

Harrison Heritage News

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Special Issue: New Book by
George D. Slade -
*Railroads in Harrison
County, Kentucky*

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BOOK REVIEW by William A. Penn:

Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky by George D. Slade

Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky by George D. Slade. Published by the Harrison County Historical Society (Cynthiana, Kentucky, 2005). 82 pages, introduction, endnotes. Paperback, \$15.

I suppose a book reviewer should be both familiar with the subject and objective. As one who assisted in editing George Slade's new book, *Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky*, I pass the first test but perhaps fail the second.

Before this book, there was little published information on the railroad in Harrison County, a topic largely ignored by 19th century historians Perrin and Boyd. Although there are several fine general histories of railroads, such as the L&N Railroad, little space is given in them to local history.

In his first few chapters, George Slade has gathered information directly from early newspapers, whose reporters excitedly followed county by county the construction of the Covington and Lexington Railroad in the 1850s.

Another chapter covers the celebration in 1854 - just over 150 years ago - of the arrival of the railroad in Cynthiana with a grand barbecue that attracted thousands of citizens.

The L&N's legacy is probably most familiar to readers and railfans today, for Harrison Countians



George Slade examines the first copy off the printing press of his new book about railroads in Harrison County.

William A. Penn photo, 2005.

watched L&N trains pass through Cynthiana from 1889 to 1986, when CSX bought the company. Mr. Slade devotes much space to this period, and tells about grading for the large coal trains. A chapter about the Cynthiana L&N passenger and freight depots includes stories about railroad employees and characters who were a familiar sight to depot visitors. He also describes the Norfolk Southern - only five miles of track within Harrison's borders - and several proposed lines never built.

Since all of the depots in the county have been retired from service and demolished, it is interesting to once again see them in photographs. John Landrum, a native of Cynthiana and editor of the L&N Magazine, found the original floor plans of Harrison County depots in the archives of the L&N Historical Society, and provided

many L&N maps used in the book, including system maps from 1953 and detailed county railroad topographic maps. An 1863 map, from the National Archives, shows the railroad through the county along with defensive stockades built by the U.S. Army.

A chapter titled "War Times" has information on the railroad during the Civil War, W.W.I and W.W.II. During the Civil War, Keller's Bridge and the Cynthiana depot were in the center of the fighting. During the later wars, local rails were guarded more closely and Harrison soldiers - including George - used the Cynthiana depot to depart for their army duties.

George grew up near the railroad tracks, and this book includes his reminiscences of people and events connected with the trains, which were much more frequent in those days. He even discusses safety issues caused by dangerous crossings and solutions enacted.

I believe anyone interested in local history and railroads will find this book rewarding. With its informative text and collection of photographs, maps, and illustrations, this will be a welcome history of railroads in Harrison County.

Harrison County Historical Society

Larry Moss, President
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Dorothy Slade, Treasurer

CYNTHIANA-HARRISON COUNTY MUSEUM

112 S. Walnut St., Cynthiana, Ky. 41031 Hrs: 10-5 Fri-Sat

Martha Barnes, President

February 17th - Book Review - *The Railroad in Harrison County, Ky.*, by George D. Slade.

Bill Penn reviewed the new book by historian George D. Slade that narrates the 150 year history of the railroad in Harrison County. He passed around a pre-publication sample which has been at the museum and available for members and visitors to examine. At the end of the meeting the membership voted to publish fifty copies.

March 17th Meeting. The program for the next meeting will be presented by Martha and Jim Snodgrass, who will discuss their interesting work with various park systems in the west. Bring a friend and have a fun evening.

HOW TO ORDER NEW RAILROAD BOOK:

Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky by
George D. Slade.

Send \$15 plus \$3 shipping to:

Harrison County Historical Society,
P.O. Box 411, Cynthiana, KY, 41031.



Railroads
in
Harrison County,
Kentucky

George D. Slade

Railroad Days at the Museum

Congratulations to George Slade on yet another excellent and important publication. Once again, George has assisted in preserving a portion of our community's history. Thanks, too, to Editor Bill for helping. Most of us would admit a fascination with trains. Poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) wrote

"My heart is warm with the friends I make,
And better friends I'll not be knowing;
Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take,
No matter where it's going."

Although I never rode a train in or out of Cynthiana, I do remember the depot - and I have heard family and friends tell of train rides. What wonderful memories! Many have provided railroad related items to our museum so that we might keep that integral part of our history alive. They are perfect companions to George's new book.

The depot was a magnificent building. Lowell Maybrier has loaned to the museum collection one of the lovely stained glass windows. Harold Slade provided the "Baggage Room" tag. The last train bulletin board - Louisville and Nashville - showing times of arrival and departure of both north and south bound (written in chalk) was loaned by Robert Poindexter. Also displayed are numerous photographs of the depot and related buildings as well as depots and bridges throughout the county.

Our model town in the annex is enhanced with a scale replica of the Cynthiana depot. This model was constructed by Raymond Landrum. Other related items in the museum are railroad locks, railroad rail sections, railroad tie plates, boxcar tags, L & N plaque, L & N hammer, railroad lantern, L & N can used to fill kerosene lanterns, and a "kindly flush...." (not in the station) sign. These items of memorabilia come to us from the Peak, Martin, and Slade families. "

De railroad bridge's A sad song in de air.
E'er time de trains pass I wants to go somewhere" -

from "Homesick Blues" by Langston Hughes.

Excerpts from *Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky* - George D. Slade

— Welcoming the coming of the railroad:

“Harrison County merchants and politicians joined other communities along the proposed route in recognizing the commercial importance of the project. Freight and depot facilities would immediately attract business to the town, along with the prospect of an increase in population.... With the first mention that a railroad might come to Cynthiana, plans developed rapidly. This was the most important news of the day. Leaders in the various communities to be affected were busy drawing the plans for the Covington-Lexington Rail Road.”

— On watching trains pass as a child:

“Sometimes when I was walking home, darkness would be coming on. “The Flamingo,” Florida bound, might pass by. Lights were on and passengers could be seen in the diner partaking of their evening meal. I wondered what they were thinking. As the speeding train passed there might be someone on the observation platform that would wave. In the center of the observation platform was a large round red-lighted display with the words, “The Flamingo.” More unknown people who have passed in the night.”

— About hobos:

“Then there were the non-paying passengers who rode the freight trains, the hobos. Occasionally you might see a man’s head sticking above the side of a coal car, but usually they sought the luxury of a boxcar. The empty boxcar doors were not sealed. The “passengers” would simply open the door and crawl inside. Sometimes they would sit in the open doorway with their legs dangling out. During the great depression it would not be unusual to see twenty or more hobos on a single train.”

— Coming of the railroad in the 1850s:

“Tension increased as the track-layers neared Cynthiana. May 11, 1854, the *News* states: ‘Mr. Burbank, the gentleman who has the contract for the framing and building bridges on the C. & L. R. R., put up the last bridge on the road between this point and Covington, in about nine days, with only eighteen hands. The bridge is about 250 feet long [A. Keller Bridge]. A more go-ahead set of men we have not seen for many a day.’ ”

NOTE: Correction to *Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky*: Page 80, photo caption should read Keller’s Bridge was originally built by the Covington and Lexington Railroad, not the Covington and Ohio Railroad.

HARRISON COUNTY’S LOST BUILDINGS



left) The L&N passenger depot, Cynthiana, Ky., was built in 1892, remodeled in 1912, and demolished in 1961. The depot was located on Railroad Avenue. A Civil War-era depot was located on the east side of the tracks, near Bridge Street, the site of a later L&N freight building. Photo by Wm. A. Penn, 1961, from George Slade, *Railroads in Harrison Co., Kentucky* (2005).

RAILROAD DATES SIGNIFICANT TO HARRISON COUNTY

[From *Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky* by George D. Slade]

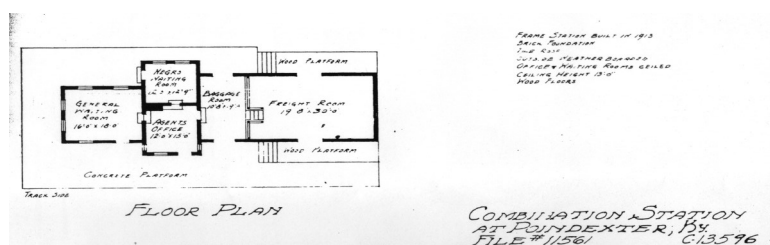
- 1847** - Kentucky legislature grants articles of incorporation to Licking and Lexington Railroad Co., March 1.
- 1849** - Above repealed and a new charter granted authorizing "construction of a railway, with single or double tracks, from Covington to Lexington, and any town or place in any of the counties through which the road might pass or in any adjoining counties." Name changed to Covington and Lexington Railroad Co. (C.L.R.R.).
- 1850** - Approved contracts for construction of first 18 miles of road which had been previously surveyed.
- 1851** - Approved contracts for remaining superstructure of the road.
- 1852** - Wm. K. Wall deeds land to Covington-Lexington Railroad for depot, "adjacent to the town of Cynthiana on the south side."
- 1853** - C.L.R.R. completed to Falmouth and service begun to that place, October 17.
- 1853** - Maysville-Lexington R.R. completed Paris to Lexington. First train passes from Paris to Lexington December 22, 1853.
- 1854** - C.L.R.R. completed to Mr. Robinson's mill, 8 miles north of Cynthiana, April 13. C.L.R.R. completed to town limits of Cynthiana, May 18. First passenger trains run between Cynthiana and Covington, May 22. Barbecue held at Cynthiana to celebrate the completion of the railroad to this place, June 8. Estimated that 15,000 to 20,000 people attended. *Cynthiana News* reported that "The amount of provisions destroyed on this memorable occasion was: In notions, \$80; Loaves of bread 650; Hams, 50; Number of Beavers killed, 6; Number of Shoats killed, 25; Number of Sheep killed, 75." C.L.R.R. completed to Paris and trains began running, September 27.
- 1855** - *Cynthiana News*, Jan. 4. reports "C.L.R.R. has leased the Lexington-Paris section of the bankrupt Maysville-Lexington R.R." C.L.R.R. cars running from Covington to Lexington and return.
- 1863** - Jan. 11 - Covington-Lexington R.R. re-chartered as Kentucky Central R.R.
- 1886** - Kentucky-Central R.R. falls on hard times and goes into receivership.
- 1889** - Louisville & Nashville R.R. acquires entire capital of K.C.R.R.
- 1913** - Double tracking of L&N R.R. through Harrison County completed.
- 1961** - Start work of taking down railroad passenger depot building at Cynthiana.
- 1968** - Last scheduled passenger train stops at Cynthiana, March 7.
- 1986** - C.S.X. Transportation acquires L&N R.R.
- 1985** - Completed return of the railroad to a single track in Harrison County.

RARE DEPOT PHOTOS AND FLOOR PLANS

This is a sample of a photo and text from *Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky*. The appendix has historic photos and floor plans of most Harrison County depots as well as a detailed history of each building. (Illustrations on this page shown 50% of original size in the book).



(Left) Poindexter, Ky. - Combination Passenger-Freight Station. This frame station was constructed by the L&N in 1913. The structure included a brick foundation, tile roof, weather boarded exterior, office and waiting rooms with 13' ceilings, and wood floors. There were separate waiting rooms for white and black patrons. In 1938 L&N retired the Poindexter depot. Photo (above) late 1930s, courtesy of Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum.



(Left Below) Combination Station at Poindexter, Ky., floor plan. L&N Historical Society.

Harrison County, Kentucky, Historical Publications

**available from Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, 112 South Walnut Street, P.O. Box 411,
Cynthiana, KY 41031 (859-234-7179); open Fridays and Saturdays 10 AM - 5 PM:**

- Boyd, Lucinda, *Chronicles of Cynthiana*. This is a reprint of the rare 1894 edition, which includes family histories, the famous account of David Sheely and his ghost, and other historical sketches and scattered accounts of persons and events connected with Cynthiana and Harrison County. 262 pp. Hardbound. \$20.00.
- June 1896 *Cynthiana Democrat* reprint. This was a special edition with biographical sketches and photographs of prominent men and women; many photographs of buildings; city/county government, church and school information is included. 24 pp. Paperback, 12"x18". \$5.00
- *Cynthiana Since 1790*. Virgil Peddicord (1986). Mr. Peddicord attempted to list the owners/businesses located on each lot from the founding of the city through the mid-1980s, including subdivisions added through 1923. 171 pp. (See separate index below). Paperback. \$20.00
- *Index - Cynthiana Since 1790* (William A. Penn). Mr. Peddicord did not prepare a comprehensive index for his book. This supplemental index contains about 3,500 names and a reference city street map. 30 pp. Paperback. \$3.00
- *Writings of Colonel William M. Moore, (1837-1927)* compiled by Andrew B. "Andy" Peak (2002). Includes 1921-1922 articles he wrote for the *Cynthiana Democrat* about his life. He was born in Harrison Co., but his family soon moved to Lewis Co., Mo.; in 1849 he moved back to Harrison Co., and he wrote much about life in Cynthiana in the early 1850s; he joined the CSA army in 1861 and fought in battles at Lexington, Mo.; Pea Ridge, Arkansas; and Shiloh, Tenn. The book includes several family obituaries and two letters that contain Moore genealogy. 10 family photographs; index; paperback, 71 pp. \$10.00/ \$3.00 shipping. Limited supply.
- *This Old House* by Katherine Wilson. Now back in print, this book tells the stories of twenty-six early Harrison Co. houses and the families who have occupied them. Much material on Harrison Co. history. Exterior and interior b & w photos of each house. Originally printed 1956-1957. 70 pp., new index, paperback. \$15.00 (An index is available for earlier editions, which had no index).
- *Cromwell's Comments*, by John M. Cromwell (1862-1951) is a reprint of Cromwell's 1928-1941 *Cynthiana Democrat* columns on the history of Cynthiana (Harrison Co., KY). A fine writer and historian, Mr. Cromwell covered many topics, including fairs, horses, fires, churches, businesses, cemeteries, government, Civil War, social events, and the Licking River. Sometimes he quoted old county histories, updated the information, and then added his personal reminiscences of interesting personalities from his career as banker and mayor. William A. Penn and George D. Slade, editors. Paperback; preface; 2 maps; 21 photos; 4 illus.; annotated; index; 200 pp. (*Cynthiana Democrat*, 2002), \$10 plus \$3 shipping.

Shipping/handling for above books: Please include a handling and shipping fee of \$4.00 for first book (unless otherwise noted above), \$2.50 for each additional book; you will be notified if special shipping fees apply. No shipping fee on *Index - Cynthiana Since 1790*, if ordered with the book. Make checks/money orders payable to "Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum." No credit cards. Prices/fees subject to change.

New Harrison County Railroad Book:

Railroads in Harrison County, Kentucky by George D. Slade. This book traces the building of the Covington & Lexington Railroad through the county; the barbecue celebrating the arrival of the tracks to Cynthiana; L&N's development and the county depots and bridges; Southern Railroad in the county; the role of the county's railroad in the Civil War, W.W. I and W.W.II.; "railroad people" Mr. Slade knew growing up in the 1920s and '30s; rail crossings safety issues; many illustrations including photos and floor plans of Harrison County depots; photos of bridges; historic photos of railroad scenes, section crews, excursion ads, and vintage maps. Published by the Harrison County Historical Society (Cynthiana, Kentucky, 2005). 82 pages, introduction, endnotes. Paperback, \$15 plus \$3 shipping.

Historic Battle Grove Cemetery - Self-Guided Tour

A thirty-page, spiral bound guidebook, by Charles Feix, which describes 22 monuments and includes a guide map, is \$5.00 at the cemetery office. To order by mail, send \$7.00, which includes postage and handling, to: Battle Grove Cemetery, 531 East Pike Street, Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031. All proceeds are used for purchasing trees and other beautification projects in the historic cemetery. Visitors may also borrow for the day the guidebook at the office.