



Harrison Heritage News

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Status of Preservation in Cynthiana:
Are We “Tearing Down the Town
One Building at a Time?”



Harrison County Historical Society

President's Corner

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Program Notes

September 15, 2010

Members gathering at the log cabin of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Stafford enjoyed their hospitality and seeing the progress that has been made on restoration. Mr. Stafford began working on the cabin six years ago and says that it is a labor of love.

Wayne and Lisa Tissot from Milford, Ohio have offered to share family documents with the Historical Society and will allow them to be copied. No date has been set for this as yet.

Billy and Sharon Fowler will present a program on the Lexington aviation museum for the October meeting. The annual Christmas dinner will be held December 3rd at the Methodist Church at p.m..

I am starting this column the same way that I have for the last few months, with an update on the Handy House lease. Well, we are once again at what seems to be a stalemate. A lease has been negotiated and distributed to the Fiscal Court and City Commission for a vote. That was in August and we are nearly in October and neither governing body has voted. I keep hoping that they will break the stalemate and vote! Well, we will see what happens next month.

Another subject that seems to keep hitting us in the face is demolition. Or maybe I should just say "destruction". That word does not sound as nice as demolition but it says the same thing only with a stronger tone. Now we all know that sometimes you have to rid yourself of the old to make way for the new. There is nothing wrong with this if some thought is put into the plan. But what I see is a lack of planning or at least a lack of logic if there is a plan. Earlier this month two two-story brick houses on Church Street built for Dr. Swinford in the early 1900's were torn down to reportedly make way for a parking lot for Judy Construction Company. This is private property and therefore we have nothing to say about what the owner does, but I will say it anyway. Judy Construction is located next door to one parking lot that is available for public use and about half a block from another one. I guess it is more prestigious to have your own, so down with the houses. Today (same month) Sharon and I stood on Main Street and watched as a City-hired contractor tore down a three-story brick building that among other things was once the home of Hobson Press. Most of the City leaders probably do not know that there was ever a book publisher/printer in Cynthiana. Did you?

This month alone has taken three brick buildings from our downtown area and the only plan seems to be one parking lot. As far as I know the one on Main Street will be a vacant lot. Somebody might park there anyway. At least that would give it a use.

I am sure that some people will say "oh well it is just three buildings". Before you make that statement stop and count! This is just the most recent three. In the last handful of years we have lost buildings from the downtown area on Pike Street, Walnut Street and Pleasant Street. Now Church Street and Main Street again! You only have to go back a few more years to start adding in others such as Mill Street and Court Street. Now that you seem to have made a little headway toward understanding that we have become very good at destruction take a couple of seconds to count what we have built back in place of what we have lost. You do not need an accounting degree to figure out that destruction seriously outweighs construction. The following is from a Letter to the Editor of the Cynthiana Democrat that I wrote in March 2007.tearing down Cynthiana one building at a time will in the end accomplish the same as tearing down the town all at once. If you think this seems drastic run the numbers one more time!

Look for that letter in its entirety elsewhere in the newsletter. The message is still the same today.



Sue Burrier with an unusual antique tea pot. Photos by Sharon Fowler.

Scenes from August "Show and Tell"



Aline Whitecotton brought in her grandmother's doll buggy.

Harrison County History Calendar

October 21 - Billy & Sharon Fowler will present a program about the Aviation Museum Of Kentucky

November 18 - Kenny Simpson will present a program about his recent trip to Alaska

December 3 - Museum/Historical Society joint Pot-Luck at the Methodist Church at 6:00 pm

January 20 - Randall Boyers will present a program about some of his many travels.

Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

Martha Barnes, President www.cynthiana-harrisoncountymuseum.org.

Horse Exhibits in the Museum

Many of our faithful recently gathered for lunch at Biancke's (local restaurant more than 100 years old - that's a wonderful milestone). Besides enjoying great fellowship, the twenty-eight in attendance especially gathered to honor and to thank Larry Moss. Larry has been a faithful volunteer and has served as president of the historical society. He was instrumental in devising the program to collect our veterans' stories. As Veterans Day approaches, what a perfect time to honor those who truly served their country and made sacrifices for all of us. The museum's veterans' display is impressive.

As the World Equestrian Games are happening in neighboring areas, it seems appropriate to mention horses and related displays in the museum. One of the most impressive horse items related to Harrison County is that of the Fennell Company. Joseph Fennell was a citizen of Cynthiana for most of his life. During the Civil War, he volunteered his services to the confederate cause. Cavalrymen in Fennell's unit who were forced to mount trotters discovered that their horses were lamed by self-inflicted leg wounds. Fennell, a saddle maker by trade, developed a leather sleeve which protected the horses' lower legs. Shortly after the end of the War, Joe Fennell started the production of boots for trotting horses. His product was first

patented in 1872 and was sold throughout the world. [see HHN article Oct. 2009] When at full capacity, the business employed 67 people in Cynthiana. The factory was located on the second floor of the Main Street building across from the Harrison County Courthouse (present site of Especially for You).

Until the early 1960's, the Fennell family operated the business. At present, the horse boots are for sale at the R.E. Fennell Company located at the Red Mile Track in Lexington, Kentucky. A framed boot designed and manufactured by Mr. Fennell, an early catalog of Fennell's supplies, an advertisement of the invention of a tailset by Mr. Fennell, and a current catalog of Fennell's supplies are among the items donated for the museum display. Local resident, Jim Lee has donated another of the Fennell horse boots to the museum.

Among the horse exhibits are a buggy whip, saddlebags, photographs of outstanding Harrison County horses, livery stables, and other military and agriculture horse related items. Perhaps more emphasis needs to be placed on Abdallah Park - many do not understand that strange street name. We are most proud of the recent acquisition of our life-sized horse created and contributed by Joe Pawley. Cynthiana is not nor has it ever been a "little one horse

Rattling Spurs

Bill Penn, editor (pennwma@aol.com)

With the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War approaching, I have decided to resurrect my "Rattling Spurs" column which was included through Vol. 3 No. 9. I plan to discuss various Civil War-related subjects such as what was happening 150 years ago that month, Kentucky battlefield preservation news, book reviews, and notes on Harrison County's Civil War heritage.

Civil War Preservation News: The National Park Service through its American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) has recently awarded grants to two Kentucky battlefields: The Battle of Richmond received \$35,000 for a preservation plan to develop ways to protect threatened battlefield land. The Tebbs Bend Battlefield Association near Campbellsville, part of Gen. John Morgan's Great Raid, received \$35,000 to build on the work of a previous ABPP grant, for an archeology survey.

The Battle of Cynthiana has received two ABPP grants in the past after being identified as one of eleven most endangered Kentucky sites in need of protection, and so has priority status for further grants to protect Keller's Bridge Battlefield. According to the ABPP Web site, "*Among the eight [KY] battlefields retaining some integrity, only Cynthiana [Keller's Bridge Battlefield] is entirely in private, unprotected ownership,*" and recommends the purchase of land or development rights to protect the battlefield and to establish a visitor center, interpretation signs, a Web site, and an

advocacy or "friends" group, as have other Kentucky Civil War sites. We should urge the board of the Cynthiana-Harrison County Chamber of Commerce to build on its two successful past ABPP grants as did these two Kentucky battlefield sites.

Since this issue's main topic is preservation, I believe it would be relevant to quote from Bob Owen's "President's Corner" column in the June 2005 issue on that subject:

"It is also important to preserve the places that are important elements of the [towns's] 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 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."

Buildings in the Cynthiana Commercial District - National Register of Historic Places are eligible for tax credits. See p. 6 for an overview and contact information..

Harrison County's Lost Buildings

Former Masonic Lodge/Whaley Funeral Home/Hobson Book Press Building

Bill Penn

According to Pedicord's "Cynthiana Since 1790" (p. 38) This building at 213-215 South Main Street was erected by the Masonic Lodge about 1873. The Masons occupied the third floor, while the second floor was rented to the Odd Fellows Lodge. Jost Hoessil ran a tin and hardware store on the first floor. This was the site of the Whaley and Hutchings funeral home in 1905. In 1906 R. B. Whaley Sr. bought out his partner and continued the funeral business in this location until 1932, when he moved Whaley Funeral Home a few doors south.

The Hobson Book Press was established in 1940 at Lexington, but moved to Cynthiana in 1941 and soon occupied this building. 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. 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.

Mr. U. R. Bell, the owner, was well educated with a doctor-

ate degree, and was a lecturer at the University of Kentucky, a minister and a world traveler. In 1947 the Hobson Book Press closed.

Next in this building were restaurants by Jane Box, Billy Parks and Mary Cinnamon. Bell Telephone had offices here for a number of years. The brick structure suffered damage from a fire in recent years.

The building was in the Cynthiana Commercial District - National Register of Historic Places (see HHN August 2009).

Information on the Hobson Press from a June 2005 Harrison Heritage News article by JaneAnn Johnson.



213-215 South Main Street was built about 1873 by the Masonic Lodge. Photo, 2004, JaneAnn Johnson.



The building was recently demolished. Photos above and page 1, Sharon Fowler, 2010.

To the editor:*

One of the articles that stuck with me from reading the March 15, 2007 edition of the Cynthiana Democrat was discussing the proceedings at the recent city commission meeting. Although the mayor was not in attendance, it was reported that he has been working with the owner of the burned out Main Street property. I have not attended any commission meetings where this property has been discussed. I have, however been told that the discussion generally leans toward destruction of the building and possibly using the lot for parking.

Three fifths of the Cynthiana City Commission is the same people who voted to tear down one of the oldest buildings in Cynthiana. The city reportedly paid around \$10,000 to have the building next to the City Hall torn down. What most people do not know is that the city had an offer for the building that would have put cash into the city's bank account rather than take \$10,000 out of it. This offer came with the promise by the prospective buyer to renovate the building and move a business into it. That would seem like a win for everyone by putting money in the bank for the city, preserving of one of the oldest buildings in town and locating a business in the renovated building. The only excuse that I heard for not selling the property was that the city had already signed a demolition contract. Full cost of the demolition contract could have been paid and there would have been money left over to put in the bank although a more reasonable settlement most likely could have been reached with the contractor leaving more money for the city. It is more likely that it was simply easier for the commission to just move forward with destruction rather than change their plan.

Pike Street buildings just east of the railroad on the south side of Pike Street were more recently taken down to allow additional parking for a local church. Those buildings, as is the Main Street building, were part of the nationally recognized historic Cynthiana Commercial District. The Pike Street buildings, like the one on Main, were not city owned, but I do not recall any effort by the city to attempt to preserve those buildings or to offer possible alternative parking recommendations that may have led to their preservation. Cynthiana once held the distinction of having the second largest collection of cast iron store front buildings in Kentucky. Is this still true after the loss of the Pike Street buildings?

We are now in a similar position with the Main Street building. I am not aware of anyone offering to purchase and renovate the building this time around and it would probably take a little more effort by the local officials to recruit someone to buy and use the building. It is always easier to destroy than to preserve.

I submit to you and the commission that tearing down Cynthiana one building at a time will in the end accomplish the same as tearing down the town all at once. It will just take a little longer. Please Commissioners spend a little time and effort working for the preservation of our beautiful city and save it one building at a time starting with the Main Street building.

Billy S. Fowler
Vice President
Harrison County Historical Society

**This letter appeared in the March 22, 2007 issue of the Democrat.*



Dr. Charles L. Swinford built his residence on the left around 1915 and the apartment house on the right in 1923 on Church Street, west side, first two lots from the corner of Pike Street. The two buildings were recently demolished. Photo, 2010, by Sharon Fowler.

Kentucky Rehabilitation Tax Credit Programs

source: <http://heritage.ky.gov/incentives/>

The Kentucky Heritage Council administers the Kentucky Historic Preservation Tax Credit program in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Revenue, and the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program in partnership with the National Park Service. Both of these credits are intended as incentives for private investment in historic buildings throughout the Commonwealth.

What is a Tax Credit?

A tax credit lowers the tax owed by an individual. A tax credit differs from a tax deduction in that an income tax deduction lowers the amount of income subject to taxation, while a tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in income tax liability. In other words, a tax credit of one dollar reduces the amount of income tax owed by one dollar. Taxpayers are urged to seek the advice of a qualified tax professional before proceeding with any tax credit rehabilitation project.

- 30% of qualified rehabilitation expenses is offered as a state tax credit for owner-occupied residential properties. A minimum investment of \$20,000 is required, with the total credit not to exceed \$60,000
- 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenses is available for all other properties, requiring a minimum investment of \$20,000 or the adjusted basis, whichever is greater. The total credit for a project must not exceed \$400,000
- "Other" properties include commercial and industrial buildings, income-producing properties, historic landscapes and properties owned by governments and non-profit organizations

Those eligible to apply for the credit include:

- Individuals
- Businesses
- Non-profit organizations
- Governments
- A "first purchaser" of a principal residence following rehabilitation

Currently the amount of historic preservation tax credits allowed for all taxpayers for each calendar year is \$3 million. If that limit is exceeded by approved projects, an apportionment formula will be applied to determine the amount of the credit that will be awarded per project. As a result, the final credit awarded to each project may be less than the entire percentage for which the project is eligible.

What Buildings Qualify?

Kentucky historic preservation tax credits are available for buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places or located ***within a historic district listed in the National Register*** and certified by the Kentucky Heritage Council as contributing to the historic significance of the National Register district. ***Cynthiana Commercial District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Pike St. from Church to Main Sts. and Main St. from Bridge to Pleasant Streets). See individual Harrison County listings on the National Register of Historic Places at: <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/> and in the August 2009 (Vol. 10 no. 8 HHN).***

A building must be rehabilitated according to standards set by the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior. Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation must be certified by the Kentucky Heritage Council. The standards are intended to provide guidance to historic building owners and building managers, preservation consultants, architects, contractors and project reviewers prior to rehabilitation. According to these standards, "rehabilitation" is "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural and cultural values."

For example:

- Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved
- Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved
- Deteriorated features shall be repaired rather than replaced

The Kentucky Heritage Council must certify all rehabilitation project plans - as well as the amount of the credit, including any amendments - before a tax credit will be approved.

Which rehabilitation expenses count?

Within a consecutive 24-month period, rehabilitation expenses for owner-occupied buildings must exceed \$20,000. Rehabilitation expenses for commercial or other property must be \$20,000 or the adjusted basis of the structure, whichever is greater.

For More Information Contact:

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