

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

A Short History of Stringtown on the Pike

By

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Required in History #40, taught by Dr. Maxwell at the
University of Kentucky Center, First District School

1950-1951

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----- Florence -----
HISTORY OF FLORENCE) - 10 cop
BY LULIE W. JONES) - 8 cop

The original settlers of what is now known as the town of Florence, were believed to be some escaped Hessian soldiers, who came down the Ohio River and traveled by foot 10 miles from Cincinnati, Ohio. Florence is now one of the oldest and most interesting towns of Northern Kentucky. It has increased in population about 69% in the past ten years. There is only one other town in Northern Kentucky that has surpassed Florence. Our town is located at the intersection of two great highways, the Dixie and U.S. 42., just 10 miles south of Cincinnati, Ohio, which makes it easily accessible to the Queen City.

EARLY HISTORY

In the early days of the settlement of Kentucky, Florence was a trading post for the Indians and was called "Pow-Wow" and "Polecat" because the Indians brought their furs here for exchange. The first English name was "Crossroads" because of the intersection of the roads to Union and Burlington with the Ridge Road (now the Dixie Highway). During the period 1815 to 1820 the Wilhoit family, the Crisler family, and the Conner family emigrated here and purchased land, and in 1821, a young lawyer by the name of Thomas Madden came here from Covington, Kentucky, and saw the possibility of the beginning of a large town on account of the crossroads. He purchased a farm from Joshua Zimmerman at the junction of the Price Pike with the Burlington Pike. Mr. Madden, Wilhelm Wilhoit, Henry Crisler, and Jacob Conner laid out the village and it was called Maddentown, but, a year later Mr. Madden sold his land and moved from the community. The village was then called "Connersville" in honor of Jacob Conner, who owned most of the land which had been mapped out for the town. It was called "Connersville" until 1829 when the U.S. Government ^{was} ~~had been~~ petitioned to establish a post

office in the town. When the name "Connersville" was sent to the Postoffice Department, they informed the residents of the town that they would have to choose another name since there was a town by that name in Harrison County. The village had previously organized and trustees ^{had been} elected but it was not incorporated. Therefore, the trustees held an election for the purpose of finding a suitable name for the village. Twenty-five votes were cast, 16 for the name "Florence," and on June 10, 1830, by an act of the legislature "Florence" was incorporated ^{with} and given a population of 63. The Post Office was then established and located at the junction of Banklick Street and Dixie Highway. Pitman Clondis became the first Postmaster.

We have noticed that many of the streets were named for famous men of the county and state, such as Shelby, Girard, ~~Montgomery~~ and Youell Streets. Center Street was so named because it splits the west end of the town into two equal parts. The locust trees ~~are~~ along the sides of the street gives Locust Street its name.

The Covington to Lexington Turnpike was completed in 1836, and proved to be a great help to the town, which grew slowly until 1870. At that time the population numbered 374, but there seems to have been a definite backslide for in the year 1890, the population had decreased to 250.

During the period between 1830-1890, several business ~~places~~ were started. Churches were ^{*}rebuilt, a school was established and two hotels were in operation. These hotels ^{*}were operated during the stagecoach days when the old Lexington Pike was one of the main routes. Since Florence was the first stop out of Covington, and horses were changed here, many of the travelers would stop ~~xxx~~ here to spend the night. They would often go back to the city in a carriage and then return for the night's stay. This made the hotel business very profitable. Also, because of the stagecoach,

blacksmiths, harness makers and carriage makers had a lucrative trade. C.C. Bradford made carriages, Fred Reich had a blacksmith shop in which he made wagons, and a harness maker named Burke, made harness, saddles, whips, dusters and other articles. It was a sad day for all these industries when the railroad was built through the neighboring town of Erlanger.

The Boone County Journal, edited by Ben Deering, was the beginning of the Boone County Recorder, now located in Burlington. This paper, printed in Florence, had for its slogan, "Independent in all things; neutral in nothing; hew to the line; let the chips fall where they may."

A four day fair was held every fall in the town. The fair-ground, located on the Lexington Turnpike, furnished all kinds of entertainment, and offered high premiums. It was operated by the Northern Agricultural Fair Association, and the capital stock was \$8,000. It was organized in 1896, and the first officers were; President, Ben F. McGlasson; Vice President, E.H. Blankenbecker; Secretary, G.J. Allen; and Treasurer, W.P. Carpenter.

Florence was very fortunate to have such well-known doctors as B.A. Dulaney, J.A. Corey, Charles R. Slater, S.S. Scott, A. Sayre, and Charles T. Souther to practice here during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The Masonic Lodge ~~(was)~~ held its meetings in the Town Hall, a building which has served the community well as an educational center. The Odd Fellows Lodge was fortunate enough to build a three story building in 1869. T.L. Swetman dealer in dry-goods, groceries, notions, and general merchandise leased this building about the year 1888. Kiddell's Market is located here at the present time.

The small community of Hopeful was settled on the outskirts of Florence during the years between 1896-1920. The first church

in the Florence neighborhood was founded in 1807, when the
was built
Lutheran Church in this small community, which has become a very
important suburb of Florence.

The small Christain Church, located at the intersection of
highways U.S. 42 and 25, was built in 1836. The ground upon which
the church is built, was donated by Ben Stephens. This church is
one of the oldest Christain churches in Kentucky.

During the war between the states, a skirmish between
John Hunt Morgan's Raiders and a reconnoitering expedition
under the leadership of Lew Wallace, was fought in front of this
church and the building was used as a temporary hospital for
the wounded.

Frank Grayson, in an article on Historic Spots in Greater
Cincinnati, Times Star--August 28, 1933--has this to say about
the skirmish.--"The Florence Christain Church is a one story
brick building standing at the junction of two highways. Around
this edifice and also around the original Baptist Church, which
stood diagonally across Lexington Pike, there was waged a battle
that never rose to the dignity of a line in the romantic history
of the Civil War.--Yet it was a brisk battle while it lasted and
for the time being turned "Stringtown" into a shambles. In its
wake, it left 19 dead and wounded. Prof. Lloyd explained, "Distinctly
I remember seeing the Yankees in rapid retreat through the Pike
and parallel streets to Cincinnati, from whence they had come on
reconnoitering expedition ordered by General Lew Wallace who
was in command of the defending forces of the city!"

Over the road came 150 of Morgan's rugged veterans. Notwith-
standing that they were outnumbered 10 to 1, the Confederates
attacked fiercely, creating the impression that their strength
was on a parity with the Federals. The Federals were taken by
surprise by this thunderbolt that seemed to have come out of the

air upon their flank and they were thrown into instant confusion. There was much shooting and ~~sub~~^{sa}boring. The attack resulted in a complete rout of the boys in blue. When things had quieted down, the dead and wounded were collected and carried into the shade of the trees that then stood around the Baptist Church. Later, the dead were carried over and laid out on the grass in the Christain Church yard, before being sent back to the Cincinnati fortifications. History has never allotted space to this little battle but nevertheless it went to show that the war was carried very close to Cincinnati and the skyscrapers of which city, can be seen from the spot.

Memorial services were held in the Florence Christain Church for Felix Moses, gallant Confederate soldier, whose body, ~~after the~~^{after the war.} ~~was~~ taken from the river below Aurora, Indiana. His body lies in a Cincinnati Jewish cemetery, but it was not surrendered until the people of Boone County had tried every means at their command to have the remains of this good man consigned to the soil of Kentucky.

When the town of Florence was incorporated in 1830, there were few families living here who held to the Methodist faith. During the period from 1830 to 1842, the Craigs, Robinsons, Conners, and Stansifers held meetings in the different homes, and about four times a year a circuit rider would appear and conduct tent meetings or revival services.

A site for the first Methodist Church was purchased from Samuel Craig for the sum of \$80.00. The deed was made July 18, 1842 to the following trustees: T.F. Robinson, Will Respress, Thos. H. Conner, Macham Baston Robinson, John Stansifer and Lewis Conner. This church was located on Banklick Street. The Craigs at this time had a sawmill that stood at the present junction of Banklick Street and route 42. The congregation got busy and most of the

lumber was prepared in this mill. The distance from where the mill stood to where the church was being erected being short, it was an easy matter to transport the lumber and the church was soon built and continued to be the place of worship until 1943. The old church building was a plain frame building with a dirt floor and the seats were free from paint, backs, and upholstery, which kept the members awake during the sermon. Wiggling was not always caused by the one-and-a-half to two-hour sermons, but ~~to~~^{by} fleas which infested the straw floor.

Rev. Rose, pastor at that time (1943) felt that after serving the public as a place of worship and badly needing repair, it would be expedient to erect a new edifice and a tract of land was purchased on the Dixie Highway, ~~and~~ ^{at a cost of \$10,000} a brick building was erected, and dedicated October 31, 1943, under the leadership of Rev. Rose. Here, in 1951, the Methodist Church worships under the able leadership of Rev. C. N. Cgg.

Cornelius Ahern was largely responsible for the erection of the first Catholic Church in 1851. Services were first held in Mr. Ahern's log cabin on Shelby Street, and later, in a frame building on Shelby Street, built in 1856, and then moved to the present brick structure on the Dixie Highway in 1911. The first resident pastor of this church came in 1874.

The Baptist Church of Florence was organized sometime before 1855. The small group of members met in different homes at first. A frame building was erected in 1855. One acre of ground was purchased from Milton and Harriet Wilhoit, in the south end of the town on the Dixie Highway, near the little Christian Church, at a cost of \$400.00. The first membership was eleven but now in 1951, its membership is near 400 members. This church has recently welcomed a new pastor in the person of Rev. Howard Gordon.

Also in Florence, there is a colored Baptist Church. This church is a white frame building, located on Girard Street. It is the second of its kind in the county.

The people of the Presbyterian Church worshiped in a building located next door to the Town Hall at one time. This building has been remodeled into a modern home.

The first school in Florence was located at the very end of Banklick Street, and was called "Squirrel Hollow school" because there were so many gray squirrels to be found in this locality. This building was very small (14x20) and did not accommodate all the pupils, so another school building was erected on Price Pike, where Mr. Perry Allen's house now stands (The proposed New Centralized Boone County High School will be erected near this site). This building was large enough to take care of the boys and girls until 1856, when John Uri Lloyd and his father came to the town as teachers, and started a private school in the Town Hall. School was conducted here until about 1890, when an acre of ground was purchased from A. Mr. Galaway on Shelby Street, and a two-room public school building was constructed. The enrollment had increased so much by 1911, that two more rooms had to be added to the structure. This building was adequate until 1926. At that time two more rooms were added. These six rooms were used until in 1931, a large ^{three-} story brick building was erected. After this building was completed, the school was consolidated with the Boone County School System.

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