

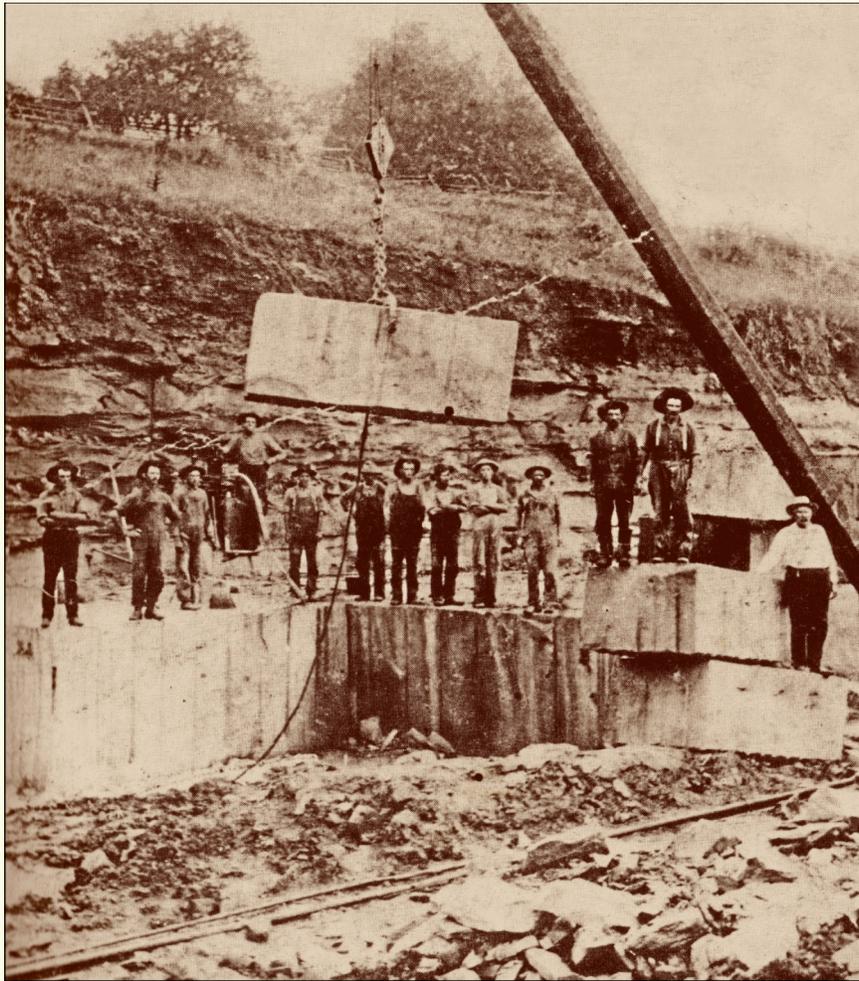


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**Stone in Nineteenth Century Cincinnati:
The Hummell Company and Kentucky**

**The Directory of the Covington & Cincinnati Bridge Co.:
Roebling's Address and Memo Book**

Michael Dunn Holliday

The Directory of the Covington & Cincinnati Bridge Co.: Roebling's Address and Memo Book

Don Heinrich Tolzmann

Introduction

While browsing through the online inventory of the Roebling Collection, which is at the Folsom Library of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, I found an item that immediately caught my attention. It was a reference to the following title: *Directory – Cov. & Cin. Bridge Co. – 1864*. So I ordered a copy to see what information it might contain.¹

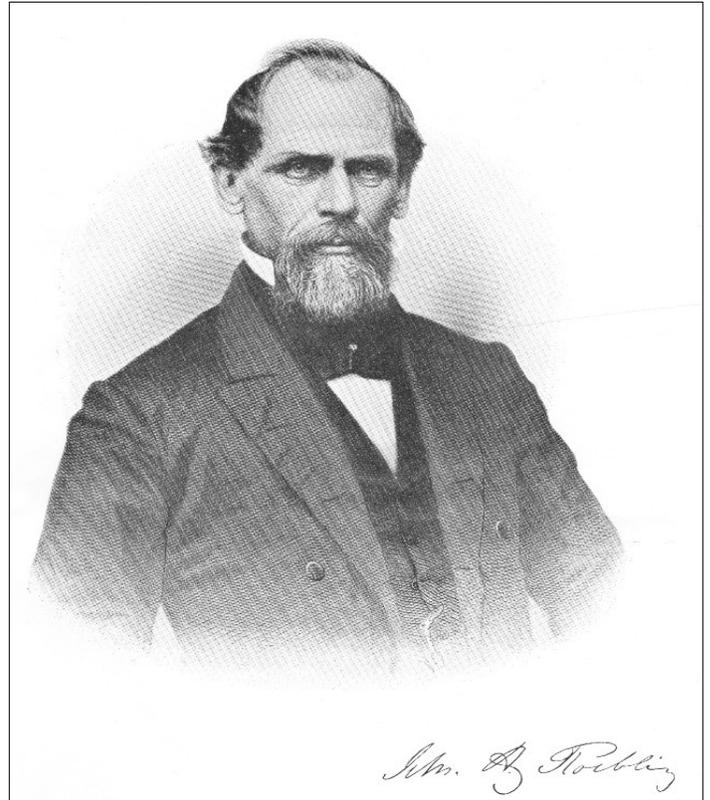
On receiving a copy of the *Directory*, I found it was more than a business directory for the bridge company. It also served as Roebling's own personal address and memo book, which he maintained while working on the bridge on the Ohio River. It contained his brief notes and sketches in addition to the customary list of names and addresses one would find in a business directory.

Contents

The directory consists of a 40-page pocketsize notebook (each page measures 3 ½ by 5 ¾ inches) in Roebling's own handwriting. It is dated 1864, with the concluding entries ending in 1869, which means Roebling used this directory from the latter years of his work on the bridge on the Ohio River up to the time of his death in New York.

The directory is not arranged alphabetically, but rather chronologically, which means that Roebling jotted down names, addresses, and notes that struck him as useful for further reference purposes. Entries include persons, businesses, and various topics, not all them related specifically to the bridges on the Ohio River and in New York. Although far too numerous to list here, they can be grouped in several subject categories to provide an overview of the directory's contents.

Bridge-related entries - Ohio River: The directory provides names and addresses for people and



Portrait of John A. Roebling.
courtesy: the author's collection

companies involved with the building of the bridge, several examples of which are listed here.

A. The lawyer and secretary of the Covington & Cincinnati Bridge Co.

B. Wire manufacturers, timber companies, cement companies, manufacturer of girders, iron foundries, a screw cutting and forging company, and a granite quarry.²

C. Listings for a stonemason, blacksmiths, a carpenter (E.F. Farrington), mechanical engineers, and railroad and canal managers/foremen.³

Non-bridge related entries – Cincinnati Area:

Roebling also includes the names and addresses of the following people and places in Cincinnati:

- A. The Cincinnati city engineer
- B. Misc. Cincinnatians: e.g. Henry Probasco and Tyler Davidson⁴
- C. The German consul in Cincinnati⁵
- D. A German apothecary in Cincinnati
- E. The Unitarian church in Cincinnati⁶

New York-related entries: The following address entries are no doubt related to Roebing's projected bridge project in New York.

- A. Where to get a map of the East River area⁷
- B. Wilhelm Hildenbrand⁸

Misc. entries: Roebing has several entries for misc. topics, such as the following.

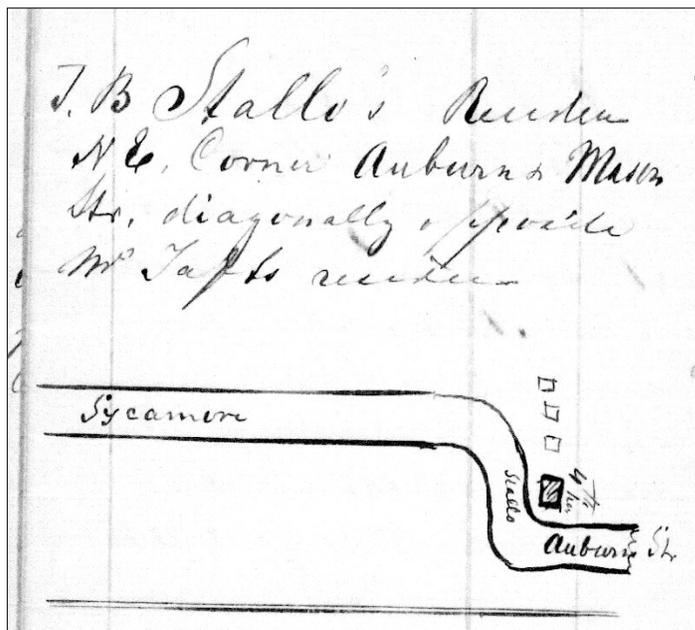
- A. A bakery in Philadelphia
- B. A recipe for mineral water lemonade
- C. Addresses of German- and English-language newspapers⁹

Conclusion:

A survey of Roebing's directory sheds light on the various kinds of contacts he had while working on the bridge on the Ohio River, while at the same time it points to his future bridge project in New York. The directory demonstrates how well organized and diligent Roebing was in terms of record-keeping. It also provides a unique glimpse into his workaday life via a directory that must have been a basic reference source for him. For Roebing there was no distinction between business and private life: both realms merged together as one in his address and memo book.

Aside from its historical value, Roebing's directory will continue to be of use for its original purpose as a reference source. In this regard, it can be helpful in answering questions that may arise about the construction of the bridge on the Ohio River. For example, what manufacturers and companies did Roebing work with, and who worked on the bridge?¹⁰

Finally, the directory demonstrates that discoveries can still be made with regard to the Roebing Suspension Bridge and its fascinating creator: John A. Roebing (1806-69). And it is also an indication that there is a wealth of archival materials to be found in the Roebing Collection at the Folsom Library of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York.¹¹

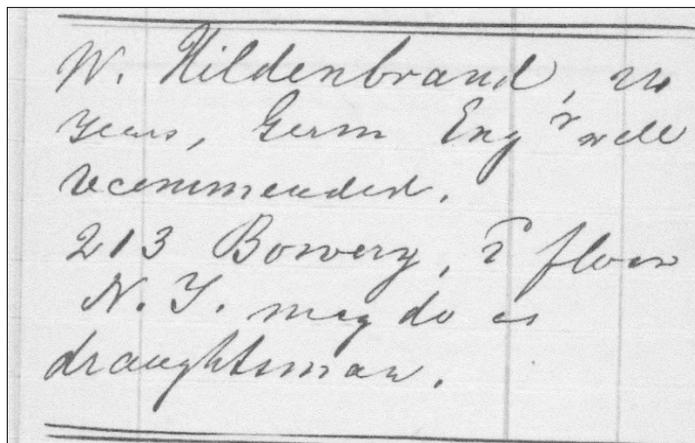


In this entry Roebing maps out the location of the Cincinnati residence of J.B. Stallo (1823-1900), which was located on the northeast corner of Auburn and Mason St. "diagonally opposite Alp(honso) Taft's residence."

Note that Roebing uses the German abbreviation of "Str." rather than the English form of "St." for Street.

Stallo was a well-known lawyer and Republican political leader in Cincinnati who supported Lincoln when he ran for president.

Courtesy: Roebing Collection



In this entry Roebing takes note of the New York address of Wilhelm Hildenbrand (1843-1908) who became the Principal Assistant Engineer to Washington Roebing during the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge and later was Chief Engineer for the Reconstruction of the Roebing Suspension Bridge on the Ohio River.

Courtesy: Roebing Collection

Endnotes

1. The directory is located in Folsom Library of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute under the following archival no.: Series I, C. Bridge Project, Box 7, f. 133. Many thanks to the Archives and Special Collections Department at the Folsom Library.
2. These companies are by no means limited to the Greater Cincinnati area, but located across the country.
3. I felt it was important to mention Farrington, a carpenter and mechanic, since he worked on the bridge on the Ohio River, as well as the Brooklyn Bridge, and published books on their construction. See: E. F. Farrington, *A Full and Complete Description of the Covington and Cincinnati Suspension Bridge with Dimensions and details of Construction*. (Cincinnati: Lindsay, 1870) and also his: *Concise Description of the East River Bridge, with Full Details of the Construction*. (New York: C.D. Wynkoop, 1881). For further information about him, see: D.B. Steinman, *The Builders of the Bridge: The Story of John Roebling and His Son*. (Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945) and David McCullough, *The Great Bridge*. (Simon & Schuster, 1972).
4. Henry Probasco (1820-1902) was a prominent Cincinnati businessman, later a mayor and superintendent of Spring Grove Cemetery, who donated the Tyler Davidson Fountain to the City of Cincinnati in 1971 in memory of his brother-in-law.
5. Regarding the German consul at this time, see: Richard E. Schade, *Carl Friedrich Adae (1805-1868): Cincinnati German Consul*. Cincinnati Occasional Papers in German-American Studies, No. 16. (University of Cincinnati, German-American Studies Program, 2006).
6. Roebling may well have attended the Unitarian Church; he was raised a Lutheran, became a Presbyterian, and at the end of his life was a Swedenborgian. See: McCullough, *The Greater Bridge*, pp. 55.
7. Regarding the East River location, see the works by Steinman and McCullough.
8. Wilhelm Hildenbrand was a German-American engineer who worked on the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge and the reconstruction of the Ohio Bridge. See my article on him: "Wilhelm Hildenbrand (1843-1908): Chief Engineer for the Reconstruction of the Roebling Suspension Bridge," *Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society*. (March/April 2015): 1-5. As a follow-up on this article, Donald Sayenga comments in an Email to the Kenton County Historical Society regarding the birthdate of Hildenbrand, indicating that he was actually born in 1845, not 1843."He was believed to be 63 at the time of his death in 1908, i.e. apparently the New York Times believed he was born in 1845. In the memoir in Engineering News his birthdate was given as June 1, 1845." He also clarifies when Roebling must have met Hildenbrand: "In the MS Memoir of his father (MS Page 255), Washington A. Roebling stated: "I returned from Europe in March, 1868, and found to my surprise a large amount of preliminary work done on the Brooklyn Bridge. My father had engaged two young German engineers, Hildenbrand and Greifenberg, to help him. Hildenbrand was a valuable man and afterwards was of great assistance to me." Obviously John A. Roebling met him at least a year prior to his own unfortunate death in July 1969." Email from Donald Sayenga to the KCHS (22 June 2015). Thanks to Donald Sayenga for this information. Also, see: Washington A. Roebling, *Washington Roebling's Father: A Memoir of John A. Roebling*. Edited by Donald Sayenga. (American Society of Civil Engineers, 2009), p. 215.
9. Roebling may have advertised in these publications with help wanted announcements, or advertisements for his company.
10. Due to the questions about the bridge, which come my way as Historian for the Covington-Cincinnati Bridge Committee, I will be keeping Roebling's directory on file. One of the recurrent questions is whether an ancestor may have worked on the bridge. Another question

is whether a certain company was involved with the bridge construction. Hopefully, the directory will help answer some of these kinds of questions. For information regarding a stonemason who worked on the bridge, see the author's article: "Charles Stolzenburg (1867-1903): A Stonemason Carves His Name into History on the Roebling Suspension Bridge," *Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society*. (July-August 2014): 9-10. For further information about Roebling, see the author's book: *John A. Roebling and His Suspension Bridge on the Ohio River*. (Milford, Ohio: Little Miami Pub. Co., 2007).

11. The Roebling Collection at the Folsom Library consists of 55 linear feet of archival materials (35 manuscript boxes, 30 oversize flat boxes. 8 mapcase drawers, and 16 oversize rolls).

Appendix – Employment Inquiries and Notes

Another item of interest is a file in the Roebling Collection entitled "Employment Inquiries and Notes." This file (Box 5, folder 5) lists the names of 17 persons who were appointed to work on the bridge, as well as 21 persons who applied for employment with the Bridge Company. Roebling no doubt compiled these lists to keep a record of appointments and applicants. They are added here as they supplement information found in his directory. Question marks are in place for names, letters, or words that are illegible.

List of Appointments (17)

L. Kirkup – machinist
Lt. Col. John Mose – carpenter
W. Coulter – carpenter
? Lemon – carpenter
J. Pardee – machinist
John Robertson – machinist
E. Langdon - carpenter
Banta – machinist
M.E. ? – carpenter
George Veitch – carpenter
E.F. Farrington – carpenter
P. McAuliffe
? Kingsley from?
Anton Gersten (?)
Dougherty – machinist
John Imlay – bridge carpenter
M. (Kennedy) of Troy – machinist
...on the back: Farrington, Kingsley, Pardee

Applicants for Employment (21)

P.H. Kelly
? Judd
Gillespie, Gilmore, Stephen Herman, Bilyieu
Stephen Herriman
? P. Andrews
Al Kensen RE: "Wanted master carpenter" ad
L.E. Mansfield
? from Columbia Co.
Hussley (?)
Anton Gersten (?)
Gillespie (?) (several)
B.j. Gilmore
A. Banta
E. F. Farrington
Griggstown (?)
? Wilson – machinist
P. McAuliffe
George Veitch (?)