

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bulletin

September 1996



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A Plea For Parks - 1903 Style

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Publisher of award-winning
Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine

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K.C. H. S. MEETING

DATE	September 10
TIME	7 PM
PLACE	Erlanger Depot on Crescent Ave.
BUSINESS AGENDA	- Election of Officers
PROGRAM	History of Kenton Pottery of Erlanger

Mr. Nick Nicholson will present this program with a display of the pottery and slides.

"A FURTHER PLEA FOR PARKS"

Editor's Note: As summer comes to a close, I thought it appropriate to publish a few select paragraphs by Mr. Frank F. Woodall urging citizens to support a park entrance to Covington "as much as possible of that section between Second and Fourth streets, and the alleys east and west of Greenup and Scott Streets, to be known as the City Hall Park." This was written in the days when private citizens wrote pamphlets promoting their causes. Mr. Woodall wrote in flowering, if sometimes sarcastic, rambling prose; this little pamphlet is 53 pages long including three pages of index., indicative of different times., a slower pace. The pamphlet includes a color picture of the visionary park, and he urges women especially to hang it on their walls so that everyone can dream this park into existence.

The park envisioned is near the bridge, surrounds City Hall, and would be a beautiful and gracious gateway for visitors to Covington.

Covington, Ky., Feb., 1st, 1903

Full many a park is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the Covington air.
--Ha, ha! and Ho, ho!--Laughter of the Fates

To all the Good People of Covington:

But more especially the **Everyday Folk**; those that can't get away in summertime--that work hard all the year, but who have a vote to cast, if they will, for the good of the city and themselves; also, to the **Young Fellows**, the careless wide-awakes, impressionable still, and not yet gone to seed in this old grave-yard; and, to the **Ladies**--or, shall I say? **Women**, whose power is great among the Gentiles, if not among the heathen:--

Since venturing last August to circulate a pamphlet entitled *A Plea for Parks in Covington* (and which, from all I hear, the most of

you have read), I find myself occupying a position not entirely to my liking. By common consent, I seem to have been granted Letter Patent, or Royal Warrant, as it were, to go ahead and bring about this park at my earliest convenience. All have promised to enjoy and do what they can to make of it a success when ever I shall have completed it, for which mark of confidence I am very much obliged. Doubtless there are hundreds, and may be thousands, of people in the city that are opposed to anything of the sort, but personally I have encountered but two: the President of the Cincinnati, Newport, and Covington Light and Traction Co., and, our old ex-City Engineer.....

Mr. George T. Beach, one of our City Fathers, said to me not long ago that everything must have a beginning and that somebody must commence. I agreed with him fully, because, in the matter of a park, the Fates had decreed that I should have the honor of commencing. But the commencement ordinarily means the beginning of a progress that is forward, whereas, after an interval of six months I can only report a progress that has been backward. The same Fates that urged me to begin, now mock me with derisive laughter and point to the erection of a building by our big corporation on one of the vacant lots, within the sacred precincts of the section that, in my commencement, I took the liberty to dedicate to park purposes forever

Will the sweethearts and wives of the careless men of Covington kindly remind them, when starting for the polls, to keep their wits about them and vote right on the park questions as they come up, if nothing else? Will their sweethearts and wives, sometimes more sensible than the men, occasionally remind them of the fact, that [in] this town, when they think they are cheering themselves hoarse for Democratic or Republican principles, they are often only cheering for poolrooms on the one hand, or rich corporations on the other; and that frequently both sides are cheering for the same thing, and don't know it?

"Poolroomville," as a Cincinnati newspaper dubbed us but yesterday; the joke and butt of the country! Where the Chief of Police, last year, according to his own report, might easily be said to have arrested himself 754 times as a nuisance. And remains a

nuisance, unabated by the Court

From somewhere high up, on top of the distillery by the bridge, let us look at that section bounded by Second and Fourth Here are the lovely lawns, across whose distances, the morning salutations will be hailed how delicious in the morning, riding or walking; and how refreshing in the evening, returning from tired labors "through the park." And behold! a fountain! Is it possible? And in Covington! And is this a bench in Covington? It is? Verily, Jasper is right; the sun *do* move! Praise God, from whom all blessings flow! Let us take a seat upon it before it flies, for this bench has wings, and we are dreaming And Daniel Boone, your Uncle Daniel, representative of the heroism and romance of the "Dark and Bloody Ground," the Kentucky of that elder day of which we have the history, but no reminder. Or Uncle Simon, if you prefer; brave old Simon Kenton and the lady in white, with a white parasol, is a member of the D. A. R., viewing the Chapter's achievement Gone are the poolrooms, the jail and saloons, to other and more appropriate localities, and a new day has dawned for Covington. Behold the metamorphosis!--a city born again. And where be thy leaders, O Israel! where be thy preachers, that they preach not for this, this the thing beautiful, calling to the souls of men?

.....Last year the assessor reduced real-estate valuations to the extent of nearly a million dollars. [because manufacturing was moving into the area.] [With a park established] our valuations would increase at the rate of 5%, or a million a year, easily.

.....The president of the C. N. & C Light & Traction Co., says, "No." He says this town is "gone" for residential purposes; that is gone beyond saving; that this gate won't work; He says Covington is to be a manufacturing town; that but one kind of houses will be in demand, those renting at from \$12 to \$15 and \$18 per month; that factories are coming up the river to the bridge, all through that section, and that the smoke and dirt will kill everything in the park if established.

[Visitors to Pittsburgh and Allegheny, Pennsylvania have seen the banks of the Allegheny River lined with mills, coke ovens,



OUR FRONT DOOR CITY PARK, C

THE RICH MAN'S PRIDE AND POOR MAN'S JOY, A



LEXINGTON, Ky. --AS IT SHOULD BE.

AND A STANDING SIGN OF THE PROSPERITY OF BOTH

and other smoke producing plants.] Have these same visitors not also seen the lovely parks of Allegheny, and the main park especially, a mile or more long

.....If we intend to go about actually making a manufacturing town out of Covington, why not do it right? Why not pass an ordinance compelling builders, while they are at it, to put patent-stokers under their boilers?

There are two classes of people in Covington that are, and for many years have been, a detriment to its progress: the top class that uses the town to make money out of, thinking some day to leave it; and the bottom class that lives in it because living is cheap, and has no idea beyond it. Between these two, the upper and nether mill-stones, as it were, are all the other classes, what we might call the great middle class, and all of its dreams, its hopes and aspirations, are ground into powder, by the sharp selfishness of the top, and the ponderous indifference of the bottom stones

There is a class of population in Covington that is the German, and especially the German-Catholic. I have often heard that next to Baltimore, Covington had a greater majority of Catholic population than any city in the United States. But Baltimore is an extraordinarily beautiful city possessing 40 or 50 monuments, fountains, and pieces of statuary, besides 37 public reservations in the way of squares, terraces (as they call the gardens in the middle of the streets,) and parks So Covington's ugliness can't be Catholic and must be German.

Occasionally some one of our "progressive" American-Protestant citizens, tells me that the trouble lies in our German population; that the German is satisfied with a little home that is paid for, and cares for nothing beyond a reduction of taxes, and, that taken together, they are slow.

Yes, I have always noticed that in Covington. I remember, as it were, but yesterday, when Covington was not a German city, but a Kentucky slave-town. And I remember the beautiful parks we used to have in those days, and the sparkling fountains, and the hogs and cows in the streets, and the ash-heaps three or four feet high, and the pools of slop in the roadways, as late as--Oh! as late as 1870, or until

the German invasion began.. And I know too, that leading Covingtonians of that day, were forever beautifying the town and thinking of its future, as the present proves But I'll bet that the average German will spend more time and hard-earned money on a flowering plant, or tree, than any population we have, native or foreign-born So we can't blame the German *character*, at any rate, and, as we are all equally guilty, from the beginning down to the present day, let us put onto the negro, who isn't to blame at all I fear I have dallied too long by the wayside

[Covington is divided into two classes, one of them twice as big as the other] Well now: It is a singular fact that the one-third is trying to turn the home of the two-thirds into a shop, and the question arises, what are the two-thirds going to do about it?.....

Covington genius may exploit itself in Cincinnati, but with few exceptions, it seems dormant on this side of the river. Our genius runs largely to pool-rooms and politics, and politics of the third-part mostly, for the government of the remaining two-thirds majority, who know little if anything about it, care less, to their shame But all the same, with my compliments and warmest regards to every city official, and without prejudice to the pool-rooms, I am going to say that if...but one-half of the time, money, brains, official favor and stretching of the law that *has* been expended in the maintenance of the pool rooms, be now devoted to the accomplishment of this park, next to light, our first and greatest need, it will come and a residential boom will follow.....

Of course, I could not bother you with an argument favoring a little 10 x 4, corner-block park. It wouldn't be worth the candle [I want to present the ideal park] ... This is no diminutive, 10 x 4 grass-plot, but a beautiful park, worth living by, and too handsome to leave..... And even you, gentle reader! I imagine to be gasping for breath. But take your time. I am waiting for you. You're a little slow, but you're all right Enthuse-up a little, and join me as a Beginner. We'll revolutionize the town

[The beautiful color picture of the park of the future will be

enough to convince people to vote for a tax to build the park.]
.....and so, O pretty Picture mine! I leave the rest to thee:---

Go thou and speak to the people. Be thou my sweet evange-
list, as thou art exponent, of what this town should be Tell them
that a flower is Divine Promise men their increase,
but steal into the understanding and make it clear, that thou canst lift
us up forever; make us sweeter in the heart, and by thy daily sermon,
lead us, more effectually, to keep the statutes and observe the laws.

NOTE:

ON OCTOBER 1st THE KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE
DIOCESE OF COVINGTON ARCHIVES OFFICE ON AIRPORT ROAD.
ARCHIVIST FOR THE DIOCESE, DAVE SCHROEDER, WILL PRESENT
THE PROGRAM.



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing a history of the SIXTH KENTUCKY VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT (UNION). The Regiment was formed in late 1861 in Louisville and included about 100 men from Kenton County and a few from Campbell County. Most were from Covington, but some were from Independence, Kenton, and Newport. These men were in Captain Alfred Martin's Company A and were mustered into U. S. service at Camp Joe Holt on September 9, 1861.

The Sixth Kentucky had a distinguished record of service and fought at Shiloh, Stones River, Chickamauga and in the Atlanta Campaign.

I would like to request that anyone with any pertinent information about this regiment and/or its men contact me. I am especially interested in letters, diaries and photographs. My mailing address is 8420 Oxford Woods Court, Louisville, KY 40222-4667.

Very truly yours,

Joseph R. Reinhart

Kenton County Historical Society membership dues are \$10 per year; \$5 for students and Senior Citizens.

Subscriptions to Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine, a semi-annual magazine of regional history covering ten counties, are \$12 a year for members; \$15 a year for non-members

To subscribe to the magazine or become a member of KCHS, please mail check to KCHS, P. O. Box 641, Covington, KY 41012
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Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"