



Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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September/October

2020



GUS. W. MENNINGER
Under taker
AND
Em balmer
OFFICE OPEN DAY AND NIGHT
COVINGTON OFFICE: 66 and 68 PIKE STREET | NEWPORT OFFICE: 609 York St. Thos. H. Gileson, ASSISTANT
W. L. SCOTT, } ASSISTANTS
H. WORDEMAN, }
—BRANCH AT LUDLOW, KY.—
AMOS TEED, Assistant in Charge.
TELEPHONE 4027

GUS. W. MENNINGER,
(SUCCESSOR TO SWETNAM & SCOTT.)
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Open Day and Night.
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August W. "Gus" Menninger

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August W. “Gus” Menninger

Travis Brown

August W. Menninger, better known as “Gus,” was born in Covington, Kentucky, April 4, 1866, to Wilhelm Adam and Johanna M. Gehner Menninger. During his lifetime, Menninger wore many hats including that of an undertaker, revenue agent, coroner, alderman, politician, insurance salesman, and socialite. At one time, he held interim appointments as both the Kenton County Coroner and Mayor of Covington. Around the turn of the twentieth century, he was one of the best-known Covingtonians, characterized both as an icon and at times, a scoundrel.

Gus’ father, Wilhelm, operated a tinner’s shop. In 1884, the Covington Business Directory listed his shop at 716 Madison Avenue, with Gus working as his clerk.¹ By 1888, Wilhelm moved the business to 712 Madison, but Gus no longer worked for him.²

Around this time, Gus left home, started a family, and chose a new career. He married Bertha Pauline Deglow, who soon gave birth to their only son, Elmore William Menninger, on August 23, 1889. Gus’ vocation as an undertaker started the following year.

Undertaker, Embalmer, and Funeral Director

By 1890, Gus worked under the flag of Newport undertaker Thomas Gideon, as the front man of a funeral home and livery stable in Covington. The 1890 Covington Business Directory listed Gus’s trade as “Undertaker and Embalmer;” also, “Livery and Boarding Stable,” 66 and 68 Pike; Residence, 618 Washington; Independent of the Undertakers Union; Telephone 4027.³

Menninger first appeared in the local news on April 4, 1890. Reports claimed five coffins recently stolen from the Cincinnati Crematory appeared at Menninger’s funeral home. Allegedly, a gang of thieves, led by Barney Bloom, stole eight coffins from

the crematory. Although authorities recovered three coffins soon after the theft, the other five found their way to into Menninger’s shop. The most expensive coffin, ornately finished, already interred the remains of a Dr. Schmuck of Covington.

Under suspicion and facing jail, the gang schemed to recover the coffin by digging up the doctor’s remains under cover of darkness. Participants unearthed the grave and replaced the coffin with one of similar construction. After reinterring the new coffin, Bloom and a coconspirator got drunk and were later arrested on the streets of Cincinnati, while in route to the crematory with the coffin.

The article printed Menninger’s account of the events as well. He claimed that Bloom approached William Abbott, his embalmer, with four coffins for sale. Bloom said he obtained the coffins as a payment for an outstanding debt from an undertaker in New Trenton, Indiana. Menninger agreed to store the coffins, temporarily, as he had no immediate need for them. Menninger, when learning of the theft from the crematory, became suspicious and demanded Bloom remove them from his business. Ultimately, neither Menninger nor Abbott faced criminal charges.⁴

Menninger, now an established undertaker, moved into the political realm in the early 1890s. A harbinger of his upcoming strife with fellow undertakers took place on July 19, 1894. Henry Linnemann, co-founder of Linnemann and Moore Funeral Home, engaged in a heated argument with Menninger over an upcoming election. Linnemann said Menninger only registered as a Democrat to vote in the election for mayoral candidate, Joseph Rhinock, accusing Menninger of garnering political favor to receive an appointment as coroner.

Linnemann believed no undertaker (he himself being one) should be a coroner and compared Menninger and all others in the profession to rob-

bers. Linnemann challenged Menninger to “put on the gloves” but Gus declined. Linnemann offered a wager of \$1,000 to Menninger over the results of the election, believing that Rhinock’s challenger, Tarvin, would win. Again, Gus declined.⁵ Rhinock, in fact, won that election.

In the mid 1890s, Menninger became one of the biggest undertakers and liverymen in Covington. While, in 1890, Menninger appeared in the business listings as Thomas Gideon’s assistant at 609 York, Newport, by 1895 Menninger now listed Gideon as *his* assistant and in 1905, Gus’ name alone appeared in advertising at the York Street facility. He opened a third location in Ludlow, operated by Amos Teed.⁶

Politician and Tax Man

Undeniably, Menninger was a resolute self-promoter who liked publicity. He apparently had friends in the newspaper business who assisted with elevating his name, as he appeared many times in the *Kentucky Post* from 1895 to 1914. Articles endorsing his candidacy for Covington city alderman read as if Menninger worked on the editorial staff. Consider this example from an article dated October 8, 1895:⁷

“No man in Covington is better known than Gus Menninger, the poor man’s friend, who, it is claimed, in the face of the most violent opposition from the Undertaker’s Trust, has broken down the opposition, greatly reduced the cost of funeral expenses, both in this city and in Newport, and stands as the embodiment of ‘equal right and exact justice for all.’”

The paper reported on Election Day, November 5, 1895, that Menninger used his livery ambulance to transport sick and decrepit voters to the polls.⁸ The positive press undoubtedly helped Menninger win the election. Further evidence of his friendliness with the newspaper staff appeared the following day:⁹

“Gus Menninger is an alderman now. He came out of the election with flying colors. Gus has a good face. The *Post* knew it and printed a picture of him three times during the course of the campaign.”

Coincidentally (or not), in December 1895, the Kenton County Fiscal Court awarded Menninger a contract for burying the county’s pauper dead. The fiscal court believed Menninger’s offer to be lowest and best, choosing his bid over others from the Glyndmeyer Brothers, Wilke and Smith, and Wilen.¹⁰

As an elected official, Menninger often attended local high-profile political events. In October 1895, he sat on a planning committee, along with other Democratic Party leaders, for the reception of presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. This reception, staged at Park Place, featured a platform with electric lighting, decorations by Dr. Wise, and oratory by Mr. Bryan.¹¹

One of the most dramatic political incidents of Gus’s term as alderman involved debate over the appointing of a Covington Street Cleaning Overseer. Menninger and others opposed the appointment of anyone to oversee street cleaning as the position came with too much power. The appointment came up for a vote in a joint session of the city council on September 28th. Only two alderman (three were needed for a quorum) presented themselves when the meeting came to order. Needing another alderman, the Sergeant at Arms left the proceeding and returned with Menninger an hour and a half later. When Menninger attempted to leave during the vote, the Sergeant at Arms detained him. Menninger refused to vote but after seven ballots, John Darenkamp finally won the office¹² and was sworn in later that day.¹³

Sometime between 1897 and 1903, Menninger either lost his reelection bid for alderman or chose not to run again. In 1901, he expressed some interest to the press in becoming sheriff, but ultimately sat out that election. He did, however, become the Kenton County Tax Assessor in 1900, either by election or appointment. With this experience on his resume, on January 2, 1904, he received a commission from the Kentucky State Auditor as Revenue Agent for Kenton County. He soon received that same commission for Campbell County as well.

Menninger was a busy man in 1904, running his undertaking and livery business at 66 Pike Street while collecting tax revenues for the Commonwealth.

As Revenue Agent, he often filed civil actions against delinquent businesses and persons in court. His first major civil case involved suing all local branches of national banks in Covington for back taxes. The revenue office claimed national banks owed back state and local taxes on unreported profits generated from appreciating bank stocks.

He lost his revenue commissions by 1909 and his political aspirations faded. He made one last effort to return to elected office by running once again for Kenton County Commissioner for the 2nd District. He lost his bid in the Democratic Party Primary to F. Owen Sheridan, who went on to win the seat in the general election.¹⁴

Social Events, Burglary, and a New Home

Menninger usually kept a full social calendar. He remained active with both the Knights of Pythias and the Elks. In 1896, the Kentucky Chapter of the Knights of Pythias held their annual state meeting in Covington. During the festivities, state chapters competed in a militaresque drill contest at the Ludlow Lagoon. U.S. Army officers judged the competition. Menninger promised to “banquet” at his expense, any of the local chapters winning a prize.¹⁵

Later that year, Menninger took part in organizing a memorial service for recently deceased members of the Covington Elks. The event filled all of the seats at the Oddfellows’ Hall. Palms and flowers decorated the stage while guest speakers, singers, and other musical performers paid homage to three recently departed honorees.¹⁶

On July 22, the *Kentucky Post* reported that two men, “Baldy” Egan and “Bug” Holliday, attempted to gain entry into Gus Menninger’s home located at 52 Pike Street. Covington Police Officer Hughes received a complaint of two suspicious characters lingering around the rear of the Menninger residence. Upon arrival, Officer Hughes located both Egan and Holliday lurking on the premises. Investigators discovered a damaged screen door and quickly determined the two men had attempted an illegal entry. Police charged the two men with trespassing. Later convicted, both men received fifty-day sentences in the Workhouse.¹⁷

In May, 1904, Gus bought the Worthington Estate at 76 W. 4th Street for \$8500. He renamed the estate “The Elmore,” presumably in honor of his son, Elmore, and invested time and money into improvements.¹⁸ Gus hosted large gala events at the estate including a “Dutch Lunch” in 1906. Guests enjoyed the spacious lawn under a grape arbor, brilliantly illuminated under electric lights, with entertainment by Barcher’s Troubadour Orchestra.¹⁹

Union Mutual Benefit Company

In December 1900, Menninger founded the Union Mutual Benefit Company, a provider of burial insurance. The object of the company appeared in its constitution, which the *Kentucky Post* published on several occasions:

“The purpose and object of this company is to extend this system of insurance to the protection of its patrons in the hour of their greatest need. It insures the expense of decent and becoming burial to those who subscribe to its contracts so low as to burden no one.”

Menninger made himself both secretary and treasurer of the company, but provided for the yearly election of the trust’s president. Shareholders paid a one-time initiation fee of ten cents. After that, the member paid a monthly fee of fifteen cents. One could insure more family members for an additional monthly fee. Those covered received a guaranteed \$100 burial immediately after payment of the initiation fee.²⁰

Union Mutual advertised by publishing positive testimonials in the newspaper, touting it had funded over eighty local burials. The company suffered a few setbacks, however. Difficulties included law suits and at least one negative door-to-door flyer campaign.

One such legal challenge in 1904 involved W. B. Hugh who asked the courts for an award of \$100 when Union Mutual refused to pay a reimbursement for a family member’s funeral expenses. The courts found the trust free of damages to the estate as Hugh did not use the undertaker recommended by the trust, as required by the benefit’s contract.²¹

Also in 1904, Winnie Walls filed another tort action against Union Mutual. Leona Walls, Winnie's daughter, died and allegedly fell under the umbrella of the burial insurance. Winnie employed Menninger's services but after embalming her, he refused to bury Leona. Winnie then hired another undertaker to complete the burial at a cost of \$100. No evidence of court's final opinion exists, so it is assumed the parties reached a compromise.²²

In early 1903, an unknown party began distributing circulars door-to-door regarding the insolvency of burial insurance companies, such as Union Mutual. As a retort, Menninger ran a newspaper advertisement which featured contents of the circular:

"The Old Gold Brick with a New Coat of Varnish. Something for Nothing. Lately, certain persons have been busily engaged in our city, selling the people membership in so-called burial associations. Glowing representations are made as to the cheapness of the scheme...they take your money and when they fail, as they have done in every locality where operated, you are laughed at for your innocence and stupidity."

His response compared the flyer's author to a "coward in the dark," who would, "shoot you in the back." After asking why the author refused to sign the circular, he published twenty-two testimonials praising Union Mutual.²³

At War with the Competition

Menninger's advertisements often stated he operated independently of the Undertakers' Union.²⁴ By 1905, however, he sat as the vice-president of the Liveryman's Union. Members of this organization included all of the undertakers in Kenton and Campbell Counties. At a meeting that year, members agreed to cut all newspaper advertising. Furthermore, members asked the newspapers to avoid printing the name of the funeral home associated with obituaries as this effectively functioned as free advertising.

According to John Allison of Allison & Rose Funeral Home, Menninger attended the meeting and agreed to these terms, but he ran advertisements in the newspapers anyway. The other undertakers from

not only Kenton and Campbell Counties, but also in Cincinnati, took revenge by refusing Menninger's business. This effectively kept Menninger from renting his carriages out to other livery stables or hiring other carriages he required for his own use.

Menninger painted himself a victim of illegal business practices perpetrated by a hostile organized trust. He claimed to be at Hot Springs at the time of the union vote. Furthermore, he claimed to possess enough carriages to operate his business without help from the other undertakers, saying he could "snap my fingers at their trust."²⁵

Gus kept his name in the news by announcing he would not raise the price of funerals at a time when others in the area did. Due to the rising price of grain and other essentials for the livery business, Cincinnati undertakers publically announced a rise in funeral prices. Menninger stated he could not "conscientiously charge his patrons an increase, at least not at the present time."²⁶

An innovative businessman, Menninger devised a scheme to cut funeral expenses in half. He proposed hitching a special funeral car to the Covington and Newport trolleys which traveled to, or very near, most Northern Kentucky cemeteries. The special car would have a place for the coffin and pallbearers, while another area held immediate family and mourners. In total, 50 people could ride, including a conductor and motorman. Although inventive, no evidence suggests he ever succeeded with his idea.²⁷

For reasons unknown, Menninger decided to give up his undertaking business. On July 10, 1907, he sold his stables and funeral home to Allison and Yates for a price "...exceeding \$30,000." The parties entered an understanding that Menninger would "...retire from the undertaking business in Covington."²⁸ No further evidence exists of the fate of the Union Mutual Benefit Company in the newspaper articles or advertising, so it is presumed that it folded after this sale.

The next day, John Bullock filed a civil suit against Menninger, Yates, and Allison. Bullock's complaint stated Menninger agreed to pay him a 2½% commission on the sale of the business if he could

identify a buyer. If the courts found for Bullock, an \$875 garnishment would be added to the property.²⁹ The Kenton Circuit Court heard this case on December 15, 1908. The jury returned a unanimous verdict absolving Menninger of any liability to Bullock for the sale of his business.³⁰ Bullock filed an immediate appeal the following day, stating the jury's verdict was "contrary to law."³¹ Judge Shaw, presiding over the case, granted the motion, setting a new trial for March 17, 1909.³² At the second trial, the new jury once again found for Menninger, stating he owed Bullock no damages.³³

Menninger's next controversy began on September 1, 1908. His name appeared in newspaper advertising as the new manager of Linnemann and Moore's undertaking and embalming business at 717 and 719 Madison.³⁴ The next day, the *Kentucky Post* published a short, but provocative, blurb touting Gus' return to the undertaking business:³⁵

"Mr. Menninger will be the General Manager, having absolute control over the firm's business. He wishes to take this means of informing his friends, extending to all to call and inspect the most up-to-date undertaking establishment in the three cities."

Perturbed, Allison and Yates countered by filing suit in Kenton Circuit Court. They alleged Menninger violated a clause in the contract which stated he would not go into the undertaking business for 10 years within 50 miles of Covington. Agreeing, Judge Shaw issued an immediate restraining order against Menninger, ordering him to cease his activities at Linnemann and Moore. The suit also asked the court to award them \$1000 in damages.³⁶

Judge Matt Harbeson commenced the civil trial on October 1, 1908. Menninger retained the counsel of Maurice Galvin and Thomas Byrne while Allison and Yates employed John L. Rich. The first witness, Maria Moore, managed Linnemann and Moore's businesses. She intended to "take a trip east" and hired Menninger, on a temporary basis, to run the business in her absence.³⁷

Judge Harbeson ruled for the enjoinder of Menninger from Linnemann and Moore, effectively

ending his career in undertaking in Covington. Menninger appealed continuously finally the Kentucky Court of Appeals agreed to review the case on February 16, 1911. The appellate court upheld the ruling of the Kenton Circuit Court, agreeing that Menninger gave up his right to practice as an undertaker in Covington when he sold his business.³⁸

Public Disturbances

Judging by all of the press Menninger received over the years, he was quite outspoken and at times, somewhat rowdy. In May 1905, he went into Seifert's Barber Shop on the Pike Street Arcade and sat for a haircut. James Taylor, an African-American porter who worked there, took Menninger's hat to a nearby hatter for a blocking. When Taylor failed to return in a timely fashion, Menninger yelled a few racial profanities and promised to hit Taylor upon his return. Taylor soon returned with the hat and Menninger punched him, sending Taylor to the ground. Taylor filed a civil suit, asking for \$1000 in damages.³⁹

On March 23, 1906, Meyer Berman, proprietor of The New Fair, 16 Pike Street, filed a civil suit against Menninger. The filing stated that Menninger pointed a pistol at Berman at The New Fair. Berman sought \$5000 in compensation.⁴⁰ Hearing testimony on April 24, 1907, a jury awarded Berman damages.⁴¹

Orene Parker owned a distillery and packaged liquor store at 12 and 14 Pike Street, near Menninger's establishment. After exchanging words with Menninger at a Pike Street saloon on June 14, 1911, the two of them brawled. Gus apparently lost the fight, receiving significant injuries. The following day, Menninger's wife filed a complaint against Parker on her husband's behalf.⁴²

A grand jury took up this case and indicted Parker for assault and battery (the original charge was disturbance of the peace). The case moved into Kenton Circuit Court where Judge John Read recused himself from hearing the case as his law partner, William Byrne, represented Parker.⁴³ A trial commenced on October 24 in front of Judge Tracey. During his instructions to the jury the judge highlighted evidence of Parker's self-defense. As a result, the jury acquitted Parker after five minutes of deliberation.⁴⁴

Divorce, Remarriage, and Last Days

Bertha Pauline Menninger filed for divorce on February 5, 1909, claiming Gus abandoned her. At a hearing on February 17, the court awarded Bertha the divorce along with \$25 per month in alimony.⁴⁵ Menninger offered no contest to the divorce, but after a month, he made no payment to Bertha. Appealing to the courts, Bertha finally received her alimony payments.⁴⁶

On April 27, 1909, Gus married Gertie Weaver Huber, widow of recently deceased Judge William Huber. After William Huber died on December 23, 1908, Gus apparently remained close to Mrs. Huber. One might speculate a correlation existed between Bertha's abandonment accusation and Menninger's speedy marriage to Gertie.⁴⁷

By 1912, Menninger retired from undertaking, politics, and fighting with his neighbors. His name still appeared in the newspapers occasionally, mostly for social reasons. He bought a motorcar from Schacht Motors, a local Cincinnati automaker. In May, he took a two-week automobile trip through Central and Southern Kentucky.⁴⁸ In September, he sold the car to Arthur Erlanger, a well-known theatrical figure, who drove the car back to New York City.⁴⁹

In 1913, Menninger became quite ill and moved in with his sister, Emma Hughes, in Clifton, a Cincinnati suburb, where he was reportedly healing. The accounts of his illness made no mention of his wife. Gus died on August 18, 1914 succumbing to Bright's Disease, a liver disorder.⁵⁰ One of his former associates, M. L. Swetnam, handled his funeral and subsequent internment at Linden Grove Cemetery.⁵¹

Elmore followed in his father's footsteps, at least in part. He married Florence Tetzlaff on January 18, 1911, and she sued him for divorce a year and half later. She claimed he took her to California and refused to care for her. She returned to her parents' home in Norwood, Ohio, claiming he treated her cruelly.⁵² After the divorce, Elmore and his mother Bertha remained in California the rest of their lives.

Gus' story does not end there, however. His mother Johanna died in 1919, but she was buried at

Highland Cemetery instead of Linden Grove for unknown reasons. The surviving Menninger family members moved Gus, and all other interred Menninger family members, from Linden Grove to Highland on April 7, 1920. The Menninger family members occupy a family plot at Section 10, Lot 226.⁵³

End Notes

1. *Williams' Covington and Newport Directory [1884-1885]*. Cincinnati : Williams and Co., 1884.
2. Williams and Company. *Williams' Covington and Newport directory [1888-1889]*. Williams and Co., 1888.
3. *Covington and Newport Directory (1890 - 1891)*. Williams and Co.
4. *The Stolen Coffins: Recovery of the Missing Five*. Cincinnati Enquirer. April 4, 1890, Cincinnati Enquirer, p. 4.
5. *Henry Was Hot*. Cincinnati Enquirer. July 19, 1894, p. 6.
6. *Gus Menninger Advertisement*. July 8, 1895, Kentucky Post, p. 2.
7. *Gus Menninger: Democratic Candidate for Alderman*. October 8, 1895, Kentucky Post, p. 7.
8. *An Incident*, November 5, 1895, Kentucky Post, p. 7.
9. *Gus Menninger is an Alderman Now*, November 6, 1895, KP, p. 4.
10. *Gus Menninger Awarded the Contract for Burying County Paupers*, December 18, 1895, Kentucky Post.
11. *At Park Place Democrats Will Hear Bryan*. October 1, 1896, Kentucky Post, p. 5.
12. *Wouldn't Vote*. September 29, 1896, Kentucky Post, p. 8.
13. *Darekamp Sworn In*. October 6, 1896, Kentucky Post, p. 4.
14. *Arnett's Majority For Senator is Only Six*. KY, May 31, 1909, p. 2.
15. *Grand Lodge Officers Chosen by the Knights of Pythias*. September 16, 1896, Kentucky Post, p. 5.
16. *In Memoriam, Covington and Newport Lodges of Elks*. December 7, 1896, Kentucky Post, p. 5.
17. *Attempt to Rob*. July 22, 1896, Kentucky Post, p. 8.
18. *Menninger's New Home*. Kentucky Post, May 21, 1904, p. 3.
19. *At New Home with a Dutch Lunch*. Kentucky Post, May 25, 1906.
20. *We Are Here to Stay*. Kentucky Post, April 25, 1903, p. 8.
21. *Decision was in Favor of the Undertakers' Company*. Kentucky Post, December 30, 1903, p. 1.
22. *Asks for Receiver*. November 23, 1904, Kentucky Post.
23. *We Are Here To Stay!* Kentucky Post, April 25, 1903, p. 8.
24. *Gus Menninger, Undertaker and Embalmer*. Kentucky Post, 1900.
25. *Boycotted by the Undertakers*, Kentucky Post, March 11, 1905, 2.
26. *The Cincinnati Undertakers*. Kentucky Post, May 18, 1905.
27. *To Take Deceased to Cemeteries by Trolley*. Kentucky Post, November 12, 1906, p. 3.
28. *Gus Menninger Sells Undertaking Business*. KP, July 11, 1907, 3.
29. *Alleges G. Menninger Owes Him a Commission* KP, July 12, 1907.
30. *Jury Brings Verdict for Menninger*. December 15, 1908, p. 2.
31. *Matrimonial Knots Cut by Shaw*. KY, December 16, 1908, p. 2.
32. *Bullock-Menninger Litigation Goes to Trial on March 17*. Kentucky Post, March 2, 1909, p. 2.
33. *Gus Menninger Winner in Suit*. Kentucky Post, March 19, 1909, 7.
34. *Linnemann and Moore*. Kentucky Post, September 1, 1908, p. 2.
35. *Gus W. Menninger*. Kentucky Post, September 2, 1908, p. 2.
36. *Restraining Order Against Menninger*. KY, September 16, 1908, 2.
37. *Menninger Case Placed on Trial*. KP, October 1, 1908, p. 2.
38. *Gus Menninger Cannot Work as an Undertaker*. Kentucky Post, February 16, 1911.
39. *Colored Porter Enters Suit Against Menninger for Damages, Alleging Assault*. Cincinnati Enquirer, May 2, 1905, p. 9.
40. *Berman Sues*. Covington : Kentucky Post, April 5, 1906, p. 5.
41. *Kenton Circuit Court Bulletin*. Covington : KP, April 29, 1907, 3.
42. *Gus Menninger is Attacked by Orene Parker*. Kentucky Post, June 15, 1911, p. 3.
43. *Special Judge Will Hear Case Against Parker*. Kentucky Post, June 29, 1911, p. 3.
44. *Orene Parker Acquitted on Assault Charge*. Kentucky Post, October 25, 1911, p. 3.

Wood v. Ward

Karl Lietzenmayer

[Excerpted from "Sweet Taste of Liberty: A True Story of Slavery and Restitution in America, W. Caleb McDaniel, Oxford University Press (2020)]

A long-lost narrative of a manumitted slave, kidnapped, sold, and regaining her freedom has recently been published by Rice University Professor W. Caleb McDaniel. The story winds its convoluted way, beginning and ending in Northern Kentucky.

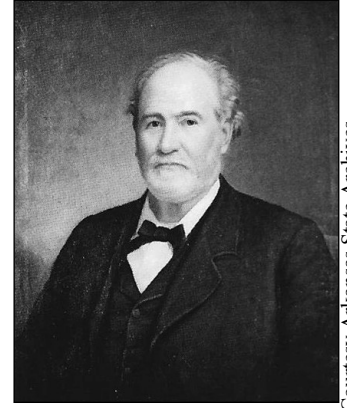
Henrietta Wood was born into slavery about 1820, the property of the Moses Tousey family of Boone County. In 1848 she was taken to Cincinnati and given her freedom papers by Moses' widow, Lucinda. Five years later, she was kidnapped, taken to Kentucky, and sold to Zebulon Ward, a notorious slave dealer (among other nefarious enterprises). Wood was ultimately bought by a cotton planter who took her to Texas, and she remained there until after the Civil War. By this time, she had a son, Arthur.

Henrietta and her son returned to a very different Cincinnati than the one she left, determined to seek justice. Cincinnati, however, remained a dangerous place for people of color. The search for paying work for her and her son was problematic.

In 1870, she began working as a house domestic for Covington lawyer, Harvey Myers, Sr. More important to Henrietta was Harvey's profession: he was a lawyer's lawyer. Myers had a thriving practice with his partner, John W. Stevenson. Myers had a reputation as a political outsider in Covington. Most of his peers were conservative Democrats, and even those who remained loyal to the Union were nostalgic about the Confederacy. The war even split Myers' law firm down the middle. Stevenson was a born Virginian and blamed Republicans for the War. As governor, he urged amnesty for Confederates.

Myers was not only an active Union man during the war, but remained a loyal Republican afterward. When Henrietta Wood met Myers and became employed by him (sometime between April 1869 and June 1870) she told him her long story. She asked Harvey Myers to represent her in her suit of her cap-

tor, Zebulon Ward. Myers likely recognized Ward as the former Kentucky penitentiary "keeper" [a very lucrative position] where he contracted with the Commonwealth to run the prison essentially as his private domain – working the prisoners for profit. Along with slave dealing and horse racing, these endeavors ultimately made Zeb Ward a very wealthy man.



Zebulon Ward

Courtesy Arkansas State Archives

On June 3, 1870, Harvey Myers presented Wood's petition at the Superior Court of Cincinnati, through Cincinnati lawyers he recommended. The petition amounted to \$20,000 for 5 years of services of lost wages, plus damages she had suffered. Harvey Myers was listed as the plaintiff's attorney, along with the Cincinnati firm he engaged. Henrietta Wood herself agreed with the facts in the petition and, since unable to read or write, affixed her "X" as her legal mark. This signaled her determination to hold Zebulon Ward to account.

After several years of delays and stalls by Ward's lawyers, the case came before the Ohio Superior Court. The judge was Alphonso Taft, a staunch anti-slavery Republican. But men such as he were becoming less popular in postwar Cincinnati. Henrietta wondered whether fair jurors could be found. Ward's lawyers insisted the case be moved to federal court and in January 1871, Wood's petition was in the record of the U.S. Court, Sixth Circuit for the Southern District of Ohio. This transfer engendered several newspaper articles not only in Cincinnati, but elsewhere because of the unusual nature of the suit.

Over two years of delay and stalling by Ward's lawyers delayed the case once again. Those who knew Harvey Myers knew he would not concede an inch.

He was not of engaging address, according to several associates, but rather clumsy, unconventional in manner, reserved and gruff in tone. Ward's lawyers succeeded in stalling for another year. Meanwhile, on March 28, 1874, the estranged husband of one of Myers' clients, in an unrelated case [see the following sidebar story] pushed his way into the lawyer's office located in the Boone Block in Covington, pulled a gun and shot Myers in the stomach. Within 30 minutes he was dead.

After the murder, Wood moved to Cincinnati into the Bucktown neighborhood. She and her son not only lost one of her most-supportive lawyers, they had to look for work as well. Her life story was printed in the *Cincinnati Commercial* in detail. After her story appeared, Zeb Ward's lawyers did not make any further motions for delay. Fifty other newspapers picked up the story in 21 states. This case was remarkable because it focused attention on slavery at a time when the drift of national politics was in the opposite direction.

By the end of the day on April 16, 1878, the court had heard all the evidence in *Wood v. Ward*. Circuit Judge Phillip Swing (a Grant appointee) delivered final instructions to the jury. After brief deliberation, the jury returned with its verdict. At the top of the paper signed by the foreman was the title of the case and number, followed by a single sentence:

We, the Jury in the above entitled case, do find for the plaintiff and assess her damages in the premises at two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2500).

Henrietta and her son Arthur relocated to Chicago, where Arthur was one of the first persons of color to graduate from what is now Northwestern University law school. Henrietta lived to see her granddaughter marry in 1912, dying that year. Arthur raised a fine family and was the oldest practicing Chicago lawyer, passing away in 1951.

It is difficult to imagine *when* most former slaves could have advanced cases for restitution, given all that it cost Henrietta to make Ward pay *anything* at all. This case was so rare and so early. It seems to offer a study of the differences even a small amount of money might have made to material prospects of

formerly enslaved individuals. The little that Henrietta received made such a difference compared with the millions of black Southerners who traveled north during the Great Migration.

Zeb Ward relied on violence to make his prisoners work – not only for the Kentucky penitentiary, but he also moved on to do similar endeavors for Tennessee, and finally Arkansas, amounting to brutal slavery for the inmates, often causing fatalities. When Ward died in 1894, he left his heirs an estate worth \$600,000 – in today's terms, multimillions.

Terrell v Terrell

Karl Lietzenmayer

On the 28th of March 1874, Harvey Myers, Sr., prominent law partner of John W. Stevenson, was taking depositions in a divorce case in which he was the council for the wife.

Mrs. Terrell was suing for divorce from her husband of some 24 years, Colonel William G. Terrell on the grounds of neglect and abuse. Newspaper accounts seem to indicate that Mr. Terrell had a temper – at least on occasion. During the collecting of depositions, Mrs. Terrell testified that her husband, in times past, had suffered from syphilis.

Myers asked whether this condition could affect the brain and a preliminary finding was that it at least should be considered as a factor. After taking depositions for the day was concluded, Harvey Myers returned to his office.

Mr. Terrell entered the Boone Block office building (Scott Street at 4th) which still stands today, looking for Mr. Myers. He apparently objected being accuse of having syphilis and wanted to “set the record straight” as it were.

Finding Myers at his desk, he began to argue with the lawyer. What was discussed exactly may never be known in detail but Myers then attempted to eject Terrell from his office. The two men scuffled, ending in the hallway, near the stairway, drawing the attention of other tenants.

Kentucky Trivia

A new, ongoing feature from Michael Crisp's

"The Best Kentucky Trivia Book Ever," available at
bookstores or at michaelcrisponline.com

This issue features

Around the State (Part One)

Questions

1. In what Kentucky city is the headquarters of the United States Presbyterian Church?
2. In what Kentucky city was the Boy Scouts of America Museum before it moved in 2002?
3. What was the name of the first settlement that was established in Kentucky in 1774?
4. In what city is the National Corvette Museum?
5. In what county was the first oil well constructed.
6. What county is recognized as the Saddlebred Capitol of Kentucky?
7. In what Kentucky city was the first observance of Mother's Day held?
8. What Kentucky city played host to the first American performance of a Beethoven symphony?
9. Post-It Notes are manufactured exclusively in what Kentucky city?
10. In what Kentucky city did the public first see an electric light?

Answers

1. Louisville.
2. Murray. It is now in Irving, Texas.
3. Harrodstown, which later became Harrodsburg.
4. Bowling Green.
5. McCreary County. The well was constructed in 1819, not far from the Cumberland River.
6. Shelby County. There are 90 Saddlebred farms there.
7. Henderson. It was the brainchild of teacher Mary S. Wilson in 1887. It became a national holiday in 1916.
8. Lexington, in 1817. The performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 took place at Postlewait's Tavern.
9. Cynthiana. It is home to the 3M Corporation.
10. Louisville, which played host to the Southern Exposition in 1883. It was there that Thomas Edison introduced his incandescent light bulb to the general public.

Suddenly, Terrell pulled a derringer pistol from his coat pocket and fired at Myers, hitting him in the abdomen. Myers was carried to his office and died there within 30 minutes. Terrell was detained by bystanders and police later haul him to jail.

Terrell was actually tried four times! The first trial was held in the Burlington Courthouse and was inconclusive due to the extended illness of a juror. The case was transferred to Williamstown. Terrell was convicted of manslaughter in May of 1876 and sentenced to seven years. His lawyers appealed on the technicality that the Williamstown court had no jurisdiction – even though it seems the same judge was presiding. Even so, a new trial was granted – this time back in Burlington and in March 1877, the jury found him guilty of manslaughter again but this time the sentence was **eight** years!

His defense team of Maj. Weden Oneal, Maj. Charles Duncan, and John G. Carlisle, succeeded in getting the Court of Appeals to hear the case on 22 September 1879. The prosecuting attorneys were Warren Montfort and Theodore Hallam. The court ruled acquittal on grounds the lower court did not grant a continuance until Nicholas Corcoran, the only other person in Myers's office that day, could appear for the defense.

References: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 28 Mar 1874; 23 Sept 1879; *Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, "Harvey Myers, Sr." page 642

Menninger — continued

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46. *Alleges She Was Paid No Alimony Since the Divorce*. Kentucky Post, March 18, 1909, p. 2.
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48. *Menninger Home*. May 28, 1912, Kentucky Post, p. 2.
49. *Motored to Fair*. Kentucky Post, September 7, 1912, p. 3.
50. *Prominent Covingtonian Passes Away*. KP, August 19, 1914, p. 1.
51. Gus Menninger. *Find A Grave*. [Online] September 12, 2014. https://images.findagrave.com/photos/250/photos/2014/254/131058156_1410532788.jpg.
52. *News of the Courts*. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 13, 1912, p. 11.
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Then and Now



Two views of Covington FD #2, Greenup Street just south of Fourth Street
Left image courtesy Kenton County Public Library, right image courtesy Facebook page: Old Images of NKY.

Mystery Photo

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



Answer:

Typing and shorthand class at Holmes High School, 1914.

Kenton County Historical Society

September/October 2020

ARTICLES FROM BACK ISSUES ARE INDEXED ON OUR WEBSITE!

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I Bet You Didn't Know

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

September 1, 1905: Pittsburgh star, Honus Wagner, became the first major league player to allow his signature on a Louisville Slugger.

September 4, 1864: John Hunt Morgan was shot and killed by Union soldiers.

September 13, 1845: The bodies of Daniel Boone, first citizen of Kentucky, and his wife Rebecca were brought from Missouri and reinterred in Frankfort Cemetery.

September 22, 1902: The first Kentucky State Fair opened at Louisville's Churchill Downs.

October 8, 1862: The Civil War Battle of Perryville pitted 16,000 Confederates against 58,000 Federals.

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

Programs and Notices

Kenton County Historical Society

The Annual Membership Meeting and election of officers and directors is scheduled for Saturday, October 3rd, starting at 10:30 a.m., in the amphitheater at the Behringer Crawford Museum, Devou Park, Covington. KCHS members (wearing masks and social distancing) can attend and vote. Nominations will be accepted up to the time of voting. After the election, Collections Curator Jason French will show and discuss some Kenton County artifacts in the museum's collection. If the weather is inclement and Coronavirus restrictions would permit, the meeting will be moved inside. With regard to social distancing, attendance at recent election meetings has been 15 to 30.

Join members of the Local History & Genealogy Department staff of the Kenton County Public Library as they conduct a virtual tour of the Mary E. Smith Cemetery. The tour will premiere in two parts. The first will go online at the Kenton County Public Library's Facebook page on Friday October 2nd at 10 a.m. The second part of the virtual tour will premiere at the same site on Friday, October 16th, at 10 a.m. Contact the department at 859.962.4070 for more information.

Charles Bogart will do a virtual presentation (ZOOM video conferencing) on the "Covington & Lexington Railroad – a Pawn Fought over by the L&N and C&O," on Saturday, October 10, 10:30 a.m.

Behringer Crawford Museum

Northern Kentucky History Hour, a program started recently, is presented weekly at 6:30 on Wednesday evenings. Its an invitation to learn local and state history through ZOOM video conferencing media.

Previous speakers have included David Schroeder on the Ludlow Lagoon; Paul Tenkotte on Women's Suffrage; Scott Clark, Newport Preservation Officer, on the Southgate Colored School now a Newport history museum; Behringer Crawford Collections Curator Jason French on interesting artifacts in the Museum collection; archeologist Jeannine Kreinbrink on Big Bone; Mike Ramler on Camp Springs; Joe Klare on historic building preservation; Jim Schaaf and Bob Schrage on Kentucky scandals; and Judge Anthony Frohlich on Kentucky's government from a local perspective. Programs are foreseen into December.

You are invited to register for NKY History Hour; then join the program by clicking the link at about 6:30 on Wednesdays:

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZcsdeGtpjMiEtFOHWP1OI4tooShmMxzS0oY>

Northern Kentucky History Hour programs are free at this time. These programs on local history also aim to encourage listeners (who have not) to become members of the Behringer Crawford Museum. Become a member through the link below: <http://www.bcmuseum.org/support-us/join/membership-levels-and-benefits>.

Virtual education programming and events: In the wake of the Coronavirus Museum staff has been working hard developing more virtual education programming for youngsters and families. See the museum website for details.

The museum is now open with Coronavirus restrictions in place including face mask wearing, social distancing and regular sanitizing of hands and surfaces. Because of Coronavirus restrictions, the annual Fresh Art auction (and "Silent Art auction") will be virtual this year. Fresh Art auctioning is scheduled for Sunday, October 4th.