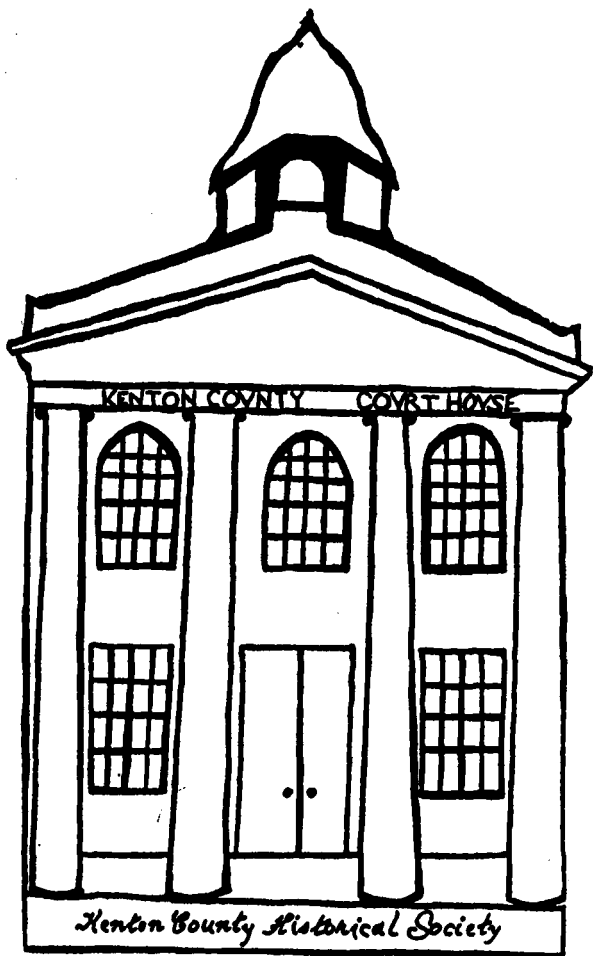


**KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
(organized in 1977; non-profit  
-member, Historical Confederation of Kentucky  
-Publisher of the new regional magazine,  
Northern Kentucky Heritage)



**INSIDE SEE....**

Subscription forms for Northern Kentucky Heritage

November program announcement

Reminder about Covington's Historic Plaque program

Short historical article

etc.

November 1993

**Kenton County Historical Society**

P.O. Box 641  
Covington, Kentucky 41012

REVIEW

November 1993

**PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT**

On Tuesday, November 2nd, 7:00 p. m. at the Kenton County Public Library, Erlanger branch, Geraldine Robinson will speak on... *trude*

**THE CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS OF AFRO-AMERICANS OF GREATER CINCINNATI.**

Ms. Robinson is Assistant Coordinator in the Personnel Division of Cincinnati Gas and Electric.

The program will be sponsored by the Kenton County Historical Society. It will be free and open to the public.

Tuesday, November 2nd  
7:00 p. m.  
Kenton County Public Library  
Erlanger branch  
3130 Dixie Highway  
(next to Krogers)

**A NEW REGIONAL MAGAZINE, NORTHERN KENTUCKY HERITAGE**  
Published biannually by the Kenton County Historical Society. Co-sponsored by the Northern Region of the Historical Confederation of Kentucky, for the Northern Region of Kentucky.

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## KENTON COUNTY'S FIRST "FULL-TIME" HEALTH OFFICER

Dr. H. Clay White (1873-1957)

"It was 1933 that the Anti-Tuberculosis League...established a Tuberculosis Clinic....This was all accomplished through... the late Dr. Henry Clay White, Kenton County Health Officer; the late Dr. Orrin Lyle Reynolds, and Dr. Charles J. Farrell."  
--Dr. Alvin Charles Poweleit, "The Kenton-Campbell Area of Kentucky--Its Medical History and Society--The Campbell-Kenton Medical Society" (1957). The Papers of the Christopher Gist Society. Volume 8.

The "Old Pest House" on city property at Kyles Lane, which had been "used for the isolation of smallpox patients at the turn of the century," was transferred to Kenton county in order to establish the clinic (Poweleit).

Since the ideal of preventative medicine in local private practice had not been satisfied, new efforts in the 1920s were made through public administration including the use of a modern vital statistics monitoring law (births, deaths), and including innovative bacteriol immunization procedures. In fact, "death rates from infectious diseases" had begun to decline "before the bacteriological era" due to bacteriological adaptation," and better hygiene and nutrition. Then between 1920 and 1940 the threats from malaria, scarlet fever, diphtheria, etc. were reduced, and "all but eliminated by 1940." This was accomplished through "education, vaccination, antitoxin, inoculation, isolation, drainage, and screening procedures." Then after 1940 "two older diseases," tuberculosis and typhoid, remained as perils as did trachoma and hookworm. It was the work of Madeline McDowell Breckinridge that had sparked the renewed efforts in the 1920s in the direction of "free diagnostic clinics, school inspections, and nursing service blended with the State Board of Health's sanitoriums development program...." In 1920 Kentucky's death rate from typhoid was one of the "highest in the nation." Thus by 1929, with Rockefeller aid, Kentucky had "45 full-time departments." In 1940 "86" of the state's 120 counties had full-time health departments under the State Board of Health (John H. Ellis, Medicine in Kentucky, 1977).

As his daughter, Virginia Jones, recalled recently, Dr. Henry Clay White had worked part time for the county when in 1928 he was appointed to head the new county health office. He was charged with providing medical services (including nursing and dental care) for schools and for indigent needs.

In recalling his public health career, Mrs. Jones first mentioned the special efforts during the 1937 flood including providing antidotes for typhoid and tetanus infections. In 1928-1929 the "Kenton County Board of Health" was located in the Covington city building. By 1931 the county had a public health office at 912 Scott street where Dr. White worked the remainder of his career. In years to come he held the title, "County Health Commissioner"(street directories).

According to Mrs. Jones, he retained that position until 1954 when he was 82 years old, some two years short of his death.



graduate, 1897  
Medical College of Ohio

From the standpoint alone of family background, Dr. White was a not inappropriate overseer; he was descended from one of Kenton county's grassroots families. His grandfather, George White (1804-1875) had married Matilda McCollum, daughter of John McCollum, jr. (died 1818). And it appears that she was the sister of the John McCollum who had in 1834 acquired from William and Leonard Stephens (first Kenton county sheriff) 100 acres along Banklick creek (DB L, p. 121). In 1841 John McCollum deeded five of the 100 acres for the new county's courthouse and public square at Independence (DB 1, p. 2). George and Matilda's children included these adults: Leonard (obit., K. P. 7-22-01); James M. (obit., K. P. 11-16-18) who married Mary Elizabeth Truesdell; Nancy G. Lamb; Augusta Hafley; Lorinda Shuster; Elizabeth Threlkeld; and George F. White (WB 2, p. 307, 1875, Covington).

According to a resident of the area, George White's log cabin is hidden behind the siding and room additions to a house which stands off Decoursey on Whites road. Indeed, the second house on the left, a few hundred from Decoursey, shows a stone chimney of a style usually seen on a pioneer cabin. And behind this house is located the George White cemetery, some 200 feet north of Whites road, and some 2000 feet from Decoursey pike, highway 177 (Kenton County Cemetery Book).

Whites road runs east on a ridge over a railroad tunnel into a large loop in the Licking river known as "Grant's Bend." Lambs Ferry road forks to the right off Whites road near Decoursey. The 1883 atlas shows Dr. White's widowed grandmother

Matilda, his uncles Leonard S. and James M., and his father George F. The 1914 county map shows various relatives and also Dr. White himself owning three or more parcels including a long rectangular piece (35 acres) extending from Lambs Ferry road across Whites road and across the railroad tracks to the Licking river. Regarding the railroad, Dr. White is one of a long list of Kenton county farmer owners who about 1911 formally deeded strips of their property which consolidated the right-of-way of the L & N railroad (DB 60, p. 95).

Dr. White's father was George Fox White (1844-1898) who married Augusta Stevens, from one of the many families named Stevens (or "Stephens"). According to Virginia Jones, Whites Tower (located where Old Decoursey intersects Taylor Mill, highway 16, above Decoursey creek and Steep creek) was named for George White. However, the land had belonged to her grandmother's family. Whites Tower also is derived from the years that a "tower" was erected on this high elevation in the county for surveying purposes, Mrs. Jones recalled.

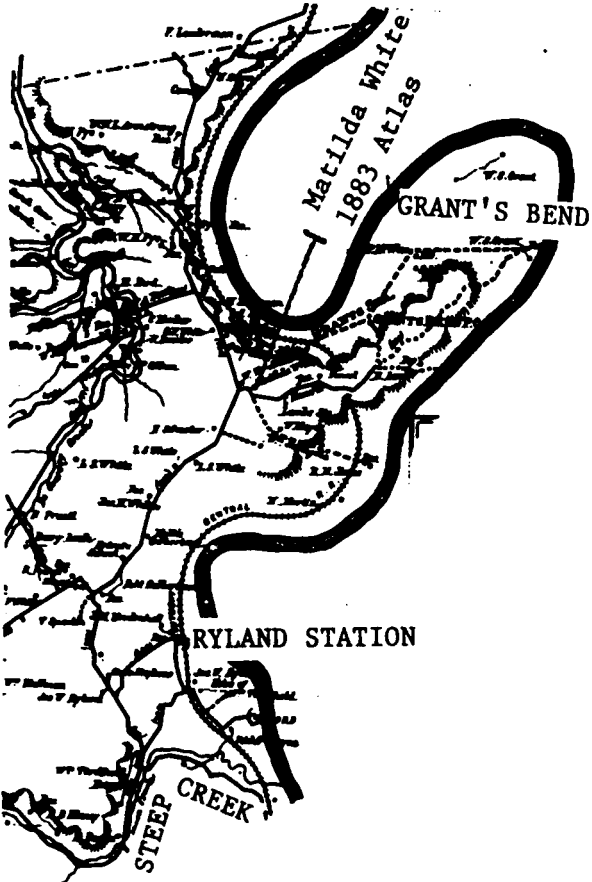
Unfortunately, when in his teens, Dr. White, his sister Nellie, and his mother Augusta, suffered the loss of his father, "a prosperous farmer," by drowning during a sudden rise of the Licking river, while trying to cross, near Grants Ford (K. P. 10-11-98).

Dr. White was "born on the old White farm, five miles south of Covington," attended school in the county, graduated from Covington High School in 1892, and from the Medical School of Ohio in 1897. He started his private practice at Visalia. In World War I he achieved the rank of Captain in the U. S. Army Medical Corps (Dr. Alvin Poweleit and Dr. James Schrand, Bicentennial of Physicians of Northern Kentucky Past and Present, 1977).

Virginia Jones recalled that her father married Edith Coleman, daughter of J. B. Coleman, from a family that lived on Steep Creek road. Dr. and Mrs. White had three children, all of whom married: Virginia, George Edwin (deceased), and Joseph L. (deceased). After Dr. White's death, Joseph lived with his mother. Only now, since the death of Joseph, will the former residence and private office of Dr. White be sold. His daughter recalled that about 1906, Dr. White moved from "Ryland" into his new house, now numbered 3823 Decoursey (on the right side going south, corner of Lincoln street and Decoursey, near St. Stephen's Episcopal church). There Dr. White phased out his private practice after becoming the county's health officer.

Virginia Jones further recalled that soon after moving to his new residence, her father ran for some office in Latonia shortly before that short-lived city was annexed by Covington. In the early 1930s he became strongly involved in the first congressional campaign of Brent Spence. But he was not active in Spence's later campaigns. In 1927 Dr. White was appointed to a nine-man "planning commission" by the Latonia Businessmen's club (K. P., 6-16-27). In those years Dr. White also once served as President of First National Bank of Latonia (1931 street directory).

His daughter added that Dr. White liked to spend time in his garden behind his home, and in his carpentry shop in his basement. Rather introverted, he liked to read, but was not involved in athletics. He died in Veterans Hospital in Cincinnati, and is buried in Independence cemetery (obit., K. P. 7-1-57).



## ANOTHER HENRY CLAY WHITE

Besides Matilda McCollum White and some of her children in Kenton county, the 1883 atlas indicates over ten landowners named "White" in Campbell county in the Alexandria and Carthage precincts, and at least two landowners named "White" in Boone county. And not only did Dr. White have one or more relatives named "H. Clay White," there was at least one lawyer (maybe related) with the same name.

The lawyer's obituary recalls these facts: H. Clay White died at Williamstown; prominent lawyer; served many years as Circuit Court Clerk; born in Boone county; married 50 years; age 78; buried in Highland cemetery (K. P., 1-31-08).

In 1875 a newspaper claimed that White had been a faithful court clerk. Appointed in 1875<sup>67</sup> after the resignation of B. W. Foley, White had since been elected and re-elected (Covington Journal, 4-17-75). In 1880 his retirement from the Kenton County Circuit Court office was reported (Daily Commonwealth, 9-6-80). And the next day the paper recorded that he had just been admitted to the bar, and that Henry Clay White's successor, Henry Clay Hallam, had been installed.

(by John Boh)

### PUBLICATIONS

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