

The Time Traveler

Scioto County Past and Present **By Kaitlin Setty**



Book Agent Fraud Was in Portsmouth

On the front page of the Portsmouth Daily Times on January 8, 1909, readers were greeted with the headline: "Book Agent Fraud Was in Portsmouth." A young man had been going around the city claiming to be an agent for a publishing house selling Stodard's Lectures. According to the Times, on the previous Tuesday, the man went into the Carnegie Library and got the names of the various women's clubs from one of the librarians. The man then went to visit the presidents and first met with Mrs. James A. Hager. Claiming it was a very low rate, he offered her a set of lectures for \$7.00. Although she wanted the books, she referred him to her husband. Mr. Hager spoke with the man and agreed to take the set but refused to pay the fee up front, instead of agreeing to pay once the books were delivered. After some quarreling, the agent agreed to these terms and left. However, a little while later, he came back to borrow an umbrella from Mrs. Hager, promising to return it to her. He never came back. After swiping the "shower stick," the man called on Mrs. Chick, another club president with the same offer for the lecture books. He informed her that Mrs. Hager had accepted his request to pay a fee of \$7.00 up front, then he would personally deliver the set of books to her. Mrs. Chick agreed to the payment, gave him money, but then never heard from the fellow again. It was believed that the man left town afterward.

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Tween Programs Limited Space

Please contact Local History at 740-354-5304 to register

September 9, 2021 at 4:30 pm
Build A Droid

September 14, 2021 at 4 pm
Burlap Owl

October 7, 2021 at 4:30 pm
Yarn Spider Web

October 12, 2021 at 4 pm
Leaf Resist Painting



Timeless Treasure: Photos from the River Days Parade (1970s)

Our September/October Timeless Treasures are these color photos from the River Days Parade in the 1970s. We have a collection entitled River Days-1970s that includes many more photos like these at <https://www.yourppl.org/history/>



Remember When...

A few snippets of a page from Volume 7 of one of Henry A. Lorberg's scrapbooks titled "Remember When..."

In 1878 A. D. Miller, a druggist at Dan Spry's, wheeled Alf. Scott, rather of Button Scott, from Market to Union Street and back, the result of an election bet.

In 1851 George Daum bought two lots where the First National Bank stands, for \$200.

In 1825 Lafayette was in Cincinnati. A reception committee was named to extend him a welcome here, but he changed his plans and did not come up the river as expected.

Who am I?

Clue 1: I was born on September 3, 1851 in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Clue 2: My father's name was Samuel, and my mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Kinney.

Clue 2: In the early 1900s, I was involved in Missionary work for several churches.

Clue 3: I lived at 310 Court Street, in the old family homestead.

Clue 4: One of my ancestors was the Revolutionary War soldier John M. Klingman.

Clue 5: I was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).



Hold your copy up to a mirror to view the answer!

Anna Rose

Do you know this place?

Clue 1: This place was located between Otway and Rarden, along the N & W railroad.

Clue 2: In the plat, there were 31 acres.

Clue 3: Dry Run Church was located just to the east of this place.

Clue 4: Although a lot of effort was put into this place, and people tried to get it to become a booming city, all efforts fell flat.

5. This place was small and considered a hamlet.

Answer in the next issue!



A Remarkable Tree...

In Nelson W. Evans' History of Scioto County, the story of a remarkable tree in Lucasville is recounted.

In the late 1800s, there was an old tree on the south bank of Miller's run in Lucasville near the railroad crossing. The tree was considered ancient, believed to be over two centuries old. At its base, it measured 21 feet in diameter and 60 feet in circumference. When it was first discovered, it was in a state of decay with a large hole in its trunk, stretching from the roots to the branches. It stood on a farm owned by Thomas Dugan, about 200 yards above Dugan's Grove. It was a natural wonder, with people traveling for miles to see the huge tree. Many people wrote accounts of witnessing the tree, and one account, written in an old Cincinnati Almanac in 1810, tells of an interesting tale. A party of 14 people on horseback came to the tree, and struck by the wonder it, all attempted to ride through the hole in the tree's center. They each took a turn, guiding their horses through the tree's trunk. All made it through until the last rider's turn came. He tried to guide his mount through the tree, but his horse was too scared and would not go. This incident occurred about 1808, and many other tales like this surrounded the tree. It remained standing on the farm until it was deemed too haggardly old. Thomas Dugan had the tree chopped down until only the stump remained, which was then removed a few years later.

Spooky Excitement on Eighth Street

On June 16, 1899, an article on the front page of the Portsmouth Daily Times discussed reports of a ghostly figure hanging around Eighth Street. A figure clad in all white emerged from an alley by the residence of John Brown. It was spotted by Will Edwards and some friends who shouted at the shape but were ignored. It kept moving toward them before suddenly vanishing about 20 feet away. The next night, George Brown saw the figure and threw a rock at it before darting away. The shape disappeared once more. This prompted a group of citizens to lie in wait for the apparition, armed with rocks and clubs. They waited along Eighth Street, at night but the ghost never showed. Residence in the area suspected that a midnight prowler had obtained a white robe and was coming around at night time to scare people. Still others claimed that a ghostly apparition had taken a liking to Eight Street and roamed the alleys at night time. Which theory do you believe?

Louisiana Moore Ricker got married November 3, 1870. In this entry, she writes about a trip to New Orleans she and her new husband Jim took with a couple who recently got married too.

November 9, 1870

Ma called me this morning to tell me to dress and commence packing while she got breakfast. I have been rejoicing all the time in the thought that I would have four or five days in which to pack after I was married and now the very morning of our departure has arrived and the trunks are still empty. Last night when I came home from Sallie's wedding I was so tired I was almost sick. Oh! how I dreaded this morning and the work to be done. Mollie Murray and Maggie Jones were in to see me and my new mother came to stay with my own dear Momma. The house was locked up and every body went to the boat to see us off. Besides John & Sallie, Jim and myself, there were about twenty others in our party. All of my and Sallie's bridesmaids Mary Peebles and Helen Ricker, Mary Moore, Helen Caton, Maggie Peebles, Rob Peebles and Maggie Jones came down to meet the Fleetwood and got off at Higginsport. Hannah Lithgow, Emma Cragg, Mrs. Muldoon, Mr. C. Ed Carson, Emma Johnson, Rick Peebles, Mr. Blaine Mrs. Robinson, & Kate Crichton, Mrs. Green & Martha and some others whom we did not care for. We had a most delightful beginning for our trip.





Local Mystery: Young Woman Found in Ohio River

"Death of Kate Patten Shrouded in Mystery" was the headline on the September 23, 1909 edition of the Portsmouth Daily Times. Kate Patten, a 21 year old girl, had been found dead beside the Ohio River the previous Thursday. The body was neatly dressed, lying face down, partially in the river's eddy. At 7 o'clock, William Estep, a riverman, was traveling through the water when he spotted something he described as a "heap of clothing," in the water and decided to pass by. One of his oars accidentally got hooked under the clothing, and in trying to dislodge it, Estep saw hair. He turned the body over to see the face of a young woman with froth covering her mouth and nose. Quickly, he towed the body closer to shore, then scrambled onto the bank. He raced to the Portsmouth Daily Times building to secure some cord to tie the body. The local police were contacted, and a crowd gathered around the spot where the body was, close to Estep's boat- about midway between Gay and Chillicothe Streets. Those in the crowd instantly recognized the body as Kate Patten. Her family was notified, the body was taken to undertaker Daehler's morgue, and the investigating began.

Kate's family hadn't notified the authorities that the girl had been missing. She usually spent some nights with her cousin, Mrs. John Call, so her parents assumed that's where she had been. They did say that the previous day before her presumed death, Kate had been complaining of neuralgia pain in her head and had said she may go down to the river to refresh herself. Allegedly, the last time anyone had seen Kate alive was at 10 o'clock Wednesday night by Walt Hughes and Monty Montgomery, and they saw her at the gate of her parents' home talking to a young man, her lover Floyd Stone. Upon learning of this, the police questioned Stone, though the boy was rather mystified by Kate's disappearance himself and could offer no explanation about where she might have gone or with whom. Another witness came forward, Thad Brown, a young boy who had been out on his father's shanty boat during that night, and claimed to have seen Kate out on her father's boat around 11 pm. However, the police were forced to drop this claim as the boy couldn't be sure that the person he had seen had been Kate. Others were questioned, but the authorities were drawing blanks on all fronts. Then there was the issue of the girl's body. The coroner, Dr. Robe, said that it was strange that her body should be found floating on the surface so soon after a drowning, if that was the cause of death. Usually in drowning cases, the body takes several days to come to the surface, whereas with this case, the body was at the surface the day after. Robe claimed that perhaps the body was found in warmer water, so that affected the gases within and caused it to float. He wrote up his formal report and laid a claim of accidental drowning as the cause of Kate's death. The authorities though were inclined to disagree with this verdict.

There were slight bruises on the girl's body and no water in her lungs. The police believed that some foul play had resulted in Kate's death. A man named John Herman, an engineer at the city water works, came forward after the initial investigation and claimed that on the night of Kate's death, he had seen a well dressed man strolling along the river, coming from the direction of the Patten family's home at about 5 o'clock in the morning. Herman had never seen the fellow before and gave him no real notice. Then, two hours later, Kate Patten's body was found. Investigators attempted to locate the man, but all their effort was in vain. They could not find him, and soon the initial excitement at the death of Kate Patten began to wane. Her body was laid to rest in Greenlawn Cemetery on September 25, 1909.

It was never decided what exactly had caused Kate's death, though her family and friends refused to believe she had committed suicide or accidentally drowned. They said that she knew the river well and had gone out in her father's boat many times. Unfortunately, this is one of those local mysteries that was never solved.