



# Harrison Heritage News

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## Neighborhood Grocery Stores of the Past: A Cynthiana Survey

Bill Penn

Many of us who grew up in Cynthiana fondly remember the old neighborhood groceries that we frequented as kids, to buy bubble gum with baseball cards, candy, or to pick up milk and bread for mom. Many neighborhoods had these groceries, which often allowed shopping within walking distance. Although our memories may only be back to the 1930s-1950s, corner groceries existed at least by 1900, as can be found in Peddicord's *Cynthiana Since 1790*, a lot-by-lot inventory of who lived on nearly every Cynthiana street over the years. As Kroger and other larger stores arrived, the old neighborhood groceries disappeared, unable to compete on price and selection. The 1976 telephone directory listed six retail grocers, including Kroger, Pic-Pac, and a few "convenient stores," which along with gasoline service stations, have become the replacements of neighborhood groceries. Of the ten stores featured in this survey, only Donovan's Grocery was still in business that year.

This survey probably missed some groceries and excludes a few that were downtown, including Solomon's, the Dot store that Chapman and Franks owned next to the Rohs Opera House, and Kentucky Food Mart, on the corner of Main and Pike where the National Bank built its new addition in the late '60s.



Denny Grocery - Schuyler Denny pictured standing in front of his store in 1943. Denny's Grocery operated through the 1950s. Mr. Denny welcomed kids, who would stand in front of his large candy case trying to make a choice. By 1970s he retired, and Bridge Street Grocery operated here for a short time. Photo (bottom left) is of the grocery building today, 454 E. Bridge St., converted to residential use. Photo above courtesy of Denny Lipscombe.



All neighborhood grocers sold bubble gum with baseball cards, especially Cincinnati Reds players such as this one. Besides collecting, kids would sometimes attach cards to bicycle fenders to make a noise flapping against the wire spokes.

# Harrison County Historical Society

Bob Owen, Acting President  
Vice President - Vacant  
Marilynn Bell, Secretary  
Dorothy Slade, Treasurer

Bill Penn, editor: pennwma@aol.com

**Meeting - March 15** - Cynthia resident Betsy B. Smith portrayed Emilie Todd Helm Rebel in the White House (joint with the Library). Betsy gave a very credible portrayal of Emilie Todd Helm, half-sister to Mary Todd Lincoln. Despite the closeness of the families, Mrs. Helms and her husband, Benjamin were Confederates, with Benjamin serving in the Confederate army. Following the death of her husband, Rachel sought comfort and support with her sister in the White House where she was reviled by Unionists to the point that she felt it best to leave the area. The Lincolns also suffered public criticism, accusing them of being Southern sympathizers. Rachel returned to Kentucky and was forced to work to support her family, and was appointed postmistress in Elizabethtown, serving under three presidents. Mrs. Smith's performance was well attended and very much enjoyed.

Submitted by Marilyn Bell

## CHS Yearbooks Available on CD

Most Cynthia High School yearbooks 1914-1962 have been scanned onto a CD-R and available for \$25 from Lowell Maybrier. Contact him at Lowell Maybrier, 429 Bourbon Acres Road, Paris, KY. 40361; 859-987-1940; lowmay1@att.net.

## JOIN THE HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Dues are \$12 a year and includes this monthly newsletter. Send check to HCHS, PO 411, Cynthia, Ky. 41031. Meetings are the third Thursday every month at the Cynthia-Harrison Co. Public Library Annex (Charles W. Feix Room) on Pleasant Street behind Biancke's Restaurant, starting at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome! Back issues are on our Web site.

## Harrison County History Calendar

**April 19-** Northside Elementary 5th grade history students  
**May 17-** Eastside Elementary 5th grade history students  
**June 15-17** - 150th Anniversary First Battle of Cynthia Reenactment. Friday, 15th 7pm skirmish downtown; Sat, Sun battle 2 pm at Elk's Club farm, Oddville Pike. Sutler, camp tours, artillery, cavalry.  
**June 21-** Susan Lyons Hughes, Manager - Museum Programs & Special Events at Shaker Village will be doing a presentation, Shakers and the Civil War for the Civil War Sesquicentennial.  
**July 19** - Bill Penn will talk on the First Battle of Cynthia.

## President's Corner

Bob Owen, Acting President

I want to thank Billy Fowler for his contributions to the Historical Society over the past several years. In Billy's last column, he cited the increase in membership. Any organization must continue to grow. We will always lose members, so it is important to recruit new ones. But equally important, we must have active members. We appreciate our "distant" members who enjoy the newsletter, but it takes an active membership to keep our organization growing and viable. So reach out to your friends and neighbors and especially some of the younger set to become members. It takes all the membership to run the organization, not just the officers.

We have a crisis! The Handy House is in disrepair and we as an organization are not in a position to take on this workload. As some of you are aware, the house has been broken into and vandalized. Due to its isolated location, it is almost impossible to keep it secure. I plan to work with the membership to determine their position on the House. Unless someone steps forward to take on a leadership position in overseeing the house and its repairs, we will have to inform the County and City that we will have to relinquish control over the house.

As I have indicated, I will act as President until the end of my term in June. After that time, I can no longer act as an officer in the Society. I am hoping someone will be willing to step forward and guide the organization through the coming year. I, and I am sure most of you, do not want to see the organization die. Please come to the meetings in April and May so that we can discuss the future of the Harrison County Historical Society.



Handy House (rear)

# Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

Martha Barnes, President

[www.cynthiana-harrisoncountymuseum.org](http://www.cynthiana-harrisoncountymuseum.org)



Have you seen the extensive **photograph collection** of old buildings in Cynthiana and Harrison County at the Museum? Above is a sample photograph, the Louisville & Nashville Railroad passenger depot on Railroad Avenue in Cynthiana, taken by Harold Slade in 1955. The Museum has a few items salvaged when the depot was demolished in 1961.

## Rattling Spurs

Bill Penn

### 150th Anniversary of the Civil War Notes:

**March 1862**

In Harrison County, loyal leading citizens attempted to influence judges into granting them extraordinary powers to use against returning Rebels. In March 1862, W. O. Smith, R. T. Lindsay, James J. Tebbs and W. W. Trimble, desperately seeking a sympathetic judge to hear their complaints, contacted Judge Samuel M. Breckinridge, a circuit court judge in St. Louis and friend of Lincoln's. "Many of the men who took up arms against us are returning without renouncing their allegiance to the Confederate government," they wrote. (OR Ser II Vol. II (S#115) 273).

The enrollment process, later used in the Federal draft, began before the Civil War when counties maintained for the adjutant general lists of the inactive enrolled state militia, which enumerated all available white males within the ages eighteen to forty-five, except exempted men such as Negroes, elected officials, ministers and so forth. The lists became more relevant with the passing of the March 17, 1862, Kentucky militia act when the state adjutant general ordered county clerks to prepare updated enrollment records. (*The Revised Statutes of Kentucky*, 1852) 470-471.



**When Nurses Wore Caps** - Edith K. Hanna wearing her 1911 class Good Samaritan Hospital Nursing School cap. She was a daughter of Wm. C. and Eliza Collins Hanna, Rutland, in Harrison County. (Photo submitted by Bill Penn, her grandnephew.)



Belmont - 419 West Pleasant St. - King's (1954); Herman Wells Grocery (1959) Sexton's Grocery (1964); Clark's Grocery (1969) and Taulbee's Grocery (1975).



A. V. Bell Grocery (1900-1920); Henry Ewing Grocery southwest corner of Locust and Mill Streets (1920-1965). Across the street was Rufus Pulliam Grocery (1950-1960), recently demolished. Ewing's brother, John, had a grocery store on Pleasant St. near Marshall School.



Oddville Avenue near Elmarsh Ave - Mastin's Grocery; Lyman's Grocery.



Oddville Avenue at Swinford Alley - Waffords Grocery; Maddox Grocery.



Old Lair Pike near Elmarsh Avenue, south side - Dunaway Grocery (1950s) and later, Beckett's Grocery.



B & N Grocery (Baldwin and Nunnely), 1940s-50s, Riffle Turner Sr. became a partner in 1947 when he returned from WWII; bought out owners in '50s and renamed Turner Grocery. The family lived in the adjoining apartment.



Photo above of 320 West Pleasant Street, 2012, Sharon Fowler



In front of Donovan's Grocery are Jean and Robert Donovan with children Bill on left and Bob. Photo, 1949, courtesy of Bob Donovan.

This building on the northeast corner of 320 W. Pleasant St. and Water Ave. was built about 1917 by J. R. Poindexter; Langstaff Wilson had ice cream parlor and restaurant (1917-1928); T. Ewalt Grocery; Willoughby Withers Grocery; Ben McKnight Grocery. Donovan's grocery was here from 1949 to 1977. Robert M. Donovan Sr. bought the store from Willoughby Withers. In 1951 Donovan remodeled and enlarged the store, adding shopping carts, frozen foods, fresh produce and a full line of grocery and meat. The store had a gas pump in front. During the period Mr. Donovan had the store it never flooded out. As in most neighborhood grocery stores, Mr. Donovan allowed monthly charges.



East Pike St. at the railroad - north side - J. T. Rees Grocery (1930s - 1951). Southbound L&N #1910 was one of 24 in the class of J-4A Mikado type heavy freight locomotives purchased in 1929 from Baldwin, and were originally assigned to the Cincinnati to Corbin line through Cynthiana. Photo, ca. 1940s. Courtesy of Bonnie Teater



Wilson Avenue, bottom of hill opposite Vine St. - built 1905; groceries here in left side include: R. C. Bell (1915); Will Parrish, J. McMurtry, R. C. Bell (1920-1943); Alton Taylor (1945-1949) Bummer Jones, then Richard Williams (1951-1968); Ellis Wells (1969); Homer Williams (1970-1972) all dates approximate.



Same site today as above left photo - Rees Grocery (19303-1951); Brooks Grocery; Fowlers Grocery. Photo, Sharon Fowler.

Sources: Billy and Sharon Fowler, Riff Turner, Denny Lipscombe, Joe Biancke, and Bob Donovan contributed to this article. Also, old telephone directories in the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum and Peddicord's *Cynthiana Since 1790* identified many of the store owners. Photos, Bill Penn, except as noted.



