



Harrison Heritage News

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Finding What You Didn't Know You Were Looking For

By Philip Naff
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Sometimes research can be a real grind. Lots of blanks to fill and no information with which to fill them. Most of the time, if you know where to look, the answers just seem to fly out of the books. Then there are times where you discover something that you didn't even know you were looking for. Such is the case which proved to be the genesis for this month's feature article.

While browsing for relatives through an old collection of city directories for Covington, Ky. (a city just about an hour's drive from Cynthiana to the north), I found a page with an entry I wanted to copy. To be able to cite my source for the listing, I went looking for a title page, and there, to my surprise, I discovered that the contents of the Covington directory I was looking at also included three others, one for Paris, one for Lexington, and, best of all, one for Cynthiana.

If you are a regular reader of this newsletter, you already know that the contents of four Kentucky directories have already been gleaned of their Harrison County information and

published in this newsletter (1859-60 (Sept., 2009 issue), 1865-66 (May, 2010), 1876-77 (March, 2011), and 1879-80 (Jan., 2012).

What makes this one any different from the others? Not only does it help to fill in the ten-year void of information between 1866 and 1876, it is also the most extensive listing of Cynthiana businesses found to date in a city directory of the late 19th century.

A City within a City: The Smith House—In the 1870s, if you couldn't "get 'er done" anywhere else in Cynthiana, then the Smith House might have been the place to go. Many who were listed in the 1871 directory were boarding at the Smith House at the time. One might say it was almost a city unto itself, with a clientele of professionals and tradesmen that could provide about any service required in the postbellum era.

Formerly known as Rankin House, it was still under construction at the onset of the Civil War but was severely damaged during the conflict. Reimbursed for the damages Thomas R. Rankin rebuilt and by 1871 it had passed into the hands of William Walker Smith (1830-1897) and his wife, Mary Elizabeth "Aunt Liz" (Greenup) Smith (1827-1917). It was during their ownership it gained a reputation far and wide as the Smith House.

In an article entitled "Old Hotel Register" published November 5, 1936 in the *Democrat*, columnist John Cromwell said of the Smith House: "I do not remember of even hearing it termed a hotel, with 'Aunt Liz' Smith as its presiding genius, was an institution in Cynthiana, beginning in the late sixties and continuing for more than a third of a century. I have often heard it said that the knights of the road, when business required them to spend the weekend from home, if possible, always arranged their schedule so as to be in Cynthiana over Sunday."

Businessmen of Northern Kentucky once used the 1871 directory to find and make the ties they needed in Cynthiana to become a success. Today the directory is being put to other uses and is reaching and even wider audience through this newsletter. May you find what you are looking for, even if you didn't know you were looking for it!



*The Smith House in modern times.
Read more about it on pages 9 & 10.*

Harrison County Historical Society

Bob Owen, Acting President
 Vacant, Vice President
 Marilyn Bell, Secretary
 Dorothy Slade, Treasurer
 Bill Penn, editor: pennwma@aol.com

April 19, 2012, Program Notes

The April meeting of the Harrison County Historic Society opened with another delightful program presented by Tanya Northcutt's fifth grade history class from Northside School. The children were costumed according to the charter they portrayed and stood as figures in a wax museum. Society members pushed "buttons" and the character came to life, stating their identity and explaining their part in history. Some of the characters were John Knox, Paul Revere, Lucy Knox, John Hancock and many other familiar names from the Revolutionary War. Bob Owen thanked the children for coming and gave each one a copy of Cromwell's Comments.

President Bob Owen had taken part in the Fair for Volunteerism and acquired names of thirteen people interested in volunteering for the Historic Society. It is hoped that these volunteers will be interested in helping at the museum, becoming docents for visitors.

The mayor and county judge approached Bob about the future of the Handy house. They want something done. Members discussed possibilities without reaching a definite decision. It was suggested that we approach someone knowledgeable and ask about the plausibility for maintaining the house now that it has been vandalized so badly. A vote will be taken at the next meeting whether to continue efforts to rehabilitate the house or surrender it back to the city and county. Members are encouraged to attend.

JOIN THE HARRISON CO. HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Dues are \$12/year and includes this monthly newsletter. Send check to HCHS, PO 411, Cynthiana, Ky. 41031. Meetings are the third Thursday every month at the Cynthiana-Harrison County Public Library Annex (Charles W. Feix Room) on Pleasant Street behind Biancke's Restaurant, starting at 7 pm. The public is invited.

Historical Society Programs and History Calendar

May 17 - Eastside Elementary 5th Grade history students.
June 16-17 - Battle of Cynthiana Reenactment, Elks Club Farm, Oddville Park. Battle reenacted 2 pm each day.
June 21 - Susan Lyons Hughes, Manager - Museum Programs & Special Events at Shakertown, will be doing a presentation on Shakers and the Civil War for the Civil War 150th Anniversary.
July 19 - Bill Penn will present a program on the 150th Anniversary of the First Battle of Cynthiana.

President's Corner

Bob Owen

In last month's Corner, I discussed the Handy House crisis. Since our April meeting, I was given a letter from the Cynthiana Chief of Police to Commissioner Grayson which cited the hazard(s) the house represents in its present condition. The house is totally open to anyone who wants to wander in. The back door has been destroyed and window coverings kicked out on both the first and second floor. The banister and spindles have been torn loose and destroyed. The property must be secured. Secondly, the grass had not been mowed, but Commissioner Grayson discovered the City/County were responsible for that chore and he directed the City workers to cut the grass which they have done.

In our last meeting, it was decided to give Marilyn Bell a month to see if she could reconstitute a steering group to oversee the securing of grants to restore/repair the house. She has had some success and one donor wants to contribute funding to rescue the house. I contacted Tri-County Lumber to see if they would take on the project. They declined but provided the name of an individual who works for them who would be a good candidate. The individual is Jason Fisher and I have contacted him. He will tour the house and provide an estimate of costs to make the repairs and install a solid door. I am awaiting his input.

Does anyone know anything about the old piano that is in the house? Luckily, it appears to have been ignored by the vandals. So far. It may need to be moved to a more secure environment.

Marilyn will present a report at the next meeting and we will then have to decide in which direction we want to go. I have informed the City and County the old barns are theirs to remove. The Historical Society has no interest in the remains. .

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 May and June so that we can discuss the future of the Harrison County Historical Society.

Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

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



James L. Patterson 19th C. Pistol Holster Set

Featured from the Museum collection this month are a rare pair of leather ca. 1830-1840 holsters that belonged to Harrison County farmer James L. Patterson. The holsters would have been connected by leather straps, allowing them to be slung across a horse in front of the saddle. Typically, these holsters held large single-shot percussion “horse pistols.” Mr. Patterson’s 1,460 acre farm, with horses, cattle and mules, was on the Townsend Valley Road, about ten miles south of Cynthiana. The holsters, and Patterson’s saddlebags, which are also on exhibit, were purchased in the 1960s by Bill Penn at the old Miller Lail place on the Townsend Valley Road. See Katherine Wilson’s *This Old House* chapter on that house. Loaned by Jane Patterson Thomas.

Rattling Spurs

Notes on the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War in Harrison County

Bill Penn

A Dilemma for Unionist Slave Owners

Harrison Countians, both supporters of the North and South, believed early in the war that Lincoln’s war goal was to bring the rebellious states back into the Union and not to free the slaves. Unionist William H. Stewart was emphatic that, “If [I] believed this war was being waged against the institution of slavery or having anything to do with it I would be opposed to it as you or any other man but I cannot see the least shade of that design but I believe that the institution of slavery will be more permanent here after than it has been for twenty years.” Henry H. Haviland, although he supported the Union, deplored newspaper reports published December 1, 1861, that Secretary of War Simon Cameron endorsed freeing and arming slaves taken as contraband: “If I thought that this war was waged for the emancipation of slavery...that is to say if I thought that the north brought on this war for the purpose of freeing the negroes, I would have been South long since.” Haviland continued, “I don’t believe congress ought or has any right to free the slaves or arm them and put them in the army...and if that

policy is adopted by the administration and they try to enforce it I hope Jeff Davis may drive the last one of them out of Washington.” Although Lincoln reprimanded Cameron and soon replaced him, Kentuckian fears over the slavery issue caused disenchantment that escalated the following year.

After news arrived in April 1862 that one of “King Abraham’s” generals had ordered slaves freed in another state, Jeff Oxley, a Southern Rights supporter, asked in his diary: “Union men of Kentucky, what think you of this move? What is the question now? Will you still cling to that foul standard - Abolitionism?” Oxley also reacted to reports in a Cincinnati paper announcing Lincoln’s planned Emancipation Proclamation: “I wonder if they will be able to enforce this outrageous and unconstitutional act. It looks queer to me that whilst they claim to be waring for the supremacy of the Constitution and the laws, that they should have to violate them in order to enforce them. Thus we go.”

Source: Draft of a manuscript for a revised edition of *Rattling Spurs and Broad-Brimmed Hats* (William A. Penn).