in illegal gambling. Somehow Brink found out about the letter. Just the fact that Brink knew of the existence of the letter was sufficient to frighten the letter-writer into silence. Even during Brink's first trial in the 1930s, "violent opposition developed in the official family of the county and the indictments were dismissed as faulty." An injunction was indeed issued as a result of the case, but was never enforced. In both trials, witnesses were too frightened to testify and Brink never served more than a month in jail.<sup>16</sup> Another raid, in March of 1952, resulted in the permanent closing of the club

and the later revoking of the club's liquor license.<sup>17</sup> Before the case was ever decided, Brink, along with Charles Drahmann, was killed in a plane crash near an airport in Atlanta, Georgia on August 6, 1952. The two men had just testified before a federal panel investigating gambling nationwide. A Kenton County Circuit Court ruled "there was a possibility Brink caused the crash through negligence, by turning over the controls to Drahmann."<sup>18</sup> After Brink's death, the club opened on only occasional dates, usually catering to parties and dances for teenage groups.<sup>19</sup> After years of legal problems, the Lookout House finally closed during the late 1950s.

### **The Schilling's Lookout House**

The Lookout House did not resume regular operations again until May of 1962, when brothers Richard and Robert Schilling bought the business from Marion Brink, Jimmy Brink's widow. According to an article in the *Kentucky Post*, dated May 31, 1962, the Schillings purchased the property for \$212,000 and were planning to spend another \$250,000 in renovations.

Under the Schilling ownership, the dormant club thrived once again, becoming nationally known for their gourmet food and high-class entertainment. In early 1970, Richard Schilling told long-time friend, Wayne Dammert, "I've taken this place about as far as it's 'gonna go." He also admitted he had made a major purchase the month before. The Schillings had bought Beverly Hills, a vacant club located in nearby Southgate, Kentucky.<sup>20</sup> A similar business to the early Lookout House, the Beverly Hills had been empty for several years and the Schillings had plans to renovate the place into the finest showplace in the nation. As a footnote to this article, the Beverly Hills Supper Club reopened in 1971. The Shillings had transformed the place into one of the finest clubs in the country. Just like the Lookout House, famous names from all over the nation came to entertain. Officially billed as "The Showplace of the Nation," Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin were just two of the club's popular regular billings. On May 27, 1977, a horrible blaze struck the nightclub at the height of one of its busiest nights. At the time, the fire ranked as the third worst in United States history with 165 lives lost [see *Northern Kentucky Fires*, KCHS, 2006].



*Lookout House, circa 1960 under Jimmy Brink.*

The Lookout House went through several changes after the Schillings left. It was first sold to the American Land Corporation for \$2 Million. In September of 1970, they sold the property to Ohio Real Estate Investment. The new owners proposed building a 400-room Sheraton Motor Inn on the site, but those plans were soon dropped. The restaurant remained open until August 4, 1973, when it closed temporarily for a few minor maintenance repairs. It was scheduled to reopen on September 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>21</sup>

### **Fire at the Lookout House**

On August 14, 1973, just two weeks before the scheduled reopening, fire struck the Lookout House. Smoke and flames ate away generations of Northern Kentucky entertainment history.”<sup>22</sup> A passing motorist on Dixie Highway noticed smoke coming from the roof of the building shortly after 3:00PM. He pulled into the Exxon station across the street and the attendant there notified authorities. First to arrive were firefighters from Covington, Park Hills, Fort Wright and Fort Mitchell. Later, six other cities were assisting in the spectacular blaze. It was reported in the *Kentucky Post* that this fire was, one of the most dramatic fires in local history.” Until about 4:00PM, it looked as though the fire could be brought under control. There was so little smoke that many club workers were standing on the front steps along with various newsmen. Heavy smoke, described as having a sickening stench, soon began pouring from the main entrance and club workers, reporters and other spectators were forced to move away from the building. Shortly afterward, the smoke thickened and flames began shooting from the roof into the after-noon sky. Traffic on Dixie Highway and nearby

Kyles Lane was halted. At that point, it was obvious that firefighters were going to lose their battle to save the structure. By 6:00PM, the fire was out of control and the blaze was allowed to take its own course. Walls and roof sections began collapsing, littering the street with debris. The Lookout House was gone forever.

Today the Lookout Corporate Center sits on the property once visited by groups of farmers needing a night's rest, the many gamblers and gangsters enjoying their vices, and famous entertainers from around the country. Thousands of Northern Kentuckians made the fine eatery a frequent stop during their lifetimes, visiting for birthdays, weddings and anniversaries. The Fort Wright landmark, though long gone, will never be forgotten.

*Endnotes for this article can be found on page 7  
Photos courtesy nkyviews.com unless otherwise stated.*

*Mr. Schneider is a cum laude graduate history major from Thomas More College who now attends Chase Law School. He resides in Wilder, Kentucky.*



*Scene of the dramatic fire that destroyed Northern Kentucky's famous Lookout House supper club on August 14, 1973.*

# One Hundred Years Ago

One hundred years ago (1904). Wow, what a difference a century makes! Here are some interesting statistics:

The average life expectancy in the United States was just 47 years. Only 14% of the homes in the United States had a bathtub. Only 8% of all homes had a telephone. A three-minute telephone call from Denver to New York City cost \$11.00. There were only 8,000 cars in the United States, and there were only 144 miles of paved roads. The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph. Alabama, Iowa, Mississippi, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California. With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower. The average wage in the US was 22 cents an hour. The average US worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year. A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 a year and a dentist, \$2,500 per year. A veterinarian was proud to earn between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per year. A mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.

More than 95 percent of all births in the United States took place at home. Ninety percent of all US physicians had no college education. Instead, they attended certain medical schools, many of which were deemed by the press and by the government as "substandard."

Sugar cost four cents a pound. Eggs were a staggering fourteen cents a dozen. Coffee was fifteen cents a pound. Most women only washed their hair once a month, and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo. Canada passed a law prohibiting poor people from entering the country for any reason. The five leading causes of death in the US were: pneumonia and influenza, tuberculosis, diarrhea, heart disease, and stroke.

The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet. The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was 30!

Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented. There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day. Two out of every 10 adults in the United States couldn't read or write. Only 6% of all Americans had graduated from high school.

Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at the corner drugstore. According to one pharmacist, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health." (Shocking!)

Eighteen percent of households in the US had at least one full-time servant or domestic. There were only about 230 reported murders in the entire United States.

Try to imagine what it may be like in another 100 years ... It staggers the mind.

## References for Lookout House article:

1. *Lookout House Met a Fiery End*, Jim Reis, *Kentucky Post*, April 12, 1999, Pg 4K
2. *Ibid*
3. *Old Lookout Tower Has Many Memories*, *Kentucky Post*, May 24, 1931, Page 3
4. *Lookout House Met a Fiery End*, Jim Reis, *Kentucky Post*, April 12, 1999, Pg 4K
5. Three articles in the *Covington Ticket*, April 24, 1875, Page 3, June 8, 1875, Page 3, and July 24, 1875, Page 3.
6. *Daily Commonwealth*, October 6, 1882, Page 4
7. *Gambling and Restaurants*, Craig Schneider
8. *Ibid*
9. John Hampel, Letter to Editor, *Kentucky Post*, January 23, 1987.
10. *Gambling and Restaurants*, Craig Schneider
11. *Strolling Along Memory Lane – Volume I*, Chester Geaslen
12. *Kentucky Post*, May 24, 1931, Page 10
13. *Lookout House Met a Fiery End*, Jim Reis, *Kentucky Post*, April 12, 1999, Pg 4K
14. *Kentucky Times-Star*, October 15, 1937
15. *Kentucky Enquirer*, August 6, 1952
16. *Gambling and Restaurants*, Craig Schneider
17. *Lookout House Met a Fiery End*, Jim Reis, *Kentucky Post*, April 12, 1999, Pg 4K
18. *Gambling and Restaurants*, Craig Schneider
19. *Lookout House Met a Fiery End*, Jim Reis, *Kentucky Post*, April 12, 1999, Pg 4K
20. *Inside the Beverly Hills Supper Club Fire*, Ron Elliott, Page 45
21. *Gambling and Restaurants*, Craig Schneider
22. *Northern Kentucky Fires – A Summary of the most Memorable Fires of the Region*, Robert D. Webster

# Machine Tool Industry in Northern Kentucky

By: John Boh

The introduction of the steamboat in 1815 soon accelerated movement of farm commodities, the development of towns and cities and eventually inspired a strong machine tool industry.

In 1826, Cincinnati had six foundries and two steam engine builders. West of the Alleghenys, Cincinnati would lead in population and commerce with the exception of New Orleans. Pittsburgh had a slight advantage over Cincinnati in manufacturing. By 1817, at least one Cincinnati firm was using "lathes and a boring mill."

In 1834, Cincinnati "metal works factories" totaled 31, employing well over 500. Of these, one was an iron rolling mill, eleven were foundries and nine were steam engine factories. Manufacturers sold locally but also expanded markets to include steam engines to power southern sugar mills, Great Plains grain mills and even New England looms. In the 1850s, the Licking Rolling Mill in Covington, one of five rolling mills in "the Cincinnati area," displayed their success with the consumption of raw materials at the rate of 175,000 bushels of coal, 3000 tons of pig iron and 1000 tons of "Tennessee clear blooms" annually [see NKH, Volume XIII No. 1].

Delivering hogs and other products to "porkopolis," Northern Kentucky witnessed the steamboat prosperity. An 1848 daguerreotype shows about 50 steamboats docked on the Cincinnati side of the Ohio River. At this time, Amos Shinkle, Ohio-born, established a very prosperous coal station on the Covington side to refuel steamboats. In 1852, A. B. Latta of Ludlow, an owner of the Buckeye Works, introduced in Cincinnati, the "first practical steam fire engine."<sup>1</sup>

Before 1850, manufacturers imported machine tools. By 1851, one Cincinnati company was building "planing machines." After the Civil War, energetic steam engine and other mechanics moved from older companies to start new enterprises that specialized in machine tools. By 1900, Cincinnati's success in machine tools was spilling into Northern Kentucky. Newport, it's second largest city, in 1900 listed under machinists, Henry F. Buecker, Frank Osburg and William Rottinger and Sons. Covington, the largest city in the state, listed in the 1900 business directory, listed the Anthe Machine Works, the H. J. Averbeck Company and the Sebastian Lathe Company. The 1926-

1927 directory listed the Anthe Machine Works, Averbeck Machine Company, Avey Drilling Machine Company, Precision Truing Machine and Tool Company, Willard Machine Tool Company and others.<sup>2</sup>

In Covington, the Avey Drilling Company enjoyed a national reputation, like other companies in Northern Kentucky. It started as the Cincinnati Pulley Machine Company, which moved to Covington in 1910. In 1913, after a devastating fire, it chose to stay and build a new plant on Third Street between Scott and Madison. In 1919, it was renamed the Avey Drilling Machine Company. The company prospered well during World War II. In 1951, it considered relocating for more space, before building a large addition in Covington. In 1956 it employed 157, with 15 in the engineering office. Its machine tools were sold worldwide to such names as Ford, IBM, Chrysler, Westinghouse and General Motors. In 1957, it merged to become a division of the Motch and Merryweather Company of Cleveland, specializing in special transfer and indexing machines, drilling, reaming and tapping tools. In 1965, it participated in a Federal job training program for the operating of lathes, cutter grinders, jig borers, milling machines and radial drills, but in 1975, word came that Avey might close. After Covington proposed issuing industrial revenue bonds to save jobs, the Cross Company of Michigan purchased Avey. In 1976, the less worker-friendly company oversaw a strike. In 1981, they employed 81 and were specializing in metal cutting tools, but by 1982, layoffs had reduced the staff to 20. The company closed in 1983 and the structure was demolished in 1985. The Gateway office building, which houses IRS operations, now dominates the entire block.<sup>3</sup>

Though most are long gone, many small machine shops and factories still operate in Covington. At 407 Madison Avenue, the fourth generation of the Anthe family now oversees the Anthe Machine Works, specializing in woodworking tools, cutters, router bits, carving cutters and cutter shapers, customized for furniture manufacturers, prominent among its 500 customers in the United States and Canada.<sup>4</sup>

1. See George A. Wing, "The History of Cincinnati Machine Tools Industry. A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Degree of Doctor of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business of Indiana University," Indiana Graduate School of Business, 1964.
2. Covington Street Directories.
3. *Kentucky Post*, Jim Reis, "Avey Symbolized Industrial Base," 14 November, 1994, Page 4K.
4. Mary Friedberg, "Toolmaker on Cutting Edge," *The Kentucky Post*, 23 April, 1996, Page 8K.



# Jacob Price

*Taken, in part, from Jim Reis' "Pieces of the Past"*

There is more to the name Jacob Price than the housing project located in inter-city Covington.

Jacob Price was born in Woodford County, Kentucky in April, 1839. His parentage is unknown. The first time the name Jacob Price appears on any public document seems to be on the 1860 census, designating him as a 22-year-old free black living in Covington. That same census indicates that Jacob had reading and writing skills, not often seen with a man of color in a time when slavery was still legal. Jacob was listed as a laborer, living in the household of Joseph Johnson, a 35-year-old free black working as a painter, and his wife, Eliza Johnson, age 40, a nurse. The group, including several other free blacks, lived on Russell Street, between Pike and Sixth Streets.

Sometime between 1860 and 1870, Jacob not only became a minister, he also married. His wife was Mary Singer, the daughter of John Singer and Ann Reynolds, originally from Virginia. Mary was born in August, 1841. Jacob and Mary had three children, Charles W. Price, Anna E. Price and John Price. The new family began their lives at 61 Bremen Street (later named Pershing Avenue). They moved to 154 East 10th Street and then, in 1881, apparently moved to 245 East 10th Street (or the original street address changed).

Throughout much of his life, Price was a very successful businessman, incredibly rare for a black man of the day. He owned and operated a lumber yard, located on the east side of Madison Avenue between 4th and 5th Streets. According to the *Kentucky Post*, the business was described as having a storage capacity of half a million board feet of lumber. His stock included white pine from Michigan, yellow pine from Alabama and Tennessee and hemlock from New York. His trade was mostly local and amounted to about \$15,000 a year. He employed several men, including his two sons and had two delivery teams. He apparently operated the business until about 1914.

Jacob Price was also a major figure in the development of black churches in Covington. According to the history of the First (Black) Baptist Church of Covington, the first church house was located on Bremen Street and Price was the first Pastor. The church moved several times, first to 3rd Street, then to Robbins, then to 13th Street and finally to East 9th Street. Price was also instrumental in the education of blacks in Northern Kentucky. At the close of the Civil War, Kentucky had no provisions for the public education of blacks. Samuel R. Singer, who became the first principal of William Grant School, wrote in 1929 that although born in Covington, he had to go to Cincinnati in 1868 to receive an education. That barrier fell in the 1870s when William Grant, a white man who supported education for blacks, worked out a deal with several influential black leaders in Covington, including Jacob Price.

Price died on March 1, 1923, a month short of his 84th birthday. At the time, he still resided at 245 East 10th Street. A front-page story the next day in the *Kentucky Post* called Price one of Covington's most respected citizens. "He was held in high esteem by both races," the article stated. According to the story, he was survived by his wife of 55 years, one son and a daughter. Funeral services were held at the First Baptist Church. He was buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Southgate. His wife, Mary, died a year later, on March 10, 1924. Daughter, Anna, died in 1956. The home on 10th Street was razed in 1967.

The housing project that bears his name dates to 1938, the year the city received a \$1.4 million federal grant to provide housing for low-income families and jobs for the unemployed. At the time, Covington officials estimated that nearly 1000 families were left homeless after the terrible 1937 flood. Although met with much opposition, two federal projects were approved, with ground-breaking in December, 1939. White families were given "Latonia Terrace," situated along Madison Pike in Latonia while blacks were given "Jacob Price," located along Greenup Street.

# A Look Back at The Headlines

By: Robert D. Webster

*An on-going feature reliving local headlines  
from the Kentucky Post.  
This issue features: July 1, 1920.*

George Read, 17, of Constance, appeared in court this morning where he confessed to the hold-up of Stevie's Roadhouse on June 19th. Read said that he and three others, Fred Lawrence, Harry Farland and John Amos were responsible for the crime. Read stated that the group had driven around most of the day before getting up the nerve to pull off the heist. He added that he had been drinking moonshine whiskey, which he blames for his actions. The same group had robbed Schneider's Saloon in Campbell County earlier in the week.

*Stevie's Roadhouse was located  
along the Lexington Turnpike (now Dixie Highway)  
at it's intersection with Horsebranch (now Orphanage) Road.  
It sat on the present site of Remke's Market.*

The Citizen's Telephone Company has agreed to drop the 10-cent toll charge for Newport residents calling into Cincinnati and revert back to the standard \$3.00 monthly rate. "Why does not the local company make a similar charge for calls originating in Cincinnati and terminating in Newport to even the score," asked Newport Commissioner Charles McCrea. "Because no one cares to call Newport," was the quick reply.

The following items were featured in an advertisement by the George Hill and Company grocery, Pike Street:

Liberty Cherries..... 35¢/jar  
Fancy Oranges..... 60¢/dozen  
Coffee..... 45¢/pound

Both Newport and Covington locations of Dan Cohen Shoes advertised: Ladies white canvas shoes, great for summer..... \$1.99/pair. Men's silk dress shirts were on sale at Coppin's, 7th and Madison — only \$6.95.

At the Lyric Theater, Eugene O'Brien starred in the movie, *His Wife's Money*. All seats — 17¢. At the Strand, located on Pike Street west of Madison, *A Very Good Young Man* was the bill. This film featured Bryant Washburn.

# Update on the History of Covington Book

The first deadline for articles submitted to the Covington history book project is fast approaching. This first date, January 1, 2007, represents articles from pre-historic times up to and including 1815, the year of the city's founding. Currently, the book committee is happy to report that the project is on schedule. For further information on the project, including a up-to-date list of all topics to be included, please visit the Society's website:

[www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc/](http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc/)  
then click on "Covington Book".

Once completed, the book will be approximately 250 pages in length, be 8 1/2 x 11 in size and include a nice, full color glossy jacket. The current "working title" of the book is:

*200 Years At The Point  
A Bicentennial History of Covington, Kentucky*

As many of you are aware, "the point" was an early term given the area at the confluence of the Ohio and Licking Rivers, long before Covington existed. The term existed in the late 1700s and could be a fitting title to the city's history.

If you have any questions about the project, or if you would like to offer any assistance on the book, please email the book committee directly at:  
[covingtonhistorybook@fuse.net](mailto:covingtonhistorybook@fuse.net)

# Be Published In The KCHS Bulletin!

The Society is always looking for interesting Kenton County stories for its Bulletin. Email your article in Microsoft Word format to:

[nkyheritage.kchs@juno.com](mailto:nkyheritage.kchs@juno.com).

You can also send a printed copy by mail to: P.O. Box 641, Covington, KY 41012-0641

Articles should have at least two references.

## Then and Now



Left: The RRYMCA (Railroad Young Men's Christian Association) situated in the 1600 block of Madison, Covington.  
Right: The same building as it appears today. The building is now a temporary shelter run by the community service organization, Traditions.

*Old photo: courtesy the Kenton County Public Library. New photo: courtesy Bob Webster*

## We Need Your Help

The committee working on the bicentennial history of Covington book is in need of your photos.

### *Historic Photos of Covington Needed*

We are always interested in sharp, clear photos of old buildings and important people of the past, but we are just as interested in random pictures of the various "burgs" of Covington and other neighborhoods such as Latonia, Parks Hills and Ludlow.

Great examples: a photo of a 4th of July parade in Peaselsburg, a picture from one of the many church summer festivals, or a photo of some of the many neighborhood theaters that once filled our city.

If you think you might have something we would be interested in, please email the committee at:

covingtonhistorybook@fuse.net  
or phone Bob Webster at: 859-356-5088.

## Mystery Photo

Can you identify the mystery photo below?  
The answer can be found at the bottom of the page.



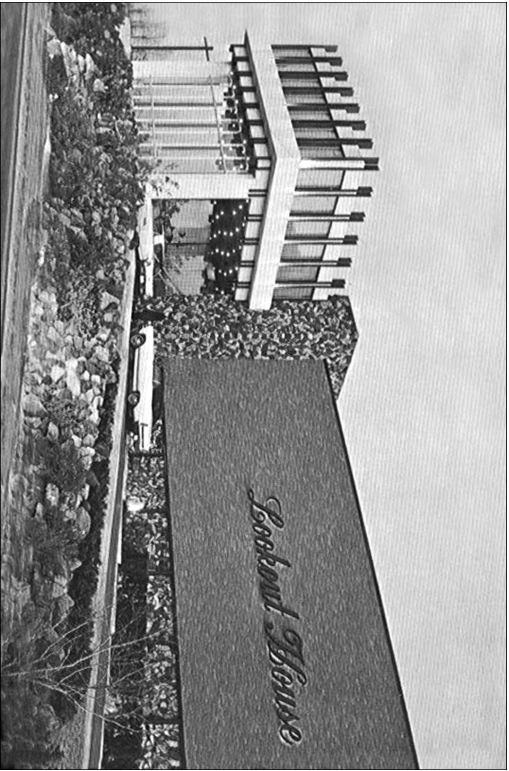
*Ron Einhaus*

**ANSWER:** Railway Museum of Greater Cincinnati, located at 315 West Southern Avenue in Latonia.

Kenton County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 641  
Covington, Kentucky 41012-0641  
Web: [www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc](http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc)  
Email: [nkyheritage.kchs@juno.com](mailto:nkyheritage.kchs@juno.com)

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# KENTON HISTORI- ETY



## Feature Story:

**The Lookout House**  
This nationally-known restaurant and nightclub had a long history, eventually becoming a Kenton County landmark.  
Pictured above is the club circa 1970.

## Other Stories Inside:

One Hundred Years Ago  
Jacob Price

Machine Tool Industry in Northern Kentucky

Dedicated to preserving

CO  
CAL

July/August 2006