

Kenton County Historical Society Quarterly Review

Spring 1980

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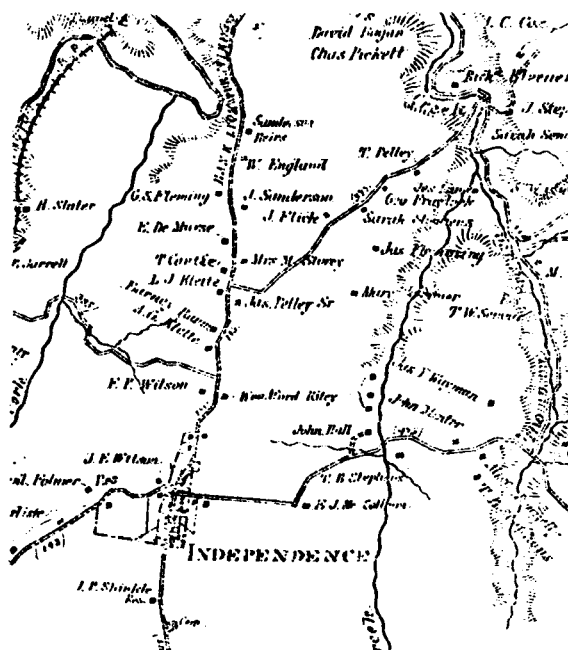
Memberships are available at \$5 per annum.
Contact the Treasurer at 2843 Ashland Ave.,
Covington, Kentucky.

INDEPENDENCE

by John Boh

Land had been cheap--its possession often the reward for military service, or the result of a trade for a horse or slave. It was the romantic era of the stagecoach. By 1839 the Covington and Lexington Turnpike had begun to change from a winding dirt wagon path into a more passable stone surfaced road. The area was growing and opinion west of the Licking River favored a separate county for the population of some 7,000 whites and 700 slaves. Therefore on January 29, 1840 the Legislature enacted a statute declaring that as of April 30 Kenton County would exist, with its Seat to be located as close as possible to the center of the newly "independent" area.

However, on the same day that the law was announced, the Covington based Western Globe also reported that influential men had met at Mr. Thornton Timberlake's home to denounce the selection of Independence.



Then, thirty-five days later, on March 4, the paper recorded the objection of a second clique of men to an amendment that a Timberlake approved Covington delegation had since lobbied for in Frankfort. Two of the eleven soon to be Justices of the Peace were publicly against naming another county seat, as were landowners Dr. J.S. Downard, Capt. Robert Perry, Lewis Collins, and Maj. Elijah Williams, in whose home at "Bagby Precinct", now Independence the new county officers were to be sworn in. Tax lists suggest that Williams, like many Kentuckians of his time a veteran of the War of 1812, was the most prosperous of these promoters of Independence. The most prosperous Justice, Thomas Tupman, was not listed on either side in these two newspaper accounts; nor was General Leonard Stephens, the county's first High Sheriff and possibly its richest man, whose valuation for tax purposes of \$21,000 exceeded Timberlake's \$9,000 and even Williams' \$18,000.

Events

MAY * DEVOU PARK

On May 4th, 2:00pm, meet at the shelterhouse for a talk on Kenton County Civil War Allegiances given by guest speaker, Paul Tenkotte. Immediately following the presentation, Paul will lead a hike to the Ft. Bates Civil War fortification. The hikers will return for a picnic supper in the park. Bring your own food and drink. Call Joyce Sanders if you need additional information, 961-7586.

JUNE * CATHEDRAL

On Sunday, June 8th, 2:00pm, meet at the parking lot entrance to the Cathedral, 12th and Madison. In addition to a guided tour of our version of Notre Dame, Mr. Rick Kersting, curator of the old St. Joseph organ, will give a brief history of this famed instrument. As a treat, Mr. Paul Zappa, Civic Center Opera, will play the organ for our group.

JULY * BIG BONE LICK

On Sunday, July 20th, 2:00pm, our President, Dr. Joe Gastright, will give a talk on the fossil finds at Big Bone Park in Boone County.

AUGUST * NO MEETING

SEPTEMBER * ANNUAL MEETING

On Tuesday, September 9th, 7pm, Kenton County Public Library, Cov. ELECTION of New Officers. Anyone interested in serving as an officer should drop a note to the Nominating Committee, Kenton Co. Historical Society, 5th and Scott Street, Covington, Kentucky, 41011-or contact one of the officers.

Those favoring the designation of a location other than Independence were Covington's Mayor Moses V. Grant; James Clarkson, wealthy "pork and Flour" merchant of Covington; Covington lawyers, W.W. Southgate, H.J. Groesbeck and Jefferson Phelps; Jonathan H. Stevenson, Washington and James Cleveland, John Tennis, James M. Dickey, Charles W. Scott, James and William Dollins, Major Bartlett Graves, and Mr. Timberlake.

On the Turnpike, Timberlake had extensive property along the eastern side. Graves held property along the western side between present-day Crescent Springs and Florence. Dollins' property, by 1841, included the Eight Mile Tavern "on the Pike" near Florence.

Since it adjoined both the Ohio River and a turnpike that connected with Louisville, as well as Lexington, the north end of the new county might eventually have assumed a certain political privilege. That old Woodford County once extended, before 1800, from Frankfort to The Point across from Cincinnati, suggests a tendency for state government to shape certain counties predominantly north-south, thereby justifying the location of a county seat away from an already commercially independent edge of the state.

In addition, it could be documented by its partisans that Independence was "democratically" selected and within a few hundred yards of the exact center of the county. As a result, court days monthly brought citizens to the county seat near Banklick Creek, where they would also conveniently trade with its merchants and buyers.

And like their fellow citizens, the Groesbecks, Southgates, Dollins, and Clarksons had also to journey to Independence from homes miles away in more heavily populated Covington, or from the commercially active Turnpike area, in order to pay taxes and tend to other legal duties.

MEMBERSHIP

The new two year membership offer has become very popular. Mr. Smith's book seem to have appeal both as a handy primary source for local history and as a collector's item. Ten dollars still buys both a two year membership and Allen Webb Smith's Beginning at the Point, as long as the supply lasts.

Covington Project

on the map

On January 30, 1980, at the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Mr. Dan Hurley, grant writer for the Neighborhood Histories Project, introduced Dr. Thomas Schlereth of Notre Dame University. Dr. Schlereth displayed numerous examples of visual clues which aid in explaining historical developments in a neighborhood, a city, or a region. Perhaps the most interesting example was that of the abrupt change in a city grid pattern caused by a natural obstruction, or, more interestingly, by a human act like the development of a railroad line. Dr. Schlereth also listed books like Grady Clay's Close Ups, a manual that might help the novice interpret such names as "Garrard" street or "Canal" street, or art objects such as painted fire plugs, public fountains, or fast food outlets with Greek columns.

After Mr. Alden Monroe, Ms. Dottie Lewis, and Ms. Susan Isaacs had outlined the Covington neighborhood histories project at the January meeting of the Kenton County Historical Society, there followed in addition to the Schlereth talk a number of programs meant to support and inform participants and potential neighborhood historians. In February, Mr. Mike Averdick addressed the Society on the Kentucky and Local History Collection of the Kenton County Public Library. In March, at the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Mr. Alden Monroe and Ms. Dottie Lewis gave a tour of the manuscript, photograph, and map collections. The goal of these two library programs was to acquaint participants with the resources available to the neighborhood historian. A special program held in March featured Mr. Charles Dunn who explained the intricacies of working with courthouse records in the three county area.

Projects underway include the following neighborhoods: Wallace Woods, Licking-Riverside, Main Street area, and "Covington from the South Shore of the Ohio River". Participants are yet deciding upon the final mode of presentation of their work. Ms. Isaacs is continuing to give instruction on family folklore and oral history technique. Mr. Monroe and Ms. Lewis will continue their emphasis on organized, documented research techniques for present project work and as a basis for future work. Anyone interested in working on the project or needing assistance should call them at 241-4622.

At the January meeting, the Society moved that Mike Averdick prepare necessary papers to nominate the Devou homestead (now the Behringer-Crawford Museum) to the National Register of Historic Places. With a good deal of research assistance from Dorothy Wieck this was done. The Kentucky Heritage Commission is in receipt of the materials, and taking the matter into consideration. Fire damage to the building some years ago may prove to be a stumbling block, as the appearance of the building was altered.

At the same meeting, the Society passed a resolution urging the Kentucky Heritage Commission to move with dispatch in placing the Odd Fellows Building, 5th and Madison, on the National Register due to both its history and architecture. The Commission will consider the nomination at their June meeting.

The Seminary Square and Mutter Gottes neighborhoods were approved for National Register status at their March meeting. Final approval from Washington is expected shortly.

County wide

Due to the Neighborhood Histories Project focus on Covington, it has occurred to a number of society members that the histories of other cities and areas of this County are equally important. Therefore, the Kenton County Historical Society plans to send inquiries to mayors and other officials seeking contacts and cooperation for the sake of wider involvement in local history preservation. If you have any ideas on this subject, contact Joe Gastright, 581-7315.

new books

Library

The Kenton County Cemeteries Vol. 1 book, originally scheduled for publication in March has been delayed. It is predicted that this best seller will appear sometime in mid-summer. We are waiting for enough pre-paid orders to cover printing costs. When ten additional orders have been received, the book will go to press. Thanks for being patient.

The Publications Committee has tentatively scheduled Records of the German Pioneer Societies of Covington and Newport for June, 1981. The material for this book is being organized, edited and indexed by Mr. Wayne Onkst, member of the Society and Assistant Head of Adult Services at the Kenton Co. Library.

The Publications Committee plans on publishing Collected Papers of the Kenton County Historical Society, 1977-1980 in late 1981. Original papers, thoroughly documented, should be submitted to Mike Averdick, Chairman of the Publications Committee.

help

Volunteers are needed to help with the following:
Program Committee
Newsletter Committee
Membership Committee.

Anyone interested should contact one of the officers.

Recent gifts to the Library Committee include:

Carter Gravesite photographs and information.
-donated by Judy Hurley, Covington.
St. Boniface: A House of the Church, 1872-1980.
-donated by Jim Kiger, Ft. Mitchell.
Histories of five F. & A.M. (Masonic) Lodges,
2 Covington, 1 Newport, 1 Ft. Thomas, 1 Erlanger.
-donated by Joe Gastright.
Lindsey-McPike-Nobel by H.B. Lindsey.
-donated by Joe Gastright.
Postcard of "Covington's Oldest House (built 1798)"
-donated by Don Lubbers, Covington.
Collection of Latonia Race Track materials, including
a 14p illustrated paper entitled GOWELL: Symbol of
Second Effort and two photographs of GOWELL, one
very nicely framed. donated by the author, Ralph Murray.
St. Boniface: A House of the Church, 1872-1980.
-donated by Bernadette Allgeyer, Ludlow.
Dan Carter Beard Home: a History. 10p.
-donated by the author, Allen Webb Smith, Park Hills.
Covington's Schule, The Temple of Israel, 53p.
-donated by the author, Leslie Lassetter Sharpe, Cinn.
Bradstreets' Book of Commercial Ratings, Kentucky, 1907
and Kentucky Division L.A.W. Road Book, 1898
-donated by Don Baker, Cold Spring
Furber Collection, additional materials, 19th C. Cov
- donated by Elizabeth Furber, Cincinnati.

and...

The April meeting of the Society was an excellent one due to the fine program, which was given by Mr. Fred Mitchell of the Miami Purchase Association. Mr. Mitchell spoke on the Victorian Influence on Covington's Architecture. He recommended Identifying American Architecture published by the American Association for State and Local History, 1400 8th Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee. The Kenton County Public Library is ordering the book, which costs about \$7.00. Our thanks to Mr. Mitchell for a fine program.

The Oral History Committee is doing well. Recently Howard Boemker interviewed an elderly woman concerning life in Covington during the early part of this century. Ralph Murray interviewed J.T. Crawford (Tommy Long) of the old Latonia Track.

The Society welcomes Ms. Susan Enzweiler of Ft. Mitchell. Ms. Enzweiler is a new member and an active volunteer. She is currently working on the Furber Collection for the Library Committee and hopefully will soon begin work on nominating a historic neighborhood to the National Register.