

History of Forest Lawn Memorial Cemetery The Rolling Hills of Forest Lawn Memorial Park , Once the site of family estates and a popular restaurant

By Patricia Hahn 8-22-2019

Erlanger Historical Society



Home built in 1852

In 1839 the Covington Lexington Turnpike (Now Dixie Highway) was completed. It was one of the first roads chartered in the State of Kentucky. Colonel Thomas Buckner, one of the early settlers of this section of Kentucky, came to Kentucky in 1812. He Purchased thousands of acres of land. His property is said to have been bounded on the north by what is now the Dixie Highway, the east by the Dudley-Pike, the south by the Turkeyfoot-Road, and the west by what is Stephenson Road today. In 1839 on this property he built his Plantation called Rosegate.. His home still stands at 3049 Heritage Lane in Edgewood KY. In 1852 Buckner family sold 350 acres to Caleb Manley for \$14,000. While the Thomas Buckner home was built on the east side of his tract the Manley plantation was erected on the west side fronting Lexington and Covington turnpike.

The Buckner Home

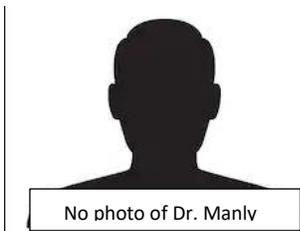


Then



and now

Manley erected his large Federal Style Mansion near a natural lake in 1852. It was built with slave labor using bricks the slaves made on the grounds. The house was originally built as a rectangle with an ornate French colonial wrought iron porch on the front. The house included nine fireplaces. All floor joists and exterior walls were poplar, in addition to major interior walls that are three bricks thick walls to the roofline. The foundation was constructed of field stones at least two feet thick. The house is still standing at Forrest Lawn Cemetery. Also, on the property were built slave homes and a smoke house. After the civil war and freedom of the slaves the smoke house was used as a school for Erlanger children. Caleb Stone Manly a physician moved here from the Deep South to be near his daughter, who was attending school in Cincinnati. He formed a practice in Covington on 11th street. Dr Manly had a large interest in Botany. And introduced Bald Cypress and Ginkgo and many other new trees and plants to his property. Manly was a good friend to Nicholas Longworth who owned a large plantation in Cincinnati. Manly and Nicholas were both botanist and Manly shared his Alabama seedlings with Longworth. Longworth sold his property to the city of Cincinnati and that is now Eden Park. Many of the same trees still growing on the Forrest Lawn grounds and in Eden Park are because of Caleb Stone Manly. Manly moved to Covington after only living at the Plantation for 8 years because the journey to his Covington office was burdensome.



Caleb Stone Manly build the home and designed the land as we see it today with the beautiful old trees.



The Rare Bald Cypress
And
The Beautiful Ginkgo Tree



James P. Garvey

In 1858 James Garvey, of Cincinnati purchased several additional parcels of land which connected to the Manly property. Garvey made his fortune in tobacco and bought the property for a summer residence. He spent his summer in Erlanger and his winters in Florida. Garvey owned a lumberyard in Erlanger and was one of the organizers of the Erlanger Land Syndicate to develop the area. Much of Erlanger was developed by his firm.



Anna & George Bedinger

In 1900 the home was sold to Anna Elizabeth Bedinger for \$18,000. Anna Bedinger was the person who gave the city its name. Mrs. Bedinger's husband was the postmaster for the city in 1880 and the city needed a new name. The city was called Greenwood and there were too many Greenwood's in the state. So, in order to get a post office, the city needed a new name

. Frederick Emile d'Erlanger was the owner of the Queen and Crescent Railroad and the Railroad was so important to the city, Mrs. Bedinger thought that would be a great name for the city. Mr. George Bedinger's wife Anna applied for the name change and it was accepted on May 20, 1882 So, the city has been Erlanger ever since.

In 1913 Col. Thomas Richard Cody a showman and restaurant owner who operated concessions at Latonia Racetrack and the Cincinnati Zoo purchased the property and turned it into a restaurant. The restaurant was elegant with fine china, beautiful furniture and silverware. Cody had friends in political life and in the entertainment business. So prominent people always visited Cody's Restaurant. Most came to Erlanger for the food which included Cody's personal burgoo recipe and mint juleps, many came for the music. A typical day on the large grounds of Cody's Restaurant was his famous burgoo lunch, baseball games, horseshoe tournaments and pool in an elegant poolroom with a chicken dinner in the evening. After Dinner a large pavilion where the mausoleum stands today was built for dancing, and band music. There were magicians, baby shows and barbecues. There was always a crowd and fun going on at Cody's. Col. Cody was the epitome of the southern gentleman. The Erlanger Women's Club would meet there, St. Henry's Church would have their annual picnic there, several local men's organizations met there. Tom. Cody was an Irishman who was the president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and a singer with the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Choral Group. On July 15, 1935 an auction was held at the beautiful Mansion on the Hill. Nearly 700 persons bid spiritedly to get a souvenir of the mint julep and burgoo utensils used at parties at the elegant restaurant. The famous burgoo pot sold for \$2.50 and the owner planned to give it to St. John's Orphanage. The next step was to sell the property.

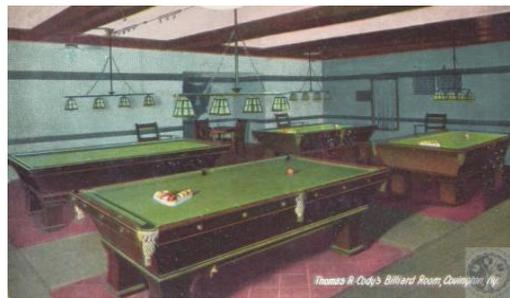
Forest Lawn as Cody's Restaurant 1913-1935



Thomas R. Cody



The Dining Room



The Pool Room

In 1935 Marguerite Stetter, 440 Berry Ave, Bellevue, KY, paid \$33,000 for the property. Marguerite was a sister of George Stetter of Vonderhaar and Stetter Funeral Home. Plans were to establish a memorial park and cemetery on the grounds. The new venture would be called Forrest Lawn Memorial Park. Before the proposed cemetery could be established much work on the property was required. The old slave houses from the Manly days still stood and had to be razed as well as old roads replaced. The first burials occurred in January 1937. Community sunrise services at Easter, now an annual event was first held in 1942. The Ralph Fulton VFW Post sponsors an annual Memorial Day parade which ends with services at Forest Lawn. A mausoleum was built in 1989 and opened for burials in 1991. The memorial park covers about 70 acres, the front 40 acres are in Erlanger and the back 30 acres are in Edgewood. Initially, an Erlanger ordinance prevented burial within the city. As a result, early burials were made on cemetery property outside Erlanger. Of course, that was all resolved. More than 10,000 burials have taken place at Forest Lawn on 43 acres of the property. Among those buried are singer Kenny Price from the old "Hee Haw" TV show, politician Judson Lincoln Newhall, US

Representative from Kentucky's 6th District and director of music at Covington Holmes High School, (a good friend of Col Cody who gave Col Cody's eulogy *The Nectar of the God the ode to Mint Juleps* and Mary Alice Stephenson Taylor and Mayo Taylor., Ralph Fulton 1st soldier killed in WWII he was a pilot killed on a mission in North Africa. The Local VFW is named after Ralph Fulton. .Just to name a few of the Forest Lawn Memorial Cemetery's residents.

The Forest Lawn Memorial Park's cemetery first manager was George Stetter . In about 1940 George Stetter's daughter and son-in-law James Lorraine Owen and Thelma Stetter Owen remodeled the upstairs of the Manly home and moved to Erlanger. The couple and their young son James Stetter Owen lived in the home, .and managed the cemetery. George Stetter's grandson James Stetter Owen and his wife G. Carole Boone Owen managed the Cemetery after the passing of his mother and father for 30 years. In 2008 James S. Owen, George Stetter's grandson sold the cemetery to StoneMor Partners, LP James now lives in Florida and his wife Carole is deceased. According to the StoneMor web site the company manages 303 cemeteries and 98 funeral homes throughout 28 state and Puerto Rico . Their home office in Levittown, Pennsylvania. Their stock is traded on the New Your exchange and their officers are CEO: Joe Redling CFO: Garry Herdler COO: James Ford

Three Generations of Ownership of Forest Lawn Cemetery 1935- 2008



George Stetter



Stella Stetter Owens & James Pennington Owens



James Stetter Owens & Carole Boone Owens

The original home which adds to the ambience of the cemetery is now in need or much repair and remodeling. It is not habitable currently. A modular office has been rented by the corporation and is now being used by the local employees as the Forest Lawn Office. The modular sits on the site of the old site of the Manly smokehouse which was used for storage for many years by the cemetery. This smoke house was used as the schoolhouse in the late 1860's. The smoke house was torn down in 2019 to make room for the modular office.so the employees would have a safe place to operate. .

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