

Harrison Heritage News

Published monthly by Harrison County Historical Society, PO Box 411, Cynthiana, KY, 41031

May - 2000



Vol.1, No.3

Rattling Spurs

Bill Penn, Editor (hmms@att.net)

Harrison County visitors to the History Center in Frankfort should watch for these items of local interest on display:

- In the "A Growing Economy" room is the flourmill used by my great-grandfather. The museum description reads: "James Samuel Penn used this flourmill made by the Bradford Mill Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, ca. 1880, on his farm in Harrison County." I remember watching my grandfather, W. A. "Alec" Penn, grind corn on it for neighbors in the 1950s. The farm, in the Penn family about 1878-1991, was one mile from Renaker on the Renaker-Rutland road. Phil Weisenberger, owner of historic Weisenberger Mill near Midway, helped my family find a home for the mill when the farm was sold.

-In the temporary exhibit hall is a "Broadside announcing the encampment of Union troops in Harrison County in 1861." This was Camp Frazer, established by the 35th Ohio just north of Cynthiana, between the railroad and old Falmouth Pike. I reproduced an identical broadside from U. of KY in my book, *Rattling Spurs and Broad-Brimmed Hats*.

-In the Civil War room, a "Confederate Raiders" display includes a print erroneously captioned, "The Fight at Licking River, Cynthiana, Ky..." Pictured instead is "Bacon Creek bridge, Mundfordville, KY." The correct picture/caption is on display in the Cynthiana-Harrison County Library Kentucky Room.

History Notes

George D. Slade

If you have visited Battle Grove Cemetery then you have seen "The Vault." But, have you looked inside? The main part of the vault was built to provide temporary storage for the deceased, made necessary due to inclement weather and other reasons.

To the left of the vault you look through iron bars at an underground tomb. The names engraved thereon are:

James M. Hodson 1827-1909;
Elizabeth C. [Aunt Betsy] Hodson 1827-1915;
James P. Hodson 1851-1933 [Son of James M. and Betsy];
Mattie A. Hodson 1850-1916 [1st wife of James P.]

"Aunt Betsy" was the daughter of Perigan and Susan Phillips, born at Bristol, England, within sight of Pimbrook Castle, made famous when captured by Oliver Cromwell in 1649. In 1831, Betsy came to New York and on to Cincinnati where she lived next door to Henry Ward Beecher. His sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and was Mrs. Hodson's Sunday school teacher for several years.

The Hodsons were prominent citizens of the Oddville community in Harrison County for many years and have a number of kinfolk in this area. There is a nice display at the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum containing items which once belonged to the Hodson family, some of which they brought from England.

Tales of Six Jails

The first Harrison Co. jail, made of logs, was erected in the courthouse square by Thomas Mounts in 1795 and later rebuilt in 1804.

In 1844 the jail was moved from the courthouse square to the present site on the SW corner of Pike and Poplar Streets. Col. Moore stated in his 1921 *Democrat* column (quoted in the April 2000 Newsletter) that the jail was a two-story log structure. In 1852 the jail was again rebuilt on the same site.

Morgan's Raiders burned the jail, along with much of downtown, on July 17, 1862. After the war it was rebuilt. The August 15, 1867, *Cynthiana News* announced that, "The jail has nearly come to completion. It should have been finished by this time. It is to be hoped that the next generation will make one sufficiently large for all purposes."

The present stone jail - our sixth jail - was built in 1886-88, by J. R. Poindexter and Thomas Lowry for \$19,370.00. It was painted white in 1958. The last prisoners were incarcerated in April 1983, then the "Old Jail," unable to meet state requirements, was closed. The adjoining jailer's residence, c.1969, is now home to the Cynthiana-Harrison Co. Chamber of Commerce.

Book Notes

A Kentucky historical highway marker two miles south of Cynthiana on US 27 tells about "Death Valley Scotty" or Walter E. Scott (1872-1954). *"Native of Cynthiana...gold prospector, whose fabulous tales of Death Valley, CA, lost gold mines fooled investors. Stories supported by \$3,000,000 castle in the desert provided by millionaire of Chicago who 'got it all back in laughs.' Old miner was found out in 1941 but had become a legend..."*

He was once a performer in the world-famous Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.

Always seeking publicity, he paid the Sante Fe railroad in 1905 to stage a record-breaking run from L.A. to Chicago, the "Coyote Special," which received national media attention.

Scotty returned to Cynthiana almost yearly. His family farm was on Wornall Ln., later the J. T. Wornall farm.

Read more about Death Valley Scotty, who once boasted: "Money and ballyhoo can do almost anything." The Cynthiana public library has in the Kentucky Room: *Death Valley Scotty* by Hank Johnston (1974); *Death Valley Scotty Rides Again* by Earl Driskill (1955); and *Death Valley USA* by Kenneth Alexander.

Historical Society Minutes

The Harrison County Historical Society met April 20, 2000. 3M has donated a much-needed microfilm reader to the library and the Society is donating \$500 toward a second reader. The Society will host a trip to the KY History Center in June. Members approved sponsoring a Gospel/Bluegrass Sing fund-raising event August 25. Members also approved setting up a concession booth at the July 4th Celebration and Taste of Harrison in September; included in the motion was approval to purchase a banner

The next meeting of the Historical Society will be Thursday, May 18, 7 PM at the library.

with the Society name for use at fund-raising events. Mayor Virgie Wells reported that the city would arrange for electric hookups for the upcoming Gristmill Days at the Museum. Robert Poindexter displayed a large original key to the 1854 jail. Jane Adams Whitehead presented an informative program on genealogy. She listed many important sources for researching family history at both the KY Historical Society and in our local public library's fine KY Room collection.

Next Meeting Topic: Tim Wells will speak on the WWII-era machine gun, the famous Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR).

(Excerpted from minutes taken by Jane Adams Whitehead)

If you are not a member we invite you to join. We need your support. Membership is \$5.00 per calendar year. Make checks to the Harrison County Historical Society and mail to the address on top of page one. Meetings are the third Thursday of each month 7 PM in the library's community room.

Cynthiana -Harrison County Museum

Martha Barnes

Museum Grist Mill Day III

To Be May 27

Make plans now to visit the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, 13 South Walnut, especially on May 27, 2000. Museum Grist Mill Day III is scheduled for that Saturday. Bob Hyatt, Bill Kelly and Billy Kelly will once again sponsor this special day for the benefit of the museum.

Bob, Bill and Billy will have three stone-ground grist mills in operation, powered by old restored "hit and miss engines." In addition, other restored equipment will be on display. A free bag of freshly ground meal will be given to each visitor. Helen Hyatt, Sue Kelly and their host of friends will serve cornbread fritters, bacon, sausage, bean soup, and drinks.

Abe and Mary Lincoln, portrayed by Jim and Mary Sayre, will once again be with us. Abe and Mary will mingle with the crowd to chat and tell stories. At 2 PM, the engines will shut down and "Mr. Lincoln: will address the visitors. The Blue Grass Gospel Travelers and the Lewis County Square Dancers will also provide entertainment.

Of course, the museum will be open for your enjoyment and to accept donations. All entertainment, food, and drinks are free. We hope to see you, your family and friends on Museum Grist Mill Day III. It's all free and educational. See you there!

The museum at 13 South Walnut St. is open Fri-Sat., 10 AM-5 PM.