

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MEETING

DATE Tuesday, June 11

TIME 7 PM

PLACE Trinity Church
4th and Madison
Covington

PROGRAM Architecture of
Covington before WW I
Part 2

A slide lecture by Walter E. Langsam. Last month's program was so full of info, and Walter has so much more. Refreshments served.

Bulletin

June 2002

Society Notes.....

Many thanks to those who responded to our appeal for donations toward the Trophy. The trophy has been given to the Behringer-Crawford Museum.

Edythe Nichols

Phyllis Crawford

Andrew Piaskowy

Leah Konicki

Alex Weldon

John Deaver

The Erlanger Depot Museum

The Erlanger Depot is now open on Saturdays from noon to 4 PM until November 1. Tours are available by appointment.

June Program - The Architecture of Covington Kentucky Before WWI

A good size crowd attended the last KCHS meeting on May 14. Walter Langsam has so much information that he agreed to extend the program to a second meeting night, June 11.

Covington architecture since its founding in 1815 has both paralleled and complemented the architecture of Cincinnati and its environs. Both exceptional and vernacular building from several periods have survived in Covington and other Northern Kentucky towns that have virtually disappeared across the Ohio River. The "Point" at the Ohio and Licking Rivers is one such group of houses, and Wallace Woods another. Many fine Covington historic residences and other buildings will be presented at our meeting this month at the Trinity Church location.

Walter, an architectural historian and historic preservation consultant, was Covington's Historic Preservation Officer in the early 1980s, when he was primarily responsible for placing many of the city's neighborhoods on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as creating local districts. A popular teacher and lecturer, he has taught art and architectural history at the University of Cincinnati for more than fifteen years. Langsam is the author of the best selling book, *Great Houses of the Queen City: 200 Years of Historic and Contemporary Architecture and Interiors in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky* (1997) and of the brochure "Architecture Cincinnati: A Guide to Nationally Significant Buildings and Their Architects in the Greater Cincinnati Area" (1999), both with superb color photographs by environmental artist Alice Weston. Her color slides and historic images will be juxtaposed to illustrate Walter Langsam's stimulating and informative lecture.

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

Ninth Street United Methodist Church, Covington, Kentucky

by John Boh, A Heritage of Covington Churches

Editor's Note: The May issue of the Bulletin covered the Presbyterian years in this historic building from 1855 to 1881.

Black Christians have formed significant membership in the Methodist Church from the beginning in America. Even though the Church split over the issue of slavery in 1844, segregation in the church both north and south has, like the country, been a fact of life to this day. Nevertheless, at the end of the Civil War, black membership in the northern church increased greatly. The M. E. Church South refused to accommodate free slaves but instead helped establish a separate "Colored Methodist Episcopal Church" now known as the Christian Episcopal Methodist Church such as the Lane Christian M. E. Church on Lynn Street.

In the 1860's in order to accommodate a growing and diverse membership, the northern church reorganized in Kentucky into three conferences: the Kentucky Conference for English-speaking Methodists, the Central Conference for German-speaking Methodists, and the Lexington Conference of blacks.

According to Richardson in *Dark Salvation*, some blacks preferred membership in the M. E. Church with white clergy because it "provided an opportunity for wholesome association, at least the most wholesome association at the time...." Even though the African and colored churches with black clergy ridiculed such participation, it should be remembered that the Methodist Church "was one of the friendliest of all the Protestant bodies" and openly sought Negroes and took them readily into their societies and into the churches, conforming as time passed, however, to prevailing patterns of racial discrimination and segrega-

tion." The Methodist Church was evangelical, and its social program was educational for freed slaves, but in terms of the standards of the time.

In 1876-77 Directory, the "Fourth M.E. Church (Colored)" is listed on the west side of Madison between Second and Third and the Pastor, The Rev. Samuel G. Griffin, is listed at 233 Madison. The colored congregation's former Elder is now listed as Pastor of the M. E. Church South, an indication of Ninth Street M. E. Church's background, but with gradual disassociation from the M.E. South. According to the northern Methodist's version, before the Civil War, they were considered abolitionist, extremist, and were often treated as outcasts. Covington, which was in a "southern" although "border" state, saw the M.E. Church South prevail and black Americans had no choice. By the end of the Civil War, that changed and some of Covington's wealthiest and most influential men attended Union Methodist Church at 5th and Greenup, and they treated this Colored congregational as their mission church.

By 1881 the congregation was known as the Fourth Methodist Episcopal Church. The Western Christian Advocate states: :

The members of the Fourth Methodist Episcopal Church, Covington, Kentucky have purchased the property on the Second Presbyterian Church at \$4,000 cash, and will formally occupy it on Sunday May 1st, at which time Re. Dr. Taylor, the presiding elder, will preach at 11 A.M. , Dr. J. J. Hight, assistant editor of the Western Christian Advocate, Cincinnati, Ohio at 3 P.M. , and Rev. W. H. Evans at night. The people of Cincinnati and vicinity are cordially invited to attend. (April 27, 1881, p.136)

The church has to be restored after the fire with help from Union

Methodist . Western Christian Advocate says in another article::

...The lecture room, which is large and convenient, fully furnished, and has an organ, will be reopened May 1st....will be the largest and finest house of worship on the Lexington Conference. The walls of the main audience room are standing and the design is to restore the house. The members will give all they can, and the friends of the church in the vicinity will be called upon for contribution. Mr. Amos Shinkle has given \$500 toward rebuilding. The restoration will cost \$2,500, making a grand total cost of \$6,500. The new church will be known as the Ninth Street Methodist Episcopal Church. (April 27, 1881, p. 133)

And the church was surely known to be a black congregation . Western Christian Advocate reports:

The Ninth Street Church, Covington, Kentucky was formally opened by the congregation of the Fourth Church, formally worshipping on Madison Street, last Sunday. Dr. Taylor preached.....Dr. J.J. Hight preached...Dr. Taylor preached...Dr. Rust, well-known and well beloved by all our colored people, gave an exhortation, as did also Rev. H. Cordoza of Union Church, Cincinnati. Rev. J. Y. Dobbins, Pastor of Union Church, Covington, gave freely of his means...The congregation contributed \$153...Too much can not be said in praise of the generous white citizens of Covington.....(May 4, 1881, p. 141)

In 1883, there was a final celebration for the restoration from the fire and full occupancy of the former Presbyterian Church by the Methodist congregation. To buy the property, the congregation had borrowed \$3,500 from

the Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Church, Inc. of Pennsylvania.

According to Richardson, black churches were separated in to 19 conferences throughout the country, and there were no black bishops even for the Lexington Conference. But the re was progress but gradual, and in "1920 two black bishops were selected for service in America; Matthew W. Clair, Sr., a Bubbth Stree Methodist Church communicant, and Robert E. Jones."

When the movement for unification came ,also at this time, the biggest hangup was still the M. E. South's refusal to join with blacks. The unification was achieved years later but it was was geographical. The black Christian Americans were assigned to the separate Central Jurisdiction, a version of segregation which lasted another 30 years into the 1970s. When the conference achieved official integration. The Ninth Street Church's acceptance in the Kentucky Conference came in 1968.

Both as active bishop in the Lexington Conference and later in retirement Bishop Clair resided at 1040 Russell. On Sunday, October 3, 1954 the organ was dedicated as a memorial to him in ceremonies presided over by his son, Bishop Matthew Clair, Jr.. This was one of the highlights in the recent history of the congregation.

The organ was part of the professional level of musical tradition of the congregation. In Elizabeth Gooch, the congregation had an organist who was a music teacher at Lincoln Grant School for 39 years. Born in Covington September 16, 1883, her residences included 17 East Third Street, 708 Scott Street and 1021 Russell, a property which she willed to the congregation upon her death. She died in 1983 just short of her one-hundredth birthday when she was about to receive a birthday card from President Reagan. As with other congregations, the piano is more in use today, but this has only served to display more easily the members' musical talent.

In the tradition of Methodist Missionary and educational work, "The Lexington Conference Women's Home Missionary Society was organized at Covington in 1900," according to a 25th anniversary program. This went along the lines of an earlier such organization founded by prominent women in Cincinnati "to provide home training and industrial training for women and girls along with academic training." The Society supplemented the classic work of the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and various related endeavors in educational and missionary work, especially among free blacks but also whites in Kentucky over the decades since the Civil War.

Additional facts about Ninth Street Methodist Church

In 2002, the Kentucky Heritage Council awarded a \$3,000 planning grant to determine what kind of work needs to be done to the building and how much it will cost.

In January 1987, "This Is Your Life was held for John Stokes, long time member of the congregation.

In March 1986, a tornado damaged the steeple. Insurance covered repairs to the bell-tower and windows and other churches also provided assistance.

Also in 1986 the residential complex immediately east of the church was demolished in order to help protect the church from vandalism. The residence had over the years housed some local clergy and was connected historically with the church in terms of age, location, and ownership.

On May 14, 1978, "This Is Your Life" was held in honor of Mrs. Elizabeth Gooch, lifelong member and retiree music teacher, whose students from around the country returned to honor her. The celebration was televised and gifts amounting to \$650 were donated to

the church in her honor.

Member Haven Gillespie was a nationally known local composer of popular music, especially "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town." In the 1970s the Baptistry was dedicated to his memory.

1985-86, the Conference Coordinating Committee of EMLC and the Ninth Street Methodist families financed new pews. They were dedicated the same month of the tornado.

Dr. J. E. Watkins, a member of Ninth Street Church, was one of the first black physicians in the community,

Communities in Africa bear Matthew W. Claire, Sr.'s name.

A committee of a cross section of community residents is in the process of incorporating a foundation to preserve and restore the building. In the meantime, funding is most welcome for planning and research. If you would be interested in contributing to this project, make out a check to Friends of Covington, Box 2614, Covington, Kentucky 41012. Notate it for "Ninth Street United Methodist Church Restoration."

Sources

Richardson, Harry V., *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as it Developed Among Black in America.*, Garden City, New York, Anchor Press, 1976.

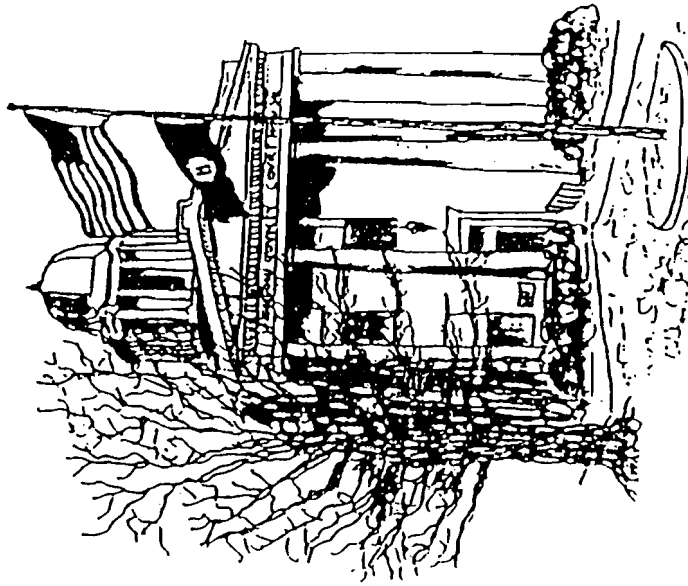
Short, Roy Hunter, *Medodism in Kentucky*, The United Methodist Church, 1979.

Local and church newspapers, church histories, miscellaneous.

Special thanks to Mrs. Katharine Harris and Mrs Anna Scruggs.

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Part 2

Kenton County Historical Society
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