# Bulletin of the

# Kenton County Historical Society

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May/June

2003

# <u>May Program</u> – A Tour of Spring Grove Cemetery's Civil War Graves Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> – 1:00 p.m.

The Society is sponsoring a tour of gravesites of Civil War Officers & others found in Cincinnati's historic Spring Grove Cemetery. Jack Simon, a member of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table and a Cincinnati Museum Center Volunteer, will meet the attendees at the cemetery main entrance at Spring Grove Avenue at 1:00 p.m. Jack will be remembered by those who attended his lecture on Civil War military hospitals at a recent Society program. This tour is free and open to Society members and the general public.

Directions to the cemetery: from I-75, exit Mitchell Avenue, turn left onto Mitchell for 4 traffic lights to Spring Grove. Turn left onto Spring Grove for 3 more traffic lights, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is Winton Road. The main entrance of the cemetery is on the right and easily recognized. Mr. Simon will meet the group directly inside the gate. The tour will last about one hour.

# <u>June Program</u> – A Tour of The Gaines House – An Early Stage Coach Stop Sunday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 [1 p.m. brown bag lunch]

The Gaines House has a long history. Established as a stagecoach stop & tavern by Abner Gaines (of the same family who owned the slave Margaret Garner). The original portion of the structure was erected c.1810 or before and has had several additions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At one time, the tavern was managed by Jerry Glenn, father of Dudley Glenn, first trustee of the town of Latonia. Abner's son became territorial governor of Oregon. The tour will begin with a "bring your own" picnic lunch & drink at the site at 1 p.m. After the brief picnic on the grounds, the tour of the house, now a private residence, will begin. After the tour, members may visit nearby site of Civil War Battle of Snow's Pond.

Directions: south I-75, to Richwood Exit. Turn left off the ramp to US 25. Turn right onto US 25, travel about 3 miles, reaching a new concrete overpass. Immediately past this overpass, turn sharp left onto "Old Nicholson Road." This road will cross the Southern RR tracks. Travel to the "end" of this road where there is an historical marker. The "Old Nicholson Road" is part of former US 25.

# Erlanger Historical Society Schedules Rosella Porterfield for May

Date: 14th May

www.ErlangerHistoricalSociety.org

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Erlanger Depot, 3319 Crescent Avenue

Mrs. Porterfield played a key role in the integrating of the Erlanger-Elsmere School system. Rosella entered the Erlanger-Elsmere school system in 1940, when she came to teach at Dunbar School, Spring Street in Erlanger. In 1947, Dunbar School was moved to a new location on Capital Avenue in Elsmere. There it was renamed Wilkins Heights School, after the previous owner of the land upon which it was built. Rosella became principal of the small, two-room "colored school" as it was known during the post-war years.

The court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 abolished segregated schools and Mrs. Porterfield proposed to Superintendent Edgar Arnett that her six students be integrated into an all-white school. Arnett and the board agreed that "the time was right" to integrate the students into the system. This took place in 1956, and unlike in many other schools located throughout the South during this period, the integration went without incident. Those students earned diplomas from Lloyd High School in Erlanger. Mrs. Porterfield became the first librarian in the school system at Tichenor Middle School and retired in 1980 and resides in Walton. For information: (859) 727-2630 erlhist@fuse.net

President, James Kiger, Vice-president/Programs, Dr. Joseph Gastright, Treasurer, Dan Carter, Secretary, John Boh, Board Members: Emily Bailey, George Gressle, Charles King, San Juan Romero, Editor: Karl J. Lietzenmayer, one open seat.

# Letters

Dear Editor:

My husband and I purchased the former rectory of St. Aloysius Church, Bakewell Street, Covington. Before we purchased the home, it was vandalized by tenants. The home is now missing 4 fireplace mantels, some of the tiles and stained glass windows. The newel post and all the doorknobs are also missing.

We have been searching for interior pictures or someone who can tell us what the missing items looked like. Even the front door is missing! We want to learn as much of the history of the house and parish as we can. My husband is a minister and found great excitement in finding a church rectory. We will be residing in the home with our two children. This wonderful home needs love and care to return it to its former beauty. Learning more about the house will help us in restoration. We hope your Society can assist us in learning about the history of the house and community we are so happy to be a part of now.

Thank you, Alana Messer kimesser@fuse.net

Dear Ms. Messer,

We are dismayed by the vandalism St. Al's rectory has experienced. Hopefully some of our members may have helpful information concerning the interior's appearance. The Kenton County Public Library and the Covington Diocesan Archives at Marydale will be of help as well.

Editor

### Preston Plantation Needs Assistance

Preston Plantation, Incorporated, Trimble County, a non-profit "upper-South plantation," needs assistance to carry on site preservation and education projects.

Good use will be made of older model vehicles such as a pickup truck, sedan, van or small bus for transporting the public to events on the plantation. A 34-40 hp tractor is also needed to do mowing. Other equipment along these lines would also be helpful. Contact Paul or Pam Venard at Preston Plantation, Inc., 95 Venard Road, Bedford, Kentucky. The phone is (502) 268-5858.

As with any donation to a non-profit, the item can be used as a tax deduction.

# Stewart Jail Model Acquired KCHS September Elections Require New Members

The Salesman Jail model KCHS proposed to acquire has been acquired by a local descendant of the Stewart family and will be available for display upon request. KCHS thanks the members who pledged money for the purchase but the pledges will not now be required.

The Society elections scheduled for September will require a new treasurer and other officers and Board members. KCHS is seeking new officers to assist in the decision making process for the future of the Society. The present officers are asking for "fresh blood and ideas" from among the 500+ current membership. The continuation of the work of the Society depends on the input and active participation of more of the current members. No special gifts are required except a fervent interest in local history and its preservation. Over the summer months, please consider your role in the Society and "step up to the plate" in September. For details on how a Board meeting runs, please ask a present member – no obligation!

KCHS ELECTIONS – SEPTEMBER
CONSIDER SUPPORT BY GETTING ON
BOARD THE BOARD !!
[new Treasurer & officers sought]

# Earl Nichols: A Northern Kentuckian in World War II

John Boh

[Earl Nichols is a native of Greenup County (east of Ashland in Boyd County). He saw combat as a communications officer and headquarters company commander with the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. The Division landed at Le Havre, France in early November 1944, saw its first action in early December and was not relieved until German surrender in May 1945.]

### **Enlistment**

Earl Nichols and a cousin Howard Brown enlisted at Huntington, West Virginia on January 29, 1941. "I had worked some for the railroad and in construction as a plumber's helper and electrician's helper. I was not satisfied. World tension was at a breaking point." I had always been military minded."

He and Howard trained at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. "We were with the 201st Infantry until about 15 March when the Army sent us to Ft. Thomas to assist in inducting draftees for army service." But Earl ended up in a tank division and Howard with the 11th Airborne Division jumping in combat in the Pacific islands.<sup>1</sup>

### Ft. Thomas

In 1940 the War Department organized "an induction center for selective service men." at Ft. Thomas. Inductees were subjected to physical examinations, aptitude tests, interviews, assigned to companies, issued dog tags and clothing, indoctrinated for safety and sanitation and practiced some drilling. Typically on the fourth day they packed up for military camps out west and thirteen weeks of basic training.<sup>2</sup>

Earl remembered, "I would take the men assigned to me, work with them as a drill instructor, take them to be fitted with uniforms, to the doctor for shots, to the theater for venereal disease movies...This is the usual life of a drill instructor..."

In the City of Ft. Thomas at a roller rink on Saturday, June 29, 1941 Earl met his wife Edythe. They made a date for Monday, but it was

<sup>1</sup> Interview, Earl Nichols, 610 Rosemont, Park Hills, Kentucky, by John Boh and Earl's written notes. <sup>2</sup> "The Military Post at Fort Thomas", by Ralph L. Wadsworth, *Bulletin of the Cincinnati Historical Society*, volume 25, 1967; "The Military Post at Ft. Thomas, Kentucky" (booklet) by Charles H. Bogart, 1985 by Charles H. Bogart Sunday when he got the orders to transfer to Ft. Knox. After getting together with Edythe that Sunday afternoon, Earl left for Ft. Knox Monday morning. A year and a half later on December 20, 1942 Edith Brooker of Covington, Kentucky and Earl married at First Christian Church, Covington, where they still attend.

### Ft. Knox, Ky.

"I was at Ft. Thomas until June 30, 1941, when the Army sent me to Ft. Knox, Kentucky to continue my duties at the Armored Replacement Center." In the 1930s Ft. Knox had become a center for developing U. S. mechanized units. By war's end the U. S. Armored Force had grown to sixteen armored divisions [including Earl's 12th].<sup>3</sup>

Earl was invited to officers' candidate school. He made his application, took an examination and did officer training "in class # 8." He was eventually commissioned an officer as a Second Lieutenant, September 11, 1942.

Earl had always been interested in "radio and aviation." In the midst of the course Earl accepted an offer to join the instructors' regiment at the armored school. Earl taught "radio sergeants." A radio sergeant handled communications for each company.

Between the world wars there had been much debate and hesitancy about tanks taking center stage. Nevertheless his recent biographer recalled that in early 1942 at Fort Benning, George S. Patton, commander of I Armored Corps, installed a powerful radio in each tank.<sup>4</sup>

### Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

As a newly trained second Lieutenant radio officer, Earl got the privilege of choosing where he would be assigned. Second Lieutenant Reichert from Paris, KY and he made 12th Armored their first choice and they joined the newly formed 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky.

Earl said they practiced maneuvers and used only wooden shells. Camp Campbell was constructed in 1942, on land acquired that same year, where the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored made history.

1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> David A. Holt, in *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, John E. Kleber, Editor-in-Chief, The University Press of Kentucky, 1992, pages 345-346

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> General Patton A Soldiers Life, Stanley P. Hirshson, New York: HarperCollins, 2002, pages 256, 257.

According to one account, "the first arrivals at the new Camp Campbell, on July 1, 1942, were a cadre—one officer and nineteen enlisted men—from Ft. Knox. The 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division was activated on September 15, 1942, and departed September 1943 [eventually] to join the 7th Army in Europe."<sup>5</sup>

### **Tennessee Maneuvers**

From Camp Campbell they moved on to "Tennessee maneuvers" around Symrna.<sup>6</sup> Earl said, that the 82nd Airborne made its first practice jump there with Earl's division.

### Camp Barkley, Texas

Earl recalled when they moved on to Camp Barkley, Texas for about another year of training before going oversees. Replacing 11<sup>th</sup> Armored, the 12th Armored Division trained there from November 1943 to September 1944.<sup>7</sup>

By coincidence one of Earl's first cousins from school days back home was a 1<sup>st</sup> Sargent with a medical company training there. His wife helped Edythe get an apartment and "we had somebody to play cards with." Now farmland, a marker there recognizes the "12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division—Hellcats."

### Texas to New York City

By September the Division had arrived in New York where Earl became an "interim company commander" because the regular commander had gone ahead to reserve temporary barracks in England. After immunization shots and other details they left Camp Shanks, New York for the Staten Island Ferry."

### New York to England

Such ships as *The Empress of Australia* could carry 5000 troops plus ordnance. Secrecy and anonymity were orders of the day. Soldiers removed their shoulder patches and obscured the markings on division vehicles. "A big old creaky tub, a big old three stacker," Earl recalled. *The Empress* had been built for the Kaiser and England had taken her as spoils of WWI and made her a luxury liner. *The Empress* was part of

a convoy of probably a dozen ships with destroyer escorts.

Earl remembered, "Troops received a dollar a day per man. The British fed hard rolls and fish. Then they came around in the evening about 11 o'clock to sell us ham sandwiches for 50 cents a piece which was a lot of money back then, especially for a sandwich. They were selling the ham that they had prepared for us in the first place! Three times a day hard rolls and fish. That was the British."

Arriving at Liverpool in early October, most journeyed eventually to Tidworth "known as the spawning ground of American armored divisions. Most of them had been based there before the Normandy landings."

### England to Le Havre

At Tidworth the division received "peeps, 6x6s, half tracks, and M-7s" which were prepared for combat. General Allen gave a lecture on "killing the bastards." 9

Earl recalled, "after drawing their equipment and doing some practice firing they crossed the English Channel. An LST is like a tub on the bottom. Crossing the English Channel was rough going. The chains holding the tanks in place groaned." Around November 11<sup>th</sup> Earl's Division landed at Le Havre beach at the mouth of the Seine River.

It was late when they reached Auffay, France, miles away to the northeast (to bivouac) to "move into the line". 10

### **Approaching the Front Lines**

They were attached to General Alexander Patch's 7th Army. As Earl remembered, for a while the British thought his group was to be part of Montgomery's operations for Arnheim. Earl's group was fed well--ice cream, chicken--treating them royally until they found out otherwise. Instead they were temporarily assigned to the American 9<sup>th</sup> American Army and later reassigned to Patch's 7<sup>th</sup> Army.

As Earl recalled his division saw its first combat east of Rheims (some two weeks before the Battle of the Bulge) at Rohrbach below Luxembourg on the French side of the Maginot

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "Fort Campbell" by William T. Tumer in *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, John E. Kleber, Editor-in-Chief, The University Press of Kentucky, 1992, pages 343-344 
<sup>6</sup> The Hellcats In World War II A History Of The United States Twelfth Armored Division, 15 September, 1942-17 December, 1945, Nashville, Tennessee: The Battery Press, 1978, reprinted 1982, page 18

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The Hellcats In World War II, pages 19, 22

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Hellcats In World War II, page 23

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The Hellcats In World War II, pages 23, 24

<sup>10</sup> The Hellcats In World War II, page 24

### KENTON COUNTY

### HISTORICAL SOCIETY



MAY 10<sup>TH</sup> [SATURDAY 1:00 P.M.] - Spring Grove Cemetery Tour

JUNE  $22^{\text{ND}}$  [SUNDAY 2 - 4 P.M. with 1 p.m. picnic] - Gaines House Tour

JULY  $8^{TH}$  [TUESDAY 7 P.M. - Trinity Episcopal] - Old Time Radio

AUGUST -

NO PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> [TUESDAY 7 P.M. - Trinity Episcopal] - History of Amusement Parks

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- Discount on Northern Kentucky Heritage

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(please check appropriate category)

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Contributing \$50 Supporting \$75

Patron \$100

line. Here they lost LTC Meigs, but Earl was able to capture a Nazi flag.

Earl's 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division helped "punch holes through the Maginot and the Siegfried lines." They used bangalore torpedoes. They would add sections of pipe while extending it into minefields, through barbed ware, past gun batteries to blow up obstacles to break a stalemate. Earl's outfit also fired the "first radio controlled shell into Germany. A radio component in the nose directed the shell."

### **Bloody Herrlisheim**

1944-45 was a bitterly cold winter. Earl usually traveled in a half-track or in a jeep, not in a tank. "The vehicles including tanks had no heaters. But tanks were closed and warmer. It was about 20 degrees below all the time. "The guys in the foxholes had a terrible time. They went through living hell." He recalled once meeting with one of the battalion commanders — Col. Wells of Hopkinsville — in a brick building called "the waterworks" ("bloody Herrlisheim"). "We built a fire to warm up."

### Colmar

In February to clean up the "Colmar pocket" 12th Armored was loaned to the French 1st Army under General [Jean] Lattre de Tassigny. It spearheaded the French 1st Army through Colmar and then to Rouffach south of Colmar where they met the Moroccan Army in order to cut off German troops at the Vosges Mountains. After the victories General Lattre the site commander and General De Gaulle joined in celebrations.

Earl was communications officer "at headquarters" and his job was to see "that communications were in order." He was with the line units frequently. In a tank or armored outfit you've got to "move, shoot and communicate" to be effective. "And let the infantry come up behind and eliminate resistance pockets. A tank runs through the enemy primarily for shock action. That was Patton's concept. 7th Army's General Patch applied Patton's theory. Earl relayed messages to the front line units. Earl's immediate commander was "in charge of who did the attacking."

The P47, "orange tail group of fighter planes supported most of our combat action. The pilot of the plane with short stubby wings and powerful radial motors would come over the

German target, dive almost straight down (it seemed), so fast, screaming, drop his load of bombs and miraculously pull out." Earl watched them many times wondering if they would actually pull out. Earl saw that an operable radio in a lead tank would allow a pilot, from Tactical Air Command, to guide his fellow pilots to the target. The tops of division tanks were painted bright reddish orange so that air cover could identify them.

### Rhineland

On March 17, 1945 Earl's unit was moved up to help spearhead Patton's 3rd Army. In an aura of secrecy they "had to take off all of our markings" so as not to betray unit and size, nor the fact that they were leaving only the 14th Armored Division with Patch's 7<sup>th</sup> Army. 11 General Patton wanted another tank division. Earl's 12<sup>th</sup> stayed with Patton "no more than a couple weeks." After Patton established position on the Rhine 12<sup>th</sup> Armored put their markings back on and rejoined 7th Army.

### Crossing the Rhine

Near the old Cathedral city of Speyer Earl recalled, "our engineers got a pontoon bridge across the Rhine. A couple of nights later we rolled across then headed to the high grounds on the other side to Wurzburg."

### Diligen Bridge

The 12<sup>th</sup> Armored spearheaded the 7<sup>th</sup> Army into Bavaria. Earl's unit captured a concrete bridge at Diligen on the beautiful blue Danube River before Germans could blow it up. "That was the first time in history that an opposing force had crossed the Danube River!" They placed a wooden sign: "YOU ARE CROSSING THE BEAUTIFUL DANUBE THRU COURTESY OF 12<sup>TH</sup> ARMD [sic] DIVISION." 12

### Landsburg

South of the Danube stood the Dachau concentration camp. As a recent author learned from interviews, "on April 27 the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division approached Landsberg-am-lech, west of Munich" A Wehrmach unit pulled out but SS fanatics even murdered civilians for signaling surrender and soon torched buildings with slave

<sup>11</sup> The Hellcats In World War II, page 55

<sup>12</sup> The Hellcats In World War II, pages 69-70

laborers trapped inside. 13 The smell of burning flesh was noticeable for miles, Earl remarked.

### Austria

Earl said they then advanced into the Alps, and to the mythical "Redoubt" that was to be Hitler's final hideaway. They sent a task force to the Brenner Pass and to Innsbruck and set up unit headquarters in the Messerschmidt estate. Then the mission was turned over to 10th Armored Division."

### Surrender

After Hitler's death the 12<sup>th</sup> pulled back to Munich, then to Aalen, where they set up "a separation center to make civilians out of German soldiers. Combat Command A was in charge of the 100,000 prisoners. "The burgermeister of some town would find a place" from which to place fifty returning soldiers "out on farms." Shortly the commander assigned Earl to be a company commander until mid November of that year.

Suddenly one day the Lieutenant Colonel came into his office and told Earl that in "four hours" he would be headed home. He had length of service, service as a commissioned officer and the Bronze Star. Earl was deactivated December 6, 1945.

### Postscript

Earl's patriotic contributions were not unprecedented in his own family. John Nicholls was a captain in the Revolutionary War and an early Justice of the Peace in Greenup County (established in 1803). Earl is a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Sons of Union Veterans (SUV). In the Civil War, a grandfather fought with the Kentucky Mounted Infantry and then the Kentucky 14<sup>th</sup> Calvary.

Earl Nichols was born (1918) on a farm in Greenup County. At age two his father commenced a career with the C & O Railroad. Edythe Brooker was born (1922) and grew up at 1709 Woodburn Street, Covington and attended 5<sup>th</sup> District School. Her eligibility in the DAR comes from her Middleton line. Her father, Henry Brooker, came from Pendleton County and her grandfather Andrew Bruker (1842-1925), of German descent, is documented to

have worked in the construction of "rock fences of the Bluegrass" in Bourbon County. Earl and Edythe Nichols have four sons enjoying successful careers. Their oldest son, Dr. David Nichols, Professor of Pharmacy and Medicinal Chemistry at Purdue University, had Earl and Edythe listed as his parents in the Who's Who in America."

# Greyhound Grill Ft. Mitchell Landmark Now a "Tavern"

The Greyhound Tavern (originally the Dixie Tea Room) was built in 1921. The two original rooms are still occupied today and referred to as the "Tavern Room" and the "Hunt Room." Johnny Hauer was the first owner and operated the Dixie Tea Room as an ice cream parlor, and sold other notions of various assortments. The Dixie Tea Room was conveniently located at the "End of the Line" where the #1 Ft. Mitchell streetcars completed their journey south, made the big turn (in the space just south – now a strip mall) and headed back to Cincinnati.

In the 1930s, Al Frisch purchased the business and renamed it the Greyhound Grill in honor of his brother Benny, who was a successful greyhound dog trainer in Florida. Al's sister Irene, and mother Mary did the cooking, which included homemade ice cream, soups and their famous "Chicken" and "Jack Salmon" setups, selling for fifty cents.

The ice cream parlor was eventually eliminated, the bar re-located to its present location (in front) and a beer garden added in the rear. The outdoor garden was a favorite summertime gathering place for neighborhood families and college students. Along with these changes, emerged the "world famous" onion rings, juicy burgers, and double-deckers for diners' enjoyment.

Most recently, since the facility was purchased by the Wainscott family, the Grill has become the "Tavern" with many changes, not only in the building, but in the menu as well.



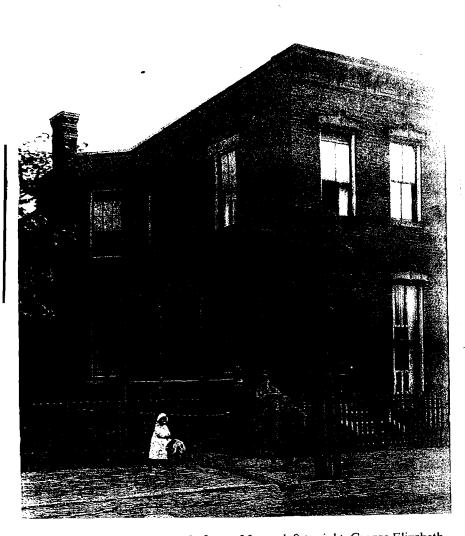
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> The Victors Eisenhower and His Boys: The Men of World War II by Stephen E. Ambrose, New York: Simon and Schuster 1998, page 342

## Then & Now

Through the courtesy of Richard Stevenson, department store entrepreneur John R. Coppin's great grandson, we have acquired a photo of the Coppin family's first Covington home at 215 West 5<sup>th</sup> Street (present number). According to Mr. Stevenson, the family lived there from 1878 to 1892, when financial success enabled them to move to Latonia. The 5<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood was an early middle-class area, but by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, became somewhat polluted with nearby foundries & smoke-producing factories.

By 1920, this property was an empty lot, when the present house was built by carpenter/contractor Adolph Kentrup. Today, descendants of the Kentrups, Carole and Andrea Lonneman, daughters of Andrew & Mildred Lonneman, reside in the home.

The fate of the old house is uncertain. No record of fire at this address is known by the Covington Fire Department but it is highly likely that the house may have burned. Further research to complete this story would include a deed search of the property to determine to whom Coppin sold this property in 1892.



Coppin residence (1878-1892). In front of fence, left to right, George Elizabeth (Richard Stevenson's grandmother), Clifford & J. Roberts Jr. Standing behind the fence: Mrs. Coppin (Mary Egolf) and eldest daughter Florence Eveline "Lina" with her pet goat. [photo courtesy Richard Stevenson]



Present home of Lonneman family [photo courtesy Ron Einhaus, KCHS member]

"'There is a time to keep silence,' said Solomon; but when I proceeded to the first verse of the fourth chapter of Ecclesiastes, 'and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter,' I concluded this was not the time to keep silence; for Truth should be spoken at all times, but more especially at those times when to speak Truth is dangerous."

Coleridge

The Northern Kentucky African American Heritage Task Force, in conjunction with the Behringer-Crawford Museum, is sponsoring an exhibit on the African American Experience at the Museum. The preliminary opening is Sunday, April 27th from 2 to 4 P.M. and extends through May into early June.

Behringer-Crawford Museum, Devou Park, is open Tuesday through Sunday, closed Mondays.

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NATIONAL LOSS INSIDE: Covination's 5<sup>th</sup> St. - Then & Now Ft. Attchell's Greyhound Grill

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