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# Riverboat Landings Along the Ohio River in Trimble County

*by*

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-Place

RIVERBOAT LANDINGS ALONG THE OHIO RIVER IN TRIMBLE COUNTY Name 5

The Ohio River forms the northern and western boundary of Trimble County, flowing for twenty-one miles along some of the most scenic and fertile area in the country. This was certainly an attraction to the early settlers who came down the river on the flatboats in the late 1700's and early 1800's. While not pertinent to the subject, historians are not sure who was the first white man to come down the Ohio River and see this area, but believe it was possibly Robert de LaSalle, a Frenchman, who made a visit to the Falls at what is now Louisville in the year 1669. It was explorers like Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark who, with their pioneer friends, laid the way for early settlements. Clark, in 1778, founded a settlement at Corn Island, but later, moved over to the mainland which is now Louisville. The Ohio and Kentucky Rivers were easier routes than the so-called roads which followed the general course of the buffalo and Indian paths, although at first more dangerous because of the savage Indians living north of the Ohio River. Later the coming of the steam boats had a tremendous effect on their way of living and their economic, social and cultural development.

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The first steam boat to arrive at Shipping Port, just below the Falls, was from New Orleans in 1813, and was gradually followed by more and more packets. Of course, to be of use to the settler or farmer, the boat must come to the shore. To do this, the shoreline needed to be free of trees, brush and driftwood. Thus, a Landing. Unless a boat had freight or passengers for a landing, it did not stop there. Anyone on shore wishing to board a boat or to ship something would have to signal or "hail" the boat, which was done by the waving of a hat, hand or handkerchief. At night the boat could be signaled by the waving of a lantern or, if a heavy fog, by a shout. The boats usually announced their approaching a landing with their whistle.

The story of the first family to come to what is now Bedford is an instance of the part the river played in the early settlement of the county. According to Byron Bacon Black, G.G.G. Gr. Son of William Bell, who with a party of explorers under Capt. James Patton were the first white men to set foot on what is now Bedford soil. This was in 1774 and four years before George Rogers Clark, with a group of Virginians settled at Corn Island. In 1779, this same William Bell made his way to Washington Co., Kentucky, on the Ohio River, remaining there eight or nine years. He then brought his slaves to the present sight of Bedford where he built a two-story brick house. Mrs. Hannah Gibson Bell, wife of Richard Bell, along with her children and some slaves came down the Kentucky River to its mouth on a flatboat in 1808, then down the Ohio River to the mouth of Corn Creek. Here they unloaded their provisions and proceeded to try to make way to the new brick home in what is now Bedford. Christmas Day, however, found the family and their slaves at just about where Mount Pleasant now stands. When the weather got milder, they made their way to the new home and on Old Christmas Day (the 12th night), twelve days after Christmas, they arrived in their new home.

Evidently they made their way up the steep hill near the mouth of the Creek, or they could have followed the creek for several miles and then when reaching what is about the foot of Beech Grove Hill and up to the ridge a short distance to Mount Pleasant. Many early settlers, coming by either land or water were not as fortunate as Mrs. Bell.

**HOTFIELD LANDING:** This landing is on the Trimble-Carroll Co. line. Here the river flows westward.

**THIEMAN LANDING:** The first landing beyond the county line. The large two-story house here is said to be one of the oldest in Hunter's Bottom, built in the late 1700's, at a time when Indians were near in large numbers.

**RAKERS LANDING:** A private landing and property still in the Raker family.

**RICHWOOD DISTILLERY LANDING:** Although near the Milton Public Landing, business was such that it was more expedient to have their own landing.

**MILTON:** It is understood that the first white men in what is now Trimble County encamped on the east side of the creek and on the banks of the Ohio River in 1774. Col. William Preston was one of the leading surveyors of this group. It is understood that Milton is one of the oldest towns in Kentucky. Here was the first post office in the county and for many years received most of its mail by the river boats. Those boats which carried the mail in addition to their other cargo, were designated as Mail Boats. They carried this appellation as long as they plied the river between Cincinnati and Louisville. A misnomer in later years of course, nevertheless, folks "caught the Mail Boat" when going to either Cincinnati or Louisville.

For many years a ferry boat operated between Milton and Madison. It is said that the first steamer was the Prairie Bird. People throughout the county would drive to Milton, leave their horse and buggy at the livery stable and take the ferry boat to Madison. Later they came by car. The largest and longest operated was the ferry "Trimble", which was replaced by a smaller boat, the "Margaret J.", coupled to a barge. Ferry service was discontinued with the completion of the Milton-Madison Bridge in 1929.

**MILTON FERRY AT BROADWAY HOLLOW:** No information on this.

**THE NARROWS:** As the name indicates, here the shore is very narrow. At the end of the Narrows is Coopers Bottom, a large and very fertile area. It is said that a John Edwards, a cooper, once lived here and that each day he made the round trip to Madison where he worked.

**COOPERS BOTTOM:** From the ridge, the best access to this bottom is to go down the Liberty Road and over a steep hill. At the foot of this hill was Baltimore Rural School, but with consolidation in the 30's and 40's, the children were taken to Milton.

At one time there were a number of farms here and most, if not all, had private landings, which usually retained their original names after being sold to a different owner.

LEES LANDING: A private farm landing. It is not known whether this family was related to the Lee Family a few miles down the river.

WISES LANDING: A private farm landing. Probably related to the Wises a few miles down the river.

SHIMFESSEL LANDING: A private farm landing.

CAUFIELDS LANDING: A private farm landing. Now owned by the Indiana Power Company, which is just across the river from Caufield's.

BELLS LANDING: A private farm landing where there was once a lovely old two-story house which was razed in 1986. The farm is still owned by a family member, Mrs. Violet Ashby.

PENDLETONS LANDING: A private farm landing.

COOPERS PLACE: Across the river from what was formerly Hanover Landing in Indiana. Now owned by the McCoy family.

SPRING CREEK: When the local people speak of Spring Creek Bottom, they have in mind the fertile bottom beginning at Gilmore Creek and extending down the river to and including Fresch's Landing. This bottom was once called Trout's Bottom. The Trout family having owned land and lived there years ago. It is recalled by one who frequently rode the New Hanover to Madison, Indiana, that there were other landings in this bottom in addition to Spring Creek. Among them were FARLEY'S, BURKHARDT'S, HOLDERFIELD'S and ADAM'S, however not necessarily in that order. It is understood that members of the Burkhardt family now own and operate most of the bottom. The headwaters of Spring Creek begin at what was once the Billy McIntyre farm which is now owned by Dick Webster. Near Spring Creek Landing was a post office known as Gum and, as was common in those days, a Country Store, both being operated by the Morelands.

MORELAND CREEK: This small creek is a short distance below Spring Creek. Several families of Morelands lived along this Creek.

FRESCHS LANDING: In the early 1900's, a Mr. Fresch lived here and operated a store near the landing. Farmers from the bottom and surrounding hills came here to trade at the store and to ship their farm products, there no longer being a store at Spring Creek. In the later days of gasoline boats, the New Hanover hardly missed a day making this landing. Here was the last house in Spring Creek Bottom.

PAYNES LANDING: Harlan Hubbard and wife Anna have made Paynes

Landing, often referred to as Payne Hollow, rather well known. Prior to the Civil War and for many years afterwards, this was probably the one most used by those living on what was then known as the Preston Plantation. Here at Payne Hollow, a gap between the ridges, Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard made their home for many years, painting, writing, and entertaining those who came from near and far.

WATSONS LANDING: Above here the bottom begins to widen and does so for quite a distance. A resident in this area said that it was once known as Radcliffe, however, it is not known why. The Watson family lived here for many years, but sold sometime after the 1937 flood. This farm was once a part of the old Preston Plantation and is across the river from the unfinished Marble Hill Nuclear Power Plant. There is a marble vein between Watson and Jacksons Landing. Collins History of Kentucky, Vol. II, Page 723 states, "Conchitic marble from a quarry on Corn Creek, near the Ohio River is of a drab gray color, and contains many fragments of shells and small portions of coral.----A corresponding vein in Indiana was worked to some extent in 1853 and pronounced by an able geologist the best and most beautiful material for construction and ornamental purposes that he had seen from any western locality".

HOLDERFIELD LANDING: Fortunately LG&E ended their acquisition of the large area of fertile farm land at this farm, also once a part of the huge Preston acreage. This farm is now operated by the Mahoney family.

JACKSONS LANDING: Here was the early home and probably the birthplace of Edd, Will, Harry, Charlie, and Effie Jackson Hudson. The last of the family to live here was Effie J. Hudson and in recent years referred to as Hudsons Landing. For the benefit of future genealogists, we might add that the Louisville Gas & Electric Co. moved the old family graves and stones to the Bedford IOOF Cemetery.

CORN CREEK: This creek empties into the Ohio River just above what was last known as the Gene Davis Farm. In 1974, the Trimble Banner published a list of business places and their owners doing business in the county in 1862. On this list was Corn Creek with M. Parham having a Dry Goods Store and Oliver Strother a Steam Flour Mill. For lack of documentation, much is written from tradition or hearsay, but since this was a list found years ago among some old papers by the late Judge Chan Morgan, it can be safely considered factual. Whether there ever was a post office here is still questionable and subject to conjecture.

LEES LANDING: Frank Lee had several hundred acres in this bottom where he built a beautiful home overlooking the river. Just when Mr. Lee came to Trimble County or when he built his home is not known, however it is recorded that he, along with the Rev. J. W. Maddox, Henry Fix and Dr. John Totten were the leaders in the organization and building of Macedonia Christian Church in the late 1880's. It is said that Mr. Lee in later years moved to Louisville and rented his farm but made frequent trips back to supervise it. After the purchase of the farm by

Will Davis, it was known as the Davis farm and landing and was sold to LG&E. Across the river was Deans Landing, the shipping point for the hundreds of acres of peaches grown in the Dean Orchard on top of the hill.

RICHARDSON LANDING: For years the Richardsons made use of this landing, especially when going to Madison. There were times during the year when the larger boats could not land at some of the smaller private landings, so those traveling to Louisville would use the public landing. This house faced the river and it is remembered that it had a large recessed front door and that there were once several slave cabins along one side of the immense yard. Mr. Richardson purchased this farm from H. W. Garr. This is the last farm down the river purchased by LG&E and here is the main entrance to the power plant.

WISES LANDING: A combination of TOTTENS and FIX LANDING. The landings mentioned thus far were landings being used in later years with possibly a few exceptions. At no time within the memory of any living person (1988) was there a Fix or Totten Landing. Records in the County Clerks Office show that each of these men gave the same number of feet off their common boundary line for a public landing and a road leading from it to the top of the second bank. Relating to the landings, it is interesting to note that a few years ago a young woman from Bowling Green came to the county to do some family research and when asked if she would like to go to Wises Landing, replied that she had never heard of the place but that she would like to go to Tottens Landing. Her ancestor, a brother of Mrs. Totten, left this area shortly after the Civil War and went to Northern Indiana. Evidently he spoke often of the landing and the name remained in the family through the years. So, there was a Fix and Totten Landing before it became Wises Landing.

John C. Strother, a native of Trimble County, in speaking at the Filson Club in 1920 on the history of Trimble, stated that while Wises Landing twenty years ago was a dense forest, that it was unexcelled by any landing between Cincinnati and Louisville due to its excellent landing for steam boats, enterprise of the people of the vicinity whose shipping activities center at this point. While not so foolhardy as to question the authenticity of Mr. Strother's statements, twenty years prior to his talk would have been 1900 and Wises Landing was not a dense forest at that time. Evidently a typing error. For years Bedford got most of its supplies via this landing, and this gave daily employment to one man and sometimes two, first by wagon and later by truck.

During the summer, the farmers on the ridge brought wagon loads of peaches to be shipped on the "Mail Boat" to Cincinnati in the late afternoon. Here they were unloaded early the next morning. Among the fruit growers were Bray, Craig, Staples and Wise. All this activity furnished much enjoyment for the children and they seldom missed going to the river when they saw or heard the boat coming up the river. Another occasion to which the children looked forward was the Spring and Fall visit of the Showboat

"Majestic" and her tow boat, "Atta Boy", built in 1923. When nearing a town or landing where they expected to stop, they would start playing the calliope on the tow boat, playing "Here Comes The Show Boat" several times before landing. Have read that a William Chapman from London, England made the first trip to New Orleans with his floating theater in 1831, and that the Majestic became the last floating theater to continue the one night show. Children were also fascinated and sometimes frightened by the unwelcome shanty boaters who often tied up across the river at the mouth of the creek.

The 1937 flood devastated everything under the first bank, the levee swallowed by the river and the bushes. Nothing remains of the 3 houses, 2 stores, warehouse, sawmill, and blacksmith shop. Across the river at the foot of a steep hill was Miles' Landing. On top of this hill was a large white frame farmhouse which burned in the 1960's. The Miles family often came across the river to trade and to attend church when Macedonia was first built.

According to the United States Post Office Department, a post office, Corn Creek, was established in 1878 and in its early history received mail by river, how long is not known. It is inexplicable and odd that this post office had the name of Corn Creek which was several miles up the river. It seems that it would have been more logical to have given it the name of Bare Bone Creek, which was less than a mile away. Confusing as it may be, the Corn Creek Post Office was at Wises Landing when discontinued in 1912. Evidently this was a more accessible landing for the large steam boats carrying the mail. As far as is known with the exception of Dr. W. A. Wright, the post offices were all located in a store. Namely: Richard Ogden, Joyce & Jackson, J. I. Williams, and J. C. Yager. In the latter store, who was the official post master is not known.

**ABBOTTS LANDING:** At this landing was an old two-story brick which was destroyed in the 1937 flood. Mrs. Mitty Abbott was the daughter of Evan M. Garriott, who probably gave her this farm as it was said that he gave all his children a farm and this is in the area of his reputed holdings.

**HOLLOWAY LANDING:** Have nothing on this landing other than we know that boats landed there as long as people lived in the house on the river bank. In the late 20's it was still a part of the farm owned by Mrs. Edmonia Garriott. The house on the river bank was destroyed by the '37 flood, another on higher ground was left. Herman Brown owned the farm at the time of the flood, but sold soon after the destruction.

**HOUSTONS LANDING:** A government light is still maintained here to aid the traffic. Again quoting Perrin's History, which states that Evan Garriott was engaged in the mercantile business from about 1849-1863, but does not say at what landing. Local tradition was that his store was at Houstons Landing and that he sold the store to Greenup Wise, a brother of Jess Wise, who then operated at that location. With the government light at this landing it does seem logical.

