

# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012 (859) 431-2666

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Dr. Joseph Gastright

## Editor of Bulletin

Jo Ann C. Brown

## KCHS MEETING

As with previous years, our March program is History Day on

Saturday, March 10, 2001

at

Northern Kentucky University

University Center

Highland Heights, Kentucky

Registration 9 AM to 9:45 AM

## 10AM Keynote speaker

Dr. James Ramage

The Gray Ghost - Life of Colonel John Singleton Moseby (1833-1916)

Many interesting topics will be presented. Display tables will feed your historic curiosity.

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Lunch & Exhibits: 11:45-1:15 PM Lunch available on campus

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Developing the Louisville-Cincinnati Shortline (1830-1882), Dr. Wendell McChord, historian on Kentucky railroads. The Shortline arrived at Newport in time to help build the L&N Bridge in 1872.

WEB SITE <http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc/>

Pioneer Land Holdings in Kentucky - Kandie Anderson, administrator in the Kentucky Land Patents Office. She will explain why and how land grants were given and how to trace a land grant.

Camp Nelson and Its Role in the Civil War - Dr. W. Stephen McBride, director of archaeology at Camp Nelson's Heritage Park, Nicholasville. Camp Nelson's role as a major mustering camp for African-American troops will be explored as well as Berea College's involvement.

**Closing Speaker: 2:30-3:15 PM**

The Future of Local Historical Societies, Universities & The Freedom Center - Dr. Prince Brown, Professor of Sociology and convenor of university support for the Freedom Center.

**Closing Remarks & Awarding of Door Prizes: 3:15 PM (Must be present to participate in drawings.)**

### KCHS PUBLICATION LIST

All items available on History Day at the KCHS display table

Title	Member Price	Non-Member Price	Mailing Fee
Collected Papers	\$25	\$30	\$6
1860 Census Index	\$10	\$15	\$2
1880 Census Index (vol. I)	\$20	\$25	\$2
1880 Census Index (vol. II)	\$20	\$25	\$2
1990 African American Census for Kenton County (except Covington)	\$2	\$4	\$1
Wallace Woods	\$5	\$6	\$1
West Side Walking Tour	\$5	\$6	\$1
Trinity Church	\$10	\$15	\$2
Wiggins' list biographies (106)	\$2	\$4	\$1
Linden Grove Cemetery (vol.I)	\$35	\$40	\$4
Linden Grove Cemetery(vol.II)	\$25	\$30	\$3
Northern KY Heritage (subscription)	\$12	\$15	\$0
Selective Issues of NKH	\$6	\$7.50	\$1
Newport Barracks	\$9	\$10	\$1
	for Kenton & Cambell members		
<b>Newly published!</b>			
1840 Map of Covington 24" X 24"	\$5	\$6	\$1
1851 Map of Covington 24" X 36"	\$6	\$7.50	\$1

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## Kenton County's First Full Time Health Officer: Dr. H. Clay White (1873-1957)

by John Boh

The *Old Pest House* on city property at Kyles Lane had been "used for the isolation of smallpox patients at the turn of the century." In 1933 it was transferred to Kenton County in order to establish a Tuberculosis Clinic (Poweleit).

Since the ideal of preventive medicine in local private practice had not been satisfied, new efforts in the 1920s were made with the institution of the vital statistics monitoring law (births, deaths), and through public administration of innovative bacterial immunization procedures. In fact, "death rates from infectious diseases" had begun to decline "before the bacteriological era" due to bacteriological adaptation, as well as better hygiene and nutrition. Between 1920 and 1940, the threats from malaria, scarlet fever, diphtheria, etc. were reduced, and "all but eliminated by 1940." This was accomplished through "education, vaccination, anatoxin, inoculation, isolation, drainage, and screening procedures." After 1940 "two older diseases," tuberculosis and typhoid, remained as perils as did trachoma and hookworm. The work of Madeline McDowell Breckinridge sparked renewed efforts in the 1920s to have "free diagnostic clinics, school inspection and nursing service blended with the State Board of Health's sanitariums development program...." In 1920 Kentucky's death rate from typhoid was one of the "highest in the nation." Thus by 1929, with the help of Rockefeller financial aid, Kentucky had "45 full-time departments." In 1940 eighty-six of the state's 120 counties had full-time health departments under the State Board of Health (John H. Ellis, *Medicine in*

*Kentucky*, 1977).

In an interview with Virginia Jones, the daughter of Dr. Henry Clay White, she recalled that her father had worked part time for the county when, in 1928, he was appointed to head the new county health office. He was charged with providing medical services (including nursing and dental care) for schools and for indigent needs.

Mrs. Jones first mentioned the special efforts of Dr. White during the 1937 flood to provide antidotes for typhoid and tetanus infections. In 1928-1929 the Kenton County Board of Health was located in the Covington City Building. By 1931, the County had a public health office at 912 Scott Street where Dr. White worked the remainder of his career. In years to come he held the title, "County Health Commissioner" (street directories). According to Mrs. Jones, he retained that position until 1954 when he was 82 years old, some two years short of his death.

From the standpoint alone of family background, Dr. White was not an inappropriate overseer; he was descended from one of Kenton County's grassroots families. His grandfather, George White (1804-1875) had married Matilda McCollum, daughter of John McCollum, Jr. (1818). And it appears that she was the sister of the John McCollum who had in 1834 acquired 100 acres along Banklick Creek (DB L, p. 121) from William and Leonard Stephens (first Kenton County sheriff). In 1841 John McCollum deeded five of the 100 acres for the new county's courthouse and public square at Independence (DB 1, P. 2). George and Matilda's children included these adults:

Leonard (obit., K. P. 7-22-01; James M (obit., K. P. 11-16-18) who married Mary Elizabeth Truesdell; Nancy G. Lamb; Augusta Hafley; Lorinda Shuster; Elizabeth Threlkeld; and George F. White (WB 2, p. 307, 1975, Covington).

According to a resident of the area, George White's log cabin is hidden behind the siding and room additions to a house which stands off Decoursey on Whites Road. Indeed, the second house on the left, a few hundred feet from Decoursey, shows a stone chimney of a style usually seen on a pioneer cabin. And behind this house is located the George White cemetery, some 200 feet north of Whites Road, and some 2000 feet from Decoursey Pike, Highway 177 (Kenton County Cemetery Book).

Whites Road runs east on a ridge over a railroad tunnel into a large loop in the Licking River known as "Grant's Bend." Lambs Ferry Road forks to the right off Whites Road near Decoursey. The 1883 atlas shows Dr. White's widowed grandmother, Matilda, his uncles, Leonard S. and James M., and his father George F. The 1914 County map shows various relatives and also Dr. White himself owning three or more parcels including a long rectangular piece (35 acres) extending from Lambs Ferry Road across Whites Road and across the railroad tracks to the Licking River. Regarding the railroad, Dr. White is one of a long list of Kenton County farmer owners who formally deeded strips of their property which consolidated the right-of-way of the L & N Railroad, sometime around 1911 (DB 60, p. 95).

Dr. White's father was George Fox White (1844-1898) who

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married Augusta Stevens, from one of the many families named Stevens (or Stephens). According to Virginia Jones, Whites Town (located where Old Decoursey intersects Taylor Mill, Highway 16, above Decoursey Creek and Steep Creek) was named for George White. However, the land had belonged to her grandmother's family. Whites Tower also is derived from the years that a tower was erected on this high elevation in the county for surveying purposes, Mrs. Jones recalled.

Unfortunately, when in his teens, Dr. White, his sister Nellie, and his mother Augusta, suffered the loss of his father, "a prosperous farmer," by drowning during a sudden rise of the Licking River when he tried to cross near Grants Ford. (K.P. 10-11-98).

Dr. White was "born on the old White farm, five miles south of Covington," attended school in the county, graduated from Covington High School in 1892, and from the Medical School of Ohio in 1897. He started his private practice at Visalia. In World War I he achieved the rank of Captain in the U. S. Army Medical Corps (Dr. Alvin Poweleit and Dr. James Schrand, *Bicentennial of Physicians of Northern Kentucky Past and Present*, 1977).

George White married Edith Coleman, daughter of J. B. Coleman. The Coleman family lived on Steep Creek Road. Dr. and Mrs. White had three children, all of whom married: Virginia, George Edwin (deceased), and Joseph L. (deceased). After Her fathers death, Virginia Jones said that Joseph lived with his mother, and only now, since the death of Joseph, will the former residence and private office of Dr. White be sold. His daughter recalled that about 1906, Dr. White moved from Ryland into

his new house, now numbered 3823 Decoursey (on the right side going south, corner of Lincoln Street and Decoursey, near St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.). There Dr. White phased out his private practice after becoming the County's health officer.

Mrs. Jones further recalled that soon after moving to his new residence, her father ran for some office in Latonia shortly before that short-lived city was annexed by Covington. In the early 1930s he became strongly involved in the first Congressional campaign of Brent Spence. But he was not active in Spence's later campaigns. In 1927 Dr. White was appointed to a nine-man planning commission by the Latonia Businessmen's Club (K.P.,

6-16-27). In those years Dr. White also once served as President of First National Bank of Latonia (1931 Street Directory).

His daughter added that Dr. White liked to spend time in his garden behind his home, and in his carpentry shop in his basement. Rather introverted, he liked to read, but was not involved in athletics. He died in Veterans Hospital in Cincinnati, and is buried in Independence Cemetery (obit., K. P. 7-1-57).

*Editor's Note: This article was written in 1993 and is reprinted here. Just recently, 90-year old Mrs. Jones reminised about the times she rode with her father in his horse and carriage to see patients.*



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