



# Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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March / April

2008

## I Bet You Didn't Know

*Tidbits of Northern Kentucky History*

I bet you didn't know about the first African-American doctor in Covington. Simon J. Watkins was born in Alabama in 1861. He graduated from Tennessee State College (later Walden University), then attended Meharry University in Nashville where he earned a degree in dentistry in 1888 and a degree in medicine in 1889. He remained at Meharry until 1891, as a member of the faculty.

Watkins practiced medicine and dentistry in Covington from 1891 until he retired in 1946. His first office was located at 113 E. 9th. He later had offices at 63 E. 9th, then at 429 Scott Blvd. He died in Covington in 1948 and was laid to rest at Linden Grove Cemetery. He was survived by his wife, Rosa.

*Pieces of the Past, Vol. I — Jim Reis*

Published bi-monthly by

**The Kenton County Historical Society**

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## Upcoming Programs

**March 9, 2008 and April 13, 2008**

The Northern Kentucky History, Art, and Lecture Series continues with this season's "Living Together In The Tri-State" theme. The March installment will be presented by Dr. J.K. Bhattacharjee and will cover Hindu/India emigration and influence to the area. The program will begin at 2 p.m. the Baker Hunt Art and Culture Center, 640 Greenup Street, Covington. The April session will be held on the 13th, when Muslim emigration and influence will be discussed by Dr. Ferhan Asghar. For additional information, contact Baker Hunt at (859) 431-0020.

The remaining schedule for the series is as follows:

May 18th — Italian — Judge Ronald A. Panioto and Phil Ciafardini

June 8th — Irish — David Schroeder

September 14th — African-American — Dr. Prince Brown, Jr.

October 12th — Appalachian — Dr. Andrea Watkins

November 9th — Latino — Sr. Juana Meddez

## Saturday April 5, 2008 History Day at NKU

This year's History Day will be April 5th, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It will be held in the Northern Kentucky University Center. The opening presentation, "That All Mankind Should Be Free — Abraham Lincoln and African Americans," will feature Dr. Thomas C. Mackey, Professor of History at the University of Louisville, and will be from 10:00 to 11:00. A wide variety of seminars on local and regional history will follow and more than a dozen booths and displays will be manned by historical societies from thirteen Northern Kentucky counties, as well as groups from the Historical Federation of Kentucky, the Kentucky Historical Society, and others. For additional information, including advanced registration, contact John Boh at (859) 491-0490 or at [jhboh@juno.com](mailto:jhboh@juno.com).

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

# Jesse and Hannah Grant

Taken in part from Jim Reis' "Pieces of the Past — Volume 3"

Jesse Root Grant was born on January 12, 1794, in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. His father was Noah Grant, a Revolutionary War captain who had moved his family from New England to Pennsylvania after the war.

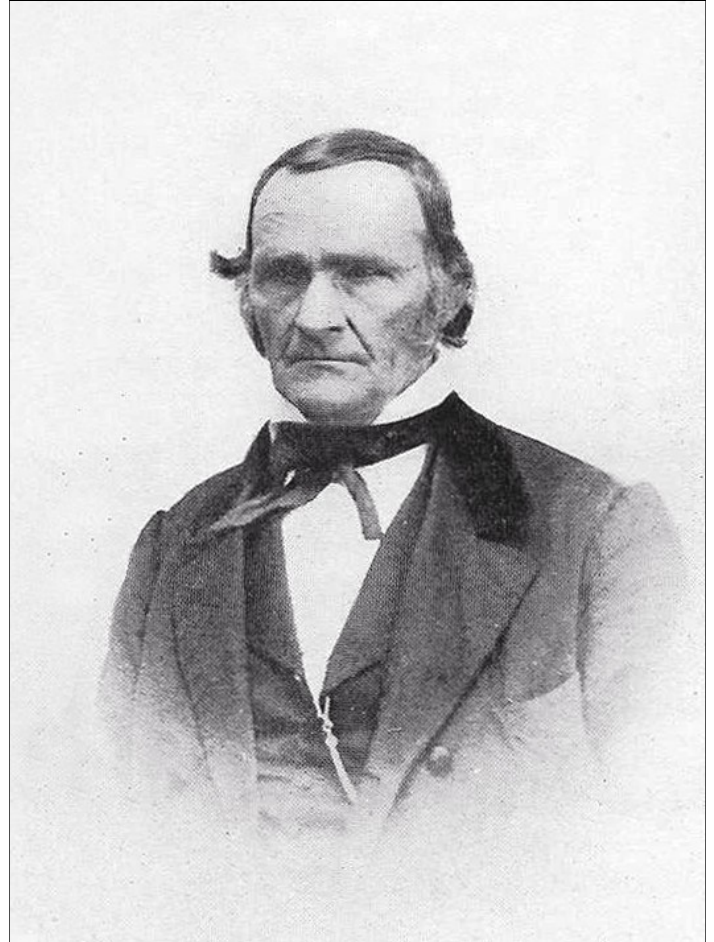
Noah's first wife, Anna, by whom he had two sons, died about 1787. Noah Grant married again on March 4, 1792, at Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Noah and Rachel Kelly Grant had six children, including Jesse, the second of her three boys.

Noah and Rachel Grant moved their family to Maysville, Kentucky in the late 1790s. Young Jesse became an apprentice in the tanning business there. Early Mason County records mention Noah's name many times, usually as a witness to various land sales. According to *Burke's Presidential Families of the United States*, published in 1975, Noah Grant died in Maysville on February 14, 1819. It is not clear where Noah Grant is buried, but his brother, Peter, is buried in the Maysville Cemetery.

As an adult, Jesse Grant moved to Ohio and married Hannah Simpson in Point Pleasant, Ohio on June 24, 1821. He was 27 and Hannah was 22. Jesse continued his work as a tanner.

Jesse and Hannah's first child, born on April 27, 1822, was Ulysses Grant. Jesse once told a *Covington Journal* newspaper reporter that he and his wife could not decide what to name the baby. "We finally agreed to write all the names we chose, place them in a hat and draw, abiding by the result," he explained. Jesse said the first name drawn was Ulysses. Noah, however, didn't like the name. He wanted Hiram. So to please the grandfather, the little boy was named Hiram Ulysses Grant — but would be called Ulysses.

Jesse moved his family to Georgetown, Ohio while Ulysses was still a toddler. The other five Grant



Portrait of Jesse Root Grant

children were born there: Samuel Simpson Grant (1825), Clare Rachel Grant (1828), Virginia Payne Grant (1832), Orvil Lynch Grant (1835), and Mary Frances Grant (1839).

Ulysses was sent to Maysville and in 1836 and 1837 attended the Maysville Seminary. In 1838 he received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Fearing that his fellow classmates would tease him because his initials spelled out H.U.G., he simply wrote Ulysses Grant on the application form. The congressman who nominated him, however, knew a middle name was required so he wrote in "Simpson," the maiden name of Ulysses'



*Hannah Simpson Grant, mother of Ulysses S. Grant*

mother. Thus, the future Civil War General and president became Ulysses S. Grant.

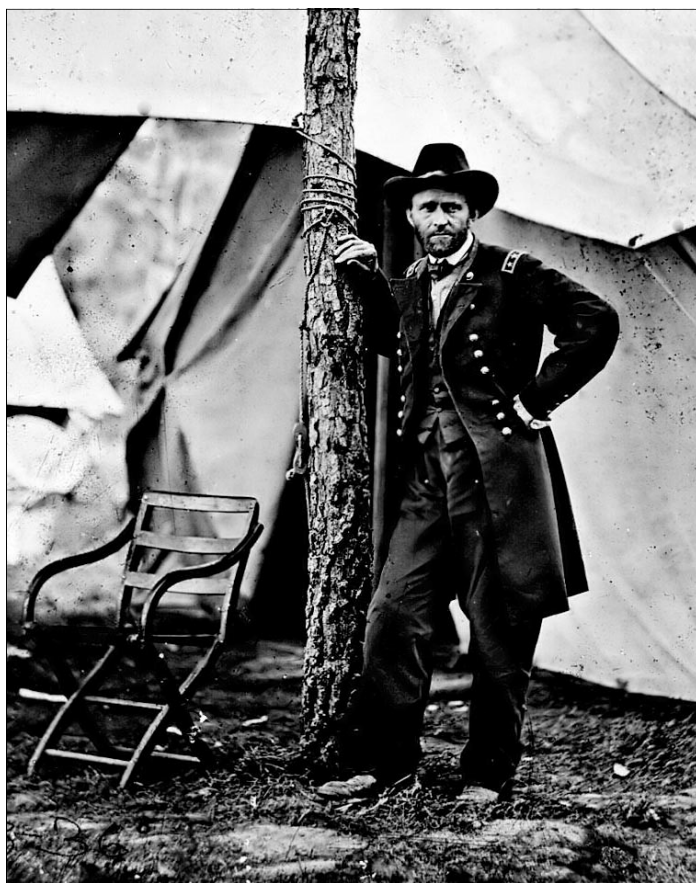
While Ulysses pursued his military career, Jesse Grant set up his son, Samuel, in the leather business in Galena, Illinois, and his son, Orvil, in Bethel, Ohio. Jesse and Hannah moved, along with their daughters, to Covington, Kentucky in 1855. He continued in the tanning business and also became involved in politics. In May 1862, Jesse Grant was noted in Covington as one who signed a resolution in support of the Union Army during the Civil War. At the time, he was a member of the Union Party, which tried to walk a fine line between the Democrats, who opposed the war, and the Republicans, who were considered radicals. The Republicans had won the 1860 election, putting Abraham Lincoln in the White House.

The youngest of the six Grant children, Mary Frances, married Michael John Cramer at the Greenup Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Covington on October 27, 1863. Cramer was a native of Switzerland.

Jesse and Hannah's oldest daughter, Clara Rachel Grant, never married. She died at the family's Covington home, located at 520 Greenup Street, on March 6, 1867.

Jesse Grant became Covington postmaster in 1866, replacing Hamilton Cummings. Jesse assumed the duties on March 12. The post office was located in the Cooper Building on the northwest corner of Sixth and Madison.

1868 brought the nomination of Ulysses S. Grant as the Republican Party presidential candidate. The *New York Times* sent a reporter to Covington in October 1868 to interview Jesse Grant. The reporter described Jesse as "hale, hearty, cheerful, of good digestion, always awake (during the day time) and to me



*Ulysses S. Grant*





*Covington home of Jesse and Hannah Grant, parents of Ulysses S. Grant  
The home still stands today, located at 520 Greenup Street*

a phrase as expression as it is elegant, always ‘up to snuff,’ which being interpreted means having good common sense.” The reporter continued that Jesse was no “genius,” but he had a philosophical mind and an old fashioned Henry Clay-style progressive attitude.

In 1869, the last child still living with Jesse and Hannah married on May 13. Virginia Payne Grant was 36 when she married Abel R. Corbin.

Jesse Grant’s health began to fail in the fall of 1871, and there was some speculation he would resign as postmaster. Instead, he took a medical leave of absence, keeping his title and his salary of about \$3,500. Gradually, Jesse’s condition worsened, however, and

by June 28, 1873, the *Covington Journal* reported he was not expected to live much longer. A message was sent for his son, the president to come. President Grant was still trying to work out the details of his trip when Jesse died – June 29, 1873. It was later discovered that Jesse had been bedridden for two weeks before his death. His wife, Hannah, and daughter, Mary Cramer, were at his side.

President Grant arrived for the funeral, which was held across the street from the Grant home, at the Union Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifth and Greenup Streets. The pastors of that church, plus those of First Presbyterian in Covington and St. Paul’s in Cincinnati conducted the services. A procession of

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# A Memorable Team

Karl Lietzenmayer

I recently spent a delightful evening with a man approaching his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday- Clem Dwertman. Mr. Dwertman has spent his entire life in Covington and lost his wife several years ago but his mind is still churning a mile a minute. A few weeks ago, we received the photo below from him through his son, Mark. Mark told us his father had a story behind each and every boy. Mr. Dwertman is now the only person on the photo still living. It was up to him to preserve their stories for all of us. The following are Clem's remembrances of his teammates (continued on the next page).



*1925 St. Benedict Church Club – Champions of Catholic Youth Baseball League With a 21-1 Record*

Members pictured L to R (all deceased, except Dwertman): Front row: R. Clem Dwertman, former Covington grocer; Frank Hahn, accountant at DuPont Corp. Second row: Ulrich “Bud” Boehmer, Hamilton, OH; Gene Williams, Covington businessman; Father Amelian, OSB, manager; John Bogenschutz, Xenia, OH, furniture salesman; Ed Haar, Covington stationary fireman, Pugh Co. Back row: John R. Green, Lakeside Park, John R. Green Company, Covington; Ed Buckholz, Covington salesman; Ed Nehring, Covington, electronics; Bud Conner, beer salesman & former Campbell County sheriff; Frank Crane, IRS; Ray Thelen, Robke Motors sales manager.



**Clem Dwertman:** Growing up in St. Benedict Church in Austinburg neighborhood of Covington, Clem played a lot of baseball as a child. This is the first team from St. Benedict who sported uniforms. Clem was playing ball in the street outside the parish hall, when his teammates called him inside to “try on your uniform”. Clem didn’t expect to make the team, since he was small for his age. As he entered the room, he was overjoyed to learn he was indeed the second baseman. And now, thanks to the Holy Name Society (a men’s parish organization), the team will look professional on the field! Surely the uniforms were acquired through the lobbying of Father Amelian as well. The assistant pastor loved baseball and enjoyed being the boys’ coach.

Clem’s grandfather emigrated from Westphalia, probably one of the many refugees from the 1848 revolutions. Clem was one of 10 children of Bernard Dwertman and his wife who were married in 1895. The family was of modest means and Clem lived with his parents and siblings in a 4-room house at 327 East 16<sup>th</sup> Street. This humble dwelling had no basement, no plumbing. At the time of this photo his family had moved to 1618-20 Scott.

After serving in the Navy in World War II, Clem married and began a grocery business with his brother Ted at 604 Main Street [now “Cosmos”]. Ted went on to other ventures when they sold that business. In 1949, Clem purchased the “K-Market” at 16<sup>th</sup> and Holman from owners Kennedy & Klaene. He ran the store until he retired in 1969.

**John R. Green:** Nicknamed “Coke” for his love of the soft drink, John lost his parents early and was raised by an uncle – Gus Stagenberg. John’s first job was with the Remke Groceries. John didn’t like it and hired on with Covington Paper & Woodenware as a salesman. After gaining experience there, he wanted his own business and succeeded in convincing Covington Trust to lend him \$10,000 to rent and renovate a former tobacco warehouse on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, near Main into the school supply business known today. He rapidly became a millionaire and the extremely successful business is still family managed.

**Ed Buckholz:** Ed’s family ran the concession stands at the old Covington Ball Park at 15<sup>th</sup> & Eastern. At one time the Covington Stars, semi-pro team used this park. Ed became a salesman.

**Ed Nehring:** Ed was a bit eccentric perhaps an early version of a nerd, according to Clem. He was obsessed with invention, loved electronics and rented a boarded up store on 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Peaselberg, where he experimented undisturbed with things electrical and mechanical. He ran a TV and radio repair shop. Incidentally, Ed’s father actually took the photo of the team.

**Ed Conner:** Became a beer salesman and later moved to Newport. His numerous relationships developed through his beer distributorship enabled him to make many business acquaintances. He entered politics and was elected Campbell County Sheriff after the gambling was cleaned up. Clem mentioned that if the gamblers were still in place, Ed could have become wealthy through the bribes that were common among local government officials during those times.

**Frank Crane:** Frank was one of triplets, having two sisters. He developed a career working at the Covington Center of the IRS.

**Ray Thelen:** Ray became manager of Seiler Motors, which became Robke Chevrolet at 13<sup>th</sup> & Madison Avenue. Ray died relatively young.

**“Bub” Boehmer:** After grade school, the Boehmer family moved to Hamilton, Ohio.

**Frank Hahn:** Frank graduated from St. Xavier High, after St. Benedict School. Frank’s family was one of the few in the neighborhood who had an automobile. Many times the team piled into their car for outings. Frank’s father was a printer. He lived a long life (into his 90s).

**Gene Wins:** Gene clerked in a card shop in Cincinnati on Vine Street between 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>. The card shop had a bookmaking operation in the back room. Later Gene ran his own operation several

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# Highway Opened Door To Kenton County

Taken From Jim Reis' "Pieces Of The Past — Volume 1"

It was once our only link to the nation. People danced in the streets when it opened, bicyclists held races on it and generations of Kenton County residents have since traveled it to work and vacation.

Dixie Highway (U.S. 25) has been widened, flattened, straightened and rerouted many times over the 90 years since its 1918 opening. However, it was long before that year when a "modern" road was built along the same basic path.

Dixie Highway replaced what was known as the Covington—Lexington Turnpike. Old State Road in Park Hills and Main Street in Florence was once part of the major thoroughfare. The state paid more than \$200,000 for the 56 miles of "McAdamized" roadway that comprised the turnpike. The remaining 26 miles were financed by local counties or private groups.

The McAdam system was used on all the original state roads. It consisted of a roadbed of crushed stone, 10 to 13 inches in depth in the center and tapering to 9 to 10 inches on the sides. It was considered the modern method of road construction at the time and was subject to washouts that often left the roads little more than dirt paths.

The Covington—Lexington Turnpike was state chartered in 1829. Only part of the long highway was finished by 1843, because of a lack of funds. A *Lexington Intelligencer* account stated that 27 miles north from Lexington and about 20 miles south from Covington had been completed, leaving about a 30-mile gap. Toll booths were situated along the road to collect fees. Rates in 1843 were: one-fourth of a cent for each hog, sheep, and smaller animal, five-cents for a horse and rider, and 62½ cents for a stagecoach. An 1867 article

showed the 37-mile stretch from Covington to Williamstown as the best revenue producer, generating more than \$90,000 in about fourteen years. Next best was the 12-mile stretch between Georgetown and Lexington, which produced about \$34,000. The 36 miles between Williamstown and Georgetown brought in the least amount of money, \$3,300, during that same time period.

The *Cincinnati Atlas* newspaper warned in 1844, that if developers didn't move quickly, a soon-to-be-completed road from Maysville to Lexington would become the main route into Central Kentucky, drastically hurting both Covington and Cincinnati. The Covington to Williamstown road was completed in December 1849, but it took several years to finish the 12 miles south of Williamstown. The completed Covington—Lexington Turnpike helped spur the growth of several smaller cities, such as Walton, Erlanger, Dry Ridge and Williamstown.

Tolls on the Kenton County portion of the turnpike were eliminated in July 1913, when the county purchased the section of road inside its borders for \$17,250.

Local interest in the turnpike increased tremendously in April 1915, when word leaked out about plans for a federal road system to be constructed between Chicago and Miami, to be called the Dixie Highway. Kenton County residents praised the idea, but soon realized they were not the only region in the running. Indiana also looked like a prime spot for the highway — emphasizing a route through Louisville. Campbell County and Newport also asked developers to consider the Alexandria Pike route. And, Ludlow pointed out their Southern Railroad Bridge as a possibility.

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# Kraus Art Inspires New Interest

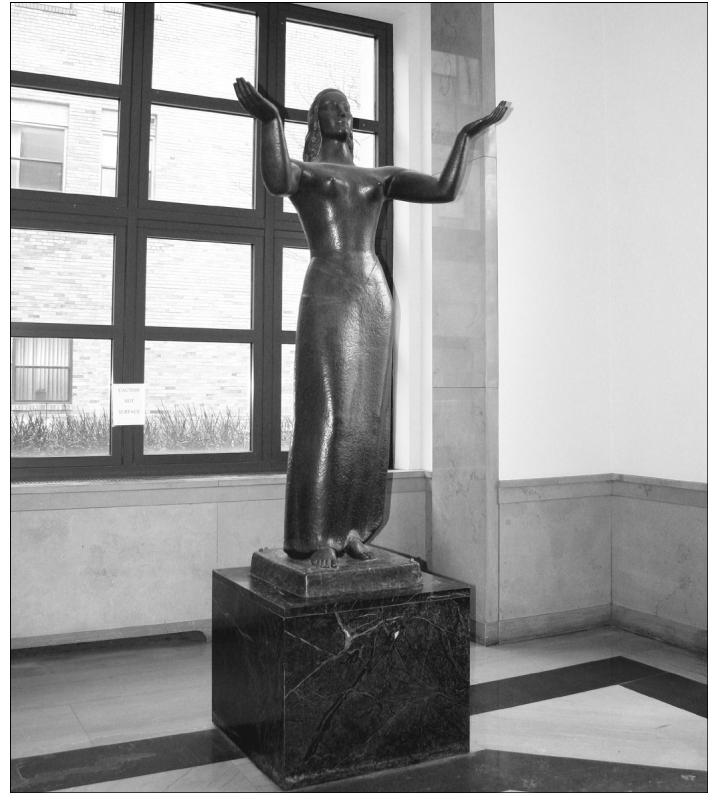
Karl Lietzenmayer

Many patrons to the Scott Street Covington Post Office hardly notice the magnificent bronze of “Justice” in the lobby. Recent focus on the work was prompted by Judith Resnik and Dennis Curtis of Yale Law School who have produced a new book, due out in 2008, on artistic renditions of justice, *Representing Justice: The Rise and Fall of Adjudication from Renaissance Iconography to Twenty-first Century Courthouses*. The volume will use more than 100 images from courts, town halls and museums around the world.

Included are several WPA-era art pieces, including photos of the Romuald Kraus’ statue of *Justice* that stands in the Newark, New Jersey Courthouse. Krause won competition for the public art sponsored by the Treasury Department’s “Section of Fine Art” begun in 1934 [commonly known as “WPA Art”]. He caste the statue for Newark in 1935 and did a second casting for the Covington Courthouse/Post Office in 1942, for which the government paid him a total of \$7,900.

In 1942, Krause told the Federal Works Agency that his inspiration for the statue was derived from conversations he had with his brother, a Justice of peace in Austria. “We were convinced that condemnation of a person is a matter of great concern,” he said. “This compelled me to express in my figure of ‘justice’ not only the idea of granting absolute justice, but also to combine it with a feeling of understanding and commiseration as well. This was my only aim, and therefore I did not think it necessary to add a sword or scale to my figure of ‘Justice’ as was customary in more traditional art.”

Kraus later executed a terra-cotta relief for the Williamstown Post Office titled “In Kentucky”



*Romuald Krause’s bronze of “Justice”  
located inside the Scott Street Covington Post Office*

placed directly over the lockboxes. The Williamstown piece is more typical of government-building art than his “Justice.” For, by and large, the artwork tended to reaffirm — even romanticize — Kentucky values and mail delivery.

Romuald Krause, born in Itzknay, Austria-Hungary in 1891, immigrated to America, worked in Cincinnati for a time and settled in Louisville where he died in 1954. The papers of Romuald Kraus are archived at the University of Louisville’s Bridwell Art Library.

For further reading of this subject, see *Off the Wall: New Deal Post Office Murals* by Patricia Raynor.



A Northern Kentucky delegation took a 15-piece band by special railroad car to a national meeting in Chattanooga in May 1915, to lobby for the federal road. After the meeting, Covington Judge D.C. Lee predicted the new roadway would be routed over the Covington—Lexington Turnpike. By lining up support from dozens of cities and counties both north and south of Lexington, the delegation totaled 250 against Louisville's 24 supporters. Lee's prediction proved right. The route of the 4,000-mile Dixie Highway was run through Northern Kentucky, basically following the old Covington—Lexington Turnpike. Plans called for a two-lane, 18-foot wide concrete roadway.

The Dixie Highway opened from Covington to Erlanger in December 1916. When the section between Erlanger and Boone County opened in 1921, officials planned a big party. Bands and food were brought in, the roadside was decorated; 10,000 danced, sang, and drank.

Traffic on the new "national" Dixie Highway prompted the development of gas stations and motels along its Northern Kentucky route. Among the more glamorous areas was Kenton County's famous "Gourmet Strip." It ran from Park Hills to Ft. Mitchell. The Gourmet Strip featured fine food and music. The Lookout House, White Horse and Oelsner's Colonial Inn were among the best known.

A portion of the Dixie Highway between Covington and Park Hills, appropriately called the "Big Bend" or "Dead Man's Curve," was to that era what the "Cut-in-the-hill" was to I-71/I-75 before recent rerouting. The congestion and wrecks in that stretch led to plans in 1941 for a new road along the Ft. Mitchell streetcar tracks.

Other plans to better the Dixie Highway in Northern Kentucky were shelved in the early 1950s when I-75 was proposed. Construction bids were awarded in 1958 and the section of interstate between Covington and Florence opened in 1962.

## 2008 Kentucky History Awards

Congratulations go out to two local recipients of awards presented at this year's ceremonies.

The awards were presented by the Historical Confederation of Kentucky and the Kentucky Historical Society, with ceremonies held at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort on March 1, 2008.

The Baker Hunt Art and Culture Center in Covington received the "Award of Merit" for their "*Northern Kentucky History Art and Culture Lecture Series*."

The "Certificate of Commendation for Publication: Local History" was presented to Robert Webster for his book, *The Balcony Is Closed – A History of Northern Kentucky's Long-forgotten Neighborhood Movie Theaters*. Bob received the same award last year for his book, *Northern Kentucky Fires*.

### Team — Continued from Page 6

doors north, established on the second floor over a religious goods store. Eventually ran out of Cincinnati, Gene moved to Covington and opened a Laundromat at 5<sup>th</sup> and Scott owned by R. B. Noll. He continued the bookmaking operation there as well.

**John Bogenschutz:** The Bogenschutz family became Covington firemen; before 1900, Karl Bogenschutz manufactured stoves; Charles managed Latonia Race-track. John moved to Xenia and ran a furniture store. His firm suffered severe damage in the tornado which hit the town in the 1970s.

**Ed Haar:** He became a stationary engineer for the Pugh Company.

# A Look Back at The Headlines

*An on-going feature reliving local headlines  
from the Kentucky Post.  
This issue features: July 1970.*

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## Will Rebuild Beverly Hills

The sumptuous Beverly Hills Club in Southgate, ravaged by fire less than one month ago, will be rebuilt and enlarged.

“It will be twice as big as before,” says club owner Dick Schilling. Construction that had been going on since before the fire will continue while final plans for the club’s redevelopment are still being drawn. No cause for last month’s blaze has yet to be been determined.

## Removal of C&O Bridge On Schedule

Two-thirds of the work has been completed now on the removal of the old C&O bridge across the Ohio. Barring any unforeseen delays, the demolition will be finished with the six week time restrictions. The bridge will be replaced by the Clay Wade Bailey Bridge.

## Building to be Razed

The 70-year-old City-County Building, located at 3rd and Court in Covington, will soon be demolished. Built in 1900, the building has been vacant for some time now.

## Anniversary

The Madison Avenue Baptist Church will celebrate its 113th Anniversary this coming Sunday.

## Tiny Tim

The unusual entertainer, Tiny Tim, was recently seen by Covington physician, Dr. Howard Ravenscraft for a bout with laryngitis. The star was staying at the President’s Inn while playing at the Lookout House. Ravenscraft is the hotel doctor.

*Grant — Continued from Page 4*

25 carriages, including one with President Grant, followed the hearse from the church to Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, where Jesse Grant was buried.

It was later learned that Jesse was writing a biography on his son, but was not able to finish it. Jesse’s widow, Hannah Grant, rented out the Covington home and moved in with her daughter, Virginia Corbin, who lived in New Jersey. Hannah died there on May 11, 1883. She was buried next to her husband in Cincinnati.

Ulysses S. Grant served two terms as president, from 1869 to 1877. He died in 1885 of throat cancer, shortly after completing his memoirs. The home of Jesse and Hannah Grant still stands today, located at 520 Greenup Street in Covington.

## STILL ON SALE

The Society’s newest publication, “The Balcony Is Closed,” went on sale just before Christmas and is selling very well. The book outlines nearly a hundred neighborhood movie theaters that once filled the Northern Kentucky region, and also details the history of theaters — from the original live entertainment venues, through the silent film era, and onto the introduction of the multiplex warehouse facilities. For your copy, send a check for \$19.95 to the Society (address listed on the front of the Bulletin).

## Advertisement

Robertson’s Restaurant, located in the Expressway Plaza, Fort Mitchell, is offering their “Dixie Boy” — double decker hamburger for 40¢. You can also enjoy an eight-piece chicken dinner, complete with french fries, cole slaw, and hush puppies, for only \$1.85.

## Movies

*The Dirty Dozen* is the feature at the Dixie Gardens Drive-In, while the Madison Theater will be showing *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*, the first feature film for the “peanuts” gang.

## Then and Now



Left: The building which housed Pieck Pharmacy, located on the northwest corner of 6th and Main Streets, Covington. Today, the structure still stands and is home to Dee Felice Café/Restaurant. “Then” photo courtesy the Kenton County Public Library Archives. “Now” photo courtesy Ron Einhaus.

## Mystery Photo

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



### ANSWER:

Early images of what is now the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. The airport’s designation is CVG, which stands for Covington, the largest city within close proximity of the field at the time of its construction.



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

# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March / April 2008



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Parents of Ulysses

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