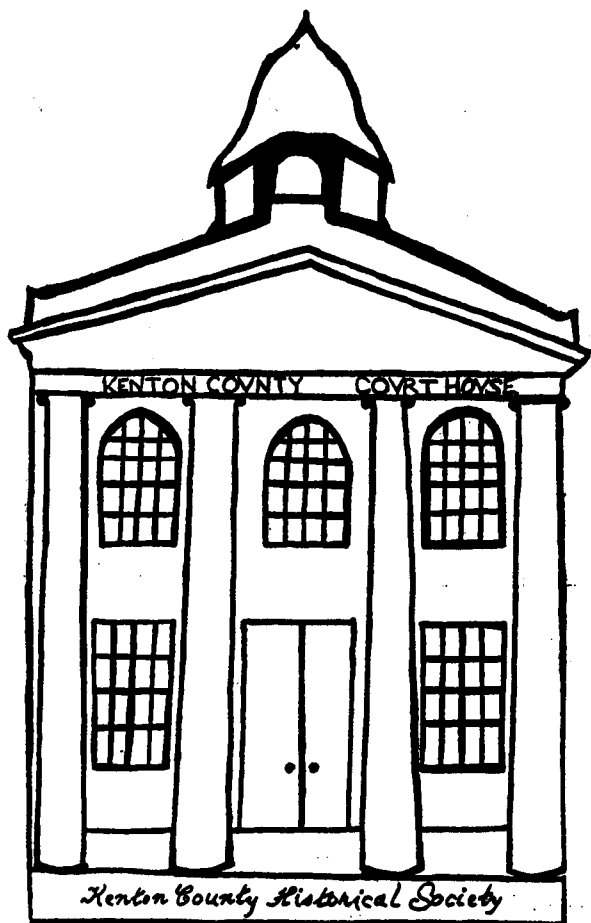


KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
(organized in 1977; non-profit;
member, Historical Confederation
of Kentucky)



May 1993

Kenton County Historical Society

P.O. Box 641
Covington, Kentucky 41011

R E V I E W

May 1993

On Tuesday, May 11th, 7:00 p.m., at the Kenton County Public Library, Erlanger Branch, Dr. Fred Stine, from the Campbell County Coroner's Office, will speak on,

THE BEVERLY HILLS FIRE--THEORIES AND CAUSES.....

The tragedy that occurred at the old Beverly Hills Club in 1977 made national news and had lasting impact on the nation's programs for preventing in the future such man-made disasters.

Dr. Stine will also show some slides.

The program is offered by the Community Relations Office of St Luke's Hospital.

It will be sponsored by the Kenton County Historical Society and will be free and open to the public.

Tuesday, May 11th

7:00 p. m.

Kenton County Public Library (Erlanger Branch)

3130 Dixie Highway (next to Kroger's)

KC JUNCTION AND OTHER CONNECTIONS

More than any other group, investors from Northern Kentucky got the Covington and Lexington railroad going and into operation by 1854. These men included Mortimer Murray Benton, attorney and Covington's first mayor (1834-35); Samuel Walker, whose brother also co-owned Walker and Simmons Drygoods (southwest corner of Sixth and Madison); John B. Casey, another drygoods merchant (Lower Market street); Charles Withers, Covington commission merchant; Frederick Gedge whose family ran a tobacco business (on the eastside of Scott between Fourth and Fifth streets); John T. Levis, Covington industrialist (Covington Cotton Factory and the Rolling Mill); and other not obscure citizens. Then soon Bushrod T. Foley, Covington's fourth mayor (1845-1860) and Alexander Greer, Covington politician, merchant, financier, industrialist, and others, stepped forward (Joseph Gastright, "The Making of the Kentucky Central").

It is recalled that the Covington and Lexington's passengers and freight reached Cincinnati by ferry. But when the Roebling suspension bridge was being completed, it was proposed (1866) that tracks be laid from the Covington side to a proposed "union freight depot near Front and Vine streets" in Cincinnati. A recently completed waterfront transfer line there already connected the Little Miami railroad facilities on the east side to the Indianapolis and Cincinnati on the west side. Even then the Covington station to the south was, in terms of raw distance to the Cincinnati core area, more or less equal to the others. But their scattered pattern very early gave birth to schemes for one centralized location (Carl W. Condit, The Railroad and the City. A Technological and Urbanistic History of Cincinnati, 1977).

In constantly pressing for additional capital, those Northern Kentucky backers, along with other regional and Blue-grass investors, through miscalculation and poor luck, lost control of ownership. In 1861 the Covington and Lexington was re-incorporated as the Kentucky Central railroad, but was by then in the hands of a shrewd Cincinnati financier, Robert Bowler. Control and ownership remained a complex legal matter into the 1870s. Then the capital shortcomings were finally alleviated when Collis P. Huntington purchased the Kentucky Central for immediate extension of his rapidly expanding Chesapeake and Ohio railroad empire (Gastright).

Then by 1888 the C&O had completed construction of new

tracks westward along the south bank of the Ohio river, and into Covington where they intersected the existing tracks (KC Junction). Starting at the old Sixteenth and Washington street intersection the new tracks were laid parallel to the existing rails northward. The C&O also erected a bridge across the river (1888) and laid tracks diagonally from the vicinity of the Kentucky Central's terminus at Pike and Washington to the burgeoning railroad switching center at the south end of the Mill Creek valley of Cincinnati. Then in 1890 the ambitious L&N acquired the Kentucky Central tracks from the financially drained C&O, and therefore immediate potential access to the same Cincinnati railyards. According to Condit, the L&N acquired "trackage rights into Central Union Depot in February 1891" (Condit).

But after 1890 the C&O and L&N exhibited a rivalry near KC Junction. In fact there occurred a short "railroad war." On May 1, 1893 The Kentucky Post reported that the two giants were fighting over a "shipping track" located between Twelfth street and "a point above the roundhouse" (located just south of Thirteenth). The matter was to be handled in court. Yet the C&O laid a "straddle" track a few inches from the first one. It seemed the L&N claimed the track, but the C&O the ground. Both sides sent locomotives to the fray, resulting in some "butting." One time the C&O roadmaster, John Reynolds, became incensed, climbed aboard an engine, and "assaulted" an L&N engineer, Tom Colbert (K. P. May 1, 1893). The next day the newspaper headlined, "Iron Horses Butted and Butted Each Other." And the L&N section boss, Thomas Maloney, was in Covington Police Court for "tearing up" the controversial track. And an L&N fireman, H. W. Glenn, was "severely" injured in another incident (K. P. May 2, 1893).

The L&N, which had opened its main line in 1859 (Louisville to Nashville), used earnings from the Civil War to repair damages and to expand southward, including by 1880-81, through acquisitions, to New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola. In 1881 the L&N acquired a line linked through Evansville to St Louis, and south into the western Kentucky coalfields. And in 1885 it saw a bridge completed for this line between Henderson (Kentucky) and Evansville (Indiana). In the early 1890s the L&N's acquisition of the "Kentucky Central's Covington-Paris-Livingston mainline" provided gradual access to "Harlan and Hazard district mines." The first coal load from Harlan county came in 1911. As early as 1886-89 the L&N had developed a branch line toward eastern Kentucky

coalfields. The L&N's coal business multiplied to become "after 1920" the dominant commodity and the incentive for investing "millions" in improvements. The acquisitions in the 1890s had already made the L&N a "major southern carrier" with over "2000 miles" of tracks" (Carl Castner, The Kentucky Encyclopedia).

When the railroad bridge was erected from Newport to Cincinnati, it was located so as to connect the "short line" tracks (from Louisville) to the Little Miami railroad tracks which at that time already were linked through Pittsburg. After the L&N acquired the Kentucky Central, and with the purchase of the "short line" system (the Louisville Cincinnati, and Lexington) in 1893, it saw growth in freight tonnage of "20.5 percent for two years and might have continued such a pace but for the mid 1890s business depression. However after 1900 L&N tonnage almost doubled, which "made the L&N the envy of the other railroad directors" (Condit).

Very early the Newport-Cincinnati (later called the "L&N") bridge (opened in 1872) was strained to capacity, and was reconstructed in 1896-97. It also can be noted that the Cincinnati-owned Ludlow-Cincinnati railroad bridge (opened 1877) saw its approach trestles reconstructed between 1890 and 1910, but the sections over the river as late as 1920. The newer Covington-Cincinnati (C&O) railroad bridge was able to withstand the increased tonnage from both the C&O and L&N for a time. But then, too, the original structure was made over for vehicular use and a new trestle structure for rail use was erected (1928-29), also on the same piers (Condit).

Condit recalls that when the C&O bridge was completed in late 1888 "Cincinnati" stood first in Ohio in manufactured goods, and "stood behind only Chicago and St Louis in the number of freight cars passing through the switching district." A "minimum of 196 scheduled passenger trains per weekday," conducted by some fifteen railroad companies, used six passenger depots. Although seemingly efficient in its time the general situation during World War I became chaotic. Aside from proposals for reconstruction of facilities, the C&O in the 1920s wanted to reiterate one strategy of routing omnipresent coal trains from its still-expanding Big Sandy area coal network northward (and toward Chicago) by way of "Columbus, Marion, and the Erie," rather than through Cincinnati. This then could make space for the C&O to receive "on the north side of the river" business from the L&N, the Cincinnati railroad through Ludlow, "and other connections

at Cincinnati" (K. P. June 9, 1927).

On June 10, 1927 The Kentucky Post reported that with metropolitan railroad improvements, including building "union terminals in Cincinnati," Newport Kentucky "will lose" L&N passenger train service, "and when the Union Terminal connections are made all of these will be routed thru Covington." The L&N had by then assumed "a keen interest in the progress of negotiations between the city of Covington and the C.&O.R.R." regarding street-rail grade crossing eliminations, and was ready to negotiate in similar fashion for the building of a viaduct over the old (Kentucky Central) tracks at Nineteenth street. Regarding freight service, however, the L&N would continue to use the Saratoga street tracks through Newport, which connected across the river with tracks to Pennsylvania (K. P. June 10, 1927).

The L&N passenger station in Newport was located where the routes of the L&N and C&O both crossed Monmouth street (east to Cincinnati and to eastern Kentucky respectively). In 1927 the L&N operated a passenger station at the southeast corner of Monmouth and the tracks; this was the old "short line" from Louisville which intersected the old north-south Kentucky Central tracks in Latonia, then went through Newport to Cincinnati. The C&O operated its station on the north-east corner of Monmouth and its tracks through Newport.

Then in fact the L&N did close its (separate) depot while the C&O continued to maintain a passenger station there in Newport into the 1960s. Then in the 1960s both the Newport and Covington (Pike and Russell streets) C&O passenger stations closed. In Cincinnati the Union Terminal (opened in 1933) closed in October 1972. The various downtown freight yards continued to lose business to over-the-road trucking. By 1962 an L&N freight office, then located at 215 East Fifth street, Newport (near the Saratoga tracks to Cincinnati) was closed. Some years later the C&O division office at Fourteenth and Madison, Covington (at the former roundhouse and railroad shop complex), was closed as were future office locations. The dispatcher's office, however, continued to be listed on West Sixteenth street at KC Junction (street directory).

In 1983 the C&O as part of the Chessie System and the L&N as part of the Seaboard system both were consolidated into the CSX Transportation holding corporation. (John Boh)

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