



Published by: Imprint Publications, LLC
 www.imprintpublications.com
 ISBN-0-9754154-1-7
 Library of Congress Control Number: 2004112943
 First Edition
 Publisher: *Charles Parks*
 Editorial Director: *Lori M. Parks*
 Author & Photo Editor: *Rex Oppenheimer*
 Contributing Photographer: *Margaret Plowdrey*
 Editor-In-Chief: *Betsy Blondin*
 Art Director: *Gina Mancini*
 Editor: *Mary Campbell*
 Project Manager: *Jim Tomlinson*
 Administration: *Vicki Verne, Juan Diaz*
 Color & Image Artist: *Kristi Campbell*
 Profile Writers: *Karuna Eberl, Allen Gardiner, Jessica Halliday, Tony Parks, Carol Patton, Alexis dHersen, Ron Raposa, Allison Rainey Wudling*

Copyright ©2004 by Imprint Publications, LLC
 All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without permission in writing from the publisher. All inquiries should be addressed to Imprint Publications, LLC.

Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library



Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the wonderful people at Imprint Publications, particularly Editorial Director Lori Parks, Editor-in-Chief Betsy Blondin and Art Director Gina Mancini, whose talents and tireless dedication are in great measure responsible for this book.

I am also indebted to the staff of the Cincinnati Museum Center, particularly Barbara Grooms Witschger, Ruby Rogers, Director Cincinnati Historical Society Library/Community History, and Photo Curator Linda Bailey, whose guidance and assistance helped improve the accuracy and quality of this effort.

To them and others who have labored to produce this volume, I am very grateful.

— *Rex M. Oppenheimer*



Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Table of Contents

Introduction•6

Historical Perspective: An Appreciation of Cincinnati•8

A Glance at Cincinnati Today•134

PARTNERS IN CINCINNATI

Building a Greater Cincinnati•158

Business & Finance•168

Manufacturing & Distribution•184

Marketplace•228

Networks•256

Professional Services•266

Quality of Life•280

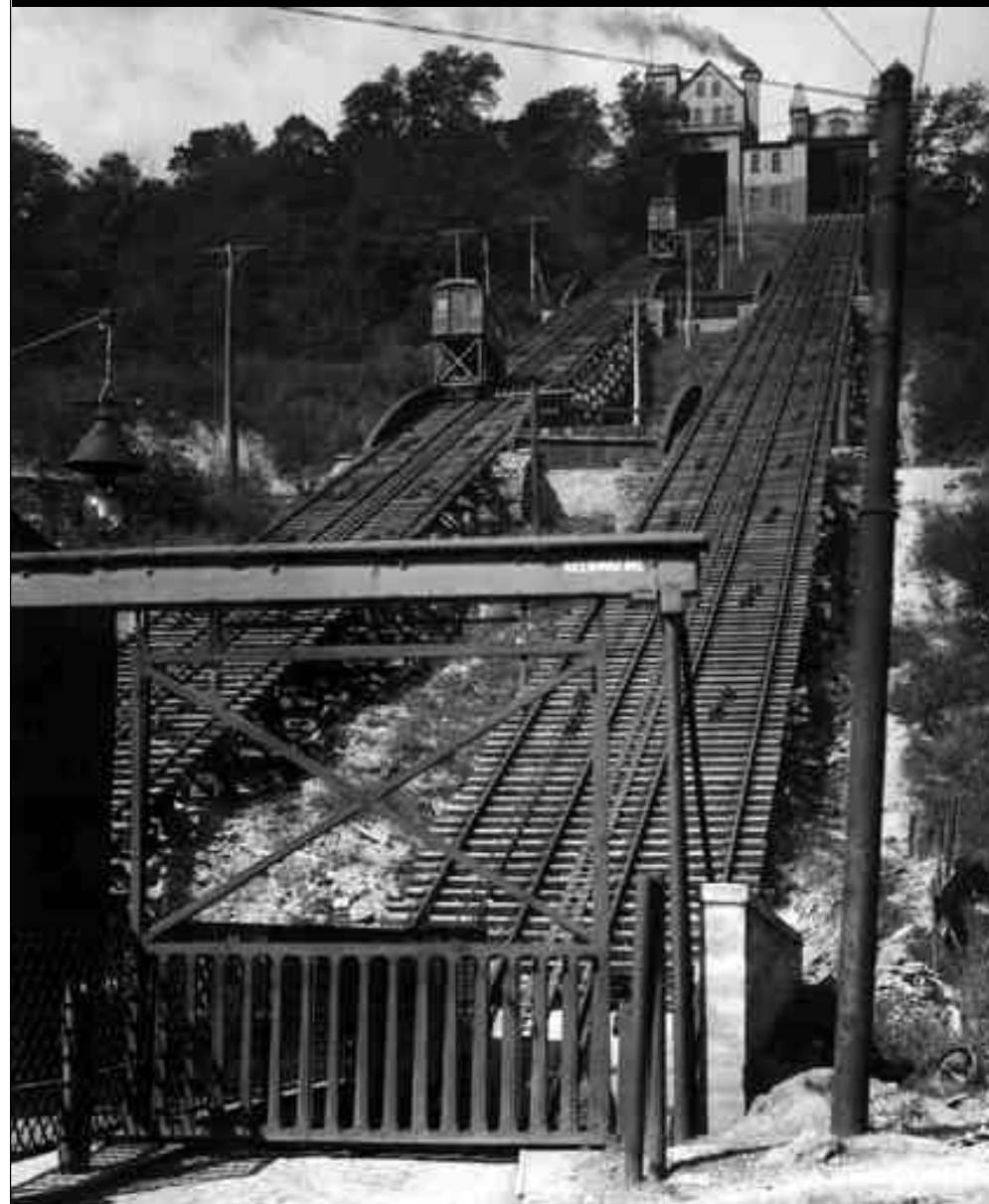
Technology•312

Bibliography•322

Partners & Web Site Index•324

A Midwestern city with a decidedly European lilt, a bastion of business, and a world-renowned city of the arts, a city of architectural prominence with beautiful buildings and graceful structures straddling a series of hills beside a mighty river of

lore, Cincinnati has seen dreams come and go. Yet, it has always remained true to itself. Cincinnati is an assured, self-reliant city. It progresses with confidence, drawn from its links with yesterday, steadily on its course toward tomorrow.



Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

If one picture is worth a thousand words, it may also generate a million feelings and thoughts. While a traditional history will generally follow a chronological format, detailing the systematic passage of time and the process of change, these pages use history more as a mirror held up to reflect the present and illuminate thoughts and feelings about the city of Cincinnati.

Although *Rivertown ~ Hometown* begins with an historical overview and then journeys past several historical highlights, it is primarily an appreciation of Cincinnati. It is not complete. Rather than offer the detail of a conventional history, it relies on a juxtaposition of historical and contemporary photographs to evoke a multitude of stories, and it relies on its readers' memories and imaginations to create and multiply the intricacies of meaning.

A book exists on many planes, both physical and ethereal. This volume is bound together by its cover and by the same spirit that weaves the disparate strands of this city into whole cloth — integrity, honesty and humanity.

Historical Perspective

an appreciation of cincinnati

Cincinnati is a riverfront town, but rather than the transience usually associated with such places, the city conveys a sense of permanence and stability. These qualities are evident in the many families with longstanding ties to the town. As the actor Tim DeZarn, who was born and raised in the city before making his way to Hollywood where he has appeared in many major motion pictures including *Spider-Man* and *Fight Club*, said, "People stay in Cincinnati."

This statement may seem funny, considering DeZarn didn't stay. Yet, the actor's assertion is important because it shows his affection for the town. He may have left, but he'll be back. More than that, DeZarn was referring to the longstanding and deep connections people form with their neighborhoods, schools and families and the sense of community that is the core of the city's history.



River Town ~ Hometown



(Both photos) Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Before the steam engine turned the railroad into an iron horse on which America rode to its Manifest Destiny, and overtook barges and boats as the primary means of freight transportation, Cincinnati's riverfront location situated it to be a major trade center. Manufacturers and distributors funneled their products and wares along the Ohio River, which connected the country's eastern states with the southern markets.

Yet, despite the comings and goings of traders and travelers along the river, Cincinnati became more of a hometown than a river town. Its neighborhoods are rich with history. In addition to the markers of important events, they are thick with the atmosphere of family and community passed on from one generation to the next. A city famous for the prowess of its professional sports teams, it's the high-school games that often seem to garner the most attention and are discussed and argued with pride in local bars.



Cincinnati, c.1815

Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Cincinnati is an enigma. It's a workers' city, and it's a cultural cornucopia — blue collar and yet erudite. It is home to some of America's great companies and more than a few notable artists. The city's devotion to the arts is evident in its many fine museums and concert halls.



Cincinnati, a riverfront queen, c. 1948, Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library



(All photos this page) Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Staid in its values, Cincinnati has shown a progressive attitude and willingness to change for the better. Its many religious institutions, community associations and charitable organizations have played a significant role in the city's development and its moral course.

In 1854 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a poem titled, "Catawba Wine," in which he sang the praises of the fruit of the vine, the Ohio River and Cincinnati, which he dubbed, "The Queen of the West."

"And this Song of the Vine,
This greeting of mine,
The winds and the birds shall deliver
To the Queen of the West,
In her garlands dressed,
On the banks of the Beautiful River."

The name must have fit, for it stuck, and over the years countless books and articles have identified, described and praised Cincinnati as "The Queen City."



Workers at the Jackson Brewery, Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Conceivably, the royal reference came partly from the way the city sits gracefully astride a series of hills, elevating its stature above the neighboring flatlands. Possibly, it persists, at least partly from the trim elegance and European air of many of the city's 19th-century buildings and lanes, and the many churches, reminiscent of those in European villages, whose spires spike the city's skyline to proclaim a combination of human humility and regal bearing.

Another poet, Carl Sandburg, called Chicago the hog butcher for the world, but long before Sandburg sang his burly ode to that city's broad shoulders, another muscular Midwestern town, Cincinnati, was slaughtering and processing more hogs than any other city on earth — 414,752 in 1858, compared with Chicago's 135,474. A far cry from Longfellow's cultured and genteel Queen City, Cincinnati also earned the moniker, "Porkopolis;" a distinction commemorated by the Flying Pigs monument at Sawyer Point.

Far from the coastal towns, which are most often recognized as the birthplaces of America's ethnic communities, Cincinnati, located at the fulcrum of North and South, was destined to be a cultural crossroads. Germans began immigrating to Cincinnati in great numbers between 1830 and 1850. They soon not only formed a sizable proportion of its population, 30 percent by 1840, but also brought with them many cultural treasures, from opera to bratwurst and beer. Cincinnati's *The Wahrheitsfreund* was the first German-language Roman Catholic paper published in the United States.

The German community made notable contributions to all aspects of the city, including culture, cuisine and commerce. The area, northwest of what was then the Miami-Erie canal (today's Central Parkway) known as Over-the-Rhine, where



(Both photos)
Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library



Fountain Square, Cincinnati's symbolic center in good times and bad, seen here during the Depression in a 1938 photo.
Photo by John Vachon for the Farm Security Administration/Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

many of Cincinnati's 19th-century German immigrants eventually settled, became an active, industrious neighborhood. Its dense, urban setting, with predominately Italianate style architecture, gave birth to many literary, political and musical societies. The streets beat with a vital commercial pulse, in the form of markets (such as the famed Findlay's), breweries and other types of light industry and retail shops.

The book, *The History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Ohio*, published by S.B. Nelson and J.M. Runk in 1894, addressed the issue of German immigration to Cincinnati:

"No other class of citizens is more loyal to the city, or more obedient to the State than the German, a class embracing more than one hundred thousand individuals, enough to form a large city. That part of the city that lies north and east of the canal is called "Over the Rhine," because it was once specially occupied by Germans who there kept up most of the customs of the "Fatherland." But now the German inhabitants are to be found in every quarter of the city—they own much property, and are distinguished for industry, frugality and public spirit. They are devoted patrons of education, and the foremost promoters of music and the fine arts. The German language is taught in the public schools, the city has several German newspapers, some book-stores, a German theatre, and innumerable German Societies. The Germans take a leading part in city politics, and represent every shade of opinion on religious subjects, some belonging to the Church of Rome, some to the Protestant Churches, some to the Jewish, and some to what is called the 'Broad Church,' which is no sect at all."

German Jews comprised part of this significant migration. Before 1830 Cincinnati's Jewish population, most of whom had English backgrounds, numbered about 150 individuals. By 1860

an additional 8,000 to 10,000 Jews, mostly from Germany, had come to the city.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering American Jewry's fabled association with New York City, the country's first rabbis were ordained in Cincinnati, at Hebrew Union College. Illuminated and inspired by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who founded the college in 1875, the city became a center of Jewish thought in America. Known as the father of Reform Judaism in the United States, Wise also established the Plum Street Temple, which still stands at the corner of Eighth and Plum streets.

In addition to the flood of Germans coming to the city, a substantial flow of Irish immigrants poured into Cincinnati in a large part because of Ireland's potato blight that began in 1846. Both groups contributed to the significant Catholic population in the city. The Plum Street Temple's neighbor is the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains, the principal church of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Henry Walters, who was also the architect of the Ohio state capitol in Columbus, designed the cathedral for the archdiocese of Cincinnati in 1840. The beautiful, monumental church, built in the Greek Revival style, was dedicated in 1845.

Immigrants fueled the city's growth and prosperity, through their increasing numbers and industrious achievements. The city's population quadrupled between 1830 and 1850, from 26,515 to 115,435. By 1860 Cincinnati had 160,000 inhabitants and was the nation's largest inland city, its third largest industrial center, and the sixth largest in total population.

In 1850 natives of Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland and New England comprised 54 percent of Cincinnati's population. German immigrants made up 27 percent, Irish-born residents comprised 12 percent and those from England tallied 4 percent of the city's total population.



Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library



*Cincinnati slums, c. 1930s Photo by Daniel J. Ransohoff
Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library*

The African-American population in Cincinnati remained at a modest two and a half percent between 1820 and 1870, except for occasional spikes, such as the end of the 1820s when it rose to 9.6 percent and in 1840 when it hit 4.8 percent. While things were difficult for many immigrants to the city, African Americans often endured severe hardships.

They were forced to occupy the worst housing, such as the infamous “Bucktown,” which lay between 6th and 7th streets and ran from Broadway to Culvert. African Americans also struggled to find gainful employment. Although there were some blacks that managed to achieve notable successes and even amass small fortunes, the majority labored in menial, low-paying jobs.

African-American men were able to find relatively good jobs on the riverfront as roustabouts and stevedores because of the labor shortage after 1840. Yet, these advances were undone with the loss of southern markets and reduced river trade during the Civil War. Competition for fewer positions heightened tension between whites and blacks. Violence erupted in 1862 when white mobs attacked African Americans for a week on the riverfront and in Bucktown.

Although African Americans suffered great indignities and hardship because of bigotry in Cincinnati, they also found opportunity and hope. In 1852 the state legislature granted a petition from Cincinnati’s African American population to establish and operate the Colored School System. This was a unique achievement for blacks in pre-Civil-War America. The African-American community elected black members to its own school board to administer the system. Proceeds from taxes on black-owned property financed it. Cincinnati’s black school system provided the African-American community with political



Bed and sitting room in the West End home of a family, December 1935, Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library



Photos by Daniel J. Ransohoff, Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library

experience and leadership skills beyond that available to almost any other black community in the nation.

Cincinnati was a vital link in the Underground Railroad. While primarily a network of safe houses run by blacks for blacks, some white Cincinnatians risked much to also shelter slaves who had escaped bondage in the South to seek liberty in the North. Among them was Levi Coffin, known as the “president of the underground railroad.” Coffin and his wife, Catharine, were Quakers who reportedly helped more than 2,000 slaves reach safety.

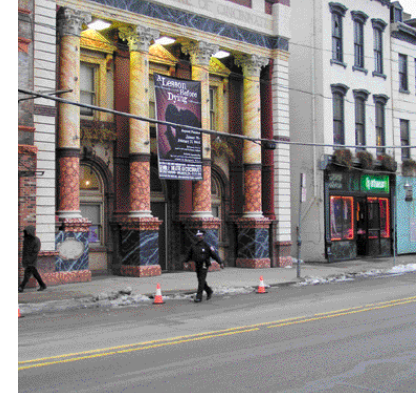
African Americans weren’t the only element of Cincinnati society to suffer the hardships of poverty. Many poor, working class whites also lived in cramped unsanitary conditions in Basin tenements. In the early 1900s Jacob Schmidlapp, a wealthy businessman with an eye toward the profit incentive and a heart of compassion, took action to provide inexpensive housing for the less fortunate. Not only interested in providing decent, low cost housing for poor families, but encouraging other wealthy people to follow his lead, Schmidlapp set up his housing plans to yield a 5 percent profit. He called this

approach, “philanthropy plus 5 percent.” He began by constructing 96 apartments in Norwood in 1911. Despite obstacles such as being overcharged for building permits, Schmidlapp persevered. His next project was to organize the Cincinnati Model Homes Company in 1914 and build units in Walnut Hills.

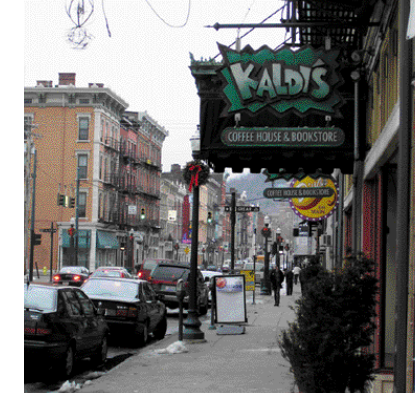
A welcome escape from dingy, high-density tenements in the Basin was the Washington Terrace in Walnut Hills. The units had recreational facilities and community-oriented activities and buildings that housed just four families in individual apartments with indoor toilets and gas heat.

Schmidlapp was extending Cincinnati’s core value of dignity through community to those less fortunate. His projects accommodated 107 white families and 337 black families. Yet, despite his noble efforts, the organization faltered after his death in 1919.

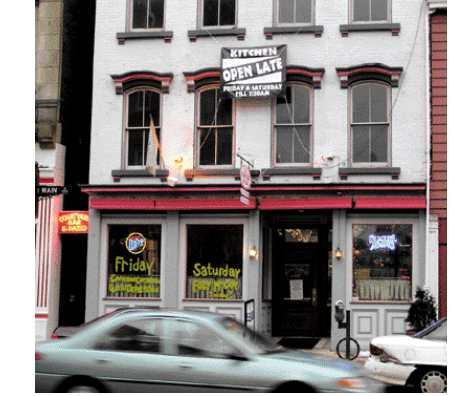
In the 1930s the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority sought to resurrect some of Schmidlapp’s concepts. Using federal funds made available by the New Deal, the housing authority created an urban renewal plan for the West End slums. The authority planned to clear away large portions



Over-the-Rhine is developing a new sense of cultural identity.



Small businesses, including restaurants and bars, are bringing vitality back to the once-depressed neighborhood. All photos this page by Rex Oppenheimer



of the slum housing and replace it with apartments similar in style to Schmidlapp’s Model Homes projects.

Yet, many Cincinnatians opposed the plan. While some decried it as socialistic, West End residents objected that the section chosen for clearance wasn’t the worst of the area’s housing. Homeowners complained that the authority was offering them sub-market prices for their property. African Americans became alarmed when they learned that two developments planned for areas outside the basin were intended for whites only and rumors had spread that blacks would also be banned from the new Laurel Homes project in the West End.

The housing authority had planned to build three separate projects in the West End, two for whites and one for blacks. The reduced funding changed the plan to building just one of the neighborhoods, and that would be for whites only. The majority of people, 61 percent, displaced for the construction of this whites-only community, however, were African-American.

Pressure from black leaders and concerned organizations forced the housing authority to admit blacks to the formerly whites-only community. Yet, the number of accommodations

allocated for African Americans, 30 percent of the 674 new apartments, was far less than the 769 black families that had been displaced. Years later, in 1941 and 42, the housing authority built 1,015 additional units for blacks in the Lincoln Court project, just south of the original Laurel Homes community.

The lack of affordable housing for low-income families has always plagued immigrants. Many arrive without much in the way of resources and often have to occupy substandard housing. This was true for many of the nearly 100,000 rural Appalachians from the mountain regions of eastern Kentucky and Tennessee who moved to Cincinnati between 1940 and 1970.

Affordable housing for lower-income people is a national, rather than a local, problem. In 1998 and 1999 the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) received two grants under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere VI program, or HOPE VI.

The housing authority used the grants as the basis of a \$180-million revitalization program, which began with the

demolition of the Laurel Homes and Lincoln Court public housing projects. The Community Builders, Inc., the project's master developer, is working with local residents and the housing authority to build a new, vibrant community, including 835 mixed-income rental units, 250 for-sale homes, a banking center, grocery store, retail space, community and childcare facilities, improved schools and redesigned streetscapes and open spaces to rejuvenate Cincinnati's West End.

Picturesque Over-the-Rhine, with its 19th-century charm and history as both a center of German culture and a port-of-entry neighborhood, is another community that has undergone significant changes. World War I dealt a nearly lethal blow to the city's German-American community. Anti-German feelings changed the character of the city, particularly Over-the-Rhine. Grammar schools dropped German language instruction in 1918. The public library removed German publications from the shelves, and the city changed German street names — German Street became English Street.

Fearful German-American families anglicized their names as well. Businesses, too, divorced themselves from references to the fatherland. The German Mutual Insurance Company became the Hamilton County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and the statue in front of the company's building at Walnut and Twelfth streets, called "Germania," was renamed "Columbia." Prohibition had a devastating effect on the breweries that were a vital part of the German community's economy and social traditions. Most of those closed in 1919 and never reopened.

Other events, such as the decline of the Miami & Erie Canal and its preemption by electric interurban railways and the construction of several large public buildings altered the neighborhood's character. More longtime businesses closed or left the

community, which continued the neighborhood's deterioration.

African Americans, displaced by urban renewal in the West End, moved to Over-the-Rhine during the 1960s, the same time the overall population of the area was declining. As a result, African Americans today comprise the neighborhood's majority population group.

While boundaries can define a neighborhood, the common goals and values of its residents create a sense of community. Although a majority of Over-the-Rhine's residents are poor and uneducated with a median income one-fourth of that of the city as a whole, the area has come together as a community. They are gaining the sense of place and pride that comes from taking the actions necessary to help each other.

Many African-American churches, along with the local schools and social agencies, such as the Over-the-Rhine Community Council, have bolstered the community's spirit and well-being. They have established programs to help change the patterns of poverty and racial discrimination and raise living and educational standards.

Although the area still faces problems of poverty and its incumbent troubles, the neighborhood's new attitude combined with its central location, architectural character and affordable property values and rents have attracted small businesses back to Over-the-Rhine. With its historical atmosphere and history of community, the neighborhood is developing a new sense of character and becoming reinvigorated with a genuine vibrancy.

Cincinnati's problems are not unique, neither are many of its solutions. Most cities have neighborhoods segregated by their resident's economic standing, and often still by race and nationality. It is common for cities to have once prosperous areas that have over the years slipped into decline, usually because of

the evolution of transportation and the demographic shifts from the city to the suburbs. Many of these cities also have programs intended to rejuvenate their inner city or downtown areas.

Yet, while cities share many similarities, they also differ greatly. Some of these differences are obvious, such as geographic and topographical aspects and regional influences. However, the greatest differentiator between cities is often more abstract. It lies in the city's personality, its attitude.

The city's history lives in the generational ties people have to their neighborhoods, schools and institutions; connections that have been passed down through the generations. Some of these qualities may be shared by other cities but very few towns in America today can claim such strong bonds of family and community as can Cincinnati.

The axiom that those who don't learn from history are condemned to repeat it implies that history carries a lesson of foreboding. Yet, it could also be said that history's greatest gift is to offer a feeling of reassurance and a sense of hope.

Looking at old photographs, while some differences, such as horse-drawn vehicles, the absence of telephone lines, indoor plumbing or electric light, let alone fax machines or computers, signify a vast differentiation from the present, a simple yet startling image also emerges — people haven't changed.

No problem facing humanity today is any graver than many that have plagued it in the past. People have met challenges and catastrophes, they have known cruel times and moments of crowning achievement. They have been besieged by enemies

and by fate; they have survived and they have found their many forms of salvation.

History's gift of hope has been handed to Cincinnatians in a more fundamental way; it has been passed down, generation to generation, through the shared experiences of community. The city's neighborhoods reflect this continuity, just as a well-made piece of furniture can reflect not just the artisan's skill, but that of his teacher as well.

Cincinnatians continue to pass on the value of community, to those with long blood ties to the area, and to those who arrive in this riverfront town to find a place to call home. ■



As this Boy Scout teaches a younger boy how to use signal flags, generation after generation of Cincinnatians have passed along skills and values that have helped chart the city's course toward the future.

Cincinnati Museum Center — Cincinnati Historical Society Library