

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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KCHS MARCH MEETING

is replaced by the annual

HISTORY DAY

MARCH 14, 1998

Northern Kentucky University

Keynote speaker 9:30 AM

Dr. Joseph Gastright

The Suspension Bridge

Registration \$3, \$4 at the door

APRIL KCHS MEETING

Thursday, the 23rd, 7 PM

NKU Covington Campus

Speaker to be announced

Please register by calling 392-3400

Bulletin

March/April 1998

"THE LIBERTY BELL IS VIEWED BY THOUSANDS"

by John Boh

If you ever wondered how successful the Millennium Tower with its monumental bells will be in attracting tourists, just consider the area's response to the transport of the Liberty Bell in 1915.

In this year, the Bell was being transported back to its home in Philadelphia from the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, ¹ which was the climax of the opening of the Panama Canal in August 1914. The Liberty Bell weighs 2,080 pounds and was cast in London in 1753. As you recall, it rang for the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The above headline in the *The Kentucky Post* on November 23 referred to a grand occasion on Monday, November 22, 1915. Children and other citizens lined the railroad tracks in Covington to view the Liberty Bell on its return trip from San Francisco to Philadelphia. The train halted briefly at the crowded Latonia Race Track grandstand, then proceeded slowly north to the C & O Railroad Bridge. The deliberate movement gave opportunity for patriotic emotions and flag waving. Renditions included "Star Spangled Banner," "My Country Tis of Thee," and "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." Boy Scouts "stood at salute." A man fell through a skylight on Pike Street. Henry Prater from Lee Street, and Robert Zuborg from Twelfth and Russell Streets also sustained slight injuries and were "attended" by Joe Michels, pharmacist for Bart Stuntebeck. The train had "several Pullmans, and the Pennsylvania flat car with its precious cargo at the rear...." ²

The people observed the Liberty Bell from roof tops, porches, balconies, as well as on street level at the tracks. Of note, coincidentally, the paper also reported on November 22 that the Covington Industrial Club and the West End Welfare Association of Covington were advancing plans with demands to the L & N and the C & O railroads regarding these grade level crossings which permeated the city at the time, and when necessary have the city pursue in court the elimination of the hazardous rail-street intersections.

Plans for the celebration and viewing of the Liberty Bell were announced, then changed. The paper carried Superintendent Homer Sluss' announcement on November 10 that Covington school children would be "released" from school, and given "free passage" to cross the Suspension Bridge, a toll bridge at that time, to view the symbol of freedom at the L & N warehouse in Cincinnati. (*The Post* reported on November 11 that Clifford Shinkle, President of the Bridge Company, was paying the tolls himself for the children as well as the teachers.) The following persons would head the parade: Superintendent Sluss, P.

C. Tarvin, Charles Moore, Ben Griffith, and F. A. Crippen from the Press, **Fathers Carroll and Ahmann** from St. Mary's Cathedral and St. Aloysious parochial schools, **Clarence Roberts** from the "Historical Club," merchants **H. Cohen, Ben Eilerman, and Louis Gershuny** (proprietor of the Cloak and Suit Co. at 626 Madison). These arrangements were outlined by Covington **Mayor Philipps**. On November 10, the paper reported that 10,000 Covington public and parochial school children would participate, but that the parade would have to coordinate with about 70,000 Cincinnati school children who were also planning to descend on the warehouse.³ Final arrangements were still in process with planning centered at the Northern Kentucky Press Club on Madison Avenue.

However, on November 16, changes were announced and by November 18, plans were finally completed. Northern Kentucky children would instead view the Bell in Covington. Fifty policemen under Lieutenant **Dan Crout** and fifteen firemen under Fire Chief **Teddy Griffith** will command the crowds." Commissioner **Theodore Kluemper** would arrange locations of rope barricades, and fifty Boy Scouts under Colonel **Nelson Edwards** would assist. Children would sing and wave flags. Twenty-thousand cards bearing a picture of the Bell as well as words to "America," would be distributed. Children would be assigned to these locations: The Latonia Race Track grandstand, **Hubert Cohen** in charge, Nineteenth Street, **W. C. Ryerson** of the Commercial Tribune in charge, Seventeenth Street, **Edwards**, Robbins Street, Superintendent **Sluss**, Ninth Street, Carroll, Pike Street, Father **Ahmann** and **Ben Eilerman**, and Sixth Street,

Gershuny in charge. The train would leave Latonia about 1 :00 PM and arrive in Cincinnati about 1:45 PM. Covington stores would be closed. On November 19 **Ben Eilerman**, President of the Liberty Bell Committee, reported that Newport had given up its previous plans, and would parade its children across the Fourth Street Bridge to designated locations at the Covington tracks.⁴

Of note, Covington was 100 years old as of February 8 of that year. Kentucky elected its 38th Governor, **A. O. Stanley** in a close race against **Edwin P. Morrow**, later elected 40th Governor.⁵ Morrow's campaign manager was **Maurice Galvin**, a robust corporate lawyer from Covington. In the course of his career, he represented the Latonia Race Track ownership. He also represented the railroads in legislative action (such as in 1927) by the city to provide for the construction of overpasses and underpasses.⁶

Thus on November 23, 1915, *The Post's* report included a photo of the scene near Pike and Russells Streets, a description of this auspicious occasion, and coincidentally other civic news, that the election (vote count) for the new Kentucky Governor had been "certified."⁷

1. *The Kentucky Post*, November 23, 1915.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *K. P.* November 10, 1915.

4. *K.P.* November 11, 16, 19, 1915.

5. Allen Webb Smith, *Beginning at the "Point", a Documented History of Northern Kentucky and Environs, the Town of Covington in Particular, 1951-1834*, printed locally, 1977; Robert A. Powell with J. Winston Coleman, Jr., et al. *Kentucky Governors, 1984.*

6. *K.P.*, May 12, 19, June 1, 9, 1927.

7. *K.P.* November 19, 1915.

**An Answer to a Question in The
Last KCHS Bulletin**

Thank you to Margaret Wiseman for sending us an answer to a KCHS reader's question:
Can you identify the uniform of Mathias Schmidt?

The answer is: The Knights of St. George Benevolent Society

Ms. Wiseman sent along a little history from the program of the Society's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary.

"In the latter part of the year 1903 several members of the Mounted Knights of St. George, Cammandery No 282, Covington, who resided in Latonia, were of the opinion that a Cammandery, Uniform Rank, in connection with a Benevolent Society could be organized in their city. [The first meeting was called on January 13, 1904 with Frank Fey acting as presiding officer and George Wieschorster as recording secretary.].....After some lively discussion a Fatigue Uniform, consisting of a navy blue coat and cap with gold trimmings and the regulation sword and belt, was adopted.....Every organization must have a United States Flag. The one which was carried for the Uniform Rank of Knights of St. George of Latonia was the gift of Miss Frances Kimmel.

"The first Drill Meeting of the new organization was held in Roebke's Hall, September 10, 1905. Three days later the Knights took part in the grand parade which was the outstanding feature of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the

Catholic Central Verein at Cincinnati....."

[As of 1915] "By introducing Gym classes, a Library and Reading Rooms, a Dramatic Club and Military Drills, it was instrumental in attracting a large number of young men....."

"On Sunday, October 24, 1920 a Memorial Tablet bearing the names of all the members of Holy Cross Parish who had fallen during the World War was unveiled at the entrance to the church. After a parade through the streets of the city, in which a number of ex-service men took part, addresses were delivered by District Attorney Thomas Slattery and Rev. J. B. Reiter. It was the Knights' last public appearance in uniform.....Since 1921 it has the status of a Benevolent Society only....."

"It can boast today [1929] of being one of the leading benevolent societies in this vicinity. It numbers at present a hundred members, and is on a sound financial basis, as its regular payments of sick and death benefits testify."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....

I am a native of Kentucky being born in Louisville and rearing my children in Ft. Mitchell.

I am particularly interested in information about:

John Edward Walton

Missouri McGlasson Walton

Both died in Erlanger.

Carrie Pacc Riddell who lived in Lookout Heights until marrying Will Riddell and moving to Burlington.

Mary Belle Porter

1312 Martin St.

Cincinnati, Ohio 45208

VOLUNTEERS

We are still in need of volunteers for various activities. Please refer to the center sheet of the last 2 Bulletins. We are especially in need of a Program Chairperson. This person will find help from many members and persons in the community.

Our apologies to Emily Bailey.

In our "Thank You's," we published her name as Dwertman.

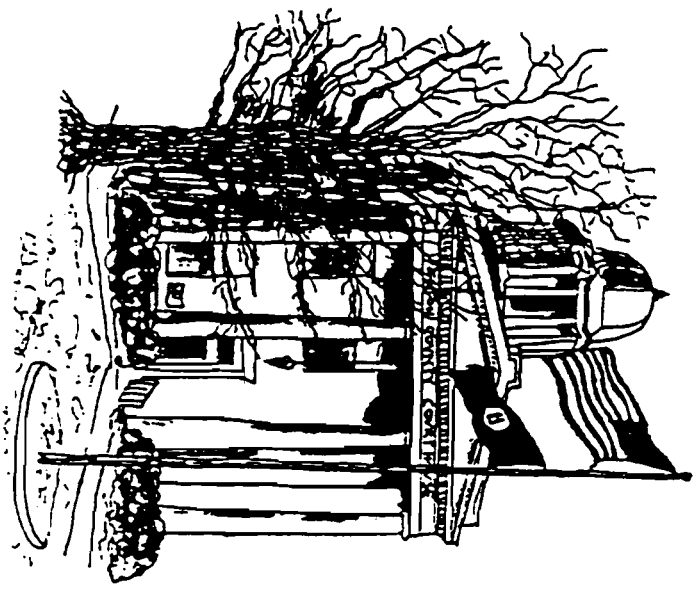
Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"

Kenton County Historical Society
P. O. Box 641
Covington, Kentucky 41012

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KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin March/April 1998



**INSIDE: The Liberty Bell Viewed By
Thousands: A Picture From the Past**