

# Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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January/February

2003

## PROGRAMS

### Trinity Episcopal Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> & Madison, Covington

**Tuesday, January 13, 7:00 p.m. – “Kenton County at NKU”**

NKU Archivist Jennifer Gregory will discuss material in the Steele Library, using documents, pictures and other historical material on Kenton County

**Tuesday, February 10, 7:00 p.m. – “Junction Turnpike”**

Jeff Schreiber of the Edgewood Historical Society will and Bill Grady, Edgewood Councilman, will discuss the historical development of Edgewood and the construction, *raison d'etre* of “Junction Turnpike.” The family dairies and other sites along Dudley Road – the “junction” between Dixie Highway & Madison Pike will be included.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 11<sup>th</sup> Annual History Day – February 28, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Student Center, NKU Campus.

**OPENING SPEAKER:** Glenn Storrs, paleontologist for Cincinnati Natural History Museum will present a visual aided lecture on the significance of Big Bone. The Cincinnati Museum has a master collection. Since Big Bone was the first area of discovery of Pleistocene artifacts, the pioneer curators labeled these fossils with names inspired by scenes in Boone & Kenton Counties.

#### TENTATIVE WORKSHOPS

Michael Washington, “CINCINNATI, CONEY ISLAND & CIVIL RIGHTS”  
Robert Vitz, “THE ART OF WAR, THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICAN PAINTING”  
Francois LeRoy, FLIGHT BEFORE THE WRIGHTS  
Rodney Daniels, “OUR BLACK COMMUNITY—A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL”  
James Claypool, Paul Tenkotte & Michael Hammons, THE NORTHERN KENTUCKY ENCYCLOPEDIA  
Kerry Duke & Karl Lietzenmayer, PUBLISHING LOCAL HISTORY  
Jennifer Gregory, DOCUMENT & PHOTOGRAPH PRESERVATION  
Jeannine Kreinbrink, THE ARCHEALOGY & LEGALITIES OF INDIAN SITES  
David Schroeder, GENEALOGY FOR TEACHERS  
Kenneth Williams, [on] PUBLIC HISTORY  
Suzanne Deluca, TELL ME A STORY—HOW TO DO ORAL HISTORY  
Daria Rhine et al., FRANCES TROLLOPE’S COMPLAINT (dramatized).

History Department student volunteers will help with the signs, with carrying materials in, with directing people outside/inside & with confirming registrations. An informational flyer will be mailed out early in January which will include a confirmed list of the day’s events, a campus map and instructions for all attendees.

The event will begin at 9 with registration and a self-serve continental breakfast. As last year, the event will not include lunch. Organizations/vendors reserving tables may set-up before 9. All attendees must register, whether manning a table or attending workshops, etc.



Dear Editor:

I maintain an internet site entitled "Kentucky's German-Americans in the Civil War" located at <http://www.geocities.com/kygermans>. This site contains the names of over 1100 German-born men from Kentucky who served in military units during the Civil War. I would like to add names and photos to the site and ask that anyone who had a native German ancestor or knows of a German(s) who resided in Kentucky (1861-1865) and served in the military for any state to provide me their name and unit, and if possible, a photo.

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Dear Editor:

Re: Union Civil War Descendants

This is to alert all to a local Civil War work in progress. It is a Kentucky Historical Marker planned for a 2004 dedication on the Covington bank of the Ohio River. It will commemorate the crossing on September 5, 1862 of General Lew Wallace, who led Union troops and "Squirrel Hunters" (volunteers from Ohio, Indiana and Illinois) from Cincinnati to Covington over a hastily constructed pontoon bridge laid on coal barges to meet the threat of invading Confederates commanded by Generals Braxton Bragg, Kirby Smith, and Henry Heth. Strong fortifications (Ft. Mitchel and Ft. Wright with many supplemented artillery batteries) were erected on the hilltops ringing Northern Kentucky. Heth skirmished at Ft. Mitchel, suffered casualties and thought better of the planned attack on Cincinnati and retreated with Smith to Tennessee, as did Bragg after he tried Union lines under General Don Carlos Buell at Perryville [Ky.], October 8, 1862.

The crossing was memorialized in an illustration appearing in *Frank Leslie's Weekly* in September 1862 and its reproduction is being painted as one of the murals on the Covington floodwall by Robert Dafford of Lafayette, Louisiana.

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### *Ft. Wright—A Brief History* [Kentucky Encyclopedia]

Fort Wright takes its name from the earthen fort built as part of the Cincinnati defense perimeter during the Civil War. This Union fortification was named after Maj. General Horatio Gouverneur Wright, a Connecticut native and engineer who helped design Northern Kentucky's military defenses and completed the Washington Monument in the nation's capital.

With exceptions of businesses along US 25 (Dixie Highway), the area remained largely rural until well into the 20th century. In the 1930s, Oelsner's Colonial Tavern was a popular dining spot and a favorite of Cincinnati Reds baseball players. Across the highway, the Lookout House featured casino gambling and entertainment.

In a state police raid at the Lookout House on March 6, 1951, eighteen people were arrested and

\$20,000 worth of gambling equipment was seized, but the club stayed in business until it was destroyed by a fire of suspicious origin on August 14, 1973.

Residential development of Fort Wright began around 1940 and continued into the 1950s and '60s. The city grew rapidly by annexing or merging with adjoining communities, although attempts to annex Park Hills and Kenton Vale were unsuccessful. A twenty-year dispute over annexed land ended in 1980 with Fort Wright owing Covington \$250,000 for loss of taxable property.

Fort Wright is a fourth-class city that had a population of 4,819 in 1970; 4,481 in 1980; and 6,570 in 1990.

**Isaac Burns Murphy**  
**World Famous Jockey**  
**Winner: Latonia Derby Five Times**

Born on the Fayette County, Kentucky farm of David Tanner in 1861 as Isaac Burns, he was the son of freedman James Burns. James Burns was an ex-slave who died a freedman in a Confederate prison camp during the Civil War. In the fall of 1876, Isaac took the name of Murphy, his mother's maiden name. Murphy worked as an exercise boy for Richard Owings, who employed his mother as a laundress. At Lexington stables, blacks typically performed many of the jobs, including that of trainer and jockey. Indeed, blacks rode fourteen of the fifteen horses in the first Kentucky Derby, and one, jockey Oliver Lewis, won aboard *Aristides*. Over the next twenty years, black jockeys won the Kentucky Derby more than half the time.

At age 14, Murphy won his first race as a replacement. By the 1880s, Murphy dominated the sport, winning in 1882, forty-nine of fifty-one starts at Saratoga, for example. On several cards he won every race. The wealthiest owners paid Murphy as much as \$20,000 a year to ride their horses in big stake races. When he won his third Kentucky Derby aboard *Kingman* in 1891, he set a record that wasn't surpassed until Arcaro won his fourth with *Citation* in 1948.

After 1885 Murphy rode under a \$4,000 annual retainer that gave first choice of his services to Edward Corrigan, a Kansas City turfman who owned Alpine Stock Farm on Bowman's Mill Pike in Fayette County, Kentucky.

Murphy had such confidence in his own ability to ride and judge his horse that he wasn't above horsing around in a race for drama, leading some to call him a "grandstander." He wasn't actually, but he did believe in whipping or pushing a horse only as much as was necessary.

While that made for exciting races, it exasperated the wealthy owners who employed him. Once, after a heart-stopping Murphy victory in the mid-1800s, owner E. C. Corrigan was so unsettled, he sought out Murphy to admonish him:

"Isaac, I realize you are a great rider. . . while your close finishes thrill the grandstand, in the future when you are on one of my horses, do not draw the line so fine." Murphy replied, "Just as you say, Mr. Corrigan, but I want you to know – I never had any doubt."

#### **Riding Style**

Murphy won four American Derbies in Chicago and five Latonia Derbies when that race was deemed more important than the Kentucky Derby. In the 1888 American Derby, he pulled one of his stunts on

owner E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin's favored *Emperor of Norfolk* until the very end, when he turned him loose for an easy victory.

As legend has it, Baldwin put the lit end of his cigar in his mouth when he saw *Emperor of Norfolk* four lengths behind at the sixteenth pole. He had bet \$10,000 to \$1,000 that his horse would win. Later, when he found out that Murphy was just horsing around, he didn't speak to the jockey for weeks.

On the other hand, Baldwin was also the beneficiary of Murphy's integrity. At the end of the 1886 season, two owners offered Murphy \$10,000 in exchange for first call on his services the next year. The jockey refused, saying he already had promised Baldwin first call for \$5,000.

Perhaps the best example of his riding style came when he rode the great *Salvator* to victory over *Tenny* in their famous 1890 match race at Sheepshead Bay, Long Island. His gentle tactics were in stark contrast to the crazed slashing and whipping of jockey Snapper Garrison, aboard *Tenny*.

While the crowds of 40,000 winced at Garrison's punishment of *Tenny*, Murphy used tender loving care to get *Salvator* home by a nose in the last stride. He coaxed the mighty effort out of *Salvator* by leaning on his neck and pressing in with his knees.

#### **Character**

In the racing world, populated by shady characters, Murphy never bet and steadfastly refused to throw a race or tolerate riders who did. Once he confronted a jockey with a reputation for cheating and said, "They get you to pull a hoss in a selling race, and when it comes to a stake race they get Isaac to ride . . . Just be honest, and you'll have no trouble and plenty of money!"

Being honest, Isaac did well just as he admonished the cheating jockey. With his annual wages of \$10,000 to \$20,000 he built a two-and one-half story, twelve-room mansion in Lexington where he often gave lavish dinner parties.

Isaac Murphy, a five-footer with long arms, gentle hands, and a weight problem that cause him to balloon to as much as 140 pounds, may well have been the greatest rider of all time. In twenty years, he won 628 races in 1,412 starts – an astonishing record that may never be equaled. By contrast, the great Eddie Arcaro won only 22 % of his career starts compared with Murphy's 44.5 %.

#### **Final Years**

Murphy's career came to a strange, mysterious end. Only a couple of weeks after the match race between *Salvator* and *Tenny*, Murphy rode James Ben Ali Haggin's *Firenzi* in the Monmouth Handicap. Sent off as a six to five favorite, *Firenzi* finished dead

last, the result of a bizarre ride by Murphy. Through the running, he seemed to have trouble staying on the horse's back. As soon as the horse crossed the finished line, it jumped over the infield and when Murphy finally got the horse stopped, he fell off in a heap.

The crowd was so stunned, they didn't even bother to boo Murphy. Back in the paddock, the stewards took a look at Murphy, who could barely stand up, and suspended him for a month. The newspapers suggested he had overindulged on champagne but a tearful Murphy contended he was poisoned by gamblers trying to score a coup. He denied the charges he was drunk.

Whatever happened, that one race effectively ended his career as racing's number one jockey. Although he came back in 1891 to win his third Kentucky Derby, Murphy had trouble getting work. From almost 200 mounts in 1889, he slipped to only twenty in 1892. He had increasing difficulty keeping his weight down to 110 pounds and retired to become a trainer after the 1892 season.

He spent his last years trying to sweat and diet himself back into condition. On February 13, 1896, only a few months after he rode – and won – his last race, Murphy died in his Lexington home, ostensibly of pneumonia. He was thirty-five years old, survived by his wife, Lucy. In 1955, Murphy was belatedly inducted into the Jockey Hall of Fame at Saratoga and in 1977 his body was reinterred at the Kentucky Horse Park in Fayette County.

#### References

Betty E. Borries, "Isaac Murphy: Kentucky's Record Jockey (Berea, Ky. 1988).

John Kleber, editor, Kentucky Encyclopedia (UK Press 1992).

Billy Reed, "Famous Kentuckians," (Data Courier, Inc. Louisville, KY 1977).

## Early Newspapers

Based on Charles Eilerman's  
"Historic Covington"

Nineteenth Century Covington newspapers not only provide a contemporary history of the young city, but reflect broader developments in the settling of the West and political currents in the nation at large. A cursory reading of papers of that time will give the definite impression of unabashed biased reporting—much more evident than in today's newspapers.

*The Farmer's Record & Covington Literary Journal* was the first newspaper in the city. Publication was begun by Richard C. Langdon in 1831.

Two of the more long-lived of the early papers were the weekly *Covington Journal* and the *Daily Commonwealth*. The *Covington Journal* appears to have been published from 1849 to 1876. It began as a Whig paper run by Samuel Davis and George Bedinger. Early offices were located at the northwest corner of Sixth and Madison. Covington's population at the paper's commencement was 8,000. It suspended publication during the Civil War because, in the words of the editor, "we did not choose to print a paper in which we could not express our opinions and convictions in reference to public affairs without the supervision of Federal officials." Needless to say, the *Journal* was a pro-slavery organ before the war.

Upon reopening in 1868, the paper had relocated to the southeast corner of Pike and Madison and Samuel Davis had taken over sole proprietorship.

The *Daily Commonwealth* began publication in 1876 and filled out the last quarter of the century. One of the more famous reporters on the staff was O. J. Wiggins, who wrote a column in the paper called "History of Covington."

Other Covington papers of the period, with estimated years of publication:

- *North Kentuckian* (1836-7) Edited by Jefferson Phelps, an attorney and prominent citizen, who ran for Congress in 1837 on the Democratic ticket against William Southgate.
- *Kentucky & Ohio Journal* (1837).
- *Covington Free Press* (1838-9). A weekly published by E. R. Bartleson, G. B. Backus & J. Nesmith.
- *Western Colonizationist & Literary Journal* (1839). A weekly published on Fridays by E.R. Bartleson at an office at Fourth and Scott. Devoted to the promotion of Liberian emigration of freed slaves, it was edited by a committee.
- *Western Globe* (1839-40). Published weekly on Saturdays by George J. Trotter. Office on the

### Kenton County Historical Society Bulletin

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Romero, Richard Johanneman,  
Robert Webster

Market Square two doors below "Insurance Office" and two doors below Greenup.

- *Kent-On Bugle* (1840). Published & printed each Friday by Jacob Musselman at an office on Garrard Street between 2nd & 3rd. Edited by a committee of the Covington Tippacanoe Club.
- *Yankee Doodle* (1840-46). Published three doors below Greenup on the Market Square.
- *Licking Valley Register* (1841-48). Begun in June of 1841 by R. C. Langdon as printer and publisher. It declared that "*the latest intelligence, whether foreign, domestic or Congressional will be laid before the reader. Prices current of Covington, Cincinnati, Louisville and New Orleans will be regularly and correctly published, together with a bank note list.*" W. C. Munger joined Langdon in the printing and publishing by mid-1844.

Henry B. Brown took over printing & publishing in 1846. He deemed it to be "*Devoted to General Intelligence, Politics, Morality, Literature, Education, the Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, Commerce, and Advertising.*"

- *The Western Visitor* (1844)
- *The Kentucky Intelligencer* (1845).
- *Freeman's Journal* (1848).
- *The Covington Union* (1849). A "*Political, Commercial and Family Newspaper*" which the *Covington Journal* took delight in referring to as the "*Onion.*"
- *Covington, Newport Daily News* (1850).
- *Democratic Union* (1850-1). Office on Fifth between Madison & Scott. Published by Arthur Crigfield and Son.
- *Covington Flag* (1852).
- *Kentuckian* (1853-4). Begun in late 1853. The publisher was R. B. Carpenter, Esq., and the editors were Maderia and Carpenter. It was sold in May 1854 to Messrs. W. W. Pike & R. S. Weaver. Robert Richardson served as the new editor.
- *The American Sentinel* (1855). A weekly.
- *The Covington Sentinel* (1856). Published weekly by Messrs. Luchs and McChesney and "*Devoted to the Advocacy of Democratic Principles.*"
- *Covington & Newport Zeitung* (Gazette) (1859). Published by Mr. G. Becker for German-speaking populace of Northern Kentucky.
- *Covington Weekly Globe* (1859-60). Samuel Pike was the proprietor with offices at the northwest corner of Sixth & Madison.
- *Kenton County Democrat* (1860). A weekly paper published by J. A. Slaughter & J. A. Gravenor.
- *Covington Express* (1869).
- *Western Tobacco Leaf* (1869). Incorporated as the *Covington Express*.

- *Die Geganwelt (About the World)* (1873-4). Edited by Hon. Joseph Hernes, city Councilman & proprietor of *Arbeiter Halle* [present Jack Quinn's]
- *Saturday Advertiser* (1874). A weekly with offices at 403 Scott. L. E. Casey was editor & proprietor.
- *Messenger* (1874). Published each Monday from offices in Drexelius Hall, corner of Sixth & Madison. J. Henry Nuxol was editor & proprietor.
- *Evening Star* (1874). Published daily at 416 Scott.
- *Covington & Newport Post* (1875). Printed exclusively in German by L. E. Casey.
- *Weekly Press* (1876). Claimed a circulation of 2,000 in April of 1876.
- *Cincinnati Post (Kentucky Edition)*. Begun September 15, 1890 by Edward W. Scripps. Located at 404 Scott. Moved in 1891 to Fifth & Scott and became *The Kentucky Post*. Moved to the southwest corner of Fifth & Madison in 1896 and to the final location in 1902. Combined with the Northern Kentucky Edition of *The Cincinnati Times-Star* in 1958.
- *The Record* (1895). Published by William Goebel.
- *The Ledger* (1895).
- *The Battle Ax* (1899).

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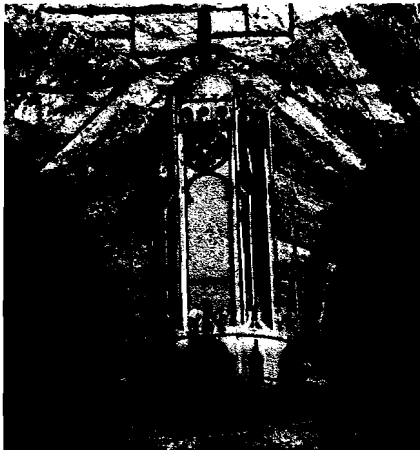
- *Villa Madonna Academy—100 years*
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# **MYSTERY PHOTO**

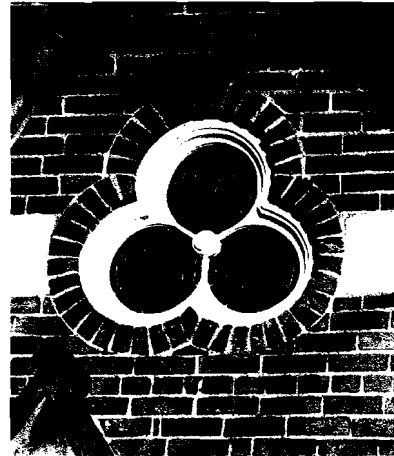
## **Monthly Contest**

**Each month a mystery photo will be featured in our bulletin. We will reveal the answer at the monthly meeting. A winner will be picked from those that correctly identify the mystery photo and be awarded a photo of the mystery building. Mystery Photos for 2004 will be of churches in our area.**

**KEEP LOOKING UP !**



**JANUARY  
Mystery Photo**



**FEBRUARY  
Mystery Photo**

# Then and Now

Below are two views of Latonia—the corner of Southern Avenue and Church Street looking north toward Holy Cross Church. The left view is from *circa* 1900 and the right view is today.

The spire windows of Holy Cross were, apparently, enclosed with glass and the original frame rectory just visible next to the church has disappeared—a new dark red rectory stands in that spot today, set back even with the rest of the homes in that block.

Notice that every single residence has had major alterations to the porches. The home nearest to the viewer is the home of Walter Ritte [now the home of Victor & Lisa Wallace]—namesake of the famous Latonia corner one block to the west. Although experiencing the most drastic remodeling of any house in that block, the Ritte home does not look “altered.” This cannot be said of the rest of the structures, for it is immediately evident the porches are not in original condition. All the wooden porches became in need of repair and instead of replacing only the rotted floors with concrete, the opportunity of eliminating all the painting maintenance presented itself—so brick railings replaced the wooden spindles. It is also unfortunate the attractive stone border wall on the Ritte property has been lost.



*Circa* 1900



2003

## Maps Available

- **circa 1846 (24 x 24 inches) Covington.....\$8.00**
- **1851 Covington (24 x 36 inches).....8.00**
- **1914 County map (approx. 4 ft. x 3 ft.) available at Kenton Library.....10.00**

## Publications

- **O. J. Wiggins' 106 Kenton Officers' Biographies.....2.00**
- **Newport Barracks—soft-bound 88 pages.....[on sale].....5.00**

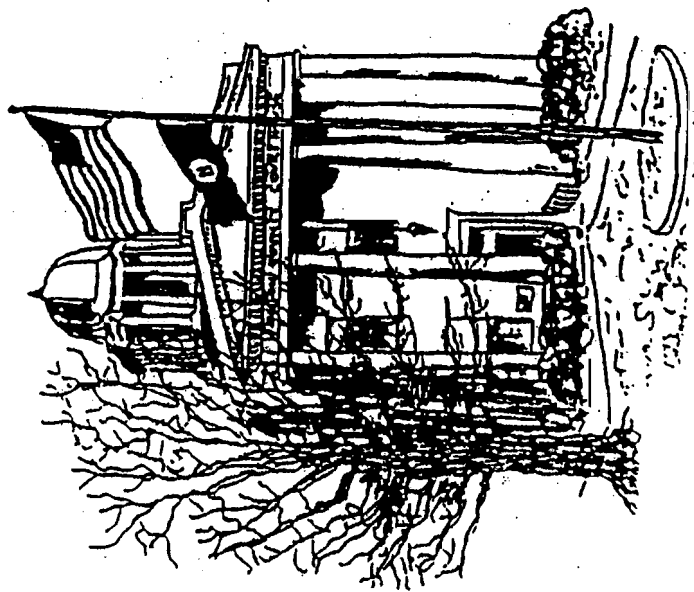
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Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"

# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January/February 2004



**Isaac Burns Murphy**  
**Early Newspapers**  
**Sketch of Ft. Wright**

**INSIDE:**