

THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY'S 200TH BIRTHDAY
JUNE 1, 1992

The Kenton County Historical Society



1792
the Celebration
1992
Kentucky

September 1992

Kenton County Historical Society

P.O. Box 641
Covington, Kentucky 41018

R E V I E W

September 1992

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

On Tuesday, September 1st, 7:00 PM, at the Erlanger branch of the Kenton County Public Library, Mr. Jerry Bamberger, Covington City Commissioner, will speak on economic development in Kenton county, what the Planning Commission projects for the future, and how historic structures fit into these projections.

The program will be free and open to interested citizens.
Tuesday evening
September 1st
7:00 PM

Kenton County Public Library, Erlanger branch
3130 Dixie Highway (across from Van Leunen's)

COVINGTON HISTORIC PLAQUE PROGRAM

This program was set up by the city's Economic Development Department partly through a grant from the Ky Bicentennial Commission. Recently a number of owners were awarded their plaques by the City Commission. Any owner may apply for such a plaque which would recognize some of the significant historical background of the owner's home, in the city.

CAMPBELL COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

We wish to congratulate the Campbell County Society which, last Sunday, August 9th, hosted an open house for its new headquarters on the second floor of the historic Alexandria Courthouse. A Kentucky Bicentennial matching grant helped fund the renovation.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On September 1st (before the scheduled program) the Kenton County Historical Society will hold its sixteenth election of officers and Directors. Members please attend. New membership is \$5.00 per person.

Shinkle Family Coal

"For the year ending 1886 Cincinnati received two million eight hundred seventy thousand tons of coal, only seven per cent of which was transported by rail. The chief sources, together with the amount supplied by each were: Pittsburg 1,293,835 tons; Kanawha river 649,447 tons; Ohio river, chiefly Pomeroy, 34,000 tons; and other sources, chiefly Kentucky, 100,000 tons."

--A History of Transportation in the Ohio Valley..., Ambler,

In the aftermath of the War of 1812, coal production and transport expanded to meet increasing demand under a system of tariff protection from coal imports and, as wood for fuel became more scarce. The decade of the 1840s saw coal really begin to feed local industry. Cincinnati in 1840 consumed 95,000 tons, in 1850 900,000 tons. Industrial output jumped from \$7.78 million to \$54.55 million. The consumption of coal in Cincinnati increased "one hundred thousand tons annually," and Pittsburg exported "one million tons" per year (Ambler).

However, one big drawback remained the periods of low water in summer and autumn, and of frozen river conditions each winter, which shut off shipping (this problem lasted into the next century). On the other hand, improvements were made when sternwheelers began to push barges (which soon replaced coalboats); unlike coalboats which were dismantled downriver, barges were returned and reloaded; long hauls became common henceforth from Pittsburg to New Orleans. Consequently the enlarged scale of transport required more capital and bigger operators. But the end result was also more supply at cheaper prices.

In the 1840s Amos Shinkle (1818-1892) became one of the big local suppliers. In 1846 he moved from Higgensport, Ohio (a landing about 45 miles upriver from Cincinnati

in Brown county) and established a refueling station for steamboats on the less congested Covington shore opposite Cincinnati. This was the "heyday of the steamboat," when Cincinnati was a center of river commerce--the Queen City of the West. The Mexican war (1846-1848) was also at hand.

As an example of another refueling station, it was said in 1854 that at Pomerooy, Ohio, 250 miles below Pittsburg, steamers regularly stopped there for refueling; 50 tons were needed by the larger steamers for up to 200 miles; at Pomerooy of the 70,000 tons sold each year, "one-third is supplied to steamers, and the rest sent down river on flats. Cincinnati was 500 miles below Pittsburg, 135 miles above Louisville, over 1400 miles above New Orleans.

In 1851 Amos and his brother Vincent Shinkle (1822-1885) built the steamer Mary Cole which was used as an excursion boat carrying parties from Cincinnati up the Licking river to a picnic grove known as Cole's Gardens. Soon the Shinkles were building and manning their own harbor boats (Champion No. 2, Champion No. 3, etc.), and packet boats (part owners and operators). Shinkle boats went into government service during the Civil War. After the war Shinkle tugboats provided power and transport for construction of the Suspension Bridge. And the Champion Coal and Tugboat Company continued to provide river and harbor services long after. Then, too, Champion N. 9 (built for the Shinkles in Cincinnati, 1875), among other noble efforts transported baseball fans from the foot of Walnut street to the neighborhood of the ball-park in Cincinnati (Way's Packet Directory).

Amos himself retired in 1864 from direct involvement in the coal business, but then became famous as "the builder" of the Roebling Suspension Bridge. He was dominant in banking (President of First National Bank, Covington, 1864-1892); in development (he

built over 40 houses, helped to construct the waterworks from Campbell county, to establish the telephone exchange in Covington, on a line from Cincinnati, and helped to transform the antebellum Covington gas light works into a modern utility company); in philanthropy (Covington Children's Home, etc.); and as a leader of the United Methodist Church. He built and occupied 215 Garrard (circa. 1859) before moving into an even more extraordinary mansion on East Second street (circa. 1870), which his survivors later deeded over to the Salvation Army (which built Booth Hospital there).

Another of Amos' brothers was Uriah Shinkle who operated a coal yard (originally in partnership with Vincent) from the 1860s up into the 1890s, primarily at the southwest corner of Second and Scott (Amos' coal office had been at the southeast corner of Fourth and Scott). In the 1890s Uriah was accused by various parties including the Kentucky Post (1-27-93) of preventing other coal dealers from using the Covington Wharf, which was city property. Then a year later, on January 9, 1894 the Post reported that Shinkle was at odds with other coal dealers (Hatfield; Smedberg & Gilham; the Stine Brothers; F. W. Piel & co., and Volmering & Ludwig). Shinkle had begun marketing his coal at discount prices to get even in response to the other companies' "enterprising methods." But the old-timer was especially at odds with the J. T. Hatfield Co. over a deal which, "sometime ago," had gone sour. The upstart company had made a deal to purchase Shinkle's "yards and landings at the foot of Scott street." But because Shinkle would not allow Hatfield to take possession (or lease) the "Ohio River Landing", Hatfield balked and Shinkle canceled the deal.

Nevertheless in years to come, the Hatfield Company would assert itself locally, as well as up and down the river, in a way reminiscent of the Shinkles.
(John Boh)

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P. O. Box 641
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