

## A Different Tale of Two Cities - Cincinnati, Ohio & Sydney, Australia

September 11, 2011

On the tenth anniversary of the Islamist jihadist attacks on New York and the Pentagon, the Travellers Club sponsored an American reminiscence by Emeritus Professor Bruce Ryan, who had worked in the United States for 33 years. His subject was a comparison of the histories of Sydney and Cincinnati, two cities founded by European settlers in 1788.



Cincinnati takes its name from the Society of the Cincinnati, a fraternal organization of Continental army officers who returned to their farms in 1783, after defeating the British. The Society of the Cincinnati (plural) took its name from Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, the Roman statesman and soldier (5th century B.C.) who had returned to his farm after defeating the hill tribes invading Rome.

Cincinnati outgrew Sydney until 1890, but now has only half its population. Whereas Sydney was boosted by European immigrants (including goldminers) during the mid-nineteenth century, Cincinnati's growth was stalled by the American Civil War (1861-65). Situated on the Ohio River—the front line of battle between North and South—Cincinnati lost its southern trade hinterland and was surpassed to the north by Chicago. Around

the time of the Civil War, Cincinnati became an abolitionist stronghold and a major river crossing for those fleeing from the “slave states” to the “free states.” Harriet Beecher Stowe's Cincinnati experience fed into her best-selling novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which Lincoln claimed to have started the Civil War.

Cincinnati struggled to regain its industrial momentum after the “War Between the States.” It benefitted from its cross-roads location between the coal-producing Appalachian mountains and the corn-and-hog belt of the Midwest. Fifteen corporations presently headquartered in Cincinnati have sales equivalent to two-thirds of the total sales by Australia's top 35 firms. Sales by Sydney's top 17 corporations equate to only 64% of Cincinnati's. Cincinnati is an economic powerhouse. Today's huge Procter & Gamble corporation traces its origins in 1837 to soap-making and candle-making. Today's Kroger Company (America's largest supermarket chain) sprang from the vast food-producing region that surrounds Cincinnati. Baldwin Piano was boosted by the city's German music festivals, as was the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Whereas Sydney is a state capital (and the primate city of New South Wales), with a vast, uncontested hinterland, Cincinnati is located in the corners of three states (Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky), yet is the capital of none. Even so, two American presidents came from Cincinnati (William Henry Harrison and William Howard Taft), and the city has pioneered many civic reforms. Cincinnati was the seedbed for the Boy Scouts of America, America's Reform Judaism movement, professional baseball, the co-operative

system of university education, and such scientific advances as the first antihistamine and the oral polio vaccine.

Sydney has its icons such as the Harbour Bridge and Opera house, which remind today's Sydneysiders of what industrious European immigrants set in train beside the waters of Port Jackson. Cincinnati's icons celebrate the Ohio River and the inland waterways—the riverboats, paddle-steamers, showboats, freight-laden tow boats, and suspension bridges.

The afternoon's talk concluded with a list of 38 Americans who were born in Cincinnati, or lived there, or worked there. Among them are George Clooney, Rosemary Clooney, Andy Williams, Sarah Jessica Parker, Doris Day, Annie Oakley, Roy Rogers, Tyrone Power, Steven Spielberg, Jerry Springer, James Levine, Eugene Goossens, Kathleen Battle, Stephen Foster, Frances Trollope, William Holmes McGuffey, Nikki Giovanni, Tony Trabert, Neil Armstrong, Henry Heimlich, Marion Rombauer Becker, Ted Turner, Powel Crosley, Jr., Charles Manson, and John Boehner.

Charles Dickens called Cincinnati “a very beautiful city” (1842), while Winston Churchill called it “the most beautiful inland city in America.” If he heard the World was coming to an end, Mark Twain said he would go to Cincinnati, since everything happened there ten years later than everywhere else. Retirees take note.

Report by Bruce Ryan





