

## Bulletin of the

### Kenton County Historical Society

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

2021



THANKS TO BOB WEBSTER ISSUE Highway Markers Installed 9/26

### Honoring Our Retiring President, Robert D. Webster

#### Karl Lietzenmayer

As you know by now, Bob has relinquished his office as President of your Society. He is a 1981 graduate from Morehead University in English. As a high schooler at Covington Holmes, he played drums and percussion for the band and would later write the story of the celebrated James Copenhaver, Holmes Band director from 1964 to 1970. [NKH, XVIII, #2]

Bob came to the Society somewhat out of the blue. He began writing articles for this newsletter as well as fleshed-out stories for *Northern Kentucky Heritage*. Bob's writing talent and leadership led him to accept the presidency in 2015. He quickly became artistic and layout editor for *NKH* and began writing books on specific subjects. His first, *The Balcony is Closed* is a reminiscence on lost neighborhood movie theaters.

In 2006, he published *Northern Kentucky Fires: A Summary of the Most Memorable Fires of the Region.* This is a survey of significant fires of the 11 counties of this region. It became popular among firemen and brought former employees of Beverly Hills Supper Club to request the Society sponsor an in-depth book on just the Beverly fire of 1977. After 4 years of research and struggle, unearthing facts and photos through the use of the Freedom of Information Act, a comprehensive book was published. Over 10,000 copies have been sold!

Bob also thought Northern Kentucky got ignored in most of the general histories of the state, so he prepared a 300-page book, *A Brief History of Northern Kentucky*, published through University of Kentucky Press. He is also one of the many contributors of their publication *Gateway City, Covington, Kentucky (1815-2015)*, writing several chapters.

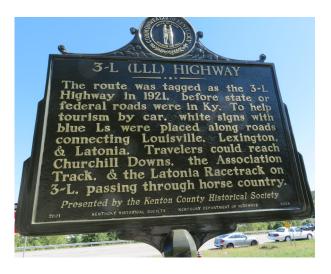
In addition to his writing and publishing, he arranged the summer picnic we used to have, manned the Society's booth at the Kenton County Fair, and acted as webmaster for our web site.

Behringer-Crawford Museum awarded him the 2-Headed Calf Award for history, but the accompanying ceremony had to be canceled due to Covid19, denying this writer the privilege of introducing him.

Even though he will no longer be President, he remains committed to serving as an ex-officio member of the Board. Thank you, Bob, for leading *KCHS* to new heights of professionalism and literacy.

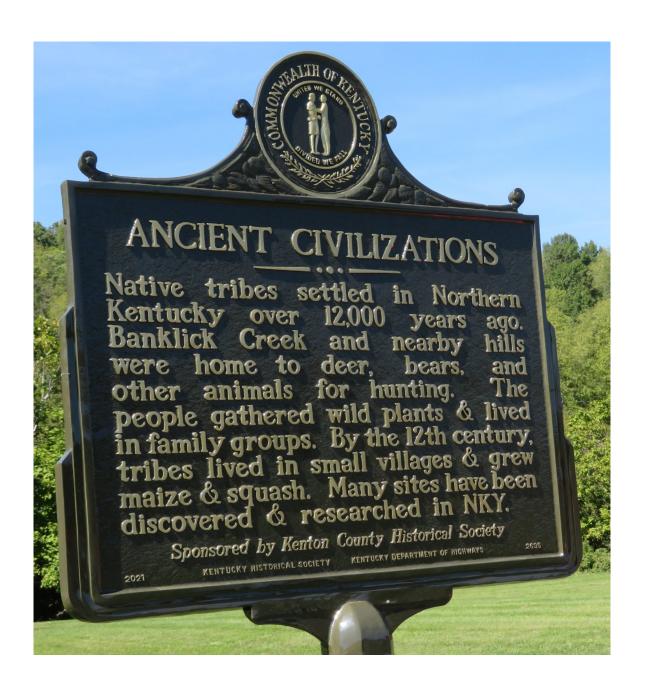
### The 3L and Ancient Civilizations Highway Markers: A Crowning Achievement by Our Former President

On September 26, 2021 a dream came true, with the installation of Highway Markers memorializing the road we locals fondly call "3L", as well as a site along that road that was occupied in centuries past by Ancient Civilizations. While financial support from the Kenton County Historical Society and Members of the Society was a necessary step in the installation of the Markers, the driving force behind them was Bob Webster, and it was he that dealt with the agencies whose permission was required, both for location and content of the Markers. Thanks, Bob!





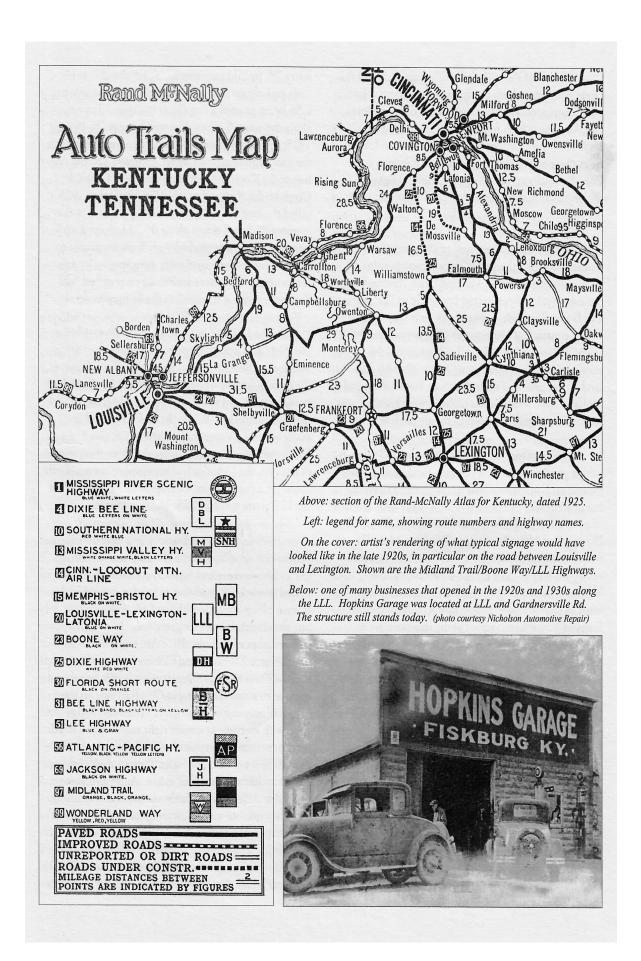
Present at the Unveiling of the Highway Marker Memorializing the "3L" Highway. From left: Past President Bob Webster, Vice President Karl Lietzenmayer, Jamar Yewitt, and John Stephenson





Present at the Installation of the Marker Honoring the Ancient Civilizations Who Once
Occupied the Area Near Pioneer Park

From left: Jeannie Kreinbrink, Past President Bob Webster, Dr. Amanda Higgins (Community Engagement Administrator from the Kentucky Historical Society) and Secretary John Boh



### The 3-L Highway: Its History and Historical Marker Dedication Bob Webster

in Kentucky.<sup>2</sup> By 1826, the Kentucky Association, - the old Covington-Lexington Turnpike.<sup>5</sup> also in Lexington, was formed by several Bluegrasstrack that would later become Churchill Downs was avail. built. In non-racing seasons, the track was open to drivers of motor carriages - hence the "Driving While the new Dixie Highway was being built, other Park" part of the name. The first Kentucky Derby roadways were also being widened and paved, and was run at Churchill Downs in 1875. Several other these highways were given new route numbers begintracks opened in the state around this time, includ- ning in the 1920s. In fact, the old Banklick Turning Lexington's Red Mile (1875) and our own Lato- pike was widened before the Dixie Highway was nia Racetrack (1883).

importantly, this allowed better access to his Indian- Northern Kentucky. apolis 500 Raceway. One of his other projects at the soon-to-be resort area.4

Usually with these new highways, existing roadbeds

were widened and paved, and only small sections were built from scratch. In towns all along the many proposed routes, citizens and mayors vied for inclusion in what they knew would be sure prosperi-By the early 1800s, the sport of horseracing had be- ty for their small cities. In Northern Kentucky, two come extremely popular, not just in Kentucky but main arteries were mentioned for the new highway, throughout the new America. In fact, many larger and folks in Pendleton, Harrison, and Campbell cities featured a "Race Street" - a straight stretch counties petitioned the Dixie Highway Association usually just off the main thoroughfare and named to name what is now US 27 as part of the Dixie. for just what went on there. In 1797, the Lexing- Citizens of Covington, Erlanger, and Florence arton Jockey Club was organized, the first such group gued for what seemed to be the more obvious choice

area big-shots, including Kentuckian Henry Clay. The Covington-Lexington Turnpike won the battle, Early races by this group were held at Old William and the section from Covington to Erlanger was Track in Lee's Wood. By 1840, the group had pur-completed around 1916. From there to Florence, chased acreage, and construction began on the Ken- not until 1924. It would be many years before the tucky Association track just east of the city limits.3 entire Dixie Highway was completed all the way In Louisville, the Oakland Race Track opened in from Michigan to Florida. Citizens along the old 1832, becoming one of the first true oval racecours- Banklick Turnpike, also known as the Covingtones in the state. In the 1870s, the Louisville Jockey Independence Turnpike, were also in the race, even Club and Driving Park was organized, and a new suggesting an "Eastern Dixie" distinction, but to no

completed. New signage, often color-coded, was installed on telephone poles throughout the state to By the early 1900s, major roads across the United aid motorists as they traveled. As with many road-States were being transformed from dirt to Macad- ways - even today - several route numbers shared amized and paved concrete. In 1915, at a governor's the same highway, making things extremely confusconvention, Carl Fisher used his political connecing. For example, Routes 25, 42, and 127 use the tions to pitch his Dixie Highway System. Fisher was same roadway from the Ohio River south to Florthe earlier creator of the Lincoln Highway, which ence before splitting in different directions. Even connected San Francisco and New York City. More Interstate 75 shares lanes with I-71 through much of

time was the development of a vacant sandbar he These roads were often given names indicating their had just purchased named Miami Beach. Fisher starting and stopping point, such as Boone Way and knew a paved road from the Great Lakes to south- Midland Trail. Boone Way ran east/west and conern Florida was imperative for the success of this nected Louisville to Boonesborough before continuing to the Cumberland Gap. Midland Trail cut across the state's midsection, connecting Louisville

(Continued on page 8)

with Ashland. Boone Way and Midland Trail ie Highway and was an extremely popular route. shared their roadway with another new route for But when the Dixie opened in December of 1928, much of their duration, one far more important the once busy flow of traffic along the LLL to our readers.

ers, and others involved with the sport of scenery, it was a full fifteen miles longer from horseracing and assist those traveling between the Covington to Lexington. And, while Dead-Man's three most popular cities where horseracing was Curve on the Dixie just south of the Covington taking place at the time, another new highway was city limits made the headlines many times, it seldesignated and signed. These people were fre- dom matched the news articles for the number of quenting Oakland Park and Churchill Downs in accidents at Chisel Bridge on the LLL, about half-Louisville - the Red Mile and the Association way between Latonia and Independence. Track in Lexington - and the Latonia Racetrack in Latonia. Apparently, many were becoming lost By the late 1930s and into the 1950s, major highon the confusing system of highways connecting ways in Kentucky were changing once again, as Louisville, Lexington, and Latonia. By 1924, the many had become part of the US Highway Sys-Louisville-Lexington-Latonia Highway, simply tem. In an effort to have some sense of uniformicalled the LLL or 3-L, was born. Signage was a ty, state highways were again renamed - assigned white rectangle laid vertically with three blue L's numbers rather than catchy names. The Dixie positioned horizontally.7

Articles began appearing in the Kentucky Post by 1925 that the LLL was "...crowded with cars, and it was noticeable that there were hundreds of cars bearing the license plates of other states.<sup>8</sup> By midsummer of 1925, ice cream stands, barbeques and restaurants, as well as modern gas stations, were being erected along the entire span." Towns along the route were alive with activity. "By late 1925," the newspaper continued, "the new highway was said to be completed with the exception of a small section between Latonia Avenue at the Covington city limits and Banklick Creek bridge." Another article in late 1925 called the new LLL Highway "...one of the best in the country."9 Small towns along the LLL thrived with the tourist trade, and even the lonely farmer was able to increase his revenue by placing signs stating "Rooms for Tourists." The more ambitious ones served "old Kentucky chicken dinners" to the hungry passers-by."10 Service stations and grocery stores sprang up overnight in little towns such as Piner, Atwood, Nicholson, and Sanfordtown.

The LLL opened a couple of years *before* the Dix-

slacked off tremendously, and restaurant and business owners felt the change quickly. While the To aid the thousands of jockeys, trainers, breed- LLL had its advantages, such as its picturesque

> Highway became US 25, the Midland Trail became US 60, and what once was the Cincinnati-Lookout Mountain Air Line became US 27.

> Popular state routes in Kenton County included Decoursey Pike - which became Route 177, and Taylor Mill Turnpike, now Route 16. 1932, Kenton County's portion of the old 3-L Highway was designated as KY 17. Suddenly, the ever-popular LLL Highway was gone forever. For the next ninety years, only a short stretch of roadway in Pendleton County, running parallel to US 27, is still signed as "Old LLL Highway."

> In Kenton County, the 3-L Highway no longer "officially" exists at all, even though tens of thousands of motorists continue to refer to the 20-mile stretch of Madison Pike as the "3-L." While omitted from official road maps of the area for decades, the cities of Covington and Edgewood each maintain one "3-L" sign on poles, maybe just for fun or possibly to confuse out-of-town drivers. One thing is very clear: the 3-L Highway will never go away for many in this region.

> In 2021, the *old* 3-L Highway is hardly recogniza-

(Continued on page 9)

ble. Once a narrow two-lane country road winding through the county, much of the roadway has be- For this author's research and the marker's authencome a major four-lane thoroughfare and has since ticity, seven different organizations were contacted, been entirely straightened out, re-aligned, and all experts on the horseracing trade in Kentucky. moved from its original path. In fact, what most Not a single person was able to find any documentapeople travel on today isn't even the 3-L at all; it's tion in their vast archives. Kim Skipton, Curator/ the new 3-L.

however, the Kenton County Historical Society non K. Luce of the historic Jockey Club says, "I find started the long process in 2020 to place a historical no record of any 3-L Association or any other group highway marker to commemorate the significance of with three L's." Charlotte Tevis, still another exthe roadway for future generations. The application pert on early horseracing in Kentucky, has "...no process is long and tedious, and then comes the dif- knowledge of the group."<sup>14</sup> Even Debra Watkins, ficulty of fundraising. Through the generosity of Manager of the Lexington History Museum, found several donors, especially the David I. Reinhardt no mention of the group in any written histories of Family, the Wells Family Trust, and others, the Soci- the Bluegrass. <sup>15</sup> Researchers at the Kentucky Horse ety was able to secure the funding.

tucky Historical Society. Robert Webster, former organization ever existed. president of the Kenton County Historical Society, gave a short presentation on the history of the high- Another local legend is that the three L's come from way and the importance of the marker.

falsehoods about the meaning of the "three Ls" in that the three city's names involved were actually the 3-L Highway. This article would be incomplete Lexington, Louisville, and Losantiville (an early without fully dispelling those myths.

An often-related scenario is that the 3 L's are about for this famed group who is said to have controlled exist. From the Covington city limits to the Kenton aging, at the state level - the group is unknown.

Librarian at the American Saddlebred Museum in Lexington, states, "There is no record of them in the To ensure the historic highway is never forgotten, world of Saddlebreds or any other breed."12 Shan-Park also found nothing in their files on any such organization, nor does John E. Kleber's Encyclopedia On September 26, 2021, the unveiling ceremony of Louisville mention the Association. Finally, exwas held, and Kentucky Historical Highway Marker perts at the University of Louisville History Depart-#2634 was unveiled. Local dignitaries helped cele- ment and even archives at Churchill Downs, one of brate the event, including Mayor Dave Hatton of the tracks supposedly under the 3-L Association's Fort Wright. Dr. Amanda Higgins, Community rule, drew a blank when questioned by this author. Engamement Administrator, represented the Ken- There clearly is no indication anywhere that such an

a man's name - Linus Lamb LeBus. He is said to have been from Cynthiana and supplied the rock Over the years, there have been several rumors and for the roadway. Not true, of course. Another is name for Cincinnati). 16 Another falsehood.

a "...consortium of horseracing tracks called the 3-L Should anyone desire to trace the original path of Association."11 The highway was supposedly named the 3-L Highway, parts of the two-lane roadway still the state's most popular horseracing tracks at the County-Pendleton County line, your trip would be turn of the century. The problem with this theory is as follows. Start on Madison Avenue at the intersecthat there is no evidence whatsoever to support the tion with Latonia Avenue (yes, this is on the new existence of such an organization. Only a few local four-lane, but you'll have to imagine some winding historians mention the group, and they cite only and zig-zagging along as if you were on the old counother local writers as their sources. No one offers try road). After you pass Jackson Florist (a company proof of such an organization, and even more dam- in business for over 100 years), you'll notice a sec-(Continued on page 10) tion of a stone wall on your right that once edged 12. Personal email reply from Kim Skipton on February 1, the roadway. While the new highway is almost a straight line, the old road weaved back and forth all the way to present-day Orphanage Road.

About 1/4 mile south of Dudley Road, a 1.8-mile sec- 31, 2010 tion of the original 3-L Highway remains from the 1930s-era, including the infamous "Chisel Bridge" underpass. Turning from Madison Pike onto Old Madison Pike, you will find the Historical Highway Marker mentioned in this article, as well as this stretch of highway. When it comes back out onto the new four-lane again, near Hands Pike, you would want to cross over onto Hands Pike, turn and pass in front of the small while church there, and then pass in front of Log Cabin Restaurant in order to remain on the original 3-L Highway.

Following KY 3035 (Old Madison Pike) at the next intersection will allow you to continue on what WAS the 3-L, all the into the town of Independence, Kentucky. Remaining on this road rather than the "New 17," you will pass the Kroger shopping center before you need to merge with the new four-lane in front of Simon Kenton High School. If you look off to your left, it will be evident that Water Tower Way was once the original roadbed. And, if you turn right onto Joseph Schmiade Road, you'll be back on the old 3-L. After KY 16 and 17 intersect at Nicolson, there is little change in the layout of the old 3-L Highway and the new.

### **Endnotes**

- 1. http://allhorseracing.com/kentuckyhorseracing, accessed February12,2010
- KentuckyHorseRacing,allhorseracing.com/ kentuckyhorseracing, accessed February12,2010
- 4. Meiman, Chris, "Dixie Highway," Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky, page 274
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. Rand McNally Auto Trails Map of 1925
- 8. "Tourist Cash," Kentucky Post, June 6, 1925, page 4
- 9. "Highway Open," Kentucky Post, November 26, 1925, page 1
- 10. "Come Our Way, Mr. Tourist," Kentucky Post, December 2, 1928, page 1
- 11. Wessling, Jack, "Three L Highway," Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky, page 878

- 13. Personal email reply from Shannon K. Luce on January 31,
- 14. Personal email reply from the American Saddlebred Horse Association/American Saddlebred Registry, on January
- 15. "Origin of the Three L Highway: Lets Put This Thing To Rest," Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society, May/ June 2010 Edition
- 16. Ibid.

## The Story Behind the "Ancient Civilizations" Marker By Jeannine Kreinbrink

Native Americans lived in the northern Kentucky area from at least 12,000 years ago until at least the 1500s. Small groups of people occupied the Bank Lick Creek valley for most of that time. The first documented archaeological sites in this valley date to the Early Archaic period (by about 8000 BC), although they probably inhabited or visited well before that. Archaic peoples made use of seasonal camps, often using a base camp with outlying activity camps for periodic use throughout the year. The addition of ground stone tools to the Early Archaic tool kit indicates that vegetable foods were becoming a substantial part of their diet. Similar settlement patterns continued for over 5,000 years. By the Late Archaic period (circa 2000 BC) population increased with evidence of expanded trade networks, status differentiation, and possible horticultural activities. Evidence for domestication of plants such as gourds, squash and sunflower has been found on excavated sites in northern Kentucky and the central Ohio Valley.

Habitation of the Bank Lick Creek Valley continued over the next several thousand years, through the Fort Ancient period (post 1000AD). During the intervening Woodland period, new technology such as pottery and the bow and arrow appeared. Sites near Pioneer Park have produced pottery sherds. The Northern Kentucky Fort Ancient peoples farmed corn, beans, and squash/pumpkins. They also hunted deer and many smaller mammals, birds, and fish. Their farmlands were the fertile stream valleys that surrounded their village site. They buried their dead either in mounds located nearby to their village, or later, in small cemeteries actually located right within thevillage itself. Numerous burial mounds and other earthworks have been documented for northern Kentucky. For example, the University of Kentucky excavated a mound in the Bank Lick Creek valley near Pioneer Park in the 1920s.

### Kentucky Trivia

An ongoing feature from Michael Crisp's "The Best Kentucky Trivia Book Ever," available at bookstores or at michaelcrisponline.com

This issue features

### Our Governors

#### Questions

- 1. Who was the 1st Governor of Kentucky?
- 2. What profession was forbidden to hold the office of Governor in Kentucky's 1799 Constitution?
- 3. What do Kentucky governors George Madison, John Breathitt, James Clark and John Helm all have in common?
  - 4. What tragic distinction does Governor William Goebel hold?
- 5. What Kentucky governor was nicknamed "The terrible Turk from Madisonville"?
- 6. What important gubernatorial building currently sits at 704 Capitol Avenue in Frankfort?
- 7. What Kentucky governor also served as the commissioner of Major League Baseball?
- 8. Who was the 1st female elected governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky?
- 9. What Kentucky governor is credited for introducing the state lottery in Kentucky?

#### Kentucky Trivia Answers

1. Isaac Shelby, who served from 1792 to 1796, and again from 1812 to 1816. 2. Minister. The governor could not be a "minister of any religious society" until this provision was removed from the state's Constitution in 1891. 3. They all died in office. 4. He is the only governor to be assassinated while in office. He was shot by an unknown assailant on January 30, 1900, was sworn in the next day, and died three days later. 5. Ruby Laffoon, who served as governor from 1931 to 1935. 6. The Governor's Mansion. 7. A. B. "Happy Chandler", who served 2 terms as governor (1935 – 1939, 1955 – 1959) as well. 8. Martha Layne Collins, who served from 1983 to 1987. 9. Wallace Wilkinson, who served 1987-1991.

### Mystery Photo

Can you identify the Mystery Photo? The answer is found below.



An early view of Rotary Grove in Devou Park, late 1930's and of the Bridle Path. Courtesy of www.nkviews.com

# A NEW FEATURE : "EMAILS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR"

The KCHS is YOUR society, and we want to know your views of how we are, or what we should be, doing, so with this issue we begin publishing comments from members.

Peggy Carson Lietzenmayer emailed: "Just read the Sept/Oct Bulletin and enjoyed learning about some of our past & present local leaders."

### Kenton County Historical Society

### November/December 2021

ARTICLES FROM BACK ISSUES ARE INDEXED ON OUR WEBSITE!

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Board Members: Travis Brown, Elaine Kuhn, Robert Rich, Arnold Taylor, Pam Marcum, and Raymond Hebert

Dennis Harrell, Jeannie Lange and Robert Webster, ex-officio

### I Bet You Didn't Know

Tidbits from Kentucky's heritage for every day of the calendar year

November 8, 1820. The State Library was created in Frankfort.

November 19, 1850. Richard M. Johnson died. One of the most prominent statesmen of the 19th century, this Kentuckian was vice president under Martin Van Buren (1837 – 41).

November 25, 1846. Carrie Nation was born in Garrard County.

December 18, 1789. The 4th Enabling Act for Kentucky to become an independent state was passed by Virginia. June 1, 1792 was set as the date of official statehood.

December 29, 1848. The final issue of the *Kentucky Gazette*, the state's first newspaper, was published after 61 years in print. The name was later revived by another Lexington newspaper 1866 – 1910.

From: On This Day In Kentucky, by Robert Powell

### **Programs and Notices**

### **Kenton County Historical Society**

The Kenton County Historical Society currently has no audio-visual educational program scheduled. The Board and others do indeed meet monthly for financial business, publicity, social media details, queries, etc.; to help plan **Northern Kentucky Heritage** magazine (now edited by Elaine Kuhn); and to publish the membership "Bulletin" containing local history articles each issue. The KCHS helped arrange and fund two historical markers, formally installed on September 26th.

### **Behringer Crawford Museum**

The BEHRINGER CRAWFORD MUSEUM HISTORY HOUR CONTINUES (ZOOM) Wednesdays, 6:30. NOTE THAT THE "HISTORY HOUR" SCHEDULE IS NOW ONCE EVERY OTHER WEEK.

### A Phoenix Arises From the Ashes

The former Erlanger Historical Society, no longer able to meet at the Erlanger Depot, has reformed into the Erlanger Elsmere Historical Society, Inc. and now meets at the Elsmere Senior Center, 179 Dell St., Elsmere, KY. Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. Refreshments are provided. Announcements about programs may be found on the new society's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/erlangerhistorical Society/ and its website, https://erlangerhistoricalsociety.com/

Both the Facebook page and the website will be changed to reflect information about the new society. The address of the new society is PO Box 18062, Erlanger, KY 41018; telephone number 859 – 279 – 6572; and email at erlangerhistoricalsociety@Gmail.com

### We Want You to Submit Articles for the Bulletin

Anyone wishing to submit an article for the Bulletin may do so by emailing it in Word to the Editor, Arnold Taylor, at astay1965@gmail.com or by regular mail, 3114 Balsam Ct., Edgewood, Ky. 41017. Any submissions are subject to editing and should be no longer than 500 words plus photos. Articles must have at least two citations, with endnotes.