

Bits and Pieces

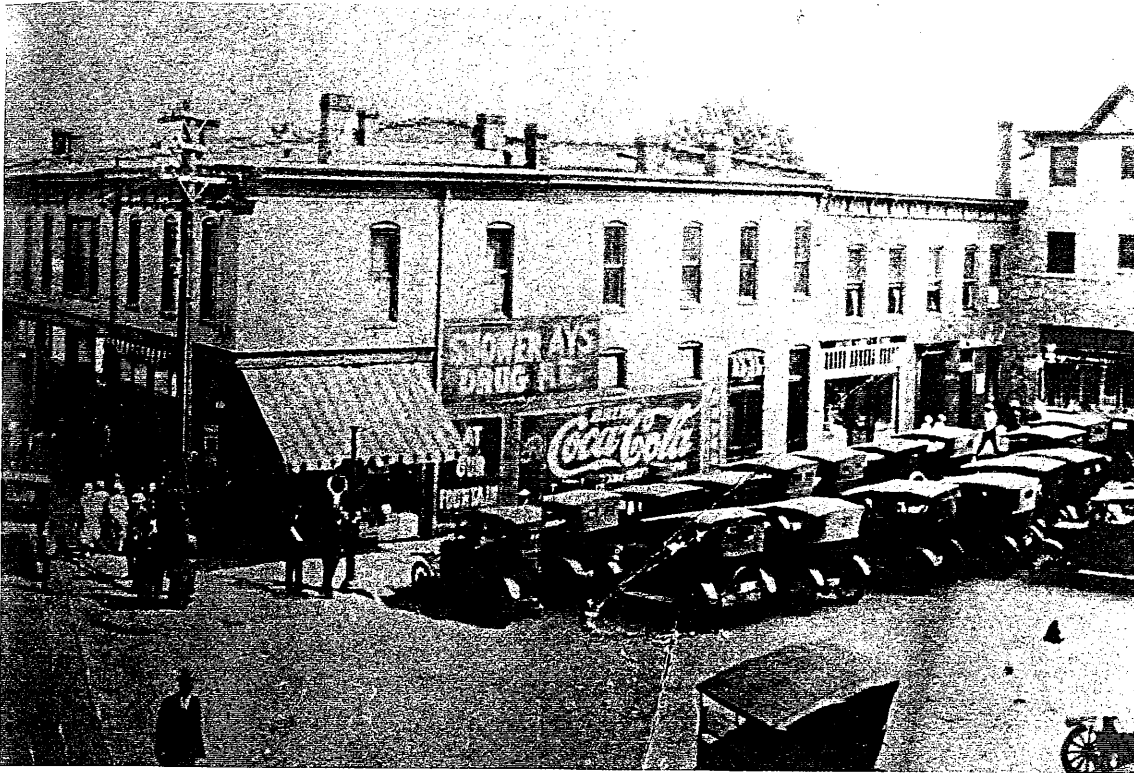
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Showers and Hays Drug Store, ca. 1924

SHOWERS AND HAYS DRUG STORE

When the doors of Showers and Hays Drug Store were locked on August 25, 1995, an institution that had been part of the business and social life in Elizabethtown for 103 years came to an end. It had been much more than a retail sales outlet. From the time it opened in 1892 it had been a store which attracted thousands of customers while serving as a meeting place and a social center for friends.

Showers and Hays was the successor to Green Bros. Drugs for whom Hugh Showers, the senior partner in the new firm, had worked as a youth. The store was located in those days, and for many years afterwards, at the corner of the Public Square and East Dixie Avenue. The new firm was composed of Hugh Showers and Horace Hays, with Mr. Showers always in active charge. It carried a large stock of drugs

and druggist sundries. Mr. Showers was a registered pharmacist who adhered to the strictest code of ethics when behind the prescription counter. (After being known as Showers and Hays for a short while, Mr. Hays sold his interest, and the business became for a time Showers and Sweets and later Showers and Phillips, Albert Phillips being a partner at that time, and once again Showers and Hays when Horace Hays bought Phillips' interest.)

With Mr. Showers in charge, the business had no set hours. He usually opened about seven o'clock in the morning and remained open until eleven o'clock at night, as much from a sense of duty as for the desire for profit. Hundreds of times he opened the store after hours for a physician treating a sick patient. He was a member of an old and prominent family, and he spent his long life in his native town. He was married to Miss "Allie" Mercer, theirs having been the last wedding ceremony performed in the old Methodist Church on South Mulberry Street.

Showers and Hays, throughout its business life, carried a large and varied stock of high grade merchandise, never resorting to cheaper wares or to substitutes. In addition to the pharmacy, the store carried a large inventory of patent medicines. It also stocked stationery. A variety of cigars and chewing tobacco was available. The manufactured cigarette had hardly made its appearance. Smokers bought a package of Bull Durham tobacco for a nickel and rolled their own.

For many years, Showers and Hays was the only place in town where new school books could be purchased.

One department of the business in which Mr. Showers took an especial interest was the sale of wall paper. He used a room over the store as a display room for his samples, and invited the ladies to come to it and see the new styles.

The soda fountain provided one of the chief charms of the business. It was large and

imposing, its bright nickel plate trimmed in onyx, and won many customers to the store. To many, the most popular drink was an ice cream soda, offered in a variety of flavors, vanilla and chocolate being the most popular. It cost ten cents. A "coke" or an ice cream cone for a nickel was popular with the young folks. Many a young man began his working days behind the counter as a "soda jerk."

During prohibition, Showers and Hays added "prescription whiskey" to the other drugs and remedies carried. During that period (1920-1933), doctors were allowed to prescribe a limited amount of "legal whiskey" (a pint at a time, with a required period between) for medication. Mr. Showers received a license and installed a large safe behind the prescription counter for keeping the stock. Business was brisk on the medicinal spirits, and many remarks were made about Mr. Showers being in the "whiskey business."

My first trip to Showers and Hays was undoubtedly while I was still in my baby buggy, and my visits continued every morning and afternoon until I started to school. My mother taught at the Elizabethtown High School, and Aunt Nina "kept" me (the expression "baby sitter" not having been coined at that time). The drug store in those days was the meeting place for the ladies. Every week-day morning about ten o'clock the ladies gathered in the "side room" to talk and talk and talk. I'm sure I've seen as many as twenty chairs gathered around one small table, with seven or eight separate conversations being carried on simultaneously. Suddenly, at 11:30, the ladies would scurry home to get "dinner" on the table, as most families in those days ate their big meal at noon, with only left-overs for supper. Some of the ladies I remember are Bess Alvey, Dora White, Minnie White, Alice Harrison, Helen O'Neal, Margaret Losson, Alma McFarland, Lettie Hart, Ella Hagan, Mildred Lord, Bessie Taylor, Belle Joplin, Mildred Gross, Nellie V. Hays, Virginia Marriott, and Martha Boone, as well as my aunt, Nina Richerson. Undoubtedly there were others.

The same crowd gathered about three-thirty in the afternoon and talked and visited as if they hadn't seen one another for a week!

While the ladies were gathered in the side room, most of their husbands and other men in town dropped in for a coke. That was the mid-morning and mid-afternoon equivalent in those days to today's "coffee break."

In 1938 Larue Cofer, an elderly bachelor with plenty of idle capital, bought Mr. Hays's interest in the store. Morris Phillips, a native of Greensburg, came to Elizabethtown in 1939 and bought an interest in the store, becoming a partner with Cofer and Showers. Showers and Phillips bought Cofer's interest in the business in 1945, as Mr. Cofer had never been actively engaged in its operation. Mr. Showers died rather unexpectedly in 1947, and E. Thomas Rogers, another Greensburg native, came to Elizabethtown and bought into the partnership with Phillips.

Three years later J. J. Newberry Co. leased the corner that Showers & Hays had occupied for many, many years, and the drug store was moved across East Dixie to the Woelpert building. After three years in that location, the business was moved to the building on the corner of the Public Square and North Main Street, and several years later, to Houchens Plaza.

The soda fountain with its white stools was disposed of before the last move, and was given to the Kentucky State Police for use at Trooper Island.

This is the sad story of the demise of a former downtown business to a big chain store with a large parking lot on the fringe of town.

M. J. J.

1958 - KENNY TABB A HERO!

An article in *The Elizabethtown News* in July, 1958, noted that Kenny Tabb, the 13-year-old son of former Sheriff and Mrs. Harvey Tabb saved the life of an 11-year-old boy at the Burnett's swimming pool in Elizabethtown a short time earlier. The younger boy, son of a tourist stopping at the hotel, jumped into the pool where the water was eight feet deep. He could not swim, and his mother, standing nearby, screamed madly for help. Tabb, who was also near the pool, jumped in with all his clothes on and rescued the boy, who had already gone under the water twice.

As a result of this incident, Congressman Frank L. Chelf, currently representing this district, recommended to the Attorney General that a Young American medal for bravery be awarded to young Tabb. At that time, under a law passed by Congress in 1950, the Federal Government could award four youth medals each year, two for bravery and two for outstanding achievement.

Tabb heard nothing more, and for 45 years he had wondered about the outcome of his nomination for the medal for bravery. Only recently, after an inquiry to the office of Congressman Ron Lewis, did Tabb receive from that office a copy of an article in the *New York Times* dated April 4, 1960, reporting that the Young American Medals for Bravery for 1958 were awarded to a Wisconsin baby-sitter and a young Connecticut lifeguard.

WILLIAM D. AND MALVINA CHURCHILL LANCASTER

Malvina Churchill was the second child of Judge Armistead H. Churchill and his first wife Elizabeth Crutcher. She was born in Hardin County on January 27, 1821, and died in the same on November 22, 1897.

At the young age of seventeen, she married William D. Lancaster who was born in Marion County, Kentucky, January 14, 1814, and died in Hardin County on August 22, 1890. He was the younger brother of Mary Eleanor "Nellie" Lancaster, the third wife of Judge Churchill. Thus, Judge Churchill was not only his father-in-law, but also his brother-in-law.

When Malvina Churchill married William Lancaster, she was converted to the Roman Catholic faith of her husband. William Lancaster's father had died about one year prior to the marriage of William and Malvina, so the newly-weds made their home initially with the widow Lancaster at "Viney Level," in a palatial residence on her 1000-acre farm in what is now Marion County. They continued to live there until 1858 when the farm was sold to Dr. John Lancaster.

In 1858 William and Malvina Lancaster and the three youngest children at that time, William Francis, Ann (Nanny) and Penelope, together with some slaves and some good thoroughbred horses from his Kentucky, moved by wagon train to Jackson County, near Independence, Missouri. At that time Independence was the starting point of the "Oregon Trail" and was becoming an area of thriving business. There he purchased several hundred acres of land.

Lancaster and his slaves built a large home, together with a large barn and other outbuildings. He engaged in farming, breeding of thoroughbred horses, and the lumber business. Lancaster's land lay mostly in timber; consequently, he purchased his own saw mill and cut, logged, and sawed these, thereby marketing a finished product, making a more substantial profit. In a few years he had become quite wealthy.

All this would pass, as a most unfortunate event was about to take place.

Even though Lancaster was an ardent southerner, he had never been bothered by Union troops. However, in the latter part of 1862 a company of Union cavalry approached his home, and the commander called for Mr. Lancaster. Coming at once, he was informed that he should take the oath of allegiance to the Union and repudiate the South.

Refusing to do so, he was seized and bound, and the troops fixed a noose around his neck, stating that he had ten minutes to take the oath or be hung in front of his family. Malvina, remembering that their oldest son, James Madison Lancaster, had graduated from the U. S. Military Academy a few months before, rushed into the house and retrieved his photograph in uniform and showed it to the northern officer. He agreed to spare the life of Lancaster, the father of a Union officer, but ordered them to leave Missouri, taking only what they could carry with them. Their slaves were then summoned and offered their freedom if they would leave their master. All refused and chose to remain with the family.

With one wagon filled with the family's immediate belongings, the Lancasters started their long journey back to Kentucky. As they looked back, they saw their beautiful home in flames and the soldiers exchanging their horses for the fine thoroughbreds that had been bred there.

They returned to Elizabethtown and made their home with Judge A. H. Churchill until the end of the war. Lancaster then purchased a farm in the Nolin area, constructed a new home, and remained there until his death. He became active in local politics and served one term as county judge. At the time of his death, he was holding a government office under President Cleveland. He was a strong supporter of the South during the war, and as a result of that, he lost the fortune that he accumulated in life, never again retaining his losses.

Soon after her husband's death, Mrs. Lancaster moved to Elizabethtown, making her home in a residence on South Miles Street, where she died a few years later. William and Malvina are buried in St. James Cemetery.

From their marriage of fifty-one years, they became the parents of nine children:

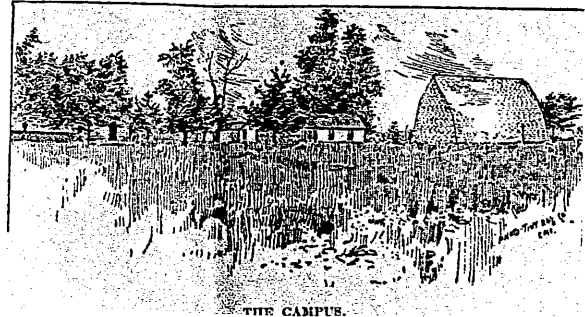
1. James Madison Lancaster. Graduated in 1862 from the U. S. Military Academy. Served in both the Civil and the Spanish-American wars. Buried in Arlington National Cemetery.
2. Mary Eliza Lancaster. Educated at Nazareth Academy, Nazareth, Kentucky. Married James P. Thompson, a Confederate veteran of the Civil War, who later practiced law in Lebanon and became Judge of Marion County.
3. Catherine Lancaster. Educated at Nazareth Academy. Joined the order of the Mesdames of the Sacred Heart. She became a teacher.
4. Henry Churchill Lancaster. Educated at St. Mary's College. Never married.
5. Penelope Ann Lancaster. Educated at Nazareth Academy. Married Charles J. Cecil, one of the brothers who operated Cecilian College.
6. Mary Frances Lancaster.
7. William Francis Lancaster. Educated at Gethsemane. Never married.
8. Anne Lancaster. Educated at Nazareth Academy and the Sacred Heart Convent, Cincinnati. Married Charles T. Warren, an Elizabethtown business man. They were prominent in the business and social life of the town. They were the parents of nine children.
9. John A. Lancaster. Born near Independence, Missouri. Educated at St. Joseph College, Bardstown. Married Mary Shaw Young, his third cousin. He was a machinist and supervisor for the N.C. & St. L. R.R.

M. J. J.

(Sources: Letters written to Malvina Lancaster, 1849 - 1859; other family papers; books about the Lancaster and Churchill families.)

CECILIAN COLLEGE

Cecilian College, located in Hardin County, Kentucky, was an institution of higher learning which, despite its relatively short life of about thirty-five years, was the means of educating several thousand young men. Very little tangible evidence exists today to commemorate the existence of this extraordinary institution. It was one of the outstanding schools in this part of the United States, and was known from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

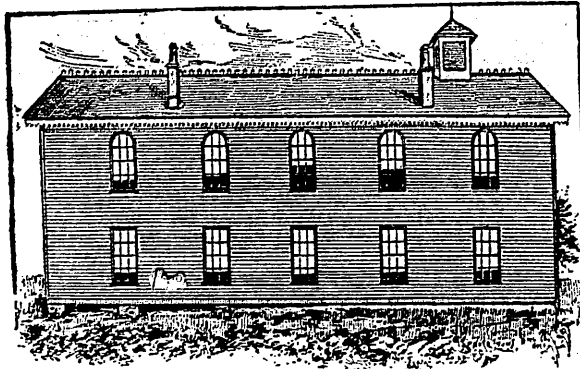


I have recently acquired, through the efforts of Elvin Smith, Jr., copies of two of the catalogs issued by Cecilian College. The following paragraphs from the edition dated June 9, 1892, state the philosophy and aims of the institution, as expressed by the president, H. A. Cecil, which are as original in their statement of claims as was undoubtedly the Cecilian method of instruction.

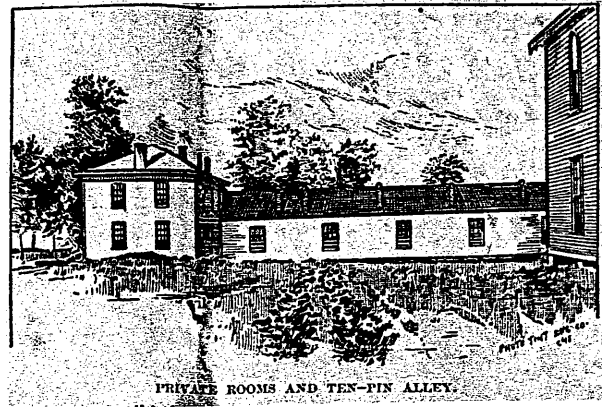
“MONEY MADE IS MONEY SAVED: Owing to the stringency of money matters, we have reduced our terms to the lowest possible rate. There is, moreover, no additional expense for a uniform or any other useless expenditure for the sake of style, military or otherwise. To be decked out in peacock plumage or show-stand fashion, may tickle the fancy of boys, and deplete the pockets of silly parents, but does not add one iota to their fund of useful knowledge, nor beget habits of economy, nor impart a correct idea of the practical realities of life. Boys should be early taught a taste for the practical, and constantly warned against indulging the day-dreams of wayward fancy, and aping the stuck-up-ism of dudes. Neither should students be tempted by various specious devices and plausible pretexts to add to their incidental expenses. On the contrary, they should be encouraged by every means to confine their expenditures to the least possible amount compatible with the grand object to be attained, viz: that thorough, practical, moral and intellectual training and culture that enable young men to go forth upon the world’s vast arena, fully armed and equipped to do battle successfully in the grand struggle of life. Whilst every species of dudeism is discouraged, every attention is bestowed upon neatness and propriety. . . .

“Other Colleges are still charging war prices—viz: from \$200.00 to \$400.00 per year, for board and tuition, whereas we charge only \$150.00. Moreover, the Jesuits of Georgetown College, Washington, D. C., have, as we also have, private rooms for the accommodation of students who prefer them, but charge each student \$80.00 per year extra, whereas we only \$10.00. Furthermore, we claim not only to be equal to these Colleges in advancing students . . . but far superior; from the fact that we, having an experience of over forty years, teach these branches ourself, whereas they are generally taught at the other Colleges by inexperienced scholastics, young teachers or missionary priests, and the consequence is we advance a student in the aforesaid branches as far in *one* year as any other College will in *two*. . . .

“METHOD OF TEACHING: Although our School is the cheapest of its grade in the United States, it stands unrivaled in Original, Philosophical, Scientific and Practical Methods of



STUDY HALL AND RECITATION ROOMS.



PRIVATE ROOMS AND TEN-PIN ALLEY.

imparting knowledge and advancing students. Students are not held back in order to consume a certain number of years to a course, but are encouraged by rapid promotion and by attending two classes of the same branch to finish the course in the shortest possible time, thus saving time and money. All of the old methods of getting rules and definitions, etc., by heart entirely discarded, and we use the authors only for the purpose of criticising their false views, definitions, rules and suggestions, for the use of the examples and for the purpose of illustrating the true and correct principles of the different Sciences. However astonishing it may seem to teachers and the knowing ones, the authors of most Sciences, for instance English Grammar, Arithmetic, Algebra and Book-keeping, are shown to be from beginning to end, nonsensical and absurd, not only in their definitions and endless rules and remarks, but also in the methods they suggest and the models they lay down. . . .

“If you don’t want to break your head getting old rules and false definitions by heart, come to Cecilian.

“If you want to ‘catch on’ to Grammar and Arithmetic in ‘double quick’ not having to get a single definition or rule in either branch, come to Cecilian.

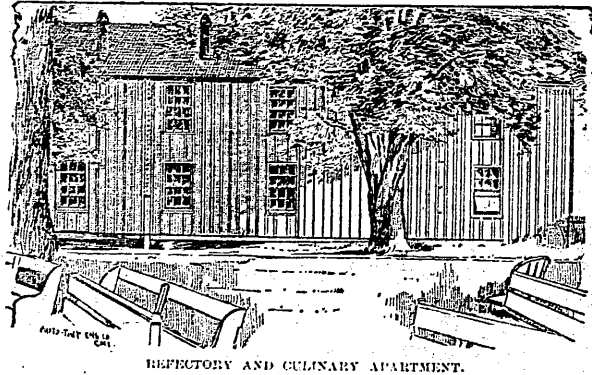
“If you want to learn all the short cuts in Arithmetic, Algebra, Trigonometry, Surveying, Book-keeping, etc., come to Cecilian.

“If you want to learn all the practical methods of Carpenters, Brick-masons, Plasterers, Farmers, Bankers, Grocers, etc., come to Cecilian. If you want to learn all the short cuts in Interest, Proportion, Square-root, Cube-root, Mensuration, Addition, Multiplication, and Division, without having to commit a single rule, come to Cecilian. . . .

“Now, how can anyone make his meat and bread at this rate? Only one way, viz: doing all the work himself and making no bad debts. . . .

“Do not play Rip Van Winkle while the world is moving right along. The old adage, ‘strike while the iron’s hot,’ is played out, but ‘strike till you get it hot,’ should be the order of the day. Do not, Micawber like, wait till something turns up, but go to work and turn something up. Old ways, methods, rules and definitioins should all be discarded and relegated to the past. . . .

“We always keep up interest in recitation, and do not discourage the students by calling them names, and blackguarding them in various ways and belittling them by various devices. When regular practical problems become draggy, we always awaken interest. . . .



“If you are going off to school why not turn from the setting to the rising sun and attend a wide awake, progressive one? A private enterprise, where success depends upon the ‘get up and get’ principle, and not attend an endowed palace car affair, whose moss-back, owl-eyed professors sit back upon their dignity, passing their hours in luxurious ease enjoying the *otium cum dignitate* of life, for the simple reason they get there all the same. Cecilian is no bloated, endowed institution. It is merely an individual enterprise, worked up by individual effort without the community’s ever having been asked or a single lottery scheme, or the sale of a single scholarship or a single contribution or donation from any source whatever. Relying alone upon her own merit and pluck, pursuing a conscientious and straightforward policy, she still, in the thirty-third year of her existence, rides the tide of success and is destined to pursue the even tenor of her course until she becomes everywhere acknowledged the only really progressive, wide awake literary institution in the land.

“This is the only school of its kind in existence, viz: a Catholic College, founded and conducted by a layman. Its aim is to avoid all the objectionable features of both Catholic and protestant systems of discipline, and combine the excellence of both. Whilst we carefully discard all the old, iron-clad, tyrannical rules of discipline, we likewise religiously avoid the demoralizing, unbridled license of the opposite system, and adopt a happy medium approaching, as near as possible, that of a well regulated family. There is wonderful power in the tact of teaching and managing boys. To produce the happiest results a teacher must be perfect master of the situation. It will not do to teach and treat all alike. Some are plodders, and wish to make thorough scholars; some again want just enough to make good, practical, business men; others again simply have a laudable ambition, to gratify, and desire a mere gentlemanly knowledge of the different sciences that make up a liberal education.

“The Common schools as well as Colleges are too much like old Proustes and his bed. All must fit the same standard. Those too long must be lopped off; those too short must be stretched out to fit the Common standard. This sameness produces monotony, monotony produces stagnation, and stagnation is ever fatal to energy. Rest assured our catalogues set forth but a few of the thousand and one advantages of our school over all others. Those casting about for the pearl of great price should know a good thing when they see it, and should, by all means, avail themselves of the advantages they can get no where else. . . .

“DECIDED ADVANTAGES: Whilst our school is the cheapest of its grade in the United States, it stands unrivalled in original, Philosophical, Scientific and Practical Methods of imparting knowledge and advancing students. . . . The College’s being situated in the country precludes the possibility of temptation to distraction of any kind from the outside world. Prohibition prevails throughout the county, not even druggists are allowed to sell spirituous liquors for any purpose. . . .

