

# KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012 (606) 431-2666  
<http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histoc/>

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## KCHS MEETING

**DATE** Tuesday May 11, 1999  
7 PM

**PLACE** Motch Jewelers  
613 Madison Avenue  
Covington

**PROGRAM** History of Motch  
Jewelers

Motch Jewelers has been in business since 1857. Tim Dwight will give a history of this long-standing business and its building which was built in 1872. Plus we will have our own Antiques Roadshow.

## Bulletin

May 1999

### From the President.....

The grand opening of Kentucky's new History Center in Frankfort on the weekend of April 10 was a magnificent dream come true! This \$28 million, 167,000 square foot Greek Revival and Neo-Palladian complex features:

The State History Museum, with a 20,000 square foot permanent exhibition gallery as well as 5,000 square foot space for changing displays

A world-class genealogical research library with seating for 110 persons

The Hall of Governors - a portrait of each governor

Storage for artifacts, manuscripts, etc. in climate controlled environments.

A large central atrium, "Commonwealth Hall," includes a formal staircase like the one in the Old State Capitol and a green terrazzo stone map of Kentucky, with each county outlined in brass. There are only 10 or 15 states in America which have such a facility, and many of these do not measure up to Kentucky's. The Center is estimated to generate \$10 million per year in tourist dollars alone. This is the state's most lucrative new development since the opening of the Kentucky Horse Park 21 years ago.

Visit this wonder on your own and see for yourself! The history center is open Monday - Saturday. Call (502)564-3016 for a schedule of events.

### From Nancy Grall, Program Coordinator.....

Don't miss the next program on Tuesday May 11 featuring Motch Jewelers! Tim Dwight, Mr. Motch's son-in-law, will give the Motch 142 year old history, including the building built in 1872. He will also give our society its own Antique Roadshow! Bring one piece of silver, jewelry, old or new, watches or clocks. Mr. Dwight will give an estimate of its value and possibly age. Please note that we must limit appraisals to one piece per person. Since Motch is a business, not a meeting place, we will have a shortage of chairs. Please bring a light weight folding chair if you have one.

Look for more information about our June 8 program. Ted Harris will present information and slides about the Underground Railroad, particularly at the Carneal House, the location of the meeting.

We were disappointed that the last meeting at the Oxley House had to be cancelled. Predictions of tornados were dire. We hope to present this program later, possibly in September.

We welcome volunteer John Grizzell who will video tape our programs. The video taped programs will periodically be presented on Channel 6. Video taping is a hobby of John's. He has done camerawork for several of Intermedia's community programs.

E-MAIL [nkheritage.kchs@juno.com](mailto:nkheritage.kchs@juno.com) WEB SITE <http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histpc/>

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## The Past of 607 Madison Avenue An Unusual Approach to Research

by Karl Lietzenmayer

*Researching the history of the John R. Coppin Company (published in Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine, Vol. vi, No. 1) led me to 607 Madison Avenue, Covington, Kentucky. This building erected in the early 1870s became the first home of John R. Coppin's new dry goods company.*

*The present occupant, Jack Doll, was quite interested when told of Coppin's origins in his building which is owned by the Motch Jewelry family today. Jack has since become an enthusiastic member of the Kenton County Historical Society and mentioned some curious graffiti on the walls of the third floor. As time permitted, this graffiti was investigated and that which was legible, written down. With this background, I now come to the emerging story gleaned from the graffiti with the help of the library and other records. Of course, with a more thorough investment of research time, an even more complete history could be reconstructed.*

The third floor of 607 Madison apparently has not been used since the 1890s. Pencil graffiti appearing on the walls date between 1882 and 1897. The subject matter is trivia, such as remarks about the weather, a Coney Island trip, an employee's sacking, the grand opening of a nearby company, and the like. What makes this graffiti study fascinating is not so much the content, but the remarkable period it has existed on those walls, as if frozen in time. Accidentally, fragments of everyday events have been handed down to us from a hundred years ago.

The name Degginger appears 4 or 5 times as author of several mundane wall comments. For example, one of them read: "A. Degginger, going home with Mr. M...[illegible]...Got out of his sulky and broke his ankle on Friday, 6:15 Dec. 14, 1894." Another: "Fred Degginger. Warm weather at 2 o'clock Aug. 1887: 1st 101 in shade; 2nd 102; 3rd 96; 4th 108 in sun." And a third writing: "A. Degginger Rented new store, April 30th."

Another writing records, "A. E. Burkhardt & Co. Fire July 7, 1891. Wrote [sic] by B. Nigbels [?], Feb. 2, 1891." A curious one says, "New boy Jan. 25, 1886 - Jack & Beril [?] got sacked Jan 18, 1886."<sup>1</sup>

Checking the city directories through these years has revealed the following: John R. Coppin rented this store from 1873 to 1880. For a short time [1881-1885] B. G. Luckener, dealer in dry goods made this his address. The Luckener name completely disappears from the directories after that! Augustus Degginger's dry goods company moved into this building by 1885, according to the directories.<sup>2</sup>

Degginger's Dry Goods had been doing business at 18 Pike Street as early as 1866 until they moved to the 607 address. Augustus had at least 2 sons: Fred W. who later ran his father's business, and Louis A. Louis wandered in and out of his father's firm and ended up in the wholesale liquor business. All lived at 1545 Madison throughout the late 19th and 20th century.<sup>3</sup>

The graffiti above stating that "A Degginger rented a new store, April 30th" is confirmed by the 1898 directory which lists the Degginger Company at the "s. w. c. of 6th and Madison" where it remained until cir. 1910.

The directories then show the Siebler Tailoring Company at 607 Madison from cir. 1910 until 1966. The Siebler Company first appears at 607 as an upscale tailoring firm, in a day when the community supported numerous tailors and seamstresses.

However, a brief search of city directories throughout those 56 years has failed to find a family named Siebler in Covington. The company is always listed with a manager's name:

1910-1919	J. E. Laffey, manager
1920-1956	Elmer F. Wigger, manager (home 345 E. 16th Street)
1957-1966	J. W. Jackson, manager

Siebler Tailors' main location was in Cincinnati. Their advertisement was on a sign over the outfield wall at Crosley Field. It offered to any player who hit the sign on a home run a new suit from Siebler Tailors. Many older citizens remember having fine clothes made by Siebler, as it was considered one of the finest custom tailoring firms in the Northern Kentucky area.<sup>4</sup>

After the Siebler Tailors closed, 607 remained vacant until 1978 when a photography studio opened. This has been the occupancy ever since and today Society member Jack Doll is proprietor of the Photo Arts Studio and the upper two floors still bear testimony to life at the turn of the last century.

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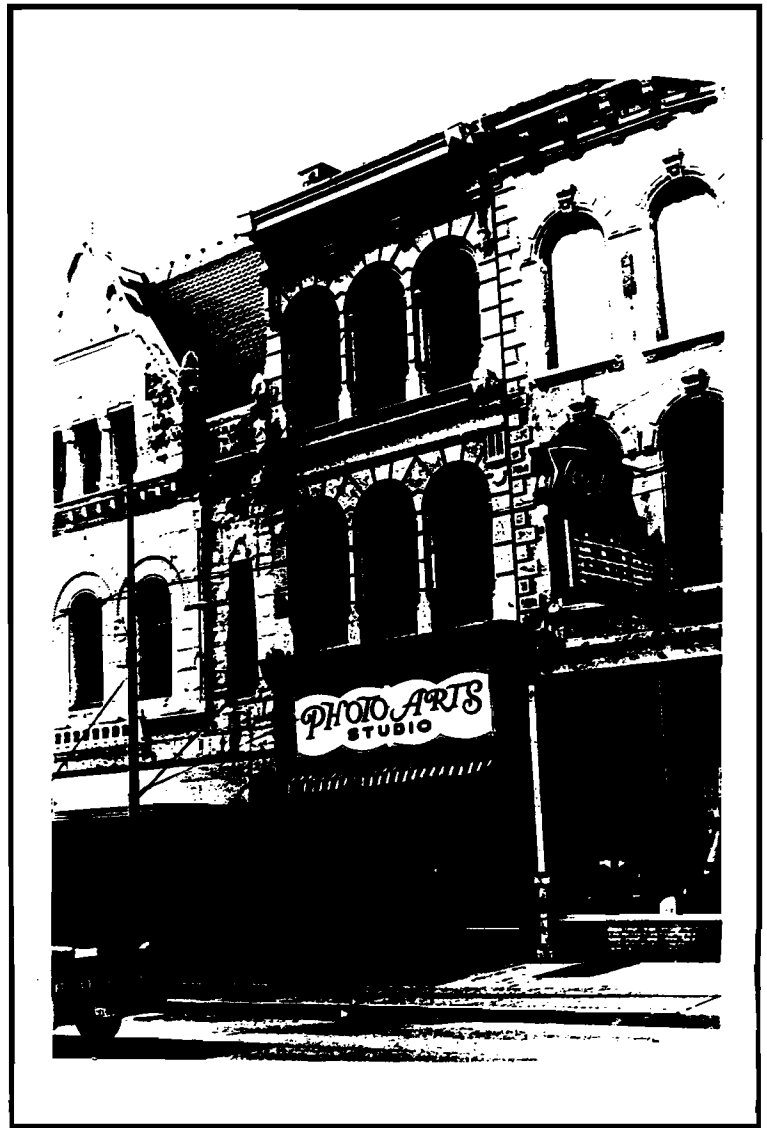
## Endnotes

1. Other mundane scribblings include "Joe closed the windows 9 June 1882" "Cleaned my straw hat . Weather cold, Oct. 1, 1886" "A good drink of mineral water Sept. 8/86" "Painting roof, Dec. 19, 1892 the painter got the rheumatism" "Laloskin (?) Is got opening - giving bouquet and picture free" "First snow Oct. 27, 1886 - raining in the morning getting cold" Others are signed: a drawing of a man has "Will Oliver" under it. A horse has "drawn by B. Huchen (?) Artist" There is also a rather good map of downtown Covington streets as well as a box score of a ball game between teams listed only as "B" and "D."

2. The Deggings lived at 31 E. Robbins until 1886 when they are listed at 1545 Madison. Apparently the two sons, Fred and Louis may not have married since they are listed as living there throughout their careers. Their mother's name is Mary.

3. Home razed. Site now part of Masonic Temple. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, neighborhood was upper middle class residential. Deggings would have been acquaintances of the J. C. Stewart family (president of Stewart Iron Works) residing at 1531 Madison.

4. Jerry Bogenschutz, a Siebler customer in the mid-1950s, had a suit made-to-order. He remembers the suit being of very high quality but somewhat out-of-style. In fact, so out-of-style, he returned the suit. Mr. Bogenschutz recalls most of the tailors were immigrants, as they spoke with a thick European accent.



### To the Editor....

My wife receives your newsletter at work, the library at Villa Madonna Academy. She brought the April issue home to show me the photo. My great-grandfather is one of the firemen in the picture. He's Johnny Kingsley, the engineer. I remember when this photo hung in Mick Noll's restaurant. Would it be possible for me to get a copy of this photo? It would be a great family memento. Jim Young, 2207 Sterrett Ave., Covington 41014.

*Editor's note: The Bulletin's picture was from a newspaper copy. But surely that picture is in the area somewhere. If anyone can help Mr. Young add to his family mementos, please contact him at the address above.*

### Announcement

1999 National Genealogical Society  
Conference in the States  
May 12-15 in historic downtown  
Richmond, Virginia

For anyone interested in genealogy, or just getting started, this is a great opportunity.

Many exhibitions and some seminars will take place at the Richmond Centre for Conventions located at 400 East Marshall. Additional seminars will be held at the Richmond Marriott Hotel--the buildings are connected by a skywalk. Offering Society Fair, societies from Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, as well as

regional and ethnic ones, will offer information for the researcher, Va. Genealogical Society hosts an Evening at the Virginia Historical Society, NGS Banquet on Friday, computer labs, internet and learning center open, and many, many outstanding topics, too many to mention.

It's almost too late, so call The National Genealogical Society now to get a brochure: (800) 473-006. They do not register by phone, but you can register when you get there.

For travel and hotel arrangements, call (800) 929-4242, or  
Web Site: [www.scitravel.com](http://www.scitravel.com)  
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Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"

John Boh (LK) 12/1/99  
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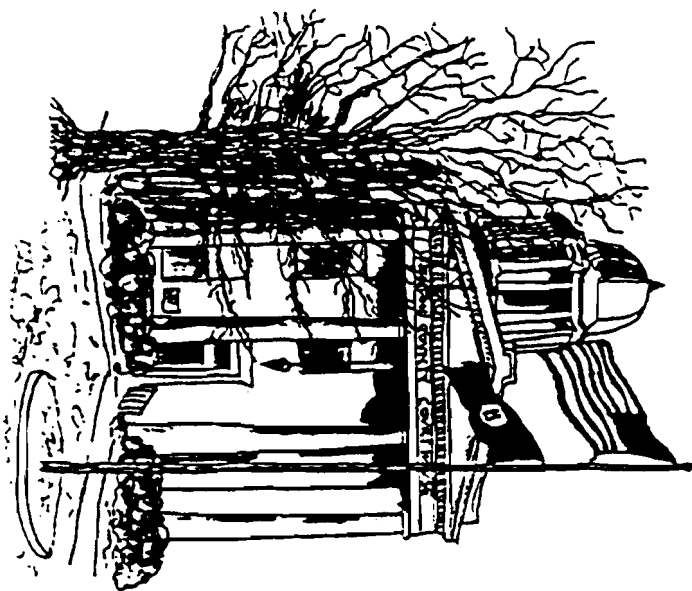
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Bulletin

May 1999



**INSIDE:**

**An Unusual Approach To Research**