

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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KCHS MEETING

DATE Tuesday June 13

7 - 9 PM

PLACE Trinity Episcopal
Church

4th & Madison
Covington

PROGRAM Black Heritage of
Kenton County

Parking available corner of 4th &
Madison and north of church.

Bulletin

June 2000

From the Program Coordinator.....

The African-American heritage enriches Northern Kentucky history. On Tuesday, June 13, 7 PM, Curtis Fuller, news anchor from CHANNEL 5 NEWS, will emcee the evening's program, along with Regina Carswell, CHANNEL 19 news anchor. We will hear of the history of Lincoln-Grant School, whose building is now being used as the Northern Kentucky Community Center. We will hear the names of many who contributed to this area's business and professional life, as well as sports and music. We will learn of black soldiers who fought and died in the Civil War.

A panel of long time residents will give us some of their oral history — about the way things were in yesteryear.

We are pleased that the Brotherhood Quartet will return with their repertoire of songs. We are in store for a full and interesting evening.

We thank Ben Butler, president of the African-American Task Force, for helping us organize this program.

From the Editor.....

The article on the next page features a new historical marker in Northern Kentucky dedicated to a fallen Vietnam veteran, and there is a small Vietnam memorial in the children's play area of Meinken Ball Field at James and Eastern Avenues in Covington. In my opinion, Veterans from wars since World War II have not received full appreciation for their sacrifices. But now 50 years after the still unresolved conflict in Korea and 32 years after the disastrous Vietnam Action (War), perhaps we are beginning to look back and appreciate those who sacrificed their lives in war.

Covington's only Korean War Memorial is in the planning stages. It will be constructed as a small community plaza at Historic Ritte's Corner in Latonia. The Memorial will feature a two-tiered cast iron fountain surrounded by tall antique wrought iron fencing, with the American flag at the apex of the site, lighted at all times. There will be a plaque commemorating the Korean War, and commemorative bricks will cover the ground to honor Covington's Korean War Veterans. Attractive historic-style iron benches and plantings will enhance the site along the Decoursey and Winston Avenue sides. Commemorative bricks in a contrasting color representing supportive community residents and business will line the planting areas and encircle the street trees.

The memorial is sponsored by VFW Post 6095, Ritte's East Neighborhood Group, and American Legion Post 203. The project will cost \$15,000 and should be ready for unveiling sometime next year. The Neighborhood Group just had a yard sale with proceeds of \$700. They have a long way to go. If you would like to contribute, please contact VFW member Butch Keller at 261-5919 or Ritte's East at 261-2807.

The small plaza will also be a beautiful focal point for the Latonia neighborhood and Covington.

WEB SITE <http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc/>

Historic Marker in Villa Hills

by Michael Nail

The first official act for the Villa Hills Historical Society was the unveiling of a Kentucky historical marker honoring the only Villa Hills resident to make the supreme sacrifice during the Vietnam conflict.

Former Governor Louie B. Nunn, who served as governor of Kentucky during that time, [gave] the keynote address. The ceremony [brought] together some folks who have not seen each other in 32 years.

On December 15, 1968, Lt. Col. William K. Clark appeared at the home of Edward J. and Mildred Niewahner to give them the terrible news that their son, Ronald, had been killed in Vietnam.

At the time, Clark was head of the ROTC program at Xavier University. Part of his duties included giving local families the tragic news that their son/brother/dad was killed, injured or missing. After giving the Niewahner family their bad news, he went on with the rest of his life, living quietly in Cincinnati.

The Niewahner family also carried on. Edward H. Niewahner, an older brother of Ronald, lives a stone's throw away from the house he grew up in on Western Reserve Road. His daughter now owns the homestead his father built in 1941. Most of the rest of the family also still live in the area.

Even though Clark and the Niewahners have lived in Greater Cincinnati all this time, their paths haven't crossed since that tragic time. One of Niewahner's sister's still had the calling card from Col. Clark.

"The calling card was 30 years old, and we had no idea how to get in touch with this guy," said Niewahner. He went on to explain that he opened up the phone book and found a William Clark listed there.

Even though he was close to 80 years old, Clark was willing to attend the ceremony.

Of the Niewahners' five sons, Ronald was the youngest. He was

also the third son to fight in Vietnam. Two older brothers, Louis and Mike, served in the Marine Corps earlier in the conflict.

Ron Niewahner, a graduate of Dixie Heights High School in 1966, worked at Fedder's Food Market in Crescent Springs and was a volunteer fireman for the Crescent Springs Fire Department before joining the Army in March of 1968.

After basic training and promotion to sergeant, Niewahner was transferred for duty in Vietnam on November 17, 1968. On December 3, Niewahner celebrated his 20th birthday. He was assigned to Co. B, 1st Battalion (Mech.) 5th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division.

A letter from Niewahner's commanding officer explained that during the afternoon of December 13, 1968, while on a search and sweep mission, Niewahner was fatally wounded when he was hit by fragments from an enemy antitank rocket and small arms fire.

A subsequent letter from Col. Gordon Sumner, Chief of Staff, 25th Infantry Division, stated that Niewahner spotted several wounded soldiers while leading his squad during an assault on the enemy position that Friday afternoon.

The letter stated, "With complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Niewahner fearlessly moved through the bullet swept area to the aid of his fallen comrade and evacuated him to safety."

Sumner went on to explain that Niewahner returned to aid a second injured soldier and was carrying him to the rear when he was fatally wounded.

"His valorous actions were responsible for the saving of two lives," continued Sumner.

Those actions earned Niewahner a Silver Star for gallantry in action.

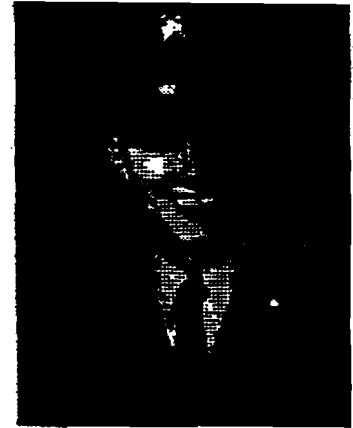
Other medals and awards given to Niewahner posthumously

include a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. The Republic of Vietnam recognized Niewahner's sacrifice and service by presenting the family with a Military Merit Medal and a Gallantry Cross with Palm.

The Villa Hills Historical Society was formed out of the nucleus of the Historical Committee for the city of Villa Hills. The committee published the Millennium Edition of the history of Villa Hills last fall.

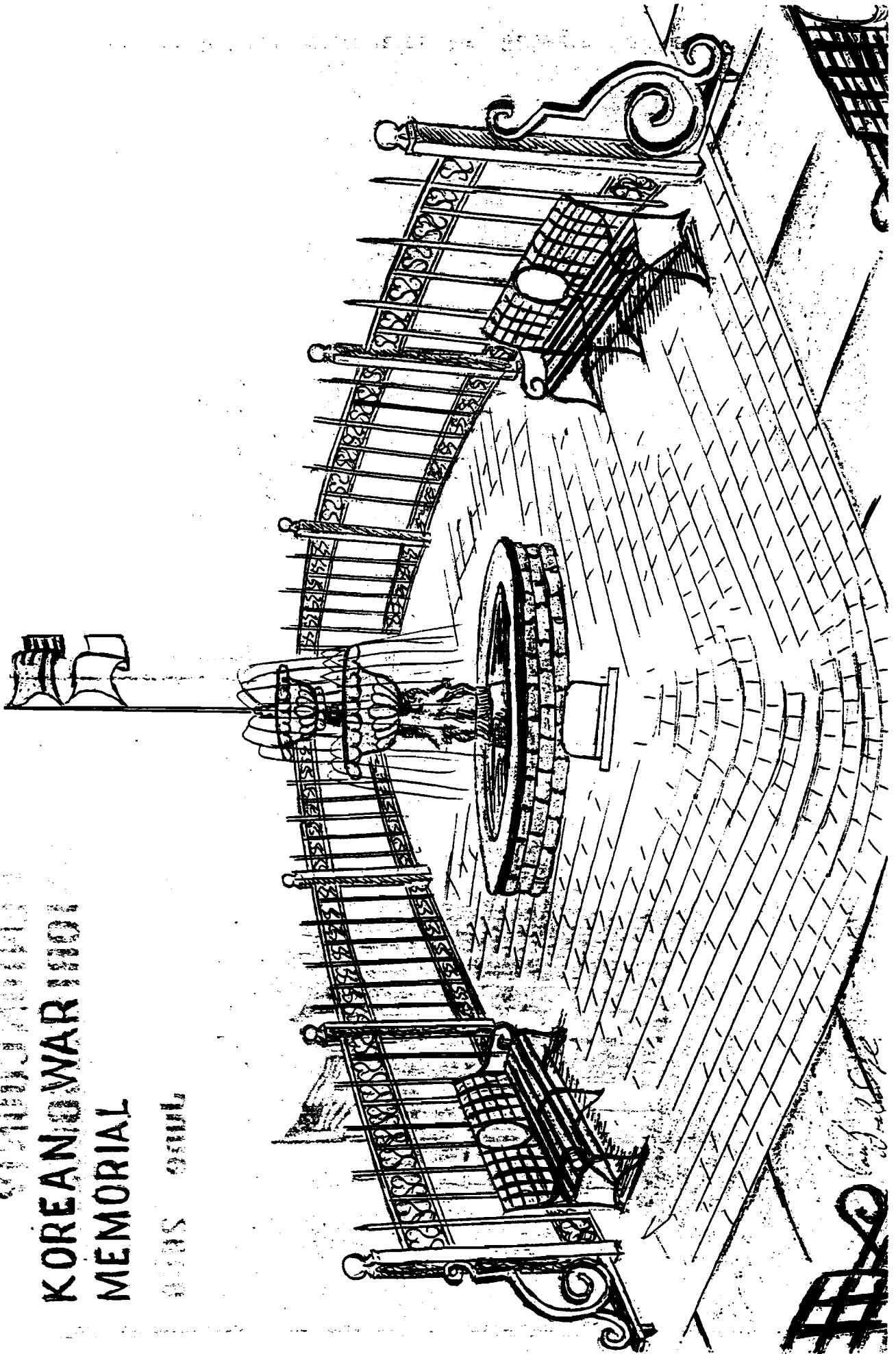
The society is registered with Kentucky Historical Society and is affiliated with the Kenton County Historical Society.

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KOREAN WAR
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1950 1953



Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"

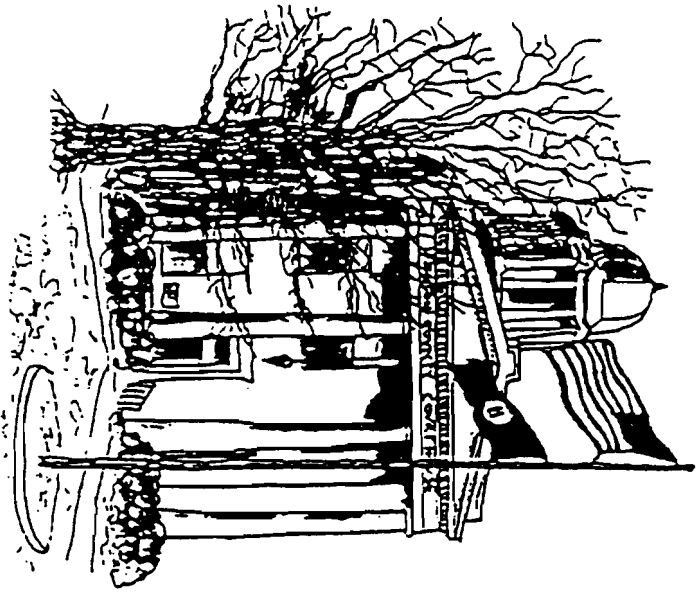
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