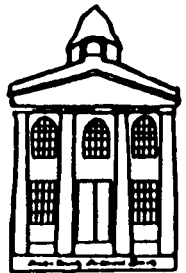


The Kenton County Historical Society



May 1992

**Kenton County Historical Society**

P.O. Box 641  
Covington, Kentucky 41012

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R E V I E W

May 1992

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**PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT:**

On Tuesday evening, May 5th, 7:00 PM,  
at the Kenton County Public Library Erlanger  
branch, Dr. Michel Breland will speak  
on this topic...

**INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIVE AMERICANS OF  
THE MIAMI AND OHIO RIVER VALLEY**

Dr. Breland is a member of the Atsina  
Sioux and is on the board of the United  
Intertribal Lodge Council. He taught  
high school on the Rosebud Indian Reservation,  
Rosebud, South Dakota (near Rapid City)  
and he taught Native American Studies  
at St. James University, Billings, Montana.  
Although his area of expertise is more  
the native Americans of the Northwest,  
he has a lot of information about Indian  
cultures in our region.

This program is sponsored by the Kenton  
County Historical Society. IT WILL BE  
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Tuesday evening  
May 5th, 7:00 PM  
Kenton Count Library--Erlanger branch  
3130 Dixie Highway  
(next to Krogers, across from Van Leunens)

THE KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS  
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION INCORPORATED IN  
THE STATE OF KENTUCKY FOR THE PURPOSE OF  
COLLECTING, ORGANIZING, AND DISPLAYING LOCAL  
AND STATE HISTORY. ANY INTERESTED PERSON  
IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE. MEMBERSHIP IS  
\$5.00 PER YEAR.

## THE OLD COLORED CHURCH ON MADISON AVENUE

The story of this old church, which was located at 213 Madison (an earlier address was 221), could begin by referring to James G. Arnold (1792-1876), Kenton County's second Sheriff, a town and city clerk, Mayor, and so forth. In 1841 Arnold paid county taxes himself on 30 city lots and 48 acres; in 1859 on 50 lots plus property outside the city limits all totaling \$132,000. By comparison, Amos Shinkle, a financier for the Suspension Bridge, owner of extensive real estate, and President of First National Bank, listed only \$123,000 nine years later.

Just as Shinkle provided major financial support for Methodism after the Civil War, Arnold, before the War, was the first Elder, and provided places of worship for the congregations of First Christian Church, and to this day his name can be seen on a bronze plaque at the front door of the parsonage adjoining the Christian Church on Fourth street.

At the end of the war freed Afro-Americans of Methodist persuasion were inclined to hold their own services. The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer reported (5-14-67) that 43 people "who have recently joined the African Methodist Church in this city, were baptized in the Ohio River." The Covington Journal (2-5-70) reported that Afro-Americans have in Covington "two church organizations," numbering 250 Methodists and 75 Baptists. On April 30, 1870 the Journal announced that the cornerstone for a new church would be laid by "colored Methodists" on Madison "between Second and Third." For some reason the ceremony was delayed a week. On July 2nd, 1870 the Journal reported that construction was halted due to lack of funds. The same month (7-16-70) "a number" of political candidates were applauded by the Journal for making donations which would greatly aid the completion of work. Then the congregation would hold fundraising picnic in Levassor's woods (Journal, 4-29-71). Then on August 19, 1871 the Journal informed its readers that the congregation through its Pastor, Rev. Adam Nunn, would appeal to Covington people for "subscriptions" because a \$1000 sum remained unpaid "on the new church building on Madison street...."

Another chapter in the story of this old church involved public education. On September 21, 1872 the Covington Journal expressed hope that the City Council would respond favorably to an appeal from Afro-American citizens for school money "despite the state law excluding negro children from the benefits of the school fund [which] is unjust...." The Council's committee did recommend money for negro education (Journal, 10-5-72). ~~The~~ the Covington Journal reported (10-19-72) that Afro-Americans had organized a school, hired a teacher, so that school has commenced "in the basement of the Methodist Church on Madison street, between Second and Third. About thirty-five scholars were present, but this number will be greatly increased."

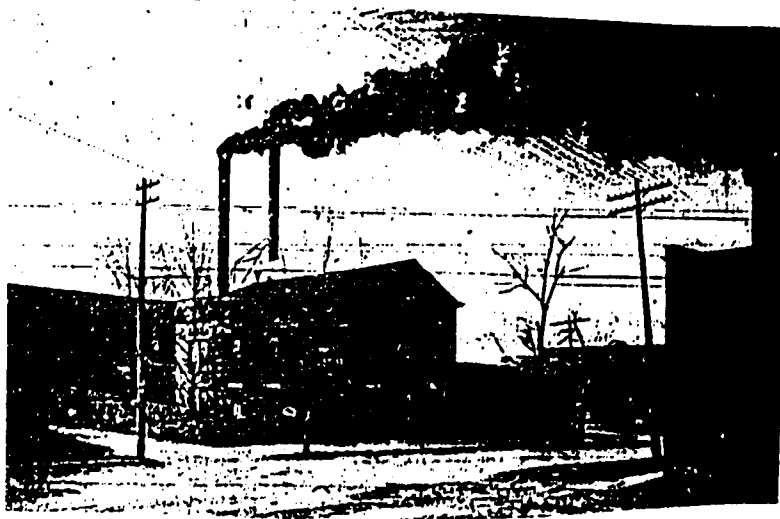
This congregation, which had been referred to as African Methodist and designated as Colored M. E. church, was called at 221 Madison "Fourth Methodist Episcopal (colored)." At the time there was also the Scott Street M. E. Church which had not opposed slavery. There was the newer "Union" Methodist Church at Fifth and Greenup (1866) which supported Fourth Methodist. Although not listed in Covington directories, there was in the region one of more of the "African" churches which had been organized by freed blacks before the Civil War, not associated with any of the larger white Methodist churches (as Fourth M. E. was).

The Fourth Methodist Episcopal Church on Madison was built on lots 286 and 287, two lots which Arnold held title to according to county tax records. In 1876 Arnold died and his large estate was administered over a number of years. Around 1881 Fourth M. E. purchased a church at 14 East Ninth (present address) and became Ninth Street Methodist Episcopal. The church on Madison ended up part of Arnold's estate. In 1883 his executors conveyed it to G. G. and Katie White of Paris, Kentucky (possibly Arnold's Relative). In the meantime the old church had been used by the G. F. Boughner Tobacco Leaf Company as a Tobacco warehouse. In 1894 Mr. and Mrs. White sold the old church to James J. Hooker and Wife of Reading, Ohio.

Later the deed was transferred from Hooker to the

Putnam-Hooker company, a regionally based cotton merchandising outfit, with main offices on West Second street in Cincinnati. In Covington Putnam-Hooker owned and operated the Argonaut Cotton Mills, southeast corner of Second and Madison and across the street the Reliance Textile and Dye Works. Reliance was located on the old church property. The first floor contained the office according to a 1909 map. Later reports of various incidents suggest that the heavier equipment and harsher operations were generally located in newer surrounding buildings. In the 1930s Reliance was reorganized. The old church was torn down and replaced with building, which Reliance used into the 1980s. The Argonaut building was occupied by other companies before being torn down within the last month.

Argonaut and Reliance both were subjected to local campaigns and regulations concerning the "smoke nuisance" and other health and safety concerns. The Kentucky Post reported (on May 6, 1910 for instance) that Argonaut was then going to erect another smokestack and make other improvements around its boiler room. The Kentucky Post supported the anti-smoke campaign such as was being conducted by Covington Health officer, Dr. J. T. Wallingford. This picture appeared in the paper on March 31, 1910. This is the old Fourth Methodist Episcopal (Colored) church then with hazardous smokestacks adjoining.



(John Boh)

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P. O. Box 641  
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