Mayor William Beuttel and the Advent of Public Housing in Covington

Reminiscences of Hiram Martin

Hydrotherapy

Molly Pitcher

General Leonard Covington
William Beuttel, Jr. was Covington-born on February 14, 1890 and was one of five children. He attained a somewhat rudimentary education – common in his time – attending the Robbins Street School (Second District) and received additional training at Nelson’s Business School. William “Bill” had three brothers: Carl, George and Walter and a sister, Elsie.1  Bill’s father, William, Sr. ran a neighborhood bakery on Pike Street.2 He would get up about 3 a.m. to hitch up his horses to deliver baked goods to various customers around town. As young Bill grew, he assisted his father along with his brother Carl. The family is listed as also operating a saloon at 26 East 5th Street during the first decade of the twentieth century. The bakery, at 253 Pike Street, was also their home.3 The family moved to 1032 Glenn Avenue in Latonia by 1910.

Bill began a plumbing business about 1905. He would spend most lunch times at a Pike Street café which had a bookie in the rear. Almost every day he would play poker and bet the horses while eating lunch, but never had alcohol with his lunch.4

Even though he never finished a grade school education, he rose to prominence in his chosen profession to a term as president of the National Plumbing Association. His brother, George, was also a Covington plumber and was in competition with his brother.5 Bill was active in the business affairs of the city and became president of Second Federal Savings and Loan.6

William married Florence Griffin (1889-1943) who was born in Toledo, Ohio, and exactly when her father John Griffin moved that family to Northern Kentucky is unknown. Bill and Florence resided at 3172 Clifford Avenue, Latonia. Florence died in 1943; they had no children. By that time, they had moved to 223 Adams Avenue in the Levassor Park neighborhood of Covington.

In 1944, the widower married Ruth Funke, who had worked for him in his plumbing office in the 1930s and Ruth moved in to the 223 Adams Avenue home with Bill. When she first worked for Bill, her family said she thought him a “fuddy-duddy.” Her initial impression was surely because of their age difference – she was 14 years younger. However, her impression of Bill obviously changed over time.

After Florence’s death, Bill became very close to Ruth and her family and embraced Ruth’s sister’s children, Nancy and David Black. Since their parents were divorced, Nancy and David were being raised by their mother, Martha. Bill Beuttel took to them as his own family, not having any children of his own. Since Ruth Funke was Roman Catholic, Bill also be-
came Catholic, primarily because of his love for Ruth and her family.

**Covington Political Career**

Beuttel’s first entry into city politics was the 1933 Commissioner’s race. Nephew David Black, as a child, remembers campaigning for him by passing out paper match books in bars.\(^7\) He was elected for two terms, first with Joseph Pieper as mayor (term: 1932-35) and then with the respected Henry A. Knollmann (term: 1936-40). The city manager through the years 1933 to 1939 was Theodore Kluemper and upon instruction from the Commission, application for federal funds were requested to erect Covington’s first public housing. Ultimately the projects amounted to expenditures of over 2 million dollars.

Not only was Covington suffering through the deprivations of the Great Depression but vast destruction from the floods of the 1930s – especially that of 1937. The floods resulted in the destruction of hundreds of dwellings and the urgent need of housing for those displaced. Flood protection in terms of construction of flood walls also commenced.

Mayor Knollmann appointed a housing commission made of William Burke, chairman; Edward Cassidy; Linus Hand; Dr. Lucas Lee; and Forrest Alvin as executive director. These were unpaid positions.\(^8\) In these days of racial separation, housing had to be planned for African-Americans in a segregated area. “Latonia Terrace” had been selected as the name for the Covington Municipal Housing Commission’s white site. The Commission requested name-suggestions and most residents wanted the name “Latonia” in the title. Latonia Terrance would be located on the old Parks property in west Latonia.\(^9\) For the Latonia project, 235 buildings were demolished.

The African-American project became “Jacob Price Homes” in honor of the late black businessman (lumber yard owner) and Baptist pastor. The Jacob Price Homes would be located at 10th and Greenup streets. The entire project of both locations was estimated at $2.7 million. The Jacob Price project required the demolition of 163 structures.\(^10\)

As the projects progressed, the incoming new mayor, Bill Beuttel, Jr. was concerned that the Covington Housing Commission was chosen illegally, since all the members were Democrats. Mayor Beuttel advised FHA that no legally constituted housing commission was locally organized. He felt the board should be dissolved and re-constituted. Attorney for the Covington Housing Authority, D. Collins Lee said the mayor could not dissolve but only replace resigned members or remove “for cause.”\(^11\)

To help solve this argument, member Linus Hand simply changed parties and registered as a Republican. Ed Cassidy resigned to accept another position. Thus there was a vacancy to appoint a Republican. The mayor wasn’t totally convinced that Mr. Hand filled the requirement by simply changing party affiliation.

Former Mayor Henry Knollmann was chosen to head the Housing Authority and ended up serving for quite a number of years. A well respected city official and businessman, Henry Knollmann (1876-1968) was in the meat and provisions business begun by his father.\(^12\) Henry had a long life of public service: a member of the Kentucky House in 1917; on Covington Park Board; and mayor (1936-40). Mayor Beuttel appointed him to the Municipal Housing Commission in 1941.

Knollmann’s service was acknowledged in 1964, after his retirement of 24 years’ service, with a national award from the Federal Public Housing Commission in Washington, DC.

After his stint as mayor, William Beuttel seemed to tire of politics and faded from the scene at city hall. He seemed to be relieved that he lost his last election (1948). David Black remembers him as saying he was ready to get out of politics even before that race began and chose not to campaign too hard. David remembers asking his uncle how much politicians made and Bill would say, “Well the Sheriff makes $5000 + and the Mayor makes $3200 +.” He would never indicate just exactly what the “+” was but as he looked back, David knew it was “gratuities” from gambling interests, which were wide open in the region at the time.
It may have been fortuitous timing that he bowed out of politics when he did, before the Kefauver Committee on Organized Crime arrived in Northern Kentucky. He ran his plumbing business until he retired in 1961, and sold it to his employees, since he had no heirs and none of his wife’s family was interested in the business. Bill died May 22, 1973; Ruth passed on September 14, 1997 at age 93.

1. Reminiscences of step-nephew David L. Black. Carl Beuttel operated his father’s bakery in Covington for many years. Walter became a barber.


3. Ibid. Survey of street directories.


5. Black Reminiscences. David suspects he and his brother did not get along well; also “Mechanics [Election] Guide 1933,” Kenton County Library Archives on line.


8. Ky. Post, 6 March 1940.


12. Henry’s parents were Dr. A. G. and Mary Heile Knollmann; residence 709 Pike Street; Henry married Elizabeth Detert in 1901.
While it lasts memory will carry them back to the days of their youth spent in their crude but happy homes, which were built of round logs...the trees were felled, cut in their proper lengths, dragged to the site selected, near a spring or stream of water, clapboards were rived, puncheons split and when all was ready the neighbors were invited to the house raising. Most cabins were without windows and but one room and a loft; the approach to the loft being by a ladder. The loft was the sleeping apartment of the young members of the family, and it was also the storehouse in the fall and winter. The tools required were skids, handspikes, axes, augers, gimlets, cross cut saws, and drawing knives. The latter two could be dispensed with as nearly all the original settlers were so well skilled in the use of the axe they could fashion doorways and fireplaces with it. When the cabin was under roof, chimney built, the floor of puncheons laid, the door hung of wooden hinges, and the latch string cut, it was ready for the reception of the family.

The stock consisted of sage, horehound, mint, catnip, pennyroyal, snakeroot, pignut, wormwood, dock; all combined, this constituted the medical department with the exception of Epsom salts and pills. The pills were made from the inner bark of the butternut tree and it was said they acted as either a purgative or emetic, which depended alone as how the bark was stripped from the tree; if upwards it acted as an emetic; if downwards vice versa. Of the truth of this saying I know nothing. There were also dried apples, smoked beans, hickory nuts and walnuts.

The change from the earliest style of cabin was from the single to the double or two rooms with a porch or passageway between. They were built like the former—of round logs, and after they were erected they were latched down which means that they were hewed.

The furniture was of the most uncouth style. It usually consisted of a bedstead, table, a few stools, benches, or split bottom chairs, and a small spinning wheel. How many of the old gray-headed sires who are here today and are natives of the Licking River Valley can say that they were not rocked to sleep in a sugar trough and slept the sweet sleep of childhood to the music of their mother’s spinning wheel, which was the only instrument of music to be found in a pioneer cabin. General Carey says a woman spinning on a large wheel, stepping backward as she drew the twist from the roll, and forward as she wound it to the spindle, placed her in a more charming and gracious attitude than was ever exhibited in a drawing or ballroom. It may be her feet were bare and her dress of linsey woolsey, but her symmetry of form was better shown than when clothed in the most costly and fashionable attire.

The early settlers were in a measure independent of the world. They made their own clothes out of their own raw materials, made their own soap, dipped their own candles, raised their own breadstuffs, and supplied their table with meat from game which abounded in the forests or from their domestic stock. The trusty rifle was always found to be suspended from a wooden hook, with bullet pouch or powderhorn ready for immediate use. They had their own log rollings, house raisings, corn huskings; their racing frolics, hunting and shooting matches; and in the winter they had their apple parings and in the early spring their sugar making. The old mothers had their quiltings and tea parties. In nearly all their pastimes they cultivated habits of economy and industry. Their tea parties might more properly be called industrial gatherings, as all of the guests were occupied at one or another with a branch of industry. There is no doubt they mixed a little gossip with it. The young people had their dances or frolics as they were called, which were quite different from the dances of the present day. There was less formality, no bowing but more real healthy bodily exercise; their plays were harmless, innocent, pastimes.
Hydrotherapy or “taking the waters” was a widely prescribed medical treatment by 1825 and by 1830, Kentucky was extremely well known for its mineral water spas. Rich southerners fled the heat, yellow fever, malaria, and worst of all, cholera, for the dozens of Kentucky spas.

Dr. Daniel Drake, who first settled at Maysville and was then Cincinnati’s most prominent physician, published a review of Kentucky’s many mineral water spas in 1828. Several locations were featured by Drake including one in Montgomery County; two near Harrodsburg; one in Estill County; Bedford Springs in Trimble County; and Drennon Springs at Henry County. Locally, the well-to-do from many states flocked to three main sites.

At Big Bone Lick, tourism boomed at the Clay Hotel, built just after 1800. Bathhouses lined the major creek there and bathers would modestly emerge from these shelters and enter the “healing waters” of the creek. Blue Lick Springs in present-day Nicholas County on the Robertson County border, began with only moderate success during the 1830s, but when John and L.P. Holladay took control in the 1840s, a three-story hotel 670 feet in length was built with a spacious 100’ by 36’ dining room and a 26’ by 80’ ballroom. Located directly on the stagecoach line between Maysville and Lexington, Blue Lick Springs became a favorite of vacationers and travelers alike.

Five miles south of the Ohio River, along Banklick Creek at what is now KY Hwy 17 and Highland Avenue in Ft. Wright, Ralph Letton constructed a hotel near the existing natural spring there. In 1832, however, he sold the hotel and 57 acres to Elisha Morgan for $8,000. Morgan built a 50-room hotel three stories high, with 100-foot piazzas running the full length of the building. In back was a massive ballroom. In the 1840s, Dr. Stephen Mosher purchased the Latonia Springs and the place continued to thrive up until the Civil War. The springs were sold again in 1866 and suffered financially after the war, as did the other area spas, until they all eventually closed. The “Latonia” name lived on however, as in 1882, the Latonia Agricultural Association developed fairgrounds a mile or so northeast of the springs and soon after, a world-renowned horseracing track was built at that site, named the Latonia Racetrack. The town which rose in the vicinity took the Latonia name, though it is now encompassed within the city limits of Covington. In 2017, a UDF stands at the actual site of the old Latonia Springs Hotel. The Latonia Shopping Center, with Big Lots and other businesses, situated on the western side of Winston Avenue south of 38th Street, replaced the old racetrack.

Another popular Northern Kentucky mineral spa, though considerably later, was that at the Carlsbad Springs Hotel in Dry Ridge. J.B. Sanders purchased property in 1909 which included the Farmer’s Bank, Huffman Blacksmithy, and Dry Ridge Creamery, near present-day Grant County Farm Supply on Broadway. The property included a deep well which had struck mineral water instead of fresh water. The discovery of the spring prompted Sanders to build a hotel at the site.

After 1915, the operation was managed by a variety of different names, such as the Lake View Sanitarium and Hotel Company, while Carlsbad Springs Hotel remained the name on the sign. The term “springs” is really a misnomer in this case, however, as there actually is no spring. The water lies in deep wells and was pumped from the ground. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1927 and, eventually a new hotel was constructed. The popularity of the mineral water spas diminished, however, and pumping water from the wells was no longer profitable. While nearly all the “springs” in Kentucky eventually dried up, the deep wells at Dry Ridge remain within the original lot 17 on Broadway Street.
Known as a heroine in the American Revolutionary War, Molly Pitcher's legend grew after the battle on Monmouth, June 28, 1778. There, she is said to have carried pitchers of water to soldiers before taking over a cannon after her husband was killed on the battlefield. She was referred to General Washington; she became a sergeant, and she received a pension of $42 annually until her death in 1832. An inspiration to all, especially females, Molly’s story suggests that women played a much greater role than realized in the American Revolution and in America’s early development.

But, historians are hard pressed to verify the accuracy of these tales. Some record that she was born “Mary Ludwig” in 1754, the daughter of a German father and Dutch mother, and grew up on a dairy farm at Trenton, New Jersey, not far from Monmouth. She may have fired cannon, or a rifle. Her husband, John Hays, may have been wounded, or he may have retired from heat exhaustion on a very hot day, and died sometime after the battle. Women often trailed their husbands as camp followers.

One claim is that she was “Mary Hays” from Pennsylvania, who in battle took over for her wounded or exhausted husband John. Later, as a widow she married a George McCauley. She was buried at Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

But Collins’ History of Kentucky recorded very early a local tie to the famous woman that has been recycled. Many of Northern Kentucky’s early settlers came by flatboat from Pennsylvania and it is noted that the famous Molly Pitcher, who had fought bravely in place of her first husband, relocated here with her second husband, one Patrick Leonard. He deserted the British army to join the colonial side. Molly and Patrick resided west of Willow Run Creek, had two sons; Simeon, who worked in a rolling mill and William, who was a river trader. Leonard Street, now only a block long in the area near Montague and Western Avenue, was named in this family’s honor.

References

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Leonard Covington, who co-owned farmland north of Monticello, was an aid to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. In the summer of 1793, Anthony Wayne sent four companies of Light Dragoons across the Ohio from Ft. Washington, at what is now Cincinnati, to a wooden camp just west of “The Point” to train under the worst conditions, riding and charging through the rough countryside. Lieutenant Covington was in charge of one of the units, but this was the only time Covington set foot where the town was later named in his honor. In the years 1792-1795, Covington distinguished himself against Native American forces culminating in the battle of Fallen Timbers, August 29, 1794. Victory there further secured Northern Kentucky for settlement.

At the end of 1808, danger of war with England was increasing. Seeing the need to strengthen the Federal military forces, in 1809 Jefferson appointed then Lt. Colonel Covington to inspect and advise at various frontier forts in Virginia, later at Newport, Kentucky, and down river to forts and trading posts in Tennessee. In 1810, for the Mississippi territorial government, he continued training new troops and provided other efforts to protect the Natchez trace area. In June 1810 he took charge of the Dragoons. After a revolt further weakened Spanish authority, Covington’s forces occupied a section west of the Pearl River, Baton Rouge and vicinity.

In March 1811, Covington was assigned to command a garrison at Ft. Stoddard on the Alabama River. There, responding to continued Spanish threats, Covington fortified American military strength with training and maneuvers, keeping the peace through the winter of 1811-1812. After war with England was declared in September 1812, Covington received new assignments. In March 1813, his forces took possession of territory west of the Perdido River, including the fortress and town of Mobile. After a Spanish surrender in April, 1813, and with the territory secured for the time being, Covington was ordered north.

Covington re-inspected frontier military positions. He was promoted to Brigadier General and on July 28, 1813, arrived at Sackets Harbor, New York. After the Battle of the Thames, Covington’s forces left from Sackets Harbor, and in a field north of the St. Lawrence River, he was severely wounded. He died on November 14, 1813. In 1820, Covington’s remains were relocated to Sackets Harbor, Jefferson County, New York, at the eastern shore of Lake Ontario, to a place now called Mount Covington.

References
A Look Back at The Headlines

An on-going feature reliving local headlines.
This issue features:
The Covington Journal – March 19, 1870

Death of Professor A. Drury

A dispatch was received in this city last night announcing the death, at his home in Minnesota, of Prof. Asa Drury. Mr. Drury was for many years a resident of Covington, and was widely and favorably known. The best years of his life were devoted to educational pursuits. He was a Professor in the Baptist Theological Institute of this city, and afterwards Superintendent of the Public Schools of Covington, and in these positions acquired and maintained an enviable reputation as an instructor, scholar and Christian gentleman. He removed to Minnesota about five years since.

Revival

A very interesting and successful religious revival has been in progress for several weeks past at the Emmanuel (German) M.E. church, at the corner of Tenth and Russell streets. The services are conducted by the regular pastor, Rev. Liebhart. There have been about forty conversions up to this time.

Contract Awarded

The contract for furnishing 400 piles and driving the same, and building a stone retaining wall twenty feet high for the Waterworks building, was awarded on Monday to George C. Tarvin and Thomas Greer, of Covington, at $23,306.75. There were about thirty bids for the job.

Other News

A bill forming a new county out of parts of Kenton, Boone and Gallatin has been rejected by the Legislature.

It should be noted that Mr. T.J. Ellis is a candidate for Surveyor of Kenton County. Also, Mr. J.D. Gaines is now a candidate for County Clerk in Boone county.

If you have not yet done so, check out the Society’s updated and enhanced website. While the general theme remains, we have made it much easier to purchase items such as historic maps, books, and gift items, as well as subscribe to the award-winning Northern Kentucky heritage Magazine.

Before the upgrade, purchases could only be made through PayPal, but the Society can now accept any major credit card through the new “online store” page within the site. Also, the layout of the “store” is streamlined, making it easier to locate and choose particular products to purchase. Covers of magazine back issues are now shown individually, and each includes a detailed description of the articles within the particular issue. Back issues of this Bulletin remain as free downloads.

We sincerely appreciate your support of the Society, and hope you enjoy the upgraded website.

www.kentoncountyhistoricalsociety.org

Want to be Published?

The Kenton County Historical Society is always looking for material for their Bulletin, as well as Northern Kentucky Heritage magazine

To submit an article for the Bulletin, send a paper copy by mail, or email it as a Word document attachment to the address below. Articles should be no longer than 500 words and should have at least two references.

To submit an article for the magazine, submit a paper copy by mail, or as a Word document attachment to the address below. Articles should have references and endnotes, as well as images or graphics.

Email us if you have any questions.

nkyhist@zoomtown.com.

P.O. Box 641, Covington, KY 41012
Then and Now

Left: Covington’s Lyric Theater circa 1920. Right: present-day image of the Madison Theater at the same location.

Left photo courtesy Kenton County Public Library, right courtesy Wikipedia.com

Mystery Photo

Can you identify the mystery photo below? The answer can be found at the bottom of the page.

Portion of the Ascent at Roebling's Bridge, a residential building in Covington designed by Daniel Libeskind. It was commissioned in 2004 and completed in March 2008 at a cost of approximately $50 million.

ANSWER:
I Bet You Didn’t Know

Tidbits from Kentucky’s heritage for every day of the calendar year

March 7, 1789: The Virginia General Assembly officially dropped the “e” in Kentucke in favor of a “y” in the spelling of Kentucky.

March 10, 1775: Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner set out to blaze a trail into central Kentucky for the Transylvania Company.

March 27, 1798: Frontiersman Simon Kenton married Elizabeth Jarboe.

April 6, 1862: More than 1,400 Kentuckians were killed at the Battle of Shiloh, near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee.

April 12, 1861: In one of the first acts of the Civil War, Ft. Sumter was attacked. Maj. Robert Anderson, a Kentuckian, was in charge of the fort.

“On This Day in Kentucky” — Robert Powell

Programs and Notices

KCHS Program Announcements

On Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:30 AM, at the Kenton County Library (the Covington branch) - Sheila Lubbers, of the Little Flower Doll Hospital, and collector Peggy Carson Lietzenmayer will do a presentation with a display on Keepsake Dolls. Examples of German, French, American, African American, Native American, and Cajun dolls will be featured (mostly bisque heads ca. 1890 –1935). Popular post-WWII dolls will also be available for inspection. The event is free and open to the public. Find that dolly that Auntie passed on to you (or perhaps you have a great yard sale find) and bring it along! Share how the doll came to you: older, newer, GC or suffering injury, e.g., limbs missing/ head off/compo peeling/eyes missing or loose, etc. Experts will suggest what might be done for a doll needing “medical” attention. Here’s an opportunity for you to check reference books and possibly discover more of your doll’s origin. The two-volume Collector’s Encyclopedia of Dolls by Dorothy S. Coleman covering 2000+ manufacturers, with accompanying black-and-white pictures and markings, will be available as well as several other reference books by doll experts Jan Foulke and Patricia Smith. The KCHS and Kenton County Public Library look forward to seeing you.

Note to members and friends:

The Kenton County Historical Society will be 40 years old, on July 13, 2017. Plans for a brief commemoration will be announced later.

Regional History Day 2017

Saturday, March 25, 2017, from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM - the 24th annual Northern Kentucky Regional History Day, (NEW LOCATION) at the Boone County Public Library, Main Branch, on Burlington Pike; the schedule will be similar to history days held for the last 23 years at NKU. Display booths will be set up on the second floor. See details on the Boone County and Kenton County Public Library websites and elsewhere. If you are on the History Day mailing list, you should receive a flyer soon with an order form to pre-register. Pre-registration again will be $8.00 ($10.00 at the door). The check ($8 per person with name listed) is to be mailed to Northern Kentucky Regional History Day, c/o the Kenton County Historical Society, P. O. Box 641, Covington, KY 41012

Behringer Crawford Museum

Feb. 3 - April 9, 2017 - Lineillism Revealed: The Birth of a New Art Form, the daring new painting style created by Kentucky-born artist Jim Hall. Coming soon – A Korean War exhibit including interviews with local veterans.