

# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012 (859) 431-2666

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## KCHS MEETING

**DATE** Tuesday, December 10

**TIME** 7 PM

**PLACE** Trinity Church

4th & Madison

Covington, Kentucky

## PROGRAM Civil War Hospitals

This area was the location of several hospitals during the Civil War.

Seven were in Cincinnati and three in Northern Kentucky. Jack Simon will tell us of the history of these hospitals, and describe the conditions of those times.

Refreshments will be served.

## Bulletin

## December 2002

### Lewis and Clark Commemoration Plans Include Covington & Boone County Stops

An impressive assembly of participants in the "Eastern Legacy" of the Lewis and Clark Commemoration met at the *Drawbridge Inn*, Ft. Mitchell on November 5&6. Sponsored by the Army Corps of Engineers, the meeting initiated the coordination of numerous events along the route beginning with the opening ceremonies at Jefferson's Monticello, January 14-19, 2003.

Few realize that Meriwether Lewis' preparation for the expedition involved a lengthy time building the boats and collecting the men and supplies before meeting Clark at Louisville (Falls of the Ohio). The complete route will be re-enacted by a troupe sailing on the inland waters in reconstructed craft. They will be dressed in period costumes and camp in tents at various stops. The Coast Guard will protect the entourage from dangerous river traffic.

The complete events schedule [as presently known] will appear in the next issue of *Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine*. The troupe will arrive in Northern Kentucky during late September 2003. They will stop at Big Bone Lick, Boone County and embark and camp at Covington the first week of October 2003 on their way to Louisville & points west.

### Farewell to JoAnn Brown

Karl Lietzenmeyer

JoAnn Brown has been the KCHS *Bulletin* editor since 1996, contributing hours of her own research and editing material submitted by others. She has done a marvelous job re-designing the format while meeting monthly deadlines in the process. JoAnn is moving on to other interests but will keep her hand in the Society. The board and membership very much appreciate her tireless efforts in producing this important communication.

The January/February *Bulletin* will commence publication on a bi-monthly basis. For economic reasons the KCHS board voted in September to cancel the Senior/Student \$5 discount and publish the *Bulletin* on a bi-monthly basis with the same or more content beginning in 2003. This change will save the Society the cost of six annual mailings, as well as valuable volunteer time to print, assemble and address the 500+ pieces mailed each month.

Volunteers are still needed. The Society hopes that fewer publications with the same or more content will generate the necessary assistance. A section of the *Bulletin* will show various task descriptions, time required, etc.

We are interested in your input and suggestions regarding future issues. What do you want to see in the bulletin? How can it be improved? Please write to us at the post office box shown or use the e-mail address.

### KCHS Board Position Open

The remainder of Carol Wenger's term [which expires September 2003] is currently unfilled. This is a golden opportunity to "try out" the position. Requirements are: interest in local history and the ability to attend most of the monthly board meetings. Some board decisions are made by phone or through e-mail messages. Contact the Society for details (859) 431-2666.

WEB SITE <http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc/>

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## Elsmere

David Lewis Taylor

Before being chartered in 1896, Elsmere was known as the Woodside Subdivision and later as South Erlanger. Scattered farmsteads developed along the Covington-Lexington Turnpike (now US 25/42, Dixie Highway), begun in 1829. Some of the earliest buildings are said to have dated from ca 1839 and were clustered around a stable on the turnpike.

Considerably later in the century, the Cincinnati Southern Railroad acquired a right-of-way through Erlanger and a stop was provided at the Woodside Subdivision. In 1885, a syndicate of Cincinnati investors led by George C. Bloss purchased the G. W. Bedinger farm in the Woodside Subdivision and platted the South Erlanger Subdivision.<sup>1</sup>

Woodside Park was a popular summer destination well before the city was established and picnics brought many people and political hopefuls to the site. In the early 1890s, the Cincinnati Southern established a commuter train between Elsmere and Cincinnati, offering special inducements to encourage new development, a tactic that had proven successful several years earlier in Erlanger.

Plans were made in the late 1890s to incorporate Erlanger as an independent municipality and citizens of South Erlanger (the settlement name at the time) decided their town should be a separate new city. In 1896, the city of Elsmere was chartered.<sup>2</sup>

Local tradition holds that 'Elsmere' came from a street name in Norwood, a suburb of Cincinnati, and the home of one of the area's early developers.<sup>3</sup> [The origin of the Norwood street name is not known.] Gaslights were installed in the more settled areas of the community and in 1897 Garvey Avenue was graded and sidewalks installed.

Early in the twentieth century building lots with 25-foot frontages were platted and raffled off. This resulted in a corresponding scale of domestic architecture and reflects popular styles of the early decades.

While no notable historic commercial architecture is extant in Elsmere, the community possesses a locally significant collection of small-scale detached homes that represent middle-class domestic design of these growth years. Styles represented include Bungalow and American Foursquare, with some cottages exhibiting Art-&-Craft style motifs, and vernacular homes.<sup>4</sup> In 1915 a tornado crossed the community destroying many of Elsmere's earlier homes; thus, these pre-1915 properties assume even higher local significance.

The fortunes of the community have long been linked to transportation, beginning with the turnpike construction in the 1820s. As the turnpike improved, so did the community. With the paving of the Dixie Highway in 1921, 10,000 gathered in Elsmere for a block party to celebrate the event.

Elsmere's growth and maturity are reflected in the 1935-6 St. Henry Roman Catholic Church on Dixie Highway and the 1951 Wilkins Heights Elementary School, built for area African-American students. White high school students attended Lloyd in Erlanger, while Elsmere's African-American students had to travel to Lincoln Grant in Covington.

In 1952, the city achieved fourth-class status<sup>5</sup> and the construction of I-75 through Kenton County west of Elsmere in 1961 ushered in new business and suburban growth. The population in 2000 was 6,947.

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<sup>1</sup> Analogous to the Erlanger Proper Subdivision platted concomitantly. Became the city of Erlanger in 1899.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Linfert, Police Judge; Carter Williams, Marshall; John P. Westerman, Assessor; Trustees: Frank Moss, Charles Jackson, Alex Daron, Sr., Henry Lackliter, W. Guenther.

<sup>3</sup> Developer was Lou Nolan.

<sup>4</sup> The term "vernacular," when applied to architecture, as defined in Ward Bucher's *Dictionary of Building Preservation*, relates to "a building built without being designed by an architect of someone with formal training; often based on traditional or regional forms."

<sup>5</sup> A fourth class city is one over 1000 population.

### About the Author

David L. Taylor is the principal of Taylor & Taylor Associates, Brookville, PA and a consultant for the N. KY. Area Planning Commission's Kenton Communities historic survey.

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## Preservation Kentucky Adds 12<sup>th</sup> Street To Top Ten

Preservation Kentucky, a non-profit group monitoring historic sites in the state, has placed Covington's 12<sup>th</sup> Street widening project on their **Top Ten Endangered Sites** list. The project has been re-examined by the Highway Department but the city has not called for a city-wide comprehensive traffic study which would shed more light on the entire subject. This controversial project has been in planning for many years.

### Howard Park Fountain Completed

The park on Covington's Eleventh Street median traces its history to the site of a marketplace established before the Civil War. A market house was built there and opened in 1857. After many years of productive use, it was demolished in 1898 and an outdoor market continued in its place. It shortly became one of the elements of a citywide interest in park development.

In 1906, ownership of the median strip situated between Scott and Greenup Streets was transferred from the Covington Council to the new Board of Parks Commission. In its 1908 Annual Report, the Board reported the conversion to a park "practically completed." At the Greenup Street end of the park, a marker was erected in memory of R. J. Dibowski upon his death in 1928 [see "A Centennial Trophy" April 2002 *Bulletin*]. A few farmers continued to set up produce stands on the sidewalk side of Eleventh Street for many years.

After years of neglect, the park had declined and was an eyesore in a troubled neighborhood. A committee of the Friends of Covington, a civic support group, developed an improvement plan for the area, which the city funded with c \$35,000 in CBDG Funds in 1998. In 1999-2000 the committee submitted a proposal for new lights in the park, and the city allocated c \$16,000 for 8 new light poles. Additional money was collected from various sources for the installation of a fountain centerpiece. This continues the effort to re-establish the park as a community focal point. The dedication of the Heron Fountain was September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002. The cast iron fountain is made from a late 19<sup>th</sup> century mold produced by W. J. Fiske of New York. The molds are currently in the possession of the Robinson Iron Works of Alabama, which produced this fountain. The circular wrought iron fence surrounding the fountain pool is in the "bow and picket" pattern and was custom fabricated by Stewart Iron Works of Covington.

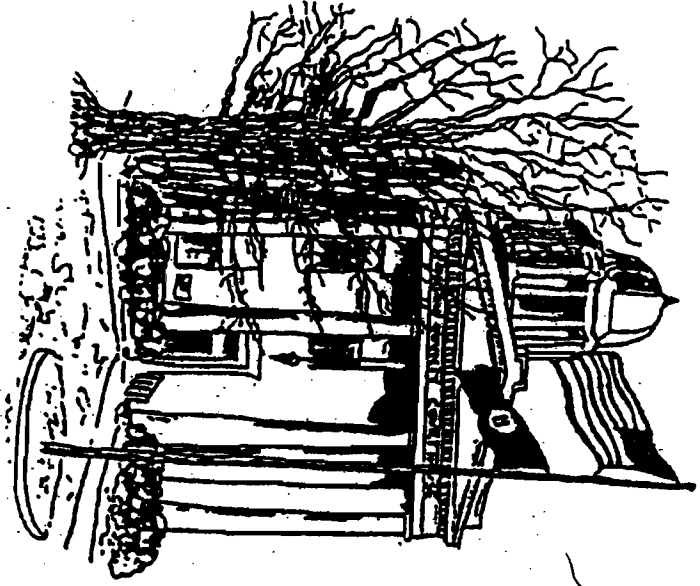
The dedication ceremonies included a Fountain Blessing delivered by Sister Janet Bucher CDP of Our Savior Church, 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

*God of all creation  
You who made the planets and waters  
Bring your special presence before us today  
in this small green spot in our city.  
Ancient earth, our mystical Mother and Flowing waters,  
Spirit of All Life, teach us, your children, to use and  
respect these Gifts with reverence.  
Flowing waters, still waters, peaceful waters,  
Cleansing waters, Source of Life and Energy –  
Bless us with your living presence ...  
May it flow in blessing upon the people who look  
upon it, those who rest in this park.  
Bless our city, bless those who installed this Symbol  
of Life and those who care for this oasis in the city,  
Bless our nation and world with the waters of peace,  
forgiveness and unity.  
Make us ever mindful of the Love You daily pour upon  
each of us in the "troubling waters" of our times.  
Grant that we may ever "wade in the waters" of peace  
and justice and hope.  
We pray in Jesus' name and in the name of the God  
of our ancestors.*



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Bulletin      December 2002



**INSIDE:**  
**A Brief History of Elsmere**  
**Eleventh Street Park, Covington**

**Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"**

Kenton County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 641  
Covington, Kentucky 41012

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