



Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich
and Descendants Develop Kenton County

A Lonely Phone Booth
A Vietnam Veteran Reminisces

Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich and Descendants Develop Kenton County¹

John Boh

In 1794, dangers from Indian raids along the Ohio River and into Kentucky were virtually eliminated.² Settlers were moving into Kentucky by flatboat at Maysville, at the Licking River, and elsewhere. Between 1793 and 1797, brothers Stephen and Thomas Rich arrived from Pennsylvania.³ [On the cover: Goshen Christian Church, Bracht-Piner Road (Rich tombstones in the rear – courtesy Robert E. Rich)]

Thomas and Ann Pool Rich of Boone County and Descendants

Present-day Boone County was created in 1798 from a portion of Campbell County west of Dry Creek. Thomas Rich, son of Joseph and Sarah Coulson Rich, who married Ann Pool, settled near Big Bone Salt Lick. In *An Atlas of Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties, Kentucky, 1883*, the name Thomas Rich twice appears as a big landowner with four residences along the west side of Big Bone Road and Creek (“Gum branch”); another residence of T. M. Rich is located west of the Big Bone Hotel near the Springs, and one Joseph Rich also resided near Big Bone Road.⁴

At Kentucky 338 and Gum Branch Road, descendants in 1991 dedicated an historic highway marker to Charles Coulson Rich. He was born near Big Bone Lick in 1809, the grandson of Thomas and Ann Pool Rich, the son of Joseph and Nancy O’Neal Rich.⁵ A year after his birth, his parents moved their family to Switzerland County, Indiana. Nineteen years later they relocated to Tazewell County, Illinois.

According to *The Kentucky Post* article about the highway marker, “Rich and his family became Mormon missionaries establishing settlements in California, Utah, and Idaho.” His descendants claim that Charles Coulson Rich was also a peacemaker during encounters with Indians. Buried in Paris, Idaho in 1883 next to his father, Charles, according to

the article, was once mayor of San Bernardino, California, and a Utah legislator.⁶

Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich of Kenton County and Descendants

Kenton County was created in 1840 from a portion of Campbell County, west of the Licking River where Stephen Rich, son of Joseph and Sarah Coulson Rich, settled. Born in 1757, one source says that Stephen may have offended his family and Pennsylvania Quakers when he married Jane Blackburn from a nearby Baptist community.⁷

Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich gave Northern Kentucky an incredible progeny. (In addition, first names are very, very repetitive!) Collins’ *History of Kentucky* listed Stephen Rich and his five sons among the first settlers of present-day Kenton County.⁸ Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich also had daughters not listed by Collins: Mary, called Polly (born 1779 in Pennsylvania), who married Patrick Dempsey, a native of Ireland. Sarah, like her brother Joseph, married into the Kyle family, to John Kyle, as did her sister Susan to Thomas Kyle. Betsy married Jacob Garrison.

Not to mention the daughters, the sons of Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich left a heavy legacy in Northern Kenton County.⁹ Second son, Alfred (born in Pennsylvania in 1784) married Nancy Helm, or Holm, and they resided in Covington. Alfred and Nancy’s oldest son, Allen, and wife, Louisa Hallam Rich, lived on Sleepy Hollow Road. Seen in the 1883 Atlas is probably Allen and Louisa’s youngest son George (born in 1854) who owned land on Sleepy Hollow, maybe inherited from his parents, on the west side near Bethel School No. 44.¹⁰

George’s residence was south of that of William Bates. The Bates and Rich Batteries are of

course on the list of those surrounding Covington in defense of Cincinnati against the Confederate threat in September 1862. Another son of Alfred and Nancy, Joseph B. Rich, was a farmer who lived on Old State Road. Joseph left his home to son Joseph and grandsons Victor and Joseph. In the Atlas, Mrs. J. B. Rich, apparently a widow, appears on the north side of Old State Road.¹¹

The third son of Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich, Stephen Jr. (born in Pennsylvania, 1787- 1868), married Nancy Drucker (1788-1874). They had eleven children. Of them, two daughters were Susan (1819) and Adelaide (1821). Of the sons, Nobel (1823) moved to Evansville, Indiana; Samuel (1825-1907) and wife Catherine (1843-1903) are buried behind the Goshen Church on Bracht-Piner Road; Stephen (1828) moved to Indiana; Joseph (1830) is buried in the Independence Cemetery, and William (1832) moved to Kansas.¹²

Fourth son, Joseph (1791- 1863), married three times: Sally Kyle, sister of Jacob Kyle, namesake of Kyle's Lane; Mary Calvert Foy; and a divorced woman, Amelia Calvert. According to one genealogy, he had six children and lived on Old State Road. Joseph and Sarah (or Sally) Kyle's daughters married William and Christopher Gedge, from a prominent Covington industrial family. One daughter, Jane Blackburn Rich, and Charles Whitcomb were especially prolific with offspring.

According to genealogist, the only surviving son of Joseph and second wife Mary Calvert Foy was Josephus, or Joseph Willis Rich (born in 1841), known as "Stonequarry Joe." He married Carolina Virginia Arnold and Josephine Moor Houston. His second of twelve children, Wallace S. Rich, was once Vice-president of the Stewart Iron Works.

"Stonequarry Joe" and the "Big Bend"

Stonequarry" Joe was a contractor and operator of a quarry near where the Golden Goose restaurant later stood on the Dixie Highway. He built roads in Highland Cemetery and some streets in Covington. According to a granddaughter, Joe built the first mile of the old Lexington Turnpike. But if so, it

must have been the father (born in 1791), not the son (born in 1841). The early officially authorized road between Covington and Lexington remained poor and haphazard until the heavily funded, macadamized "Covington & Lexington Turnpike" was completed in the 1850s.

The 1883 *Atlas* shows one parcel of "oseph W. Rich property on the east end of present-day Old State Road where then it still seemed to intersect with its replacement, the Covington & Lexington Turnpike from Pike Street.¹³

Old State Road in Park Hills once started blocks south of Pike Street in Covington, followed the southern boundary of the Linden Grove Cemetery from which it crossed Willow Run Creek, and ascended the creek's western bank and steep hill to where Old State Road in Park Hills is still so named. Its path crossed at the location of the "Big Bend" of the Covington & Lexington Turnpike, later the modern Dixie Highway, a stretch that could also be a challenge for a very heavy load by wagon or truck going uphill toward Ft. Mitchell.

Today from the Big Bend, a driver on the right side of the Dixie Highway can look down to the right at the "Death Hill" section of I-75, treacherous between Kyles Lane and the Brent Spence Bridge.

The *Atlas* shows a second property of eight acres owned by Jos. W. Rich with quarry and residence (near the later Golden Goose restaurant location) along the Covington & Lexington turnpike up from the big bend. Quarrying the side of the hill or cliff below Old State Road supplied stone and widened space for the new Covington & Lexington Turnpike, now the Dixie Highway.¹⁴

The fifth son of Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich, John Rich (born 1797), married Nancy Ross. They lived near the corner of Sleepy Hollow and Old State Roads. The *Atlas* does not confirm this. Their oldest son was Samuel R. Rich (1818-1889) a farmer, his residence in Fort Mitchell. He probably would be the same as S. R Rich seen in the atlas on the west side of Buttermilk Pike near the head of Pleasant Run Creek.¹⁵

Stephen and Jane Blackburn's Eldest Son Samuel, in Southern Kenton County

Eldest son Samuel Rich, in the spirit of primogeniture, stayed in southern Kenton County. Samuel (born 1777) and wife Sarah Rittenhouse must have become keepers of Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich's homestead. Many of Samuel and Sarah's descendants continued to own farm property.

The 11 children of Samuel and Sarah Rittenhouse Rich were: Alfred, who traveled to Cuba; Joseph (1820), a medical doctor who died in Cuba; Stephen (born 1826), moved to Indiana; Samuel Jr (born 1818) – known as “Devil Sam” - who married Mary Bryan Stowers, a descendent of the sister of Daniel Boone; Blucher (the first Rich with that obscure name), married Eliza Williams; Margaret, married Procter Hume; Jane, Phillip McDonald; Caroline, Thomas Hume; Susan, Gabriel Mullins; Harriet, Sam Bryant and then William Mann; and Flora, married a man named Clarkson of Moberly Missouri.¹⁶

Samuel Jr. - “Devil Sam” - and Mary Stowers Rich

The eleven children of Samuel Jr. (born 1818) and wife Mary Bryan Stowers (born 1826), included Alfred, Samuel, Cincinnatus, Stephen (1857-1939), and Joseph Rich, (born 1847) who married Helen Lambert. Joseph and Helen's son, John Lambert Rich was a lawyer who served as a Kenton County Master Commissioner. He married Bertha Aitcheson (1871-1930). John and Bertha's children were Marjorie Rich, once Dean of Girls, Holmes High School,¹⁷ Dr. Murray L. Rich, and Ralph Rich attorney, who once served as Covington City Manager.

John Lambert was a charter member of First Baptist Church of Covington. He moved to a farm he acquired near Kenton Station. He was a founding member of one of the early churches, the Oak Island Baptist Church, located on an island on Cruises Creek. The first structure was a log house which was temporarily used for a church and for school. Bluch Rich Sr., a son of Samuel and Sarah Rittenhouse (John Lambert's uncle), taught in the little log house. The church was later relocated from the island to the top of Kenton Hill.

One source thought that Rich Road was built in the 1860s by the sons of ‘Devil Sam’, connecting Piner and Morning View.¹⁸ Other children of Samuel Jr. and Mary Stowers Rich were Dr. Samuel P. and then Blucher Rich, Sr. (born 1856), who married Susan Elliot. They begot seven children including, Dr. Charles, Dr. Alfred Rich, and a son again with the obscure name of Blucher.¹⁹

Taxes and Probate

Kenton County tax records show that the family patriarch, Stephen Rich (husband of Jane Blackburn), once paid taxes on 450 acres of land. At his death, each of his nine children received fifty acres.²⁰

An estate inventory dated 1843 described the property of eldest son Samuel Rich, a much larger estate, divided among eleven survivors: widow Sarah Rittenhouse Rich, 250 acres along Cruises, Creek; Alfred, 110 acres; Joseph, 127; Stephen, 127; Samuel, Jr. (“Devil Sam”), 110; Blucher, 100; Margaret Rich Hume, 110; Caroline Rich Hume, 110; Susan Rich Williams, 150; Harriet Rich Mann, 125; and Flora Clarkson, 120 – a total of over 1,400 acres.²¹

An estate inventory dated in 1860 listed property distributed after the death of the daughter-in-law of Stephen and Jane Blackburn Rich, Samuel's widow, Sarah Rittenhaus Rich: 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres to Thomas Williams, possibly a grandson; 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres to daughter Harriet, and 201 $\frac{1}{4}$ acres to son, Blucher Rich. The latter included a homestead house on the Falmouth Road through Piner to Pendleton County.²²

1883 County Atlas: Landowners Named Rich

Relationships are generally not obvious, but the Rich name appears repeatedly in the county's magisterial District No. 5 at the southern end of the county. Samuel is seen on the east side of Independence Turnpike west of the lower branch of Cruise's Creek; Samuel Jr. is seen on the east side of the Independence Turnpike and two residences at west side of Independence Turnpike, west of lower branch of Cruises Creek; and S. Rich north of lower Cruises Creek, just south of Robert Mann.²³



Above: 1958 Board of Education (Blucher Rich front left).
Others seated are: Foreman Rudd and Clyde Hopkins.
Standing: Albert Hawes and Robert Scott.

At right: Blucher and Susan Elliott Rich home on Rich Road.
Both photos courtesy Robert E. Rich



Minnie Daugherty Kratz, then practicing in Grant and Owen counties and serving as a county health officer; Dr. Franklin Daugherty, then an intern at St. Elizabeth Hospital; as was Dentist Alfred Rich's son, Dr. James Rich. Harriet Rich Mann was the maternal great-grandmother of the Daugherty family.²⁶

Robert E. Rich: From Farm to Harvard Law School

Robert E. Rich attended the old Independence Elementary but graduated from Kenton Elementary, then Simon Kenton High School, the University of Kentucky and finally the nationally-elite Harvard Law School. He once served as State YMCA Youth Governor of Kentucky. He later served as law clerk to former governor Bert T Combs on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati.²⁷ He recently held executive positions with the Kentucky Historical Society and is on the board of directors of the Kenton County Historical Society. Descended from Stephen and Jane Blackburn's eldest son Samuel, Robert E. Rich is the son of Edward Blucher and Marjory Brooks Wentworth Rich, and grandson of Blucher and Marie Binder Rich. Growing up, Robert labored on his family's dairy farm. He now practices in the law firm of Taft, Stettinius, and Hollister.

Farming in Northern Kentucky

In Ft. Mitchell on the Dixie Highway, Henry Kruempelman's farm in the early 1990s still sold tomato plants, lettuce, and other items started very early in glassed-covered enclosures, and as the season progressed Bibb, leaf, and romaine lettuce, kale, spin-

The son of Stephen Jr., Cincinnatus Rich (born 1845), owned 25 acres. He resided between the post office and saloon at Fiskburg on the Independence Turnpike. He was a storeowner, a dealer in groceries, notions, wines, liquor, cigars, tobacco, etc., with a post office address at Fiskburg.²⁴

Joseph Rich owned 256 acres and J. D. Rich owned 70 acres at Fiskburg; Joseph Rich Jr. owned 117 acres at Key West; Joseph Sr. is seen on the east side of the Independence Turnpike above the lower branch of Cruise' Creek, south of the tobacco warehouse; and Joseph Rich is seen on an off road across the field to the west of the Independence Turnpike. William Rich is seen on east side of Independence Turnpike due west of intersection of upper and lower Cruises creek, just north of a tobacco warehouse, just south of B. S. Rich; J. D. Rich is on the east side of Independence Turnpike a short distance north of William Rich.²⁵

Physicians, Dentists

In the 1950s, among the Rich family were dentists: Dr. Stephen B. and Dr. Alfred, practicing in Covington; Dr. Albert in Williamstown; and Dr. Dwight Lambert Maddox in Walton. Medical doctors, in the middle years of the last century included: Dr. Murray L. Rich; Dr. Frank Daugherty in Independence; his brother, Dr. Harry Daugherty in Florence; Dr. J. F. Daugherty, son of Harry, Florence; Dr.

ach, turnips greens, mustard greens, and turnips, and fresh tomatoes. He also advised visitors and suburban neighbors who surrounded him about their own gardening.

Kruempelman recalled that they once fed some cattle, 150 chickens, and horses. The last of the animals, a thirty-five-year-old horse, died in the early 1970s. There was a shopping center across the highway, a motel down the highway a little, and an apartment complex next door. Henry was delivering everything over to the Castellini Co. in Cincinnati. Sometimes Kruempelman could not grow enough to satisfy Castellini. The costs of labor, fertilizer, seeds, and containers were high, especially containers. If Castellini called expeditiously, Kruempelman and family would get up at 3:00 AM, go to the field with a flashlight and cut some greens all by hand. In the midst of the dense suburban city, he could still vividly recall when a family next door milked many cows on their dairy farm when farms were everywhere.²⁸

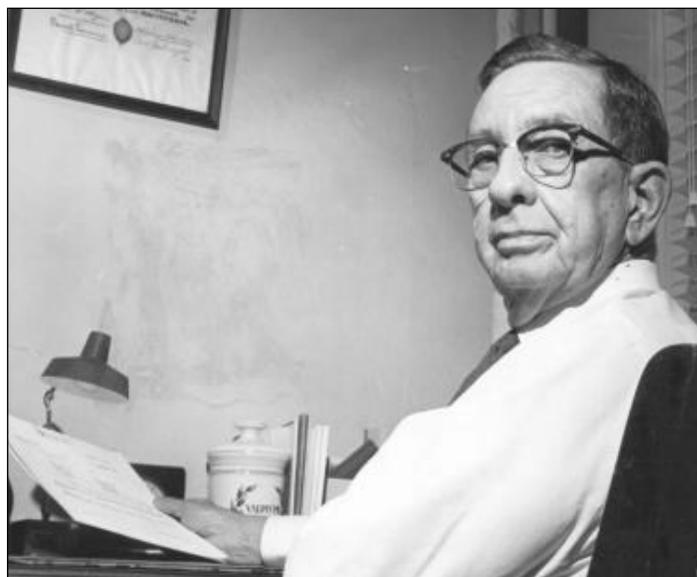
Unlike Henry Kruempelman, many Kenton County farmers moved to larger farms in Boone County, providing new opportunities for more mechanized farming, growing large fields of corn and wheat, and milking herds of Holstein dairy cattle mechanically.²⁹ After Henry's death, his survivors sold the farm on which another subdivision has been built.

County & Family Change with the Times

Around Independence, the influx of automobiles came around World War I. Telephone service started in 1903, electrical service in 1925, and a tiny post office operated in a grocery store. Businesses once included the town's tobacco warehouse, two saloons, and a grocery and dry goods store. Farmers ordered new machinery at the Independence hardware store.³⁰

In 1937, firefighters from Covington could find no adequate water supply and two deaths occurred. Soon, Independence (population about 300 in the 1950s) acquired a fire engine and dug cisterns. Business was overseen from the county's courthouse, including the duties of a town marshal and part time patrolman.

In 1961, the first public water lines and fire hydrants were installed. The county built Fire Station 2 on Cox Road in 1974 and Fire Station 3 on Richardson Road in 1976, for the 80-member volunteer department. A system of pledges funded the department until establishment of a tax district in 1979.



Top: Dr. Murray Rich

Middle: Home of Marie Binder Rich. Her parents, Edward and Mary Rich, bought the Petty Farm.

Bottom: Robert, Sally, and Susan Rich

As suburbanization continued, Independence acquired its own building for city business in the 1970s, and expanded the police department. The city grew to five square miles with a population of 2,000. New subdivisions sprung up on old farmland surrounding the city. By annexing surrounding countryside, Independence was shielding itself from the city of Covington in any annexation competition.

In 1995, a new branch of the Kenton County Public Library opened in the area (later it was replaced by the Durr Library at Nicholson).³¹

In the late 1990s, Pleasure Isle was bulldozed; Highway 17 was straightened and widened from two lanes and made to bypass the segment of old Highway 17 (Independence Pike) that passed through the county and city courthouse square and by the city's old historic buildings.³²

Kenton County's population of 159,720 in 2010 included 40,640 in Covington and 24,757 in Independence. Independence occupied the middle third of the county, the largest city in square miles.³³

Farming Continues in Kenton County

Marie Binder Rich (1897-1998) grew up on the old Petty farm on "Old Decoursey. In 1917 she married Bluch Rich and moved to the Rich farm at Piner, but after her father died she and her husband moved to part of the Binder farm on Old Decoursey that her father had acquired in a split with his two siblings from the Petty family.

The Pettys seemed to own everything along this stretch of Old Decoursey just as the Rich families owned everything along Rich Road. Her father's Catholic family came from Germany. Marie knew few German relatives. Binders were market people selling produce, also slaughtering hogs. The milk collector would start out from Ryland stopping at the Beck, Rich, Vanlandingham, Shaw, and other dairy farms.³⁴

Marie Rich's father, Edward Richard Binder, was a founder of the Kenton County Farm Bureau.³⁵ In 1926, Marie Binder Rich and Waurega Rich (circa. 1907-1993) started a girl's 4-H program at Piner



House built in 1869 by Dudley and Amanda Petty
Courtesy Faces and Places

school - teaching sewing, canning and other domestic skills. In 1930, Marie, Steve Durr, and Carl Wicklund successfully appealed to County Judge John Read for funds to pay for secretarial and travel expenses. Funding came equally from Federal, state and county sources. The normal agricultural agent oversaw the boys 4-H, in addition to his main duties advising farmers.

Marie Binder Rich celebrated her 100th birthday in 1997. On December 14, 1997, one of the three meeting rooms in the new extension office was named in honor of Marie and Zelma Byerly.³⁶

In 1994, the Kenton County Extension Service moved from the courthouses in Covington and Independence into a new building at Marshall and Taylor Mill roads in Independence. It is named the Steve W. Durr Extension Center Kenton County Office, 10990 Marshall Road Covington, KY. It has space for its seventeen workers and a meeting room capacity of 262.

Such county agencies were originally established at the turn of the century, in the heyday of American agriculture, to keep farmers up to date on modern farming practices. By 1994, the Kenton County agency and its agents was also serving mainly

urban and suburban people - homemakers, students and other residents of the county. The agency was testing soil without charge, diagnosing plant and insect diseases, proper methods for planting trees and shrubbery, and controlling insects.

The agency counted 550 farmers - only seven full time. The agency was hosting weekend camps for single parent households teaching the importance of time spent together, nutrition, and the dangers of firearms and drugs. The Extension Service was aiding 10,000 4-H students and 400 homemakers.³⁷

Endnotes

1. John Boh wrote an article on the Rich family genealogy seen in the KCHS membership newsletter (October 1993); then a second one slightly revised appeared in the Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society (June 1999). This third one is an attempt to blend the genealogy more with local history
2. Indians defeated at the Battle of Fallen Timbers under General Anthony Wayne in 1794; John Klee, "Maysville," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, edited by Paul A. Tenkotte and James C. Claypool, Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009, pp. 621-22
3. Mary Jo Dilks, Dallas, Texas, letter to Mrs. Bluch Rich, Morningview, Kentucky; Mrs. Flora Rich Maccox (sic) and Florence E. Rich, paper read at a meeting of the Christopher Gist Society, March 22, 1955; much of the latter especially is written in a speculative tone
4. *An Atlas of Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties, Kentucky, 1883*, a reprint by the Boone County Historic Preservation Office from an original copy found at the Kenton County Public Library, Mt Vernon, IN, Windmill Productions. Inc., 1992 pp. 22, 23
5. Copy of letter from Wendell O'Neal Rich, Logan, Utah, April 29, 1943
6. Crystal Harden, "Pioneer, Morman Honored at Home near Big Bone Lick," K P, Sept. 24, 1991
7. Researched and written by Mrs. Flora Rich Maccox (sic) and Florence E. Rich and read at a monthly meeting of the Christopher Gist Society, March 22, 1955
8. Richard H. Collins, *History of Kentucky*, original work by Lewis Collins, updated to 1874 by said Richard Collins, Vol. II, Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Historical Society
9. Mrs. Flora Rich Maccox (sic) and Florence E. Rich; a letter from Mary Jo Dilks of Dallas, Texas to Mrs. Bluch (Marie Binder) Rich (date lost); Information comes from family oral traditions, family genealogists who are not always absolutely sure.
10. *Atlas*, p. 35
11. *Atlas*, p. 35
12. The *Atlas* shows land belonging to "Rich Heirs" south of Persimmon Grove in present-day Campbell County Atlas, p. 67; website: "Kenton County Goshen Cemetery"
13. *Atlas*, p. 35
14. *Atlas*, p. 35 and list of Atlas patrons, District No. 1, p. 45
15. *Atlas*, p. 35; Mrs. Flora Rich Maccox (sic) and Florence E. Rich
16. Dilks to Mrs. Bluch (Marie Binder) Rich
17. Dean of Girls, photo, "Lest We Forget," Holmes H. S. Yearbook; teacher, Holmes H. S., residence 412 Garrard, 1938-39 street directory; Marjory Rich, student, Murray Rich, student, John Lally Rich, 412 Garrard, 1920-21 street directory
18. Interview of Waurege McNay Rich by John Boh, 1988; The original railroad depot was situated on the western side of the tracks, just south of Rich Road, while a fine hotel was established on the eastern

- side of the tracks just a hundred yards to the north; Robert D. Webster, "Tidbits of History Surrounding the Piner/Fiskburg/Morning View Region of Southern Kenton County," Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society, November/December 2015
19. Mrs. Flora Rich Maccox (sic) and Florence E. Rich
 20. Mrs. Flora Rich Maccox and Florence E. Rich
 21. Independence Courthouse, Inventory Book 1, pp. 126-131, Nov. 29, 1843
 22. *Atlas*, p. (37); Independence Courthouse, Inventory Book 4, p. 575, Dec. 3, 1860
 23. *Atlas*, p. 51
 24. *Atlas* pp. 48, 50 and 51
 25. *Atlas*, p. 50
 26. Flora Rich Maccox (sic) and Florence E. Rich, March 22, 1955, Christopher Gist Papers
 27. Email from Robert E. Rich
 28. John Boh "Reminiscences of the Kruempelman Farm, Fort Mitchell Kentucky," Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society, September 2002
 29. Gabrielle Summe, "Dairies," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, pp. 254, 255
 30. Interview Ben Rivard, December 20, 1988, by John Boh
 31. Dedication program, Independence Branch, Kenton County Public Library, May 21, 1995; Wayne Onkst, "Kenton Co. Public Library," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, pp. 508, 509
 32. Chris Meiman, "Pleasure Isle Swim Club," *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, pp. 718, 719
 33. "Kenton County, Kentucky," "Independence, Kentucky"; Wikipedia
 34. Marie Binder Rich, interview by John Boh, December 12, 1988; Marie Binder Rich, spouse of Bluch Rich (died 1969), daughter of Edward Richard Binder and Mary Schneider who bought the Petty Road farm; Robert E. Rich
 35. Email from Robert E. Rich
 36. Robert Rich, "Marie Rich - Homemaker/Community builder," presentation at ceremony that honored his grandmother Marie Rich and others at the Cooperative Extension building, Dec. 14 1997
 37. Connie Remlinger, "Kenton Agency Moves into New Headquarters," KP, June 3, 1994, p. 11A

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A Lonely Phone Booth

Mick Warman

This is the third in our series of interviews with Vietnam vets from Kenton County. Military life is a unique experience. Put two veterans at a table and you will hear stories. We would like to revive and preserve some of the stories that would never be included in the history books. Some will be first-hand accounts, others will be oral histories which have been transcribed and edited. This edition comes from Mick Warman, Covington Catholic High School class of 1964. Special thanks are once again extended to our own Al Murphy, the veteran sitting on the other side of the table in each of these stories.

Anyone who has ever served in the military will understand how, through no fault of my own, I began my tour in Vietnam as a Chaplain's Assistant. No qualifications. No training. No nothing... except availability.

I arrived in Vietnam in January of 1969, and soon thereafter began serving as a Chaplain's Assistant. The chaplain I worked with provided services in the I Corps (variously spoken as either the High Corps, or the Eye Corps) and II Corps (universally spoken as Two Corps) areas. I accompanied the chaplain; technically I was his security detachment, in a jeep to five or six different military locations. The circuit was about 50 miles in length, mainly in the coastal areas in what I would describe as the south central part of South Vietnam. The northernmost post was a US base at Ninh Hoa. About 50 miles to the south was the huge airfield and base at Cam Ranh Bay. Our physical home was the 21st Signal Group headquartered in Nha Trang. Whenever the chaplain traveled outside this circuit, he would be transported by helicopter, but I did not accompany him during those trips.

On most Saturdays we would go out to Hon Tre Island in the Bay of Nha Trang. There was a little seaport on the south side of the bay that was used to shuttle supply trucks and troops back-and-forth to the island of Hon Tre. The north side of the bay was

primarily used by the Vietnamese fishing fleet, which was, and still is, a major part of their economy.

We would leave pretty early in the morning, drive the jeep over the sand and up into the landing craft to go to the is-



Mick Warman

land. It was only maybe a 10 or 15 minute boat ride out to the island. It's kind of weird with all the different rules that apply in the military, but I would usually drive on these trips. The chaplain had to drive in the cities, on the big military bases, and when we were on the roads between stops. He did not carry a weapon, but I did. However, the port area was secure enough that, even if I carried a weapon, it was probably in the back of the jeep. The chaplain was usually happy to have me drive anytime it was possible.

We would exit the landing craft at the base of the mountain on Hon Tre. There was some kind of Special Forces training area there, and also a US Military Police area and dog team quarters on that part of the island. The island was a shared piece of geography. It was a pretty big island and it was not entirely guarded like many U.S. bases. The dog teams were a major part of the security around the base. A Vietnamese naval academy installation was in the same general area, but we never did anything in their area.

Our first stop was always for the chaplain to conduct a service in the Special Forces area for anyone in those U.S. camps. There would typically be about a dozen or so guys at this service. After that morning service we would drive up a little dirt road to our signal site, which was maybe three quarters of the way up the mountain. This site handled much of the communications in the I Corps and II Corps areas. As might be expected, the signal site provided a terrif-

ic view of the city of Nha Trang and the surrounding area. So, we would normally hang around until early evening when the chaplain would deliver mass at the signal site. On a good day, we might get eight or 10 guys for that service. We would usually spend the night at the signal site, sleeping in whatever rack was available from the guys working the night shift. We would return to the mainland on Sunday morning.

On this one occasion, instead of idling our time between services, the chaplain told me that we had been invited to drive up to the top of the mountain for a visit. Neither the chaplain nor I had ever been up there before and we had no idea what to expect. The one lane road to the top ended on this big, open plateau. I saw some antennas and things, but no buildings of any sort. Then, I noticed a little structure out in the middle of that open field. From a distance, it looked like a telephone booth out in the middle of that field... on the top of that mountain... in a bay on the South China Sea... on the coast of South Vietnam. It was really weird-looking. We just glanced back and forth at each other with puzzled looks on our faces. As we approached, it was actually a little bigger than we originally thought, maybe about three feet wide by six feet deep by about six feet tall - a double phone booth.

We banged on this steel door and some Air Force guy opened the door and invited us in. We were standing at the top of a stairwell that goes nowhere but down. There were lights, but it was noticeably darker than outside. It was quiet, but with a bit of a buzz. As we went down the steps, we realize we were in an amphitheater, maybe like a high school gym cut in half. Instead of bleachers, there are 10 or 15 guys in four or five descending rows. Each guy was wearing a headset and studying some kind of electronic radar or communication console. There were several large screens on the wall opposite the consoles, with blinking lights and tracking lines all over the maps. Well, apparently these guys were sitting there coordinating every kind of Air Force activity all over South Vietnam. It was obviously a major communications center.

I was totally amazed by what I saw, almost like star struck. We were only there for a few minutes, and I really don't remember much about it. It seems



that it was all Air Force guys working there. I'm sure that it was staffed 24/7, but I guess they must have been billeted under that mountain because our unit was all army, and I don't recall any significant Air Force presence down at the bottom.

After a few minutes of gawking in disbelief, we went back up the stairs and out through the metal door. I scanned the whole plateau and there was nothing else up there. There were some radio and radar antennas, but nothing more significant than what we had at our signal site. There were absolutely no other buildings. I'm sure there must have been some ventilation systems and maybe some other stuff to support that facility, but I saw no evidence of that or any construction of any kind.

We drove back down the mountain and were immediately back to our routine. The chaplain did his service for our signal area. We stayed there that night and went back across the bay on Sunday morning. As usual, he did a Sunday service at a church at the First Field Force headquarters in Nha Trang. After that we fell back into our usual circuit. Although I made several more trips to Hon Tre Island, I never again visited that lonely phone booth on the top of the mountain.

Mick Warman
Covington Catholic High School
Class of 1964

Then and Now



Left: "Latonia" racecourse in nearby Florence, Kentucky, circa 1960. Right: "Turfway Park," 2009.

Left image courtesy Turfway Park / right image courtesy D.A. Brown, descendant of Thomas and Frances Kennedy

Mystery Photo

Can you identify the Mystery Photo? The answer is found below.



Answer:

Steeple of Saint Augustine Church in the Peaselburg section of Covington

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President..... Robert Webster
Vice-President..... Karl Lietzenmayer
Treasurer..... W. Terry Averbeck
Secretary..... John H. Boh

Board Members: Travis Brown,
Elaine Kuhn, Dr. Jodie Mader,
Robert Rich, Iris Spoor, and Joe Weber

Welcome New Board Members

Dr. Jodie Mader PH. D. loves local history and is enthused about being elected to the Board. A native of Fort Thomas, she has a B.A. in History from Thomas More College, M.A. in History from UC, and a PhD in History from UK. Since 2009 she has been an Assistant Professor of History at TMC and Phi Alpha Theta/History Club co-advisor. She teaches World Civilizations and several upper-level courses.

Joe Weber is social studies teacher at Newport Central Catholic High School, the National Honor Society Moderator, Mock Trial Moderator, and is a current member of the Behringer Crawford Museum Board of Trustees. Joe states he is interested in helping the Society at various events and contributing by writing articles.

Travis Brown is a retired police officer and has worked in several departments in Northern Kentucky, including the Kentucky State Police at Dry Ridge. He is active with the Northern Kentucky Heritage League and enjoys the Society's Newsletter articles, and may submit his own pieces. He earned his master's of public administration from NKU and has been an adjunct professor at XU since 2015.

Programs and Notices

Kenton County Historical Society

On Saturday, November 10th Mr. Terry Lehmann will speak and show slides about "**The Green Line in Kenton County, 1867-1971**," at 10:30 a.m. in the Kenton County Public Library - Erlanger Branch. Lehmann is well-qualified as the co-author with the late Earl W. Clark, Jr. of *The Green Line, The Cincinnati, Newport & Covington Railway, An Illustrated History of Public Transit in Northern Kentucky* - 240 pages long including numerous photos, illustrations, images, as well as appendices and an index.

For the centennial year of the death of Covington-born artist **Frank Duveneck**, a presentation by author and expert James Ott is being scheduled in February, 1919. Duveneck trained in Covington, Cincinnati, and in Germany. He became a nationally-acclaimed artist, praised by novelist Henry James and so many others. He became a popular art teacher in Munich and Bavaria and at the Art Academy in Cincinnati. His paintings are seen at nationally-prestigious art museums and locally at the Taft and Cincinnati Art Museums. The Kenton County Library has a collection as well. He resided in Covington in his later years and is buried in Mother of God Cemetery. In February, come hear the speaker, a recent biographer of Duveneck.

Behringer Crawford Museum

The opening of the **2018 Holiday Toy Trains**, Wiley Wahoo's Winter Wonderland and the Dickens Village exhibit will be on Saturday, November 10th. It will be the 27th year for the museum's holiday trains running now on 250 feet of track "through busy cities and snowy countryside." Wiley Wahoo's Winter Wonderland is an animated exhibit based on the children's book by Kenton Hills author Diana Grady. The Dickens Village exhibit will again show hundreds of miniature, hand-painted, ceramic mansions, shops and figurines, all lit and decorated for the holidays.

Likewise, on November 10, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., Dennis Smith will display and discuss his collection of **historic White House Christmas cards**, including those sent to White House and foreign embassy staffs. Smith will also show a collection of White House holiday ornaments.

See the Behringer Crawford museum website for the holiday schedule of a variety of special, some first-time, holiday programs, demonstrations and events for children and also adults. They will include the Hills of Kentucky Dulcimer, carolers in Victorian dress and dance demonstrations and workshops for children. A New Year's Eve celebration will teach party crafts, and provide games and snacks for children and the whole family on December 31st from 10:30 a. m. to 1:00 p. m. During the holidays, citizens of some Northern Kentucky cities, by arrangements with Behringer Crawford, will get free admission on a special "night" or "day."