



# Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

Website: [www.kentoncountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.kentoncountyhistoricalsociety.org) Email: [info@kentoncountyhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@kentoncountyhistoricalsociety.org)  
P.O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012-0641 (859) 491-4003

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**The Bygone Gedge Family:  
Railroaders and Tobacconists**

# The Bygone Gedge Family: Railroaders and Tobacconists

John Boh

The Covington & Lexington Railroad was sold in 1859 for \$2,125,000,<sup>1</sup> at the courthouse in Lexington. William Gedge submitted the winning bid. His oldest brother, Frederick Gedge, by then deceased, had been a director during construction of the Covington & Lexington (C&L) Railroad. After the sale, William would become "Superintendent" under a new corporate ownership. From the 1830s to 1902, the Gedge brothers, and later a few offspring, were also Covington tobacco dealers or manufacturers.

The once very prominent Gedge family, landed in Covington before 1830. Only the head of household, Elisha Gedge, was named in the 1830 Federal Census (Campbell Co.).<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later the 1850 census listed Elisha's four sons with their spouses and children: Frederick G., 45; James C., 41; Christian H., 36; and William H., 34; all "merchants," all born in England.<sup>3</sup>

With the city requiring infrastructure they served on the boards of bridge, road and railroad companies. In 1839 Frederick Gedge was involved in the development of the Banklick Turnpike.<sup>4</sup> In 1852-53, Frederick Gedge and others organized construction of the first bridge (suspension) at 4th Street in Covington over to Newport. It was the elderly James C. Gedge (it appears) who in 1877 was elected a director of the Lexington & Maysville Railroad Co.<sup>5</sup>

In civic affairs, the charter for the Kenton Lodge of the Odd Fellows was granted in 1846 to a group of prominent men, including James and Christian Gedge.<sup>6</sup> In 1847, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows lodge dedicated a hall inside "Gedge's new building" on Scott Street.<sup>7</sup> Ten years later the Odd Fellows would dedicate a new hall of mammoth size at 5th and Madison.

Frederick, James and William enrolled in "the First Fire Company of Covington" (sic) March 4,

1845.<sup>8</sup> In 1852 Frederick, as President of Fire Company No. 1 and chair of the library committee, gave a brief history of an earlier "first" volunteer company chartered in 1832.<sup>9</sup> In 1850, Frederick and two other citizens directed a parade of the local fire companies organized by the Independent Franklin Fire Co.<sup>10</sup>

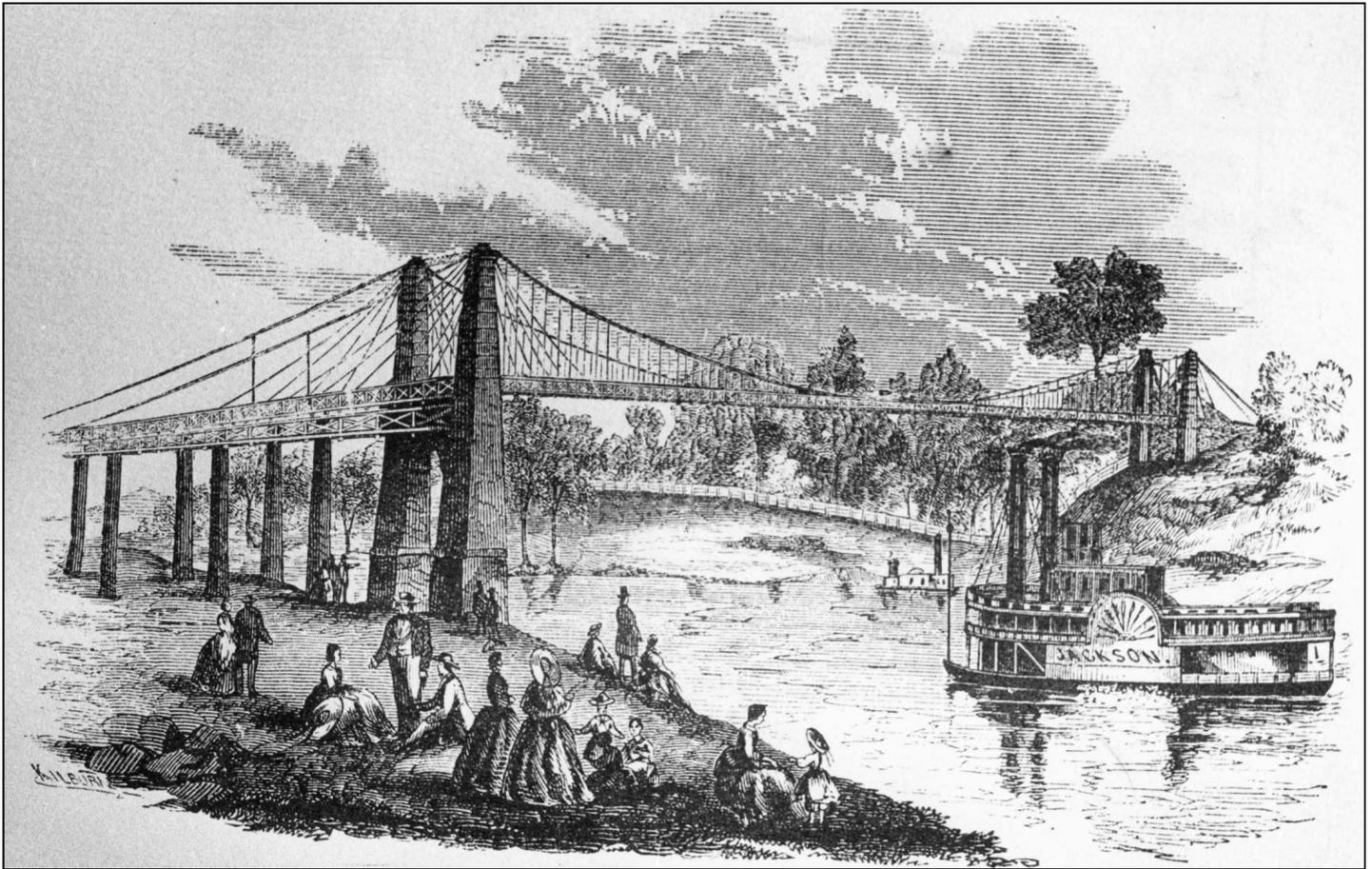
On January 2, 1847 Frederick Gedge was elected to city council from the third ward,<sup>11</sup> as was, years later, his brother William on January 5, 1856 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> ward.<sup>12</sup> Yet after all the activities in business and civic affairs, the Gedge name, if not all relatives, was absent from the Covington street directory by 1906.<sup>13</sup>

## Tobacco and Railroad

Tobacco and railroads were "English" enterprises. Tobacco was the big crop in England's colonial Virginia (think Sir Walter Raleigh), forbearer of Kentucky. In 1825, the first public steam railroad on iron tracks in the world opened in England.

The "Town" of Covington was incorporated a city in 1834 and the street directory listed James Gedge a clerk in John Casey's dry goods and tobacco store on Covington's Market Square. Frederick was a tobacco merchant, and from the 1830s onward the Gedge brothers' tobacco company was prominent between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5th streets at Scott.<sup>14</sup> The opening in December 1830 of the Louisville & Portland Canal, bypassing the Falls near Louisville, henceforth enabled steady long distance commerce in both directions on the Ohio River. It was then tobacco's importance to Northern Kentucky as a cash crop "exploded."

Tobacco leaves dried and pressed into hogsheads (large barrels) weighing up to 1000 pounds (even more) were commonly loaded on to steamboats at landings along the Ohio River and its tributaries and shipped to Louisville or other markets, and continually overseas.<sup>15</sup>



Suspension bridge linking Covington and Newport  
*Photo courtesy the Kenton County Public Library*

Louisville was the most prominent, if not exclusive, tobacco market. But new railroads and changing market trends gave farmers access to other processing and manufacturing plants and depots. Around the Civil War, Cincinnati became a major tobacco marketing center.

In 1849, under a new state charter, construction of the Covington & Lexington Railroad commenced and was well advanced by December 1853. The company elected Mortimer M. Benton President and Frederick Gedge President Pro Tem.<sup>16</sup> Frederick's early death in November 1854 occurred just as the new railroad was about ready with freight and passenger service all the way between Covington and Lexington.<sup>17</sup> Surviving brothers James, Christian, and William, became proprietors of a "new firm" still named Gedge & Brothers Tobacco Company and the family followed up on existing financial commitments to the railroad. Eleven years later, William was a shareholder and also railroad Superintendent when he died in 1865.<sup>18</sup>

In the winter months of 1853-54, an increase in the numbers of hogs slaughtered in Cincinnati might have been partly due to farmers using only those sections of the railroad by then open for service. Hogs were processed at Covington or driven to Cincinnati by ferry, or on the hoof across the frozen river.

The C&L indeed had a great impact. Bluegrass farmers began sowing many more acres in wheat causing a sharp increase in bushels delivered from the Covington terminal. The C&L also greatly increased Cincinnati products marketed to the Bluegrass and beyond.

The opening of the Suspension Bridge a decade later added a more efficient avenue for getting hogs, wheat, tobacco and other produce from the railroad terminal and Northern Kentucky to Cincinnati (with its own railroad connections). In 1869, during a 24-hour period, "60 carloads" of hogs arrived in Covington.<sup>19</sup>

### Letters about Family, 1850-1865

The Gedge family had left some real estate holdings in England and they seemed experienced with bigger scale financial matters. Real Estate seemed to be the most prominent reason that letters were exchanged yearly between William Gedge and his relative Burton Hughes (14 Hayfield Place, Mile End Road 14, London, England).

Gedge's letter (Feb. 2, 1850) came after the death of his father Elisha (1799-1849) on December 31st. Elisha had appointed William executor of the estate, the proceeds going "wholly" to his widow Jane (1785-1865). William, his brother and sister (unidentified), were in agreement regarding the "distribution or application" of the property in England, and Jane wanted Hughes to continue as agent collecting rent for a fee.

The letters contained observations on the tobacco and railroad business, on the sale of the C&L Railroad, on slavery, on the Civil War and political situations.<sup>20</sup>

Hughes also addressed letters to Jane "his cousin." He sent a letter to Jane and a second letter to William the same day (Jan. 5, 1853). "Mrs. Weber" in England wanted to sell "her share" to Jane, but a person named "English" had made an offer.

Hughes' letters regularly gave "our respects to Mr. Jackson Sparrow."<sup>21</sup> Also a native of England, and member of Trinity Episcopal Church, Jackson Sparrow once had a "bakery" and residence on Greenup at Covington's Market Square.<sup>22</sup> Sparrow returned sentiments through William Gedge.

Hughes' letter to Gedge (Jan. 23, 1853) updated the issue with Mrs. Weber. Later a statement was sent (Aug. 10, 1853) from a solicitor on the legal issues that had arisen when Mrs. Weber sold "her share." Hughes' letter (Jan. 7, 1854) with its yearly account reiterated issues resulting from Mrs. Weber sale of her interest to Mr. English.<sup>23</sup>

William Gedge's first wife Charlotte had passed away in 1851. She and second wife Mary Hannah were daughters of Thomas D. and Nancy Kennedy, and great-granddaughters of patriarch Thomas and Dinah of the pioneer Covington family. As re-

called, Thomas sold his farm to the Covington Company which developed the Town of Covington (1815). Kennedy relatives and friends were the most prominent of early Covington Society.<sup>24</sup>

In one of the letters (April 16, 1854), William briefed his wife Mary Hannah on his business trip: *Arrived in Columbus, Ohio Tuesday, sold tobacco, waited to go to Zanesville on the evening train but arrived late at the station; next morning left Columbus, took three hours to get to Zanesville; on Wednesday, left Zanesville for Wheeling, Virginia, by Friday, did better than expected selling tobacco; Saturday morning left Wheeling arrived at Pittsburgh Saturday night; attended St Paul's Church Sunday morning. Doing business in Pittsburgh on Monday; on Tuesday will leave for Cleveland by boat and train.*

Mary Hannah should tell the boys that he expects them "...to take care of the cow and provide wood and all other things that you and their grandmother wants them to do and to be very attentive to their studies.... Give my kindest regards to your father, mother, brothers and sisters and to my mother, brothers, sister [unidentified], nephews and nieces."<sup>25</sup>

That year in November 1854. William's brother Frederick was killed in a railroad accident. One source implied a "possibility" of suicide given financial risks from his own investments in the railroad. There was also Frederick's willingness to co-sign for the debts of associates. After his death, debt service, infrastructure upgrading, and improving passenger and freight services continued to burden the shareholders and threaten their financial security. City leaders and others crowded funeral services.<sup>26</sup>

After Hughes' (May 24, 1855) annual statement, Gedge wrote back that Jane was willing to sell her share in the rental property ("the houses"). Later that year, Hughes in October informed Gedge about substantial legal expenses regarding "Mrs. Weber's" transaction. Hughes' letter (Jan. 7, 1856) included the solicitor's bill. Also a cistern at "the houses" had burst again with repair costs unknown and the intervention by the local "sanitary commission" a possibility. Hughes' endnote said that he would have liked to share a "glass of Our Hayfield ale" with Sparrow.

The letters (Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> 1857 and Jan. 4, 1858) gave updates on the rental business. Hughes' (Jan. 15,

1859) included best wishes for business recovery and the hope that the Gedge family had had a happy Christmas. Hughes (March 14, 1859) reported business and family news and concern about the possibility of a European war. Hughes said (January 4, 1860) that extra expenses had made the rental property in 1859 not so profitable.

After receiving Hughes letter (Jan. 3, 1861) Gedge's wrote back weeks later that Southern states were leaving the Union. After Hughes' letter (March 19, 1861), Gedge answered that he and his son James "*belong to a volunteer company that is sworn to keep Kentucky in the Union at all handicaps...*" On his farm, son James had planted 100 acres of corn and was to plant 100 acres of wheat. Mr. Sparrow sends his regards.

Rental property updates (Jan. 4, 1862 and Jan. 2, 1863) were the usual. Hughes letter (Jan. 7, 1864) also commented that the English papers were biased toward the South. Gedge answered back in February that everyone was well. He and wife Mary Hannah had just welcomed another son. His brother James and family and Mr. Sparrow send best wishes.

After Hughes (Jan. 2, 1865) rental business update, Gedge's letter in February reported that his mother Jane was just surviving at age 79. His son James had married. He still had four sons and one daughter at home. Family and Mr. Sparrow offered best wishes.

In 1865, over a decade after oldest brother Frederick's demise, William Gedge passed away at age 50, leaving his widow Mary Hannah Kennedy Gedge. Besides Covington business activities, William Gedge had been farming in Kentucky and Illinois.<sup>27</sup> At time of death, William Gedge was "General Superintendent" of the Kentucky Central Railroad (KCRR). The estate was complicated involving many family members and much property.

An inventory dated February 14, 1866 listed 168 shares of KCRR stock at a total value reported \$34,517.40. An inventory two years later listed (for some reason) 80 shares KCRR stock at \$166,000; undivided interest in 665 ½ acres of farmland in Marion County Illinois valued at \$6,000; also the value "cannot be determined" regarding an undivided interest in Gedge & Brothers.

There were other inventories including reference to "lots in Louisville." Years later a "final settlement" of the William H. Gedge estate dated March 22, 1883 in court records listed proceeds: Kentucky Central Railroad stock \$36,007.99; total estate receipts \$39,755.25.<sup>28</sup>

### Other Big Events in the Same Letters 1850-1865

Dating from 1850 to 1865, these same letters between Hughes and Gedge portray great events about the railroad, slavery, the Civil War and the everyday the tobacco business.

The *Covington Journal* reported (Feb. 1852) that the past year had seen an upsurge in business: Operations resumed at Gedge & Brothers' big tobacco factory, G. W. Ball's Iron Foundry, Sellers & Co. Saw Mill and at the cotton factory. "The dark cloud which for months past has hung like a pall over the business of Covington" is passing away.<sup>29</sup>

The *Covington Journal* (June 1853) proclaimed "Choice Chewing Tobacco." Tobacco manufacturing was very big in the Covington economy. Gedge & Brothers, J. & S. Laird, Young & Mooklar were big manufactures. Gedge & Brothers had just purchased 25 hogsheads of tobacco leaf in New Orleans, bringing it back to its factory in Covington. "It is a fine gamble despite shipping costs" but "the price was low enough to make a profit."<sup>30</sup>

William's letter (see above) to his wife Mary Hannah (April 16, 1854), described his business trip: selling tobacco in Columbus, Ohio; to Zanesville; to Wheeling where he did better than expected selling tobacco; to Pittsburgh where he did business; to Cleveland by boat and train, and back home.<sup>31</sup> The death of Frederick, his oldest brother, occurred in November.<sup>32</sup>

### Slavery and the Civil War

Referring to Gedge's recent letter (Jan. 30, 1856) Hughes wrote back in April that "*he was sorry to hear the company had met with such heavy losses in 1855 but I cannot offer sympathy for your loss of slaves.*" If Gedge acquired 20 more slaves Hughes would hope that Gedge "*would lose them...abominable ...cannot help pitying the Poor Negress that Murdered her child as I think I should have done the same had I been her.*"

The last comment referred to an attempted slave escape that made national news and gave a lasting image as to the cruelty of slavery. Margaret Garner and other slaves had escaped across the frozen Ohio River January 28, 1856. About to be recaptured in Cincinnati, she killed a daughter and was probably about to finish off her other offspring rather than see them returned to slavery.<sup>33</sup>

Gedge wrote to Hughes (Jan. 27 1858) that the U. S. was suffering “*one of the severest of financial strains... prostrates all kinds of businesses. Getting by as best we can*” but the firm will suffer losses of \$30-40,000. “*We have disengaged ourselves in the last two years from almost three hundred and fifty thousand dollars of liabilities including Frederick’s liability for the Rail Road. We have yet to pay about sixty thousand dollars when we git [sic] that done we shall be free.*”<sup>34</sup>

Gedge wrote (Feb. 19, 1859) that the Gedge Brothers were suffering from a “depression” of real estate” and will owe up to \$100,000. “*Three brothers will have to pay thirty to forty thousand dollars each.*” Yet Christian and William had acquired 427 acres of farmland 300 miles from Covington!

His brother Christian had departed from the Gedge & Brothers Tobacco Co. and acquired another farm “28 miles out from our Rail Road.” James and William were of course continuing with tobacco manufacturing.<sup>35</sup>

### Sale of the Railroad

The railroad incurred massive debt during original construction and in early years of operation when reconstruction, expansion and improvements in customer service required still more capital investment. Thus, bonds were sold to cover earlier debts and subsequent improvements and enhancements (replacing substandard rails, improving roadbeds, building depots). Later, bondholders stood second or third in line for claims from railroad proceeds. Financial matters became more tangled, trying to keep up with debt. By 1858 a successful and persuasive Cincinnati investor, R. B. Bowler, had become involved with the C&L’s financial struggles. His securities never had more than second or third level claims on proceeds. Yet Bowler imposed himself as a problem solver getting approval for some unorthodox

maneuvers that looked to forestall bankruptcy. Just before the suddenly forced sale of the C&L long suffering shareholders seemed not have realized that company income had most recently substantially exceeded expenses suggesting a long-awaited turnaround.

Appointing a Master Commissioner to run the “bankrupt” railroad would have been the ordinary expedient. But political pressure led the Fayette County Kentucky Court quickly to allow for a new ownership by an auction sale.<sup>36</sup> Fronting for Bowler, Gedge’s bid of \$2,125,000 acquired the C&L Railroad. Bowler became President with Gedge and others also as shareholders. In 1863, the Kentucky Central Railroad Corporation, a joint stock company, assumed ownership.<sup>37</sup>

About four months after the sale, William Gedge wrote (Jan. 30, 1860) to Hughes: “*Have been doing well this year employing 70 hands manufacturing 3000 pounds of tobacco daily. James and William still had not paid off all of the \$100,000 debt “of our old firm.*”<sup>38</sup>

Gedge’s letter continued, reflecting on his recent ownership of the C. & L. Railroad. “*As for myself, I owed a larger debt four months ago than any ever recorded on the state of Kentucky, what you may personally have seen in the papers. On the 5th October last I became the purchaser of the Covington and Lexington Railroad, being 99 miles of road together with all the real estate buildings, cars, and in fact everything belonging to it at Two million one hundred and twenty five thousand dollars. And this was all on credit. For three years before I was one of the board of directors...a gentleman (Bowler) held a large amount of securities of no value in the road but hoped to make money by buying the road which I advised him to do and he consented but requested me to become the purchaser in my own name and transfer to him after the sale. He requested my consenting to the transfer of my purchase to my friend Mr. R. B. Bowler. I was sole owner and debtor for 20 days.*” In his letter to Gedge (March 1860) Hughes joked: “*I think you may almost soon expect to be called the American Rail King.*”

Gedge reported to Hughes (Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> 1861) that James and William Gedge each had an interest in the railroad “*amounting to \$20,000 each.*” The



Kentucky Central Railroad Depot  
 Photo courtesy the Kenton County Public Library

“whole railroad belongs to five individuals including us two,” (Jan. 7, 1864) who were also two of the directors.

As mentioned above, Gedge (May 30, 1861) reported that he and son James “belong to a volunteer company that is sworn to keep Kentucky in the Union at all handicaps...” The railroad is only keeping up with expenses. The tobacco business is doing better. Anarchy and confusion reign.

### The Military Takes over the Railroads

Responding to Rebel victory in the Battle of Chickamauga, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, in September 1863, had Major-General Joseph Hooker, by Presidential order, take military possession of all railroads. The War Department (Sept. 1863) requested that R. B. Bowler provide details as to the feasibility of troops being transported from Covington to Louisville. The rail gauges of the C&L and L&N, being different widths, was one reason that the Union soldiers were instead transported the long way from Cincinnati to Louisville through Indianapolis.

Hughes said in his letter (Jan. 7, 1864) that he “can barely judge from the newspapers as they are generally for the South.” Gedge responded (Feb 8, 1864) with

complaints. The tobacco business had suffered due to fluctuations caused by acts of Congress regarding taxes. Profits were down but “our railroad business has done much better than the previous year. We have not been interrupted by the Rebel’s since September 1862 and hope not again.”

Gedge reported back to Hughes (Feb. 13, 1865). The tobacco business earned less than last year. If the government pays some \$100,000 including for military damages, the company might pay dividends. Losses had been very heavy from Rebels burning bridges (over \$40,000 worth) cars, Engines (\$70-80,000 worth) and station houses. Passenger cars were shot at, captured, robbed and burned.<sup>39</sup>

In 1865 over a decade after Frederick’s demise, William, General Superintendent of the Kentucky Central Railroad, passed away, age 50, leaving his widow Mary Hannah Kennedy Gedge and children and other family.<sup>40</sup>

### Tobacco Alley and the Boone Block

According to George G. Perkins, a long time lawyer and Judge, Anthony D. Bullock of Cincinnati purchased Gedge Brothers’ “buildings and shanties” along the east side of Scott. The 1877 Covington Atlas does show A. D. Bullock as owner of the buildings (by then mostly razed), between 4th Street and



View of the southeast corner of 4th and Scott streets, Covington — (Boone Block).  
*Photo courtesy the Kenton County Public Library*

Tobacco Alley. Today, Covington street signs still mark “Tobacco Alley” (see front cover).

Demolished much later, only decades ago was a huge commercial building at the southeast corner of 4th and Scott which became a vacant lot for a liquor store drive-up. All other buildings facing Scott up to Tobacco Alley were replaced by the “Boone Block” built in 1872. Bullock’s new three story edifice (currently seeing major renovation) provided a row of store fronts and offices once occupied by some of Northern Kentucky’s most prominent judges and lawyers, and other occupations.<sup>41</sup> Yet behind Bullock’s new holdings, the atlas shows “James C. Gedge Tobacco Factory,” on Tobacco Ave. facing “Bridge Avenue” which then extended on a line toward the Roebling Bridge entrance.<sup>42</sup> Now the name Bridge Ave. is discontinued; Court Street as an alley extends south of 4<sup>th</sup> to intersect with Tobacco Alley.

After the death of William a succession of partners operated the factory: In 1870 James, age 61,

and his son William H. Gedge, age 28. In 1876 James Gedge, Dwight B. Chapin, and William H. Gedge were partners.

By 1880 the elderly James (circa. 1807-1878) had died. William. M. Lovell and another son, Julius F. Gedge, were listed as partners (Lovell & Gedge) and William H. Gedge held the title of foreman. Spilman & Ellis & Co. appears to have been the last tobacco company operating at Court (formerly Bridge) Ave. and Tobacco Ave. in 1908-09.<sup>43</sup>

Connected indirectly with the Kentucky Central Railroad, Frederick’s son Washington L. Gedge in 1879 was secretary for the nearby Covington Stockyards and in 1880 proprietor, of the Ashbrook House, the old inn for livestock drovers and hog farmers at the southeast corner of Pike and Banklick.<sup>44</sup> In 1890 Washington Gedge, was a bookkeeper for Crigler & Crigler Distillers (“7 Pike Street”). The same year, L. H. Gedge was President and B. H. Gedge Vice-president with the American

Wire Nail, Co, “manufacturers of standard wire nails” (at the railroad tracks, on the eastern side of Washington Street between 15th and 16<sup>th</sup>). By then, both were residents of Anderson, Indiana. Washington L. Gedge, was still a professional bookkeeper in 1900.

In 1890, Mrs. Clemmie Roberts and Lilly B. Gedge were partners operating Roberts & Gedge Art School in the Boone Block building. About then, Julius F. Gedge was Secretary and General Manager, of the Luminous Sign Company, located at 15 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

### Gedge Tobacco on Greenup Street

The next generation did continue in the tobacco business. Up from the Ohio River near the Suspension Bridge, the 1886 Sanborn fire Insurance maps show the Louis Senour & Frederick C. Gedge (son of William) “Redrying Tobacco Warehouse” and directly across Greenup Street, in the 100 block, the Senour & Gedge tobacco factory. Incorporated in 1884 by James R Ledyard, Francis D Thompson, and William H. Gedge (James’ son), the Railroad Tobacco Company, on the east side of the 200 block of Greenup, was to manufacture and sell “chewing and smoking tobacco.” The 1886 Sanborn map shows the factory building, and immediately south a warehouse on contiguous city lots.<sup>45</sup> Business relationships were complicated. The tobacco business involved river traffic and railroad connections. Cincinnati had its railroads connecting many points, and its Front Street tobacco warehouses and numerous other tobacco firms there and throughout the city.

### The Gedge Family Fades

The street directory for 1906-07 lists no person with the last name Gedge.<sup>46</sup> Until her death in 1965, Mary Hannah Gedge, of Anderson, Indiana, preserved her grandfather’s letters seen above and other records.

William Gedge’s second wife Mary Hannah Kennedy Gedge (1822-1900) survived him by 35 years. Many relatives are interred in Linden Grove Cemetery including Charlotte and Mary Hannah Kennedy Gedge,<sup>47</sup> the four brothers, their parents Elisha and Jane, and other spouses and descendants.

### Endnotes

1. Maybe \$59.5 million in 2016 dollars
2. In one instance “Gedge” is traced to a site in the parish of Filby, County Norfolk and “Eegges” became Gedge between 1450 and 1600; name traced to various places in England, also Australia, New Zealand, Canada; website “Gedge Family Crest, Coat of Arms with name history...” dedicated to selling coat of arms replicas, framed images, mugs, etc.
3. The 1850 Census listed Jacob, age 25, and Jane Sellers, age 18, probably two slaves in Frederick’s household
4. *Western Colonizationist & Literary Journal*, April 5, 1839
5. *C. J.* July 24, 1852, p. 2; *Ticket*, May 16, 1877, p. 3
6. O. J. Wiggins, “History of Covington,” *D. C.*, Nov. 22, 1884
7. *L. V. R.*, Aug. 20, 1847
8. *Ticket*, Aug. 7, 1877, p. 3
9. *C. J.*, Aug. 21, 1852, p. 3
10. *C. J.* April 27, 1850, p. 2
11. *L. V. R.* Jan., 9, 1847, p. 2
12. *C. J.*, Jan. 12, 1856, p. 2
13. 1906-07 Covington Street directory
14. 1834 Covington Directory; 1839-40 street directory: Frederick, James and William proprietors, Christian merely a “tobacconist”; Elisha Gedge a “carpenter”; Schaefer’s Advertising Directory for 1839-1840
15. John Klee, “Tobacco,” *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, edited by Paul A. Tenkotte and James C. Claypool, Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009, pp. 879-880
16. *C. J.*, Dec. 17, 1853, p. 3
17. Death of Frederick Gedge C. J., Nov. 11, 1854
18. “Death of a Prominent Citizen,” *Cincinnati Gazette*, Nov. 28, 1865, p. 1; 1830 and 1840 Federal Census; 1834, 1840 Covington Street directory; *C. J.* Oct. 8, 1859, p. 2
19. Paul A. Tenkotte, *Rival Cities to Suburbs: Covington and Newport, Kentucky, 1790-1890*, University of Cincinnati: A dissertation for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1989
20. Donald B. Roberts, “Some Personal Letters and Records of a Covington Businessman and Manufacturer, Mr. William H. Gedge from 1838 Through 1865,” graduate thesis, Master of Arts, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, 1969, over 100 pp; the Kenton County Public Library vertical files
21. Roberts, p. 14
22. Jackson Sparrow, was born near London, England. In the 1830s Sparrow had a bakery on Greenup Street opposite Market Space (today’s Park Place), also his residence. In 1884 Sparrow died at his residence in the 300 block of Garrard, age 86, having been a resident of Covington for fifty-one years and “for more than half a century” devoted to Trinity Episcopal Church; obituary, funeral, *D. C.*, April 22, April 23, 1884
23. Roberts, pp. 21-23
24. Thomas D. Kennedy (1795-1869), the son of Joseph (1768-1825) and Nancy Cummins Kennedy and a grandson of the Thomas Kennedy (1741-1821); Thomas D. Kennedy an engineer and surveyor who planned several subdivisions; Thomas D. Kennedy’s son, Thomas H., also a city engineer from 1855 to 1901; E. Polk Johnson, *A History of Kentucky and Kentuckians*, vol. 2, 1912
25. Roberts, pp. 24-27
26. Roberts, pp. 46, 47; death of Frederick Gedge, *C. J.*, Nov. 11, 1854; “with obligations of a very depressing nature,” co-signer for the debts of others, “Frederick had been a man of great energy and dedication to the city”; organizations in the funeral procession were the Independent Franklin Fire Company No. 2, the Washington Fire Company of Newport and the Covington Fire Company No. 1; pallbearers M. Benton, C. A. Withers, B. W. Foley, John T. Levis, S. J. Walker, John B. Casey, A. Robbins, Colonel Garrett, John Gray, Samuel Reynolds, Jackson Sparrow and Alexander L. Greer. An Episcopal minister conducted services at the larger capacity Scott M. E. Church.

# A Look Back at The Headlines

An on-going feature reliving local headlines.

This issue features:

*The Covington Journal – November 15, 1873.*

## Local Headlines

A white fox, according to the Elkton Witness, was scared up last week in that neighborhood a few days ago and killed. It was the first white fox seen in that county in thirty years.

Eight colored persons were baptized in Owen County last week.

Maysville Bulletin: A criminal at the present term of the Circuit Court, on being asked if he had anything to offer to the court, said: "No, he had five dollars, but his lawyer took that."

An amusing duel was lately on the agenda in the usually quiet town of Shelbyville. A couple of youths, well known to those citizens, engaged in a conversation in which one of them considered himself highly insulted. He challenged his companion and the challenged party chose shot-guns loaded with wads and a distance of seventy-five yards. This novel method had the effect of assuring the party of the first part that he would be subject to very little danger and promptly accepted the terms. Latest accounts state that mutual friends prevented the meeting.

Benjamin Martin, aged 114 years, and who was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, died at his home on Crooked Creek, in the northwestern portion of this county, on Wednesday the fifth. He was undoubtedly the last surviving soldier of the Revolution. He was interred on his son's farm.

## Advertisement

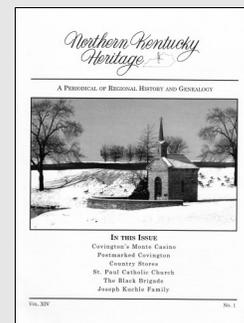
Kentucky Shoe Store, No. 6 Pike Street  
Men's kip and calf boots..... \$2.00  
Misses shoes..... \$1.00  
Children's shoes..... 15¢

27. Roberts, pp. 5, 38-39, 42, 68-70, 72-74, 88
28. Estate of William H. Gedge; inventories, settlements, Covington Courthouse, books 2, p. 205; 3, pp. 90, 406; 6, pp. 400, 565; 10, p. 184; and 12, p. 606
29. *C. J.*, Feb.25-1852, p. 3
30. *C. J.*, June 11, 1853, p. 3
31. Roberts, pp. 24-27
32. Roberts, pp 46, 47; the firm announced that with the death of senior partner Frederick G. Gedge it desires to settle past debts with the "late firm" at the office on Scott Street; Gedge & Brothers will continue under the same name; James. C., Christian. H. and William H. Gedge; *C. J.*, Feb. 17, 1855, p. 4
33. Roberts, pp. 5, 38-39; "Garner, Margaret," *Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, p. 387
34. Roberts, pp. 46-47
35. Roberts, pp. 50-52
36. Joseph F. Gastright, "The Making of the Kentucky Central..." Kenton County Historical Society "Quarterly Review." 3 parts, July 1983, Spring 1984, Spring 1985; see digital copy, KCHS Website, Bulletin Archives
37. John E. Burns, *A History of Covington Through 1865*, edited by Karl J. Lietzenmayer, printed by the Kenton County Historical Society, 2012, p. 168
38. 1860 Covington Street directory
39. Roberts, pp. 68-70, 72-74, 77, 83-88, 92-93
40. Roberts, p. 5
41. George Gilpin Perkins, *A Kentucky Judge*, Washington, D. C.: W. G. Roberts Company, 1931; Jack Wessling, "Boone Block", *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, p.100
42. *City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky*, Philadelphia, C. M. Hopkins, 1877
43. Covington street directories
44. In 1846 James C Gedge married Mary Jane Howell, daughter of late A. P. Howell after whom Covington's Howell Street is named. Their son Washington L Gedge in 1879 had remodeled W. E. Ashbrook's house formerly known as the Day House, a drovers inn, for use by travelers; *D. C.*, Aug. 4, 1879 , p. 1; 1880-81 Covington Street directory
45. Articles of Incorporation, Covington Courthouse, book 2, pp. 32-34, July 30, 1884; *D. C.*, Aug. 9, 1884, p. 2
46. 1890-1891, 1900-1901 street directories
47. First wife Charlotte Kennedy Gedge (1818-1851), the older sister of Mary Kennedy Gedge; Gedge brothers, other spouses, certain sons, daughters, spouses interred in Linden Grove Cemetery; George C. Dreyer, *Linden Grove Cemetery, Covington, Kentucky*, Vols. I and II, 1998; see Vol. II

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## Then and Now



Two views of the Gaines House (Tavern) in Walton.  
Both photos courtesy Kenton County Public Library

## Mystery Photo

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



ANSWER:

Jimmy Brink's Lookout House, circa 1940, located on the eastern side of Dixie Highway near Sleepy Hollow Road in what is now Ft. Wright.

# Kenton County Historical Society

March - April 2016

ARTICLES FROM BACK ISSUES ARE INDEXED ON OUR WEBSITE!

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## I Bet You Didn't Know

*Tidbits from Kentucky's heritage  
for every day of the calendar year*

March 4, 1861: Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th President.

March 6, 1750: Dr. Thomas Walker set out from Virginia with his group of men to explore Kentucky for the Loyal land company.

March 7, 1777: The first siege of Harrodsburg by Indians began on this date.

March 10, 1775: Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner set out to blaze a trail into central Kentucky for the Transylvania company.

April 3, 1882: Jesse James was shot in the back and killed in St. Joseph, Missouri. Born in Kentucky, he and his brother Frank were head of the notorious James Gang. Though never convicted of a crime, he did become a legend.

*"On This Day In Kentucky" — Robert Powell*

## Programs and Notices

### History Day 2016 — March 19, 2016

23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Northern Kentucky Regional History Day at NKU  
Doors open at 8:00 a.m. Student Union Building — \$10.00 at the door.

Dr. Don Heinrich Tolzmann will be the opening speaker, with his topic:  
"John A. Roebling and His Suspension Bridge on the Ohio River."

Opening Presentation: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Workshop Session #1 (11:15 to Noon):

- A: "The Tragic Lives of John and Lucy Cronin" — Kathleen Reed
- B: "Using Newspapers for Local and Family History Research" — Elaine Kuhn
- C: "Covington in 1916: A Historical Tour" — Beth Coyle, Cierra Earl, and Kaira Simmons
- D: "Highlights of Local History in Special Collections" — Anne Ryckbost
- E: "Christopher Gist in Northern Kentucky?" — Robert Webster

Workshop Session #2 (12:15 to 1:00):

- A: "The Aftermath of the Battle of Perryville" — Stuart Sanders
- B: "Let the Truth be Told: Researching Local African-American History" — Eric Jackson
- C: "Ancestral Clues from Ohio's Early Land Settlements" — Liz Stratton
- D: "American History through Popular Music" — Burke Miller
- E: "Long-Distance Genealogy Research" — Don Rightmyer

### "Out of Kentucky: Oxford's African-American Community"

(Second in a quarterly series of presentations in 2016 by the KCHS)

**Saturday morning, April 16, 2016 Free and open to the public**

Erlanger branch of the Kenton County Public Library

Meeting room doors open by 10:15 a.m.; program begins at 10:30 a.m.

Bridget Striker is historian and Local History Coordinator at the Boone County Public Library. Discover the Kentucky origins of some of Oxford Ohio's African American families as we explore their roots as enslaved people in Boone County, Kentucky.

### Behringer Crawford Museum: "Silent Storytellers"

**Saturday, February 27 through Sunday, May 15, 2016**

featuring rarely displayed artifacts from the Museum's collections. See how heirlooms in museum collections preserve the memories of our ancestors and impact our lives today.

### Evergreen Cemetery: "Explore Evergreen"

**Saturday April 9, 2016 from Noon to 3 p. m., rain or shine**

hosted by Friends of Evergreen Cemetery; refreshments; free and open to the public;  
historical tours of the cemetery; volunteer recruitment;  
a kickoff for the "adopt a section" preservation effort.

Contact Andrea Janovic, FOEvergreen1847@gmail.com or (859) 391 7218;

Evergreen Cemetery, 25 Alexandria Pike, Southgate, KY 41071;

Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Evergreen-Cemetery>

Linda Eads (859) 462-8729 or (859) 441-5197