

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

History of Covington

by

Laurie J. Blakely

From the Covington's Commercial Tribune,
Sunday, August 23, 1914, and subsequent weeks

www.nkyviews.com

HISTORY OF COVINGTON

BY

LAURIE J. BLAKELY

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Part I, taken from the Commercial Tribune of
Sunday, ~~September~~ 23, 1914
August

BLAKELY & GETTYS LAWYERS BUILDING COVINGTON, KENTUCKY 41011

When Richard Harding Davis, during the war between Japan and Russia, declared history to be "a censored dispatch to posterity", he gave voice to a brilliant epigram - but he was mistaken. Possibly he felt the rigors of press censorship as it is felt today, and mourned because he was not allowed to send to the world the facts of the conflict as he saw them or as he regarded them, and so gave utterance to his epigram. But, the misfortune is that history is not a censored, but an uncensored dispatch to posterity. The scribe eager for the limelight is too often in these days capable in his own estimation of the writing of history and the result is that "History as she is wrote", seems to be one of the demands of our times.

In 1749, Marquis de Gallisonere, Governor General of Canada, sent Chevalier de Celeron, a Captain in the French army, down the Beautiful River, as Celeron calls the Ohio, with instructions to proceed as far as the mouth of the Great Miami, on a voyage of information and enlightenment as it might be called. He was to interview the tribes along the river, with special reference to their feelings towards the encroaching British; to note their strength, and to bury leaden plates at various points to be selected by him, the plates to be inscribed with notification to the world that he had taken possession of the country in the name of the King of France. He did his work well and returned to Detroit, and then to Quebec, broken hearted and filled with the belief that the rule of France over the territory traversed was fast approaching its termination and that the hated English were marching on with a steadiness that was irresistible.

In Greenup County, Kentucky, as in other counties, there are chains of fortifications, mounds and so forth, erected by a race coexistent with, and possibly preceding the Mound Builders, so far back in prehistoric times that the riddle has not yet been solved. But in 1893 there came a brilliantly written syndicate letter to the leading papers of the country, describing the ancient fortifications and gravely announcing and asserting that Celeron had built them on his way down the Ohio in 1749!

Archeologists are excavating in the buried cities of Asia and their discoveries are wonderful, especially in the facts revealed in the decipherings of the cuniform tablets. The world has been enlightened by them. But it is to be hoped the inscriptions on the unearthed tablets of Asia are more true to facts than the inscription on the equestrian monument erected to the memory of William Henry Harrison on Garfield Place by the citizens of Ohio, through the Ohio Monument Association. The inscription reads: "William Henry Harrison, Ohio's First President." In the far distant day when some great convulsion of nature buries the city of Cincinnati and the archeologists of the future dig up the statue, they will be enabled gravely to assert the discovery of indisputable evidence of the fact that Ohio was an independent republic and that her first President was William Henry Harrison. He was the ninth President of these United States and the first citizen of Ohio to be elected to the Presidency.

In like manner, the commercial bodies of our big sister across the Ohio gravely take to that city the credit of the Suspension Bridge connecting the cities. It is added that it was the first suspension bridge in the United States. But it was Covington push and Covington capital that did the work - the names of Amos Shinkle and John W. Finnell embody the story. Neither was it the first suspension bridge. The first suspension bridge in the United States spanned the Licking and connected Covington and Newport - before the Ohio Suspension Bridge was completed and while its abutments were staying floods in the Beautiful River to the extent of their ability.

Some time ago, postals were sent out from Covington showing a half-buried log cabin on the little strip between Russell and Bank Lick. It was heralded as "the first house built in Covington". It was not the first house built in Covington, nor even the second - but it answered the purpose of the card printer admirably, and numbers of the cards were treasured and cherished with affections wasted on the wrong object. The first house built in Covington was on the banks of the Licking about "twenty rods below the point". It was built in 1770 by the father of the late Elliston E. Williams. The second house built in Covington, and standing until a few years ago, was on the Licking, a short distance below the east end of Thirteenth Street. According to a deposition taken for use in litigation in 1819, this house was "exactly one mile and fifty-two poles from the Ohio". It was built by Presley Peake in 1792 and sold by him to Wesley Miller, who in turn sold it to William Martin in 1804.

The first public notice of Covington that is available appeared in a directory of Cincinnati, published in October, 1819 - a small volume of few pages and with greater space given to description of the town and its surroundings than to the names of residents. The publisher was Oliver Farnsworth and the printers were Morgan, Lodge and Company. The author of the descriptive portion of the directory was far too modest to give his name, contenting himself with a statement that it was written by "A Citizen". Cincinnati is described as on the north side of the Ohio "directly opposite the Licking River" and the Kentucky towns "opposite Cincinnati" are thus mentioned: "Opposite to Cincinnati, on the Kentucky shore, stand Newport and Covington. The former on the east, the latter on the west bank of the Licking. Newport is the seat of justice for Campbell County. It contains a handsome Courthouse and a military depot belonging to the United States. It is a flourishing village and appears to advantage when viewed from the Cincinnati shore. Covington is as yet a new settlement, but affords a pleasant and healthy situation for a town".

Another interesting item in the directory is the reference to the possibility of a bridge spanning the Ohio, the author saying: "Some considerable talk has at times agitated the Cincinnati public touching the practicability of bridging the Ohio opposite Cincinnati. Many have ridiculed it as an hypothesis at once absurd and visionary, while others have viewed it in a more serious light. It is now satisfactorily ascertained that a bridge may be permanently constructed and at an expense vastly inferior to what has been generally supposed. The current of the Ohio here is never more rapid than that of the Susquehanna, the Allegheny and the Monongehela sometimes are, where the experiment has been successfully proved. There is little doubt, if one can be allowed to form an opinion from the public enterprise which now distinguishes our citizens, that very few years will elapse before a splendid bridge will unite Cincinnati with Covington and Newport".

Interesting features of the early history of Covington are found in the fact that Ohio frequently called on Kentucky for aid against the incursions of the Indians; that Kentucky always responded promptly and that the site of Covington was the rallying point for the Kentuckians and the point where the troops disbanded on their return from the wilds of Ohio.

HISTORY OF COVINGTON

BY

LAURIE J. BLAKELY

Part II, taken from the Commercial Tribune
of Sunday, September 6, 1914

BLAKELY & GETTYS
LAWYERS BUILDING
COVINGTON, KENTUCKY 41011

The first expedition was that of General John Bowman, then Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky County, against the Chillicothe and Miami Indian towns. The expedition was determined upon in answer to a call from Ohio, then a part of the old Northwest Territory. In April, 1779, Governor Bowman notified the people of Kentucky to plant their corn and be ready to rendezvous at the point of Licking in May. The men from the Falls of the Ohio, now Louisville, were directed to meet the troops at the mouth of the Licking and to bring boats with them with which the troops might cross the Ohio. The expedition was not successful, returning to the Licking with slight loss of men.

Because of another invasion of Ohio towns by the Indians and another call from Ohio, George Rogers Clarke, who saved the old Northwest Territory for the struggling and the weak thirteen states of the Union and thereby accomplished a work as great west of the mountains as Washington accomplished east of the mountains—organized a Kentucky expedition against the Indians and with some 1100 men rendezvoused at the junction of the Licking with the Ohio in 1782 toward the latter part of the year. From thence he marched against the savages, routed them, completely destroying their towns and scattering their tribes right and left. On his return from the expedition and when the troops halted on the summit of the hills surrounding Ohio at the head of what is now Sycamore Street, Captain Virgil McCracken, a Kentuckian, dying from the wounds received in the fight at Pickaway,

called his comrades around him and suggested that the survivors of the expedition should meet 50 years thence, on November 3, 1832, on the site of their rendezvous, the point of the Licking, in commemoration of their victory over the savages. The suggestion was received heartily, and it was then and there determined that the meeting should be held-and Captain Virgil McCracken died within a few hours.

Simon Kenton, for whom Kenton County is named, was a Captain under Clarke, and sometime prior to the date fixed for the assembling of the pioneer veterans, issued an address to his surviving comrades calling their attention to the coming of the day of commemoration and urging each and everyone to attend. His program was as follows:

"To meet at Covington on November 3rd. On the 4th, being the Sabbath Day, to attend the Divine Services. On Monday, the 5th, to meet our friends on the grounds where the old fort stood and then to take a final farewell to meet no more until we shall meet in the land of the spirits."

His address was as follows:

"Fellow citizens! Being one of the first, after Colonel Daniel Boone, who aided in the conquest of Kentucky and the west, I am called upon to address you. My heart melts on such an occasion. I look forward to the contemplated meeting with melancholy pleasure. It has caused my tears to flow in copious showers. I wish to see before I die my few surviving friends. My solemn promise made 50 years ago binds me to meet them. I ask nothing for myself, but you may find in our assembly some who have never received any pay or pension, who have sustained the cause of their country equal to any other service and who in the decline of life are poor. Then, you prosperous sons of the West, forget not those old grey headed veterans on this occasion. Let them return to their homes with some little manifestation of your kindness! I end my prayer: 'May kind heaven grant us a clear sky, fair and pleasant weather; a safe journey and a happy meeting, and smile on us and our families and bless us and our nation on this approaching occasion'.

Simon Kenton"

The day of the meeting came. Very few of the survivors of the Clarke expedition were able to meet in Covington. The cholera was then devastating the West, but the program was carried out, notwithstanding Simon Kenton was detained

by sudden illness at the home of Judge Donipham in Clermont County, Ohio. On the 3rd they "renewed old acquaintances". On the 4th they attended Divine Service in Covington. On the 5th they visited the site of the old fort-Fort Washington, near the present junction of Third and Broadway, Cincinnati-and the corporation of Cincinnati entertained them at dinner. Unquestionably, it was a melancholy rendezvous of the old veterans of 1782. Death and sorrow were surrounding them because of the cholera. Their old friend and comrade, Simon Kenton, was not with them-and when the few who did attend parted for their homes, it was indeed, never again to meet until in the land of spirits!

The site of Covington also was the rallying point of the Kentucky Militia, which suffered so disastrously in Harmar's defeat in 1790. In 1792 the troops under General Charles Scott, in his expedition against the Eel River Indians, returned to their homes in Kentucky by way of Covington and thence through the wilderness of the Dry Ridge path to Central Kentucky.

One of the most interesting events in the early story of Covington was the raid of Colonel Byrd of the British Army from Detroit to Ruddle's and Martin's Stations in what is now Fayette County, Kentucky. It was as daring as any ever accomplished by Francis Marion during the days of the revolution or by gallant John Morgan in the bitter days of the war between the States. Colonel Byrd crossed Indiana and Ohio with his troops, with cannon, and came to the Ohio at the mouth of the Big Miami. Crossing the Ohio, he halted at the site of Covington for several days, resting his troops after their march from Detroit and undoubtedly sending out his Indian allies to spy out the land, with possibly engineers to blaze the path to Central Kentucky. Assuredly he laid out a road and felled the trees to make easier the way for his artillery. Beyond Falmouth the road is still called Byrd's Trace and is plainly discernible, save where the brush partially conceals it.

Accounts vary as to the number of troops and Indians under his command, but the most careful examination of authorities places the number at 600 British troops and 500 Indians. The expedition camped on the site of Covington early in June, 1780.

The journey between Covington and the Forks of the Licking, and Falmouth, was made in canoes. From the Forks, Colonel Byrd marched his men to Ruddle's Station within a few miles of Lexington, his approach being discovered on June 22, 1780. The Station was captured after a heroic resistance. After destroying Ruddle's Station and taking a great number of prisoners, Colonel Byrd marched his men to Martin's Station, which he also destroyed, taking a large number of prisoners there.

It was within his power to have captured Lexington had he but known it, but as the waters of the Licking were falling, he concluded to retreat, which he did, taking with him his prisoners, men, women and children, again camping on the site of Covington for a time, from thence going to the mouth of the Big Miami and to Detroit.

The first visit to the site of Covington of which any record is made was that of Christopher Gist, an agent of the Ohio Company. In his journal, this entry is made: "S. five miles, S.W. fifteen miles to a creek that was so high that we could not cross it that night." Most of the Journal compiled by Mr. William M. Darlington of Pittsburgh and made with the utmost care, says: "The Licking River at the lower Blue Lick. He had traveled thus far by an old trail from the Ohio." That the Licking is meant and that he landed at the point of Licking is also shown by the preceding entries in his Journal, his course being from the Little Miami to the Big Miami, whither he went, but returned. The preceding notes deal with information given him, after leaving the Miami, of the bones of the Mastadon and other prehistoric animals found at what is now called Big Bone Lick.

Collins also asserts the visit of Gist to the site of Covington, saying: "Christopher Gist, in his tour as agent of the Ohio Company, crossed the Licking at or near its mouth in March, 1751—the first white man upon its waters of whom we have any knowledge."

It is exceedingly probable that Celeron, in his expedition in 1749, stopped at the mouth of the Licking and buried one of his leaden plates, inscribed with the fact of his taking possession of the territory in the name of the King of France. Plates buried by him have been discovered at the mouth of the principal streams entering the Ohio from either side, the latest having been discovered at the mouth of the Great Kanawha. His journal faithfully records the burial of plates at the junction of streams with the Ohio, and there is unquestionably a description of the Licking and the surrounding territory in his journal.

It is reasonably probable from the other reason that he knew that he was approaching the end of his journey from the information the Indians with him had given him. The last record of a burial of a plate was at the mouth of the Big Miami from which point on, as his journal states, he went over land to Detroit.

Prior to its incorporation as a town in 1815, Covington was known as Kennedy's Ferry, the ferry being operated by Thomas Kennedy and his sons, Samuel, Joseph and Robert. The Thomas Kennedy farm included the point of the Licking, and Kennedy and his sons, in operating the ferry, used skiffs for the transportation of foot passengers at 12 and one-half cents each way, 50 cents for a two horse team and \$1.00 for a four horse team, the vehicles being transported on flat boats propelled by poles and oars. Later, Pliny Bliss became connected with the Kennedys and a steam ferry came into use and was used up to the time of the completion of the Suspension Bridge and for some time after.

The first survey of land on the site of Covington was made in 1779, embracing 200 acres. The Patent was subsequently assigned to John Todd, who in turn assigned it to James West, whose Patent bears date September 20, 1787. The next was in the name of Levi Todd, embracing 400 acres and running "west of the path leading from Elkhorn to the mouth of Licking". The "path" being the present Lexington Pike over the Dry Ridge.

Prominent among the early settlers of Kenton County was General Leonard Stephens of Orange County, Virginia. He came to Kenton, then Campbell County, about 1807, driven by a servant in his carriage the entire distance, as his son, the late Napoleon B. Stephens, told me. Shortly after taking up his residence on the Lexington Pike, as it now is, General Stephens was elected one of the Magistrates of Campbell County.

When Kenton County was organized, General Stephens, being the senior Justice of the Peace, became Sheriff of Kenton County. He was frequently a member of the Legislature, living and dying in the highest esteem among his fellow citizens and deserving it. Another prominent citizen was General Thomas Sandford, born in Westmoreland County, Virginia in 1762 and settling on the Highlands, south of Covington in 1792. He was a distinguished member of the convention which framed the second constitution of Kentucky. He was several times a member of the Kentucky Legislature and served two terms in congress. He met his death by drowning in the Ohio River at a comparatively early age.

Among the very earliest settlers of the present county of Kenton was Edmond Rittenhouse of Pennsylvania. He was a relative of Governor Rittenhouse of that state and ranked high as an astronomer. He built a house on Banklick Creek about 1793, soon after removing to Ruddle's Mills, but returning to Kenton County in 1795. In the same year John Martin settled near the first toll gate near the Banklick Pike, now within the city limits. Rittenhouse and Martin were the grandfathers of Isaac Martin, born in May, 1798, and who resided in his mature years on the Banklick hills.

Among the older residents of Covington in 1810 were Thomas Kennedy and his three sons, Samuel, Joseph and Robert; Robert Kyle and five sons, Samuel, John, Thomas, Robert and Zacheus; Joseph Riddell and his son, John; James Harris and his two sons, Nathan and David; Duncan MacVicker and his son, James;

Jacob Fowler and his two sons, Benjamin and Edward; Jacob Martin and his son, John; Samuel Swing and six sons, David, James, Jeremiah, Samuel, William and Arthur; William Martin and nine sons, Isaac, John, Peter, Adam, William, Hiram, Enoch, Norton and Henry; John Gambel and four sons, James, John, Andrew and Joseph; Joel Craig and Robert Fleming. Surrounding the town were the Sandfords, Riches, Mackoys, Martins, Parrys, Freemans, Friers, Lucases, Rockenfolds, Holmans, Scotts, VanHooks, and Ellistons.

The town of Covington was incorporated by an Act of the Legislature approved February 8, 1815. It embraced 150 acres of the Kennedy farm, purchased from the Kennedys by John S. and Richard M. Gano and Thomas David Carneal.

Following is a copy of the act of incorporation:

"An Act establishing the town of Covington at the mouth of the Licking. Approved February 8, 1815.
Whereas, it is represented to the present General Assembly that it would be advantageous to the state and more particularly to the habitants of the counties of Boone, Campbell and Pendleton, if a town were established on the land lately purchased of Thomas Kennedy by Richard M. Gano and Thomas D. Carneal and John S. Gano, situated at the mouth of the Licking River at the lower side thereof. Therefore,

Section I. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, that 150 acres of land at the place aforesaid, is hereby vested in Uriel Sebree, Alfred Sandford, Joseph Kennedy, William Hubble and John C. Buckner, gentlemen trustees, for the purpose of a town and out-lots, and be established as such by the name of 'Covington'. That said trustees or a majority of them, shall have full power and authority to dispose of the lots as at present laid out by the proprietors of said plan, at public auction, for the best price that can be gotten in ready money; or so many of said lots, and at such credit, as said proprietors shall approve; the day of sale having been previously advertised by the said proprietors.

Section II. Be it further enacted, that the said trustees shall convey the lots sold to the purchasers in fee simple, upon the purchasers producing the receipt of order of the said proprietors. And they shall have power to make regulations for the government of said town; to settle all disputes between the boundaries of lots and shall be entitled to such immunities and privileges as towns in the Commonwealth possess and enjoy; provided always, that nothing in this act shall be so construed as to affect the right of any person or persons to the said 150 acres of land, or

any part thereof; and any person or persons, establishing his or their rights to the same, shall have full power to sue for, and recover the purchase money, with interest, from the said proprietors. In case of the death, resignation, or refusal to act, of any one or more of the said trustees, such vacancies shall be filled up by the appointment of a majority of the remaining trustees; provided, however, that said proprietors shall enter into bond, with sufficient security, in the sum of \$50,000.00, in the county Court of Campbell County, at a Court previous to the sale of said lots, conditioned to repay the price of said lots, with interest, to any person or persons who may establish a better claim to said land or any part thereof.- Littell's Statute Law of Kentucky, volume 5, page 282."

The first sale of lots in Covington was at public auction on March 20, 1815, and the plat of the town was recorded at Alexandria on August 31 of the same year.

From 1815 up to October, 1832, the records of the town are missing. On October 9, 1832, the records show a meeting of the trustees of the town at the store room of Mr. A.L. Gaines on Lower Market, as it was later called. The location of the store is not given and the name of Mr. Gaines does not appear in the directory of Covington for 1833. At that meeting there were present William Wright Southgate, Chairman; Carey Clemens, John B. Casey, Alexander L. Greer, and Thoms Callant. Absent, Messrs. Gustavus Fisher and Isaac Martin.

At that time, the ravages of Asiatic cholera were being felt throughout the western country and at the meeting of the trustees Messrs. Callant and Clemens were appointed a "health committee". They were authorized to visit every house in the town they might think proper, to direct that all nuisances to abated and the proper remedies be applied. They were also directed to procure a suitable room to use as a "hospitable", as the records have it, for the unfortunate who might be attacked by the Asiatic cholera. They were authorized to borrow on the credit of the town \$1,000.00 for the care of indigent patients.

The town at the time extended from the Licking River west to the alley running north and south between Greenup and Scott, the alley being Court Avenue. Up to

a comparatively few years ago, the alley was used as a passageway for the old mule cars, and the old jail stood on the east side of the alley. An ordinance was passed regulating the market stuff prior to reaching a market place. No person was allowed to buy corn, oates or other grain during market hours for the purpose of distilling the same, and all butchers were required under the penalty of \$5.00, to wash, scour and keep clean their stalls, benches and blocks. These sanitary measures were undoubtedly because of the Asiatic cholera.

Mortimer M. Benton, later one of the ablest and most distinguished members of the Kenton Bar, was the Clerk of the Board of Trustees.

At the next meeting of the Board on December 23, 1832, it was suggested that the alleys of the town should be cleaned up and it was so ordered. Complaints being made by the sick in the town, of the noise accompanying the playing of nine or ten pins, the game was prohibited under heavy penalties, especially when money was wagered on it. Three copies of the ordinance were ordered to be posted in three of the most public places in the town.

Member Clemens was allowed 87 and 1/2 Cents for furnishing a rope for the public well and his offer to keep the well clean and in good condition for \$10.00 a year was accepted.

At the meeting in February, 1833, an engine house was ordered built on the public square, later called Lower Market, at a cost not exceeding \$225.00. The sale of the public school house to C.D. Littlefield for \$18.25 was reported, and he was required to give bond for the payment of the amount within six months. In the same year, John T. Levis, John A. Goodson and Cassius Sandford became members of the Board of Trustees and it was ordered that a regular meeting place should be procured, an appropriation of \$1.12½ was made to member Greer for the purpose of candlesticks to be used in illuminating the new chamber.

There seems to have been something of politics in those early days and somewhat of distrust of public officials-matters of which we know nothing, of course, in these days- for in June, 1833, Member Martin offered this resolution:

"Whereas, there are many ordinances in force now in Covington, and Whereas the policy of the town requires many more and it is obvious that good government, with wholesome laws, and these laws executed, are an indispensable requisite for the welfare and prosperity of a growing town. And whereas the present administration has scandalously neglected to enforce these laws; therefore be it resolved, etc."

We have the same thing in these days, however, it must be admitted, and probably as deserved as in the early days.

The last meeting of the Board of Trustees of the town was held on April 10, 1834, and the following report was submitted:

"At an election held in the city of Covington on April 5, 1834 for the purpose of electing a Mayor and Councilmen, for the office of Mayor, Mortimer M. Benton was declared elected. For Councilmen, William Hopkins, John T. Levis, William W. Southgate, John B. Casey, John A. Goodson, John Mackoy and James Grimsley Arnold were declared elected. The members convened at the Council Chambers and were severally qualified and took their seats according to law and the oath of office followed. Mr. John T. Levis was called to the chair, Hamilton Martin was elected Clerk for the present year and Edward G. Bladen, Marshal."

Among the members of the last Board of Trustees of the town of Covington, Messrs. Goodson and Sandford later became Mayors of the city of Covington. No record is made of the location of the Council Chamber, nor whether Mr. Benton had opposition for Mayor, nor whether his election and that of the councilmen had been without opposition at the polls. But there is no possible doubt of the high standing of all officials first sworn to the service of the city of Covington. Mr. Benton's later position at the Bar of Kentucky is well known. He is survived by two sons, John C. and William K. Benton, both now living in California.

Mr. Levis is survived by his daughter, Miss Sophia Levis, Mr. Goodson's son, John A. Goodson, for years was a leading power in Covington affairs, filling the office of Marshal and Chief of Police. Mr. Mackoy is survived by his son,

William H. Mackoy, a Senior member of the Kenton Bar, a gentleman and lawyer of the highest standing in all things active for the advancement of Covington. Mr. Casey is survived by his son, Lewis E. Casey, the founder and for years the successful publisher of the Covington Commonwealth, a Kentucky paper unequaled in influence and exceeded in circulation only by the Courier Journal. James Grimsley Arnold was one of the largest land owners of Kenton County, a man of remarkable force and will power. None of his descendants of the name of Arnold survive him in Kenton County. The name of Southgate is one of the oldest in Campbell County, of which the present limits of Kenton County were a part at the time of the incorporation of Covington as a city.

At the first meeting of the City Council, Mr. Southgate was elected City Attorney and four wards were created. All were divided by the alley running north and south, first west of Greenup Street, the old jail alley. The first ward commenced at the point of the Licking, thence south to Third Street and west to the alley. The second ward, running from the Ohio to Third Street west of the alley. The third ward was established immediately south of the first and fourth ward, back and south of the second and divided by the alley. At the same meeting, general ordinances were passed as to streets, alleys, licenses and health. Messrs. Mackoy, Goodson and Levis were appointed to confer with some printer and find out at what amount he could afford to do the public printing by the year. They had trouble with street contractors in those days, and especially with reference to Greenup Street, but Mr. Levis reported that the contractor who had filled up holes on Scott Street "had done it right". The following standing committees were appointed: on Law, Messrs. Martin and Levis; on Propositions and Grievances, Messrs. Goodson and Levis; on Improvements, Messrs. Clemens and Goodson. John T. Levis was elected Chairman.

The boundaries of the First Ward, beginning at the point of the Licking, bring up memories of the day when the young folks, some of them not so young today, found in the charms of the point of the Licking, a favorite spot in which Cupid

often played havoc and found his work advanced on the exquisitely beautiful moon-light nights on which the strains of the barracks band were wafted across the river and when along the riverfront were the Myers, the Gedges, the Bannings and others of the old-time families of Covington.

An exceedingly interesting part of the early history of Covington is found in Deming's directory for 1833, the directory being published in 1834 and embracing the towns of Cincinnati, Covington and Newport. It is a book of 266 pages in all, including advertisements, easily carried in a pocket and allowing for the register of Covington citizenship just eleven pages. At that time, according to the directory, Covington had quite a number of manufacturing establishments. Among them was the Covington Ironworks owned by Alexander McCandless. Its annual output was 1600 tons of iron, 5200 kegs of nails and it employed between 80 and 100 operatives. The Covington Cotton Factory was owned by William York and others. The building cost \$64,000.00. The factory ran 2500 spindles. Its annual output was 310,000 pounds of cotton yarn and according to the directory it gave employment to 60 hands, mostly children, as the directory gives it, and many of the children were young girls.

Some time ago the Ohio Archeological and Historical Society published the Journal of Cyrus P. Bradley, a graduate of Dartmouth and classmate of Daniel Webster. Mr. Bradley traveled down the Ohio from Pittsburgh, stopping at Cincinnati and giving his impressions of that city and Covington and Newport. As neighborhoods are sometimes given to gossiping of other neighborhoods, and as Cincinnati sometimes assumes an air of lordship over Covington, it may not be amiss to give Mr. Bradley's opinion of the Queen City-then called Porkopolis.

He says: 'Swine are here in abundance. Remember Mrs. Trollope's amusing experience with the hogs in Cincinnati? The beasts are impudent. They know enough to get out of the way of the vehicle, but pedestrians must turn out'. Having overlooked Cincinnati and being attracted by the appearance of Covington, Mr. Bradley records in his Journal that:

"Then we walked down to the river and took passage on a steam ferry boat for the Kentucky shore. We landed in Covington, a flourishing village founded in 1815. Hard by, a little further above, is Newport. Both these towns make a very pleasing appearance from the opposite side of the river. There are many beautiful houses in Covington which stand, as it were, in tiers on the slope of a beautiful hill. This hill rises above the village to a great height, and is crowned with magnificent forest trees and fresh verdure. This is a fashionable resort and the place is furnished with shady seats at convenient distances. Here Mrs. Trollope delighted to come and dream away the day and hither we directed our steps. Covington does not appear so favorably on a near view as from the opposite shore--there are too many manufactories, too much coal and too much coal smoke. Indeed this bituminous coal is villainous stuff".

Mrs. Trollope, of whom Mr. Bradley writes, was the mother of Anthony Trollope, one of the most entertaining of modern English writers, especially in his admirable portrayals of home life in England. Mrs. Trollope resided in Cincinnati for some years building the house known as "Trollope's Bazaar", one of the most remarkable, and, in truth, bizarre bits of architecture ever devised, and it was devised by herself.

Recurring to Mr. Bradley, he thus tells of his visit to the old rolling mill, the Semple Works, "there were very many boys employed in this horrible business, whom I pitied exceedingly. But they nearly forfeited all claim to my sympathy, amusing themselves by throwing lumps of coal at the strangers. I suppose they knew no better". Undoubtedly they were really bad little boys, throwing coal at a classmate of Daniel Webster--but there are two notings of fact worthy of consideration in the directory of 1833 and in the Journal of Mr. Bradley in 1835.

One is the great number of factories in Covington in the early days and the other is in the fact that there was child labor in Covington then, as now. The directory complains of the fact that the greater number of employees in the cotton factory were children, many of them girls, and the Journal cites the employment of boys in the rolling mill. As gentle Father Southwell, in the days of Elizabeth, wrote:

"Times go by turns", and indeed, they do. Child labor is a thing abhorrent. It diminishes at times in the number of children employed and then increases. It has existed in all ages and in all climes and is not, as some sociologists seem to imagine, a thing of modern days. And if the sociologist would study history, instead of confining himself to scanning present conditions only, he would be all the better qualified to deal with the problems of today.

After the Semple Mill, there came the McNickle Mill, the Tranter Mill and the Licking Mill, the Hemingray Glass Company, the cotton mills of John T. Levis and others. Tobacco factories and warehouses were on almost every street in Covington, with buyers from Cincinnati crossing the river to the Kenton Warehouse, on Greenup Street, to buy their hogsheads of the delightful weed grown on the soil of old Kentucky-but not today! There are reasons for the flight of the factory and warehouse from Covington, not in the least connected with tariff questions nor with currency bills. One of the reasons is found in lack of unity in Covington in matters affecting the city at large-a lack of civic pride unfortunately shown in the suggestion that Covington should give up her name and be content to write herself on the map as "South Cincinnati".

But to get back to the shores of Kentucky. The directory of 1833 does not direct as directories do in these days. There were neither wards nor street numbers in the days before Covington was incorporated as a city, and the directory contents itself with recording that residents lived near the Catholic Church, or near the Methodist Church, or near the river, or near Lower Market. But careful examination of the directory fails to show the location of the Catholic Church or the Methodist Church. In that year there were Catholic and Methodist churches in Covington, one of each, but the directory fails to give the location of either of them.

It made, however, but slight difference in the days of 1834. Covingtonians knew the location of each and every church in the town and were far more particular and more in earnest in church going than in these later days. But the lack of

location giving might have bothered a visitor. In those days, everybody knew everybody, and up to the time the railroads crossed the river, and up to the time the old mule cars ran, when the mules felt like it, and before the fare across the bridge fell from 12¢ to 5¢, there was more home shopping done in Covington than is done today-and more's the pity. But this can be said of Covington, that never in her history did one of her banks or trust companies close its doors because of insolvency!

BLARELY & GETTYS LAWYERS BUILDING COVINGTON, KENTUCKY 41011

HISTORY OF COVINGTON

BY

LAURIE J. BLAKELY

Part III, taken from the Commercial Tribune
of Sunday, September 13, 1914

BLAKELY & GETTYS LAWYERS BUILDING COVINGTON, KENTUCKY 41011

Coming down to later days, 1850, in what may be included in the early history of Covington, which closed in 1850, sixty four years ago, the city of Covington continues, and in a sense, grows in interest. In 1850, there was a paper published called the Covington and Newport News. It was printed in Newport with W.T. Halsey its editor and Thomas W. Chamberlain in charge of the Covington features. In its issue of December 2, 1850, it gives voice to indignation over wire pulling and politics. It seems that the News had been carried across the Licking free of charge on the ferry. But, in the opinion of the editor, politics played a part in inducing the ferry owner to charge the large sum of \$1.00 per month for the transportation of the News. In concluding his bitter attack on the scandalous methods of Newport politics and politicians, the editor announces that he found a friend who had agreed to carry the News across Licking free of charge and he thus finishes: "May heaven reward this bounteous gift and heal our malediction on the Mammon of Unrighteousness".

In those days and for years after, Colonel Sam Davis edited and published the Covington Journal - a gentleman of the old school, indeed, bitter in his denunciations of the villains of the opposite party and having the rare faculty of saying in one brief paragraph what it would take others a column to say and not half so pungently. It was my pleasure to know him intimately. He took three toddies each day, one in the morning, one at noon and one at night and he mixed them himself. He never treated anyone and never allowed anyone to treat him, predicting that the treating habit would grow to dangerous and destructive dimensions.

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In 1850, in the days of the rise of the Know Nothing party, he called the attention of the Covington citizenship to the fact that the opponents of the American party were meeting in secret. "We do not charge," said Colonel Davis "that a midnight canal, that horrible thing, of which we have heard so much, is at work - but it surely looks very much as if it were a fact. Let the good people of Covington beware!"

The bitterest election ever held in Covington was approaching - the American party on the one side and the Democratic party on the other, in the same issue of the Journal in which Colonel Davis sounded his note of warning. John B. Landrum, then City Clerk, published the official notice of the approaching election, with the following named as inspectors of election: First Ward, George H. Tarvin, Robert H. Ball and George W. Munger; Second Ward, William E. Wade, Captain Ben Young and Ephriam Hardy; Third Ward, John G. Ellis, F.S. Lewis and Bruce Broaddus; Fourth Ward, G.W. Clayton, J.L. Henderson and H.H. Overman; Fifth Ward, William Rogers, J. VanHom and Samuel H. Hays; Sixth Ward, E. Hood, William Wasson and J.W. Matrin; Seventh Ward, Edward Hoyt, George Duncan and Joseph Knoll. Not one of the number is living today- editor, newspaper, clerk, inspectors of election. Ephriam Hardy, one of the inspectors was the first Superintendent of Schools in Covington, appointed in 1866 and dying recently, a nonagenarian universally esteemed and respected.

The Journal announced that two trains would run over the Kentucky Central between Covington and Lexington but it was also made plain that no trains would run on the Sabbath Day. The notice was given by the late William Ernst, President of the road, one of the foremost in standing of the earlier citizens of Covington, for years President of the Covington branch of the Northern Bank of Kentucky, a thorough gentleman, strict in business and in church matters but always kindly, charitable and conscientious.

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The Journal also published the proceedings of the Kenton County Bar on the death of John D. McGill, one of the early lawyers of Covington. The meeting was held at the office of M. J. Dudley. James M. Preston was Chairman and Mr. Dudley, Secretary of the meeting. Messrs. E.B. Bartlett, J.M. Spillman, Bruce Porter, M.J. Dudley, Robert Simmons and Edward H. Phelps were the Committee on Resolutions and Messrs. S.H. Cambron, S.T. Wall and S.C. Perrin were named the Committee to present the Resolutions to the Court-and all are dead!

One of the striking differences between Covington of the early days and Covington in later days-and all other cities for that matter-is in the lack of individuality, or its overlooking, in all branches of business and its civic life. In the early days everybody knew who was editor of the newspaper, and individuality was the rule of the newspaperman because individuality was strong in the community. But there came the war between the States, and later, as an inevitable result of centralization in Washington, there came the corporate form of transacting business and the "we" of the old time editor disappeared, giving place to the opinion of whatsoever the corporate name of the newspaper might be. It is the corporation doing the thinking instead of the old time editing.

In the early days of Covington, men ran for office as they happened to feel that way. The campaigns were marked by the utmost individuality of claim to support. In these later days campaigns are mapped out by committees and run by committees. The new rule is that the official plums belong to the party and not to the official elected for distribution as he sees fit. The new rule prevails in all large cities and is growing in the smaller cities with the inevitable result that the cities suffer.

In the early 50's there appeared an advertisement by Mr. U. Clary announcing himself as a candidate for City Marshall in this fashion:

"Having been solicited by multifarious friends to run for Marshall in the coming electing, I now offer myself as a candidate. Should I be so fortunate as to be elected, I solomnly pledge myself to discharge the duties of the office to the best of my abilities and absolutely without regard to politics".

What would be thought of a candidate in these later days who would dare make a declaration of independence so tersely. But Mr. Clary was not to have the field for himself. In the next issue of the news, this appeared: "Mr. Editor. Having been solicited by all my friends and two-thirds of my enemies to become a candidate for Marshall in the coming election and believing in the true democratic principle of 'Vox Populi, Vox Dei', which means, Mr. Editor, the voice of the people is the voice of God, I have concluded to consent to their wishes and will become a candidate. So clear the track for the Democrat, John Taliaferro".

This also appeared with reference to our sister on the other side of the Licking

"Newport can't grow any wider
She's bound in chains by T. B. Snyder
But some sweet day he'll make a blunder
And falling, break the chains asunder".

They surely had politics in the 50's in the Licking cities, and far more individualistic than in these later days.

Speaking of the Suspension Bridge, the Globe, another paper, once existing in Covington, said: "This stupendous structure has been completed. The price and value of real estate in Covington will be doubled, and an impetus given to business of every kind, which cannot fail to astonish even the old fogeydom of Covington and give our noble city a newer and a brighter page in history".

This also is from the Globe, in answer to a scolding from the Cincinnati Gazette over some democrats from Covington crossing the river and making democratic speeches: "Let the Abolitionists of Cincinnati be quiet. They are fully competent to absorb their own vile whiskey and to do their own voting, but if they will attend to their own business instead of stealing Negroes from Covington, they will have stronger claims to our respect". So it can be seen that there

was a lot of bitterness in those early days.

To mention all incidents recorded in the files of the early newspapers of Covington would exceed all limits of time. More than that, between 1859 and the days of Fort Sumpter, there seems to have been nothing but bitterness in their columns—bitterness of politics and bitterness over the certainty of the coming of the war between the States. With 1860, 45 years after the founding of Covington, and 55 years before the coming of the Centenary of Covington, the early history of Covington should close.

Shall the history of Covington come to be written? It should not be written in the fashion of so-much-per-age biographic sketches which appear from time to time, to the profit of the publishers, but not to the profit of the public.

Biography, even correct biography, is not history but a handmaid of history.

The Covington schools, public, parochial and private are deserving of having history taught more completely than it is taught today. Pupils in all schools should know more of the history of their home city more than they do.

In law and in medicine Covington always held first rank. What city in all Kentucky ever had a bar which number in its membership lawyers of the standing of John W. Stevenson, George Robertson McKee, William S. Pryor, John G. Carlisle, Robert Richardson, Mortimer Benton, Harvey Myers, R. B. Carpenter, John W. Menzies, James O'Hara, Robert D. Handy, Theodore Hallam, John F. Fisk, William E. Arthur, Victor Chambers, William W. Cleary, S. H. Cambron, Charles Eginlon and Robert Simmons? Can you name one other city? It is impossible, and the very names of the membership of the bar bring up two instances closely connected with the story of Covington and her early days and worthy of record. In the medical profession of the old days and in the front rank, were Drs. Pretlow, Henderson, Thomas, Hunt, King and Theodore N. Wise.

Other names prominent in the early history of Covington were the venerable and most highly esteemed John Mackoy, ex-Governor Morehead, Hancock Taylor, Benjamin Leathers, Joseph Chambers, and William Ernst.

In the little Directory published by Deming are found Arnolds, Abbots, Balls, Bentons, Bowens, Brookshaws, Caseys, Colvilles, Childresses, Claytons, Coopers, Clemons, Davidsons, Drews, Dunaways, Ellistons, Foleys, Gedges, Grays, Greers, Hardins, Hamiltons, Herndons, Hills, Hopkins, Howells, Johnsons, Kennedys, Kings, Lightfoots, Littlefields, Lendrums, Leonards, Longs, Martins, Lovetts, Metcalfes, Musselmans, Montgomeys, Myers, Mackoys, Owens, Paxtons, Porters, Phelps, Prestons, Pughs, Robinsons, Sandfords, Semples, Stewarts, Senours, Southgates, Sparrows, Stevensons, Talbots, Taylors, Richards, Wades, Woodyards, Wyatts, and Waymans. To name them all would go beyond the limits of space, but with the few named and with the close of 1834, in which year Covington emerged from the grade of a town to the dignity of a city, the story of the beginning of Covington closes.

Pioneer societies have been organized in Covington. They stood their ground through a brief space of time and passed out of existence. They were composed of the settlers of the town and their descendants, but they did not last. The German Pioneer Society, organized comparatively few years ago, exists and flourishes. So does the Society of the Sons of German Pioneers. I merely mentioned the matter and submit it for your consideration.

One of the most interesting and one of the most straight-from-the-heart letters it was ever my pleasure to read was that from the late Mr. John Mackoy addressed to the Pioneer Society of which he was a member and shortly before its dissolution, his letter was a classic. But where is the society?

The graphic description which Mr. Bradley gave of the beauties of Covington, notwithstanding he just hated bituminous coal, includes the fact that the trustees of the little "village of Covington" set apart as a public square or commons, the ground between Third Street, or Second Street, anyway, to the river as a park

and that benches were provided under the beautiful and shady trees.

And what has Covington today? A greater park area in proportion to population and taxable values than Cincinnati has. She has taken over the old time market spaces and has turned them into playgrounds. By purchase, she has an extensive playground on the banks of Willow Run. Devou Park, of more than 500 acres affording most magnificent views of the Ohio Valley, was one of the most generous donations possible to be made and the generosity of the Devous should be remembered most gratefully by the present and future citizenship of Covington. She has more than 60,000 inhabitants, bridges spanning the Ohio from Court Avenue to Ludlow, paved streets, a Federal Building, constructed somewhat on old-time plans, but distinctive among all federal buildings in the land is the fact that the contractor, M.H. Smith, an old-time citizen of Covington, built it for \$32,000.00 less than the amount of the appropriation and turned that amount back in to the federal treasury.

Covington has the most magnificent Cathedral in the west, the window in the north transept being exceeded in size only by the window in the north transept of York Minstery in England, but not equal in grandeur of design by York. The stained glass windows and the mural decorations of the Covington Cathedral are unequalled in the United States. Further to the north, on Madison Avenue, the membership of the Christian Church on Fourth Street has erected a magnificent temple of worship most impressive in architectural design.

Covington has a Courthouse fitted for all her needs. She is connected by streetcar lines running in all directions to the city to Latonia, to the hilltops, west Covington, Ludlow and Bromley-~~too~~ often mightily overcrowded, but things may be bettered.

Covington has factories and stores and banks-one of the stores being the largest in the State, outside of Louisville, a credit to its owner and projector. She has churches in all parts of her area. She has in fact all things that go to make a city.

In the early days of the history of the Licking cities, the State of Kentucky undertook to build dams on the Licking River and they fell to destruction. Today, in addition to other advantages Covington has, there is at all times a navigable stage of water in the Licking, through the building of the Fernbank Dam. The Licking is now an asset of great value to Covington, in addition to her other assets and advantages, and an asset not to be overlooked.

The trustees of Covington were filled with love for Kentucky and showed it in the naming of the streets running north from the Ohio-Shelby, Garrard, Greenup, Scott and Madison, with delay in the naming of the latter until the returns of the election had been finally counted and the result determined. As the trustees showed their love for Kentucky and for Covington, so should the Covingtonians of today show their love for their home state and home city.

An exceedingly interesting contribution to the early history of Covington comes from the late William M. Leathers, the son of Benjamin W. Leathers. At the time of writing the letter, Mr. Leathers held the distinction of being the first child born within the limits of Covington-as the corporate limits then were-being in his 84th year and actively engaged in business at Mapleton, Iowa. For many years, Mr. Leathers was engaged in dry goods business on Madison Street-as it was then called-between Fifth and Sixth, on the site of the building later occupied by the late John R. Coppin. His interesting letter is as follows:

Mapleton, Iowa
August 20, 1904

To the Editor of the Courier:

I see you are writing of Covington in its earliest days. If agreeable, I will give you a few items about the town when the inhabitants numbered 500. As water is one of the most important factors in our lives, let me tell you how the people really got their drinking water. It was from the well on Greenup Street, between Second and Third, opposite the old log school house, and when the rope was not capable of performing its duty, the citizens got their water from a spring on the bank of the Ohio above the foot of Garrard Street. For washing, the majority did it in the Ohio River.

The next in importance is the schools. The first teacher we had was Miss Betsy Scholes. The next was Mr. Stephens. Then came Uncle Jimmy Adams, and it was healthy and cheering to see him, bare-footed and one suspender holding up a pair of linen pants; neither coat nor vest. He had a full school and everybody loved him. Then came M.M. Benton, George P. Marshall and Bushrod W. Foley, and after him came modern times.

The first preacher was Lorenzo Dow and he preached in the old log school house. The first church building was on the west side of Garrard Street and it was open to all denominations and liberally supplied with Methodist preachers from Cincinnati. Such gifted reverends as Hamlin, Swanstead, Willis, Croft and others. In 1836 the Reverend Pilcher, was sent by conference as preacher in charge of the Garrard Street Church. The first class leader was David Musselman, a manufacturer of tobacco. His sons were William, Birch and David. The next place of worship was built by Father Montgomery, on Fifth Street, and at the same time he built a school and the White Cottage for his residence.

It would hardly do to speak of the old times in Covington without mentioning old Granny Kyle, who had her residence about where the German National Bank was first located, about Pike and Madison, and her orchard just south of her house and fairly well fixed for the kids getting in and out and filling their pockets with apples. There was another apple orchard that was handy for the boys, owned by a man named Arnold. He owned the rope walk that ran from Fish Gut to Main Street on the Ohio. Only a few persons now living can call to mind the large Hickory and Walnut trees that were in Willow Run and the Butternut trees in the pasture on the east bank. There was a graveyard on the banks of Willow Run as late as 70 years ago.

The merchants doing business as early as 70 years ago were John D. Casey, Henderson Phelps and A.L. and T. Greer. Manufacturers of tobacco were John H. Casey, David Musselman and his son William. Benjamin W. Leathers was the first manufacturer and first merchant. He died in Covington in 1822. I send you one of his notes. As he was the first banker, the note is dated in 1819. You will see Platt Kennedy's name upon it, who was the first doctor. That year tavern keepers were Hays, Graves, Connolly and Fisher. One of the early settlers was Alex Drake, who built the brick houses on the banks of the Licking. Levi Daugherty lived in it for a number of years. Another one was John A. Gano, who built the houses at the east end of Fourth Street, south side, next to the bridge. Dr. John King and after him, Harndan Groesbeck lived there.

Another old dwelling was the house built by Benjamin W. Leathers at the corner of Greenup and Lower Market. Another was the Connelly house at Second and Garrard; the dwelling of W.M. Southgate on the banks of the Licking was still another. One of the very oldest was the Stone Kennedy house.

I have no doubt tired you in writing so much about old times and places and persons in Covington. But as I am the oldest native born citizen of Covington and have sold goods in the town for 35 years, I certainly am entitled to speak of what I so well remember. By the reading of your paper and the shaking up of my memory, I begin to feel young again, notwithstanding my 83 years.

Sincerely yours,

W. M. Leathers"

As the directory for 1833 gives the names of residents of Covington as "near the Catholic Church" it is evident that Mr. Leathers was mistaken in assigning the date of the erection of the church by Father Montgomery to 1834; the same is to be said of the Methodist Church. To it an earlier date must be assigned than that given by Mr. Leathers. The reunion of the veterans of the Clark expedition was to open in Covington on November 3rd, 1832 and as the 4th "being the Sabath" they were to "attend divine service". The difficulty no doubt arises from the fact that it was difficult to decipher the writing of the venerable pioneer citizen of Covington.

This contribution is not offered as the history of Covington, but merely as a sketch of the beginnings of Covington in the hopes that it will be of interest because of the close approach of the centennial year of 1915--the year in which Covington, now the second city of Kentucky, will enter in and upon the 100th year of her existence as a municipal corporation. Necessarily, many names and many incidents of the story of the birth, the rise and the advance of Covington have been limited --not because of lack of interest of them nor because they were unimportant incidents but because of the limitations of space. The history of Covington remains to be written and it will be written.

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