

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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KCHS MEETING

DATE Tuesday July 10

TIME 7 PM

PLACE Trinity Church
4th & Madison
Covington, KY

PROGRAM Civil War
Fortifications in Kenton
County (1861-65)

Jeanine Kreinbrink, Senior Archaeologist with N & E Environmental Solutions and Associate Archaeologist, Baringer Crawford Museum, will present an audiovisual presentation of Civil War fortifications.

Bulletin

July 2001

From the President.....

The "12th Street Project," so long in the mill, will mean the demolition of 52 structures on the south side of the street from I-75 to Scott Street. Since this involves Federal highway funds and intrudes on an historic neighborhood, Federal law requires the formation of a "Mitigating Committee" to deal with the harmful impact the road construction could have on the area.

It could have an irreversible effect on this neighborhood since the back yards of the next street will be totally exposed. As presently configured, there will be a 45 foot median separating the east and west bound lane.

The Covington Business Council (CBC) and some other influential individuals are on record supporting this effort. However, when traffic goes through the city faster and more efficiently, many Covington residents don't see how this will assist the community of Covington.

As KCHS members, you should be aware of the possible negatives for Covington's future. Re-configuring 12th Street as proposed might split Covington into two parts permanently, creating great difficulty and danger for pedestrians crossing this wide chasm.

Could this be an urban renewal project in disguise?

Odd Fellows Hall Tour- Donors Needed

On Thursday July 26, 4-7 PM, public tours will be conducted at the Odd Fellows Building on 5th and Madison. There will be a \$5 charge for all those wishing to view the historic building. The event has a two-fold purpose: to satisfy the many requests the new owners have had for tours and a fund-raiser for the Kenton Society.

The Society is requesting volunteers to act as guides. This will require a run-through session to be scheduled at a convenient time to familiarize all docents with the facility. The Society has been removing the wallpaper to expose the numerous graffiti made by Civil War soldiers held in the Hall. This and other features of the building will be reviewed. Please contact the office by phone (859) 431-2666 or e-mail to volunteer or for more information.

We anticipate the need for 12 guides based on the expected crowd and 30 minutes touring for each group. A reception table on the ground floor will need service as well. This events will be exciting and a great fund-raiser for the Society.

KCHS Meeting

Concerning the next meeting of the Society on Tuesday, July 10, Ms. Kreinbrink will provide maps of the old Corps of Engineers which show not only the military fortifications, but also give insights about the people, places and topography of early Northern Kentucky.

She has given presentations at a National Military History Conference, and before various Civil War and other heritage minded groups.

The Model T - What it Was Like to Own One

[from the writings of Leon Mandel, Senior Editor of Car & Driver]

The Model T Ford....has a tank for father, a hood for mother, and a rattle for baby.

On October 1, 1908, the world was introduced to the Model T. Soon wherever you looked there was a T.

You probably purchased yours from a franchised dealer. You might have paid cash, or have participated in Ford's layaway plan, so much a month until you had the price of the car deposited with the dealer. With the car, you got a small tool kit containing a monkey wrench, pliers, and a hammer.

The operation of the car was very different from the familiar pattern of today. The left pedal was clutch and gear operator. Pushing in the left pedal halfway put the car in neutral - all the way, was low. Letting it out full put the car in the higher of its 2 speeds (the middle or reverse pedal had only one speed - reached by pressing all the way to the floor.) Neutral was also attained by releasing the hand brake Halfway. The brake was the far right pedal. Braking was a thrill. The car had internal expanding rear-wheel brakes (front-wheel brakes were not offered), but the foot brake applied a kind of vice to the transmission band. On long down grades this meant you had to let up on the brakes frequently to allow a little oil to get back between the brake and the band so the lining wouldn't get dry.

There were no standard

instruments. The driver sat at the wheel beneath which was a finned metal half-collar attached to the steering column. Two levers, one right & the other left, traversed the corresponding 90 degrees of the collar. One lever advanced or retarded the spark; the other was the throttle.



Starting the car; with the hand brake on halfway (neutral, remember), you reached over to the right side of the steering column and retarded the spark. Then you walked forward to find the crank in the 6 O'clock position. If it wasn't there, you put it there; you jerked toward you and up on the handle would come whirling back to break your arm. You had already pulled

out a wire sticking out from the front of the car, which activated the choke. These things done, you walked around and turned the ignition from magneto to coil and returned to give the crank a few upward jerks. If you were a small woman, this was not easy. If it were cold and you were a large man, it was not easy to do either unless you first jacked up the rear wheel, since starting the car meant turning the engine and transmission. The oil in both was close to the consistency of jelly. The engine had to run awhile until the oil got warm.

Whew! No wonder some states had two licenses - one for Ts, the other for everything else.

The car was lively. You could get from a stop to 20 mph in just over 8 seconds, to 30 mph in 7 seconds more, and to a reasonable cruising speed of 40-mph in a total of 35 seconds. This assumes the road permitted. [For comparison, a medium sized 1965 Ford with automatic transmission could do 0 to 40 in 10 or 11 seconds.]

Driving in the rain was no fun at all. Wipers did not come with the car - hand wipers were an option - and if the rain came with dark clouds or at night, it was not easy to see. By 1915, the T finally came with headlamps, but they ran off the magneto, which meant the slower you drove - which would be pretty slow in the dark and rain - the dimmer they were.

The car gave the occupants a view of the road not equaled for

half a century. With the top up, however, rear vision was dreadful. The top was useful for keeping birds from strafing the occupants but otherwise not reassuring. The car had no roll up windows; the top was attached to the windshield pillars by bungee cord - a stretch rope with hooks at both ends.

You couldn't lock yourself out of your T because it didn't have outside locks; it didn't even have outside door handles.

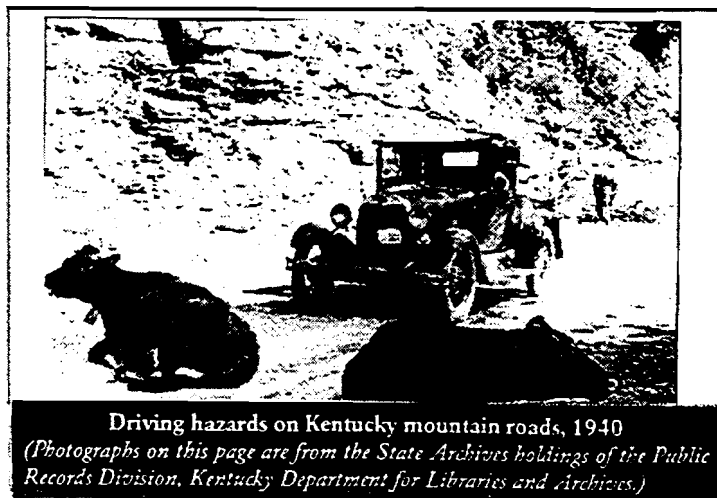
In 1923, gas came in three grades: low, regular and the new ethyl, at about 16 cents a gallon for regular (add 2 cents for ethyl). Gas would come in a two-wheeled cart right to your car and pumped in by the gallon. Further maintenance at the service station included: replenishing grease in the rear axle every (500 miles); greasing the steering

gear (every 5,000 miles). Every 200 miles oil had to be applied to 12 oilers and 6 grease cups had to be screwed down one turn. The front hubs needed regreasing at the same time that the rear end had to be checked, and the ignition had to be looked at as well.

A Sunday drive out passed the macadam road of the city to the dirt or gravel roads of the country would require carrying a spare coil and at least 2 spare tires. The children would be in back and your wife would ride shotgun. She might be nicely dressed, but would have chosen clothes

she was willing to get dirty, for it was a frequent adventure to have to get out and change a wheel. Dressing warmly was wise, since the T had no heater as well as no side windows.

The trip would have been an adventure. In 1923, we were still very much in love with the auto - particularly that quintessential American car, the Model T.



Driving hazards on Kentucky mountain roads, 1940
(Photographs on this page are from the State Archives holdings of the Public Records Division, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives.)

Transportation History at the State Archives

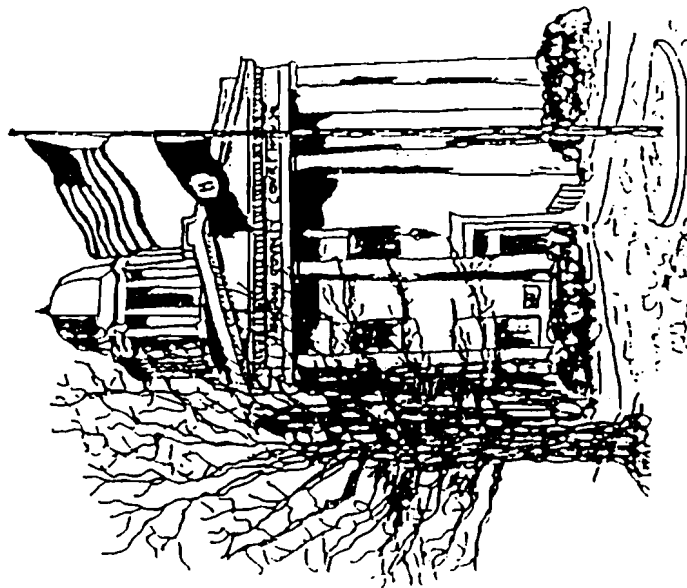
Steamboats first began plying the waterways of Kentucky in the early 1810's. At first they were restricted to the Ohio River and the lowest reaches of its tributaries, but soon the design and construction of shallow-draft vessels allowed steamboats to reach well into the state's interior. In periods of high water, and later with the introduction of a series of locks and dams, steamboats could navigate the Kentucky River up to the forks and beyond. The vessels were charged a fee by the state for using the river, and the four volumes of "Reports of Tolls Collected on the Kentucky River" records these transactions. These books were maintained by the Auditor's Office and cover the heyday of the era of steamboat traffic (1847-1868). Entries include the names of the boats and masters and amount of tolls charged for passengers, livestock, farm produce and other materials. For example, on April 5, 1850, the "Blue Wing," under the command of Captain Shockley, paid a total of \$228.41 in tolls for a cargo that included tobacco, salt, utensils and livestock, as well as passengers.

A much more personal mode of transportation made its appearance in Kentucky in the early 1900's. The automobile revolutionized the way Kentuckians could get from one place to another. The Secretary of State's Office maintained a series of "Automobile Registration Books," which are available for the years 1910-1920. These books generally include the name and town of residence of the owner of the vehicle, the registration number and license fee, and the "name of the machine" and its horsepower. The 1910 volume contains entries for 40-horsepower "Overlands," 30-horsepower "Locomobiles" and "Packards," as well as 20-horsepower "Fords" and 10-horsepower "Maxwells" and "Stanley Steamers." Many other makes, some still in existence (Cadillac, Buick), and others long forgotten (Hupmobile, Waverly Electric), are also listed. Registration fees were generally in the \$5 - \$10 range.

Both the "Tolls Collected on the Kentucky River" and the "Automobile Registration Books" provide interesting and unique perspectives on the history of transportation in Kentucky.

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