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Cincinnati in 1848: A Panoramic Portrait of a River Community



Shows Slice of Life in 19th
Century at Main Library
November 7

In the mid-nineteenth century Cincinnati was the sixth largest city in America, as well as its largest inland port. Traffic on the river was at an all time high, with over 3,000

steamboats arriving in Cincinnati annually. It was during this time in 1848 that Cincinnati photographers Charles Fontayne and William S. Porter captured this bustling river city in an eight-plate daguerreotype panorama, which is now part of the collections of the Public Library. This historic view, the earliest known photograph of Cincinnati's waterfront, will be the focus of a slide program presented by M'Lissa and Rick Kesterman at the Main Library, 800 Vine Street, on Sunday, November 7 at 2:00 p.m. as they present **Cincinnati in 1848: A Panoramic Portrait of a River Community.**

“The program will provide background information on the photographers who took this series of photographs, as well as show what’s happened to them over the years,” said Mrs. Kesterman. “In addition we will survey Cincinnati's riverfront, taking a detailed look at the buildings, businesses, and steamboats found in this panoramic view of the city's past. What makes these photographs so significant is the fact that they vividly illustrate the importance of the Ohio River to Cincinnati’s development and growth.”

Panorama History

- 1848: First exhibited in Philadelphia in October at the Franklin Institute's Exhibition of American Manufactures, where it was awarded a first premium. Later that year it was also displayed at the Maryland Institute in Baltimore, receiving yet another prize.
- 1851: Traveled to London for the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations at the Crystal Palace.
- 1887: Appeared at James Landy's Photographic Gallery at Fourth & Plum Streets.
- 1913: Placed on display at the Main Library.
- 1948: Library purchased the panorama from William S. Porter's son.

Although these original daguerreotypes are now in storage, a mural reproduction can be seen in the Atrium of the Main Library on the first floor.

About the Presenters

M'Lissa Kesterman is the assistant manager of the Library's Rare Books & Special Collections Department. She is currently a member of the Board of Governors of the Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen and secretary of the Middle Ohio River Chapter of Sons & Daughters. Rick Kesterman is librarian at Concordia Lutheran School and president of the Middle Ohio River Chapter of Sons & Daughters.

Photo Caption: This second plate from the series of eight shows a slice of what life was like in 19th century Cincinnati. Three steamboats can be identified in this photo: *General Worth*, *Embassy*, and *Car of Commerce*. Directly over the flagstaff of the Steamer *Embassy* (center between *General Worth* and *Car of Commerce*) is the office where Stephen Foster worked as a steamboat clerk. Foster was composer of *Oh! Susanna* and *My Old Kentucky Home*. The clock tower of the Second Presbyterian Church can be seen prominently near the skyline, just to the right of the center.

✓ **Information about the Main Library and 41 branch libraries is available on the Internet site: www.CincinnatiLibrary.org.**

✓ **Our goal is to make our programs accessible to everyone. Please request ADA services one week in advance at 513-369-4406 (TTY 369-4409).**