

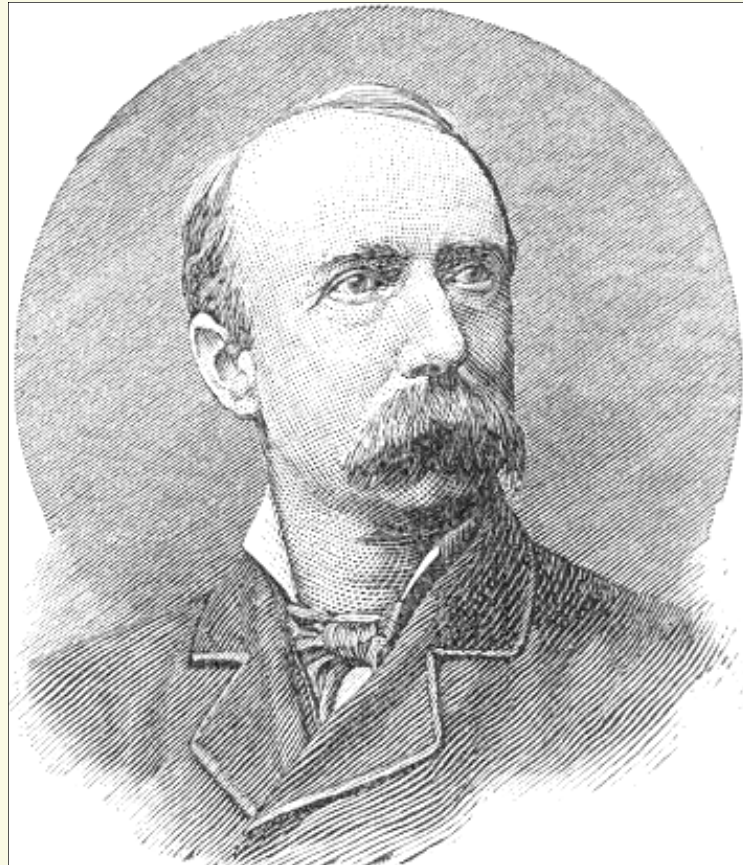


# Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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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From Pioneer Days to the 1920s

as recalled by  
Eleanor Childs Meehan  
and  
George G. Perkins

# **From Pioneer Days to the 1920s**

## **as recalled by Eleanor Childs Meehan and George G. Perkins**

John Boh

Eleanor Childs Meehan and George Gilpin Perkins both had ancestors at Brandywine in the Revolutionary War. Both were Presbyterian, and born in the same year (1839). They had strong Southern roots, but enjoyed prosperity in an industrializing age.

### **Meehan's Family**

A wealthy inventor's widow telling her family's story, Meehan also recalls a panorama of antebellum "old Covington" (1924).<sup>1</sup> Her DAR application stated that her grandfather, James Gowdy, had served at the Battle of Brandywine with a Pennsylvania Company, and had "had the honor of being a bodyguard of Mrs. Washington...in 1780."

Her father, Montague M. Childs, was born in Virginia, and her mother, Eleanor Gowdy, in Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> Eleanor Childs remembered family stories of Indian raids, of fleeing often to a blockhouse for refuge; of both grandfathers serving in the Revolutionary War; and of a great uncle telling tales from the War of 1812.

Little brother Preston and some classmates joined the Confederate army. During the Confederate invasion (Morgan's raid of 1862), industrialist Alexander Greer, seeing the emergency, alerted citizens on horseback. There were the forts and batteries at Ft. Mitchel and elsewhere; the pontoon bridge over the Ohio River; the Rebel Yell - and Lee and Jackson - the equals of Grant and Sherman. "My father was an enthusiastic lover of his native state Virginia", where her grandfather, Benjamin Childs, once owned the White Sulphur Springs.

Husband James Meehan, an Irish immigrant, joined the Confederate navy. He was captured by Union forces, and escaped, taking refuge in Florida, Cuba, and then Mexico where he engaged in railroad

building under Emperor Maximilian. After seeing Maximilian executed, rebel forces imprisoned the American engineer suspecting that he knew something about Maximilian's hidden "treasures." He was rescued shortly before his planned execution.

Before the Civil War, James Meehan had worked in the Kentucky Central Railroad repair shops. Returning to Covington he worked in a machine shop. In 1881, he became master mechanic for the Cincinnati, New Orleans & Texas Pacific Railroad, which leased the rail shops in Ludlow. He invented a special type of rail car brake shoe which made him wealthy. Resigning in 1893, he promoted his brake shoe, manufactured by the Condon-Ross-Meehan factory in Chattanooga, Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

### **Perkins' Family**

A lawyer, judge and politician, Perkins with stylish prose reveals in *A Kentucky Judge* (1931) his family history, insider tales, political happenings, and personal experiences. He recollects American wars and events (in random fashion - as he interpreted it all).<sup>4</sup>

His great grandfather Israel and a Joseph Gilpin were both officers in the Revolution. Perkins claims that the farm of Israel Gilpin was located at the Brandywine battle site. The Perkins and Gilpin families were neighbors at Wilmington, Delaware. The Gilpins moved in the 1780s from Delaware to Bourbon County. William Perkins came from Maryland to Kentucky as a boy with his widowed mother. In Paris, Kentucky, William married Nancy Gilpin, daughter of Israel Gilpin (1804).

In Bourbon County, after his uncle James had apprenticed in a woolen mill and his father in a saddler shop, they moved in 1828 with George's grandparents to Boone County, acquiring farmland.

Grandfather William built a grist mill on Gunpowder Creek. A slave cooked for George, his parents and many siblings. Of Burlington and Boone County, George Perkins recalled the Morgan Academy [see: NKH, XVI, #1], the nearby cemetery, the courthouse, prominent citizens, and that the British Museum was exhibiting an enormous reconstructed skeleton of a mammoth from Big Bone Springs.

In the Mexican War at Buena Vista, one-fifth of General Zachary Taylor's troops were Kentuckians. Perkins' military heroes included Taylor, Major John P. Gaines of Boone County, General William O. Butler of Carrollton and Kentuckian Richard Mentor Johnson.

In 1844 H. Clay White (1830-1908) "lifted me when a child in Burlington to the election window to vote," playfully, for his father's favorite, Henry Clay. When Perkins was presiding judge, White became a colleague in the circuit clerk's office and finally chief clerk in the Covington judicial district.

At age 10, the Perkins family moved to Covington (1849). Perkins witnessed the opening of the Covington & Lexington Railroad. A major project of erecting locks in the Licking River had been abandoned but stones from it were then used for building the new Roebling Bridge.

### **Meehan: People, Events**

Along the Ohio, old Covington had several visitations of Cholera, that of 1849 being very severe with many fatalities. Eleanor attempted a little girl's essay about it "and the heart will shudder when the Summer of 1849 is brought to the memory."

In 1853-54 when the Ohio River froze, heavy iron-laden wagons crossed on the ice and booths were erected to serve hot lunches. Her family lived on the Banklick Road. Emily added, "Once our little settlement was thrown into great excitement with Federal officers rushing up to the newly discovered retreat of the famous counterfeiter, John Mount."

Thomas and Dinah Piersol Kennedy sold the land that became the original town of Covington. Their descendents, an extended family of many Pres-



Above: Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church (demolished)  
(Courtesy Kenton County Public Library)

On the Cover: Judge George G. Perkins  
(Courtesy Kenton County Public Library)

byterians, included Dr. Louise Southgate and her brother Bernard.

Of many happy memories at the end of Presbyterian services Pastor John Mr. Bayless might announce: "there will be preaching this afternoon at Casey's Schoolhouse." This meant a long ride out the Lexington Pike to a building near the Turkey Foot Road, "a long white building later a dwelling." Mrs. Bayless "had a number of us children interested" and would encourage missionary work at quilting sessions.

The growing First Presbyterian congregation built a second church near the northeast corner of 9th and Madison (still standing) but soon the congregation moved to Madison near Eleventh Street (the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, now demolished).

Meehan went with her father to hear the Irish Apostle of Temperance, Father Mathew then visiting this country; her father was a rigid abstainer from alcohol but moral suasion seemed more effective than Prohibition. Like Meehan, little George Perkins attended the same meeting and he "felt on my head the caressing hand of Father Mathew," from Ireland preaching for temperance. Yet both authors discounted the ongoing Prohibition effort.

William Orr, Covington's first Presbyterian preacher and minister, also started the Covington Female Academy for young women. Females were taught reading, writing, rhetoric, arithmetic, geography, ancient and modern history, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, music, drawing - besides ladylike manners and some household crafts.

Kentucky historian Richard Collins called Dr. Orr's academy one of Kentucky's "best literary institutions." Centrally located in the Ohio-Mississippi Valley, it once advertised that boarders would pay \$65.00 per person for 20 weeks study.

Dr. Orr started his academy in the White Mansion on extensive grounds between Montgomery and Russell and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets. In 1849 he moved from Montgomery Street to his new edifice (still standing) on Sanford, the property extending from Sanford (then an alley) to the Licking River and south to 7<sup>th</sup> Street. It was Eleanor's Alma Mater. Later developers built Garrard Street through the old school grounds over a drinking well that, she recalled, had been "a panacea for any ailment."<sup>5</sup>

Covington physician Dr. (Frank W.) Major had a son Tom who had been Eleanor's Sunday school companion. Tom fought for the Confederacy and was wounded. He was treated in Cincinnati by two "noble" and influential women, Mrs. Esther Cleveland and Mrs. Peter of Cincinnati. They helped found St. Elizabeth Hospital. Tom became Catholic, a priest and an idol of fellow Confederates.<sup>6</sup>

Linden Grove Cemetery was the favorite Sunday resort; the main cemetery road was lined by prominent Locust trees that blossomed in May. Filling in the hollow for the 13th Street roadbed created a lake requiring relocation of a couple family vaults. Also the city desecrated the original cemetery layout by cutting a street through the rear and the back hillside became densely built over.

Meehan attended a funeral of one of her mother's service maids buried in a desolate little burying ground with a few straggling graves of the pioneer Catholics — in present-day Devou Park (before St. Mary's Cemetery was established).

For railroad development (1870s) the city removed its pioneer burying ground at 6th and Craig streets, the site of many elegant funerals. (Remains were transferred mainly to Linden Grove and to Highland Cemetery.)

When the first permanent Covington Courthouse was remodeled the statue of General Washington was taken down and placed in the courthouse yard for a long time. But so neglected it was permanently lost as an artifact.

### **Perkins: People, Events**

George Perkins wrote, "My principal schooling in Covington, to which city my father removed when I was about ten years of age, was in the private school of Professor Sackett Mead. It was when the rod was in common use and the larger boys, my older brother Harry, and James and Lewis Casey, John Sandford, William MacKoy, Mortimer Benton, John Hopkins, the Riggs brothers, and others, all fairly diligent students, gave him something to do when their mischief making and disregard of school regimen were let loose, the master always coming out first best. The school room was a large second-story hall in the fire engine brick building on the southwest corner of Pike and Washington Streets, where the 'Henry Clay,' a volunteer row-boat fire engine had its quarters."

Perkins continued, "The only other fire engine was the 'Neptune' whose pumps were worked overhead, and its building, also a brick one with a hall over it, was at the corner of an alley midway between Scott and Greenup Street, running north from Third Street to Second Street, the building afterward becoming the workhouse for misdemeanor culprits, within which the murderer Hicks was hanged, the alley later becoming Court Avenue to the Suspension Bridge over the Ohio River. A rivalry sprung up between the two fire companies, both volunteer, and became so spirited that incidents of arson (to test competition) brought penitentiary terms."

Perkins attended college for two years in Shelby County. Classmates included the Southgate brothers, the Norvel brothers, the Riggs brothers and Wright Smith, all from Covington. His momentous first trip from home was on a steam packet, the *Ben*



Covington Fire Company #1 — Sixth Street at Washington  
(Courtesy Kenton County Public Library)

Franklin, to Louisville, then a stagecoach from the Galt House in Louisville to Shelbyville.

The Dred Scott Decision in 1857 had stirred great sectional unrest. In 1859 Perkins trained with the Madeira Guards, a company of states rights sympathizers led by Aston Madeira, a former Covington city councilman. But Perkins contracted typhoid fever, recovering at home.<sup>7</sup> Illness caused Perkins to take a year off. He transferred from Shelby College to Farmers College outside Cincinnati, graduating in 1861. Perkins did not fight in the Civil War, but rather studied law under Judge James Pryor for several years, and was admitted to the bar in 1863. Attending the nearby Ohio Female College was his wife-to-be Lavinia Jane Smith, a cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln.<sup>8</sup>

The art of McAdam roads facilitated stagecoach travel. He recalled that once “after its all-day run from Lexington to Covington, when the sun was sinking” the stagecoach rounded “the turn at Pike and Madison Streets at full speed, the guard’s horn

sounding, and the coachman reining up his dripping team, their feet bringing fire from the hard street.”

Ten miles per hour or more was the speed of the best of the later mail coaches. Perkins had seen the old time coach roll into the Burlington post-office, before a big gathering of villagers thirsting for news of the Polk and Clay presidential election and about General Taylor and his large contingent of Kentucky volunteers who were driving Santa Anna into Mexico City for the inevitable surrender.”

His first stagecoach trip was still in an historic coach... the body of which was not supported by springs but swung on strong leather straps. By the late 1920s, travelers rode in glass-enclosed railway carriages three times faster than the speediest stagecoach, even faster in motor cars on the best paved roads, or above “in the fleeting airplane.

### **Meehan: Walking the City<sup>9</sup>**

Walking along busy streets in the 1840s and 1850s was an education for schoolchildren. Some early pioneer families resided on the old Banklick Road [KY 17], once the most used route between Covington and Lexington. Eleanor recalled, “On our way to school we had to pass through two free orchards, one on Banklick Road above Eleventh Street - then known as High Street. Between Seventh and Eighth on Washington Street stood a Liberty pole which was probably a relic of Whig celebrations. At 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Banklick Road, Mr. Riddell had built a house on the recent farmland of the old Indian fighter and pioneer Jacob Fowler. To the north of it was an Indian mound.”

“There was Mr. Thomas’ pottery in an historic log cabin on 9<sup>th</sup> Street near the Banklick Road. As children on our way to school we would often stop to watch the wonderful fashioning of ware as it grew under the workmen’s hands at the pottery windows,” Meehan said.<sup>10</sup> Eleanor and friends saw nearby an elongated rope-walk factory building, at Pike and Main the McMurtry Flour mill, and farther west Mr. Keene’s brickyard.<sup>11</sup>

The old Kennedy stone house stood near the river (until 1909), a relic of colonial days. Near the

foot of Garrard “jovial and rotund” Berry Connolly’s had a tavern, and “entertainment for man and beast.”

Walking south from the river, they passed the Groesbeck mansion (present-day Herne house) surrounded by forest near 4<sup>th</sup> Street. At 7<sup>th</sup> and Greenup Mr. Doyle had a soap and candle factory, later the site of La Salette Academy. North from 7<sup>th</sup> on Greenup was the remodeled frame house of the Bullock and Clayton families (still standing). Opposite was the Kennedy farmhouse later the residence of Isaac Cooper and Judge William Arthur, then replaced by the Arthur apartments.

Nearby on the east side of Greenup was the home of U. S. Grant’s parents (still standing). Near 4<sup>th</sup> was the home of schoolmate Hannah Boude; then the well known residence of Dr. Richard Pretlow; farther north the home of Jackson Sparrow (still standing); across Greenup Street, on the Market Square (between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) the large home once occupied by tobacco merchant (and railroad executive) Charles Withers and family (demolished decades ago).<sup>12</sup>

At 3<sup>rd</sup> and Scott streets was the Northern Bank of Kentucky (still standing); below the bank on Scott Street was Factory Row, probably built for Mr. Ball’s iron foundry employees; Ball’s mansion nearby; south on Scott was Laird’s book store; McDonald’s Jewelry; the Post Office; James Gedge residence; and nearby in the 400 block, an artistic carpet weaver.

At the southeast corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Scott in a large hollow stood the open vats of the Lemair Tannery; on the opposite side was the residence (still standing) once of Mr. Geisbauer who had owned the nearby brewery.<sup>13</sup> “It was a common occurrence for us children returning from school to get brewer’s yeast for baking bread there, and flour from McMurtry’s mill,” Meehan remembered.

On 8<sup>th</sup> Street between Scott and Greenup was old St. Mary’s Cathedral; just below 8<sup>th</sup> Snowden’s school for girls; farther south Ephraim Robbins Mansion, later replaced by Covington’s Carnegie Library; on the southwest corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Scott a dwelling that as late as 1858 was the High School; opposite there Dr. John Murnan’s dwelling.

Beyond 15<sup>th</sup> Street on the Licking River was the estate of Seneca Austin (namesake for Austinburg). Beyond the city limits it was reached when the bars were let down at Madison and Fifteenth Streets. Also south then of the city limits Wallace Place fronting on Madison Street, the park-like farm of Colonel Robert Wallace who at Presbyterian Church services assumed a military bearing. “In my childhood a little pleasure boat ran up to Cole’s Gardens southward on the Licking River,” Meehan said.

Meehan accompanied her mother and Aunt Betsy Boyd and their relative Judge Samuel Moore, to the Kenton County Courthouse in Independence to settle the estate of her grandfather, James Gowdy. The ride was over a rough stony and muddy road. Returning into Covington they passed again the old Latonia Springs site (opposite Highland Pike on Madison); the dense woods surrounding the springs had disappeared as had the Pleasant Inn. Nearby was the pretty hillside home of the great violinist (Joseph) Tosso who popularized *Arkansas Traveler* [see: NKH, XVI, #2].

Near the Licking River the turn of the road passed below a Civil War battery site overlooking Latonia, once Milldale; then on the western hill the Benedictine Monks and their Monte Casino winery and the “tiniest church in the world” (holding three persons). A small Catholic cemetery was at 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison since replaced by Mother of God Cemetery, Latonia.

On the east side was Levassor Place and Wallace Avenue. West at Madison was “once a pond dignified by the name of Lake” a setting for some Cincinnati artists. Nearby Franklin Riggs, “aristocrat of meat dealers, directed his “pride of Kentucky” stalls. Then the children passed the railroad shops off Madison at 13<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>14</sup> At 12<sup>th</sup> and Madison the old Watkins home became the Cathedral Rectory. Opposite was “the imposing home of Mr. Jordan of Phillips and Jordan iron dealers” since replaced by the Cathedral School.

Between Madison and Russell and 10<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> streets (Seminary Square) was once the Western Baptist Theological Seminary main building,



later a Civil War hospital and St, Elizabeth Hospital, then demolition and later construction of the Wadsworth Electric factory (still standing).

To the south, Seminary owners and developers had made space for Linden Grove Cemetery. They also sold off much land beyond Seminary Square in the very heart of the developing city for many new neighborhoods. Next on Madison (recent site of a Walgreen's) was the residence of Judge William W. Trimble first constructed by pioneer banker and developer Phillip Bush. Farther north was the residence of Henry Sage, later Dr. W. W. Henderson, and nearby, that of John Mackoy.

Farther north on the east side of Madison between Pike and 7<sup>th</sup> streets a building once the Magnolia House; at the prominent south west corner of Pike and Madison was Uncle Billy Wasson, John White, John Mackoy, the Timberlakes and then Perkins & Company (saddles etc.). Farmers parked rows of wagons along Pike Street. At 6<sup>th</sup> and Madison streets was the Virginia Inn, with double porches.<sup>15</sup>

In the 400 block a tobacco factory was replaced by the Odd Fellows Hall at 5<sup>th</sup> and Madison. Farther north at Old Trinity Church, "little Mary Hall" played the organ. Railroad and tobacco executive Frederick Gedge once lived on the western side of Madison Avenue.

To the west along the Lexington Pike stood the homestead of Alexander Greer (Covington financier); in the west end the mansion of (former school teacher and city official) the wealthy Squire James G. Arnold. Overlooking the West End and Ohio River was once the residence of the tragedian (Edwin) Forrest. By then a sewer pervaded the banks of Willow Run Creek at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street - once a playground for little disciples of Isaac Walton.

Farmers took produce down the Lexington Pike. The hills along the way were covered with forest trees and many grapevine swings were enjoyed across the creek. Returning back south on the Banklick Road from Pike Street was seen a famous hostelry known as Ashbrook's Drovers Inn. Farmers drove thousands of cattle, sheep and hogs through the un-



Covington home of Alexander Greer (demolished)

*Courtesy: Kenton County Public Library*

paved streets of early days. South from Drovers Inn were the many old cottages of early emigrant pioneers.

At 15<sup>th</sup> Street was once the home of Major John Goodsen, whose daughter Jane married John G. Carlisle, Treasury Secretary under President Cleveland. Farther south was the Howell homestead and a lane called Howell.

### **Perkins: Politics and Law**

Perkins had known no cruelty in slavery. His lasting affection for the family cook from childhood, Aunt Sarah, irked Perkins when her race was castigated. He recalled local free blacks Isaac Singer, William Page and Ike Bartlett. Perkins helped purchase the freedom of Ike Bartlett, once owned by Major Bartlett, long time clerk of the circuit court.

During the Confederate invasion in 1862 the Perkins farm lay between the camp of the Confederates and the hastily constructed forts under the command of General Lew Wallace. During the Civil War U. S. Grant from time to time visited his parents and family and while there, bought his cigars at the emporium of Jacob Lehman, a small one story frame on Madison Street above Fifth.<sup>16</sup>

After the Civil War Captain John Leathers and other southern sympathizers gathered in the store of Fitzhugh and DeGaro on Madison to rehash old battles and issues. Perkins discussed lynching, including those locally during his time on the bench.

According to Perkins, Anthony Bullock of Cincinnati took over converting the street cars from mule-power to an overhead wire system. He built the Boone Block which provided offices for some of Northern Kentucky's prominent judges and lawyers on the east side of Scott Street. After purchasing the Gedge Brothers building on the south side of 4th Street and some old shanties to the alley, he built a long row of stores and offices (still standing).<sup>17</sup>

Bullock helped secure the whole block between Second and Market Place and Scott and Greenup for a new Post Office or "Government Building," built in a Gothic style. Stores, offices, residences and an oyster restaurant were removed. Samuel Laird's cigar factory and sales room once stood at Scott Street and Market Place. (Many tobacco stores, factories and warehouses through the years populated the streets of Covington.) Of course it was built in a location central to the streetcar line going and coming at the Suspension Bridge.<sup>18</sup>

Jessie Grant was appointed postmaster by President Andrew Johnson, from 1866 to 1872. Perkins stated, "The Postmaster and my father were both concerned with leather, were well known to each other and on friendly terms. He was a farmer and tanner and my father a farmer and manufacturer of it, and I had been a schoolmate of one of the Grant girls. In his quiet way, a tall figure with slightly bent shoulders, a long staff guiding his unfailing way, and a stop at the tavern his customary habit."<sup>19</sup> General Grant was President...when I was elected to the Legislature and his father, Jesse Grant, was Postmaster of Covington and took an active part in opposing my election. It was not such an embittered fight for control, as many of that day were when animosities of the Civil War were yet rife."

Perkins and John White Stevenson were neighbors on Garrard Street and he served in the legislature when Stevenson was governor. Perkins said,

"After my service in the State Legislature I was temporary and permanent President of the first and most important after-the-war Democratic State Convention."

Perkins' friend John G. Carlisle was one of the nation's profoundest lawyers. When Carlisle was in Washington and was to become President Cleveland's Secretary of the Treasury, Perkins was asked to take a message to Carlisle offering him a "gift" of \$100,000 through a wealthy Kentuckian. Perkins delivered the message to Carlisle and wife Jane. They declined the offer. Carlisle was, Perkins thought, entirely dependent on his law practice, which could not be kept up by a cabinet office.<sup>20</sup>

Perkins remembered state senator William Goebel as not lacking in a quiet courtesy, but his social qualities were not winning. He had been very diligent and successful suing railroads, street railways and manufactures in the name of workers injured and killed on the job.

Once at Independence, the rural county seat, after getting up from a lunch break during court session, Goebel approached Perkins about Goebel's contemplated bill to reform political party management by legislative action. Judge Perkins who was no longer active in politics answered Goebel: "Since the Civil War with its inevitable interferences with elections and civil proceedings, the party to which both of us belonged was having uniform success at the polls, and I thought it, by all means, very desirable that nothing be attempted that would breed contention and break the peaceful flow of the political stream." The Democrats were winning elections; strident reform efforts could greatly injure their party.

Goebel represented a growing urban and progressive point of view. Perkins was attuned to the much more common politics of post-war rural Kentucky. And rampant political infighting did lead into Goebel's assassination.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Meehan Legacy**

Eleanor, a Presbyterian, and James Meehan, a Catholic, on February 8, 1858 exchanged vows in the four-year-old St. Mary's Cathedral on East 8<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>22</sup>



The couple by 1872 had moved from Banklick Road to the north side of 13th between Madison and Wood Street near the Kentucky Central Railroad shops.

In 1882, H. Clay White sold a large residence on East 11<sup>th</sup> Street overlooking the old Market House to Eleanor and James Meehan. The old Market House, Eleanor recalled, became “so offensive to civic pride” (before demolition for a small public park).<sup>23</sup> Then they moved to a new house they built on Mooney Avenue in Hyde Park, Cincinnati. But James Meehan (1834-1908) unfortunately passed away eighteen months later.<sup>24</sup> Eleanor Meehan (1839-1925) returned to Northern Kentucky.

Eleanor’s religious heritage in 1955 survived at the new Lakeside Presbyterian church. Upon her death in 1925 her will left real estate interests on the Lexington Pike (the Dixie Highway) to her daughter Grace Meehan Read Hagemeyer; in the event of her daughter’s passing it would go to grandson Augustus Robert Lee Read; for other children, a trust was set up.<sup>25</sup> George L. Hill of the George W. Hill Company grocery store purchased the Meehan property, from the grandson.<sup>26</sup> The Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in Covington purchased it from George L. Hill estate. The congregation moved from Madison Avenue, to the renamed Lakeside Presbyterian Church, connecting again with Eleanor’s legacy.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Perkins Legacy**

After moving from Boone County John H. Perkins manufactured saddles, harness and trunks on Pike Street between Madison and Washington. In 1856 Jesse Grant a vendor of leather was apparently importing leather to Covington on the south side of 3<sup>rd</sup> between Russell and Johnston streets. In 1860 Eleanor Meehan’s brother-in law Jeremiah Merring was connected with Mr. John Perkins, in the leather and saddlery business on Pike Street.<sup>28</sup>

One of the other such nearby Northern Kentucky firms was the Eastern Kentucky Hide & Leather Company. In 1871 A. O. Goshorn, J. E. Clendenning and George W. Howell signed incorporation papers listing \$150,000 in fully paid stock and



Cornerstone ceremony at Lakeside Presbyterian Church

*Courtesy: Kenton County Public Library*

their office at 817 Madison Street. Judge Perkins recalls that several of his brothers followed his father’s profession. Henry Perkins, William Perkins, and B. W. Campbell had organized the Perkins, Campbell and Company, a saddle and harness business (1879) in Cincinnati. In 1918 the address was 622 Broadway. Another brother, Frank, joined the firm. In 1901 the company won a contract for ambulance harnesses, one of the largest government orders since the Spanish American War.<sup>29</sup>

John H. Perkins retired from his saddle and harness business to his Lexington Pike [U.S. 25] farm. But he died in 1894 (age 87) while living with his daughter on West 12<sup>th</sup> Street. His late wife Martha Stansifer also was from a well-known family from the town of Union in Boone County.<sup>30</sup>

Eight of ten children survived: Henry A., William S., Frank H., John E. (Perkins and Ernst, tobacco), and Charles L. Perkins of Columbus, Georgia. Daughters were Mrs. X. W. Culbertson of Covington and Mrs. Wallace Riggs of Louisville. A minister from Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church presided (six sons as pallbearers, burial in Highland Cemetery).<sup>31</sup>

Perkins was elected to the legislature for two years; then in 1869 judge of the Kenton County court; and in 1874 appointed to be the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District’s criminal court judge. After the new state

constitution changed the judicial system in 1893, he became judge of the Kenton County Circuit Court.<sup>32</sup>

Not revealed in *A Kentucky Judge*, Perkins participated in starting the Latonia Jockey Club and was prominent in local horse racing. George G. Perkins (1839-1933) resigned from the Kenton County Circuit Court to practice law in New York City for about five years. Then he retired to an estate in Maryland outside Washington. One daughter resided in New York City, another in Washington, D. C. He died in a summer home in New York. His funeral was in Washington, D. C.<sup>33</sup>

### Meehan 1924 & Perkins 1931

Meehan and Perkins recorded memories in changing times when conciliation and commerce were lessening the North-South political divide. In the 1920s the prospect of traveling along newly paved state highways increased the possibilities for travel and for the tourism industry. The Bluegrass State could be a wonderland for the nostalgic enjoyment of scenic hills and waterways, old towns and countryside, in the land of Lincoln, My Old Kentucky Home and horseracing.

### Endnotes

1. Eleanor Childs Meehan, "An Octogenarian's Personal Recollections of a Beloved Old Kentucky Town 'Old Covington' (revised)," copyright by author, 1924 (a booklet), including "General Lafayette's Visit"
2. Application, DAR membership, April 24, 1901; James Mehen (sic), "finisher," KCRR Machine Shop; M. Childs, Carpenter, west side of Banklick Road between 13th & 14th streets (1860 Directory); James Meehan, engineer, home 1040 Banklick; M. Childs, carpenter, boards 1040 Banklick (1869, 1872-73 directories); 1850-1880, 1900 Federal Censuses
3. John H. White, "Meehan, James," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, edited by Paul A. Tenkotte and James C. Claypool, Lexington, KY: the University Press of Kentucky, 2009, p. 612
4. George Gilpin Perkins, *A Kentucky Judge*, Washington, D. C.: W. G. Roberts Company, 1931 (a hard cover book); Judge, Criminal Court, residence 430 Garrard (1892 directory); home, 430 Garrard (1902-03 directory)
5. John E. Burns, *A History of Covington, Kentucky Through 1865*, edited by Karl J. Lietzenmayer, Covington, Kentucky: the Kenton County Historical Society, 2012; Dr. Orr's school on Sanford, later the Bruce family home, called the "Rugby"
6. See Paul A. Tenkotte, "Major, Thomas Smith," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, pp. 577-78
7. John E. Burns, *History of Covington, Kentucky Through 1865*, pp. 361-363
8. Perkins, George G., "The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky," pp. 710, 711; Israel Ludlow, roommate (*A Kentucky Judge*)
9. For confirmation of MANY places: "The City of Covington," circa 1841; "Map of the City of Covington From Actual Survey," 1851, Rickey, Kennedy & Clark; the *City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky*, 1877, Philadelphia: C. M. Hopkins, 1877; *An Atlas of Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties, Kentucky*, 1883, Philadelphia: D. J. Lake & Co, 1883 (All are recent local reprints.)
10. This historic log cabin had been a well-used meeting place in early years before it was moved from the town center to 9th Street near Banklick Road.
11. John J. Riddle & Samuel J. Riddle, west side of Banklick at the foot (western end) of 11th Street (1860 directory); Jacob Keen, brick maker, south side of Riddle (now 9th) between Bakewell & Philadelphia; Joseph Keen, brick maker north of Lexington Pike between Main & Philadelphia (1856 directory)

12. Richard Pretlow, physician, southeast corner 4th & Greenup streets (1860 directory); Charles A Withers, Superintendent of the Kentucky Central Railroad, southwest corner of Greenup Street & Market Space (1856, 1860 directories); Jackson Sparrow, east side of Greenup between 3rd & 4th streets (1856 directory)
13. George W. Ball & Company, G. W. Ball & Thomas Ellison, stoves, hollow-ware, south side of 4th between Main & Johnston streets, G. W. Ball, home south side of 3rd between Madison & Scott (1856 directory); G. W. McDannald Jewelry Store, southeast corner 5th & Madison streets (1856 directory); J. C. Gedge, Gedge & Brothers, east side of Scott between 4th & 5th (1856 directory)
14. Franklin Riggs, butcher, north side Lexington Pike between Riddle Street (now 9th) & Main (1856 directory); Theo. H. Riggs, meat store, northwest corner of Pike & Madison streets; W. A. Riggs, butcher, north side of 15th between Russell & Madison (1860 directory)
15. W. W. Henderson, physician & surgeon, office 510 Madison, home, 63 west 11th (1869 directory); P. S. Bush, Agent Athenaeum Fire Insurance Society of London and Real estate agent, southeast corner Pike & Madison, home, east side of Madison between 10th & 11th streets (1856 directory); P. S. Bush, Aetna Ins. Co., southeast corner Robbins & Madison (1860 directory); Magnolia House, east side of Madison between Pike & 7th streets (1856 directory); John Mackoy, dry goods, groceries, produce, merchandise, south side of Lexington Pike between Washington & Madison (1856 directory); John White, grocery, southwest corner Madison & Pike streets (1856 directory); J. F. B. Timberlake, grocer, and W. D. F. Timberlake, merchant, west side of Lexington Pike between Washington & Madison streets (1856 directory); John H. Perkins & Company, Saddles & Harness & Trunks mfg., west side Lexington Pike between Washington & Madison (1856 directory); John H. Perkins, saddler, north side Lexington Pike between Madison & Washington streets (1860 directory)
16. *A Kentucky Judge* p. 133
17. Boone Block in 1872 fully leased: the Adams Express Office, a merchant tailor (first floor), L. B. Baker, Colonel W. S. Rankin, H. P. Whittaker, Esq., Judge O'Hara, J. G. Carlisle and C. D. Foote, & W. G. Whittaker (floors above); (*Covington Journal*, Nov. 9, 1872); later attorneys included William E. Arthur and William Goebel (street directories).
18. Samuel B. Laird, wholesale & retail cigars, tobacco, musical instruments, fishing tackle, fancy goods northeast corner Scott Street & Market Space (1856 directory)
19. On Sundays Jesse Grant and family attended the Methodist Church at Fifth & Greenup Streets (dedicated in 1867); *A Kentucky Judge*, p. 132
20. *A Kentucky Judge*, pp. 214-218
21. *A Kentucky Judge*, pp. 228-235
22. Cornerstone laid, Oct. 2, 1853, dedicated June 11, 1854; Paul E. Ryan, *History of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky, the Diocese of Covington, 1853-1953*, Diocese of Covington, p. 477; marriage, Book 2, p. 140, Independence courthouse.
23. Deed book 92, p. 360 (1882 recorded in 1896), Covington courthouse; H. Clay White, Clerk Circuit Court, office, Courthouse, home 68 East 11th (1876 directory); James Meehan, Superintendent Motive Power, home 68 East 11th (1890-91 directory)
24. Deed Book 124, p. 149, (1906), Kenton County Courthouse, Covington; "Perkins, George G.," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, pp. 710-711; obituary, *KP*, February 28, 1908, p. 3
25. Death notice, *CE*, March 21, 1925, p. 7; Will Book 17, Oct. 15, 1923, p. 189, Covington courthouse, April 3, 1925
26. A twelve room house, five room servants' quarters, on twelve acres, *KP*, Nov. 15, 1928, p. 1; in 1918 George L Hill took over the company started by his diseased father in 1865 and operated until his death in 1941; Harriet Howard Helthaus, "Last Sales for Hill Seed," *KP*, Dec. 8, 1998
27. *CE*, Kentucky Edition, August 5, 1955
28. 1839-40 directory; J. R. Grant leather merchant south side of 3rd between Russell & Johnston (1856 directory); Jessie R. Grant, residence east side of Greenup between 5th & 6th (1860 directory); Jessie R. Grant, Postmaster, Post Office, at northwest corner of 6th & Madison (1869 directory); 1860 Federal Census, page 348; Perkins, George G., "The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky," pp. 710, 711
29. 1849-50, 1866-67 1894, 1914-15 & 1918-19 Covington directories; *Covington Journal*, Nov. 4, 1871, p. 2; Nov. 11, 1871, p. 2; the company building at 626 Broadway built in 1898, *CE*, April 10, 1970, p. 13, *CE*, Aug. 21, 2010, p. D6
30. 1872-73 street directory; Perkins, George G., "The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky," pp. 710-711
31. "A Pioneer Gone," *KP*, December 31, 1894, p. 3; "John H. Perkins Funeral," *Kentucky Post*, Jan. 2, 1895, p. 4; in 1882 John E. Perkins & Company, 184 Pike Street, was manufacturing plug tobacco, with fifteen employees, in 1894 the firm a partnership, Perkins & James C. Ernst, *Daily Commonwealth*, Sept. 8, 1882, p. 4; 1894 street directory
32. Perkins, George G., "The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky," pp. 710-711
33. "Perkins, George G." *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, pp. 710, 711

## Then and Now



Left photo: Lookout House supper club/restaurant, c. 1970 (burned down in 1974).  
Right photo shows Lookout Corporate Center office building which now occupies the site..

Left photo courtesy Kenton County Public Library. Right photo courtesy Bob Webster.

## Mystery Photo

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



ANSWER:

Tower marking the entrance to the Tuscany Condominiums,  
located along Madison Pike just north of Pioneer Park.

# Kenton County Historical Society

March/April 2014

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## I Bet You Didn't Know

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

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

March 9, 1880: The first official football game held west of the Alleghenies took place between Centre College and Transylvania.

March 14, 1888: State Treasurer James "Honest Dick" Tate disappeared with two sacks of gold and silver and a roll of bills: \$250,000.

April 5, 1775: Daniel Boone and his men began construction of a fort along the Kentucky River for the Transylvania Company.

April 6, 1862: More than 1,400 Kentuckians were killed at the Battle of Shiloh, near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee.

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

## Programs and Notices

### DO NOT MISS THIS Northern Kentucky Regional History Day

Saturday, March 22, 2014 is the date at Northern Kentucky University for this year's regional celebration. The schedule of events in 2014 will be same as in recent years. Registration at the door starts at 8:00 a. m. (Organizations who have reserved display tables will start setting up at 7:30 a. m.)

Between 10:00 and 11:00 a. m., Jeannine Kreinbrink will give an opening audio-visual presentation on "Ft. Ancient and Native Americans in Northern Kentucky." She will review recent investigations at Petersburg in Boone County and provide an overview of Native American settlements in Northern Kentucky.

For the first session at 11:15 a. m., six audio-visual workshops are scheduled: Daniel Boone, Linden Grove Cemetery, the Underground Railroad, "Turning Points in American History," and two workshops about genealogy.

For the second session at 12:15 p. m., five more are scheduled: The Civil War, "Ghost Stories of Northern Kentucky," "Sharing Your Collections: Developing Exhibits," "Using Wills and Deeds to Teach about Slavery and the Underground Railroad," and one workshop in this session about genealogy.

Historical societies, museums, libraries, historic sites and other heritage groups need to reserve a display table before March 22nd. There is no charge for the table, but all persons are expected to pay a registration fee. Each organization is asked to donate a door prize and to keep their tables open until 2:00 p. m. After 1:00 p. m., door prizes will be awarded to people still in attendance.

Registration at the door again will be for \$8. Pre-registration again will be \$6. **To pre-register, make checks payable to Northern Kentucky Regional History Day. Mail them to Northern Kentucky Regional History Day c/o Kenton County Historical Society, P. O. Box 641, Covington, KY 41012.** Use forms provided to indicate name, full address and the number pre-registering (at \$6 each).

### "Vietnam: Our Story," Behringer Crawford Museum

This exhibit is based on stories told by local veterans, about their military service and the medical and social after-effects as veterans returning to civilian life. It includes public attitudes seen and heard of back home. BCM curator, Tiffany Hoppenjans, interviewed dozens of veterans. On display are uniforms, communications apparatus, other artifacts, photos and memorabilia with local and personal-story connections. The exhibit includes a continuous Vietnam timeline. The Behringer Crawford Museum in Devou Park is open six days a week (closed on Monday).