

BULLETIN

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Kenton County Historical Society

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INSIDE SEE:

Rev. Henry Tappert (1855-1929)
Pastor-Musician

January 1996

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 641
COVINGTON, KY 41012

On Tuesday, January 9, 1996, at 7:00 p. m., the Kenton County Historical Society will hold its monthly meeting at the LATTA HOUSE, 254 Latta street, Ludlow, Kentucky. In addition to a short business meeting, there will be a display of historical memorabilia relating to the house, past residents, and the city of Ludlow. This meeting will be free and open to members, guests, friends.

This home was built (1900-02) while owned by the Latta family at the site of the residence of the patriarch. He was A. B. Latta (1821-1865), a nationally recognized inventor of a quick heating steam fire engine, which became standard fire fighting apparatus--equipment which also gave rise to the creation of professional fire fighting departments in Covington and other cities around the country. Latta was also elected to Ludlow's first city council; he of course enjoyed prominence here after his great accomplishments as a Cincinnati manufacturer and gifted inventor.

The ten room brick Latta house is a "duodecigon" (twelve-sided), a plan apparently envisioned by the inventor before his death, and executed through his survivors.

THE NORTHERN BANK OF KENTUCKY, COVINGTON BRANCH
THIRD AND SCOTT STREETS

In February, 1835 the Northern Bank of Kentucky was chartered with \$3 million capital. Covington, Richmond, Paris, and Louisville became sites for the four branches. In 1836 the Covington branch was organized with Richard Southgate, President, Philip S. Bush, Cashier, and the following as Directors: John W. Tibbatts, James M. Clarkson, William W. Wade, Erastus Tousey, John B. Casey, Carey Clemons, George B. Marshall and John T. Levis. William Ernst (1813-1895), born in Pennsylvania, first became a clerk at the bank office in Lexington; in 1838 teller at the Covington branch; 1849 Cashier; 1867 President of the branch. While President his son, John P., became Cashier, and was later President. In 1839 William Ernst married **Lydia Bush, his first wife**, daughter of P. S. Bush, the Branch's first Cashier; they had one daughter, Amelia, who married Robert Semple, merchant in Cincinnati. After the death of Lydia in 1841 William Ernst in 1843 married **Sarah A. Butler, his second wife**, and they had nine children, several prominent in banking, business and community affairs including John P., and Richard Pretlow Ernst, major organizer and President of the YMCA, and Republican U. S. Senator, 1921-1927.

William Ernst was also President of the Covington and Lexington Turnpike company, a director of the Kentucky Central railroad, trustee of Centre College at Danville, the Covington Protestant Children's Home, Linden Grove Cemetery, twice President of the City Council, an organizer in 1841 and major financial supporter of the First Presbyterian church. Like the Bush family the Ernst family lived in an apartment at the Bank located at the northwest corner of Third and Scott streets.

Rev. Henry Tappert (1855-1929)
Pastor-Musician
by Karl Lietzenmayer
Part of *Sesquicentennial Project, Mother of God Church*
1991

Henry Tappert was born April 9, 1855 in Dueren, Rhineland. His older brother, William, born January 14, 1848 left Germany shortly before the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, in the midst of his theological studies. Henry received his classical and musical education in the Rhineland and followed his brother to America in 1875. -1 William was ordained by Covington's Roman Catholic Bishop Augustus Toebbe in 1872 after finishing his theological studies at Mt. St. Mary Seminary, Cincinnati. Henry Tappert finished his theological studies at the same institution, being ordained in May, 1879. -2

Whereas, Father William was focused on his parish and his German heritage, Father Henry was preoccupied with the perfection of liturgical music. -3

It is the musical endeavors of Father Henry that is of particular interest to us. Father Henry was an enthusiastic proponent of the *Caecilian Movement* of Catholic Church music. The *Caecilian Movement* of the 19th century for the reform of Catholic church music had its roots in the late 18th century and early 19th century relationship of music and liturgy. -4 The movement originated in Germany. The advocates of this reform composed in a polyphonic style, frequently unaccompanied in imitation of Renaissance polyphony but highly influenced by Romanticist harmonies. -5

The brother-priests were both *Caecilian* music advocates and, upon arriving at Mother of God Church, found "Teacher" Hellebusch with a well-established *Deutsche "Singemesse"* music tradition. -6 However amiably or unamiably, after over 30 years of musical and educational service, B. F. H. Hellebusch left Mother of God to the *Caecilians*.

Father Henry organized a mixed adult choir in 1883, calling it the *St. Gregorius Singing Society*. The number of singers ranged from 50 to 70. Melchior Abele was hired that same year to be organist and teacher in the parochial grade school. -7 Presumably, he accompanied the *St. Gregorius Society* since the choir loft and placement of the new pipe organ (installed through the efforts of B.H.F. Hellebusch by the *Koehnken Company* in 1876) console against the casework made it rather difficult to direct the singers from the organ bench. -8 When Professor Abele resigned in 1895-6, twenty-year-old Edward Strubel began his long career as organist, playing for Father Henry's choir. [see NKH magazine Vol I, No. 1, page 27]

Before being admitted as a singer (a good voice was, of course, presumed) candidates had to take a two-year course! When they were able to read music readily, even very difficult compositions *prima vista*, they were taken into the choir. -9 Even this training in sight reading did not make the choir what it was at its best for so many years. As a choir, these singers had usually three rehearsals a week; sometimes four! -10 Father Henry taught the choir about 20 different Choral Masses besides a great many offertory motets (many with 6 or 8 parts) any of which could be sung on any Sunday with perhaps but one rehearsal for the more difficult passages. -11

When Father Tappert reached his fortieth birthday, he decided to begin intensive study of the pipe organ. Sources do not mention under whom he studied but, if references are to be believed, he prepared himself as a recital organist until his 50th year. -12

At a course in Plainsong given at the Covington church by Professor Singenberger -13 in 1896, the **Gregorius Singing Society** gave two sacred concerts; one made up of the best modern composers, consisting of 14 numbers; the second concert consist of selections from the old masters, and embraced 17 numbers. -14 As may be supposed, much rehearsing was necessary for these concerts. Many of these compositions were written for 6 or 8 parts.

After 33 years of existence, this mixed choir had to be abandoned in 1916 because of repercussions of former Pope Pius X's *motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini* -15 regarding his concept of liturgical music. The new Bishop of Covington, Most Rev. Ferdinand Brossart -16 issued an order as a result of the deceased Pope's wishes which, in effect, banned women and girls from parish choirs. A male choir of 25 voices and a fine boys' choir were formed beginning after Christmas, 1916. -17

The *motu proprio* of Pius X stated that whenever singing does not pertain to the celebrant and sacred ministers, it "belongs properly to the choir of clerics, and that if singers are laymen they are substitutes of the ecclesiastical choir." -18

In paragraph 13, he stated that "women cannot be admitted to the choir." This law was not well obeyed, especially in the United States, where as a result, women sang in choirs with the tacit permission of the local Catholic bishop. This was true in the Covington Diocese as well, under the episcopacy of Bishop Camillus Maes [promoter of the new Covington Cathedral]. Just why Bishop Brossart decided to enforce the banning of women by a deceased Pope is not clear, but enforce it he did! Nothing more was heard from Rome on this subject until Pius XII reinstated women in choirs - as long as they stayed out of the sanctuary!! -20

The final appearance of the mixed choir known as the **St. Gregorius Singing Society** was the Sunday following Christmas 1916. -21 There are no clues as to how Father Henry Tappert felt about this directive, and if he did feel disgruntled at this order from his bishop, he certainly kept his opinions to himself. Obedience to his bishop certainly was his first priority. It is known from the descendant of at least one of the women involved that there was considerable anger and resentment among the discharged female singers! -22

The very next year, Father Henry Tappert received word from Rome that he had been honored with the appointment of Domestic Prelate of the Pope's Household, with the title of **Monsignor**. Pope Benedict XV bestowed it on Father Henry in recognition of his work in the field of church music. -23 By this time, he had labored industriously and gained a reputation as an authority.

Father Tappert composed - church music almost exclusively - all through his musically active career. Among the known compositions are two Masses, for two and four mixed voices; many songs to the Blessed Sacrament, some for mixed voices and others for male voices. In his later years, he composed much for male voices (certainly because of the change to all male singers in 1916). English and German sacred songs for two and three voices, male, female, and mixed; also many songs to the Sacred Heart, Blessed Virgin, etc. are among his repertoire. -24

While Father Tappert's compositions deserve attention, it is as leader of a famous choir that he will always be remembered. Judging from the repertoire of the choir alone, Father Tappert's choir measures up fully with the best of its kind in the nation. As F. J. Boerger says of his work:

"We are considering it from an artistic point of view. We have read about the **Thomaeus Choir** of Leipzig, Dr. Walle's **Bach Choir**, Dr. Vogt's **Toronto Choir**, etc. There are **Arioso Societies**, **Musical Art Societies**, etc. all over this great country yet how many of them will undertake to sing, and sing as well, all that the Covington choir had in its repertoire." -26

These words of praise, written about Father Tappert's work in 1919, sum up an endeavor set in a time of church music when choral singing was the norm in Roman Catholic churches and that which developed at Mother of God Church was the best of that tradition. Pray God that wonderful tradition can be kept alive, for it is truly worthy of the church and the worship of God.

* * * * *

ENDNOTES

1. *The Church of the Mother of God. A Centennial Chronicle*, Sister Mary Carmelite Brungs, SND, Jameson-Rolfes, Covington, 1941, page 38 (hereafter referred to as Brungs, *Centennial*).
2. Brungs, *Centennial*, page 38.
3. *Ibid.*, page 39.
4. "Cecilian Movement," Karl Gustav Fellerer, *Graves' Dictionary of Music*, page 47.
5. "Cecilian Movement," F. J. Moleck, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 3, page 1041.
6. See B.H.F. "Teacher" Hellebusch (1825-1885), NKH Magazine, Vol. I, No. 2.
7. Brungs, *Centennial*, page 60.
8. The original console and action was a tracker (mechanical) and the keyboard was installed against the pipe casework in the rear loft with the organist seated facing the altar. This mechanism and console was removed (unwisely) and the present keyboards installed in 1957.

9. F. J. Boerger, "Catholic Church Music, Rt. Rev. Monsignor Henry Tappert," The Indiana Catholic and Record, February 14, 1919 (hereafter referred to as Boerger, Music).

10. Boerger, Music.

11. ibid.

12. ibid. It is assumed that Father Tappert was already quite proficient on piano, as this is a necessary prerequisite for the study of organ.

13. John Singenberger (1848-1924) native of Switzerland, studied at Regensburg, Germany, headquarters of the Caecilian Vetrin. Emigrated to America. Founded the American Caecilian Society.

14. Boerger, Music.

15. Træ la sollicitudini, motu proprio of Pope Pius X, 1903. A motu proprio (L. on one's own accord) is drawn up at the Pope's own accord, bears no seal and lacks other formalities, and although signed by the Pope, is not accompanied by the authority of a Bull or Encyclical.

16. Most Reverend Ferdinand Brossart (1849-1930) fourth Roman Catholic Bishop of Covington, 1916-1923.

17. "Final Appearance of Mixed Choir," Cincinnati Times-Star, December 30, 1916.

18. New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 10, McGraw-Hill, 1967, page 131.

19. ibid., page 131.

20. ibid.

21. Musicae sacrae disciplina, motu proprio of Pope Pius XII, paragraph 74

22. Personal interview with Marcia Witte Strategier, whose grandmother, Helena Middendorf sang in the St. Gregorius Singing Society and was dismissed. Interview, August 1991.

23. Cincinnati Times-Star, December 30 1916.

24. Catholic Telegraph, Cincinnati, April 26, 1917.

25. Boerger, Music.

26. ibid.

MARYLAND CATHOLICS TO MEET

The 1996 National Reunion of Descendants of Maryland Catholics of Kentucky will be held in Marion county from June 28 to 30, 1996. The headquarters will be the historic St. Charles Parish in St. Mary, Kentucky.

A reception, guided tours, and a special banquet will punctuate the genealogical sharing, photo-copying and camaraderie of registrants.

For more information or for registration blanks, call Sister Teresa Wolking, O. S. B., at 331-6979, or write Maryland/ Kentucky Reunion, P. O. Box 7, St. Mary, Kentucky 40063

The Messenger, 9-22-95

*****NOVEMBER REMINDER*****

YOU ARE INVITED TO A FREE COMMUNITY OPEN-HOUSE PROGRAM
“HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN OUR BIG BACK YARD—
CINCINNATI AND BEYOND”

Come Early—It's Easy

- * Drive/Car Pool Downtown to the Omni-Carew Tower
- * Parking Available at Hotel
- * Take Elevator to 4th Floor—Pavillion Room
- * Room opens at 11:30 am
- * Sign-In at Our Registration Table
- * Pick-Up Your Program Name Tag
- * That's It—Can't Wait to See You! —Now, Relax And Have Some Fun!

Saturday, January 6, 1996

1:00—4:00 pm, Pavilion Room; Reception 4:00—5:00 pm
Omni Netherland Plaza Hotel-Carew Tower
35 W. Fifth St., Cincinnati, Ohio

Don't miss this terrific opportunity to learn about the amazing world of historic archaeology—your historic past! Come early and enjoy our exhibits, displays, photo gallery, hands-on artifact activities and mystery games. Visit our “Book Room” which has a great assortment of books, reports and information about our historic past. Bring your camera—There will be re-enactors dressed in Civil War uniforms and some exciting surprises!!!

Program Organizers:

David T. Clark/Mark Wilde-Ramsing
Anthropology/Catholic University
Washington, D.C. 20064
Fax: (202) 319-4782

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE: Do you know the location of any old historic building foundation (house, mill, etc.) in your area? Even if destroyed long ago, foundation remains often yield interesting clues to our historic past. Bring the locational information to the program. This is a great way to develop mutual interests between archaeologists and the local community.

***** IMPORTANT *****

**How many people do you think will attend the program
from your group? Please call with your best guess!!!
Voice Mail (513) 956-7538**

Porkopolis Or Bust!!!

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

/ /
John Koh (L)
507 Russell Street
Covington, KY 41011

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