

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

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## Germantown Fifty Years Ago

Dr. M. F. Adamson

Written on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
the Founding of the Germantown Fair

1879

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*Manuscript*

Address by E. V. A. Alanson, at the 50th Anniversary of the Germantown Fair Co.

Title of address is "Germantown Fifty Years Ago".

Learning that we were to have a reunion of the old citizens of Germantown and vicinity, I thought it would not be amiss to give some recollections of those especially who resided in said village fifty years ago.

I was the first born of my mother, on the ninth day of January, 1815. My father and mother were living in a cabin then owned by Aaron Frazer, twin brother of my grandfather, Moses Frazer, now owned by J. H. Walton, about one mile and a half from where we assemble today. My father had lived in the neighborhood since 1800. After several removals in the neighborhood, the family--father, mother and three children--settled more permanently in the village of Germantown in 1824. It was quite an interesting epoch in the recollection of a boy of nine years, to get to live in a town--change from a cabin or log house to a two-story frame--painted. I had been to school long enough to learn to read and write.

I propose to mention briefly most of the then citizens, not one of them living here to tell us of those days. I only recollect four persons now in the town who were children then. Mrs. Maria Dismitt was grown and just married, but not living in town. Mrs. Mary Ann Pollock, eldest daughter of James Savage, now wife of Dr. A. H. Pollock; Mrs. Eliza Coleman, daughter of Francis McLean, and wife of Simpson Coleman, and John McClean were living with their parents here.

The first and only hotel keeper was major John D. Morford, who settled at a very early day--built his cabin in the woods--on the spot where he lived so many years afterwards. His youthful choice for a wife was Rachel Stockwell. They lived till they were very old. She dying first the major married again, Mrs. Lewis. He died in a few months. He left quite a large estate even after most of his slaves left for Canada.

The older inhabitants will recollect his reception office and barroom on Main Street, in front of his residence--a porch the whole length of the building--where not only the travelers, but those who desired the drinks (and they were not a few) assembled day and night.

The major was a very shrewd horse-trader and after he had accumulated property bred and traded largely in fine horses, and the care of the tavern was mostly in the hands of Mrs. Morford, who filled with the cut silver money of that day.

They had one child, familiarly called Jack Morford, a fast young man, who was the only customer the major would loan money without security or interest. He was social and much beloved by his young friends; married a Miss Coleman of Harrison county, and died soon after, from fast living. He was a very handsome man. He much impressed me, when in full and costly uniform, and paraded on a fine horse, leading the cavalry of that day.

After major Morford died Mr. John W. Franklin, in Mason, and William Daugherty, in the Bracken end, established and continued the hotel business, both successfully.

William Currens is the next old citizen I shall speak of. He had a large tannery, and even at that day had accumulated, by frugal industry, quite a fortune--quiet and unobtrusive, attending to his own business.

*afterwards told me how often she would have emptied her pockets.*



Fanning was a popular trade at that time, and a great many of the sons of well-to-do farmers became his apprentices--some of whom became prominent and useful citizens. Three of Mr. C's. daughters married men who had served a term of years with him--James Savage, John Gregg and Robert P. Dimmitt, who after their marriage became successful merchants in Germantown. Mr. Savage and Dimmitt lived long lives and died here. Mr. Gregg moved to Rush county, Ind., dying in old age, leaving a large family with a fine estate.

Besides these merchants at that day, Joseph France sold goods for many years afterwards in partnership with John M. Gregg.

George Keith failed in business and settled on a farm in Pendleton lived to an old age, leaving a great many descendants. These were all the merchants I recollect in 1824.

The first and only physician was Dr. Anderson Doniphan, who continued without opposition for twenty-five or thirty years. I think he settled there about the year 1800. His visits extended over a vast territory, the population being sparse, in Bracken, Nicholas, Harrison, Pendleton, and across the river in Brown and Adams counties Ohio. He was quite a large farmer, strong slave force--several mills and a distillery. The first physicians who came and located here in opposition to the old doctor were two brothers, Henry and John Perkins, who remained sometime, doing considerable practice. They went south and died in Louisiana. Then Dr. Frank Chinn, son of Eli Chinn of Mayslick, located here and did well for awhile, but lost his business and left on account of the opium habit. After he left came Dr. John F. Tomlinson, brother of Joseph Tomlinson, D.D., of Augusta College. He remained a few years, married in Augusta and removed to that place. He retired from that practice on account of his health injuring his mind. He died in Cincinnati some years since.

After Dr. Doniphan's death Drs. Penn, Coburn and Pollock did the practice until recently. We had, at that early day of which I write, the usual mechanics, such as were absolutely necessary for the well living of the community--hatters, tailors, shoemakers, cabinet-makers, carpenters, stonemasons, wheelwrights. John Burkite, esq., was the natter, an excellent man and citizen, being a prominent man in the county of Bracken--a magistrate, sheriff and representative at Frankfort, raising a large and respectable family; his wife being the daughter of Randolph Black, a farmer near the town. Dr. William Burkite, his eldest son, was my special associate and friend during my minority. He lives now, I think in Iowa.

My recollection is that we had three or four shoemakers. Alex. McCready did the most business, had a good many journeymen and apprentices who broke the peace, and at any rate every Saturday night and Sunday. Almost to a man they were dissipated tramps. I think that James Peck and Francis McClean had shops in the west end. The latter lived till old age and raised a large family of daughters.

William Lewis and John Hooten were the blacksmiths. The latter moved west to Indiana, William Lewis to Pendleton county, Ky. He was succeeded by Daniel McAfee, who died of consumption. Some of his grandchildren are living in this community. We had three saddler shops. Ludwell Owens was in the center of town. He was postmaster for many years I think and did the largest business. I recollect that once a week we had the post-rider to bring the mail on horseback, announcing his arrival as he came in sight by blowing a long tin horn. In my boyish notions I thought he was the most important character in the world. Mr. Owens was postmaster when he died.



William Black and William McClean had shops in the west end of town. Mrs. Betty Black, a German widow lady, was the mother of Billy Black. She was one of the first settlers of the town; Her husband's name was John but he died before I lived. William, Frank and James McClean were sons of one of the first settlers, who was an Irishman by birth, John McClean. I recollect when he told me he was eighty years old, that he had never been sick or taken a dose of medicine in his life.

Samuel Ingram was the carpenter until my father moved in. Mr. Ingram, being old, soon ceased work, and my father, George Adamson, built most of the houses in town and country for many years, and as soon as I could do so I was his bookkeeper. I need not tell you that he lived in this county and Bracken, until July 25th last, being eighty-eight-and-one-half years old, having his reason until the last hours, dying from the weight of years.

We then had but one cabinet-maker, Stanfield C. Pinckard, who manufactured largely for that day. Was a very prominent and influential citizen, representing Bracken in the state legislature. He left a large family, most of whom still live in the neighborhood.

The only tailor I recollect was Samuel Dicks, a very worthy man, but a very slow tailor, as I well recollect, as he made me my first cloth coat, and he commenced it but did not finish it for six weeks. He emigrated, with a great tide, to Indiana, and I learn did well. We had a wagon-maker, Jeremiah Ballenger, who was then quite an old man. The two old people were much respected. I remember his death some years after. He is the grand and great-grandfather of the family in Mason.

Mr. V. R. Thompson was the wheelwright--made little and big wheels for the community, who, at that time, made most of their clothing out of wool and flax. Mr. Thompson, through life, was one of our most intelligent citizens, was well posted on the politics of the day. He had three sons and a daughter with whom I associated in town and the school. I think probably one son and the daughter are alive somewhere in the West. Mr. Thompson and wife both died in Germantown. I don't recollect any stone-masons at that time living in town, but John and Edward Case were the masons who did most of the stone work, laying foundations and building chimneys, lived southwest of the town, were honest, clever men, raised large and respectable families, many of their descendants living in that part of the county now. After they commenced building some brick houses they employed brick makers and layers from other parts of Mason and Bracken counties. The first money that I ever earned was in carrying off brick from the moulder, at twenty-five cents a day.

We had a wool-carding factory, and connected with it, a linseed oil press, owned by Samuel Reeves and John White, who sold out and removed to Indiana. At this time we did not have any schoolhouse in the village, but the nearest seat of learning was one mile distant on the hill near Mrs. Lloyd and Robert Walton, northwest of the town. I recollect some of the teachers in that house--Harvey Holton, John Humlong, Lockridge Enoch Lloyd and Rice Bolton. After the spirit of education had increased the town and neighborhood raised enough money to build a new schoolhouse between the town and Mr. Currens's residence. I think Mr. Currens gave the lot. The first teacher was William Ellis, brother-in-law of S.C. Pinckard, Charles B. Smith, and many others. After this C. B. Smith established an independent school. William Smith was the very best teacher of that day. A man of culture and good morals. From him I received the best instructions of my youth. He taught as long as he lived, much beloved by the entire community.



Until this time an old log structure in the west part of town was the only house of worship. I think it was a union meeting-house. I recollect once, soon after we came to town, hearing the celebrated Mr. Stribling in that house. About this date Rev. Jas. Savage built a frame chapel, owned it as his individual property. My father built it. This was the first and only church building for a number of years. It was in this house I received the religious convictions of my youth, when my kind father and mother led me to hear such men as then labored in the Methodist ministry-- Stamper, Tydings, Corwin, Holiday, McKnight, Barger, Askins, Baker, Collard, Tomlinson, Durbin, Bascom, McCown, Taylor, Brush, Stevenson, Ray and others. The regular Baptists often preached in this house as they had no house in town, but several large congregations in the vicinity. Those I recollect more distinctly W. Wadger, William Vaughn, Jesse I. Holton. Wadger was the great Baptist preacher of that day, but I do not recollect hearing him preach. Mr. Vaughn was very popular personally and in the pulpit. He studied most of his sermons on the tailor's board. I recollect he preached a year in this house, the outside community paying him a small salary. He was a man of rare ability. Would have been a very distinguished preacher if he had early culture. He died in Danville a few years since, at the house of his son who is a Baptist preacher, over ninety years old, preaching as long as he could get to the church. Old Locust meeting-house, west of town; Bracken & Lee's Creek meeting-house, east, were popular preaching points for the then leading denomination, to-wit: the Regular Baptists. Nearly all the first settlers who belonged to any church were of that denomination.

About this time, 1825, great excitement broke out in this branch of the church by the preaching of Alex. Campbell and other former Baptist preachers who embraced his peculiar views. Although but a boy I attended often with my aunt, who was a Baptist, and all my Frazee relations took position with the reformation, as it was then called. I recollect hearing Mr. Campbell, D. Burnett, Creath, Rains, Gates, who were considered talented preachers. It is not necessary for me to say they built up large churches in Germantown, and especially Mason County, uniting most of the wealth in the Baptist church in their organization. I recollect a very warm discussion between Messrs. Vaughn and Abernathy, at Old Lee's Creek meeting-house. Large crowds attended and much feeling was expressed throughout the community. The Reformers have long established themselves as a branch of Protestant Christianity, and the Baptists have recovered from the division in their ranks at that date. The Baptists, Christians and Methodists have been the leading denominations in this region from that time to this day.

I have mentioned most of the householders in Germantown fifty years ago. Of course there were a few families who have escaped my recollection. We are here only a small part of the descendants of those men, who, when taken together, were an upright and, we may say, intelligent people, and we feel proud of our fathers and mothers who were the pioneers of this part of Kentucky. I cannot name the settlers around the village at that time. I can name a few of the leading land owners in the immediate vicinity, many of whose descendants are here, many scattered, and many in their graves. Among these whose names were familiar and whose children were associated with me at school and after we were grown, were the Frazees, Coburns, Pollocks, Norrises, Lloyds, Thompsons, Humlongs, Waltons, Leachmans, Dicks, Hugheys, Reeves, Brownings, Harmons, Andersons, Mannens, Kilgores, Owens, Tentons, Mastersons, Stroudes, Fields, Worthingtons and



several others. These old settlers were upright and respected, and as intelligent as farmers of this day in Kentucky, and those present, who are their descendants have reason to be proud of their plain but honest forefathers, and I hope the second and third generations will leave to the next as good a reputation as these pioneers have left. Oh, how I would prize the likenesses of these dead men. I have but two—George Adamson, my father, and Dr. Anderson Doniphan, my medical preceptor. I have a relic of the latter which I prize very much, which others might not, to-wit: the bones of old man Huff, who left his body to Dr. Doniphan seventy years ago. His bones are well preserved. Hundreds of their citizens visited the bones of this old man, strung up in the second story of his office.

I will not close without mentioning the names of two other citizens of the neighborhood, to whom I am much indebted. Joseph Frazer, who owned the land upon which this Fair improvement was located, was a special friend in time of need, and continued so as long as he lived. How many instances of his friendship rush upon me! Dr. John A. Coburn, with whom I was intimately associated in boyhood, and fellow medical student and partner in practice, I cannot but feel the kindest recollections. When I heard that he was dying I hastened to his bedside. He grasped my hand in his cold hand a very few hours before his death. He said: "You and I have been life-long friends. I am now dying, and say to you you have been my friend, and I have always loved and respected you and your good old father." Uncle Nick Lloyd and his good wife were also the very kindest and best friends of my youth. In fact, when I commence this list, so many rush up in my mind that I mention no more. I am glad to meet the descendants of any of these pioneer settlers, especially my life-long friend Elijah T. Currans. It is truly gratifying, not only to me but this entire community, to have him as guest, the only son of that worthy pioneer who settled in this neighborhood more than eighty years ago, whose mother was of that christian family, the Thompsons.

Another person I meet here today is Thomas Kenton, of Robertson county, great-nephew of the distinguished pioneer of Mason county, Simon Kenton. Mr. Thomas Kenton was a soldier in the War of 1812. He is in the eighty-ninth year of his age, enjoys the society of his old friends of that period, but very few of whom are alive. Though so few citizens of fifty years ago are now alive their descendants of the second and third generations are glad to meet them. The history of the early settlers of this neighborhood, in fact the whole of our beloved Kentucky, is the most interesting of any of the western or southern states. We hope our friend, Will D. Hixson, will soon have his History of Mason County in print, which will transmit to our descendants the deeds of our noble ancestry.

This address was delivered at the twenty-fifty anniversary of the founding of the Germantown Fair, in 1879.

MRS LAWRENCE BROWN  
R. R. 6  
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

April 27, 1958

Dear Mr Clift -

Enclosed is a copy of an article which I found in a very old scrapbook which was owned by my great-aunt (Mrs. H. A. Taliaferro - who was also an aunt of the deceased Mrs. John C. Everett and Mrs. John Chenault of Maysville).

I know you are greatly interested in Mason County history, so thought you'd like this.

Yours very sincerely

Blanche Everett Brown