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Old Covington Landmark Has Interesting History

By

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Old Covington Landmark Has Interesting History

Lafayette, Henry Clay and Other Distinquished Men Were Feted There; Tradition of Restless Ghost

By MARY LAIDLEY
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ONE of the most interesting homes in Kenton County is the house at 406 East Second Street, the present residence of F. A. Rothier and wife.

In 1814, Gen. John S. Gano, Richard M. Gano and Thomas D. Garneal purchased 150 acres of land from Thomas Kennedy in the northeastern part of what is now Covington, extending from the junction of the Ohio and Licking Rivers. In the next year they appointed Albert Sanford, William Hubble, John C. Buckner, Uriel Sebree and Joseph Kennedy as trustees to incorporate a town. This was the beginning of the city of Covington.

Thomas Carneal built a handsome residence near the Point. The house is built of brick and has an upper and lower gallery intaglio (cut into the brickwork) supported by slender Corinthian columns. Everything in the house is handmade.

No description of the house would be complete without mentioning the old elm which is still standing on the broad lawn. No definite age can be set for the tree. It may have been standing for a century and a half, but it has surely passed its one hundredth birthday. The old tree is therefore a worthy rival of the Washington elm, under whose branches General Washington took command of the Continental Army, and which only recently died after having been so carefully preserved for a century.

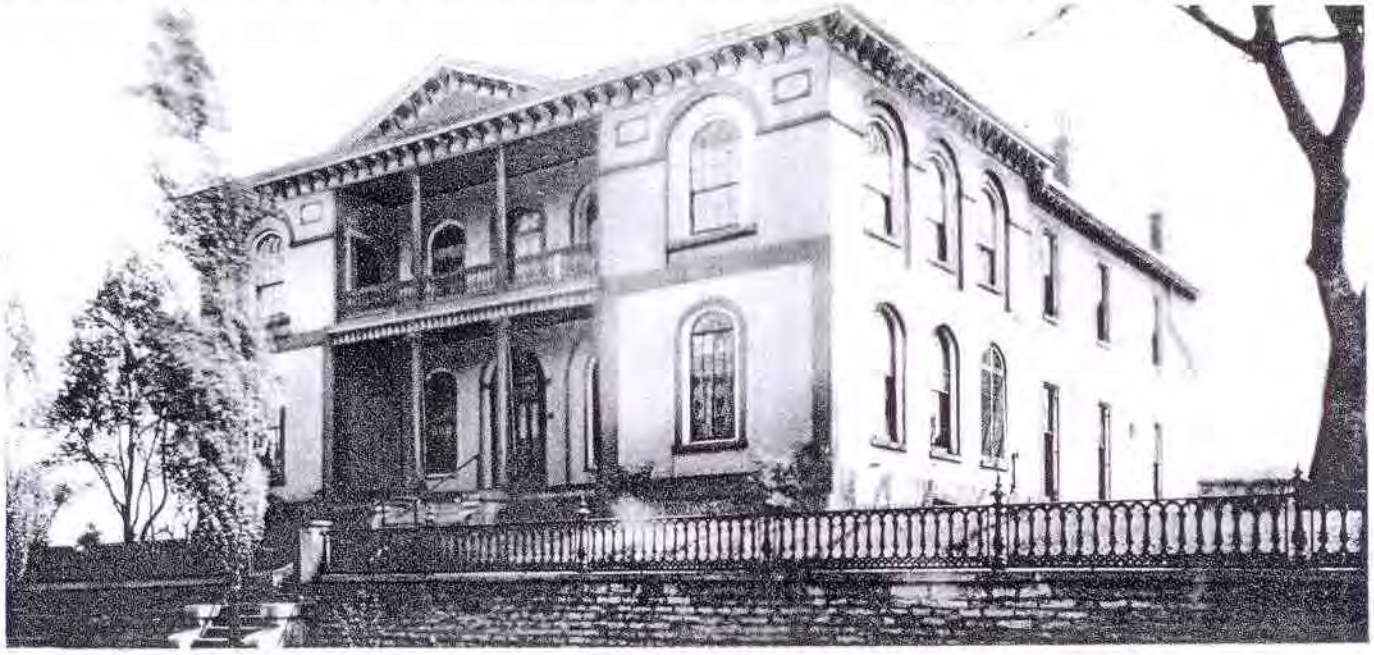
Later the house was the home of William Southgate, who was prominent in civic and social life in the early part of the nineteenth century. Old records show that he was chairman of the Board of Trustees of Covington in 1832, probably the first governing body. Three years later when this government became a council, he served as mayor, being the second mayor of the city.

In 1824 the Marquis De Lafayette made a visit to the United States upon the invitation of President Monroe, visiting every state in the Union, and he was given a reception in the old house by William Southgate. Other famous visitors were Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster and Henry Clay.

Often, the present owner says, when digging in his garden he uncovers arrow heads, relics of the Indian skirmishes which frequently occurred at the junction of the Licking and Ohio Rivers.

It is said that a former mistress of the house was unhappy there, and her spirit being earthbound, her restless ghost for nearly a century wandered through the old home. Hers grew to be a familiar figure as she walked through the rooms and the broad upper gallery, and she was called, almost affectionately, "the little lady in gray."

Some say that a ghost may be quieted by questioning its restlessness, and so about twenty years ago a member of the household saw the little gray lady one dark winter afternoon on her unhappy roaming and asked, "Why do you return to earth? There is nothing to distress you now. Sleep your long sleep in peace." The little lady is said to have returned and her story is almost forgotten.



Thomas Carneal, pioneer, built this handsome century-old residence at Covington.