

# Harrison Heritage News

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

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Index: Vol. 1-6 this issue.



IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER  
SOUTH FORK LICKING RIVER LOOKING NORTH FROM LADISH ROAD BRIDGE  
Photo ca. 2000, Bill Penn

## VICTORIAN WINTERS IN CYNTHIANA

JOHN M. CROMWELL

## President's Corner

Bob Owen

*Editor's note: Wintertime in Kentucky brings cold weather, snowfalls, and ice on the streams, along with the excitement of Christmas and New Year's Day. In Cynthiana's Victorian days, boys and girls had somewhat different winter activities and holiday celebrations. Reading again the pages of John M. Cromwell's newspaper columns, I encountered several references to winter, which I reprint below:*

### Manana

December 24, 1931

TOMORROW will be Christmas. Fifty odd years ago [in the 1870s-'80s] how the hearts of us "old timers" would have thrilled to the sound; and perhaps the hearts of the "youth" of today will be equally thrilled, but I doubt it.

When I was a boy Christmas lasted the entire week, no work was done at all except the necessary things, such as feeding the stock, chopping wood, etc. This went for the hired help also (they were hired by the year in those days). As soon as the chores were done, their time, during Christmas week, was their own.

I very well remember we used to make far more of New Year's Day in Cynthiana. One very pleasant custom we had, making New Year calls. In the afternoon a bunch of boys would get together and make the rounds, visiting the homes of all the girls, stay in at a place just long enough to say

*(Continued on page 3)*

At our November meeting, John Downs of the Kentucky Heritage Council spoke on the role of the Council. He gave the history of the Council and his role.

I attended the November meeting of the Cynthiana-Harrison County - Berry Joint Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission conducted a third review of the request to rezone land immediately north of city limits on US 27. The plan by the owner is to have the land rezoned for development and seek annexation of the land into the city. Although I made an approach

*[continued on page 6]*

## Harrison County Historical Society

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

**Nov. 17th minutes:** President Owen reported on a letter about the Burrier property zoning he wrote on behalf of the historical society to the property owners, city, county, and zoning commission. Harold Slade encouraged everyone to visit the museum to read the collection of Harrison County veterans' stories. The Historical Society voted to donate \$50 to the Museum for purchase of supplies.

**Program:** John Downs, Kentucky Heritage Council, a specialist in preservation of Civil War sites, made a presentation on his agency and its contribution to the state's historic preservation goals. He has replaced Tom Fugate, who had advised the Cynthiana-Harrison Co. Chamber of Commerce and local government on obtaining grants for battlefield protection, interpretation, and preservation.

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

**December 10**—no meeting. Potluck with Museum at First Methodist Church 6 p.m.

**January 19**—Billy Fowler will discuss the nomination of the Handy House to the National Register of Historic Places.

### MEMBERSHIPS NOW DUE

2006 Membership dues **per household \$12** due in Jan. Bring to next meeting or mail to address on page 1. Include your mailing address. Membership includes this newsletter.

*Correction: In the Nov. 2005 issue we listed the wrong e-mail address for our Web site writer, Phillip Naff; it should be: [philnaff@comcast.net](mailto:philnaff@comcast.net)*

### Museum Volunteers Harold and Dorothy Slade Honored

Harold and Dorothy Slade were honored for their contributions to the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum in the Cynthiana Christmas Parade December 3rd by being named Grand Marshals. We all join in congratulating them. Their contributions have been essential to the successful efforts to have a museum, and they have been instrumental in accumulating a museum collection and preparing attractive and educational displays. Thanks, Harold and Dorothy, for many contributions to the museum, continued support for the Historical Society, and dependable volunteer time. [ed.]

## Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

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

### *Christmas Thoughts*

On behalf of all of us at the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, we extend our best wishes for a merry, blessed Christmas. We appreciate the importance of preserving and sharing our community's history.

We extend congratulations and special thanks to our own Harold and Dorothy Slade—grand marshals of the 2005 Cynthiana-Harrison County Christmas Parade. What a well-deserved honor! We indeed are proud of them! As well, we are so proud of and thankful for our wonderful volunteers.

Our Christmas gathering was most enjoyable. The potluck dinner was scrumptious—our editor Bill Penn aptly described it as “family reunion food.” Best of all was the great fellowship—a group of precious people.

Christmas thoughts and childhood memories about at the museum and the an-nex. You can bring the kids to see Miss Katie's dollhouse, models, toys, our Raggedy Ann and Andy corner, and cards ornaments from the past (cardboard dles from window can-tional Bank Farmers Na-Deposit and Harrison Bank a Monticello Bank a ball orna-ment, a tree-topper pur-chased at Newberry's, decorations, etc.). The wonderful Santa from the old J & R Drugstore, our Christmas tree, and Neville Haley's sleighs add to the festive air.



We encourage you to continue your support of the museum and our endeavors, we invite you to be a part of our work and our goals, and most especially, we wish you and yours all the best for the New Year.

(VICTORIAN WINTERS-Cromwell—Continued from page 1)

“howdy!” and to partake of light refreshments, and, be it known, this was when “coming events” had just begun to cast their shadows before, eggnog or a glass of wine being sometimes included.

### **Sleighing**

March 13, 1930

Another delightful sport that the ubiquitous automobile has got out of business. Time was when few winters passed without at least one spell of sleighing weather, and when all of the livery stables kept sleighs for hire, and when many private gentlemen owned them; or failing ownership, improvised them, easily done by removing the wheels and top from a buggy, and having a blacksmith attach a pair of runners. I wonder if somewhere in the county there is one of these old sleighs stored away? As I write this I particularly recall the month of January, 1884, when a big snow came, and we had about two weeks of uninterrupted sleighing. The sleighs, improvised and otherwise, were hauled forth, and beginning along about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and continuing until midnight our streets resounded to the merry jingle of sleigh bells.

Main Street, from Bridge to the old cemetery, was our speedway. Then becoming more ambitious we organized a Sleighing Club of about eight couples, as I recall it, and began making excursions into the surrounding country, taking care to know in advance where we were to stop each night for refreshments.... Reading between the lines we find that three weddings were to result from our Club. We were first entertained by J. Will Kimbrough at the home of his parents on the White Oak pike; next just across the way at the country residence of Uncle Sam Ashbrook; then at home of the writer's parents on the old Lair pike; and again by Miss Wilson at the home of her parents; our last stop was at the home of Mr. Jas. K. Megibben, also on the old Lair pike. Here we were welcomed by “big” genial Jas. K. Megibben, who of the older generation can ever forget him? The boys having been assigned to a dressing room to remove wraps, and ditto the stains of travel, our host appeared on the scene bearing a tray of steaming “hot apple toddies.”

### **A Cold Sleigh Ride**

On a certain day, in the month of January, 1886, I believe it was, there came a big snow, after which it turned extremely cold; kind of deceptive weather, if you get me, bright sunshine, but bitter cold, nevertheless, if one was long exposed....

The time being propitious, what more natural to suggest than a sleigh ride. So the next day, having secured the cooperation of a friend, we drove around for the ladies and were soon on our way. For a time all went merry as the proverbial “marriage bell,” or I should have said “sleigh bells.” Our “cutters” were of the latest model; our horses fast, and the air bracing. In fact, we were soon to discover that the air was far too bracing, so in passing a farm house we suggested that the young ladies go in and warm. Of course, being made of sterner stuff, we did not accompany them. We were later to wish we had, as from that day to this I do not remember ever to have been so near frozen as when, a little later, I disembarked from that sleigh in front of the R. H. Will’s livery stable.

Closing, I recall an incident which happened at Berry when I was a school boy...[when] one “Ney” Smith, drove up, and his best girl, in an improvised sleigh. A word here about these sleighs, crude affairs they were, often used and easily obtained. All you needed was a couple of hickory saplings, and a medium sized dry goods box. Then peel your saplings, nail your box across the butt ends, attach the horse to the smaller ends, which acted as shafts and you were ready to go. For the proper understanding of the story I should say that practically no harness was required, just a collar and a pair of hames, the shafts shafts to be attached to the hames by hooks. While “Ney” talked one of his friends slipped to the horse’s head and detached the hooks, taking care the while to hold up the shafts. Ready to start, our swain cracked his whip, spoke to the horse, which immediately walked away leaving our young couple sitting in the middle of the road in a horseless sleigh.

As a final reflection on Victorian Christmas, in the 1860s, fireworks were popular at Christmas and New Year’s holidays. Cromwell noted that: “The Trustees having passed an ordinance prohibiting the sale of ‘crackers,’ fireworks, in view of the fact that Christmas was approaching voted to hold it in abeyance from Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> to Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, so that ‘grocery keepers’ might sell them during the holidays.” [Source: *Cromwell’s Comments*, John M. Cromwell, edited by Wm. A. Penn and George D. Slade, available at the Cynthia-Harrison County Museum.]

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### IN FRANCE CHRISTMAS.

J. Samuel Jones, of Cynthiana, has written his father, Mr. F.N. Jones, the following letter:

“Camp Le Valdahon, France,  
“December 30, 1918.

“The Christmas season of 1918 will linger with us only as memories when these few lines reach old Kentucky as it takes about three weeks for a letter to reach American from this part of France. Notwithstanding this fact I feel that it may be of interest to some people who have not had the opportunity of spending the Yule tide season in France to know just how the soldiers of the Field Artillery School of Instruction of which I am a member, passed Christmas day and enjoyed the festivities of the season. With this point in mind I shall endeavor to write a few lines concerning our observance of the day.

“First of all, the soldiers of our detachment enjoyed a most delicious and bountiful dinner. I am sending herewith a menu which speaks for itself. The dinner was well prepared and enjoyed to the highest degree by all. The Mess Hall was appropriately decorated for the event and a high degree of appreciation dominated the organization. Of course during the course of the dinner our thoughts went homeward bound and more than once we wished that we were back to America to participate in the Christmas festivities at our respective homes, but as circumstances would not permit this we contented [*sic*] ourselves with our surroundings. There was not a man who left the tables without expressing his appreciation of the dinner and many of them said they could not in the least envy the soldiers who were back home in the States for Christmas so far as their dinners were concerned for they certainly did not have any more elaborate feast than we, even though they did have their fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers seated at the table with them.

“Most of us realized while partaking of the palatable dinner that Christmas Day of this year will always be remembered by the world with a special significance. After a bloody war of several years during which several Christmas Days witnessed most of the civilized world bearing arms in a mighty conflict which has at least resulted in the triumph of right and justice over tyranny, this Christmas saw the dove of peace flying over the lands and awakened us to a fuller realization of “Peace on Earth, and Good Will to Men.” During all of our festivities we did not forget this fact and many times during the day we felt proud that we are members of the American Expeditionary Forces who although separated from our loved ones, will continue to be optimistic and place consolation in the fact that the next Christmas Day will find us sitting at a table along side of the home folks who have cheerfully kept the home fires burning while the boys of America assisted in bringing about the end of the greatest conflict that the world has ever seen.

“The censorship of letters has been somewhat modified and we are now permitted to divulge more information than previously, so I shall take this opportunity of stating that I am now located in Camp Valdahon in the province of Doubs, France, within a few miles of the border of Switzerland. The famous Alps mountains are plainly visible by taking a short ride eastward. We can see the foothills of these mountains from our barracks windows, and long before we had any snow in our camp we could see snow off in the mountains.

“Close to our camp is the city of Besancon, one of the most historic cities in this part of France. It is located in a beautiful valley and is cut by a spacious span of water, a river formed by mountain streams. In this city there are many things of interest among which is an astronomical [*sic*] clock which registers the time and tide in all parts of the world. There is also a large arch which is said to have been erected during the reign of Julius Caesar when the Roman Empire was at its supremacy. There is also a tomb erected to the memory of John the Baptists which was constructed early in the first century. Among the other things of interest are the remains of a large amphitheater which is said to have been built by the Romans, and a large fort overlooking the city from a large cliff which was built during the reign of King Louis the fourteenth.

“Not so far from our camp is a cave which is 200 feet into the ground and it is the scene of much activity by the soldiers, for most of the boys enjoy going down into the cave to explore.

“Now that the armistice has been signed and peace is inevitable we are looking forward with pleasure to the time when we shall be given the command, “Homeward Bound.” We fully realize that we will be sent home as soon as it is expedient, but we are anxious to know just when that time will arrive. I don’t think there is a boy in our organization who will regret that he has served with the American Expeditionary Forces in France and has done his bit toward the triumphant termination of the war for the allies, and I don’t think that there is a soldier here who does not fully appreciate the support that the American army has been given by the folks back home.

“In closing this short letter, I wish to extend to all my wishes of a happy and prosperous New Year and my desire that all of my friends may this year have every asset that will contribute toward comfort and happiness.

“J. Samuel Jones,  
“F.A. School of Instruction,  
[“]A.P.O. 704, Amer. E.F.[”]

## Harrison County, Kentucky, Historical Publications

### Books Are Welcomed Christmas Presents

available from Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, 112 South Walnut Street, P.O. Box 411, Cynthiana, KY 41031 (859-234-7179);

- 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. 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. 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). 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.

[PRESIDENT'S CORNER cont. from page 1]

to the owner about setting aside some small bit of the land for historical preservation, this was ignored. The attorney for the owner voiced opinion that there was no historical significance to the land. After much discussion, the Commission voted to continue the review and reconsider it at the next meeting. I will meet with Tonya Coleman, director of the Cynthiana-Harrison County Chamber of Commerce in an attempt to get the persons who conducted the Battlefield Study and John Downs to attend the next meeting and present the historical significance of the Camp Frazer area, especially the entrenchment.

If you are concerned about losing more of the County's historical provenance, please attend the December meeting (December 19<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 PM at 113 W. Pike, Fiscal Court Chambers (Sheriff's office building)). If this land is developed as planned, the remaining entrenchment area and all vestige of Camp Frazer will be forever lost to historical preservation.

The Society will not meet in December. Members are invited to attend the Museum dinner to be held at 6 p.m. on December 10<sup>th</sup> at the First United Methodist Church. Our presenter for January will be Billy Fowler. Looking for the perfect holiday gift. Give a membership to the Historical Society. It lasts a year.