

Friday, October 21, 1955

JACK RAMEY



The History in "620"

THERE IT IS, "620," in the small golden bronze plaque upon the door to this magnificent citadel of a home, 620 Greenup Street.

In and behind its walls and within the Baker and Hunt families who lived there for three generations there is a record of most of the history of Covington, and much of the history of Cincinnati.

Now it is the Baker-Hunt Foundation, the trust gift of Margaretta Baker Hunt, the last member of the family. Within the walls of this great home and within a second structure formerly known as the museum, Covington children study ceramics and are taught to square dance, the Weekday School of Religion is conducted, adults

study ceramics and art, play bridge, knit.

Miss Julia Hill is the executive secretary. Henry Harris of CG&E is chairman of the board, comprised of George F. Roth, William Coughlin, J. Rawson Collins, Gilbert A. Davis and Virginia I. Reed.

Old "620," still alive, still reflecting the splendor Covington knew when magnificent homes with great stables and spacious lawns lined Greenup and Garrard Streets, is kept spotless by the caretaker, Fred Kitz, and his wife.

Within "620" may be found facts most Covingtonians wouldn't dream about their city and its early citizenry.

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GEORGE MUSE, an old soldier, obtained the first grant for land comprising Covington from Lt. Gov. Bererly Randolph of Virginia in 1780. That grant was traded often, for no more than a keg of whisky or buffalo meat, until it fell into the hands of Thomas Kennedy, a farmer and ferryman, who built a fine stone house, planted corn. And thereby started Covington, for in 1814 he sold 150 acres to Richard M. Gano, Thomas D. Carneal and Gen. John Gano, who obtained a state charter incorporating the city, February 8, 1815.

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IN 1818 Gen. James Taylor and Jake Fowler blazed the road through the forest between Covington and Lexington with axes. In 1819 a little log schoolhouse was built. Citizens carried drinking water from a spring at Sixth and Scott Sts. In 1828 William McCallister built a cotton factory.

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BY 1850, Covington was a city of more than 10,000, with a City Hall and its first fire engine, the "Coffee Mill," pulled by men and boys. When the city became too harried and noisy, residents of the gracious homes such as "620" drove for rest to the then fashionable Latonia Springs.

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IN 1854, John Baker, a Cincinnati merchant and native Philadelphian, moved into "620" with his wife and two children. He and his good friend and partner rented their lamp and candle store in Cincinnati on Main Street between Third and Fourth from Nicholas Longworth already an outstanding business and financial leader in Cincinnati.

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AS AN EARLY stock purchaser in the Covington and Cincinnati Suspension Bridge, John Baker associated with the Shinkle family, John W. Finnell, Daniel Bannin, William Ernst and George C. Tarvin, and Val Peers Collins, the Ohio River steamboat captain.

His family later associated with Covington's famous lawyers and statesmen, among the nation's foremost: There were John G. Carlisle, who became Secretary of the Treasury under President Cleveland; John W. Stevenson, governor of Kentucky and United States senator and president of the American Bar Association; Gov. William Goebel, Sen. Richard P. Ernst. Frank Duvencek, the painter, was born on Greenup Street in 1848; Dan Carter Beard, one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America, was born in Cincinnati but grew up in Covington.

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GATHERED 'ROUND the dinner table at "620" frequently were Edward F. Abbott, real estate dealer, and his son, George M. Abbott, Dr. C. M. Roudebush; William Benton, lawyer; Mortimer M. Benton, Covington's first mayor, and Frank F. Woodall, the poet.

Yeah, the history wrapped and preserved within the walls of Green Up Street's "620" by the Baker-Hunt foundations perhaps was Covington's brightest period. For the city, as of now, and for quite a few years past, has not been producing men with the quality of leadership represented within old and untarnished "620's" walls.