

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012

Bulletin

November/December 1997

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Christmas Party

Tuesday December 9

7 PM

at

**Beringer-Crawford
Museum**

Beverages provided

**Come, be a child
again, and enjoy
the train display**

Kenton County Historical Society Board Meeting

Held on November 6, 1997

Since Betty Foster is on the sick list (prayers for her are requested), the subscription and membership renewal notices have been sent out late. There were ca. 165 NKH subscription expired and 180 more to expire after the current issue.

The operation of the Society would be greatly enhanced with acquisition of at least one additional computer, a small photocopier, and a fax machine. Some request letters will be sent to several corporations to secure their used equipment.

A Program Committee is being developed. Lisa Gillham will act as clearing person for collection of lists of potential program ideas. A member volunteer is needed to schedule the programs decided upon, i.e. planning meeting places and times and sending details to *Bulletin* for publication.

Volunteers for various projects are a growing need. A special meeting is planned to place those already expressing interest and to enable more to volunteer. A list of projects the Society would like to encourage is being developed. The membership is encouraged to contribute ideas for additional endeavors they feel KCHS should consider.

A closer relationship of Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine with Northern Kentucky University is being pursued, possibly joint sponsorship along with Historical Confederation of Kentucky. When this is in place, NKU will appoint a faculty representative to encourage submission of student and faculty papers for publication in future NKH issues.

Winners of Awards

A Historical Confederation of Kentucky Awards luncheon was held on November 8 in Frankfort, Kentucky. Congratulations to the following honored guests from Northern Kentucky awarded for excellence in their work:

Karl Lietzenmayer, Editor
Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine

Thomas Purvis, Editor
History of Newport

Mary Northington, President
African American Taskforce



Setting the Vision for the Next One-Hundred Years

Part 3

by Jo Ann Brown

It is 1983, and sitting above the entrance to the Carnegie Art Center is the sculpture of Minerva, the Goddess of wisdom and skill. She is still sheltering the arts, but is looking a bit disheveled. If you look very closely, you'll probably see chips falling from her forehead from worry. Finding funding for arts programming is difficult enough, but restoring the eighty year old Carnegie structure and keeping it heated is a tremendous burden. Arts organizations in Cincinnati have a tough time, too. A 1985 report funded by the Cincinnati Institute of Fine Arts and the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce recorded that eight arts organizations who received funding from the Annual Fine Arts Fund had a combined operating deficit of \$1 million.¹

Arlene Gibeau stepped into this dismal picture with positive energy and enthusiasm. She was described as emanating "sparks of magic."²

She had previously been an arts program director for the University of Kentucky Extension. Called SOS, (Sharing Our Selves), the program required Mrs. Gibeau to go into small communities to discover and capitalize on local arts talents. When State money ran out for arts programming, she retired

from her field extension work. The financially strapped Northern Kentucky Arts Council had been searching for a new director. Mrs. Gibeau's previous work had prepared her for the challenge, and when the opportunity presented itself, she saw it as an appropriate place for her love and enthusiasm for the arts.³

With Mrs. Gibeau's advice, the Board created an Arts Advisory Committee to establish policy. The Committee was made up of Board members with an arts background as well as other professionals such as Gary Gaffney of the Cincinnati Art Academy. He was her mentor. The Committee then made recommendations to the Board on the kind of programming The Carnegie should have. The "Call to Artists" became an annual event which planned all of the shows of the year, making sure they had juried shows for the visual arts, and that the pieces chosen were unique, quality pieces, as well as varied from year to year. It was also decided that The Carnegie would always have an open door to local artists. With its large Downstairs Gallery and the four smaller galleries upstairs, exhibiting at The Carnegie was a "shot in the arm" for many local artists.⁴

In response to the number

of "opportunities that would come in," Mrs. Gibeau moved out her office to create The Corner Gallery, a gallery to exhibit the works of artists who did not have the opportunity to use the "jury system." As an example, an art teacher told her about a deaf artist worthy of an exhibition. The exhibition revealed a world from the viewpoint of one who could not hear the world. Another "opportunity" came in one day. A man with alcohol on his breath showed her some drawings, and although they were splattered with coffee stains, she thought he had potential. She suggested he do some more work and come back. A year later, he did come back. He had joined Alcoholics Anonymous and began working on his painting in earnest. He had enough for a show that year and has continued working.⁵

During her tenure, Mrs. Gibeau founded the Arts Collaborative responding to community thinkers who thought an arts presence should be in Mainstrasse, the newly revitalized German tourist section of Covington. She started "Right Side Artists," a group that continues to meet at The Carnegie once a week to critique the works of the participants.

Mrs. Gibeau not only programmed 40 gallery exhibits a

Arts Administration from Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.²⁴ Mr. Baum feels that he can build on The Carnegie's excellent reputation of unconditional support in the visual and performing artists and its mission to educate. He is adding the economic expertise often not found in non-profit organizations.²⁵

In October 1996, The Carnegie celebrated its Silver Anniversary, a black tie event with live music, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and an auction of over 100 works donated by some of Cincinnati's most celebrated artists. Their contribution exhibited their support and loyalty to The Carnegie.²⁶ The Carnegie's goal is to be as self-sufficient as possible which validates the Center in the eyes of funders. It will continue to have one large scale fund-raising event each year and two or three smaller ones throughout the year.²⁷

An unprecedented thrust of PR has doubled the membership two years in a row to 900 members. The Carnegie has increased its budget by thirty percent in the past two years. The full time grant writing staff has enabled them to do many other things. Twenty-thousand dollars worth of electrical work was completed in The Carnegie Theatre. The balcony is now open for the first time in more than twenty-five years. It now seats 500 people, the magic number to book a national tour. The theatre which was built to resemble an 18th Century European opera house has been newly painted, and there is new carpet on the stairs.²⁸

The identity of the Northern Kentucky Arts Council and the work of The Carnegie has been a confusing problem for a long time.

The NKAC organization was incorporated to be a "regranting" organization, one which would help arts organizations in the area with funding, either through channelling funds to them, or helping them to write for grants. But with the location of offices in the Carnegie, most money went for programing, maintenance, and renovation in the Carnegie building. The Council never was able to function as it was supposed to function. In fact, a certain animosity had begun to grow among the arts community.²⁹

Dissolving the Northern Kentucky Arts Council, Incorporated is too expensive at the present time. So, in February of 1997, the Board took a decisive step toward the process of dropping the Northern Kentucky Arts Council identity. They applied for a d.b.a. (doing business as) with the State of Kentucky. All contracts with the NKAC name can stay the same. The status of d.b.a. gives the Board the right to call the arts center The Carnegie Center for Visual and Performing Arts which ends the confusion and sets The Carnegie on its own track.³⁰

The Carnegie now has nine staff members and hope to hire an education program director. They would like to expand educational outreach as funding becomes available. They have continued ArtStop, and have expanded other educational programs for children.

They are working with the City to find some appropriate way to provide parking space without displacing neighbors. A group of volunteers is working together to create a garden in the small lot behind the theatre.³¹

The dream of making The

Carnegie a completely handicapped accessible building with elevator as well as restrooms is finally becoming a reality. It will not only serve a wider population, it will be easier to find funding for programs and expanded operations. They are still raising money for the elevator, but plans are underway to "break ground" in the next few months.³²

Mr. Andrew Carnegie would approve.

End Notes

1. *Cincinnati Post*, November 15, 1987.
2. Personal Interview, Bill Seitz, August 1997 (hereafter cited as B. S.).
3. Personal Interview, Richard Gibeau, September 1997 (hereafter cited as R. G.).
4. Personal Interview, Arlene Gibeau, October 1997 (hereafter cited as A. G.).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. *Cincinnati Post*, October 10, 1985, page 4B.
8. A. G.
9. *Cincinnati Post*, Op. Cit.
10. *Cincinnati Post*, November 1, 1986.
11. *Kentucky Post*, November 18, 1986, page 2K.
14. R. G. & *Cincinnati Post*, Op. Cit.
15. *Cincinnati Post*, November 18, 1986, page 1B
16. *Cincinnati Post*, October 17, 1985, page 5B.

17. A. G.
 18. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 23, 1995, H1.
 19. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 23, 1995, H6.
 20. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Op. Cit. & B. S.

Friends of Baker Hunt

The mission of "Friends of Baker-Hunt" is to preserve and enhance the Baker-Hunt organization as a center for spiritual, cultural, educational and artistic activities for the people of Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati.

Meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month at the Baker-Hunt Mansion, 620 Greenup St., Covington. For more information, call 861-4146.

21. Ibid.
 22. Ibid.

Publications for Sale

23. Personal Interview, Jeff Baum, November 1997.
 24. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Op. Cit.
 25. *Kentucky Post*, October 2, 1996, 2KK.
 26. *Kentucky Post*, October 2, 1996, "Art Auction," 1KK.

Kenton County Officers (1776-1880s): 109 Biographies of office holders by O. J. Wiggins as found in The Commonwealth 1884. Compiled and edited by John Boh with additional facts where found. \$2.00 plus postage.

Collected Papers of Kenton County Historical Society (3 Volumes)
 Titles available upon request \$30

Color Photo of Kentucky Parlor streetcar: Suitable for framing 7" x 7"
 \$2.00 plus postage

Census Indexes of Kenton County:

- Compiled by Dorothy Weick
 1) 1810, '20, '30 (Campbell County) \$20
 2) 1840 \$15
 3) 1850 \$25
 4) 1860 \$15
 5) 1870 \$25
 6) 1880 (2 Volumes) \$25

History of Trinity Church
 by George Roth
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27. J. B.
 28. B. S.
 29. J. B.
 30. J. B.
 31. J. B.
 32. J. B.

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year and dozens of theatre productions, but started ArtStop, an after school program for neighborhood children, as well as a Theatre in Diversion program for Kenton County Juvenile Justice Division. Youth was always important at the Carnegie. The Creative Youth Expo was organized as well as The Scholastic Arts and Writing Exhibition. New play readings were begun in the theatre, a successful idea for playwrights to expose their work for, possibly, the first time.

Two or three art exhibitions were in place at The Carnegie each month, but the low profile and financial problems continued. Mrs. Gibeau was the only staff person on the payroll, and in those days, being on the payroll didn't mean she got paid every month. If she had not had a husband to support her, she could not have continued as Director of The Carnegie.⁶

Each year the Council had received funds from the large well established Cincinnati Fine Arts Fund, a small amount compared with the percentage of money contributed by Kentuckians. In the fall of 1985, the Northern Kentucky Arts Council planned its first Northern Kentucky Arts Council Fund Campaign. A goal of \$75,000 was aimed at ending ten years of financial struggle.⁷ Brochures were printed and ten thousand letters were ready to be sent out. However, a funny thing happened on the way to the big kick off. Two weeks before the letters were sent out for the first fund raising drive of the Northern Kentucky Arts Council, the first Northern Kentucky Fine Arts Fund Drive was launched. This was a big surprise to everyone on the

Council Board, especially since the campaign chairman for both was the same person. It was decided that it would be fruitless to go ahead with the Council's fund raising campaign in that year.⁸

In October 1985, the City of Covington channeled a Community Block Grant to Carnegie for several projects: \$16,000 to install an elevator for the handicapped and \$15,000 to develop jobs for low income workers which would encourage neighborhood participation. At the same time the City of Covington let the community at large know that operating expenses must come from outside of Covington since The Carnegie and the Northern Kentucky Arts Council benefits all of Northern Kentucky.⁹

In 1986, the Carnegie still was short on operating funds. Cincinnati Gas and Electric notified the Carnegie Arts Center that it would not turn on the heat unless the \$12,000 which had accumulated over the past three years was paid. Annual cost for utilities was \$25,000. Again the Council and Arlene Gibeau appealed to the City Commissioners and Kenton County Fiscal Court.¹⁰

About a year or two later, CG & E actually did turn off the gas which provided heat for the cavernous building. Mrs. Gibeau and all volunteers came to work in long underwear and heavy sweaters. A Carnegie supporter brought in several kerosene heaters. The electricity was left on, so that all meetings and programs went on as scheduled. If visitors complained about the cold, Mrs. Gibeau simply pointed out the difficulty of keeping such a large old building heated. Again the Kenton County

Fiscal Court came though and gave enough money to pay the entire utility bill.¹¹

Thieves stole the copper from the roof, and after the City of Covington gave \$75,000 to replace it, thieves stole it again causing extensive water damage inside. Again the City replaced the roof. The outside of the building needed tuckpointing. The theatre needed much work to make it usable. (When Mrs. Gibeau first came, it took three months to clean up the theatre. She found petrified peanut butter sandwiches from Peanut Butter Theatre days, scaffolding from an unfinished project, and old crackled men's workboots that had been left behind.¹²) In response, the Kenton County Fiscal Court gave \$25,000 for capital improvements.

From 1974 to 1986, the NKAC had spent \$402,915 on maintenance and renovation and \$465,000 on arts programming and administration. The Carnegie had signed up 600 members.¹³ Council President Ralph J. Grieme and Vice President Gene Archibold asked the County Commissioners for \$50,000 for the Center.

The NKAC officers also told the Commissioners that the Council was ready to drop the Carnegie building because it was too much of a burden. (The year before in 1985, Council President Thomas Coffey tried to close the doors because of these problems, but the Board vetoed the proposal.¹⁴) The Northern Kentucky Arts Council which was incorporated to make art available to more people throughout Northern Kentucky had changed its focus because of the responsibilities to

the Carnegie. There was an identity problem. The officers suggested that a separate Board be set up for the Carnegie. The Commissioners approved of the fact that there was a specific plan, and they granted the \$50,000.¹⁵ The organizational change, however, never took place.

At that time, it is estimated that about 200 people came to the art show openings. In spite of all this activity at Robins and Scott Streets, the Arts Council and Center were still not well known among the general public which hurt the possibilities for private funding from corporations and large donors. The location was blamed for poor interest; it was outside the business district and lacked parking, and there was also the perception that the area was dangerous.¹⁶

In 1992, Arlene Gibeau was chosen to win the Post-Corbett Award for her role in being the person who had done more to support local artists and for promoting the visual and performing arts in the community. NKAC had been nominated for the Post-Corbett Award several times, but the winning of the award by Mrs. Gibeau became a turning point for the center. People began to give The Carnegie the recognition it deserved; it was making a place for the future.¹⁷

In 1993, a new revitalized Board began to recruit more civic activists. Small theater companies took up residence there.¹⁸ The Board asked Mrs. Gibeau to hire a part time development director. The development director wrote grants to the Greater Cincinnati Foundation which matched a grant from Fidelity Investments to pay

for fifteen thousand new brochures and the development director position.¹⁹

The new Board began looking at the seven-year-old plan for renovation of the building. At the time, much of the possible arts funding was rejected because the 19th-Century Carnegie didn't meet the standards of the American Disabilities Act of 1988. Previous grant money for the elevator just didn't begin to solve the problem. The design required a much higher figure, at least \$350,000, to make the galleries handicap accessible from the street level theatre entrance. The second floor of the theatre is on a different level from the main building. In fact, to make the building totally handicap accessible from the basement up, they had to design around six levels. They also had to take into account the historic preservation of the building.²⁰

In 1994, a grant application to the Kentucky Historic Preservation Foundation was rejected, but included in the rejection letter was a notice about applications to ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act.) The Act, created to improve air quality through improved transportation, included amendments for money for other community improvements and has been used by many cities throughout the country. The staff and Board took the chance and sent in an application. Their argument was that an elevator in the building would create a handicapped accessible historic building and would be an enhancement to Kentucky's surface transportation by creating a place worthy of the drive. In February 1995, Governor Bereton Jones gave Arlene Gibeau an

ISTEA check for \$338,000. Realizing The Carnegie was no longer a white elephant, the City of Covington chipped in close to \$100,000.²¹ All totalled, the grants contributed to the first phase of the renovation plan. The Council figured that, as of 1995, a total renovation, repairs, and restoration would be \$1.5 million.²²

In 1995, a substantial bequest was made to the Carnegie which gave the Board new vitality. They decided to take a proactive approach to become a self-sufficient organization.²³ Other notable activities for 1995 are additional staff. Buz Davis, an actor who later took the position of the Performing Arts Director, was hired. Bill Sietz, now gallery director, later took development. A Volunteer Coordinator was also hired. A new membership campaign was launched to shore up the membership which was below 100 members at the time.²⁴

In January 1996, Arlene Gibeau regretfully stepped down as Director of The Carnegie. At a grand gala, she was hailed by the Greater Cincinnati community as an innovative and creative director, honored by artists everywhere for her loyalty to local artists, and for her concern for the neighborhood kids and common folk in general. She is credited for holding The Carnegie together with a magical intuition, love and determination.

Later in the year, Jeff Baum was hired as the new director, having left his job as general manager with the Taft Theatre. He had a degree from Columbia University of New York City, had spent a year and half at the London School of Economics, and came to Cincinnati to get his Masters of



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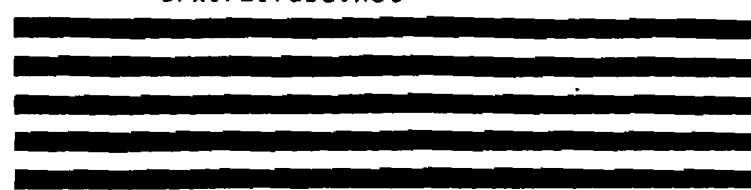
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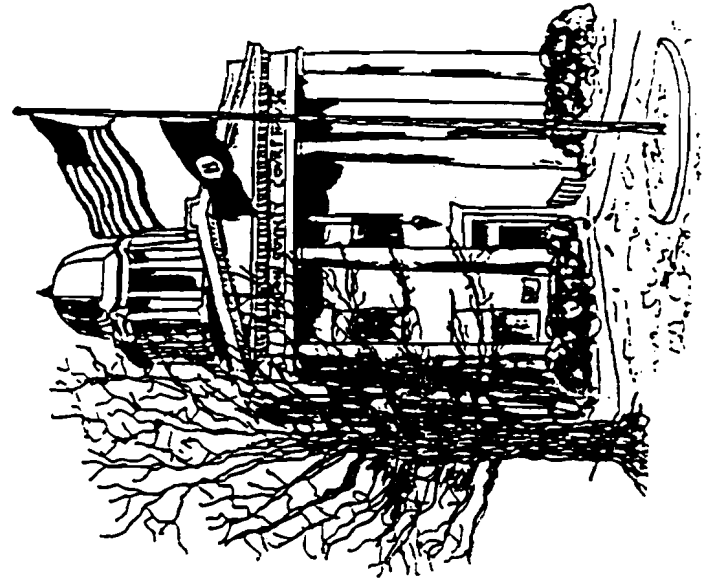
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KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November/December 1997



**INSIDE: KCHS News and
Setting the Vision for the Next 100 Years:
Part 3, History of The Carnegie**

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