Book Review: George Keats of Kentucky: A Life

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like. This stunning success is paramount for academic and
government libraries and is beyond price to people interested in
the Delta.

Melinda F. Matthews
University of Louisiana at Monroe


In the book, “George Keats of Kentucky: A Life”, any
reader will be immediately drawn to the family connection
that highlights this biography.  Written by Lawrence M.
Crutcher with a foreward by John E. Kleber, this 342 page
publication sets a delightful pace and maintains it as the
story unfolds.

Mr. Crutcher is a Former President of Book of the Month
class and currently is a corporate director.  Mr. Crutcher is a
great-great-great grandson of George Keats and author of

_George Keats of Kentucky: A Life_ begins with an
introduction of the biography of George Keats by alerting
us quickly to the relationship between George Keats and
the famous English writer and brother, John Keats.  Taking
us to the towns of Henderson, Kentucky, and soon
thereafter to Louisville, we see George plunge into business
ventures and became a community leader and respected
entrepreneur using the natural resources that abounded in
the newly developing country during the early 1820s in
lumber mills, steamboats, and real estate, George made
connections and led business associates.  By 1828, George
was highly connected with local entrepreneurs and
flourished financially.

The table of contents gives the reader a look at periods in
George’s life that defined his challenges and successes as a
leader in his community in Louisville and shed light on his

family in England, especially his famous brother, John
Keats.  One such chapter, entitled, “Who Failed the Poet?”
leads the reader to ponder four questions: was it (George)
his brother who failed to provide financial support to John,
was it his doctors who failed to treat his illnesses, was it his
critics who failed to give him open minds, or was it the
poet himself who cared little for his personal health.

The book jacket and photograph that stares out at the reader
presents a sophisticated, quite British subject with elegant
dress with an open innocent stare—not a dandy but
certainly the look of privilege.  The reader is immediately
drawn to the mystery behind the face and the innocence
apparent of any hard and grueling impacts his life may have
faced.

For a scholar of John Keats, the author’s research, almost
painstaking, gives many avenues to investigate the 1800s in
Kentucky life and times.  Family interactions and stressful
concerns about a family divided by allegiances to both
England and to the new life in America tugged at the
familial connections between the brothers and their
families.  While George appears to keep his family ties in
England alive, he can be seen to grow tired of his brother’s
complacency and the lack of strong dedication to the
achievement motives he felt so dramatically in the newly
developing Kentucky.

A beautiful collection of color plate photographs, depicting
the life and the acquaintances and scenes from George and
his family life and surroundings, add greatly to the
imagination of the life and times of George Keats.  The
author of the work diligently searched and bought forth
items and related information on the cultural and
sociological background that is highlighted through the
biography.

The Appendices --Circle of Friends and Acquaintances,
Pertinent Documents, Events in the Life of George Keats, the
Notes, Bibliography and Illustration Credits bring
invaluable resources to an historian searching for
documentation for on-going research on the life of the
Keats families and the history of early Kentucky cultural
and sociological development of real estate, banking,
manufacturing and shipping.

The issue for the reader of this book may be the desire to
know more of the life of George Keats’ brother, John.  At
first glance, _George Keats of Kentucky: A Life_ may appear
to be another biography but the tact with which the author
draws the reader into the story by weaving George’s
relationship with his famous brother, the renowned English
poet, John, keeps the reader involved and that character
development does not falter as the story unfolds.  The book
will be helpful to historians as it creates highlights of the
rich cultural and social fabric of life in 1800s in Kentucky!

Dr. Carol Walker Jordan
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