Covington, the parish seat of St. Tammany Parish, celebrated the one hundred fifteenth anniversary of its founding on July 4, 1963. When the town was founded on July 4, 1813, by John Wharton Collins and his kinsman John Gibson, it had another name — Wharton.

John Wharton Collins in May 1813 bought from Jaques Drieux a “town” consisting of 1600 acres and four inhabitants. On July 4, he dedicated a portion of the area which he called the Division of St. John of Wharton.

The name of Wharton is well-known in English history, and John Wharton Collins had a connection with this famous family: Thomas Marquis of Wharton, founder of the Whig Party in England, had a brother, Sir George Wharton, whose daughter was Mary Wharton. She in turn had married James Campbell, fourth Earl of Argyll. The marriage was dissolved by Parliament on the demand of Sir Thomas, but a son was born, who took the name Wharton. He married a Miss Collins. This couple left two children, a son and a daughter. Thomas Wharton Collins took the surname of both parents. One of his sons was John Wharton Collins, the founder of Wharton.

In March 1816, Wharton was incorporated by the Legislature, but in doing so the lawmakers changed the name to Covington, in honor of General Leonard A. Covington, a hero of the War of 1812.

Following the defeat of the British at New Orleans and the subsiding of threats of a Choctaw uprising, the area began to prosper. John Wharton Collins moved his business establishment to Covington, and energetically pushed the sale of his building sites. The start of the town was immediate, but Collins did not live long enough to see the town grown. He died in 1817 at the age of 29, thereby founding by his death the only cemetery Covington has required until recently. Collins left one son, Thomas Wharton, who has been long known as a noted writer and jurist. Judge Collins died in 1887.

Source: Correspondence with Adrian D. Schwartz and his “History of St. Tammany Parish” — Clare D’Artois Leeper