

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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KCHS MEETING

DATE Tuesday, November 9

PLACE Kenton City Library

5th & Scott, Cov.

TIME 7 PM

PROGRAM Found: Indians in
Kenton County!

This is the second in a series of
presentations by the Library's
week-long Portraits of the Past.

Refreshments will be provided.

Bulletin

November 1999

From the Program Coordinator.....

You won't want to miss the exciting program this month! Raye McDonald, a Cherokee descendant, will talk about the history of the American Indians who resided in Kenton County. She will also discuss the "Trail of Tears" and an update of the status of the American Indian in the '90s.

It's just in time for America's commemoration of the first thanksgiving by the Pilgrims and American Indians. It will be food for great discussion at your Thanksgiving dinner table, so bring your family, your children and grandchildren, for this program.

Mark December 14 on your calendar for the KCHS Christmas party at Trinity Church with live music!

The other Library programs will be of interest to you history and genealogy buffs.

Monday Nov. 8

Finding Missing Persons/Adoptions

Presented by Mike Sweeney, experienced genealogist. Techniques for finding missing persons and birth parents will be discussed.

Wednesday, Nov. 10

Genealogy ONLINE!

Pam Cary Durstock, expert genealogist and genealogy webmaster, will demonstrate Web tools used in doing genealogical research. This presentation has been extremely popular and well-attended in the past.

Thursday, Nov. 11

A History of the Fort Thomas Military Installation

As part of a celebration of Veteran's Day and in conjunction with the monthly meeting of the Campbell County Historical Society, local history author Betty Daniels will describe the development and history of the military installation in Fort Thomas.

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

Covington Fraternal Hall has Odd History

by Jim Reis

The following article was published in the Kentucky Post November 26, 1984. Ownership of the building is the same, and the prospects for its preservation haven't changed.

It's easy to walk past the Covington Odd Fellows Hall with out noticing it.

Anchoring a busy northeast corner of Fifth Street and Madison Avenue, the mammoth structure fits snugly into the city block like a piece of a puzzle.

It has not always been that obscure.

More than 10,000 mourners once filed through the building to pay their respects to an assassinated leader.

Temperance and woman suffrage leaders held rallies there as did Union General Ulysses S. Grant.

Kenton County's best-known senator was driven out of Covington and into exile after being pelted with rotten eggs while speaking there.

Peepholes cut in doors and a secret room, hidden along a stairway, gave rise to stories of smuggled slaves and gambling activities.

Two Covington banks started in the building.

And one of the most famous bank robbery teams of the 1800s once tried to crack a safe there.

More recently, the whir of roller skates filled its rooms and false teeth were manufactured there.

Today, the large ballroom, meeting halls and cubicles on the second and third floors are empty.

The only life in the 3 1/2 - building is a series of small shops [dance clubs] on the first floor on Madison Avenue.

The building's cornerstone laid April 12, 1856.

Amos Shinkle, a Covington philanthropist and the man who for

the Suspension Bridge, was among its backers. Shinkle was a deputy grand master of the Kentucky Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows.

The Odd Fellows is a secret society with a system of rites and passwords. The society's main purpose is to give aid, assistance and comfort to members and their families.

With roots dating back to the 1700s in England, the Odd Fellows remains one of the largest fraternal and benevolent organizations in the United States.

The cornerstone ceremonies were marked by a grand parade through the streets of Covington. Placed inside the cornerstone were a Bible, coins, Northern and Farmers Bank bills, names of officers of the Odd Fellow Hall Association, a list of lodge and encampment officers, a copy of the lodge publication, *The Odd Fellows Casket*, that day's *Covington Journal* and facts and figures on Covington. in 1856.

About 18 months later, the building was completed.

Some believe the building was designed by John Roebling, the designer of the Suspension Bridge. They point

to the building's radical suspension design and to Roebling's later relationship with Shinkle.

The building has no interior supports. The weight rests on the outside walls, which are two feet thick. The third floor is suspended from rods running down from the attic.

A copper-lined tank encircles the top of the building. It was designed to catch about 1,300 gallons of rainwater. The water was piped to the various rooms in the building. The building's size made it impractical to carry in water, which was the general practice at the time.

The building was described as a "beautiful temple" in an October 24, 1857 newspaper story chronicling the dedication ceremonies. The activities were described as "the most imposing display of the kind ever witnessed in Covington."

The story went on to say, "the lower story is divided into business rooms, five in number, all of which are occupied. The Deposit Bank, the Post Office, Cropper and Curtis's Book Store, F. S. Case's Medicine and Perfumery Depot, and J. M. Fisher's Family Grocery."

The Deposit Bank had been organized about five months earlier.

The second floor concert room soon became the place to hold important meetings and events.

Among the more notable events was a major temperance meeting, organized by Thomas F. Marshall on April 17, 1858, and a Union Party rally, held on October 29, 1860.

The temperance meeting was ballyhooed in advance by the Covington Journal as a "must." But reviewers were less than thrilled with the actual event, later terming it "Hum bug."

The Constitutional Union Party was formed that same year, touting U. S. Senator John Bell of Tennessee for



The 143-year old Odd Fellows Hall at Fifth and Madison, Covington, Kentucky

Church after the church building burned. And, in 1922, woman suffrage leader Jeanette Rankin held a rally there.

The Odd Fellows Hall also was the site of a series of boxing matches in the 1920s and 1930s. A ring was set up in the center of the third floor lodge hall and banked seats were installed around the ring.

The 1940s brought the Covington Roller Rink, which was located in the second floor concert hall. It operated until about 1958, when the present owner, Doris Kappas, and her late husband, Theodore, bought the building.

The marks left by the roller skates still can be seen on the floor and the handrails are still in place.

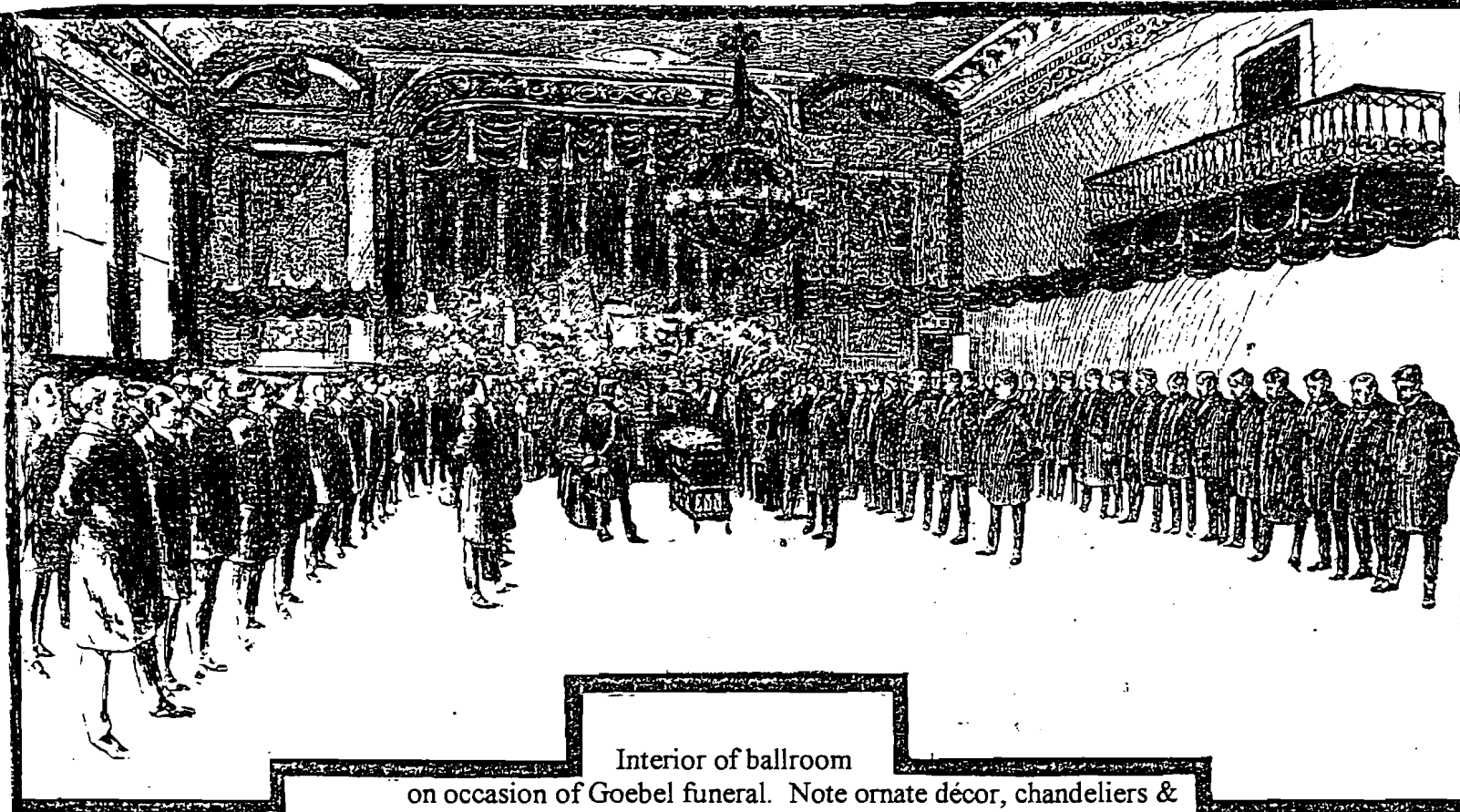
And just off the main room, where they used to rent skates, a chalkboard still lists times and dates for the girls' and boys' speed clubs. Joyce Egan is listed as the girls' captain and Jack Armstrong as the boys' captain.

During the same period, a dental lab operated on the half-floor. Mrs. Kappas said they found a lot of false teeth when they bought the building.

Since 1958, the second and third floors, and the floor between them, have remained empty. Today's fire and safety standards would require extensive renovation.

Mrs. Kappas said she would like to renovate the building, but the

cost has postponed any such plans. "It's a shame that it has to be this way," Mrs. Kappas said, "The building actually is still in good shape and it would be a shame if it can't be restored."



Interior of ballroom on occasion of Goebel funeral. Note ornate décor, chandeliers & balcony now removed.

Dear Editor:

My interest is due to my [ancestor] coming to what is now Kenton County in the 1790s. His name was John Winston and he was born in Louisa County, Virginia in 1748. He came to Kentucky with seven slaves who were evidently versed in the building trades as they built a brick house in 1804 on a hill between Bank Lick Creek and the Licking River. The house was an imposing structure and was torn down sometime after 1945. John had 10 children by two wives, Sabella Moseby and Elizabeth Noble. The oldest son, Samuel, was, I believe, a lawyer. Joseph, the 3rd son was born in 1794 and married Sarah Grant Lemond a great niece of Daniel Boone. John's brother, Joseph was the Winston who fought in the Battle of Kings Mountain. Because of his valor he was awarded a sword by NC and the town of Winston was named in his honor. It is now Winston-Salem. I am still researching the family and am looking for the site of the house mentioned above. If anyone can help me in this I would appreciate it.

John Winston is buried in a cemetery on Decoursey Pike called the Winston or Redmond cemetery. Also in this cemetery is a monument to William Horsfall who was a medal of honor winner in the Civil War. This cemetery is in a very bad state of repair which, in my opinion, is a shame, as this is an important part of Kenton County history.

Glenn Winston;
gwin107<gwin107@citcom.net>

Dear Editor:

As a long time member of the Society, I was interested to read the article concerning the Monte Casino area of Covington.

Back in 1936/7 when I was a freshman at Holmes High School, our biology teacher had us make a collection of wild flowers. My girlfriend and I trudged out Highland Pike and up the hill into the Monte Casino area. We had never been there, but we found lots of wild flowers. In our search we ran into the large brick building where the brothers lived, the little church, and several large black dogs. We panicked at the sight and sound of the barking dogs, but a friendly brother came out to greet us. He gave us permission to stay, and to visit the little church. It was open, and that was the only time I was ever in the church, but I remember it well.

Your article brought back the memories of that visit, and I always felt we were privileged to have been there, even though it was strictly accidental.

Just thought you might be interested in a first person account.

Edythe Nichols
Parks Hills, Kentucky

**Northern Kentucky University
Military History Lecture Series
Fall Season**

Patton Trooper: "I was There"

A talk by Charles F. Hinds
Kentucky State Librarian (retired)

Date: Wednesday, Nov. 10
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: BEP Building 200

Refreshments to follow presentation. For more information call: (606) 572-5461

Victorian Christmas Tour

The Mansion Hill Neighborhood Association hosts its Ninth Annual Victorian Christmas Tour on December 4-5, 1999, in Newport, Kentucky. The tour, which is sponsored by the East Row Historic District, the second largest local historic district in Kentucky. Newport was founded in 1795.

Each of the six homes will feature holiday music including a few live performances of local musicians. Many homeowners and greeters will be dressed in costumes echoing the late 19th century. Free carriage rides will be available from 1-5 p.m. Sunday, December 5.

Tickets are \$8 per person and can be purchased at the Wiedemann Mansion, 401 Park Avenue, during tour hours. Group tickets may be purchased in advanced but are non-refundable. For information, call 513-588-4600.

Tours support Echo, a soup kitchen, and other community projects.

president. The Democrats were split into northern and southern factions and the Republicans were nominating a radical named Abraham Lincoln.

Sponsoring the Union Party rally was Charles S. Morehead, a former Kentucky congressman and governor who practiced law in Covington.

The Covington Post Office moved out of the Odd Fellows Hall in July 1862. Its new location was the southwest corner of Sixth and Madison.

The loss of a major tenant was offset in January 1865 when the First National Bank of Covington opened. Amos Shinkle was bank president.

First National's stay at Fifth and Madison lasted 10 years. Its eventual move may have been prompted by a nighttime visit.

Late on April 2, 1875, members of the Scott-Dunlap gang, a flashy burglary ring, got into the second floor concert hall. They sawed through the floor and joists into the bank vault below.

After the flooring was removed, they discovered a layer of bricks and cement, which they also removed. Once inside the vault, they still had to tackle the safe.

Witnesses later said they heard a muffled explosion between 4 and 5 a.m. No one knew where it came from and the police weren't called.

The burglars however, didn't know this.

Figuring police would arrive in minutes, the safecrackers scrambled out of the vault, up through the hole in the floor and out of the building.

They not only didn't get into the safe, but they also left behind their tools, valued at more than \$500.

The attempted burglary wasn't discovered until after 6 a.m. when an employee opened the bank.

The explosion damaged the safe lock, but didn't open it. It took a safe expert until 4 O'clock that afternoon to open the damaged lock. To the relief of bank officials, they found the safe contents jostled a bit, but the

\$10,000 to \$15,000 undamaged.

It was less than three weeks later that the bank announced the purchase of the old Moreland stables in the 500 block of Madison. A new bank building soon went up there.

A story later in the year said the Odd Fellows were reopening their library, which had been closed for repairs. Its 2,000 books could be borrowed for up to two weeks for an annual fee of \$2. A penalty of 2 cents a day was levied for overdue books.

During the 1870s, the Odd Fellows Hall was the center of several special events.

During the summer of 1875, General John M Harlan and Col. J. B. McCreary, the Republican and Democratic candidates for governor, held rallies there.

General Green Clay Smith, the Prohibition Party nominee for president spoke before a packed house on August 12, 1876. And on July 4, Covington author Richard H. Collins presented an historical sketch of Covington as part of the celebration of the American centennial.

President Ulysses S. Grant, whose father was a Covington postmaster, also is said to have spoken at the Odd Fellows Hall at a rally after the Civil War.

A politician who found the Odd Fellows Hall less than hospitable was John G. Carlisle. Carlisle, for whom a Covington school is named, was a Kenton County native who rose to political prominence as a U. S. senator and U. S. Secretary of the Treasury. While his fame grew nationally, Carlisle fell into local disfavor over his opposition to a new Ohio River bridge at Covington. The public disdain was such that when he returned to Covington in 1896 to give a speech on the gold standard, Carlisle was literally driven off the Odd Fellows stage by rotten eggs.

Another Covington politician tied tragically to the Odd Fellows was William Goebel. A controversial figure,

Goebel was a newspaperman and a Democratic Party kingpin. One of his longtime opponents was Thomas L. Sanford, director of the Lexington Turnpike Company and cashier and chief officer of Covington Farmers and Traders Bank. In 1895, the two men had met by chance on the steps of the First National Bank Building. Heated words were exchanged and each went for a gun. Sanford was killed.

Goebel went on to run for governor in 1900 and had apparently lost the election. But the results were contested and the Democratic legislature threw the election to Goebel. Before he could be sworn in, he was shot and died from his wounds.

Goebel's body was brought back to Covington where it lay in state in the second floor concert room in the Odd Fellows Hall. It was estimated that more than 10,000 people walked through the ballroom to pay their respects.

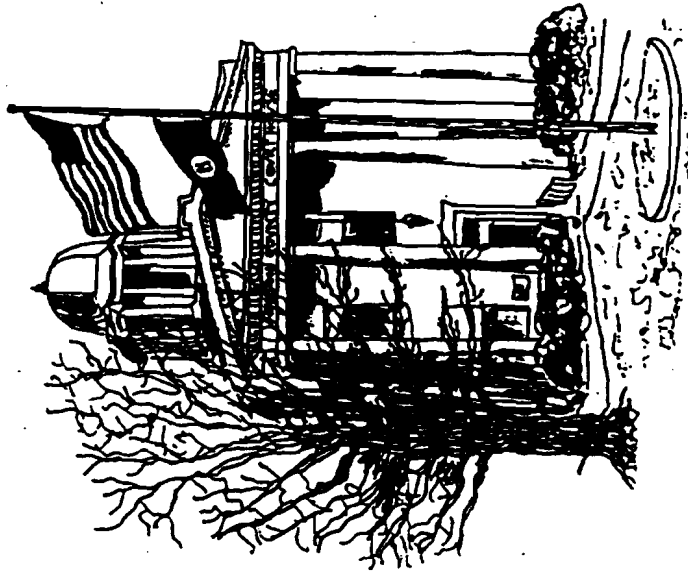
In 1916, the hall served as the temporary home of the First Baptist



An ornate staircase that now leads to an empty floor.

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INSIDE:
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Dedicated to preserving our heritage as the "Gateway to the South"