

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012 (606) 431-2666
<http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoe/>

Bulletin

October 2000

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KCHS PROGRAM

DATE: Tuesday, October 10
7 p.m.

PLACE: Trinity Episcopal Church
4th & Madison, Cov. KY.

PROGRAM: Covington's German
Heritage

Author & professor Don Tolzman will discuss German immigration & contributions to Covington. Dr. Tolzman has written several books on this subject. These will be available at the program.

From the President.....

Society elections brought few changes. Joe Gastright is our new vice-president as Steve McMurtry did not run for another term.

At the risk of missing someone. I would like to recognize all the work of Society members and volunteers. Jack Doll for copying and enhancing historic photos; JoAnn Brown for patching together a fine *Bulletin* every month (a very demanding schedule!); Joe Gastright, for being one of KCHS finest researchers & contributors; Linda Carter for helping with refreshments (until she broke her hand!); Emily Baily, Barbara Begg & Pat Bogenschutz for data entry (important for publishing); Carol Wenger for keeping membership/subscriptions (essential!); Dan Carter, a most efficient treasurer; John Boh, a mainstay to the Society for years.

The September speaker, Dr. Paul Tenkotte, was one of four KCHS presidents (past & present) in attendance. He gave a summary of his ongoing research, comparing the history and growth of Lexington and Covington. Paul is fleshing out the causes for these two cities' divergent paths. Both had similar population sizes until after World War II but have since become quite different in almost every way. Lexington has gone to "County-wide" government and the local government has limited growth in the western & southern sections of Fayette County to protect the horse farms.

Covington has actually lost population since 1950 because of many factors. Geographically, hemmed-in by hills, Covington had less growth room than Lexington. Many of the subdivisions built around Covington became incorporated towns in themselves. This was not the case with Lexington.

Paul intends to interview Northern Kentucky families who moved from Covington to find out their reasons for doing so. He believes that personal interviews rather than simply researching records will tell a better story as to why Covingtonians left. Paul will share his findings in the pages of a future *Northern Kentucky Heritage*.

Nancy Grall Steps Down

Nancy Grall found it necessary to step down from Program Coordinator after two years of developing some of the best programs KCHS has presented. The most difficult part of programs is development of ideas - Nancy was excellent for she has a limitless imagination. She brought a cable TV presence to the Society by having a regular monthly spot on the Dick VonHoene Show. Her creativity will be missed. Joe Gastright is handling that position until a new coordinator can be found. If any member can assist in this important work, please let the Society know. Programs have been sketched out through the year 2001, thanks to Nancy.

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Dorothy Wieck (1908-2000)
KCHS Former Board Member Passes
25% of Her Estate to Kenton Society
by John Boh

At the Allison & Rose Funeral Home, her pastor recalled that Irene Dorothy Helen Lauderback ("Scotty") Wieck was born 84 days prematurely, had intense blue eyes, was a constant reader and traveler. She could recite the names of the Presidents who served during her lifetime. She passed away September 11th and was buried in Highland cemetery, Ft. Mitchell.

Dorothy was born August 4th, 1908 in Colorado. A member of First Presbyterian Church, after her husband's death, Dorothy lived for several years on Park Place, downtown Covington. In recent years, she resided in the Panorama highrise, the women's home at Seventh & Garrard, a nursing home in Crestview Hills and lastly in Woodcrest Manor, Elsmere.

Her father was born in Bracken County, as were his parents who married at the Germantown Methodist Church in 1875. In 1920, Warren Scott Lauderback (1876-1927) was listed as a "boilermaker" living with his family at 1004 Scott Street. He died in New York City, possibly while on business.

In 1928, Dorothy's mother Mary Irene Wilson Lauderback (1886-1956), who was born in Illinois, resided as a widow at the se. corner of 7th & Madison, Covington with her 2 daughters Dorothy and Geraldine (employed as clerk & phone operator, respectively). After the war, Mary Irene shared her home at 1533 Greenup with Geraldine's children, Arnold & Raymond Rucker and Bonnie Rucker. Indeed, Dorothy once recalled nephews attending Villa Madonna College (now Thomas More College) in Covington. The late Dr. Raymond Rucker practiced medicine in Madison, Indiana. Until recent years, Dorothy regularly visited her surviving nephew, "Dr." Arnold Rucker, in Florida during Christmas holidays.

With some 100 other "pioneers," Dorothy's father-in-law Theodore Wieck, Sr. (1843-1918) was pictured elegantly in the *Deutschen Pionier-Vereins von Covington, Kentucky* (1902). In the 1880s, he operated a prominent livery at 3rd & Court Streets which caught fire on May 25, 1886. Later he operated near sw. corner of Pike & Russell.

According to the newspaper, his will left \$200 for memorial Masses at Mother of God Church. He left his estate to his widow, Gertrude. At her death, the Pike Street property

passed to his sons Bernard and Theodore, who would reimburse their brother Fred \$3,000. A house in the 500 block of Russell would go to his daughter Dora; a house in the 300 block of Bakewell to his daughter Hedwig; and \$1,800 to a married daughter, Philomena Langheim.

Dorothy's husband Theodore "Teddy" Wieck (1884-1974) inherited part of Theodore Wieck & Sons. In the 1920s & '30s, he was a garage operator, auto salesman and dealer - all near Pike & Russell. In his later years, he was an "agent" at the Cincinnati Union (Railroad) Terminal, and living with Dorothy at 255 Pershing Street.

A 1987 *Kentucky Post* front-page article featured Dorothy who recalled suffering through the Depression with her recently widowed and crippled mother. Despite difficult early years, Dorothy seemed to receive good care in her declining years. Having worked at various jobs, including the Covington IRS Center, her pension, Social Security, and inheritance all helped.

Dorothy could trace American ancestors back over 200 years. With a rather complex family background, Dorothy developed a love for family and local history. For many years, she enjoyed researching, conversing with and advising fellow enthusiasts. During innumerable hours spent reading microfilm she compiled her census indices for 1810 through 1880, covering Kenton County. In recent year, she compiled birth, marriage, and death records from church and county courthouse archives.

Dorothy served for many years as treasurer of the Kenton Historical Society and seldom missed a meeting. She regularly made factual comments from the audience taken from her storehouse of memories. Dorothy also wrote a brief biography of Covington Mayor Joseph Rhinock, first read in the membership *Bulletin*, and now found in the KCHS "Collected Papers." Among many awards to Dorothy were constant expressions of appreciation from the Kenton County Library and in 1986 an official one from the Kentucky Genealogical Society for outstanding achievement.

In her will, Dorothy has bequeathed 25% of her assets to the Kenton County Library and another 25% to the Kenton Historical Society. Her legacy will long be appreciated by KCHS.

Somerset Hall Ludlow Hidden Treasure

Somerset Hall, circa 1832, was built by William Butler Kenner as a summer house. Kenner was a wealthy Louisiana plantation owner. His estate originally sat on 42 acres that extended from Elm Street on the south to the Ohio River and Kenner Street on the east to the Bromley city boundary on the west.

The home was Kenner's escape from the humidity and heat of the Bayou Country. The front of the home faces north and at one time had a terraced lawn and walk bordered by shrubs and roses that led all the way to the Ohio Riverbank.

Kenner brought his house slaves on his summer trips and they began escaping across the Ohio River. At times using a delivery tunnel during escapes that led to the base of present Somerset Street. The home was also used as a hiding place by escaping slaves during times it was unoccupied.

Financial problems and his escaping slaves caused Somerset Hall to be sold to Thomas Keevan of Cincinnati, and in 1854 to Richard Clayton, a noted 19th century balloonist and successful Cincinnati businessman. Mr. Clayton sold the home in 1875 to the Closson family, proprietors of the famous Cincinnati furniture & antique business.

The Clossons sold the home in 1925 to the Ludlow Masonic Lodge (Unity Lodge #478). The Lodge used it as their meeting hall until 1998 when it was sold to the present owners, Stephen and Paula Chapman.

Somerset Hall is built in the Greek Revival style and first floor ceiling heights are 13 feet 10 inches. The basement ceiling is 9 feet and was originally Kenner's slave quarters. On the second floor, ceilings are 7 feet and floors are tongue & groove white pine.

Somerset Hall now sits on one acre and has a street address of 416 Closson Court, the actual rear of the home. The Clossons began using the rear as the main entrance. It is reported to have the longest residential porch in Kentucky, measuring 120 feet.



"Rear" (now front) with
view of "Longest Porch"

Original Front view (facing
Ohio River)

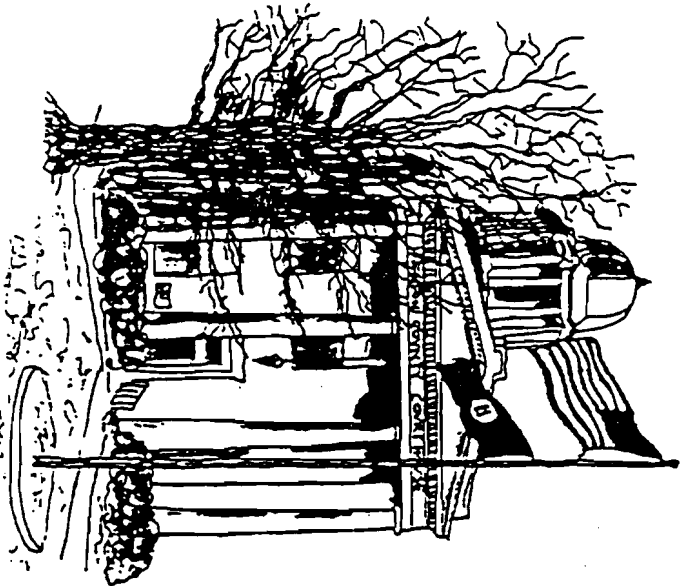


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INSIDE:

Somerset Hall - A Ludlow Treasure

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IN MEMORY OF Dixie Viox who passed away on September 30, 2000. Dixie was a charter member of Erlanger Historical Society and a member, historian and librarian for Erlanger Christian Church.

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