

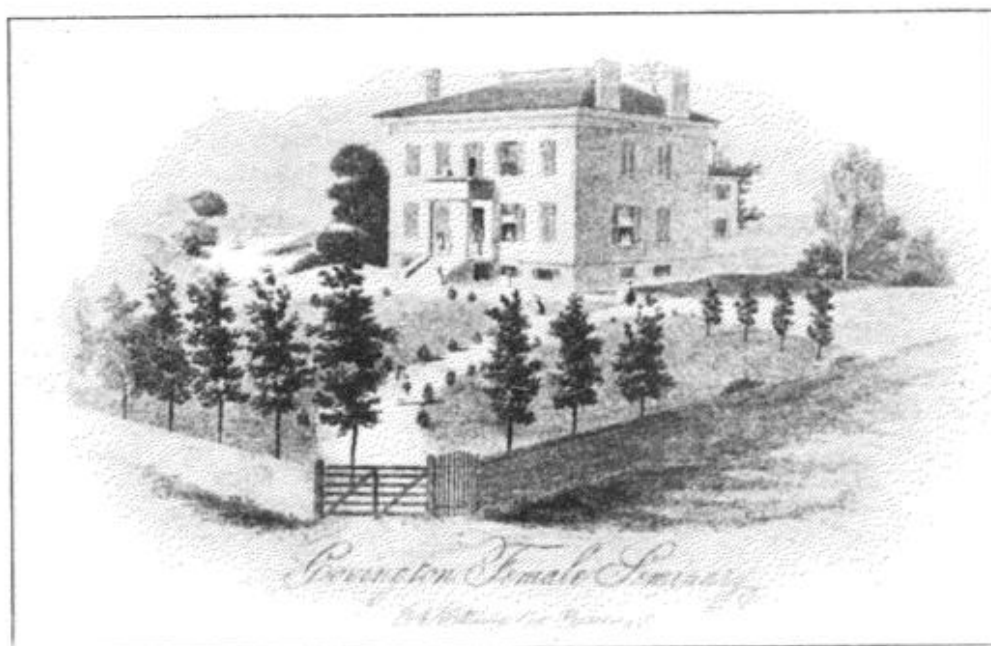
OLD GOVINGTON, KENTUCKY

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF AN OCTOGENARIAN

MRS. ELEANOR CHILDS MEEHAN

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OLD COVINGTON, KENTUCKY



Mrs. Eleanor Childs Meehan

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ELEANOR CHILDS MEEHAN

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*"Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me."*



IN the mad and merry rush of the present age it may be that to a few remaining kindred souls these reminiscences of mine may be of interest.

Sitting among some treasured relics of the past, memories both sad and sweet return to me. They carry me back to the time when but a little child I was held in my father's arms to witness the marriage ceremony of a young lady who had made much of me, and record my first childish grief on being told that she must go away from me.

A few years later that tender father's hand would lead me to where I learned to read—the old "White Mansion" in Covington where the Reverend Doctor William Orr then conducted a school. The grounds included the space between Fifth and Sixth Streets and between Russell and Montgomery Streets. The latter was named for the Reverend Father Montgomery, pastor of the little Catholic Church on Fifth Street; he also erected the White Mansion.

A little west was the old Craig Street burying ground which was later removed to make room for the railroad that now spreads its tracks over the space where the "rude forefathers of the hamlet" slept. Going south on Craig Street it joined the Bank Lick Road at the Lexington Pike near which was the Drover's Inn conducted by Mr. Ashbrook. The cattle pens occupied the space now used by railroad tracks and the gatekeeper's outlook. As children on our way to school we timidly gauged our

time in passing the gates to guard against the rush of cattle and hogs being driven to slaughter.

Down the old Lexington Pike farmers brought their produce to market. The hills along the pike were covered with forest trees and many grape-vine swings were enjoyed along the creek that meandered along the northside now occupied by truck farmers. On the south side ran Willow Run, its pretty little cascades trickling down to the valley where, beside a great flat rock under an immense sycamore tree, there dwelt alone in his little cabin one of whom we whispered as "the hermit." One day a hunter came up into our little settlement, startling us by the announcement that he had found the old man dead, sitting in his chair, his faithful dog beside him.

Where now are the tracks of the Kentucky Central railroad were ponds where, with bent pins, switch poles and brave spirits, we fished for the elusive mudcat fish and gathered walnuts and butternuts from the many surrounding trees.

On our route to and from school, we passed through two orchards: one, just above what was then "High" Street, now Eleventh and Bank Lick Road, and the other where the railroad freight depot stands at Eighth and Washington Streets. On High Street, now Eleventh, were immense grounds extending from Madison to Russell Streets, now also, alas, invaded by railroads, where stood the Baptist Theological Seminary — later, Saint Elizabeth Hospital — and, at the western end of the grounds the house occupied by the college president. This house is still standing, but much changed. In the College grounds, as they were called, Sunday School picnics were held and the Fourth of July was duly honored by assembling for patriotic addresses and the reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Where now is Austinburgh was the residence of Mr. Austin, near the Licking River. To visit there, the bars were let down at Madison and Fifteenth Streets and a charming woodland road led to the Austin property. In the Austin orchard I, as a little girl of ten years, was honored by coronation as Queen of the May. My royal speech was written by the father of Mr. John Simpson, who is still living, an honored benefactor to charities, and it is still fresh in my mind. But, alas and alack! my queenly dignity suffered on returning home from the festivities by having to discard my pretty new slippers, which Otway Norvell, also a ten-year-old courtier, carried home in his pocket, while I was escorted to my palace, the royal chariot being the wagon which had carried the lunch baskets.

In those days a little pleasure boat made trips up the Licking river to Cole's Garden, now occupied by various industries. The old Taylor Mill road led to Taylor's Mills, through what is now Latonia. At the Latonia Springs stood an Inn which was quite a fashionable resort and famous for Kentucky hospitality. Time's "effacing fingers" have swept away all those beautiful and popular places. The Inn is gone and forgotten and the grand old woods opposite, that stood around the Springs, have long been leveled.

As Covington had no park, the Linden Grove Cemetery was the favorite Sunday resort. Reverent and social crowds would make a weekly parade to its quiet walks. The main avenue was bordered by stately locust trees whose blossoms in May burdened the air with their sweetness and lured the droning bees. At that time a large spring was at the foot of a hill where now a lake has been formed by the filling up of Thirteenth Street, necessitating the removal of the Groesbeck family vault to higher

ground. This recalls the old and beautiful, but rather gloomy, Groesbeck mansion above where now the Newport and Covington bridge crosses at the end of Fourth Street. The quiet loveliness of old Linden Grove seemed desecrated by cutting through a street in the rear and the once bare hillsides are now densely built up.

In the early days it was customary, on the burial of a member of a fraternity, such as an Odd Fellow or Free Mason, to head the funeral cortege by a brass band playing dirges or sacred music on the approach to the cemetery, while the members in full regalia marched in procession. On the return from the cemetery, the music would be changed to lighter sound. Sunday was a favorite day. Now all is changed, as in many other affairs, and for the better morale of the street urchins, black and white, to whom these public funerals were a diversion. Dignity and solemnity now are more becoming.

I remember once driving out with my mother and her cousin, Judge Samuel Moore, to the Kenton County seat at Independence in the settlement of my Revolutionary grandfather Gowdy's estate. Although the road led through a beautiful country, it was rough and rocky and we little dreamed then of the pleasant highway that has succeeded it.

As time went on our beloved and venerated Doctor William Orr built the new home for a school on the Licking River banks. The grounds took in all the space between Sixth and Seventh Streets and Sanford Alley and the Licking River. At Seventh and Sanford stood Doyle's Soap Factory, a modest affair, now the site of La Salette Academy. Back of it was a very deep hollow, now filled by Greenup Street. One evening in Winter an older companion and myself concluded to emulate Bonaparte crossing the Alps and plunged down into the deep snow, but to ascend the other side was a difficult question

and had my companion been unable to assist me I should not be here now to tell the tale. We were disappointed in our ambition as was our hero.

Another circumstance was particularly impressed on my memory. Our good preceptor always endeavored to have his pupils give their minds through the week to the construction of their essays, regularly a Friday morning occasion. It seemed that a boat, or they called it a ship, had been built and was to be launched at the foot of the school grounds, on the Licking River, for a trip to California. I suddenly remembered, here was Thursday afternoon and my essay due next morning. In consternation I seized upon the launching for a subject and recall my rather flowery description of gales and stormy seas with poor Jack aloft, but at last sailing in triumph into the summer land where gold awaited the Argonauts. My classmates thought it wonderful, and when I rose to read expected commendation, but our wise Doctor, after a short silence, gravely looked at me over his spectacles and his sarcastic criticism touched the others as well as myself when he reminded me that the injunction to make an essay a week's careful study had been disregarded, as the launching had occurred only the day previous.

To return to the topography of the city: On one corner of Pike and Scott Streets stood the Giesbauer Brewery. It was a common affair for us to stop at the door on our way from school for the brewer's yeast which made such delicious bread, the flour for which was ground at the McMurtry Mills on the Lexington Pike where now is the junction with Main Street. Opposite the brewery on Scott and Pike Streets was a large hollow, then occupied by the open vats of the Le Maire Tannery. Now, this is all filled and built over and the corner contains an oil filling station.

Following Pike Street up to Madison, on the southeast corner stood the general store, a frame building with shed in front, where Uncle Billy Wasson, as many called him, held forth, conspicuous for his portly form and kindly ways. Here was dispensed the usual "dry goods and groceries" and the questions of the day were discussed. On the opposite corner Mr. John White had a grocery; then followed the business houses of Mr. Mackoy, James Spilman, Robert Howe, Mr. Timberlake, the saddle and harness establishment of Mr. Perkins, and other names known to old residents.

On the west side of Madison Street stood a frame building, with old-fashioned porches — the Virginia House. At the foot of Garrard Street was a tavern conducted by the genial and rotund Berry Connolley. The city jail, a square, unassuming building, stood at the junction of two alleys between Fifth and Sixth Streets, while close by was the wagon works of Mr. John Gray, whose daughter Mary was one of Dr. Orr's pupils.

On a short street between Bank Lick Road and the Pike stood a rope-walk. On Bank Lick and Ninth Street stood a pottery and we children were often attracted by the wonderful fashioning of pottery, as it grew under the turner's and molder's hands at his bench, just inside the window. Adjoining this was the residence of the owner, Mr. Thomas, I think an Englishman, the famous Log house, then a comfortable and well cared for dwelling. This recalls that other famous building, the old Kennedy Stone House of Revolutionary days, now demolished.

Opposite Covington, across the Licking River, was the Garrison, from which every night at nine o'clock the reveille music and drum could be heard to the western hills. Now, Fort Thomas has taken away the romance, and the glory has departed from

the banks of the Licking at the Point where the Indian warwhoop once resounded and the "dark and bloody ground" received its baptism. But now our Chapter, the Elizabeth Kenton, Daughters of the American Revolution, is planning a memorial to the famous pioneer, Simon Kenton, and keep in mind the wonderful sacrifices of Kenton, Boone, and other kindred heroes.

Old Covington also had wonderful fireworks displays from the pyro gardens on Mount Adams, near the point.

On a hillside at the west end of Covington stands yet a house once occupied by the great tragedian Forrest, and on the Independence Pike a former residence of the great violinist Tosso. The old river road leading to Ludlow has been deflected and its curves remodeled to accommodate a trolley line. Old Willow Run is utilized as a sewer and soon all traces of the romantic old stream will have vanished. Wallace Place brings back Colonel Wallace, whose home seemed a plantation and whose military bearing was marked as he strode into church. My childish interest was always attracted by the old and venerated Mr. John Preston as he walked into church, one hand leaning on his cane, the other seemingly helpless.

I remember when the late Trimble residence was erected by Mr. Phillip Bush, there was at the southeastern corner of Madison and Tenth Streets a pond, on the edge of which grew a tulip poplar tree; the beauty and odor of its flowers remain with me. On the opposite corner stood the residence of Mr. Sage, later of Dr. Henderson. It is still standing. The Alexander Greer homestead, on Lexington Pike, in its large grounds was handsome and stately. The Robbins mansion stood where now is the Auditorium. The Groesbeck home has already been mentioned; the LeVassor home still is in the

possession of Mr. Louis LeVassor. Where now stands the Richmond home at the west end of Eleventh Street was the Fowler farm, with rambling house and Indian mound, surrounded by great pine and forest trees. The Watkins home on Twelfth and Madison, with corner offices, has the main building still standing, though remodeled and occupied by the Cathedral clergy. The solid, comfortable home of Governor Stevenson still stands.

Covington was rich in legal talent. I vividly remember Mr. Septimus Wall, whose wife was the lovely, dainty Mary Finnell; and Mr. Aston Madeira, who left the practice of law for the pulpit, as did Mr. John Spilman. Deeply was I impressed with the solemnity of the occasion when, on taking charge of his pulpit the usual pledges were asked of him, and his grave response, "God helping me, I will!" Judge Samuel Moore, doubly related to me by blood and marriage, was of the old *regime*. Tall, erect, he seemed the embodiment of the law; Judge Pryor, grave and dignified; Judge William Arthur; Mr. Cambron, whose granddaughter is the wife of our prominent attorney, Judge Frank Tracy. There was Major Robert Richardson, profound student and able lawyer, whose literary abilities led one to think he should not have to be concerned with the sordid things of life, but browse among his books. His brilliant daughter, Miss Mary Cabell Richardson, resides in Covington, her facile pen still turning out eloquent periods and poetic thoughts. There was the witty Theodore Hallam, "Mister" he would be called, to distinguish him among the many Kentucky "Colonels." His name will ever be linked with that of "Marse Henry" Watterson; two wonderful typical Kentuckians. His cultured daughter inherits his wonderful talents and literary ability: her delightful

“talks” on travel and other subjects are always eagerly anticipated by cultured audiences.

Among physicians, prominent was Doctor Theodore Wise, whose first wife was Virginia, the daughter of Squire “Jimmy” Arnold, whose palatial residence occupied much space in the west end of the city: Doctor Richard Pretlow, whose entrance into a sick room inspired confidence and courage in the patient; Doctor Evans, the distinguished surgeon, whose death was much lamented; Doctor Blackburn, whose residence on Fourth Street was that of a Southern gentleman, with servants’ quarters in the rear. His daughter, Bettie, married the handsome young Doctor Dulaney, now among the departed. There was Doctor Major, whose pretty sister, Kate, was my childish ideal of beauty. His son Thomas was a Sunday School companion, and I used to look at his pale, spiritual face and mentally prophesy, “Tom Major will, sometime, enter the ministry.” Time went on — came war between the North and South; he espoused the Southern cause; was sick, wounded, brought to Cincinnati, where he shared the ministrations of two noble women who literally obeyed the Divine injunction to “visit the sick and prisoners,” Mrs. Esther Cleveland and Mrs. Peter of Cincinnati. With the zeal of converts, they interested him in spiritual affairs. He became a Catholic and a priest, by dispensation, having been a soldier, and “Father Tom,” as he was affectionately called, was the idol of his fellow Confederates.

Among prominent merchants were Mr. John B. Casey, in dry goods; Mr. W. D. McKean, in footwear; Mr. Charles Withers, in tobacco; Mr. Robert Ball, in foundry work; Mr. Isaac Martin, in lumber; the Walker Brothers, in dry goods; Mr. George McDonald, in jewelry; Bodeker and Miller, in drugs and medicines.

Among real estate people were Mr. Levi Daugherty; Mr. John Clayton, whose uncle, Mr. Young, was once postmaster; Mr. Isaac Cooper, whose calling descended to his son and grandson.

Prominent among Covington citizens was Mr. John Goodson, Sr., whose daughter Jane married the rising young lawyer, John Carlisle, whose talents carried him into the office of Secretary of the United States Treasury under President Cleveland.

Among my pleasant memories is that of the pastor of our Presbyterian Church, the Reverend James Bayless. I happily recall the occasions when, sometimes at the close of his sermon, he would announce, "There will be preaching this afternoon at Casey's schoolhouse." This meant to us children a long ride out the Lexington Pike to the place, a long, white building near the Turkey Foot Road, still standing, but converted into a dwelling. Mr. Bayless' charming wife had a number of us children interested in missionary work and would assemble us at her home on Saturday afternoons to learn to sew and hear her instructions. At her request, we began for her an "album quilt." In the center of a nine patch the worker would write her name in indelible ink. Should that little quilt be in existence now, how I should love to see it! This little circle, as the members grew up, met with Mrs. William Ernst at her home, connected with the Northern Bank, and was, I suppose, the nucleus of the present "Sarah Ernst Sewing Circle." Mr. Bayless, the pastor of our Presbyterian Church, was an earnest and practical demonstrator of the doctrines he professed. Our then small congregation felt the need of better housing and the Council Chamber of the Court House was placed at their disposal while a more substantial edifice was being erected. Surmounting this court house was a wooden statue of George Washington. When a

better court house took the place of the old one, this statue was taken down and placed in a corner of the court yard, where it stood a long time. My sympathies were often roused at the sight of Washington's effigy so neglected.

Our congregation was comprised of many of the oldest families. I recall my admiration as a child, of the melodious voice of Mr. William Ernst leading the singing in both Sunday School and church service. His sons remain Covington citizens, in commerce, banking and the law, Mr. Richard Ernst representing Kentucky at the National Capitol. The Kennedy family, pioneers on both land and river, is largely represented still, and known to all. Doctor Louise Southgate, a worthy exponent of womanly ability, and her brother Bernard are nephew and niece of one of my loved schoolmates, Jennie Fleming, whose sisters married Dr. Southgate and Mr. Bedinger, respectively. Jennie's quaint drollery was the life of our chosen group in my last schooldays. There were Rose and Mollie Pace, whose mother was a Kennedy, and little Lucy Southgate, of another branch, full of quiet mischief, who would meet a well-earned reprimand by an innocent, enquiring gaze and a drawling "Sir?"

To return to our church. As our congregation increased a mission branch was sent out to the southern end of the city, at first occupying an humble little brick opposite the Mackoy residence on Ninth and Madison Streets, while a modest little building was being erected for our occupation, and standing yet, I suppose, in the rear of a more pretentious one erected later, which now I believe is occupied by colored people, while our congregation moved to Madison near Eleventh Street. In the first venture the Reverend Mr. Shotwell held the pulpit for awhile.

Our choir was led by Mr. James Allen, the father

of the late Doctor John Allen, and here Kate Menzies, lately deceased, sat beside me and we joined our voices in the hymns from the little old "Mason's Sacred Harp," still held by me. Mr. Charles Mooar's fine tenor aided and the little melodeon was our accompaniment. I can yet see the various members in our little congregation. Judge Pryor's family sat near the pulpit; his daughters, then unmarried, have become the heads of interesting families here. Mr. Robert Athey, then a handsome young gentleman, was an interested attendant and later married sweet little Lizzie Wallace. Our Wednesday evening prayer meetings were well attended, and dear, saintly old Mr. Menzies, when asked to lead in prayer, would stand with upraised eyes and folded hands, imploring Divine blessings and protection, until one fairly imagined he saw the personal Presence he invoked. I had the pleasure lately of looking at his picture at the residence of his granddaughter, Mrs. Leslie Applegate, and my mind was carried back many years.

But War's grim visage reared its head and all our quiet, simple lives were changed. The long delayed "irrepressible conflict" predicted by Secretary Seward was at hand. Kentucky's attempted neutrality was overcome. Our geographical position denied us the right of choice. Then, as now, our ground was the "gateway to Dixie." Kentucky's "sacred soil" was invaded, property rights trampled on, families disrupted, neighbors looked askance at each other, where perfect harmony once existed. The dauntless John Morgan and Kirby Smith kept the Northern occupants guessing, but at the turn of the Independence Pike a camp was placed and non-combatants were obliged to work on the fortifications erected near the river. One day an alarm was sounded. One of our citizens, a gentleman of heavy weight, came flying into town on horseback.

“To arms! To arms! the rebels are advancing!”
“Every man to his post!” Early citizens will recall the portly form of Mr. Alexander Greer as not conducive to expediting the breathless horse he was urging frantically. In all our fright we could distinguish a comical side, and the query arose, “Is this a Paul Revere or a John Gilpin ride?” This was but a scare: but the alarm spread. To protect Cincinnati, Governor Todd of Ohio summoned his “squirrel hunters” to the rescue. A wire came to me from a sister in Ohio: “All of you come to me! The alarm bells are ringing and all is confusion!” But I held my post. God was with us here as well as there. Our streets were filled with passing troops, although we did not suffer from actual conflict as did some other parts of the state. The slightest approach to seeming disloyalty was to risk imprisonment. Sad to say, some, “clothed with a little brief authority,” presumed and persecuted unnecessarily. The ferry boats were closely guarded. Soldiers stationed at the wharves inspected bundles for contraband goods and sometimes with rather embarrassing results. Once as some ladies were standing with me to watch the troops pass our place to entrain, there was a whispered wish that the Southern troops were as well equipped. But a few days later a message was received that John Morgan’s men had fallen on this regiment at Cumberland Gap and captured wagons, men, stores, guns and much that contributed to the comfort of the hungry Southern soldiers cut off by blockades. The pretty burgh of Fort Mitchell occupies the spot where earthworks were thrown up and the lovely old Kentucky hills echoed the rattle of musketry and drum. A pontoon bridge across the river was a novel sight. Many of our people now living can remember these sad occurrences. Although the “conquered Banner” fell, indeed, and the glorious

Stars and Stripes float again over a united people, that "Banner" is enshrined in the lavender of faithful hearts. The music of "Dixie" brings out the old "rebel yell," while all unite in singing "The Star Spangled Banner."

The unstained "Sword of Robert Lee" and the name of prayerful "Stonewall" Jackson stand in the honor light with Grant and Sherman. In traveling over the scenes of heart-breaking memories, the sight of a monument to "Stonewall" Jackson recalled an anecdote of war time. A sudden yell from the Southern lines at a time of cessation of hostilities brought a question from a visitor. The reply was, "It is either Stonewall Jackson or a rabbit," as the sight of their beloved leader always evoked cheers and the little "cotton tails" sometimes captured proved a welcome change in their poor diet. Again, while traveling in Virginia soon after the erection of General Lee's equestrian statue, an ex-soldier with but one arm was selling souvenirs in the shape of bits of the rope on which even women and children had helped to draw the statue to its place. My husband made comment on the poor gentleman's loss of an arm. "Yessuh, yessuh, I was hit pretty hard, but I thank God I lived to see the 'unveiling.'"

However, many of our people remember these Civil War experiences, and so, before I close these reminiscences, I turn back once more to the days of childhood and girlhood. The old schoolroom! The beloved teacher in his usual chair; each face in its familiar place—all are photographed on my memory. Particularly do I note the darling girl who was so long my deskmate, Amelia Ernst, who became Mrs. Robert Semple. There was dear little Laurena Greer—later Mrs. William Simrall—cantering in to school on her pony, accompanied by her pet dog; pretty little Bina Finnell, who always loved

to converse on religious matters and the eternity to which she was early called; Amelia Fahnestock, the niece of our beloved Mrs. Ellen Ernst Orr, with her gentle influence over others less regardful of discipline; Susan Roberts, whose children, Mr. Harry and Mrs. Olive Percival reside in Covington. There was Miss Mary Abell, an Ohio girl, whom we regarded with a certain awe on account of a remarkably able essay on political subjects which Doctor Orr gave to a newspaper for publication. Quite a flutter was created one day by the announcement that little Aseneth Rose had eloped with the rosy-cheeked bachelor, Mr. John Todd, who became an influential and wealthy citizen. There were Addie and Julia Hamilton, whose lovely mother was a frequent visitor to the school and to whom we were all attracted. There was pretty Hattie Fish, with her curly hair and red cheeks, later the mother of Mr. Leonard Smith.

There were Sue and Fannie Murnan, mother and aunt of the Misses Sarah and Laura Creaghead, and aunts of our distinguished surgeon, Doctor John Murnan; Sallie Dell Perry, later Mrs. Pope Sanford and lately taken by death from the side of her beloved life companion, who, from the grand, typical Kentuckian of years ago, now lingers in patient suffering for the time when he shall meet her in eternity.

A number of years ago I gathered together as many of the old schoolmates as I could locate for a late reunion. I drove around the school grounds in the hope of obtaining some water from the remembered well which we once regarded as a panacea for any ailment, in which to toast the past, but progress had cut a street through. I had a number of photographs struck of the school and grounds from an old catalogue and at the plate of each "girl" placed a copy, with a touch of forget-me-nots. Tears and

laughter greeted the remembered scene. We toasted the absent and loved widow of Doctor Orr, then living in Denver with her daughter, Mrs. Peters. We discussed from A to Z the names in an old catalogue brought by Laurena Greer Simrall. We sang old songs and had long-ago music, learned from the school instructors, Professor Kunkel and Madame Sofge. Dell Perry Sanford found she could remember the steps of the fancy dances in which she once excelled.

"Marse Henry" Watterson uttered a truism when he said, "Once a Kentuckian, *always* a Kentuckian." He related the following anecdote in illustration: "General Grant once said to me, 'You Kentuckians are a clannish set. While I was in the White House, if a Kentuckian happened to get in harm's way, or wanted an office, the Kentucky contingent began pouring in. In case he was a Republican, the Democrats said he was a 'perfect gentleman;' in case he was a Democrat, the Republicans said the same thing. Can it be that you are *all* perfect gentlemen?' With unblushing candor, I told him we were; that we fought our battles as we washed our linen — at home; but when trouble came, it was Kentucky against the Universe."

After several years' absence I am returning to my old Kentucky hills, and so these memories come back to me. On the sunset slope of life I turn in retrospect. I see my father, grand and erect, the "noblest work of God, an honest man!" Undaunted by early financial reverses when irresponsible banks and other schemes undermined the home supports of unsuspecting men, he turned to face the world again, possessing the indomitable spirit of his Virginian forefathers. With his own hands he helped to fashion a home for his family and with large grounds renew the life, after hours, of his early

home. Straight in the eye was his glance; plain his speech; he would owe no man a dollar.

I see my gentle mother, happy among her flowers, fostering the Maryland traditions of herbs and roots, besides. I have yet a faded and broken remnant of a fragrant lily she placed in my hand one day on leaving for school with her usual kiss at the gate and her precious benediction. Born in the year of Washington's death, her accomplishments were rare for the home training in those days. I have some bits of her exquisite brush work, the coloring bright. Her manuscript poetry is treasured by me as the breathings of a pure and holy soul. I see the happy, carefree life of pioneer days when children were children and not the grown-up wise-acres of the present. "Oh Time and Change!"

I have had experiences of joy and sorrow, as falls to every human lot, but I can turn to my happy, innocent, fostered childhood, and to each succeeding memory, in gratitude for Divine aid and protection and the comforting assurance that the loved ones who have preceded me into the "Silent Land" will greet me when I too am called.

Now I am returning to my old Kentucky home, Kentucky, where "the sun shines ever brightest, life's burdens are the lightest, the blue grass is the bluest."

I believe there are some among our people who will recall the "Covington Female Seminary" as it appeared years ago before it was sold to Mr. Bruce, the brother of Mr. Henry Bruce, and among the students there, remember their old classmate,

NELLIE CHILDS.

May 3, 1922.

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SUPPLEMENT TO
OLD COVINGTON, KENTUCKY
AND
PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF AN OCTOGENARIAN

To which is appended Sketches of Old Covington's share in the festivities attending the visit of General Lafayette and son to Cincinnati, selected from an ancient newspaper, dated May 25th, 1825, once owned by the father of

MRS. ELEANOR CHILDS MEEHAN

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SUPPLEMENT TO "OLD COVINGTON"
and
"Personal Recollections of an Octogenarian"



THE kindly reception given this little booklet by many old friends, acquaintances and lovers of the old Home Town, added to the regret of its brevity expressed by some, have sent my mind gypsying over spaces and names that may be pleasantly recalled. It proves what a poet tells us:

"Old books, old friends are best,
Old things are loveliest,
Old houses and the glamor of old days,
The olden peace, the olden, quiet ways,
Old Gospels and old dreams,
With new delight life teems
When these are read."

Old trees are fascinating in every season of the year, and we recall in kindly feeling the pioneers who planted them for future generations to enjoy.

Old photograph albums, amusing and saddening; old cemeteries, with their quaint, sad or hopeful epitaphs, sending the mind in sympathy back to the probable lives and loves, heartaches and hopes of those that "lie under the stone."

Then there are old manuscripts, as in the old South Church in Boston, where one wonders over the almost microscopic writing in old sermons and letters; or, in some old papers of our own dear ones the often quaint and always sincere wording reflecting the honest thoughts of hearts unspoiled by life's vanities, the writers' once busy fingers folded over the pulseless breasts these many, many years.

Old houses were mentioned in my former paper, but there was one, beside the Old Log and Old Stone House, that stood, beautiful and homelike on the

northwest corner of Sixth and Greenup Streets: the old Kennedy Farm House, the space now occupied by the apartment building erected by the son of Judge William Arthur, who occupied it for some years, after having been for a long time the residence of Mr. Isaac Cooper. Opposite, stands a dwelling I remember as the residence of Mr. Tarvin, whose daughters, Anne, Mary and Sallie, attended Dr. Orr's School. Lower down, a long frame house, remodeled now, the home of Mr. Clayton and the Bullocks. Just below here resided Jesse, the father of General Grant, while acting as postmaster, just after the Civil War.

Then came the pretty home of Mr. Boude, whose daughters were my schoolmates; one of them, Mrs. Peter Thornton, residing in Newport, Ky., is still active in patriotic and social circles. This lovely home long since demolished and built over. "*Sic transit.*"

Then came the substantial, comfortable home of Dr. Richard Pretlow, still a pleasure to the eye. Farther down was the business house and residence of Mr. Sparrow, whom we regarded as a severely English type of gentleman. Across the street was the residence of Mr. Charles Withers, once so pretty and homelike, the yard and well so beautiful, but now the grounds are built over and with the added stories seems to look down over its neighbors, as if to say, "Time has not touched me, I have taken new lease on life!" The little park in front was once occupied by the "lower market," and this brings us to the Court House, with its memories of stormy days when Judge James Pryor Tarvin was on the bench. Aware of the insecurity of the building, which was Covington's second Court House, he argued the necessity of safeguarding the records, but some of the members of Council were dilatory

and refractory, and the determined Judge promptly sent them to the Independence jail, where they remained until they came to terms. Judge Tarvin was a grandson of Judge Pryor of noble memory.

Down below the Northern Bank on Third and Scott Streets stood "Factory Row," a long frame building, occupied, perhaps, by many of the employes of "Ball's Foundry," on West Third Street, now substituted by handsome dwellings.

In those days, a trip from the suburbs to Cincinnati and return occupied a whole day, walking all the distance, crossing the ferry, and some delays. Then when we would reach the flower market in Cincinnati, at the east end of what is now Fountain Square, once the Fifth Street Market, my gentle mother would be lost among the flowers. Going up Scott Street, just above Fourth, was seen the time-honored book store of Andrew Laird. Other places already mentioned. On the east side of Scott Street, between Fourth and Fifth, was the handsome home, long demolished, of Mr. James Gedge, whose wife's pretty sisters, Laura and Emma Howell were once schoolmates.

Just north of Eighth Street, on an elevation above Scott, was an academy conducted by Mr. Snowden, a popular school for girls. Near by, on Eighth Street was the humble Cathedral that had faced many vicissitudes. The wooden tower had to come down and the cracked bell stand on the ground until better days. I have lately read a touching apostrophe to the "Old Church Bell," written long ago by a prominent Covingtonian and rescued from an old newspaper.

Continuing south, at the northwest corner of Eleventh and Scott Streets, stands now a dwelling that as late as 1857 was the Covington High School.

The adjoining square, beautified by a little park,

bears no evidence of the unsightly Eleventh Street Market, so long obnoxious to lovers of civic progress.

South of what is now the city and west of the old Bank Lick Road, once bordered with trees, stood the Howell homestead, "Howell Lane" running back among the hills. The grand "Park Woods," surmounting one of them, were familiar to all lovers of nature. On the Buena Vista hill was the large vineyard, with buildings occupied by the Benedictine monks, where sacramental and other wine was made with Old World skill.

Nearly opposite, where now is Wallace Avenue, was a pond, dignified by the name of "lake," where once there was a night exhibition of the "Pinafore" opera, with some Cincinnati talent taking part.

From Wallace Avenue, down Madison Avenue, are comparatively modern buildings. The large place formerly belonging to Mr. James Walsh, is still imposing. Down to Twelfth Street, where stands the present Cathedral, owing much to the generosity of the late James Walsh and his sons, Nicholas and Dennis, and enriched internally by artists abroad, as well as our own Duvenick and Barnhorn. At the northeast corner of Eleventh and Madison, for many years, was the modest grocery stand of "Uncle Jimmy Ellis," a familiar figure and of numerous connections.

Following Madison Avenue, past places already mentioned, down to the Old Trinity Church, brings back memories of former prominent citizens and of dear little Mary Hall, so devoted to its wants and pleasures. Farther down, on the opposite side, once stood the handsome home of Mr. Frederick Gedge, whose daughters, Jane and Mary, were contemporaries of my own sisters, all pupils of Dr. Orr's Seminary. My recollections of Jane are par-

ticularly bright; gifted with a rich voice, as a reader she was wonderful! Although but a youngster myself, I was included in the reading class, and I would sit absorbed in admiration of her dramatic renditions, especially as she would fairly intone Nat Willis' "King David's lament over Absalom!" Should the lesson be humorous, she would, without a smile, read with fierce emphasis — to the great amusement of her hearers, and taxing the dignity of the teacher in charge of the class. She married Mr. Jacob Sellers, and was the mother of a prominent citizen, Mr. Frederick Sellers.

Where now stands Odd Fellows Hall was, within my recollection, a tobacco factory. I have, in another paper, mentioned Virginia, the eldest daughter of Squire Arnold, who was the first wife of Dr. Theodore Wise. The second daughter, Louisiana Arnold, who married Mr. Phelps, I remember well as a merry singer of the popular songs of that day. I thought her "O, Susanna," the "Burman Lover," "Oh, come with me in my little canoe" the *ne plus ultra* of musical execution. Among the contemporaries of my sisters and the fellow-pupils of Dr. Orr's School were Rachel Cleveland, the Bakewell girls, whose pretty home in the west end gave name to Bakewell Street. There were Sue and Elizabeth Ashbrook, and these recall an incident which approached a tragedy in our school lives. At the lower or river side of the school grounds stood a number of large beech trees, and all enjoyed swinging on the long, pliable branches. One day we were summoned to the superior exhibition of Sue Ashbrook swinging out over the high bank. Her sister and another girl prepared the scene; when ready, the word "go" was heard, and we prepared for the wonderful act, but not for the slipping hands, the rushing body down

among the weeds, the swoon and consternation and final restriction placed on our favorite amusement.

There were the McMurtry girls, whose father owned the flouring mills before mentioned. The younger, Mary, a very amiable, pious girl, was greatly mourned by all who knew her, by her early death. Although in love with life, her resignation to the will of God was edifying and beautiful.

The favorite teacher in the older classes in the early days was an assistant, Miss Robb, whose dismissal of the girls in the evening was one by one, and exacted a very correct and Victorian curtsy at the door; outspread skirts, low obeisance, not the silly "bob" of today.

Covington had several visitations of cholera, in my recollection, the one of 1849 very severe. In an essay, as a little girl, I attempted a sort of review of that year, the climax being, "And the heart will shudder when the summer of 1849 is brought to the memory." There were then no professional nurses. In an emergency, sometimes a Sister from an institution might be obtained, but neighbors were kind and would take turns in "sitting up" with an invalid, to watch the medicines and wants. In 1867 cholera visited us again. Sometimes it would sweep one place, take one or two in another, and be unknown in another. In the last epidemic Mr. John Condell, prominent citizen and church deacon, was stricken. It seemed, over the country, to be most prevalent where limestone water was used for drinking, as around Nashville, Tennessee.

In the winter of 1853 and '54 the Ohio River was frozen over (some thought to the bottom) for a long period. Booths were erected on the ice, where hot refreshments were served to skaters and visitors, and heavily loaded wagons crossed constantly. The ice was a playground between the

two cities. To suffer from floods in the spring was common, necessitating much inconvenience and suffering among the lowland residents and the shifting of the ferry landings, but the flood of 1884 exceeded the recollections of the oldest inhabitants.

I vividly recall one day when our little settlement was terror-stricken by the sight of Federal officers and many other men rushing up the old Bank Lick Road to where the retreat of the notorious counterfeiter, John Mount, had been discovered in our little quiet hamlet. There may be yet among our older residents some who remember this startling event.

At the close of his school life Dr. Orr retired with his family to the pleasant Ludlow Cottage in the old Carneal district. Here another ex-pupil and I paid a short visit as probable farewell to their further removal. I can see the placid river, the green hillside above, long before railroad invasion was dreamed of. That evening will long be remembered, full of happy anecdotes and recollections. It was, indeed, our last meeting until we saw the body of a venerated instructor and friend committed to mother earth in old Linden Grove. The pretty "Ludlow Cottage," since destroyed by fire and rebuilt, was a quiet, restful place for him who had spent a busy life in education. Returning home the next day, he drove us in his carriage up over the hill, through the little hamlet of "Economy" (now West Covington), the poor little spire of St. Anne's Church pointing to the sky.

Old Covington had spasmodic attempts to moderate the indulgence in intoxicating drinks, but, like most such movements, the enthusiasm would subside. I recall being allowed to accompany my father to hear the famous Irish Apostle of temperance, Father Matthew, then visiting this country many

years ago, lecturing in the open and on the grounds of the Old White Mansion. My father was a rigid abstainer from alcohol and his example was admired by all who knew him. Moral suasion seemed more effectual than the forced prohibition of today.

When a little girl, there was a small patch of dense woods in the rear of our place, and sometimes in summer we had open-air preaching in "God's first temple." Beyond the trees, I could see a house on top of "Light's Hill" and would wonder what was beyond and beg to be taken up to see. At last, one day an opportunity offered. A woman who had been in my mother's service, died and I was permitted to attend the funeral. Arriving on the bleak hillside, we came to a little, desolate burying ground where once were laid to rest the early pioneer Catholics, the graves now removed to St. Mary's Cemetery on the Lexington Pike. Returning over the steep, rocky road, we found that a carriage preceding ours had been wrecked by runaway horses, the poor driver lying besides the roadside, badly injured. My romance of "beyond the hill" was shattered, as has been that of many in life, whose curiosity to "see beyond" has equally come to grief.

In my childhood, a finely made rag carpet was a work of art. On the ground now occupied by the late cold storage building, on Scott near Fifth Street, was once a frame building housing an artistic weaver of carpets. Some of his work was beautiful, fit to adorn any home. Then the quiet, simple lives of housewives were often brightened by an invitation to a "quilting," when someone, having finished the piecing of a quilt, often containing treasured scraps of gowns of long-lost dear ones, the neighboring ladies would be invited, the quilt tacked in its frames, the desired pattern defined by chalk lines; the best quilters, among whom was

always a friendly rivalry, would take their places at opposite sides. When the "reach" would be finished, the quilt would be rolled and another line begun. With such busy hands, the work was not long in the frames. Congratulations were exchanged and all ready for the much-enjoyed supper of hot biscuits, country ham, fried chicken, home preserves and pickles — all being the housewife's pride. Then the chatter—neighborhood news—lingering farewells until the "next time" when this pleasantly anticipated reunion would be repeated. Now we occasionally hear of an exhibition of old-time quilts, and the young generation may form an idea of the industries of their grandmothers. To lovers of the past, such scenes appeal; the sound of a long-forgotten strain of music, the perfume of a flower, will awaken memories. Like the rose jar of Tom Moore—"you may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, but the scent of the roses will hang 'round it still."

Old Linden Grove was noticed in a former paper, but I and many others regretted when the inscription was removed from above the gate and the plain little two-story houses on each side demolished. The inscription was laid on the ground by the vault—"I am the resurrection and the life"—

As late as 1858, on returning from church one Sunday, I saw the old fire engine standing on the street where it had been dragged the night before to extinguish a fire and left after the excitement was over. Boys and men would drag merrily the antiquated extinguisher to the fire, and it was nobody's business to return it. There was great rejoicing on the occasion of the completion of the Atlantic Cable, illuminations and fireworks from the pyro gardens on Mt. Adams—bell ringing and

general approbation of the first message, "What hath God wrought!"

My father was an enthusiastic lover of his native State, Virginia. At home in evenings, gathered around the open wood fire, he would regale us with his boyhood reminiscences. His "figure-four" traps for birds and sometimes larger game, of coons and rabbits; of the capture of some prowlers from a neighboring plantation who had discovered and were chopping down their old "bee tree" on his father's land; of the stories of the negroes who attributed the wild galloping of the horses during the night to the riding of the witches.

Old Virginians would appreciate these simple annals. He would repeat to us his father's stories of the Revolutionary War, in which he served. Of his brother's return home, "riding up the lane" at the close of the War of 1812, having served his country and returning to rural life. The famous Indian Chief, Black Hawk, had passed through the country, and my father would relate to us his history and amuse us imitating his dialect. He would sing to us old campaign songs—one of the Harrison candidacy:

"Come out from among the log cabins
And vote for old Tippecanoe,"

Another, of the services of the Kentuckians at the battle of New Orleans, when Pakenham boasted of what he would do, in spite of the cotton bales and the vaunted Kentuckians.

"Oh, Kentucky! the hunters of Kentucky!"

Old Kentucky! how far and wide her fame has gone! The land of fair women and brave men! There needs but the name "Kentucky-bred" to insure the excellence of a racing horse. Long ago, in Switzerland, the name of Kentucky on some of our baggage on a lake boat had caught the eye of a

fellow-passenger, and I heard an old Kentucky song not far from us—and so, those far-off mountains and lakes caught the name of our proud old State. The silvery-tongued Watterson, “Marse Henry,” was at his best when this was his theme. At the “homecoming,” some years ago, while lauding Kentucky, he said: “It was Crittenden, a Kentuckian, smiling before a file of Spanish bayonets, refusing to be blindfolded or bend the knee for the fatal volley, uttered the keynote of his race, ‘A Kentuckian always faces his enemy and kneels only to his God.’ ”

Up to the present time my rambling “recollections” have been strictly personal, but on an interesting occasion old Covington and her sister, Newport, had the honor of being “interested spectators” of a wonderful pageant, and the little Newport garrison privileged to add a few salvos to the honors paid a nation’s guest.

Come back with me to Lafayette’s visit to the United States, as detailed in an old newspaper of May 25th, 1825, belonging to and treasured by my father. Cincinnati was chiefly honored, but our little burghs might shine by reflected lustre. Several years ago a gentleman who edited a column in a morning paper, “Notes and Comments,” asked for information concerning the correct date of Lafayette’s visit to this country. I wrote him of my father’s old paper. I will merely quote his notes, although abbreviated much, and he failed to speak of the General’s son, George Washington Lafayette, who accompanied his father. The friendship between the gallant Frenchman and our own Washington, sealed by patriotism, war experiences and gratitude. Visitors to Mt. Vernon have, of course, noted the key of the Bastille presented to Washington by Lafayette.

I will quote the newspaper clippings in my possession :

“NOTES AND COMMENTS

“Some time ago I made mention of the fact that I had engaged in a hunt to locate the exact date of General Lafayette’s visit to Cincinnati. That the information has been found through the kindness of Mrs. Eleanor Childs Meehan, who has in her possession an old newspaper, *The Advertiser*, May 25th, 1825, which contains a full account of the arrival of General Lafayette. ‘But,’ she continues, ‘that the precious old paper is so worn, I would send it to you for extracts.’ She quotes, however, and I beg to present this most interesting historical date, as it will interest many who know of that great event through traditions of fathers who have gone to their rest.”

“May 25th, 1825, fell on Wednesday,” *The Advertiser* says. “On Thursday, which was May 19th, he appeared on the opposite shore, attended by his suite and a respectable convoy of gentlemen from Kentucky, among whom was Governor Desha of that State. The new troop of cavalry under Colonel Morsell turned out to receive them, and an elegant six-oared barge under command of Midshipman Rowan of the United States Navy rowed them across the river, where they were received by the new company of artillery, Captain Brinkerhoff; the Light Infantry, Captain Avery; the Lafayette Grays, Captain Harrison, and the Cincinnati Guards, Captain Emerson. The banks were covered with our happy citizens, and Governor Morrow welcomed him and his son and handed them into an elegant barouche and escorted them to Broadway. On a stand at the foot of Broadway there was an address by General Harrison. Of course, there were all sorts of decorations and a display of fire-

works at Vauxhall Gardens. There were arches, one at Front and Vine and one 'on the hill near the Presbyterian Church'—the First. On Friday morning about fifteen hundred children marched to Broadway.

"On the Common, west of the Court House, then on the north side of the square bounded by Main and Walnut, Fourth and Fifth, there was a pavilion for the honored guest and others for the city authorities, etc., and benches for the citizens. At ten o'clock they had a grand procession of military companies and other organizations. The quaint part says 'they marched down to the hotel,' but gave no name, there being evidently but one hotel at that time. At the hotel the General joined the procession. As he took his seat, the band played 'Hail, Columbia,' and Mr. Samuel Lee sang an ode, accompanied by the music. Then Mr. Benham made an address; the procession again formed and escorted General Lafayette to the house of Mr. Fernberger on Vine Street, where he remained for the evening. The Thespian Society invited him to visit the theatre (no name given), where he listened to the address of Mr. Reilley, which was received with 'thunders of applause.'

"Of course, there had to be *a ball*. That was an inevitable part of every entertainment in those days. This was a great affair, with about five hundred of the beauty and fashion of the city being present. Full credit is given Colonel Mack for the beautiful decorations of the hall and supper room. "It was the most splendid affair of the kind ever occurring in the Western country. The company present enjoyed the most perfect felicity for the time that human creatures are capable of enjoying. At twelve, midnight, the General and suite, the Governor of Ohio and his aides, embarked on the steam-

boat Herald for Wheeling. He sailed with the loud and repeated huzzahs of a large concourse of people who covered the bank at that late hour. The reception which the nation's guest has received at Cincinnati, we understood, has been highly gratifying to him and we are sure that the people themselves are highly satisfied. No accident happened and the weather was extremely favorable, although for weeks before it had been very inclement."

Thus far "Notes and Comments." The rather stilted style of reporters of nearly a hundred years ago differs much from the flowing style of today. And so I leave my readers with the kind wishes of one who loves the past, enjoys the present and hopes and prays for the future.

ELEANOR CHILDS MEEHAN.

October, 1922.

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