



# Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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Owen J. Carpenter  
of Old Dexter Whiskey Fame

A Few of Owen J. Carpenter's Real Estate Endeavors

Mary M. Nourse

Oak Ridge: A Kenton County Community

Mary Florence Taney

## Owen J. Carpenter of Old Dexter Whiskey Fame

The unusual stoneware jug shown on the cover once held a nationally known whiskey named “Old Dexter.” Three men were responsible for giving it to America. Two of them were named Dexter: Edmund J. and Edmund J. Jr. The third man was Owen J. Carpenter. All three operated in and around Cincinnati before National Prohibition. While the Dexter family originated the brand, it was Carpenter who became the innovator

Owen J. Carpenter was a Kentuckian through and through. Born in Boone County in 1854, his ancestry is said to have numbered among its members *“some of the most valuable and interesting of the Blue Grass pioneers.”* With origins in Virginia his kinfolk were ministers and farmers, the latter including his father, Caleb Carpenter. His mother was Zeurilda (Utz) Carpenter. Owen received a “common school” education and was about 18 when Caleb pulled up stakes in Boone County and moved to Covington to open a wholesale liquor business.

About 1872, Owen joined his father in the trade, working beside him until Caleb’s death in 1879. At that point, he joined with his brother, David, in a whiskey dealership located at 129 Pike Street in Covington. In 1886, David departed leaving Owen the sole proprietor. The same year the company moved to 15 West Seventh Street.

In 1883, at the age of 29, Owen married Martha “Mattie” Adams, a native of Missouri who had been brought as an infant to Versailles, Kentucky, at the time of the Civil War. Her father was William W. Adams, a prominent livestock trader in Lexington. Owen and Mattie would have two sons, William A. and Owen C. The latter tragically died at the age of seven.

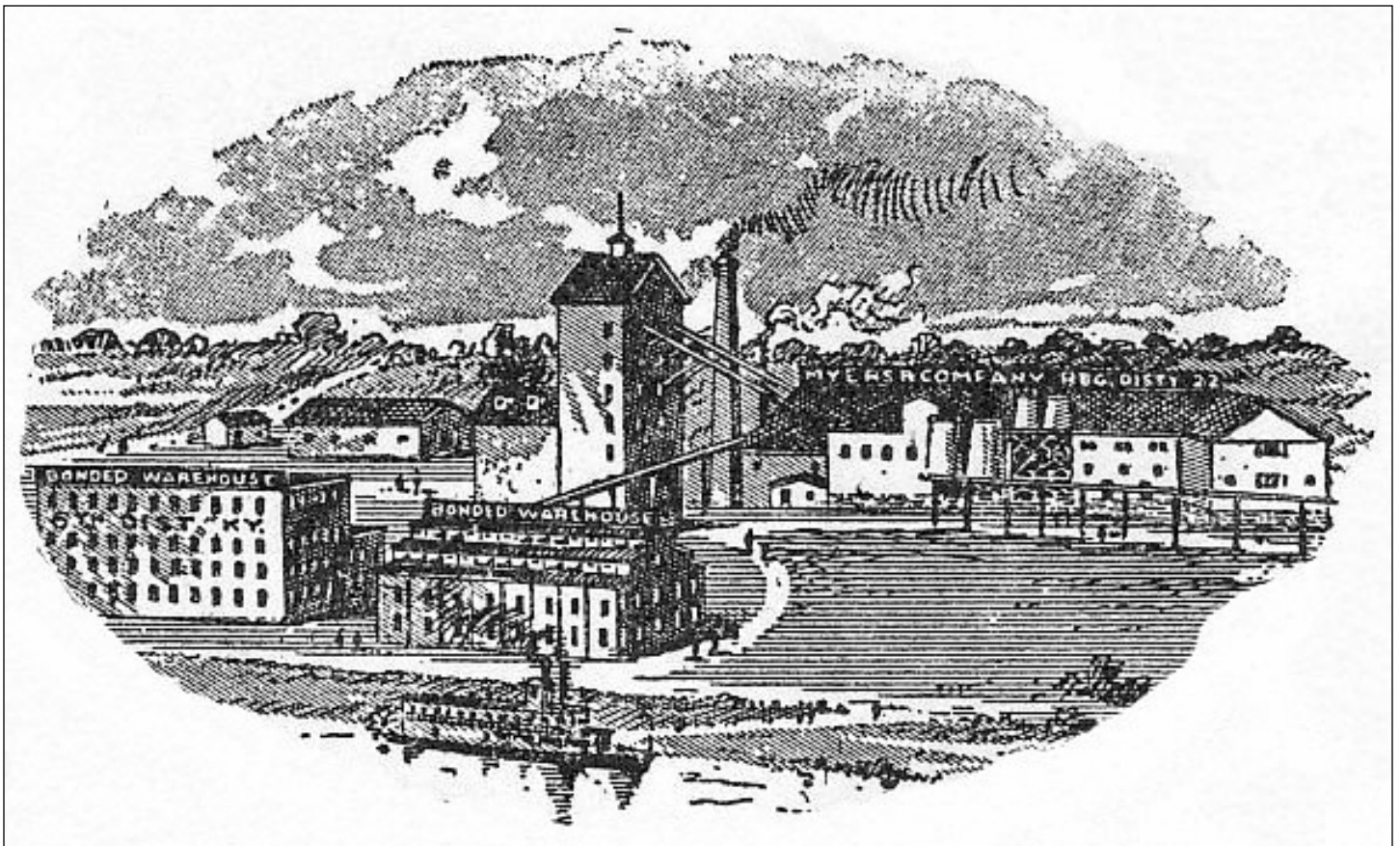
Owen Carpenter was not content with simply running a liquor store. He desired a steadier supply of raw whiskey for his blends, chiefly Old Dexter and

Carteret Club, both which he trademarked in 1906. As a result, he sought a distillery. The one he found was close at hand to Covington, designated in Federal records as RD#22, 6th District. It was located two miles south of Butler Depot, Kentucky, on Butler Pike at Flower Creek. The property also included one bonded warehouse. By 1890, the name had been changed to “The Old Dexter Distillery” and the Covington office listed for the distillery was Owen Carpenter’s address. The extent of his investment in the facility, however, is not clear. By the mid-1890s, the distillery was mashing 24 bushels a day and had warehouse capacity for 450 barrels, expanded to 600 barrels by 1910.

He also was innovating a container for his flagship brand. As shown on the cover, Carpenter pioneered an unusual looking salt glaze stoneware jug. One side has a flower motif in the center, surrounded by a legend that reads, “Old Dexter Distilling Company...Butler Kentucky.” The other says “The Old Dexter Jug Whiskey” and notes that the design was trademarked on Aug. 11, 1893. There are four grooves in each side that have suggested to some that when drained of its contents, the jug was to be turned on its side and used as an ashtray. These jugs must have been produced by the thousands and are quite commonly found for sale at bottle shows and online auction sites.

Less commonly seen are Carpenter’s labeled bottles of Old Dexter Rye and Old Dexter Bourbon. The elaborate label illustration depicted a Kentucky scene with barrels and glass embossing that read “Warranted...Perfectly Pure.” The bourbon also merited a shot glass from Carpenter.

As the forces of Prohibition began to tighten in Kentucky and elsewhere, Carpenter expanded his business savvy to other endeavors, turning mainly to real estate development. He became known as the “Father of Fort Mitchell,” a suburban housing com-

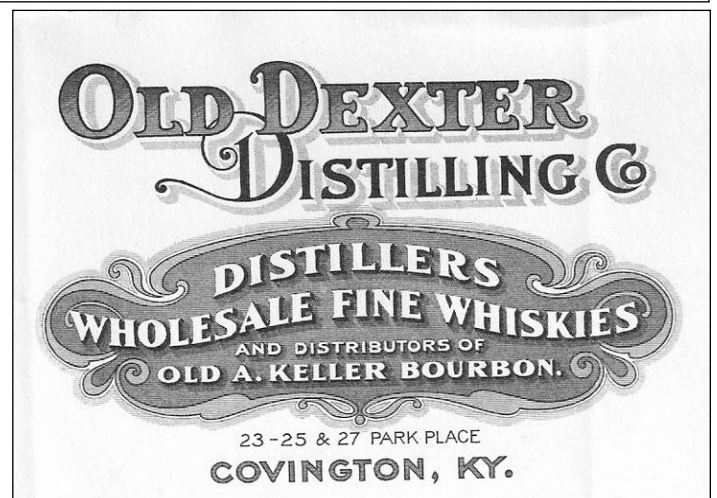


munity that was said to “boast of some of the finest residences in this section of the country.” Carpenter had bought the land, platted it, and arranged for trolley transit from the development to Covington. He also was an organizer and later president of the Kenton Water Company that built another suburban development called Latonia. His real estate ventures also included large portions of what is now Covington.

About 1917, with statewide prohibition in Kentucky, Carpenter was forced to shutter his store and the Old Dexter Distillery at Butler was shut down. He continued with his real estate enterprises until retiring. During that period he saw the advent of National Prohibition, its repeal in 1934, and the return of whiskey-making and selling in Kentucky.

In 1937, Carpenter wrote an account of some of his real estate ventures. One short piece was included in the last issue of the Bulletin and other will follow this article. In 1944 Carpenter, age 90, died at Fort Mitchell, the community he had innovated, and was buried at adjacent Highland Cemetery.

From a blog on “pre-pro whiskeymen” found at <http://pre-prowhiskeymen.blogspot.com/2015/11/searching-out-old-dexter-whiskey-three.html>



Top: The Old Dexter Distillery at Butler, Kentucky

Middle: Whiskey label

Bottom: Grave marker at Highland Cemetery

## A Few of Owen J. Carpenter's Real Estate Endeavors

*Owen J. Carpenter (1854-1944) was a businessman in Covington, operating a distillery and selling wines and whiskey. In 1888, he began investing in property development. In 1937 he wrote an account of some of his real estate ventures. Thanks to Arnold Taylor for transcribing his account.*

### **The Covington Land and Improvement Company**

The Covington Land & Improvement Company was organized by A. G. Simrall. Articles of Incorporation are dated October 4th 1888, and are recorded in Book 2 page 547. The incorporators were A. G. Simrall, O. J. Carpenter, A.M. Schultz, George A. Argus and C. H. Pindly who subscribed for all the stock the company ever issued. This company purchased all of the property fronting on the west side of Holman Street between Linden and 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and on the east side of Woodburn Avenue between Linden and 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and a small frontage on the west side of Woodburn Avenue extending southward from Linden Street. This company's three plats are Copied and Restored Plat 46, December 7, 1888, Copied and Restored Plat 262, October 16, 1889, and Copied and Restored Plat 31, August 1, 1890. A. G. Simrall and John G. Simrall sold all of this company's real estate and the margin for profit was very satisfactory. My stock in this company represented my first investment in real estate in Kenton County

### **The Woodburn Avenue Land Company**

Early in the month of October 1889, I obtained from Judge William E. Arthur, an option to purchase the 25 acre tract of land known as the Arthur tract, for \$25,000.00 cash, and soon following, I organized the Woodburn Avenue Land Company in

about one hour, with the understanding that it would purchase this 25 acre tract at the option price mentioned. The subscribers to the stock of the company were: M. C. Motch, \$5000.00, O. J. Carpenter, \$5000.00, Chas. Hair, \$5000.00, E. J. Hickey, \$5000.00, and Henry Holtrup, \$5000.00. The Woodburn Avenue Land Company was incorporated October 14, 1889, and Articles of Incorporation are recorded in Book 3, page 66, and the above-named subscribers were the incorporators.

Soon after this company was incorporated, Judge and Mrs. Wm. E. Arthur conveyed the tract mentioned to the Woodburn Avenue Land Company and received the consideration of \$25,000.99 in cash. The stock subscribed for as above-mentioned, is the only stock the company ever at any time had outstanding. The company subdivided this entire tract in building lots as shown by Copied and Restored Plat 333, dated June 1st 1892.

The lots in this subdivision include all the lots fronting on the west side of Holman Street between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> streets, and all of the lots fronting on Woodburn Avenue between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> streets, and all of the lots fronting on May Street south from 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and a number of lots fronting on the east side of Holman Street and on the west side of Banklick Street, north from 18<sup>th</sup> Street. The west line of this subdivision is the east line of the Woodland Park Land Company's subdivision in Willow Run. The Holman Street School Building stands on a site composed of lots in the Woodburn Avenue Land Company's Subdivision above-mentioned. A. G. Simrall and John G. Simrall sold a considerable number of the lots in this subdivision at private sale, and a large





number were sold by A. G. Simrall at auction at which time he again showed his skill as an auctioneer. A later purchase by the Woodburn Avenue Land Company was the property between Linden and 16<sup>th</sup> streets, and between May Street and Woodburn Avenue. The Woodburn Avenue Land Company subdivided this property into 49 building lots. The plat of this, the company's second subdivision, is Copied and Restored Plat 332, dated May 17, 1890. Twenty-six of these lots front on the west side of St. Clair Street; 12 on the east side of said street; and 11 on the west side of Woodburn Avenue. In about 2 hours, A. G. Simrall sold all of these lots at auction, the purchase price to be paid 1/10 cash, balance payable in 9 equal semiannual payments with six percent interest. For about three hours during the morning preceding this auction sale, it was advertised all over town by a brass band in a furniture wagon well covered by canvas signs directing attention to the sale and the terms of payment. An immense crowd was present at this sale, which contained many bidders, and the sale was in every way a great success.

### **The Woodland park land Company**

After I had carefully examined the Thomas H. Kennedy 17 acre tract, adjoining the west line of the Woodburn Avenue Land Company's subdivision, and had decided that it was desirable for subdivision into building lots, I obtained from the owner, Thomas H. Kennedy, a written option to purchase this tract for \$17,000.00; and a short time after I had obtained this option, I organized the Woodland Park Land Company with the agreement that it would purchase this 17 acre tract at \$1000.00 per acre, to be paid according to the terms stated in the option mentioned. The Woodland Park Land Company was incorporated July 16, 1890; the Articles of Incorporation are recorded in Book 3 page 202. The signers of these articles were O. J. Carpenter, M. C. Motch, Charles A. Lehman, Henry Holtrup, Henry J. Gospohl, B.

Bramlage and F. Pieper; who were all subscribers for the stock of this company. Thomas H. Kennedy and Martha S. Kennedy conveyed the 17 acre tract mentioned, to the Woodland Park Land Company by deed dated July 11, 1890, which was recorded July 17, 1890, in Deed Book 67 page 383.

Soon after this deed was recorded, the Woodland Park Land Company subdivided this entire tract into building Lots. The plat of this subdivision is Copied and Restored Plat 302, recorded November 11, 1890. The north boundary line of this subdivision is 50 feet north of and parallel to the north line of 16<sup>th</sup> Street; the east boundary line runs along the west line of the Woodburn Avenue Land Company's subdivision; the south boundary line is the south line of 18<sup>th</sup> Street.; and the west boundary line is the west line of Monroe Avenue.

The following streets run north and south through this subdivision; West Boulevard (now named to Euclid Avenue); Jefferson Avenue, and Monroe Avenue. The length of Jefferson Avenue within this subdivision is about 1000 feet, and the length of the other two streets may be slightly less. This subdivision contains 196 building lots. Soon after the plat of this subdivision was recorded, the Woodland Park Land Company appointed A. G. Simrall and John Simrall the sole agents for the sale of the lots in this subdivision, and I think it was during the summer of 1892 that A. G. Simrall held an auction sale of lots in this subdivision, and the fact that he was an auctioneer of unusual ability, I think was plainly to the immense crowd present at this sale. Excepting the auction sale of lots in the Woodburn Avenue Land Co's second subdivision, mentioned on page 3; this was the best attended and the most successful auction sale of building lots in the City of Covington that I ever attended. At this auction sale, I think that all of the lots fronting on Jefferson Avenue were sold, and also many lots in other parts of

this subdivision were sold; all at good and satisfactory prices. The stock of the Woodland Park Land Co was a good and satisfactory investment for its holders.

There were only two outlets from the City of Covington during the 1937 flood from about January 23rd to about February 1st. One of these outlets was the Suspension Bridge to the north; the other outlet was west on 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Jefferson Avenue; and south on Jefferson Avenue to the Highland Pike; and along this Pike westward.

*Note that the Greenup Street Lot Company was featured in the previous issue of the Bulletin.*

## Want to be Published?

We are always looking for material for the Bulletin, as well as Northern Kentucky Heritage magazine

To submit an article, send a paper copy by mail, or email it as a Word document attachment.

Bulletin articles should be no longer than 500 words and should have at least two references. Magazine articles should have several 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

## Mary M. Nourse

From the Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky

Mary M. Nourse (1870-1959) was the sixth of seven children born to Charles and Viola J. Seward Nourse. She was born in Mt. Healthy, Ohio, and attended the Cincinnati Art Academy. In 1891, she became a decorator for the Rookwood Pottery on Mount Adams in Cincinnati. She remained there for 14 years.

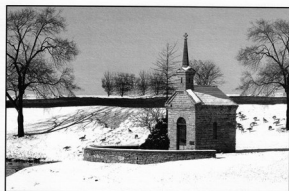
Nourse learned wood carving from Benn Pitman, an uncle by marriage. She taught basket-weaving and jewelry-making and taught art as a volunteer at a Catholic school in Cincinnati. Mary was the niece of Elizabeth Nourse, an internationally known artist.

Mary's work is displayed at museums in France and Norway. For many years, she resided along East Fourth Street in Covington. She was a member of the Covington Art Club for at least 55 years, and in 1920 she designed the organization's insignia.

Mary kept a scrapbook, which contains many photographs of the early artists at Rookwood Pottery. She died in 1959 at her home in Fort Thomas and was buried at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati.

*Northern Kentucky  
Heritage*

A PERIODICAL OF REGIONAL HISTORY AND GENEALOGY



IN THIS ISSUE  
Covington's Monte Casino  
Postmarked Covington  
Country Stores  
St. Paul Catholic Church  
The Black Brigade  
Joseph Kuchle Family

Vol. XIV

No. 1

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# Oak Ridge: A Kenton County Community

Greg Perkins and Pat Workman

Oak Ridge is a central Kenton County neighborhood located just south of Taylor Mill. The businesses and homes at the intersection of Hands Pike (Ky. Rt. 1501) and Taylor Mill Road (Ky. Rt. 16) serve as a reminder of the small communities that dotted central Kenton County before the wave of annexations that began during the 1960s.

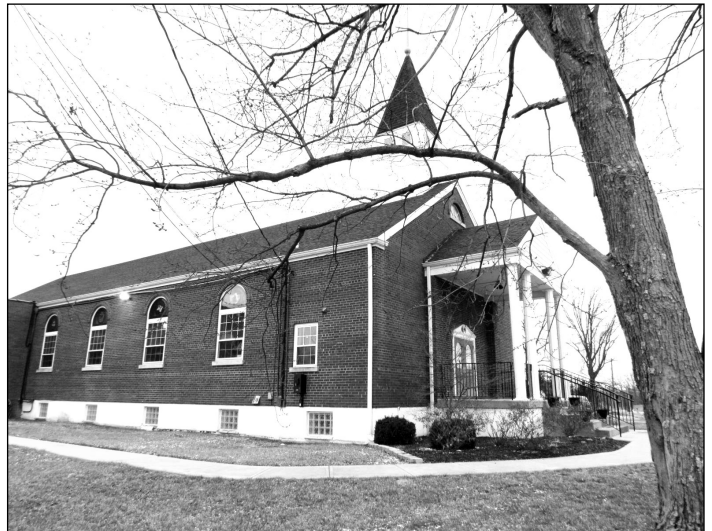
Established early in the 1800s, Oak Ridge was a typical farming community. An Oak ridge Booster reported to a Covington newspaper in 1883 that “peace and friendship and plenty prevail at the Ridge.”

The names of early Oak Ridge families including Hand, Klette, Lipscomb, and Senour survive as street names. Latonia Lakes, originally a resort village, was carved out of Oak ridge during the 1930s.

After Worlds War II, Oak ridge began the slow transformation from a farming to a suburban community. Annexations over the past 30 years have almost removed Oak Ridge from the map, as Covington, Independence, and Latonia Lakes have partitioned the area. Landmarks remaining include the Oak Ridge Baptist Church and the Oak Ridge School building, which now houses the Bible Baptist Church.

## Oak Ridge Baptist Church

Now part of the Southern Baptist denomination and a member of the Northern Kentucky Baptist Association, Oak Ridge Baptist was formed in 1844 by 37 families belonging to the Banklick Baptist Church (known today as the Hickory Grove Baptist).



Oak Ridge Baptist Church

At first, the new church was named Decoursey Creek Baptist, and meetings were held at a store on Klette Road. Local physician George White donated land the following year for a new, two-story white frame building on the east side of Decoursey, about five miles south of Latonia. Today, this building is used as a private residence. In 1872, the congregation moved into the Richardson Schoolhouse, on the western side of Taylor Mill Road opposite Klette Road and the church’s name was changed to Oak Ridge Baptist. That building now houses the Brucewood Presbyterian Church.

In 1879, a new one-room frame structure was built on the site of the current church grounds, on property donated by the Richardson family. In 1942, that structure was moved and placed on a new base-ment. In 1958, services were held in the new brick sanctuary during the church’s 114th Anniversary. The old frame structure was razed in 1960 and a new educational building was added on the north side of the sanctuary that same year.



# Mary Florence Taney

## Poet, Educator, Civic Leader

Karl Lietzenmayer

Mary Florence Taney (Taw-ney) was born in Newport on May 15, 1856, to Peter and Catherine (Alphonse) Taney. Her father was a nephew of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney. Mary's family has deep roots in America. Her ancestors sailed with Lord Baltimore in 1632, when they landed in Maryland.

Mary graduated with honors from Immaculata Academy, the Sisters of Nazareth school formerly in Newport. She never married and lived most of her adult life in Covington, her home still standing at 312 Garrard Street. She grew up in the shadow of her famous ancestor, Justice Taney, writing his biography, which portrayed a noble picture of the author of the *Dred Scott* decision.

In 1889, Governor Buckner appointed her as the first woman Notary Public. Shortly thereafter, she was private secretary to the Collector of Kentucky Internal Revenue at a salary of \$1200 per year. Her gifts as a poet brought an appointment to write poems for the World's Fair

In 1893, she published "Prose Sketches of Noted Pioneer Women," accompanied by a commemorative poem following each sketch. On November 10, 1895, for "Kentucky Day" at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, her lyrics for the "Kentucky State Song" were set to music by Professor Andrew J. Boex (later published as sheet music). The flowery lyrics of the first three verses are as follows:

*Beautiful State, where the bluegrass grows  
Over rich pastures, broad and free;  
O beautiful State, how glows my heart  
With pride and love for thee!*

*Millions lie in thy forests' mold;  
Treasures are in thy depths untold;  
The forge shall glow when the anvils' ring  
Praises of thy glory sing.*



Mary Florence Taney

*Kenton County Public Library*

*Thy mountains, rich in iron ore,  
Await the touch of a master hand;  
For countless fortunes and wealth galore  
Are hidden in this Promised Land*

Mary was active in Covington and the Commonwealth's Centennial celebrations. She was a founder of the Kentucky Audubon Society, member of the Covington Art Club and the McDowell Music Society. She was a teacher, singer, newspaper correspondent, private secretary and assistant editor of the *Women's Club Magazine*. Prominent in society and club circles and well known for her charitable work, she, of course, favored women's suffrage.

# A Look Back at the Headlines

*An on-going feature reliving local headlines.*

*This issue features:*

*The Covington Journal – May 31, 1856*

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## Pic Nics To-day

The teachers and scholars of the Sabbath School connected with the Scott Street M.E. Church South, go to a Pic Nic excursion to-day.

There will be a Pic Nic gathering at the Fair Grounds of the Kenton County Agricultural Society, near Independence. A large crowd is expected.

The “Merry Bachelors,” with their friends and guests, proceed, per steamer Champion No. 2, to a beautiful grove near Petersburg, where they will spend the day. A joyous time is anticipated.

## Singular Freak of Nature

There is now one exhibition at Cooper's Hall, in this city, a remarkable curiosity. It is a calf with a head shaped like that of a full blooded bull-dog. The ears, tail, and legs also resemble those of a dog. The calf is two weeks old, and apparently healthy. It came from a cow twenty-two months old, in the upper end of this county. We advise the curious to call and see this *lusus naturae*. This is the last day in Covington.

## New Ice Cream Saloon

The subscriber wishes to inform the residents of Covington and vicinity, that he has opened an ICE CREAM SALOON, in connection with his bakery establishment. The saloon will be open from 9 A.M. until 12:30 P.M., Sundays excepted. All of my cream I warrant to be of the best quality, pure and unadulterated. Any cream not giving the most perfect satisfaction I wish returned, and the money will be refunded.

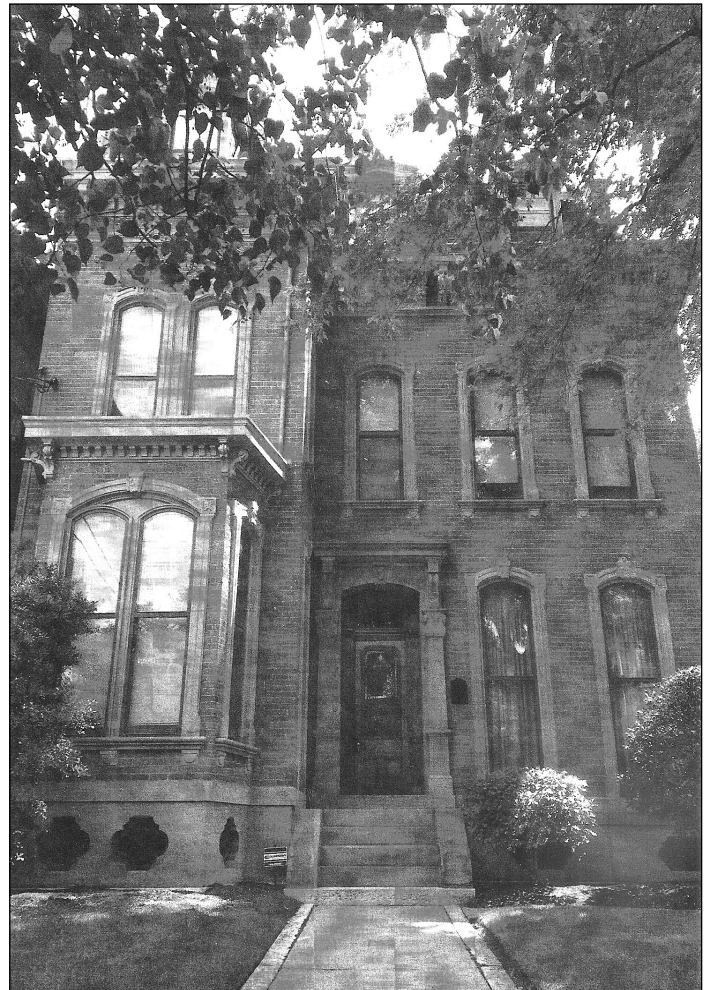
Thomas E. Brickley  
Scott Street between Fourth and Fifth

## Mary Florence Taney - Continued

She moved in high society. She and her sister Elizabeth (Mrs. Thomas Hardeman) were invited to parties with Cornelius Vanderbilt, Speaker of the House Nicholas and Mrs. Longworth, the Tafts and were guests at the White House. She was known as a brilliant conversationalist, a clever writer and a capacity for making warm and lasting friendships.

In July 1915, she founded the Colonial Dames 17<sup>th</sup> Century at the International Genealogical Congress at The Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. This organization is perhaps her crowning achievement. The Dames are now sponsoring a Kentucky Historic Highway Marker to commemorate her life.

Mary Florence Taney passed away October 9, 1936 at age 80, and is buried at St. Mary Cemetery, Fort Mitchell, Kentucky.



## Then and Now



Covington's riverfront, pre-I-75 and present-day

Courtesy the Kenton County Public Library

## Mystery Photo

Can you identify the Mystery Photo? The answer can be found at the bottom of the page.



Answer:

Turkeys "preparing for Thanksgiving" at the Tewes Poultry Farm, Crescent Springs.

# Kenton County Historical Society

May/June 2018

ARTICLES FROM BACK ISSUES ARE INDEXED ON OUR WEBSITE!

*Published bi-monthly by*

**The Kenton County Historical Society**

Membership, which includes the Bulletin,  
\$20.00 per year

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Dick Johanneman (Ex Officio)

## I Bet You Didn't Know

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

May 3, 1986: Karen Easterday, music education major at the University of Louisville, became the first female to sound the "Call to the Post" to start the *Kentucky Derby*.

May 7, 1777: The first Kentucky census was taken at Harrodsburg.

May 17, 1982: Jennie Walker, the first woman elected sheriff anywhere in the nation, died in Barbourville at the age of 93.

June 5, 1985: Steve Cauthen, of Walton, became the first U.S. jockey to win the Epson Downs in the 206th running in Great Britain.

June 25, 1927: Natural Bridge was dedicated as a State Park.

From: *On This Day In Kentucky*, by Robert Powell

## Programs and Notices

### Kenton County Historical Society

On Saturday, May 12th, in the Erlanger branch library at 10:30 a.m. Arnold Taylor will do a program on the history of the Covington water supply. Mr. Taylor has also written, *Fit to Drink: The History of Water Supply in Covington, Kentucky* (see KCHS website).

This summer the KCHS plans again to set up its booth at the Kenton County Fair (the week of July 16<sup>th</sup>).

On Saturday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, from 11:00 to 2:00 p.m. in the Durr branch of the Kenton County Public Library on Nicholson Road the public is invited to have their old photos scanned for placement on the library's website. Note that the originals will be returned to the owner. After the scanning session, author Bob Webster is scheduled to speak on "Northern Kentucky's Long-Forgotten Neighborhood Movie Theaters."

The KCHS expects to host another membership (with guests) picnic on Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup> similar to last year when the KCHS celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a Pioneer Park picnic shelter on Highway 17.

On August 18 and 19 the KCHS plans again to have a booth at the Ramage Civil War Museum for Battery Hooper Days.

### Behringer Crawford Museum

*Storied Threads*, an art quilt exhibit, continues through May 13, 2018. Photographs, seashells, food wrappers, group collages and African and Guatemalan fabrics are among elements rendered by artists in these spectacular quilts. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5 p.m. on Sundays - at 1600 Montague Road, Devou Park, Covington, KY. For more information, call 859-491-4003.

Music@BCM, the annual spring and summer concert series, begins Thursday, May 3rd, 7-9 p. m. with "Live From New York with Nicole Zuraitis." It's an evening of original compositions, beautiful vocals and superb keyboard work by award-winning vocalist, pianist and songwriter Nicole Zuraitis. Weather permitting, concerts are held in BCM's outdoor amphitheater. They move indoors when weather is forbidding. Guests are encouraged to bring folding chairs or blankets for seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. when there will be available for purchase bottled water, soft drinks and adult beverages and a selection of food from Colonial Cottage of Erlanger. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 3-12. The next concert date will be May 17. This Thursday evening series becomes weekly starting June 7<sup>th</sup>.