

Harrison Heritage News

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Hobson Book Press

JaneAnn Johnson

The Hobson Book Press was established in 1940 at Lexington, but moved to Cynthiana in 1941. The company had a great impact on the economy of Cynthiana, in that it was the first company to offer minimum wage to its employees. Mr. U. R. Bell, the owner, was well educated with a doctorate degree, and was a lecturer at the University of Kentucky, a minister and a world traveler. The name of the company was derived from his wife's initials which were H. O. B., and his son, who also worked at the press until he went into the armed forces.

The Bell family worked together in this enterprise. Mr. Bell was the manager, editor, and business administrator. His wife made the book plates used for printing, and their son, Graydon, ran the presses.

Mrs. Fran Dailey was the first employee hired, and in the early years of the company learned to do almost everything pertaining to the book publishing trade.

In the beginning, the company struggled to obtain adequate capital. The Hobson press grew very fast during the war years and soon there were eighty employees. Mr. Bell hired his son-in-law, Zane Cowan, to take over the operations of the plant so he could concentrate on seeking new business.

Mr. Bell had bought the patent to the Addressograph process of printing in which each page is printed by a plate made of four



(Above) The Hobson Book Press was located in this building on the west side of South Main Street, in Cynthiana. Photo, 2004, JaneAnn Johnson.

sections of punched tin. The Hobson Book Press specialized in small-order books, usually 250-500 per run. Customers who could not afford to send their manuscripts to large publishers instead used the Cynthiana press. Books published were mostly family histories, small volumes of poems and college theses from teachers at U. K.

Originally located across from Biancke's Restaurant on North Main St., the company later moved to South Main Street, next to the former Whaley Funeral Home. Here the press changed to the faster process of printing using Linotype. The Linotype machine casts one line of type at a time. An operator strikes a key that releases a mold for a specific character. Each mold

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President's Corner

Bob Owen

President, Harrison County
Historical Society

I thank those of you who sent kind words of support in reference to my first column. Secondly, my correct email address is robert_owen@bellsouth.net. I apologize to those who tried to reach me via the incorrect one I had provided.

I want to address membership this month. I encourage all members to recruit one (or more) additional member (s) this month and bring them to the next meeting. An increased membership will make more people aware of the history of Cynthiana and Harrison County and its importance to our future generations. Many of you remember the TV program, Roots, and the impact it had on people discovering and recording their genealogy or history. The history of places is just as important as the people who are born, live, work, and die there. Knowing about these places can help us understand the people and times in which they lived.

It is also important to preserve the places that are important elements of the history. Many acknowledge the historical significance of the Harrison County Courthouse, the Griffith Tavern and the old covered bridge. Unfortunately, the importance of the latter was not recognized until it was (*continued on page 3*)

Harrison County Historical Society

Bob Owen, President
 Billy Fowler, Vice President
 Janie Whitehead, Secretary
 Dorothy Slade, Treasurer

Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

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

Martha Barnes, President

Griffith Tavern Subject of May Meeting

Meeting Notes May 19, 2005. The program on Griffith Tavern and Silver Lake Farm was presented jointly by Phil Crowley, UK, and Sharon Buford, a graduate student who is writing her thesis on the historic farm. Using slides to illustrate the proposed use of the farm, Phil Crowley explained the importance of the farm as a savanna-woodlands, one of the best preserved on the east third of the U.S. Long range plans call for restoring woodlands and cane fields to the period before European settlement.

Sharon Buford, who is in the graduate program in Historic Preservation and Dept. of Biology at UK explained the original use of the tavern room by room and discussed restoration plans for the building. Through a series of federal TEA-21 grants, UK plans to restore the building so that it can be used to interpret the cultural and ecological connections of the farm to the early settlement of Kentucky.

UK is negotiating with the Harrison County Fiscal Court to have an agreement to operate the tavern upon its restoration. UK plans to incorporate a non-profit trust for developing and maintaining the tavern.

Business Session: Motion was passed to contribute \$150 to the Battle of Cynthiana reenactment August 19-21.

Underground Railroad subject of June 16th meeting.

Alicestyne Turley-Adams, the director of the Underground Railroad Research Institute at Georgetown College, will speak on the Underground Railroad. The institute, housed in the former slave quarters of John A. Sullivan at Georgetown (Ky.) College fosters research on African-American resistance to slavery and racism and seeks to broaden public understanding of this aspect of American history. Its purpose is to study the historical and cultural context of the system in Kentucky and Ohio. Be sure to attend and bring a friend to this educational lecture in the Cynthiana public library at 7 p.m.

Things We Made Today and Yesteryear...

...is the name given by Harold Slade to one of the special sections of the museum. The existing space for this exhibit is filled to capacity. Obviously, it is an ongoing display. When one thinks of all the industry and business which have been in operation in Cynthiana and Harrison County and that which continues, the numbers are great. Consider the products, services, advertisements, family names, company names - this is indeed our past, our present, and our future. A partial listing of the products and companies represented in this area of the museum includes: Kawneer, Bundy, Grede, Ladish, Atkinson Automatic Timer, Amos's Cleaners, Blake and Johnson, numerous distilleries, Fennel Horse Boots, 3M, Bullard, Webber's Sausage, Home Ice Company, and the Hobson Press. Our Hobson Press display consists of information, some handwritten by the late Mrs. Sue Dailey who worked for the company. Mrs. Dailey was one of our special museum supporters from the beginning. She and Billy Browning supplied several Hobson publications for our exhibit. Does anyone have Hobson Press books in their personal libraries or personal boxes of books? We would like to increase our Hobson Press numbers in the museum. Many have been unaware that the book publisher ever existed in Cynthiana. Do you know of other Harrison County-Cynthiana publishers? Who originally published Lucinda Boyd's Chronicles of Cynthiana? Surely you have your own copy to look that up- if not, visit the museum and purchase a copy - only \$20. for a hardback that looks just like the original.

Thanks again to the Kelly family - all four generations - for making our eighth annual Museum Grist Mill Day a possibility and a success. Thanks to all who helped in other ways, to our museum volunteers (We always need more volunteers!), to all who attended (We had lots of first time museum visitors), and to all who support the museum. It was a great day!

Our hometown Farmer's Market now is located at the corner of Bridge and Church Streets. Hours of operation are Tuesdays and Fridays, 3-6 P.M. and Saturdays, 9 A.M.-2 P.M. Since the museum is open during part of that time, we are combining marketing efforts - a museum sign at the market and a Farmer's Market sign at the museum. The market is hosting special events on the first Saturday of each month. We participated in June's arts and antiques event. We talked with interesting and interested persons about the museum and sold a number of Cromwell's Comments .

(President's Corner - Continued from page 1)

too late to save it. Many older homes in the county have historical significance and should be saved if possible.

Some have already researched and learned the historical significance of structures of the county. But we must educate the rest of us, members and non-members, and build a database of these important structures so that we can encourage their preservation. The membership should be the spokesperson for preservation. The larger the membership, the louder the voice and the better opportunity for success. So please, encourage your friends and neighbors to join the Historical Society and to attend our meetings as often as possible.

Lastly, we need your help in identifying individuals to make presentations at our monthly meetings. Please think about whom you would like to hear or a subject you would like presented and we will try to make it happen. Please give your ideas to one of the Society officers as soon as possible. It is your Society and we want to make it responsive to you. (Bob Owen, President, Harrison County Historical Society)

Harrison County, KY, on the Internet

(e-mail editor other sites)

- www.cynthianaky.com - Harrison Heritage News back issues from vol. 1 no. 1 are archived under Community Life/Historical Society link. (Internet search engine www.google.com searches these back issues.) Church photos, history and other information is on this site. HHN annual index in Dec or Jan issues.

- www.battleofcynthiana.org - Battle of Cynthiana Reenactment Information -

- www.ramsha1780.org - Hinkson and Ruddle Station Historical Society:

- www.savehandyheritage.org - Promotes preservation of the Handy House; Brown/Frazer/Handy family ownership history; Civil War and Camp Frazer connections; early barn; slave quarters; photos of site.

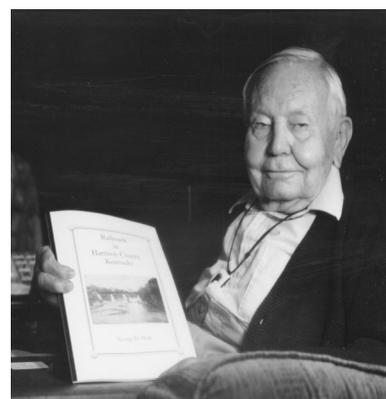
- www.harrisoncountky.us - "a site...to use as an aid in the genealogical & historical research of Harrison County, Kentucky and its people." There is much information on Harrison County history, local communities, postcard views, a valuable research checklist, and to be added are "families" and "data bases". There are many links to other Web sites with Harrison County links.

HARRISON COUNTY'S LOST BUILDINGS



Banneker High School - Built in 1860 as the C. B. Cook residence, Penn Street, north side between Locust and Poplar, it later housed Cynthiana's first hospital from 1907 to 1920, when Banneker High School occupied it until 1937. That year the African-American public school replaced the former mansion with a new school, demolished in 1962. Postcard, 1920s.

GEORGE D. SLADE 3/12/16 - 6/6/05



George D. Slade, member of the Harrison County Historical Society, a feature writer for the Harrison Heritage News, author of *Railroads in Harrison County, KY*, and co-editor of *Cromwell's Comments*, died June 6, 2005. A profile on George will be in the July 2005 issue. Photo 2005, Bill Penn.

Kentucky Community Scholars Program

William A. Penn

In January, four Cynthiana residents and one Louisville student completed the Kentucky Community Scholars Program. This program, which was promoted in our community by Cynthiana Renaissance, is a partnership between the Kentucky Folklife Program, the Folk Studies Graduate Program of WKU, and communities across the state.

Program literature describes it as “a training program for individuals interested in documentation and promotion of community culture, folklife, and traditional arts. Participants become familiar with folklife documentation techniques, ethics of working with communities, research methods, presentation of cultural resources, grant writing, and project development.”

The classes started last fall and students presented their findings January 29, 2005. Besides Mrs. Johnson’s Hobson Book Press topic, included in this newsletter, other subjects were: John Hicks - medicinal herbs; David Kennedy - mills; Charlene Wilson - one room school houses, and Pam Wiley, black schools in her Louisville neighborhood.

The classes were taught by Janet Gates and Sarah Milligan. Bob Gates, Kentucky Folklife Program director, participated in the final student presentations and handed out the certificates of class completion to the students.



Kentucky Community Scholars Program participants from the fall 2004 class pose for the January 29, 2005 course completion ceremony: front row: John Hicks, Janet and Bob Gates, instructors; David Kennedy. Row 2 - JaneAnn Johnson, Charlene Wilson, Pam Wiley. Mr. Gates is director of the Kentucky Folklife Program. Photo, 2005, Wm. A. Penn.

Hobson Press (Continued from page 1)

JaneAnn Johnson

is automatically moved to its place in the line of type being set. The machine's casting mechanism then pours molten metal into the mold. When the metal hardens, a line of raised type, called a slug, is formed.

As the company grew, problems began. The larger press runs and big work force proved to be more than the town and company could handle. The company had expanded too fast for the community and capital was lacking.

After W. W. II other methods of printing short runs were developed elsewhere in the country and competition became more intense. Also, higher paper cost and a continuing lack of capital for new equipment handicapped the business.

Finally, a company client in Chicago made an offer to buy the Hobson business, but Mr. Bell loved his company so much that he could not bear to sell. In 1947 the Hobson Book Press folded.

Mr. and Mrs. Bell then moved to Louisville where he died in 1952. Their daughter Garnetta and son-in-law Zayne Cowan moved to Jackson, Mississippi, where Mr. Cowan worked as a civil engineer. Their son Graydon became Professor of Physics and department Chairman at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California.

The Hobson Book Press used space over the former Dixie restaurant (now Jet Tubs, s.w. corner of Pleasant and Walnut St.) for storage, and an old printing press still there is said to have belonged to the company.

Thus ended the brief history of the Hobson Book Press, the dream of U. R. Bell but the victim of intense competition in the book business. Hobson Book Press titles show up now and then in area book stores and antiques shops, but today are only a curiosity of Cynthiana’s past. To see a copy of a Hobson Book Press publication visit the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, where several examples are on display.

JaneAnn Johnson, a resident and native of Harrison County, wrote this essay as part of the Kentucky Community Scholars Program, described elsewhere in this issue.

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.

For Railfans and History Buffs: 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.

New Book: 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.