



MainStrasse History

MainStrasse Village

www.mainstrasse.org

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The Carroll Chimes Bell Tower

At the western end of the village stands the glockenspiel Carroll Chimes Bell Tower. In an effort to see Northern Kentucky grow as a vital tourist area, funding was appropriated by the Commonwealth of Kentucky to develop the area of Main Strasse. Some of the monies were allotted to construct the tower. Architect Addison Clipson was commissioned to design the tower and worked with partner Bill Batson.

Completed in 1979, the tower was named in honor of the then governor of Kentucky, Julian Carroll.

The Goose Girl Fountain

Located in the center of the village is the bronze Goose Girl Fountain. The Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitor's Bureau commissioned the noted Greek sculptor Elefcherious Karkadoulis to do the piece. Using his daughter as a model, he worked over one and a half years and cast the Goose Girl using the "lost wax" method. The fountain was erected and unveiled in October of 1980.



At one time, farmers raised geese in the Covington area. Thus, the German Grimm's fairy tale entitled the Goose Girl was the inspiration for the theme to represent the culture of the area.

Legend has it that a queen gave her daughter a magic handkerchief to protect her on her journey to be wed to a prince in a far away land. When stopping at a stream to water the horses, the princess dropped the handkerchief in the water. The evil handmaiden, finding her powerless, took over the princess's horse and gown.

When they arrived at the castle, the fake princess sent the real princess to a farmer saying she was a goose girl. Each day she would herd geese and at the end of the day the goose girl would unbraid her hair and cry. One day the farmer heard the crying and

found out the truth.

The farmer took the goose girl to the king and told the whole truth. The prince and the real princess were married and lived happily with their geese the rest of their days. The fake princess was imprisoned.

Historical Markers

William Goebel

The only Covington, Kentucky native to be elected Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, William Goebel died a short four days after being declared Governor.

William Goebel was elected to the Kentucky State Senate in 1887 and served as President Pro-Tem 1894-1900.

In 1899, William Goebel was nominated for governor, but lost the race to William Taylor.

In a whirlwind of charges that included corruption and vote stealing, the race was contested. During the debate on January 30, 1900, Goebel was shot. Four days later, just before his death, William Goebel was declared by the legislature as the Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Three men were convicted of murder, but were later pardoned of the crime. The true killer's identification is uncertain to this date.

The land in Main Strasse Village now marked as Goebel Park, in memory of Governor William Goebel, was donated to the City of Covington by his brothers

Location: Goebel Park on Philadelphia Street

Haven Gillespie

Who would believe that a ride on a New York subway would become the birthplace for one of the most loved children's Christmas songs of all time?

That's exactly how one version of the story goes. When Covington native, song writer Haven Gillespie was asked to produce a cheery holiday song, the words were written on the back of an envelope while riding the train, and reminiscing about his mother's warnings about behaving so Santa wouldn't pass him by on Christmas Eve.

Working with composer J. Fred Coots, the two put the perfect tune to the perfect lyrics, and created an unforgettable holiday song, "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town"!

James Lamont Haven Gillespie was born in Covington, Kentucky, one of ten children. Although an excellent student, accounts of his childhood claim he left school after the sixth grade, due in part to a less than ideal family situation. Moving to Chicago to be with an older sister, Gillespie began working at a printing press. In 1909, he found work as a "plug" man, entertaining audiences by playing and singing songs he had written.

By 1912, Haven Gillespie and his family had made the move to New York, where his songs were being published, and on their way to becoming hits. Among his most popular are "You Go to My Head", "Breezing Along with the Breeze", "Drifting and Dreaming", "God's Country", and "The Lucky Old Sun". However, "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" remains his most famous.

Following a bout with alcoholism, and the death of his beloved wife, Haven Gillespie returned to his native Kentucky, where he died in 1975.

Location: Goebel Park on Philadelphia Street

Una Merkel

Covington native, Una Merkel, found fame as well as many awards for great achievement as a renowned film star.

Great achievements include winning a Tony for Broadway's "The Ponder Heart".

In addition to Broadway, Una Merkel was featured in 66 motion pictures, receiving an Oscar nomination in 1962 for the film "Summer and Smoke".

Location: Goebel Park on Philadelphia Street

Robert Surtees

Covington native, Robert Surtees found his fame through the art of cinematography. His work earned him three Academy Awards during his 54-year career for the 1950 hit "King Solomon's Mines", the 1952 hit "The Bad and the Beautiful", and the 1959 hit "Ben-Hur". In all, Surtees received 16 nominations.

Among film credits, Robert Surtees boasts "The Graduate", "Sweet Charity", "Summer of '42", "The Last Picture Show" and "The Sting".

Location: Goebel Park on Philadelphia Street

Slave Escape

Historical marker Dedicated to the Slave Escape and the Memory of Margaret Garner.

Margaret Garner, Murderer or Heroine? by John Burns Compliments of the Kenton County Historical Society

One of Kentucky's most startling slave-connected tragedies to occur during the immediate pre-Civil War days took place after 17 blacks escaped from Covington homes and neighboring farms, late on a Sunday night in the latter part of January, 1856. There was a light snow on the ground, so the group stole a pair of horses and large sled for their flight. They drove the horses at full speed into Covington and through the quiet city streets. Dawn was breaking when they reached the foot of Main Street, near the edge of the Ohio River. There they abandoned the sled and dashed on foot across the frozen river.

When the group reached the Ohio side, its members split into smaller segments so as not to attract attention, now that the sun was up. One segment was comprised of a single family, consisting of a young married couple named Simon and Margaret Garner, their four children and Simon's two parents. They found shelter at the home of Elijah Kite, a sympathetic freed man who lived at the foot of Cincinnati's West Fifth Street, near Mill Creek. Elijah was also a cousin to Margaret.

The other runaways successfully contacted Ohio's Underground Railroad, which safely conducted them to freedom. The Garner's were not so fortunate. Officials quickly learned of their whereabouts and obtained a warrant for their arrest. Then, under provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Negroes would be returned to Covington where their owners could claim them.

When arresting officers arrived at the cabin where the runaways were hiding, they found it locked and barricaded. The blacks, armed with "cudgel and pistols", put up a brief resistance and managed to inflict a gun wound on one of the officers causing him the loss of a finger and several teeth.

When the officials finally managed to break into the cabin and over-power the fugitives, they found Margaret had cut the throat of her 3 year-old child and injured two of the other children. The young mother had acted out of a sense of desperation and declared she had intended to kill all of her children and herself rather than be returned to Covington and to slavery.

A large number of people, many of whom showed sympathy for the slaves, quickly gathered at the scene and "it was with no inconsiderable difficulty" that the Garners were placed in carriages and taken to the Cincinnati jail.

The body of the 3 year-old was claimed by its slave-master and returned to Covington for burial. Here, it was said, the child could "rest in ground consecrated to slavery."

On February 8th, a grand jury returned a murder indictment against the parents and grandparents for the young child's death. This indictment placed the four adults under control of state authorities. The Probate Judge then issued a writ of habeas corpus for the three surviving children, and ordered they should not be removed from the court's jurisdiction pending a decision in their case.

Meanwhile, a federal marshal applied to the U.S. District Court for a habeas corpus against the sheriff of Hamilton County, Ohio but not for the purpose of determining if the four black adults were unlawfully deprived of liberty. Instead, it concerned whether the sheriff was entitled to their custody under Ohio law, or whether they should be in the marshal's custody under the Fugitive Slave Act.

Eventually, on February 28th, a U.S. District court upheld the federal marshal's contention that the four adult blacks be brought before him and ordered the marshal be given custody of not only the adults but the children as well. Instead of this happening, the fugitives were hurried into an omnibus and driven under heavy guard to the ferryboat "Kentucky" and brought to Covington. Hardly an hour had elapsed after the court's decision than all the Garners, except Margaret, were returned to their slave master. Margaret was locked in the Covington jail pending further developments in the charges against her.

No one was more shocked by the turn of events than then Ohio governor, Salmon Portland Chase. On the other hand, jubilant advocates of states' rights declared the law had been vindicated. And some, like the Garners' owner and his attorney, held happy celebrations during which, according to one observer, the whisky "flowed freely".

The whole weight of Governor Chase's influence was now used to induce Kentucky officials to return Margaret to the Ohio courts. Eventually, Kentucky's Governor Charles S. Morehead agreed to the

request, but when Ohio officials came to Covington with the necessary legal papers, they found Margaret had been released several days earlier to her owner's agent.

It was said that Margaret, along with one of her infant children and the two senior Garners, were then spirited away and placed aboard a steamboat bound for Arkansas. They were in custody of Covington's Marshal Putts for the journey, which, one report said was abruptly interrupted when the vessel sank after colliding with another boat below Louisville. The child, according to this report, drowned during the tragedy.

Yet another report claims Margaret clutched the baby in her arms when first put aboard the craft and leapt into the river. The deck hands managed to drag her back onto the boat, but the infant was lost to the swirling waters.

Regardless of which version of the tragedy is correct, Margaret was never heard from again.

The Garner case shocked the entire nation. Northern newspapers stressed its minute details, while even the staunchest pro-slavery journals of the South found it impossible to ignore. It was even a topic in the floor debate of the Democratic Party's 1856 national convention.

The local community's conscience was severely jolted and slavery was placed on the defensive to a degree that had never been seen before, as more and more townspeople began divesting themselves from the human chattel.

The number of runaways increased and even Margaret's owner was said to have lost four more slaves just four days after the Garners first fled. Within a year, the number of slaves held in Covington dramatically dropped to

but 101.

Location: Sixth & Main Streets

Major League Baseball

Brothers John (1896-1968) and Joe (1900-1970) Heving of Covington made it to the big leagues. John began his major league career in 1920, as catcher, while Joe made his debut in 1930 as pitcher. Several teams benefited during their careers of 8 and 13 seasons. The brothers played together on local teams including the Golden Rods, when in town.

