

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY REVIEW

JULY 1983

The following is Part One of a series by Dr. Joseph F. Gastright.

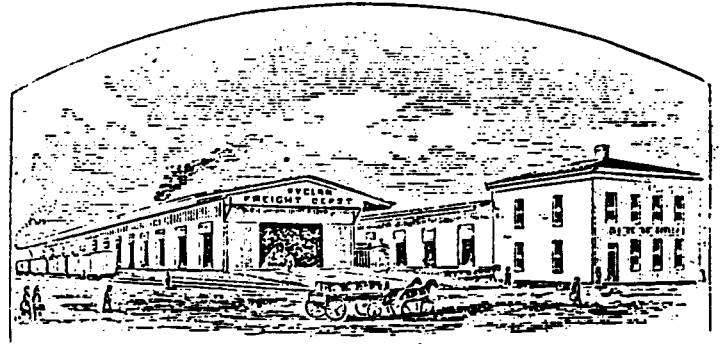
The Making of the Kentucky Central...

On March 1, 1847, the state legislature chartered the Licking and Lexington Railroad. The citizens of Kenton County and Covington were interested in the idea but skeptical. The act specified that the route would include Lexington, Paris, Cynthiana, Falmouth and either Newport or Covington. The formation of Kenton County out of Campbell only seven years earlier had left an enormous amount of bad feeling that had only lessened across the years. Neither county was interested in supporting a route that might end up benefitting the other. Fayette County was the state leader in railroad promotion and voted \$200,000.00 in bonds to support the venture. The City of Covington voted to support the issue with \$100,000.00 but the public sales were disappointing. Only twenty shares were subscribed in the three day sale in Covington.

Opposition to the road said that it would take business from the turnpikes and canals and, that the railroads should be taxed to make up the deficits. The Licking Valley Register which strongly supported the issue argued that the improvement in trade and property would certainly justify the losses.

The issue was probably decided by the uncertain economic situation. The economic decline in the late forties was small compared to the collapse ten years earlier but many investors had learned a lesson. Some old timers remembered that the Lexington and Ohio Railroad chartered in 1830 was rumored to have Cincinnati as the terminus. Later the owners decided on Louisville and this pioneer road had only been completed as far as Frankfort by 1835 as a "horse-line." Louisville like Cincinnati was confident in the future of the river trade and openly opposed to the railroad ambitions of Lexington. The Louisville to Frankfort end of the Lexington and Ohio was rechartered in 1847 and in the meantime the short road to Frankfort was not a profitable enterprise.

Paris had staged a serious effort to organize a Paris to Covington line in 1836. Major John S. Williams, their engineer, had assured them that the road could be completed for as little as \$720,000.00 without the use of "a perch of masonry" if it used the ridge route through Williamstown. The collapse of 1837 ended the plans of this small bluegrass town just as it delayed the start of the Licking and Lexington ten years later. Even prosperous Cincinnati had problems pushing its railroads to profitable markets during the same period. The Cincinnati Sandusky and Cleveland Railroad, chartered in 1837, was still incomplete when the Lexington and Licking died in the late forties.



KENTUCKY CENTRAL RAILROAD DEPOT.

The Licking Valley Register had made a strong case in Kenton County despite the defeat. They agreed that Covington would benefit from the north-south commerce on the road. Further, it would reduce the dependency of Kenton County on the river which was controlled largely by Cincinnati interests. When the rivers were too low for river traffic the county would provide cheap access to the products of the rich bluegrass. The editorial message of the Register echoed in the days after the Lexington and Licking died. "We say again take stock in the railroad - take it if you can pay - take it if you can't pay."

After the defeat the paper admitted that the uncertain northern terminus had been a major obstacle to private investment.

One competitor for investment in a Northern Kentucky railroad was eliminated in February 1847 when the Licking River Navigation Company forfeited its charter. The canal would have been a serious threat to a parallel railroad that would depend on bulky agricultural goods to make a profit. The rural bluegrass region could have taken advantage of the slow but cheap water rate to bankrupt a competitive railroad. The old locks which were virtually complete to Falmouth were abandoned forever and their stone was gradually quarried over the next 20 years to build farmhouses as well as the foundation of the Suspension Bridge at Cincinnati.

In 1849 the Lexington and Licking Railroad was rechartered as the Lexington and Covington Railroad which eliminated the problem of Kenton County funding. In June 1849 the great question in Northern Kentucky was, "Where is the support for this great project at the other end." B.F. Sanford proposed that state support was necessary. He suggested that the legislature issue State Stock to be secured by an equal amount of railroad stock in return for a first mortgage on the assets of the railroad, equal "to half of the total amount loaned." In this way the road would be built by European investors and the limited local capital would be released for objects of local and more private enterprise. Displaying the spirit of optimism of the time, Sanford assured the public that, "The State Bonds would be sold at no more than six percent interest while the road would show dividends of not less than ten percent."

The State did not act in 1849 and newspapers in both Lexington and Covington reported rumors that a New York Company had taken all of the remaining stock in the Lexington and Covington. The report was received with guarded optimism and the register reported that Bourbon, Scott, Harrison, Pendleton and Campbell Counties would benefit as much or more than Fayette and Kenton should the report be true. The Lexington Atlas opined that land on or near the route, "would double in value..." They were also certain that the route would be built with or without Eastern money. Surveying for the line was begun in 1850.

Despite the support from both ends, the road remained short on funds until the State of Kentucky acted in 1851 to allow the further support by the cities. Perhaps the completion of the Lexington and Frankfort Railroad down the cliff into Frankfort in March of 1851 impressed the legislators attending the session. Covington renewed its \$100,000.00 investment and increased it by another \$200,000.00. In any event construction started in earnest in 1852 and the road was completed to Falmouth in October 1853. In the meantime, Maysville which helped block the Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad in the late thirties, secured a Charter for the Maysville and Lexington Railroad in 1851. This route was crucial to maintain the town's old business between the east coast and the bluegrass region. The issue was pushed so vigorously that the line reached Paris on Christmas day in 1853.

Most of the right-of-way had been released free of charge by the owners. Mortimer Murray Benton, President of the Lexington and Covington Railroad reported that the ninety-six mile road would have over 3000 feet of brick arched tunnels, full masonry bridges, and very little grade on its planned route to Lexington. In early 1854, Benton estimated that it would take another \$551,000.00 to complete the roadbed and another \$196,360.00 to purchase equipment. By May 1854 service was opened to Cynthia and the grade was largely complete to Lexington.

Funding was short and much of the line was built with light weight rails and without ballast. Faced with raising large sums to complete the Paris to Lexington section, the Board of Directors decided on December 20, 1854, to lease the Paris to Lexington line of the Lexington and Maysville for 18 months at \$1250.00 a month provided that the first five months rent be applied to improving the line. By Christmas day in 1854 regular service was in operation from Covington to Lexington. The route to Paris had been completed at a cost of \$2,435,939. During its first year, the road took in \$264,973.66 with net earnings of over half of the amount.

Eighteen hundred fifty-four was a big year in Covington. The short lived \$80,000.00 suspension bridge to Newport opened, a cathedral was under construction for the new Diocese of Covington, and the city was first lighted by gas from the new gas works. More important perhaps was the completion of the Lexington and Covington Railroad which made Cincinnati the market of choice for Central Kentucky

A prosperous ferry and transfer trade developed in Covington to transport produce and merchandise from the Cincinnati water front to the terminus of the Covington and Lexington at Pike Street and Washington. The small town of Covington began to creep south commercially and turn its back on its poorly located public landing. Fourth and Fifth Streets which were largely residential changed very little. Scott and Madison and especially the Lexington Turn-

pike near the proposed depot were destined to become the center of the new Business District in Covington which faced south and not north. The trains stopped in the center of Washington Street because the directors delayed construction of a depot until their finances improved.

(to be continued)

TROUBLE IN LATONIA...

Among the many figures in Kenton County's history, James T. Earle stands out as a little known but influential resident. He was to rise from his humble beginnings to become one of the most well known and outspoken men of his day.

He was born in 1866 in Harrison County, Kentucky, the home of the Earle family for many years. Through his eighteenth year, James Earle worked on the family farm and attended the local schools. He then studied telegraphy and began working for different railroad companies. His jobs transferred him to many places, even Cincinnati. There, in 1888 he became the joint freight agent of the Chesapeake and Ohio and the Louisville and Nashville lines.

As an early resident of Latonia, Mr. Earle became active in the affairs of the small city. He served on the city council and the school board and was the postmaster for the town. In 1906 he became the Mayor of Latonia. His tenure was to be filled with much controversy.

Latonia was a growing city. Mayor Earle developed seventy-seven houses himself. During his term in office, the city was constantly growing. City council and the mayor supported the rapid development.

Unfortunately the relationship between the council and the mayor was not always so amiable. Mayor Earle's views on liquor and gambling were not in accord with the other leaders of the city. Earle wanted all the saloons closed on Sundays. He felt that too many undesirable people came to the bars on that day and wreaked havoc in the city.

The city council disagreed with the mayor and passed a resolution stating the exact opposite of the mayor's wishes. Earle cited a letter from Governor Beckham condoning his actions and said, "If the saloons of Latonia do not obey my orders and the law of Kentucky by closing on Sundays, I shall see that they are closed every day in the week."

The next Sunday, the saloons were closed even though there was no city ordinance stating that they had to. The saloon keepers closed at Earle's "request." Police Chief John Hamlin did not know whether to obey the mayor or the council. Eventually, Earle withheld Hamlin's salary because Earle felt he wasn't doing his duty.

Earle's outspoken position on drinking and gambling made him the ideal candidate for president of the Law and Order League. Its aims were:

...to inform the people through the pulpit press, and by every available means, of the laws regarding crime; to secure amendments where defects are found in existing laws when the same are deemed necessary.

Basically, the Law and Order League was against gambling of any kind and had the support of several ministers.

Earle's crusade against gambling went so far that he hired detectives from the Acme Secret Service Bureau of Cincinnati to investigate city workers. Earle never fully disclosed the findings of the detectives, but he did allege that some city workers were being bribed and were allowing illegal bookmaking to take place in the City of Latonia.

When the city council received the detective bill for \$755.00, quite a sum in 1907, they refused to pay it. Existing records do not reveal whether the bill was paid or not.

After the annexation of Latonia by Covington, Earle ran for Kenton County Commissioner. Perhaps some of our readers could let us know when Mayor Earle passed away.

Much of the information for the above article was gathered by Damian J. Hills from the History of Kentucky and Kentuckians by E. Polk Johnson and turn-of-the century articles in the newspaper file.

NOTICE -- UPCOMING PROGRAMS...

September 6 - "Kenton County Suburbs: the Dixie Highway Corridor" (with slides) by Paul Tenkotte, resident of Park Hills and Graduate Student at the University of Cincinnati.

October 4 - "The Architecture of Downtown Covington (Part II)," People and places along Madison, Pike and Main (with slides of both past and present sites), by Walter Langsam, researcher for Covington's economic development program.

ANNUAL MEETING -- ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 1984...

The Annual Meeting and election of officers of the Kenton County Historical Society will be held on Tuesday, September 6, 1983. You are invited to make nominations for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Director. Note - According to our bylaws, John Boh is not eligible to run for president.

These nominations are vital to the future of the organization. We are looking for new people to participate as officers. Senior citizens, students, or anyone with sincere interest is more than welcome. Being an officer does not require attendance at every meeting. In fact, we need persons who are willing to do a few hours clerical work every month in their spare time. Primarily this involves coordinating meetings and events. Often an officer's most important function is simply to think of new ideas and to plan future activities.

GENEOLOGICAL QUERIES...

We have received requests for information on the families of: August Arand, John Bate, Benjamin Beale (Beall), Amanda Boughner, Charles F. Bollinger, Grover Dodd, William Kennedy, Isaac N. Lane, Thomas Logan, William Orcutt (sometimes indexed Orent), Isaac Squires and the Terlau family.

If you have any information on these families, please contact the Kenton County Historical Society, P.O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012, Attn: Dorothy Wieck.



PUBLICATIONS...

The following books may be purchased from the Society. Please circle the book(s) you want to order and send along with your check to the Society.

- Gentlemen Farmers to City Folks, Gastright----\$2.50
- Westside Covington Walking Tour, Boh/Boehmker-\$2.50
- Kenton County Cemetery Book-----\$22.00

MEMBERSHIP...

- Individual-----\$5.00
- Student-----\$2.00
- Contributing-----\$10.00
- Business, Inst. Prof.-----\$15.00
- Sustaining-----\$50.00
- Lifetime-----\$100.00

Note: Membership dues and donations are tax deductible, and for a two year payment, you can get the Westside Walking Tour booklet or the book From Gentlemen Farmers to City Folks free of charge.

NAME: Miss, Mrs., Mr., or Ms. _____

Street Address _____

City of Town _____

State _____ County _____

Phone _____ Payment Enclosed _____

Make check payable to the Kenton County Historical Society c/o the Treasurer
P.O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012. Thanks.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR VETERANS IN KENTON COUNTY...

Although much is known about John Keen, a Revolutionary War Veteran, there are still questions about his family that will never be answered. John Keen was born circa 1759-60 probably in Virginia. In 1778 John Keen, an orphan, was indentured to John Coleman according to the records of Spottsylvania County, Virginia. There is a possibility that his father was John Keen who died in 1777 while being held as a prisoner of the British, which is shown on the Muster Roll dated May 1777 for Captain Gabriel Long's Company, the Eleventh Regiment commanded by Colonel Daniel Morgan. John Keen was married on July 18, 1781, to Hethia (Hettia) Williams in Spottsylvania County, Virginia. Around 1808-09 John Keen bought 100 acres on the waters of Cruises Creek, in the boundary of John Harris Survey, from John and Millisent Fowler of the County of Fayette. It is assumed that John Keen's farm was on or near Pflumfling Road at Cruises Creek. The 1810 Campbell County Census shows John Keen over 45, one female over 45, one female 10-16, one female 16-26 and one female 25-45. The 1820 Campbell County Census shows John and his wife, one female 16-26 and one male under 5, with his two older daughters(?) married or deceased. The young boy must be Fountain Young who is also shown in the 1830 and 1840 Census living with John Keen. The 1830 Campbell County Census shows John, wife, no daughters, but three males, one is 10-15, another 5-10 and still another under 5. No doubt these three boys are Fountain, Madison and Barnett Young. The 1840 Campbell County Census shows John Keen, his wife and the three males mentioned above. Although his will states, "I, John Keen, of the County of Campbell" and dated March 31, 1840, the will was recorded in Kenton County, (Will Book 1, page 9), March 1841. In this will John Keen leaves \$1.00 to his brother Joseph Keen. Joseph was born circa 1775, married Catherine Hutcherson in 1796 in Harrison County, Kentucky and by 1810 was living

near John Keen. At the time of John Keen's death, Joseph Keen was living in Boone County, Kentucky, near his daughter and son-in-law, Sarah and William Roberts, Jr., John Keen's entire estate was left to Fountain, Madison and Barnett Young. He named "his friends" Fountain and Madison Young as his executors. Considering the fact these boys were shown as living with John Keen in the census years and the fact that John cut off his brother Joseph with \$1.00 does indicate a closer relationship between John Keen and the three Young boys than "friends," and it is supposed they are his grandchildren. In the Kenton County Court Order book 1 is the following: "...it was proved in open court by the oaths of John Byland and James Ross that said Keene was a revolutionary soldier and pensioner - that said Keen died 5th October., 1840 leaving Fountain, Madison and Barnett Young his heirs and devisees and that Hetty the widow of John Keen deceased, died in July 1842." Fountain Young and Martha Ross were married July 21, 1841, by John G. Ellis, an Elder in Cruises Creek Church. It could be assumed that John Keen and his wife Hethia are buried in the Cruises Creek Church Cemetery, however, John Keen and his wife could have been buried on their own land in a small family cemetery. No doubt they were buried somewhere in Kenton County.

Another veteran in Kenton County, Kentucky, is William Stephens. He was a Lieutenant in Washington's Army. He came from Virginia and is buried at Whites Tower Cemetery just off of Taylor Mill Road. This cemetery is no longer visible as it is said the markers from this cemetery were taken up and placed in a basement nearby, whether as building material or safe-keeping is not known. His will was recorded March 24, 1817, Will Book A, page 253, Campbell County, Kentucky.

Contributed by Mrs. C.E. Leiblie, Route 1, Box 1106, Napoleon, Missouri 64074