SUPPLEMENT TO

OLD COVINGTON, KENTUCKY

AND

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OCTOGENARIAN

To which is appended Sketches of Old Covington's share in the festivities attending the visit of General Lafayette and son to Cincinnati, selected from an ancient newspaper, dated May 25th, 1825, once owned by the father of

MRS. ELEANOR CHILDS MEEHAN

The Baker-Hunt Foundation
620 Greenup Street
Covington, Ky.

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SUPPLEMENT TO "OLD COVINGTON" and "Personal Recollections of an Octogenarian"

THE kindly reception given this little booklet by many old friends, acquaintances and lovers of the old Home Town, added to the regret of its brevity expressed by some, have sent my mind gypsying over spaces and names that may be pleasantly recalled. It proves what a poet tells us:

"Old books, old friends are best,
Old things are loveliest,
Old houses and the glamor of old days,
The olden peace, the olden, quiet ways,
Old Gospels and old dreams,
With new delight life teems
When these are read."

Old trees are fascinating in every season of the year, and we recall in kindly feeling the pioneers who planted them for future generations to enjoy.

Old photograph albums, amusing and saddening; old cemeteries, with their quaint, sad or hopeful epitaphs, sending the mind in sympathy back to the probable lives and loves, heartaches and hopes of those that "lie under the stone."

Then there are old manuscripts, as in the old South Church in Boston, where one wonders over the almost microscopic writing in old sermons and letters; or, in some old papers of our own dear ones the often quaint and always sincere wording reflecting the honest thoughts of hearts unspoiled by life's vanities, the writers' once busy fingers folded over the pulseless breasts these many, many years.

Old houses were mentioned in my former paper, but there was one, beside the Old Log and Old Stone House, that stood, beautiful and homelike on the

northwest corner of Sixth and Greenup Streets: the old Kennedy Farm House, the space now occupied by the apartment building erected by the son of Judge William Arthur, who occupied it for some years, after having been for a long time the residence of Mr. Isaac Cooper. Opposite, stands a dwelling I remember as the residence of Mr. Tarvin, whose daughters, Anne, Mary and Sallie, attended Dr. Orr's School. Lower down, a long frame house, remodeled now, the home of Mr. Clayton and the Bullocks. Just below here resided Jesse, the father of General Grant, while acting as postmaster, just after the Civil War.

Then came the pretty home of Mr. Boude, whose daughters were my schoolmates; one of them, Mrs. Peter Thornton, residing in Newport, Ky., is still active in patriotic and social circles. This lovely home long since demolished and built over. *"Sic transit."*

Then came the substantial, comfortable home of Dr. Richard Pretlow, still a pleasure to the eye. Farther down was the business house and residence of Mr. Sparrow, whom we regarded as a severely English type of gentleman. Across the street was the residence of Mr. Charles Withers, once so pretty and homelike, the yard and well so beautiful, but now the grounds are built over and with the added stories seems to look down over its neighbors, as if to say, "Time has not touched me, I have taken new lease on life!" The little park in front was once occupied by the "lower market," and this brings us to the Court House, with its memories of stormy days when Judge James Pryor Tarvin was on the bench. Aware of the insecurity of the building, which was Covington's second Court House, he argued the necessity of safeguarding the records, but some of the members of Council were dilatory

and refractory, and the determined Judge promptly sent them to the Independence jail, where they remained until they came to terms. Judge Tarvin was a grandson of Judge Pryor of noble memory.

Down below the Northern Bank on Third and Scott Streets stood "Factory Row," a long frame building, occupied, perhaps, by many of the employes of "Ball's Foundry," on West Third Street, now substituted by handsome dwellings.

In those days, a trip from the suburbs to Cincinnati and return occupied a whole day, walking all the distance, crossing the ferry, and some delays. Then when we would reach the flower market in Cincinnati, at the east end of what is now Fountain Square, once the Fifth Street Market, my gentle mother would be lost among the flowers. Going up Scott Street, just above Fourth, was seen the time-honored book store of Andrew Laird. Other places already mentioned. On the east side of Scott Street, between Fourth and Fifth, was the handsome home, long demolished, of Mr. James Gedge, whose wife's pretty sisters, Laura and Emma Howell were once schoolmates.

Just north of Eighth Street, on an elevation above Scott, was an academy conducted by Mr. Snowden, a popular school for girls. Near by, on Eighth Street was the humble Cathedral that had faced many vicissitudes. The wooden tower had to come down and the cracked bell stand on the ground until better days. I have lately read a touching apostrophe to the "Old Church Bell," written long ago by a prominent Covingtonian and rescued from an old newspaper.

Continuing south, at the northwest corner of Eleventh and Scott Streets, stands now a dwelling that as late as 1857 was the Covington High School.

The adjoining square, beautified by a little park,

bears no evidence of the unsightly Eleventh Street Market, so long obnoxious to lovers of civic progress.

South of what is now the city and west of the old Bank Lick Road, once bordered with trees, stood the Howell homestead, "Howell Lane" running back among the hills. The grand "Park Woods," surmounting one of them, were familiar to all lovers of nature. On the Buena Vista hill was the large vineyard, with buildings occupied by the Benedictine monks, where sacramental and other wine was made with Old World skill.

Nearly opposite, where now is Wallace Avenue, was a pond, dignified by the name of "lake," where once there was a night exhibition of the "Pinafore" opera, with some Cincinnati talent taking part.

From Wallace Avenue, down Madison Avenue, are comparatively modern buildings. The large place formerly belonging to Mr. James Walsh, is still imposing. Down to Twelfth Street, where stands the present Cathedral, owing much to the generosity of the late James Walsh and his sons, Nicholas and Dennis, and enriched internally by artists abroad, as well as our own Duvenick and Barnhorn. At the northeast corner of Eleventh and Madison, for many years, was the modest grocery stand of "Uncle Jimmy Ellis," a familiar figure and of numerous connections.

Following Madison Avenue, past places already mentioned, down to the Old Trinity Church, brings back memories of former prominent citizens and of dear little Mary Hall, so devoted to its wants and pleasures. Farther down, on the opposite side, once stood the handsome home of Mr. Frederick Gedge, whose daughters, Jane and Mary, were contemporaries of my own sisters, all pupils of Dr. Orr's Seminary. My recollections of Jane are par-

ticularly bright; gifted with a rich voice, as a reader she was wonderful! Although but a youngster myself, I was included in the reading class, and I would sit absorbed in admiration of her dramatic renditions, especially as she would fairly intone Nat Willis' "King David's lament over Absalom!" Should the lesson be humorous, she would, without a smile, read with fierce emphasis — to the great amusement of her hearers, and taxing the dignity of the teacher in charge of the class. She married Mr. Jacob Sellers, and was the mother of a prominent citizen, Mr. Frederick Sellers.

Where now stands Odd Fellows Hall was, within my recollection, a tobacco factory. I have, in another paper, mentioned Virginia, the eldest daughter of Squire Arnold, who was the first wife of Dr. Theodore Wise. The second daughter, Louisiana Arnold, who married Mr. Phelps, I remember well as a merry singer of the popular songs of that day. I thought her "O, Susanna," the "Burman Lover," "Oh, come with me in my little canoe" the *ne plus ultra* of musical execution. Among the contemporaries of my sisters and the fellow-pupils of Dr. Orr's School were Rachel Cleveland, the Bakewell girls, whose pretty home in the west end gave name to Bakewell Street. There were Sue and Elizabeth Ashbrook, and these recall an incident which approached a tragedy in our school lives. At the lower or river side of the school grounds stood a number of large beech trees, and all enjoyed swinging on the long, pliable branches. One day we were summoned to the superior exhibition of Sue Ashbrook swinging out over the high bank. Her sister and another girl prepared the scene; when ready, the word "go" was heard, and we prepared for the wonderful act, but not for the slipping hands, the rushing body down

among the weeds, the swoon and consternation and final restriction placed on our favorite amusement.

There were the McMurtry girls, whose father owned the flouring mills before mentioned. The younger, Mary, a very amiable, pious girl, was greatly mourned by all who knew her, by her early death. Although in love with life, her resignation to the will of God was edifying and beautiful.

The favorite teacher in the older classes in the early days was an assistant, Miss Robb, whose dismissal of the girls in the evening was one by one, and exacted a very correct and Victorian curtsy at the door; outspread skirts, low obeisance, not the silly "bob" of today.

Covington had several visitations of cholera, in my recollection, the one of 1849 very severe. In an essay, as a little girl, I attempted a sort of review of that year, the climax being, "And the heart will shudder when the summer of 1849 is brought to the memory." There were then no professional nurses. In an emergency, sometimes a Sister from an institution might be obtained, but neighbors were kind and would take turns in "sitting up" with an invalid, to watch the medicines and wants. In 1867 cholera visited us again. Sometimes it would sweep one place, take one or two in another, and be unknown in another. In the last epidemic Mr. John Condell, prominent citizen and church deacon, was stricken. It seemed, over the country, to be most prevalent where limestone water was used for drinking, as around Nashville, Tennessee.

In the winter of 1853 and '54 the Ohio River was frozen over (some thought to the bottom) for a long period. Booths were erected on the ice, where hot refreshments were served to skaters and visitors, and heavily loaded wagons crossed constantly. The ice was a playground between the

two cities. To suffer from floods in the spring was common, necessitating much inconvenience and suffering among the lowland residents and the shifting of the ferry landings, but the flood of 1884 exceeded the recollections of the oldest inhabitants.

I vividly recall one day when our little settlement was terror-stricken by the sight of Federal officers and many other men rushing up the old Bank Lick Road to where the retreat of the notorious counterfeiter, John Mount, had been discovered in our little quiet hamlet. There may be yet among our older residents some who remember this startling event.

At the close of his school life Dr. Orr retired with his family to the pleasant Ludlow Cottage in the old Carneal district. Here another ex-pupil and I paid a short visit as probable farewell to their further removal. I can see the placid river, the green hillside above, long before railroad invasion was dreamed of. That evening will long be remembered, full of happy anecdotes and recollections. It was, indeed, our last meeting until we saw the body of a venerated instructor and friend committed to mother earth in old Linden Grove. The pretty "Ludlow Cottage," since destroyed by fire and rebuilt, was a quiet, restful place for him who had spent a busy life in education. Returning home the next day, he drove us in his carriage up over the hill, through the little hamlet of "Economy" (now West Covington), the poor little spire of St. Anne's Church pointing to the sky.

Old Covington had spasmodic attempts to moderate the indulgence in intoxicating drinks, but, like most such movements, the enthusiasm would subside. I recall being allowed to accompany my father to hear the famous Irish Apostle of temperance, Father Matthew, then visiting this country many

years ago, lecturing in the open and on the grounds of the Old White Mansion. My father was a rigid abstainer from alcohol and his example was admired by all who knew him. Moral suasion seemed more effectual than the forced prohibition of today.

When a little girl, there was a small patch of dense woods in the rear of our place, and sometimes in summer we had open-air preaching in "God's first temple." Beyond the trees, I could see a house on top of "Light's Hill" and would wonder what was beyond and beg to be taken up to see. At last, one day an opportunity offered. A woman who had been in my mother's service, died and I was permitted to attend the funeral. Arriving on the bleak hillside, we came to a little, desolate burying ground where once were laid to rest the early pioneer Catholics, the graves now removed to St. Mary's Cemetery on the Lexington Pike. Returning over the steep, rocky road, we found that a carriage preceding ours had been wrecked by runaway horses, the poor driver lying besides the roadside, badly injured. My romance of "beyond the hill" was shattered, as has been that of many in life, whose curiosity to "see beyond" has equally come to grief.

In my childhood, a finely made rag carpet was a work of art. On the ground now occupied by the late cold storage building, on Scott near Fifth Street, was once a frame building housing an artistic weaver of carpets. Some of his work was beautiful, fit to adorn any home. Then the quiet, simple lives of housewives were often brightened by an invitation to a "quilting," when someone, having finished the piecing of a quilt, often containing treasured scraps of gowns of long-lost dear ones, the neighboring ladies would be invited, the quilt tacked in its frames, the desired pattern defined by chalk lines; the best quilters, among whom was

always a friendly rivalry, would take their places at opposite sides. When the "reach" would be finished, the quilt would be rolled and another line begun. With such busy hands, the work was not long in the frames. Congratulations were exchanged and all ready for the much-enjoyed supper of hot biscuits, country ham, fried chicken, home preserves and pickles — all being the housewife's pride. Then the chatter—neighborhood news—lingering farewells until the "next time" when this pleasantly anticipated reunion would be repeated. Now we occasionally hear of an exhibition of old-time quilts, and the young generation may form an idea of the industries of their grandmothers. To lovers of the past, such scenes appeal; the sound of a long-forgotten strain of music, the perfume of a flower, will awaken memories. Like the rose jar of Tom Moore—"you may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, but the scent of the roses will hang 'round it still."

Old Linden Grove was noticed in a former paper, but I and many others regretted when the inscription was removed from above the gate and the plain little two-story houses on each side demolished. The inscription was laid on the ground by the vault—"I am the resurrection and the life"—

As late as 1858, on returning from church one Sunday, I saw the old fire engine standing on the street where it had been dragged the night before to extinguish a fire and left after the excitement was over. Boys and men would drag merrily the antiquated extinguisher to the fire, and it was nobody's business to return it. There was great rejoicing on the occasion of the completion of the Atlantic Cable, illuminations and fireworks from the pyro gardens on Mt. Adams—bell ringing and

general approbation of the first message, "What hath God wrought!"

My father was an enthusiastic lover of his native State, Virginia. At home in evenings, gathered around the open wood fire, he would regale us with his boyhood reminiscences. His "figure-four" traps for birds and sometimes larger game, of coons and rabbits; of the capture of some prowlers from a neighboring plantation who had discovered and were chopping down their old "bee tree" on his father's land; of the stories of the negroes who attributed the wild galloping of the horses during the night to the riding of the witches.

Old Virginians would appreciate these simple annals. He would repeat to us his father's stories of the Revolutionary War, in which he served. Of his brother's return home, "riding up the lane" at the close of the War of 1812, having served his country and returning to rural life. The famous Indian Chief, Black Hawk, had passed through the country, and my father would relate to us his history and amuse us imitating his dialect. He would sing to us old campaign songs—one of the Harrison candidacy:

"Come out from among the log cabins
And vote for old Tippecanoe,"

Another, of the services of the Kentuckians at the battle of New Orleans, when Pakenham boasted of what he would do, in spite of the cotton bales and the vaunted Kentuckians.

"Oh, Kentucky! the hunters of Kentucky!"

Old Kentucky! how far and wide her fame has gone! The land of fair women and brave men! There needs but the name "Kentucky-bred" to insure the excellence of a racing horse. Long ago, in Switzerland, the name of Kentucky on some of our baggage on a lake boat had caught the eye of a

fellow-passenger, and I heard an old Kentucky song not far from us—and so, those far-off mountains and lakes caught the name of our proud old State. The silvery-tongued Watterson, "Marse Henry," was at his best when this was his theme. At the "homecoming," some years ago, while lauding Kentucky, he said: "It was Crittenden, a Kentuckian, smiling before a file of Spanish bayonets, refusing to be blindfolded or bend the knee for the fatal volley, uttered the keynote of his race, 'A Kentuckian always faces his enemy and kneels only to his God.'"

Up to the present time my rambling "recollections" have been strictly personal, but on an interesting occasion old Covington and her sister, Newport, had the honor of being "interested spectators" of a wonderful pageant, and the little Newport garrison privileged to add a few salvos to the honors paid a nation's guest.

Come back with me to Lafayette's visit to the United States, as detailed in an old newspaper of May 25th, 1825, belonging to and treasured by my father. Cincinnati was chiefly honored, but our little burgs might shine by reflected lustre. Several years ago a gentleman who edited a column in a morning paper, "Notes and Comments," asked for information concerning the correct date of Lafayette's visit to this country. I wrote him of my father's old paper. I will merely quote his notes, although abbreviated much, and he failed to speak of the General's son, George Washington Lafayette, who accompanied his father. The friendship between the gallant Frenchman and our own Washington, sealed by patriotism, war experiences and gratitude. Visitors to Mt. Vernon have, of course, noted the key of the Bastile presented to Washington by Lafayette.

I will quote the newspaper clippings in my possession:

"NOTES AND COMMENTS

"Some time ago I made mention of the fact that I had engaged in a hunt to locate the exact date of General Lafayette's visit to Cincinnati. That the information has been found through the kindness of Mrs. Eleanor Childs Meehan, who has in her possession an old newspaper, *The Advertiser,* May 25th, 1825, which contains a full account of the arrival of General Lafayette. 'But,' she continues, 'that the precious old paper is so worn, I would send it to you for extracts.' She quotes, however, and I beg to present this most interesting historical date, as it will interest many who know of that great event through traditions of fathers who have gone to their rest."

"May 25th, 1825, fell on Wednesday," *The Advertiser* says. "On Thursday, which was May 19th, he appeared on the opposite shore, attended by his suite and a respectable convoy of gentlemen from Kentucky, among whom was Governor Desha of that State. The new troop of cavalry under Colonel Morsell turned out to receive them, and an elegant six-oared barge under command of Midshipman Rowan of the United States Navy rowed them across the river, where they were received by the new company of artillery, Captain Brinkerhaff; the Light Infantry, Captain Avery; the Lafayette Grays, Captain Harrison, and the Cincinnati Guards, Captain Emerson. The banks were covered with our happy citizens, and Governor Morrow welcomed him and his son and handed them into an elegant barouche and escorted them to Broadway. On a stand at the foot of Broadway there was an address by General Harrison. Of course, there were all sorts of decorations and a display of fire-

works at Vauxhall Gardens. There were arches, one at Front and Vine and one 'on the hill near the Presbyterian Church'—the First. On Friday morning about fifteen hundred children marched to Broadway.

"On the Common, west of the Court House, then on the north side of the square bounded by Main and Walnut, Fourth and Fifth, there was a pavilion for the honored guest and others for the city authorities, etc., and benches for the citizens. At ten o'clock they had a grand procession of military companies and other organiations. The quaint part says 'they marched down to the hotel,' but gave no name, there being evidently but one hotel at that time. At the hotel the General joined the procession. As he took his seat, the band played 'Hail, Columbia,' and Mr. Samuel Lee sang an ode, accompanied by the music. Then Mr. Benham made an address; the procession again formed and escorted General Lafayette to the house of Mr. Fernberger on Vine Street, where he remained for the evening. The Thespian Society invited him to visit the theatre (no name given), where he listened to the address of Mr. Reilley, which was received with 'thunders of applause.'

"Of course, there had to be *a ball.* That was an inevitable part of every entertainment in those days. This was a great affair, with about five hundred of the beauty and fashion of the city being present. Full credit is given Colonel Mack for the beautiful decorations of the hall and supper room. "It was the most splendid affair of the kind ever occurring in the Western country. The company present enjoyed the most perfect felicity for the time that human creatures are capable of enjoying. At twelve, midnight, the General and suite, the Governor of Ohio and his aides, embarked on the steam-

boat Herald for Wheeling. He sailed with the loud and repeated huzzahs of a large concourse of people who covered the bank at that late hour. The reception which the nation's guest has received at Cincinnati, we understood, has been highly gratifying to him and we are sure that the people themselves are highly satisfied. No accident happened and the weather was extremely favorable, although for weeks before it had been very inclement."

Thus far "Notes and Comments." The rather stilted style of reporters of nearly a hundred years ago differs much from the flowing style of today. And so I leave my readers with the kind wishes of one who loves the past, enjoys the present and hopes and prays for the future.

ELEANOR CHILDS MEEHAN.

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