12-2014

Landmark Report (Vol. 32, no. 2)

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The Landmark Association
& Meyer Mortgage
present a

Christmas Tour of Homes

 Saturday, December 6, 2014 • 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. • $10 per person

 Tom Morris – 1123 State
 Eleanor Asher – 1153 State
 Victory Baptist – 1202 State
 Shea Apartment (Above Tea Bayou) – 906 State
 Alice Gatewood Waddell – 513 East Main
 Candlemakers Loft – 415 Park Row
 Shawn Sinclair – 1318 College
 Stephen & Patsy Morgenthaler – 1310 College

(Tickets may be purchased at any home on tour day)

Landmark Store & Silent Auction
Morgenthaler Home - 1310 College
Banker's Memorial

Thank you Roger & Davis Thomas for hosting the annual picnic at the Wright-Kolby Thomas House. Members donated $250 at the picnic toward a memorial tree to be planted in memory of David Gaylor and his preservation efforts in Bowling Green and Warren County. A story about the house will appear in the next issue of Landmark Report.

The death of our President

JULIAN W. POTTER brings to the Directors of the Coal & Iron National Bank a personal sorrow and a sense of loss that cannot be measured.

In the short span of three years he won our deep regard the ability respect and affection of his brother officers and the whole bank.

POTTER worked with his father J. Whit Potter in the Potter-Matlock Trust Company. He left that association in 1920 to become vice president for the Italian Discount and Trust Company. He held that position until 1922, when the Coal & Iron Bank hired him as president, making him at the age of 34, the youngest president of any New York City bank. At the time of his death he was planning a merger of the Coal & Iron Bank and the Fidelity-International Trust Company.

Potter's funeral was held at First Baptist Church on New Year's Day 1926. The newspaper reported: "The large altar and choir loft were filled with floral offerings from relatives and friends in Bowling Green and Warren County, New York City, and various other points. One of the offerings was an elaborate pall covering the casket, from the officials and employees of the Coal & Iron Bank. It was made of lilies-of-the-valley and orchids."

The cortege, said to be "the longest ever seen in Bowling Green," meandered its way to Fairview Cemetery where Potter was interred.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Kentucky Building last month, curators selected several items from the collection to highlight the variety of treasures it houses. One of those was an illuminated memorial for Julian Whitfield Potter, the president of the Coal & Iron Bank of New York City. The bank's board commissioned the item from Tiffany's, signed it upon completion, and sent it to Mr. Potter's widow, Blanche. The paper announced that he died after a "long siege of typhoid fever."

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The Current Events Club Tapestry

by Jean E. Nahm

Recorded among the artifacts of the Current Events Club are several statements about the founding of the club. Most of them simply report that the women's literary club was organized on January 1, 1902 in the Park Street home of Mrs. Jennie McClure Sims. However, one special notice, written in 1918 by Mrs. J. Porter Hines, not only relates the facts but does so in the flowery language popular in those days. In her special voice, she gives us a more intimate glimpse into the women's personalities and motivations. Mrs. Hines writes, "Once upon a time, there lived in a beautiful colonial home typical of the old South, a woman who was of herself a fitting character of the old South: genial, charitable, hospitable, and one who loved her neighbors. This was so intense that she never tired of the company of those she most admired, and in order that she might draw them the closer to herself, she advocated their forming themselves into a social club. That the vulgar type of social gossip might be crushed first, last, and always, she planned that the current events of the day might be discussed during the hours of meeting. She told her dream to her dearest friends and neighbors who were eager for membership, and it is to the memory of Jennie McClure Sims that the Current Events Club owes its birth."

For the first months, the club was called the Park Street Literary Club, but the ladies soon settled on the permanent name of Current Events Club. As was done in other clubs of the time, members selected a club flower (the pansy) and club colors (purple and gold). They chose lines from the English poet Edward Young (1683 - 1765) as motto, printed in club yearbooks for over 100 years: "Thoughts shut up want air, and spoil the face of flowers."

"In an era when women may have had limited opportunities for education or socializing outside of the home, the members of the new Current Events Club had no intention of keeping their thoughts "shut up." Indeed, they seemed to thrive in their "united effort towards intellectual growth," the club's official objective.

Though the club was organized in 1902, the first minutes of notes, archived in the Kentucky Building, did not record activities until 1906. What a busy agenda the ladies set for themselves! The assigned literary programs included Shakespeare's A Winter's Tale, Macbeth, The Tempest, Cymbeline, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, King Richard III, and Hamlet. At each meeting, members answered the formal roll call with a quotation from that day's play. In addition to the literary works, reports were given from leading magazines, including articles on political reformers and a biographical sketch of Thomas Edison. Interspersed with their readings were discussions of current events, such as Wealth and Expansion of the Nations, the Panama Canal, Susan B. Anthony, Pure Food Legislation, and the Affairs of Cuba in 1906. The members were also concerned with civic affairs and were "urged as individuals to take a membership in The Library as it would be of benefit to us in our club work as well as encouraging a very worthy and commendable effort on the part of the ladies in charge."

In the fall of 1918, the secretary dutifully recorded minutes for their first meetings, which included programs about French Women in War Industries and Literature of the War. Abruptly, there were three meetings missing from the chronology. A note of explanation was added: "Owing to the order of the State Board of Health, the meetings with Mrs. B. R. Ellis Oct. 15, Mrs. J. E. Meredith Oct. 29, and Mrs. A. M. Foster Nov. 5 were cancelled."

This may have been precipitated by the outbreak of influenza. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, in an article entitled "The Great Pandemic: The United States in 1918 - 1919."

"Influenza first appeared in Kentucky about September 27. On that date, troops traveling from Texas on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad stopped off in Bowling Green. There, soldiers left the train to explore the city. They infected several local citizens before returning to the train and traveling on... On October 6th, the Kentucky state... (continued on page 4)"
board was forced to issue a state-wide proclamation closing "all places of amusement, schools, churches and other places of assembly." In the November 12, 1918 minutes, the secretary was pleased to write, "The ban having been lifted, the club rejoiced that conditions were so improved that we were allowed to continue our year's work."

The year 1920 was a sad one for the club, as several members passed away during the summer: Mrs. T. Barclay Lee, Mrs. Yorkhabrough, and Mrs. Binkley. The deaths of Mrs. Helm in October was a surprise since she had just given a "splendid paper on New Nations" and had hosted the club as well. Secretary Lena Williams wrote that Mrs. Helm's "bright and happy smile was a decalver, and few knew she was not well. ... Our hearts ache to have to give up such a beautiful life." A letter of sympathy was sent to Mrs. Helm's family, saying, "We deeply feel the vacancy that has been left in our hearts and minds, but the memory of Mrs. Helm shall be a guiding star causing us to strive for a higher standard."

The letter goes on to offer comfort with a few lines from an anonymous poet:

"Not until each lorry is silent and the shuttle ceases to fly, Shall God enthrone the lilies, and explain the reason why
The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern that
He planned."

One of the most anticipated traditions of the Current Events Club was the annual picnic, held at the close of the year's meetings before a summer recess. The picnics at Beech Bend Park in the 1920s inspired lyrical descriptions from the secretaries. In 1921, for instance, the event was described as "one of the most delightful institutions of the club. The lunch was served under the wonderful Beech Trees." The following year, the secretary noted that "just before sunset, the club enjoyed a very elaborate lunch served from a long table out among the grand old beeches." The entry for June 12, 1923 records, "The menu committee composed of Mrs. Long, chairman, Mrs. Goodrum and Mrs. Ashley, had proved what a wonderful triumvirate they could make, and the lunch was perfect in every detail. The table was set in the large dining hall, and it seemed more like a banquet than a picnic when we considered the sunny lilies, vases of cut flowers, and the very high class waiters (husbands of the members of the committee)."

Mrs. McElroy, the secretary in 1925, writes a long entry about not only the special picnic but also its growing significance for the members. "Each year we seem to feel more and more how fortunate we really are to have as a beautiful spot as Beech Bend for our outings. ... After some of the club and guests had enjoyed a dip in the cooling water of Big Barren, our very efficient menu committee arranged the lunch which was a feast for the gods. ... After a most delightful evening, the Club separated for the summer, feeling it possible, just a little closer to each other, after having together another picnic."

Regrettably, the secretary in 1927 did not sign her name, so we do not know who wrote the lively description of the rainy but memorable picnic that year. The minutes report, "The Club Picnic was held at Beech Bend on the afternoon of June 21. A wet day failed to dampen the ardor of the members one for another and all for the good lunch. It was first hoped to have the spread under the trees but Pluvius reckoned otherwise and after fairly trying to sit out the rain, the whole part and parcel was ignominiously routed to the pavilion - that is - all but the pies. They were safely snug in big dress boxes so came to no serious grief. ... It is such a good, pleasant custom to be together in this type of freedom that at the end of every year, all the members begin immediately looking forward to the next club picnic. "Yee la picpineque" and on to 1928."

During the early years of the Current Events Club, an Order of Business was established, which members have adhered ever since:

**Order of Business**
- Club Called to Order
- Roll Call
- Reading of Minutes
- Report of Treasurer
- Unfinished Business
- Communication
- New Business
- Announcements and Appointments
- Program of the Day
- Round Table - Current Events
- Adjournment

Within this structure flowed a continuous, multi-hued texture of traditions and topics over the years. Responding to roll call with a quotation, for example, has been a source of pleasure for over 100 years. As one secretary stated, "The quotations always add very much to the program; we get an insight into the poetical taste of each member from their response."
company at a Tea in Observance of its Fiftieth Anniversary at the home of the President Mrs. James F. Sears. The Daily News reported that 100 guests called between the hours of 4:00 and 6:00 on June 3, 1952 and enjoyed punch served from a silver punch bowl, ice cream, and cake. The newspaper also reported the 75th anniversary, celebrated in 1977 at the State Street Methodist Church, where members were proud of having held 1,500 meetings since Jennie McClure Simon had organized the club.

A grand centennial celebration was held on May 21, 2002 at Village Manor. Refreshments, décor, and fashionable ladies were the perfect combination for a most memorable event. Chicken salad, lemon tarts, cookies, strawberries, mints, and petit fours were served. The lovely serving table also featured linen napkins, punch, and tea in a silver tea service. Smaller tables were adorned with white tablecloths and decorated by Helen Almond with pansies in rings or on candlesticks with purple candles to carry out our purple dress, including a bustle, which she wore to greet guests. One member in a ribbon-tied scroll.

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The hall was artistically decorated in the club colors, green and yellow. The chandeliers were wrapped in textured rice paper for an evening of Japanese music and dance. Each program featured its own illustration on the cover, the interiors announced the program and listed the members of the Current Events Club. Fortunately, our old newspaper clipping is included that explains the significance of these unique paper items. The newspaper title and date are not recorded on the clipping.

Under the title "The Current Events Club's "Entertainment," the article reads: What was said to be the prittest and most unique social event of the season was the Japanese entertainment given on Friday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock in Neale's Hall (also known as the Davenport Building, which was at the corner of State Street and 10th Avenue. It was razed in the mid-1990s) by the members of the Current Events Club for the six literary clubs of the city. This was in keeping with the annual custom for one club to entertain the other clubs every year. Each guest was presented at the door with a Japanese program with "Current Events Club, 1914" on the face of the program. The interior contained the list of the members: Miss Frances Arnold, Mae Simmons, H.H. Warren, H.H. Automotive, and J.D. Smith.

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The second page contained the program which consisted of selections from the Japanese musical sketch given at New Vanmeter Hall (the current Van Meter Hall which was completed and opened in 1911; the old Vanmeter was razed in the mid-1990s) by the members of the Current Events Club. The program was rendered very entertainingly. The ices which were served were beautiful, consisting of individual ice shapes carved by Japanese figures holding fans and parasols. At each plate was a Japanese souvenir. In the receiving line were the officers of the club and Mrs. R.H. Lacy of Franklin, president of the Kentucky Federation of Woman's Clubs.

The members of the Current Events Club were highly praised by the various clubs, on the preparation of the delightful entertainment. The Current Topic Club will entertain the six clubs in 1915.

The Current Events Club received a promotional brochure related to the Japanese performances.
Architecture on Trial: The Porters and the Pest House

by Lynn Niedermeier

When four-year-old Amelia Porter fell ill on September 6, 1902, her parents did not have far to look for help. Luther and Lizzie Porter resided at 1149 State Street in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and their family physician of ten years, Dr. Joseph N. McCormack, lived opposite at 12th and State. Dr. McCormack knew Amelia as a robust and ordinarily healthy child, but when called in three days later, he found her suffering from a "well defined" case of variola—smallpox.

McCormack stood ready to lead the battle against this dangerous and highly communicable disease and its growing presence in Bowling Green. Besides being a practicing physician of 32 years, the 54-year-old Nelson County native had been Secretary of the State Board of Health for the past 19 years and was currently acting Health Officer for Warren County. A tireless public health advocate, he frequented every session of the state legislature and was generally regarded as the author of all of Kentucky's public health laws since 1888.

McCormack at first instructed Amelia's parents to confine her to a rear room on the second floor of their well-appointed brick home, but on September 13, with the girl now weak and feverish, he informed the Porters of their obligation. State law called for Amelia and others infected or exposed to infection by smallpox to be removed "to some house or place in the county where the disease will not spread, there to remain" until recovered or certified not to be at risk. Some in Bowling Green's medical community strove to refer to the place of quarantine as the "Eruptive Hospital," but this clinical name commonly yielded to a more medieval-sounding one: in the language of the notice delivered to the Porters on September 15 and signed by Dr. John H. Blackburn, acting City Health Officer, Amelia and her parents were requested "to go to the pest house."

The Porters refused. When Chief of Police and city board of health member Henry James returned later that day with a warrant to take the family into custody, Luther Porter struck back. The 37-year-old former bank cashier was by now ordinarily healthy for three days, but when challenged, he found her to confine her to a rear room on the second floor of their home. James, however, immediately procured a hearing before the county court judge who had issued the writ and convinced him to change his mind. It was now after sundown, and James and police officer Tom Potter agreed to wait until the morning of September 16 to convey the Porters to the pest house. By the time they returned, however, the Porters had revived the restraining order by filing a lawsuit in Warren Circuit Court. The defendants in the suit—officers James and Potter, and Drs. Blackburn and McCormack—responded just as quickly. Since the preceding Circuit Judge, Warner E. Settle, was not only absent from the district but married to a cousin of Amelia's mother, they notified the Porters the next day of their intention to ask a judge in Louisville to dissolve the restraining order.

Meanwhile, Amelia's fever had subsided, but she was now covered with large pustules and in the most contiguous phase of her illness. The stage was set for several days of legal wrangling over the family's fate as doctors, lawyers and even other victims of the disease took sides in anticipation of the court hearing. Public health, medical expertise and parental rights all became subjects for debate, but the star witness in the proceedings would be the pest house itself.

Bowling Green had used quarantine as a weapon against smallpox at least since 1865, when the city trustees contracted for the building of a pest house in the "New Cemetery grounds"—a somber but convenient location, since the city arranged to bury smallpox victims in what is now Fairview Cemetery. Public funds also paid for African-American women to provide nursing services, but the same community could be scapegoated for the disease itself: the Porters, charged Dr. McCormack, had not only neglected to vaccinate little Amelia, they had "suffered and permitted her to be nursed by a negro nurse, residing in Jonesville, a suburb of Bowling Green, where smallpox was prevalent."

The pest house was likely relocated from time to time as Bowling Green grew, but as the parties to the Porter lawsuit gathered evidence for and against moving the family, a wide gulf emerged in their perceptions of the amenities of the current facility. Affidavits placed the location of the pest house "in the woods," on an elevated plane between 1.5 and 3 miles from the city. Two buildings, for white and African-American patients, stood on different sections of the site. Joseph Franklin, a messenger who listed the pest house daily conveying patients and supplies, described the structures as "boxed houses, built of plank set upright, being one story and ceiled inside." Each had two rooms about 15 feet square, and a kitchen. In order to accommodate the volume of patients, tents with screening and plank floors had been erected. Both the houses and tents had stoves for heating and were, according to Dr. McCormack, "in perfect sanitary condition." Two patients also provided testimonials. Edward Sears had been the "first inmate" of the pest house, and after his recovery had served as occasional cook and nurse for the last three years. He described the rooms as well lit, heated, ventilated, and "entirely comfortable" all year round.

But the star brother-in-law, he stated, had both died at the pest house, and the structures were "not suitable or fit places to carry sick persons to."

Medical opinion was similarly divided. The Porters secured affidavits from six physicians concluding that it was both
cases he had seen, no deaths or other ill effects had ever resulted from the patient’s removal to a pest house. A colleague, Dr. James O. Carson, and three Louisville physicians, including that city’s health officer, submitted affidavits endorsing the policy of isolating smallpox patients and emphasizing its practical benefits for both the patient’s recovery and the community’s safety. Dr. Carson included photographs he had personally made of the pest house, although the whereabouts of these fascinating pieces of evidence are today unknown.

Dr. McCormack also disputed the Porters’ charge that he had exhibited a considerable lack of bedside manner in the execution of his public duty by placing their home under guard, interfering with other doctors’ access to Amelia, and generally causing the family, “distress and mental anguish” through his “high-handed, overbearing and domineering manner.” His denial nevertheless carried an admission that he was not popular with every local member of the profession. No physicians had been refused permission to examine the girl, he protested, except for one who was unlicensed and another who was “the personal enemy” of McCormack and with whom he was not on speaking terms.

On September 23, the day of the court hearing, even as their attorneys appeared before Judge Henry S. Barker in Louisville, the parties to the lawsuit were engaged in dramatic negotiations. Alarmed at rumors that the entire city of Bowling Green was now at risk of quarantine, a committee of citizens had brought both sides close to compromise. The Porters agreed that, rather than go to the pest house, they would retire to some suitable isolated cottage. When such a dwelling was found, however, its owner demanded a steep rent of $500 and refused to settle for $200 offered, generously, by McCormack himself. Just as a member of the citizens committee volunteered to pay the entire cost, time ran out. A long distance telephone message arrived from Louisville reporting that Judge Barker had dissolved the restraining order. Without further ceremony, McCormack and Police Chief Henry James descended on the Porter household and whisked the family to the pest house.

“By force,” exclaimed the headline in the next day’s Louisville Courier-Journal, summarizing the tactic that had quickly become “the gag of the entire town” of Bowling Green. In a lengthy front-page story, the paper reported Judge Barker’s vindication of McCormack and his allies. The proceedings of the local health authorities, he ruled, were “warranted and justified both by the law and by the facts.” With respect to the pest house itself, Barker found that such accommodation, while “far less elegant than her own home,” presented a danger to Amelia that was “imaginary rather than real,” and would “afford her every necessary shelter and protection.” While sympathetic to the plight of the Porters and others caught up in this compulsory exercise, he reminded them that “this is a hardship which must be endured for the good of the community.”

Perhaps the community eventually determined that its own sympathies were due, particularly to Amelia’s besiegged father. Four months after his well-publicized attempt to evade the pest house, a jury acquitted Luther Porter on the first of the embezzlement charges hanging over his head. An even happier ending to the story, however, lay in the fact that when they relocated to Texas a few years later, all members of the Porter family were alive and well. As Joseph N. McCormack predicted, those little plank houses and tents outside Bowling Green had performed their necessary function.

The Porters refused to move daughter Amelia from their comfortable State Street home to a tent on the pest house grounds. Courtesy Library Special Collections, WKU.
Perhaps you could pass this newsletter along to someone you think would be interested in supporting Landmark’s efforts in historic preservation advocacy.

I (we) want to support the Historic Preservation efforts in Bowling Green and Warren County.

Name ________________________________

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