

# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Bulletin**

**February 1997**



**INSIDE:**

**The Biography of The Honorable Brent Spence**

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## NOTICES

### Volunteers Needed

**Computer Skills** KCHS has had some response to the call for someone to enter data onto computer disk, but the handwritten research projects which we would like to publish are voluminous. We still need more people who can enter this data onto computer disk so that we can transfer them to publishing form. If you have the time and no computer, the Society's computer is available.

**Do you have an interest in old photos?** The Society wants to collect, label, preserve, and keep old photos, which may have historical significance, in our files for possible use in the magazine or other historical display events. We need someone who has ideas on how to publicize the need for old photos; someone to collect, label and file the photos.

**Could you stock Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine in a store near you?** The Magazine can now be purchased at bookstores and gift shops in the area. Several people have volunteered to restock and collect money from the sales each month in several stores, but we need a few more volunteers. N. K. Heritage Magazine is being sold at the following stores:

**Barnes & Noble, Florence**                      **Ohio Bookstore, Main St., Cincinnati**  
**Madison Stationary, Cov.**                      **Visitor's Center, Philadelphia St., Cov.**  
**For Love of Books, Latonia**                      **BehringerCrawford Museum Gift Shop**  
**Blue Lick State Park in Robertson County, near Mt. Olivet, Ky.**

Suggestions for additional locations will be welcome.

If you have the skill or the interest for any of these of these projects, please call Karl Lietzenmayer, 261-2807 or John Boh, 491-0490 (H), or 292-2124.

### FOR SALE

✓George Roth History of Trinity Church, Covington- hardbound, 300 pages, indexed, 20 pages of black and white and color pictures and illustrations. Cost \$10 plus \$2 postage.

✓7 X 7 Color 1947 Photo of the Kentucky Parlor Streetcar.

Kenton Officers From 1776 To 1888----- In 1884, in the Daily Commonwealth newspaper, O. J. Wiggins listed over 100 names of court officers and legislators primarily from Kenton County but also Campbell County before 1840 when the region was one county. Recently John Boh compiled brief, biographical "abstracts" of each and arranged them alphabetically. It could be a wonderful help for your research. Cost: \$2.00, including mailing.

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# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Publisher of award-winning  
**Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine**

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Program: **THE CATHEDRAL AS SACRAMENT OF THE REDEEMED CITY**  
by M. Francis Mannion--Rector, Cathedral of the Madeleine, Salt Lake City

at

The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

1140 Madison Avenue \* Covington, Ky

Tuesday, February 4, 1997, 7:30 p. m.

no charge, reception after the lecture

one of a series of programs sponsored by the Cathedral Foundation, Inc., NKU, and TMC on  
"The Role of the Urban Cathedral in the Twenty-First Century"

## Northern Kentucky Regional History Day

The Fourth Annual Regional History Day will be Saturday, March 1, 1997, at Northern Kentucky University. Registration fee is \$4 at the door or \$3 in advance. Registration and information brochures will be mailed out to the local NKHS membership. Last year's attendance was over 250 persons.

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## A Biography of The Honorable Brent Spence

Brent Spence was born on Christmas Eve 1874 in Newport, Kentucky to Philip N. and Virginia Berry Spence. His father was a native of Virginia who had commanded a Confederate cavalry regiment, served as Newport's postmaster during Democratic administrations, and officiated as U. S. consul at Quebec. On his mother's side, he was a great, great grand nephew of General James Taylor, great grandson of Washington Berry (a charter trustee of Newport and first judge to convene Campbell County's courts), nephew of Congressman Albert S. Berry, and a second cousin (twice removed) of Brigadier General John T. Thompson.

Spence earned a law degree in 1895 during a single year's study at the University of Cincinnati. He joined Congressman Berry's law office, which was intimately connected with local politics, and made his home on 4th Street so he could be a stone's throw away from any fast-breaking developments at the courthouse. Spence emerged as one of the Democratic Party's rising stars at a time when Republicans were threatening to control Campbell County. He entered the State Senate in 1903, but the Republicans captured his seat in 1907. He returned to public life in 1915 with an appointment as Newport city solicitor. During his tenure in that post, he reputedly won every suit filed against the city, but was nevertheless replaced in 1923 when his political rivals took over municipal government.

Brent Spence first ran for Congress in 1928, but was defeated in the Republican landslide spawned by the Hoover-Smith presidential contest. He ran again for the House of Representatives in 1930 and reclaimed his district's seat for the Democrats. He strongly supported the New Deal, Fair Deal, and other progressive legislation such as Philippine independence. He won a reputation for integrity among his colleagues as the only congressman who never amended his speeches on the House Floor before they appeared in the Congressional Record.

He took over the House Committee on Banking and Currency in 1943, and earned nearly universal praise for chairing it

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firmly and fairly. This position assumed extraordinary importance in the 1940s, because the U.S. was the only country capable of exercising international leadership to establish a framework for global trade and economic growth that would avoid another Great Depression. He worked closely with Treasury Secretary Robert Morgenthau and Senator Robert Wagner to prepare U.S. proposals for creating a new world monetary order in the aftermath of World War II.

Spence was one of the most important delegates to the Bretton Woods Conference of July 1944, in which the U.S. and forty-three other nations agreed on procedures for avoiding currency devaluations, stabilizing price levels, and encouraging the flow of investment capital to rebuild war-shattered economies. He introduced the congressional legislation necessary to implement the Bretton Woods agreements by setting the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency and founding the International Monetary Fund. Newport's congressman performed his finest service in this task, and emerged as a statesman of international significance.

Spence also played a key role in a wide range of domestic legislation, including the landmark Housing Act of 1949, Export Control Act of 1949, Defense Production Act of 1950, Defense Housing and Community Facilities and Services Act of 1951, Bank Holding Company Act of 1956, Savings and Loan Holding Company Act of 1959, and Area Redevelopment Act of 1961. He sponsored laws to charter the Export-Import Bank, to make the first major increase in FDIC insurance of bank deposits since the committee established the Small Business Administration. He deserves much of the credit for the Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, which was the first major piece of federal environmental-protection passed since the Refuse Act of 1899.

As he gained seniority, Spence won support for legislation of vital importance for northern Kentucky's economic development. (Cincinnati, which was controlled by the Republican Taft machine, found it exceptionally difficult to compete with the influence of this southern, New Deal Democrat of long tenure.) He attracted the federal funds that enabled the Boone County airport to expand gradually during the 1940s and 1950s into the

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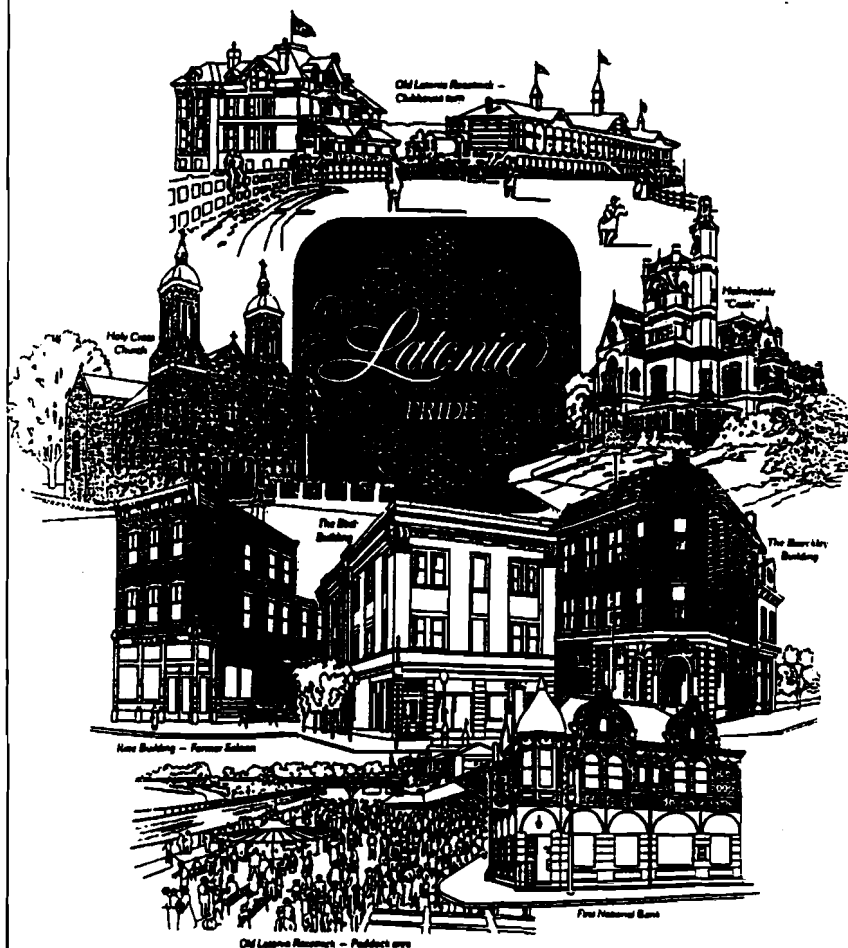
major air hub for all of greater Cincinnati. He secured U.S. grants to build large-scale public housing projects in Newport and Covington. He obtained federal funding for floodwalls to protect Newport, Covington, and Maysville. He exerted critical pressure to persuade the Kennedy administration to build a regional Internal Revenue Service processing center in northern Kentucky rather than Cincinnati where a large IRS office already existed, and then overcame a strong bid by Michigan congressmen to have the service center built in their own state.

Spence served 32 continuous years in Congress from 1930 to 1962. He would have continued safeguarding northern Kentucky's interests at Congress, but the 1960 census forced his district to be merged with that of a younger Democrat, and he decided against waging a divisive primary fight at his advanced years. When he retired at age 88, he was the dean of this state's congressional delegation and had served more years in Washington than any other representative or senator from Kentucky. (Only much later did Kentucky representatives Carl Perkins, Sr., and William Natcher surpass his record seniority.) Brent Spence died at age 92 on September 18, 1967 in Ft. Thomas.

*Reprinted with permission from Newport, Kentucky: A Bicentennial History, Thomas L. Purvis, Editor*

Black and white drawings by Charles Gillham  
of each of these historic locations  
in the Latonia area of Covington  
are now available in the form of note cards.

**\$1.25 each** (one building per card)  
or a **full set of 8 for \$8.00** (plus \$1.00 shipping)  
A percentage from each sale goes to Northern KY Heritage Magazine.



To order, call Karl Lietzenmayer at (606) 261-2807  
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