

HISTORIC
GAINES TAVERN
HISTORY
CENTER



*One of the most important buildings
existing in Northern Kentucky
Circa 1814*

150 Old Nicholson Road
Walton, Kentucky



The City of Walton, Kentucky
"The Place To Be"

The Gaines Property

This property had passed through the hands of several prominent pioneer families before becoming the property of **Abner Gaines**.

Levi and Jane Todd, grandparents of Mary Todd Lincoln and a founding father of Lexington, KY, were the second owners of the property. Mr. Todd, a farmer and attorney, probably acquired the property from a revolutionary war veteran for compensation of legal services provided by Mr. Todd.

In December 1801, **Archibald Reid** purchased 300 acres from the Todd's. He established a distillery and a tavern house "on the main road from George Town to Cincinnati".

Five years later, in 1806, Reid sold 200 acres to Caleb Summers, with a stipulation in the mortgage that he would deliver 200 gallons of "merchantable whiskey" to Reid in Georgetown. Summers got into financial trouble, and defaulted on the mortgage, so Reid forced Summers to sell at auction.

In 1808, **Thomas Kennedy**, who sold property he owned to the founding fathers of today's Covington, KY, was the highest bidder, and paid \$414.12 for the entire 200 acres. It is believed that Gaines ran a tavern on the property for Mr. Kennedy.

Abner Gaines, his wife, and four children are found in the 1800 census living in Woodford County, KY. Mr. Gaines appears in Boone County court records as early as 1804. He is approved for a tavern license October 24th, 1808. In November 1813, Gaines purchased 200 acres from Kennedy and built the current house around 1814.

The Gaines Family

Abner and Elizabeth (Susan) Gaines were the parents of 13 children. Several of the Gaines men were prominent figures in early local, state, and federal government. **Abner Gaines** held the office of Justice of the Peace in 1805 and was Sheriff of Boone County in 1816. Gaines served on the court for a number of years before becoming Sheriff.

His oldest son, **James Matthews Gaines**, was appointed Postmaster by our fourth United States President, James Madison. The first recorded post office for Gaines' Fork Roads (later called Gaines' Cross Roads) was established on July 4, 1815.

Abner's second son, **John Pollard Gaines**, was a lawyer who practiced in Walton. He volunteered for service in the War of 1812 after which he represented Boone County for several years in the Kentucky legislature. He served in the Mexican War as a Major. He was captured at Incarnacion in January 1847 and was confined for several months in Mexico City. While in captivity he was elected as a Whig to the Thirtieth Congress (March 4, 1847—March 3, 1849). Later President Zachary Taylor appointed him Territorial Governor of Oregon, after Abraham Lincoln declined that office, from 1850 - 1853. He remained a farmer in Oregon until his death.

Sons, **William Haney, Abner LeGrand, Benjamin Pollard, and Richard Mathews**, were prominent figures in the settlement of Gaines Landing, Arkansas.

Richard Mathews was an Arkansas state senator from 1856 — 1860. He was also a Mexican War veteran and was a delegate to the Confederate convention. It's noted he was instructed to nominate Jefferson Davis for President. Earlier in his career, while in Mississippi, he was appointed by President Andrew Jackson to be the US District Attorney of Mississippi.

The Present Setting

On the remaining 7.6 acres from the original 300 acre tract, sits the restored 2 1/2 story, seven bay, Federal brick house. Built on the site of an earlier tavern, the house has served as an inn, tavern, and stagecoach stop; antique shop; apartments; barn; single family home; and now a museum.

The Exterior

Although speculative, it is likely the construction of the house was a combined effort of local craftsmen, and skilled African-American slaves. Most, if not all, the materials were probably obtained locally, perhaps from the property itself.

Flemish bond brickwork are visible on the front of the house with a common pattern used on the sides and rear. The central passage features seven openings across the front with six over six double hung windows and an elaborate entrance with a three part elliptical fanlight and sidelights.

The original house was two rooms over two rooms with an attic, using mortise and tenon, pegged framing. A later ell, or addition, was apparently constructed by the mid-nineteenth century adding much more space to the house. Original decorative details were copied for use in the ell, although some in more simple patterns. A second floor side gallery originally ran the length of the addition, although a rear portion was subsequently enclosed to be a small room. This is part of the frame section that was added to the ell.

The Interior

The interior of the house has an abundance of delicately carved Federal woodwork and mantles.

This may well be the most elaborately detailed historic home still standing in Boone County.

The second floor of a nineteenth century house was often considerably simpler in detail and dimension, as it was considered private space as to the more public spaces below. Like many early nineteenth century houses, the Gaines House has a grand entrance hall that features an initial look at the architectural treasures to come. An entrance detail to note is the handsome six panel front door with its detailed fanlights, three pane sidelights, fluted trim and original door hardware. It is difficult to miss the commanding three story staircase that features hand carved details along the side, a cherry balustrade, tiger maple spindles on the lower portion (likely a later replacement), original cherry spindles and newels on the upper portion, and wide low steps.

In the north parlor, an original feature, the magnificent fireplace and mantle on the north wall, draws your attention when entering. The mantle features intricate sunburst carving with a fan motif and chevron detailing (present as a decorative detail throughout the house). Small closets on either side of the mantle are carved to blend in, and open for storage. The walls of the house are four bricks thick. The flooring and baseboards of this room have been replaced, perhaps after a portion of the house was used as a barn in the early twentieth century.

On the second level the two primary rooms on the left show a distinct change in overall room scale, but the details remain the same. The similar carved corner fireplace mantles are wonderful miniature versions of those found in the first

floor parlors. The wall curves slightly to meet the fireplace, and features a small section of carved baseboard.

The third floor of the house is a traditional attic space. The originally open area at the top of the steps was filled in at a much later date, but there is still enough space for a small room in the center hall. The window in the center is part of an attic dormer not original to the house. The large rooms on either side of the hall offer good views of the mortise and tenon, pegged framework of the house. These may have been rooms for rent at one time.

When descending from the attic area, the room on the right features another beautifully carved mantle with sunburst and fan details, cupboards on either side, simple window framed detailing, and wide plain baseboards. This fireplace demonstrates the late nineteenth century practice of closing in large openings for coal wood burning stoves. The floor of this room had been painted.

The steep steps at the rear of the room lead to the ell. The exact construction date has not been determined, but was likely added in the mid-nineteenth century. The fireplace mantle in this room is much plainer. Also, the baseboards are more narrow, there are nine over six windows, and the door frames and window sills are less deep. Also featured is a built in corner cupboard with the same eight panel doors as the cupboards in the front room.

Off the rear room is a small room created when the originally full length gallery was enclosed.



The Friends of Gaines Tavern appreciate your support. The restoration of the GTHC would not be possible without the countless volunteer hours, contributions and donations from the community, and financial support of the City of Walton.

Directions: Travel I-75 to exit 171;
go east on Mary Grubbs Hwy to US 25;
turn left on Main St.;
go north to Old Nicholson Rd.;
go over RR tracks and travel to end of
road.

Trip total from interstate - 3.7 miles



The Gaines Tavern History Center is open the
first and third Sunday, May - September.

Hours 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Admission: Adults - \$3; Students - \$2;

Children under 5 - \$1.

Visit www.cityofwalton.org

for schedule of special events.

GTHC is not fully handicapped accessible.

859-485-4383

