

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

History of
Grant & Company
- in Salt Works

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HISTORY OF GRANT & COMPANY - IN SALT WORKS

"Grant & Company - in Salt Works" was created by a contract made and entered into between John Grant, James Taylor and John Breckinridge on July 18, 1804; however, John Grant had been involved in making salt prior to this date.

Keturah Taylor Jones (granddaughter of James and Keturah Moss Leitch Taylor of Newport), in her "HISTORY OF CAMPBELL COUNTY" (1876), indicates that, early in the 1790's salt water was found at Grant's Lick by Samuel "Bryant", who, in conjunction with John Grant and Charles Morgan, sank a well and began the manufacture of salt.

The earliest reference in the court records of Campbell County of Grant being in the business of making salt is on September 28, 1797 when he sent Elias Roberts to "Mr. Sandusky", or the acting agent at Big Bone Lick, to obtain as many "Salt Kettles as he can bring perhaps twelve in whole." Elias, and John Roberts who went with him, received from Jacob Sodowsky, as the agent for Thomas Carnel, 14 kettles; weight 1134 pounds. John Grant and John Roberts were a company to make salt.

As Grant was in need of additional kettles, he sent Samuel Bryan to obtain 8 kettles from "Mr. Sandusky" at Big Bone on October 19th. These kettles weighed 730 pounds.

The usual method to obtain the salt was to dig about 10 or 15 feet through sand and mud in the bed or edge of a river or creek. When they came to the rock, the boring commenced with a 2½ or 3 inch auger, with which they bored about 60 to 90 feet through the solid rock, passing perhaps several veins of fresh water in that distance, which was kept from the salt by means of tin pipes introduced into the holes from bottom to top and tightly caulked at top where they entered the gum, as it was called. This gum, though made of hollow sycamore, answered as a coffer-dam within which a man worked through the mud and sand, while it sank with him to the surface of the rock, where its lower edge was tightly secured all round, admitting neither mud nor water from below and extending upwards beyond high water mark. Into this gum entered the tin pipe introducing the salt water from its hidden reservoir. Into the gum, pumps were then fixed, which were either worked by man or horse power, and the water conveyed from these in open troughs to the kettles, which were placed in a double row under a shed, and over a long hole cut in the ground, into which wood was cast for boiling them and evaporating the water.

A furnace of 60 kettles when ready for operation, cost from \$1500, and 4 hands were sufficient when the water was pumped by hand, to keep a furnace of this kind going night and day, besides 2 or 3 engaged in cutting and hauling wood. Usually it took from 250 to 900 gallons of water to make a bushel of salt.

Lowell H. Harrison, in his book "John Breckinridge, Jeffersonian Republican", tells us that "The brackish water had to be poured into twenty-five gallon kettles which straddled a long, narrow fire trench ten feet deep at the furnace end and four feet deep at the chimney. All openings around the kettles were chinked with clay, and cordwood was fed into the trench. Three such fires consumed seven cords of wood in a day and required the efforts of three men and two yoke of oxen. As the water evaporated in the kettles nearest the fire the residue had to be ladled into the ones nearest the chimney and the empty ones refilled. Lime, blood, tallow or corn meal was usually added to aid crystallization and to ensure good texture and color. The services of at least two men were required at the kettles with the average daily output amounting to twelve bushels."

Roads to and from the salt works were a necessity and on January 16, 1799, John Grant requested that a road be built from Reed's Tavern on Dry Ridge to his salt works. On April 8th, Charles McLaughlin, Joseph Dickens and Francis Spilman were to act as viewers to view and mark out the nearest and best way for a road from Grant's salt works to Newport. Also, on the same day, George Riddle, Drummond Wheeler and John Taylor were to view and mark out the nearest and best way from the forks of Harris' Creek to Grant's salt works.

Archer Dickinson (Archibald Dickerson), on October 3, 1803, entered into an agreement with John Grant whereby John agreed to pay to him the sum of \$2000 for Dickinson "to fix up a furnace containing 30 kettles in one month at his own expense for the purpose of boiling water at Grants salt lick on Philip's Creek" and Dickinson was to allow Grant 200 bushels of salt, at the rate of \$3.00 per bushel.

Dickinson was given the right to cut and use the wood from Grant's lands for the purpose of boiling salt water, the use of all the cabins on the north side of Phillips' Creek and the enclosed ground was to be considered as pasture in common. He was to give Grant one entire furnace of 30 kettles "as soon as the sum of \$2000" was discharged.

Grant could erect kettles for his own use but, if the present well or wells did not provide sufficient salt water, he and Dickinson were to share the expense in digging to find sufficient water.

Profits were to be divided equally until "the expiration of 4 weeks at which time, the works was to be given up to Grant to his sole use, etc."

In November, Solomon "Trewsdale", Jonathan Carmack, Henry "Boyles", William Gosney, or any three of them were appointed by the county court to view and mark out a road from the salt works to the mouth of Wells' Creek (now Twelve Mile Creek).

One of the problems that Grant was to have was the claim of persons to the lands his lick was on. It is not clear from the records whether a number of wells were drilled or if the claims were based on the water under the ground flowing to his wells.

On November 5, 1803, Benjamin Beall, claiming that the salt works was on his land, made an agreement with him that was to cost Grant \$2000 - one half was to be paid in salt at \$2 a bushel.

James Taylor, from Newport, wrote to "The Honbl. John Breckenridge esq. Senator in Congress - City of Washington" on October 10, 1803 that "A most remarkable discovery of Salt water is made at Grants Lick that perhaps is in the state. A Well was dug last fall about 40 feet and good water obtained, but in small quantity, a man to whom Grant had rented boared about 18 feet thro a rock with a 2 Inch auger and broke into a fountain of Salt water that has risen 27 feet in the Well and it is said by actual experement makes a bushel of Salt for every 160 Gallons and it is thot there is a sufficiency of water to boil 500 Kettles...I have not ben at the lick my self but my brother has and I have seen Benja Beall and several other persons who all agree on the acct both as to the quantity and strength of the water..."

On December 10, 1803, Bartlett Collins also wrote to Breckinridge that "Colo Grant has found the best Saltwater in the State. They make a Bushell of Salt from about 130 Gallons of water, and Colo Johnson has rented it from Grant at 50 Dollars or 25 Bushells Salt pr day and in 3 or 4 days will make 100 Bushells pr day."

Charles Daniel was the next person to settle a claim with Grant for land. On May 23, 1804, for 500 bushels of merchantible salt, Charles sold his one fourth interest in three tracts of land containing a total of 2300 acres and his one fourth part of an undivided half of a tract of 1007½ acres; all of the tracts of land included the salt works on Phillips' Creek.

Again a claim was made on Grant. This claim was to bring into existence "GRANT & COMPANY - IN SALT WORKS." James Taylor of Newport and John Breckinridge of Fayette County, Kentucky, became his partners through an agreement made on July 18, 1804 in order "to adjust and settle amicably and finally without the delay and expense of law suits all disputes and difficulties created by the interference of their respective claims." John Grant retained control of the company by being given two shares in the company while Taylor and Breckinridge each had one share.

On August 16th, Grant wrote to Breckinridge that "Very little is doing at the Salt Works. We canot get a person to Blow rock or should be at work at one of the Wells. The Watter is very Scarce - I wish you could procure and send a proper person to Blow rock that is all that is wanting "

In October, Robert Johnson prevented the well diggers from quitting the well before "Bryants door", despite the efforts of Bryan to get them to quit and move to Dickerson's well. Want of powder was the reason for the delay.

Squire Grant and William Dickerson conducted a store at Grant's Lick; when they established it isn't know. However, in 1804, John Brown Lindsey bought out Squire's interest and continued in partnership with William Dickerson until the fall of 1808.

John Grant moved to Boone County after the purchase of a tract of land on the Ohio River containing 740 acres, known by the name of "Tanner's Station", from Philamon Thomas on January 3, 1805.

Samuel Bryan was granted a license to keep a tavern at his house at Colonel Grant's salt works on February 18, 1805.

On April 3rd of this year, Grant wrote to Breckinridge from the "Salt Works" telling him that "the Works are stopt owing to the rapid decline of the watter for a few days past. We shall indeavour to make a few blasts in Johnson well so as to take us below the augre hole, the amt of salt made pr day lately is abt \$25 in afd whole. I am in hopes that we shall gain by blowing some lower but I believe that it will not answer a good purpose to push both wells at the same time" From time to time, there continued to be a failure of the water.

A claim against "Grant & Co. - in Salt Works" by Peter Guerrrant of Buckingham County, Virginia, brought another partner into the company and a new agreement was made on December 2, 1805. By this agreement, Guerrrant received 16 shares, Grant 10 shares. Taylor and Breckinridge 5 shares each, but in conducting the affairs of the company, each man only had one vote. Each one was to receive one fourth part of the profits of the salt works and was liable in one fourth part "in case of any suit or damages brought or recovered against the company."

Either in the winter of 1806 or the spring of 1807, Grant and his family moved from Kentucky and settled within 3 miles of Shawnetown in the now state of Illinois. Arriving back here from the Saline Salt Works on December 3, 1806, he wrote to Breckinridge a few days later concerning the "absolute Needcessity of raising our Salt to abot \$3 pr bushell. We canot but loose on the principles We now Make Salt." I did not discover a record to indicate if the company made this increase.

On December 14, 1806, John Breckinridge died. Just what effect his death might have had on the company isn't know, but two days later, Grant mortgaged his interest in the tract of land known by the name "Grants Lick" which was "under the care and agency of Samuel Bryan at present" to his son-in-law, John J. Flournoy, to cover a loan of 940 pounds, 18 shillings he had made to him. Flournoy was to have "all the profits and advantages of the salt works and salt Lick and wells. Provided however, that the said John J. Flournoy is not to enter on the said lands and possessions until the 1st day of March at which time the said Grants Claim, title and interest to the said land and salt lick and works is to determine and the said Flournoy is to have full possession of the same." As soon as Flournoy was paid back the loan with legal interest, or if the profits of the lick and land amounted to the loan with legal interest, he was to reconvey the possessions to Grant.

In 1809 Grant's interest in Grant & Co. was sold at a commissioner's sale in Boone County to settle a debt of John and William M. Grant for \$700 on a replevin bond and \$2.97 costs, etc. Flournoy bid \$300 on the share and no person bidding more, it was sold to him.

In 1811 John McLaughlin was appointed Post Master at Grant's Lick.

By 1813, John Grant had returned to live in Campbell County and on the 10th or 11th of September 1816, he sold his interest in "Grant & Co. - in Salt Works" to James Taylor for \$5000. The same day, John J. Flournoy gave Taylor a deed stating that he had "received satisfaction in full for a Deed of Mortgage dated the 16th December 1806 executed by John Grant to him" on his interest in the company.

Between this date and the 29th of November 1856, only one piece of information has been discovered with regard to the salt works. On January 1, 1823, Francis T. Helm and James B. Taliaferro rented it for three years. They mortgaged to the company two yoke of oxen; one red one, (a) black one, (a) red one with white face with horn off, and the other (a) red one. Also one red cow, one blind brown horse called sampson and also another small Brown horse called Dugout."

Just when Peter Guerrant died isn't know, but he was still alive on September 17, 1806. James Taylor died on November 7, 1848 and his executor, his son James, brought a suit against the heirs of Breckinridge and Guerrant in the Campbell County Circuit Court on November 29, 1856 to dissolve the company and divide the assets and debts; the final decree was rendered at the August 1857 term of the Circuit Court.

In the front yard of Cooper Funeral Home on old U.S. 27 in Grant's Lick is the remains of a salt well that has been preserved over the years. Mr. Ken Cooper bought the property November 1975 from Mrs. Thelma Sheanshang...The community of Grant's Lick is on the land patented to Peter Guerrant.

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