



A HISTORY OF
INDEPENDENCE, KENTUCKY
LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF
KENTON COUNTY

Incorporated in the year of 1842

"THE HEART OF KENTON COUNTY"

As we celebrate 150 years together in 1992, may we remember those who came before us, and continue to grow with their great spirit of community and pride in our city.

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INTRODUCTION

as we recall the history of Independence, we see the history of a developing nation. The first permanent settlements by white men in Kentucky were established in 1775, in central Kentucky at Boonesboro and Harrodsburg, and Kentucky entered the Union in 1792. In the earliest days of exploration and settlement, travelers from Virginia crossed the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. From the first settlements, they followed the Licking River north to the Ohio, journeying regularly to the salt licks at Big Bone for salt which was important for food preservation and seasoning. It is likely that many of the earliest settlements along the Licking River and its tributary streams were established by those who had become familiar with this travel route. The Ohio River was also used for travel from Pennsylvania, and most new European immigrants followed this route.

ivers and streams were important to early travelers, both as water sources and travel routes. Archaeologists have found evidence that Archaic Native Americans lived and travelled along Banklick Creek from 700 to 1000 BC. These American Indians were hunters and gatherers who pre-dated the Mound-builders, however when our nation was founded, there were no permanent Indian settlements in this area. First pioneer settlements in Northern Kentucky were along the Ohio and Licking Rivers, and finally up the tributary streams. Banklick Creek flows approximately 20 miles from its beginning point between Nicholson and Walton, north to Covington, then into the Licking River. The Louisville and Nashville Railroad now follows the wide Banklick Creek valley, as does Madison Pike before beginning the uphill climb to Independence. This stream provided an access route and water for early settlers.

EARLY SETTLERS

The rolling hills of this area had attracted settlers by 1800. Land was being cleared for farming and log cabins were being built. The first church recorded was called the "Baptist Church of Jesus Christ at Banklick," organized by these early settlers sometime around 1800. More information about this church will be given as we trace the progress of our community.

EARLY POSTAL SERVICES

This area was served by its first post-office, opened on November 20, 1837 by Isaac Everett, at a location first called "Everett's Creek." A month later, it was renamed "Crews Creek," perhaps because it was located on what is now called "Cruises Creek," which flows from east of Walton, through Piner, and into the Licking River at Morningview. The location was south of what is now Independence; probably near Piner. In July, 1838, this post office was changed to "Bagby" by Thomas H. Hornsder.

FORMATION OF KENTON COUNTY

In 1794, what is now our tri-county, Northern Kentucky Area was all part of the vast Campbell County. Boone County was formed from the western portion of Campbell County in 1798, but what we now know as Kenton County struggled for independence for many years. Travel was difficult, and the Licking River was a formidable barrier. Newport was the northern County Seat, and the southern County Seat was then at Visalia on the Licking River (moved to Alexandria when Kenton County was created). The existence of "Visalia Road" on both sides of the Licking River suggests the necessary crossing of the river at this point, perhaps by ferry. By this time, settlements were not only in the river valley, but also on the creeks and ridges, and we can only imagine how difficult it was to negotiate the hills to the Licking Valley in a carriage on a dirt road.

(continued)

FORMATION OF KENTON COUNTY

In 1840 the struggle for an independent county was finally successful. Campbell County was again divided, creating a new county, which was named "Kenton" after pioneer Simon Kenton, who had helped to settle this part of Kentucky.

INDEPENDENCE THE COUNTY SEAT

Farmer John McCollum donated a five acre tract located in the center and believed to be the highest point of the newly formed Kenton County, to serve as the location for the county seat of Kenton County, and a Court House was constructed. This county seat, established in 1840, was named "Independence" to celebrate the independence of the new county of Kenton. The "Bagby Post Office" was moved to Independence on October 7, 1840, and renamed for the new county seat.

In 1842, the town of Independence was incorporated.

In 1859, the boundaries of Independence were expanded from the original block surrounding the court house to a size about one-half mile in total length with an area of surrounding farms, encompassing a total of about 165 acres. There were about 55 buildings, including the court house, clerk's office, jail, school, homes, and businesses.

Many important political events took place at the Court House in Independence, and many notables received their first nominations for public office here. John G. Carlisle who became Secretary of the Treasury, Governor Stevenson, and Lieutenant Governor Bryan were first received at Independence's old Court House, and early political conventions here often lasted for a week or more. The local farmers and their wives would provide a hearty meal for those in attendance at these events, and quite a crowd would be present to hear the speeches and orations.

The Court House was used for church, private and Sunday school, concerts, plays, funerals, and circulating library when there was no court: the courtyard was the scene for dances, plays, tennis, baseball, and other sports. It was seldom idle. Independence became a busy town with three physicians, a boarding house, tobacco warehouse, general store, brick hotel, drug and dry goods store, several taverns, jail building, and a two room public elementary school house at the north edge of town.

Entertainment in town included "balle" or dances held in the tobacco warehouse, and plays offered by dramatic clubs in Independence (which were organized by some of the older men), as well as the opportunity to participate in the politics of the county and attend the thrilling and eloquent political speeches given at the Court House.

On July 4th, men would line up along each side of the street for Roman Candle fights, and on Election Day, the contest was to throw each other's hats into the bonfire! These pranks were all in fun, and it was said that the jail was seldom occupied.



INDEPENDENCE COURTHOUSE.

During the years of 1840 to 1860, many German immigrants were settling in both Cincinnati and Covington, and the population of Covington was growing rapidly. In 1851, and again in 1858, acts were passed providing for certain terms of the County Court to be held in Covington, since a 12 mile trip to Independence in those days meant hours by horse-drawn carriage, stage, or "omnibus" on the "Independence Turnpike," a dirt toll road which then followed the current route of the railway through the Banklick Creek valley, and up the hill into Independence. In 1860, because of the growth of Covington, an act was passed by the Kentucky Assembly dividing the county into two districts, there by providing for a Court House and keeping of records in Covington. During the years which followed, disagreements concerning the jurisdiction of each Court House and County Seat became, at times, heated. The cartoon reproduced here accompanied an article in the February 7 1898 Kentucky Post concerning one of these jurisdiction disputes, when Covington commissioners were ordered to the Independence Court House.



THE EARLY WINNING PILGRIMAGE FROM COVINGTON TO INDEPENDENCE

One of the first group efforts in a new community was often the organization of a church. As previously mentioned, the first church in this area was called the "Baptist Church of Jesus Christ at Banklick." Their earliest surviving records begin in 1841. In 1844, members of this church established a second meeting place on Decoursey Creek east of Independence, called the Decoursey Creek Baptist Church (later moved and renamed "Oak Ridge Baptist Church").

Minutes of business meetings from a period beginning in 1844 through 1849 reveal much discussion concerning a new location and building for the Baptist Church of Jesus Christ at Banklick.

One-half acre was donated by each of two member families in 1846, and in 1849 they began meeting in the new location on a high ridge in a beautiful grove of hickory trees. This first brick meeting house was replaced in 1869 with a larger brick building. By 1893, the church was known as "Banklick Baptist" and in 1900, with consideration for their location and the fact that two other churches newly located on Banklick Creek had both used the stream's name, the name was officially changed to "Hickory Grove Baptist Church."

Catholic immigrants from Ireland settling in this area petitioned for a priest to minister to their needs during the late 1850's. Mass would be held in the home of one of the settlers by a visiting priest, probably once in two or three months, then later monthly. These services were well attended by both Catholic and non-Catholic, and many traveled long, rough roads from the surrounding countryside. In 1866 a brick house with ground sufficient for building a church was purchased by a group of Catholic settlers, and in 1867, a priest was sent to reside in Independence.

A room on the upper floor of the building was used as a rectory while the lower floor served as a church. This first location was sold in 1868 and a foundation was laid for a new church in that same year, but due to financial difficulties, construction was not completed. Church was again held in the homes of local parisoners for the next twelve years. A visiting priest was sent out to the missions of Florence and Independence during this period, who encouraged people to buy land and was instrumental in obtaining financial aid for some who wished to settle here.

The first Catholic Church was erected in 1880, with the guidance of the priest from St. Paul's Church in Florence. First Mass was celebrated in November, just prior to the feast of St. Cecilia; thus it was named in honor of this Saint. The church was simple. Lumber was brought in by local settlers, and the old pews from St. Paul's Church were used. In March of 1919, this original St. Cecilia Church building burned to the ground. There was little delay in beginning construction of a new church.

Land was purchased at the present location of St. Cecilia Church and construction began in July, 1919. Church was held at at the Court House until the new building was finished in November, 1919.

Money was raised for Independence's first protestant church due to interest sparked by a revival held in 1862 by a Presbyterian Evangelist and educator named Reverend Dunlap. Built in 1884 and called the "Union Church," it had seating for 500 persons, and a bell was loaned by St. Cecilia for the steeple. The Union Church used by various denominations, each in turn. In 1896, this church was destroyed by fire and was never rebuilt, however by this date there were other churches of various denominations near Independence.

When the Civil War began in 1861, many of the hill tops overlooking the Banklick Creek were used for military defense and look-out posts. Independence apparently saw no fighting, however we do see the history of these outposts in the names of many cities throughout Northern Kentucky. Fort Mitchell, Kyle Battery (at Kyle's Lane now), and other familiar names appear on an 1862 map of military defenses in Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati.

Independence itself was probably little affected by the War between The States, however progress of public education and other developing state services was delayed.

FIRST SCHOOLS

The first schools were taught by parents or neighbors, and each small community held its own classes at home, or built a small school building.

The Kentucky State Board of Education was created in 1838 and during the 1840's public elementary education became available, however small school houses and in-home private schools persisted into the early 1900's. A high school education became available in Independence after 1894 through a private school taught by Reverend Dunlap in his home.

This private school was sold to C. V. Lucy and his mother in 1898, and continued until 1910 when it was taken over by the county.

In 1910, the 11th District Board of Education was established, and plans were made for the construction of a public high school. In 1911, land was purchased at the intersection of Independence Station Road and Madison Pike for the location of the "Independence Graded and High School," and construction was completed in 1912.

This building served the students of Independence until 1953 and still stands, though much changed from its original appearance.

A NEW COURT HOUSE

In 1904, it became apparent to some that the old Court House at Independence needed to be replaced. The Court House was old and in poor condition; however during the period between 1908 and 1911, there was debate concerning the advisability of maintaining two court houses in Kenton County. Citizens of Covington argued that replacing the Independence Court House was unnecessary, and that the County Seat of Covington could meet all the county's needs. Eventually, agreement was reached which provided that at least one court session per year would be held at Independence, and money was finally allocated to replace the old Court House.

In late 1911, the old Kenton County Court House was torn down. The present Court House was constructed and dedication ceremonies were held in October of 1912. With the beautiful new Court House and the new school building completed that same year, Independence was developing a new look. The dedication ceremonies for the new Court House brought the largest crowd in the history of Independence. Officials from all over the county and other parts of the state were in attendance. After many dedication speeches, a feast of burgoe was enjoyed by all. The gala affair brought memories of the earlier days of Independence, when conventions and court days brought prominence to this country town of less than 500 inhabitants.

The automobile was still not in common use, and transportation continued by carriage for most, however members of the Covington Industrial Club traveled by automobile to attend the Court House Dedication.

Most of the trails through the creek valleys naturally developed into wagon roads, and early farmers and settlers had to create travel ways to their homes and fields. Many of these wagon paths were maintained by those who needed them, however "Road Companies" built virtually all of the major roads in Kentucky during the 1800's. These were private companies chartered by the government, and construction was paid for by stock investments sold to the public. The road companies would then charge and collect tolls for passage across these roads. Generally, these toll roads were not such "improved" from the wagon paths they replaced, but the road companies did build some bridges, and continuously fought to prevent the by-passing of their toll booths. The original wagon path which followed the Banklick Creek was taken over by one of these road companies in 1833, and they petitioned the government to order people to use their "turnpike," and not by-pass the tolls.

The major roads serving the Independence area were: The Banklick Turnpike (1833), Independence Turnpike (1848), Taylor's Mill Turnpike (1857), and the Independence Big Bone Turnpike (1855). It appears that the Banklick Turnpike became known as the Independence Turnpike some time after 1840, and originally extended only 17 miles south from Covington, but was later extended to the Pendleton County line. De Coursey Creek Turnpike (1850) also came from Latonia along the Licking River to the mouth of Decoursey Creek, and followed the winding creek up hill to Whites Tower and beyond. The many remaining sections of this old turnpike are now the infamous "Old Decoursey Pike." Apparently a bad investment, the De Coursey Creek Turnpike Company was in receivership for fifteen years.

In 1868 the old Independence Turnpike was sold to the Louisville Railroad, and the road to Independence was re-routed. A rail station was located on Independence Station Road, establishing a railroad link two miles from Independence. The Covington and Independence Stage which traveled the Independence Turnpike brought mail, news and passengers from Covington, with a 2 to 3 hour journey over rough road. Independence farmers sent their products to Covington markets by horse drawn cart for many years, down the Independence Turnpike. [Read the 1869 article "A Trip to the County Seat" for a first-hand account.]

The roads shown in an 1883 atlas of the Independence area include almost all through roads in use today, as well as several other roads which involved creek-bed crossings. Most of these roads are now known by the names of the families who lived along them when they were created, or the name of the creek they follow. Some major turnpikes were surfaced with crushed stone, but most were dirt roads and trails.

During the period from 1904 to 1913, these toll roads were purchased by the government, and the toll booths were eliminated. The automobile came into use during this period, and automobile users demanded better roads. By 1912 when the tolls were eliminated, the Independence Turnpike had been extended to "Colemansville" in Harrison County and was known as the Independence and Colemansville Turnpike. Colemansville no longer exists, but the road went to a mill on the South Fork of the Licking River in Harrison County, about 10 miles beyond Falmouth. In 1913 the Covington and Lexington Turnpike (now the Dixie Highway), was not only the last toll road in Kenton County to be made public, but was also the first road to be surfaced with asphalt.

After the tolls were removed from the turnpikes, most were called "Pikes." During the 1910's what is now Route 17 was referred to as "Covington and Independence Pike" from Covington to Independence, and "Independence and Colemansville Pike" south from Independence, through Falmouth, and into Harrison County to Colemansville. It was also called "Covington and Colemansville Pike" for the entire length, or simply "Independence Pike."

A news article in the Kentucky Post dated May 16, 1916, refers to money allocated for the paving of "Covington and Colemansville Pike" from Covington to Independence and a protest made by those south of Independence that the paving should continue beyond Independence.

Extensive research into the origin of the name "LLL Highway" and a search for any continuation of this road beyond the old town of "Colemansville" has produced theory, rumor and conjecture. No documented evidence has been found to establish the source for this name.

The popular theory explaining the name as Latonia, Lexington, Louisville is given credence by tours suggested in MOTOUR Magazine, published by the Cincinnati Automobile Club. One of their routes included a tour from Cincinnati, down the Independence and Colemansville Pike to Falmouth, continuing south along the Licking River to Paris and into Lexington; then west to Louisville on the Lexington and Louisville Pike. A description of this route appears in an issue of "MOTOUR Magazine" dated July, 1925, headed "Cincinnati, O. to Lexington and Louisville ... via Falmouth — L.L.L. Highway." Although the city of Latonia had been annexed by Covington in 1909 the Latonia Race Track brought many visitors, and the first "L" may have stood for Latonia.

Earlier articles in the Kentucky Post during 1925 may dispute this theory. News from March 17, 1925 says "Only the northern section of the [Three L] road, between Covington and Barklick Creek, prevents thru traffic between Cincinnati and the central and southern sections of Kentucky." Quoting from November 26, 1925, "The L. L.L. Highway is one of the best in the country and with the exception of a short strip from Berea to Roundstone, it is completely paved." This article also states that the "L.L.L. Highway is known throughout the country as the Eastern Dixie." Note that Berea is 40 miles south of Lexington, certainly not on the way to Louisville.

Mr. Herman McClanahan of Cynthiana, Kentucky, age 92, says that during the early 1920's he helped to lay rock for the road bed on what became route 27 through Falmouth and Cynthiana. A Mr. Linus Leab Liebus was weigh-master for the rock used to build the road bed, and since the new road had no name, Mr. Liebus called it the "L.L.L. Highway."

The current use of the name, "LLL Highway" ends south of Falmouth near the Harrison County line, and efforts to locate an "LLL" road today anywhere in Harrison County, Lexington, or Louisville have been fruitless.

Most of the Independence and Colemansville Turnpike became Route 17, Taylor's Mill Turnpike became Taylor Mill Road, and the Independence Big Bone Turnpike included parts of what are now Barklick Station and Maher Roads, joining Madison Pike at the Big Bone Turnpike which is now a dead end road.

As you have read this history, you may have noticed the mention of many fires, and buildings which burned. Fire was a serious danger in all early towns and on the hill in Independence, there were few water sources available for fire fighting. Throughout the years, attempts to establish a fire department had failed due to a multitude of reasons, foremost of which was the lack of money.

In 1936, with one small and used hand-drawn chemical cart, a group of 15 volunteers met at the old Independence school for the purpose of organizing a volunteer fire department. They agreed to canvass within a five mile radius of Independence for pledges toward the funding of a fire department. Realizing the possibility of failure, they further agreed that if they were unsuccessful in organizing this department by the end of 1937, they would return all monies contributed and dissolve their organization.

The response from the farmers was gratifying, with contributions ranging from \$.50 to \$100.00 collected. In 1937, a supper was held at the new Simon Kenton High School to raise additional funds, which netted \$685.00. With the money raised and a loan of \$1800.00 (on a note signed by five member volunteers) the new fire department purchased a pumper truck with the capacity of 500 gallons per minute. It was estimated that by the end of 1937, the new department had saved the property owners over \$20,000 in reduced insurance rates alone!

Water sources had to be created, and in 1939 it was decided that cisterns should be constructed. One of these cisterns still remains at the corner of McCullum Road and Madison Pike. Also in 1939, Fire Station 1 was built on land donated by the county.

In 1940, a siren was mounted on top of the firehouse. When a fire was sighted, they would hurry to the fire house and sound the siren. Phones were being installed in Independence in 1940, and it was decided to place one in the firehouse, and in the garage across the street.

Funding for the fire department was a continuing problem. Pledge cards were used and in the 1940's the Ladies Auxilliary began fund-raisers to help the volunteer fire department.

During the 1940's another truck was purchased, and the pump for it was donated by the Civil Defense. With no life squad available south of Covington, the department purchased its first life squad truck from the Civil Defense in 1944.

In 1950, the protection area of the Independence Fire Department was increased to include the area from St. Mary's Cemetery in Covington to the Kenton and Pendleton County lines. This service area was decreased as other departments were established.

In 1961, installation of water lines began in Independence, and the job of fire fighting must have become much improved. The size of the original fire house had been increased by an addition in 1949, and in 1967, a new engine room was added to the front of the building to house the additional equipment. In 1969, radios were installed in all department vehicles, and in 1973, hose radios were purchased for all members, so that they could all be alerted at once.

The growth of Independence through the 1960's and 70's necessitated the purchase of additional equipment, and the construction of two additional fire stations. Station 2 was constructed at the corner of Cox Road and Jimas in 1974, and Station 3 was built on Richardson Road in 1976.

In 1979, the Independence Fire District was formed, which included the unincorporated area of Kenton County served by the department, and allowed the department to collect tax dollars from property owners in the District. In 1985, Station 1 was remodelled and a second story was added. In 1987 the first paid employees were hired. The department continued to serve the city of Independence under contract until 1992 when the district was expanded to include Independence, thus allowing the taxation of Independence property owners. From its modest beginnings, the department has continued to grow to meet the demands of our community.

THE ARISTOCRAT PEAR TREE
(*Pyrus calleryana aristocrat*)

In 1959, Mr. William Straw was tending some seedling ornamental pear trees he had planted in his small nursery in Independence. They had been planted in 1954, and although a few had been sold, they were quite thorny, and he had determined to clear the planting. As he ran down the row with his chainsaw, he came upon one tree with no thorns. This tree had appeared as a deviant from seed, and he decided to graft bud cuttings from the thornless tree onto the stumps remaining in the row. All of Mr. Straw's cuttings survived, and leafed vigorously in the spring. That fall, Mr. Straw sent a sample of the beautifully colored foliage to the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, Massachusetts at Harvard University for an opinion. He received their reply requesting a plant when possible, and comments complimenting the beauty of the foliage. Mr. Straw sent plants to several arboreta, requesting an evaluation, and all returned an excellent rating. The following spring the bloom was gorgeous, and Mr. Straw applied for a plant patent and U. S. Trademark for his new variety which he called, "aristocrat."

The Aristocrat Pear is now trademarked in the United States, Canada, and parts of Europe. It is grown by about 90 licensed growers throughout the United States, and 500,000 to 1,000,000 trees are sold each year. The Aristocrat Pear is often used for memorial plantings, and can be found on the capitol grounds in Washington, D. C. in the National Botanical Gardens along Canal Street, in the National Arboretum, the capitol grounds of Frankfort, Kentucky, and in many arboreta throughout the nation. In 1974, a tree was dedicated in Atlanta, Georgia to the 75th anniversary of the Southern Nurseryman's Association.

In 1990, the Aristocrat Pear was selected as the official tree of Kenton County. The original tree from which the first cuttings were propagated was given to the county, and was planted in front of the Independence Fire Department for their 50th anniversary.

These magnificent trees give pleasure to everyone as they grace Independence with their bloom each spring.

GROWTH AND SERVICES

By 1898 one telephone line served Independence, and it was often used for court business and communication with the Covington Court House.

The first bank to locate in Independence was the First Deposit Bank, in January of 1903. The brick building on Madison Pike across from McCullum Road was built by this bank in 1902. In early 1920, they completed construction of the larger building at the corner of McCullum Road and Madison Pike, and moved into this building. The First Deposit Bank remained open in Independence throughout the great Depression of 1929.

City electrical service became available to Independence in 1925. Prior to this time, some buildings had private generators to provide electrical lighting, but most homes used gas lights and lanterns.

For many years, the Court House was used by various churches for services and Sunday School. After having begun its services in the Court House, the First Baptist Church of Independence built the church now occupied by Grace Baptist Church in 1927, then later moved to its present location.

There were small schools scattered throughout the rural areas surrounding Independence in the early 1900's. In 1928, the school district was consolidated and any remaining small school houses were eliminated. The high school grades were moved into a 6 room frame building built behind the Independence Graded and High School. A bus garage was also built, and a separate auditorium was constructed beside the original building. In 1937 Simon Kenton High School was built, and the old buildings were used only for elementary students.

In 1951 Kenton Elementary School opened, however the population was growing so rapidly that it was too small. Not only were the old buildings needed, but some classes were even moved into the court house. Modern plumbing was not available in the old school, and out-houses were still in use. In 1954, with re-districting and the construction of Taylor Mill Elementary School, the old building was no longer needed. In 1950, middle grade students were moved to Twenhofel Middle School. White's Tower Elementary was built in 1953, and Beechgrove Elementary School opened in 1967.

In 1961, the first public water lines were installed in Independence and since that date they have been expanded to serve most of central Kenton County.

Our post office moved from the building across from the court house to its present location in 1991. The previous building had been constructed in 1961, and served 1400 homes by 1963. It now serves nearly 5000 homes and businesses with delivery and post office boxes.

From 1960 to 1984, Independence grew significantly through the annexation of surrounding areas. This growth began as a result of Covington's annexation of towns and areas surrounding its limits, and a threat of the entire annexation of Independence.

The first lands to be annexed were along Madison Pike. In 1968, the Cherokee area, with all lands between the previous boundaries of Independence were taken into the city limits. In 1973 and 1974, annexation toward the Beechgrove area began, expanding the city north to Richardson Road, and south to Bristow Road. Annexations continued rapidly through 1978 and 1979, completing the annexation of the Villages of Beechgrove, and additional lands east of Taylor Mill Road. In 1981, annexation to the west continued to the Boone County line (thereby taking a portion of the Industrial Park) and in 1983, the entire city of Ridgeview Heights was taken by Independence.

During this period, many cities in Northern Kentucky were fighting for survival. Covington, being the largest city, had the greatest power to take over the smaller cities and unincorporated areas of Kenton County. For many property owners, the choice was to either be annexed by Covington, or by a city with a lower tax rate. Many would have preferred to remain outside any city limits, however, this choice was not an option. Independence had one of the lower tax rates available.

Due in part to the rampant annexations which took place during this period by major cities in Kenton County, laws were passed which now limit the ability of any city to annex land without the request and approval of a majority of property owners involved.

Both the Hickory Grove Baptist Church and the Oak Ridge Baptist Church have prospered on the foundations set by the first settlers. The Hickory Grove Baptist Church has grown to include a new sanctuary, Family Life Center, pre-school and 45 acres of land. Although these churches are outside the city limits of Independence, they were organized and built by the earliest settlers and citizens of the Independence area.

There are now churches of various denominations within the city limits. Some of these churches offer day care, educational, and other services.

The Kenton County public schools provide one of the best public educational programs available in Kentucky. In addition to the public schools, parochial education is provided by St. Cecilia Catholic School in Independence, and just outside the city, Calvary Christian Academy and the Community Christian Academy provide educational facilities.

Independence has apartments, condominiums, subdivision single family homes, farms, and estate homes. Outdoor recreation is available at the Kenton County Bencklick Woods Park on Independence Station Road, and the Kenton County Public Golf Courses with a total of 54 holes are adjacent to this park, within the city limits.

Independence has three major shopping areas, convenient to the major population centers. These are along Madison Pike in the center of town, to the west in the Beechgrove portion of Independence, and on the east side at the Cherokee Shopping Center. In addition to these major concentrations, there are retail and service establishments throughout the city.

State routes 16 and 17 run north-south through Independence, and other routes cross through Independence in all directions. Route 536 is being improved at present, to provide a direct east-west route from Union to the Versailles bridge over the Licking river, crossing the southern portion of Independence. Although there are no interstate highways through Independence, all of the city is accessible on well maintained scenic roads and highways, being within 4 to 8 miles from Interstate 275, and within 3 to 10 miles from Interstate 75. The Greater Cincinnati International Airport is within 20 miles, making it now possible to travel from Independence to Europe in the time that the first residents needed to make the trip to Covington and back!

Public transportation is provided by TANK bus service which travels routes 16, 17, and connecting roads, as well as service to Beechgrove on a regular schedule.

The Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission oversees land usage, and provides recommendations to the city concerning zoning and development plans. City water is provided by the Kenton County Water District, and electricity is provided by Owen County Rural Electric and Union Light Heat and Power. Cincinnati Bell Telephone service provides local service to all of Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati. Cable television is available through Storer Cable, and public broadcasting reaches our air waves from Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport.

A CITY PROFILE

The City of Independence is reported to be the largest in Kentucky by land area, comprising a total of 16 square miles.

According to the 1990 census, the population of Independence totalled 10,444 (3,463 households), with 43% of the population between the ages of 19 to 44, and another 1/3 under the age of 18. These statistics reflect a large number of young families, and an implied future of greater population growth.

Independence has grown with new home construction, and new subdivisions are constantly being developed. It may be noted that with 16 square miles and a population of only 10,444, there is an average of 10 acres for each man, woman, and child! There are farms, and undeveloped lands which give Independence scenic views and room to grow.

Approximately 25 of the businesses in the Florence Industrial Park are located within the city limits of Independence, employing between 500 to 1000 people.

The city of Independence is governed by a mayor elected to serve 4 years, and 6 city council persons elected for 2 year terms. They employ a full-time city clerk, secretary, and 10 person police department.

The city contracts with Kenton County to provide 911 dispatching service for emergency fire and police calls. Other services provided by the city include street lights, weekly garbage collection, city sewers throughout much of Independence, and a city park and ballfield. The city maintains 46 miles of city streets, and provides winter snow removal.

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS COPIED FROM:

The Covington Journal
Covington, Kentucky

Saturday, June 26, 1869

The asterisks added are referenced to the following:

* The "omnibus" was a horse drawn bus.

* "Latonia Springs" was a mineral springs resort spa, located along the Banklick Creek, just south of Highland Pike today.

* The Independence Turnpike was a toll road which later became Madison Pike.

* The writer had attended the Democratic County Convention to select candidates for State Senator and County Judge for Kenton County. John G. Carlisle was nominated for Senator, and George G. Perkins was nominated for the office of County Judge.

Being one of the number in attendance at the Democratic Convention on last Monday, we apprehend it would not be missa to give a short account of our trip to the seat of justice in our goodly county. Two omnibuses, generously provided by the principal contestants for the nomination for County Judge, were placed at the disposal of the city delegates, and about half past eight o'clock we left the city for our destination. The bus in which we were fortunate enough to obtain a seat contained a goodly number of congenial fellows, including a newly nominated candidate for the Legislature, and the many pleasant jokes told, and sallies of wit and repartee served to enliven the trip, and dispel the dull monotony of an omnibus ride.

The elements did not seem to favor us at starting, but the occasional showers, interspersed with streaks of sunshine, only served to keep the atmosphere in a delightful condition. We were soon without the city limits, and rumbling past some of the beautiful suburban retreats adjacent to our city, at once brought to view nature in all her loveliness.

We noticed on the road many handsome residences, some of the houses being almost obscured from sight by the heavy foliage of the shade trees, and surrounded by beautiful gardens of exotics, the fragrance from which was wafted on the morning air.

At *Latonia Springs the delegation stopped to "see a man." This famed resort has been placed in most excellent order, and we can imagine no more delightful retreat for those who wish to escape the heat and oppressiveness of the city during the Summer months. Having "seen" the ubiquitous individual referred to, we started on. At this point we were joined by Mr. Asher, one of the proprietors of the Springs, a whole-souled, genial gentleman, who was accompanied by a mysterious looking bottle and a box of fragrant Havanas, to which the representatives of the unfettered did ample justice. A short distance beyond the Springs we turn into the *new pike, the best portion of the old one having been transferred to the new Louisville railroad

for a road bed, and the riding for three or four miles is not so pleasant on account of its not being worn sufficiently. The fields along the road were teeming with the products of the soil, and the crops looked in a most excellent condition, and the heart of the farmer rejoiceth thereat.

Arriving at Independence about half an hour before dinner time, we found a large concourse of country people assembled — sturdy old farmers, hardy tillers of the soil. To grasp them by the hand and gaze upon their honest sunburned faces did one good. After appeasing our keenly whetted appetite with an old fashioned country dinner, we proceeded to the business which called us there.

*Our readers are already familiar with the proceedings of the Convention, and it is unnecessary to detail them here; suffice it to say that the deliberations were of the most harmonious character, and the best of feeling prevailed throughout. The remarks of the candidates for nomination were brief and to the point, each declaring his fidelity to Democratic principles and each in turn pledging himself to abide the decision, and heartily support the nominee of the convention.

We were glad to note the improved appearance of the town since our last visit, and especially the excellent condition of the Court House.

Leaving Independence about four o'clock, a ride of about two hours and a half brought us home, every one well satisfied with the day's work. The convention, in point of intelligence, harmony and good feeling, was equal to any we have ever attended.

CREDITS:

Behringer-Crawford Museum provided maps and turnpike history, as well as archaeological records.

History of Hickory Grove Baptist Church from surviving minutes of business meetings and recorded memories, provided by the church

History of St. Cecilia and the Catholic Faith in Independence summarized from the Centennial Book published for their centennial celebration in 1980.

History of Independence and Community Fire Department provided by the department.

History of the Aristocrat Pear from Mr. William Straw.

City services, statistics and annexation reports provided by the City of Independence.

Much research has been done at the Kenton County Library through old newspaper microfilm and other records, by myself and with the assistance of their reference department.

Many thanks to the highway departments, postmasters and others in Kenton, Pendleton, and Harrison Counties who have searched their records for remnants of the "L11 Highway," and to the libraries of Palmouth, Lexington, and Louisville for their assistance.

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Researched, Written and Edited by
Margie Prindle
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A personal note from the author.

I was not born in Independence, nor did I grow up here. I was, however, born in a small community much like Independence. There are many small towns like Independence and the community in which I was born throughout this nation. They each hold their own memories of the early struggle to establish a community out of the wilderness.

Researching and writing this history has truly been a labor of love. I believe it is important to record this history and to remember it. Many of the problems we face today are not so unlike those of our forefathers. Much of rural America still does not have adequate services for water, sewer, roads, and the ability to keep our land and streams free from pollution. As Independence continues to grow, we find that much work is ahead of us to keep pace with the changes.

This is a beautiful and peaceful place to live. As we reflect upon our past, we must also plan for the future of this town we call "home".

Margie Prindle