

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

The Home of John Pendleton Gaines,
- Or -
“Mr. Gault’s Haunted House”

By

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THE HOME OF JOHN PENDLETON GAINES

OR

"MR. GAULT'S HAUNTED HOUSE"

Many old houses serve as the setting of stories about ghosts, murders and the people who have lived or have visited them.

This story is most unusual and fascinating because the house is located in Boone Co. on the old Lexington Pike about one mile North of Walton and nine miles South of Florence. On a Ky. map of 1836, this location was called Gaines X Roads.

The story begins in the 1700's in Virginia. The Indians were hostile, transportation was very crude and the restless trend was to move westward to settle new lands.

In the year 1785, Abner Gaines of Augusta, Va. (now W.Va.) grew restless and decided to take his family west as Daniel Boone had a few years earlier. He became one of that sturdy fearless band of pioneers who were building for themselves new homes in the wilderness West of the mountains. It probably took Mr. Gaines, his wife, several children and his slaves 2 or 3 months to make their journey down the Ohio river and hence South into Kentucky-our Boone County. Upon arriving at his chosen location, Mr. Abner Gaines first built a log cabin and began the clearing of land necessary for their food crops. A few families lived in this vicinity but only a small settlement existed.

This first cabin burned. A few years later Colonel Gaines, as he was now called, thought it wise to build a larger home for his growing family. He ordered his slaves to huc some trees and the task of building was begun there.

A short time later a friend of his, who was riding by on horse back, stopped for a visit. This friend, a Mr. Walton, who was a steamboat captain, asked Colonel Gaines, "Why don't you build a brick house here Colonel?" Abner Gaines replied, "It's like this, I don't have the money for a large brick house." Whereupon his friend answered, "Forget about the money, Colonel, I'll furnish that and you can pay me later."

Immediately, the construction of a three floor brick house was started. This was in 1791. Arrangements were made to make the brick on the grounds. We know some of the brick were sun-dried for numbers have been found with deer tracks and turkey markings proving the friendly wild things walked on the soft bricks before they were sun-dried. The slaves also started felling trees for the joists and flooring. Even the nails and shingles, or shakes as they were then called, were hand-made.

In June of the following year, Kentucky was admitted to the Union as the 15th state. Colonel Gaines was now a prominent man in this Kentucky settlement. Here in 1795, John Pendleton Gaines was born. Some have said that the P stands for Pollard. In 1812 when he was only 17, John felt it was his duty to help defend this country under William Henry Harrison in the Michigan forests and around Lake Erie. After the war he returned to this beautiful brick house and to his community where he practiced law and later married Elizabeth Kinkead in June 1819.

Colonel Gaines converted the house into a tavern or inn. It became a famous stop for stagecoaches which traveled between Lexington and Cincinnati.

On a map marked "The Tourist's Pocket Map of the State of Kentucky exhibiting its Internal Improvements Road Distances and etc. by J.H. Young, Philadelphia, 1836," there is a coach stop marked "Gaines X Roads." Just above it is Florence with the distance of 10 miles printed between the two towns. The town of Walton isn't given a place on the map, which proves that this Gaines house was quite well known and necessary place between Lexington and Cincinnati. Three trips are listed a week so one can easily assume that many prominent and famous men stopped here on their way to and from Cincinnati and Lexington. One of these was Henry Clay; another later was Richard M. Johnson Vice Pres. under Van Buren; the Breckinridges and others of prominences. In 1825 John P. Gaines was elected to represent Boone County in the lower house of the General Assembly. So well did he perform his duties that the people continued to elect him to his office until 1836.

The surrounding community wanted to change the name Gaines X Roads but the Colonel didn't want it named for him. He then suggested the name Walton in deep appreciation to the man who loaned him the money to build his brick house.

In the early 1840's, it was ^{again} renowned for its elaborate balls and lavish festivities. John Pendleton's two daughters enjoyed these as many dances and parties were held in their honor. This was a very popular place for weddings and receptions.

It was at one such occasion that the first man was killed here. Two gentlemen who were suitors of the same lovely lady were attending the ball. One man was much older. The story is told that the younger man warned the older suitor to stay away from "his girl," and if he danced with his damsel he would jerk off his wig. The older gentlemen replied, "And, if you do, I'll kill you." During the evening the elder suitor did dance with the girl and his wig was promptly jerked from his head. Immediately the older man in his rage stabbed the younger man.

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For a long time afterward, blood stains could be seen at the spot where the young man fell and not until these boards were removed and replaced were they erased. The story in my family is that my Grandfather, Samcul W. Hudson, as a young man, often played his fiddle there for its festivities and was playing at this particular ball.

In 1846, John P. again felt it was his duty to help defend his country. The Mexican War had been declared. John volunteered his services, was chosen major of the First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry and was stationed along the Rio Grande River. He took part in the battles of Buena Vista and Palo Alto and was captured by General Minon at the battle of Encarnicion. He escaped and joined the forces of General Scott as they marched toward the Mexican capitol, and had the honor of being the only volunteer from Kentucky who helped in the famous charge at Chapultepec.

Upon his return to his beloved brick house, he found that the people had unanimously elected him on June 8, 1847, as a Representative of Kentucky to Washington. After one term in this office, Zachary Taylor appointed John to go to the West to help settle what is now the state of Oregon. While in Washington, he became acquainted with Millard Fillmore, who became President when Zachary Taylor died in office in 1850. He appointed our Kentucky hero the first Governor of Oregon, when it became our 33rd state. He was reluctant to leave Kentucky for it meant selling his home. His family consisted of his wife, Elizabeth, son, and his two beautiful daughters, went to New York with him where they boarded the store ship "Supply" to go by way of the tip of South America- for there was no Panama Canal at this time-1850. Both daughters developed yellow fever as the ship neared the Brazilian coast. Both were buried on St. Catherine's Island near the Brazilian coast. (At Richwood cemetery ther are two gravestones erected in their memory.) His son died soon after reaching Oregon and his wife was killed when her horse threw her.

The Kentucky home remained in the Gaines family for four generations and was then sold to a farmer named Ira Cleek. He was very abusive to the lovely interior, using one of the large front rooms for hay and grain storage, causing the floor to sag in the center about six inches, and is in that condition now. During the Civil War, he kept one of his horses in this room so that the soldiers couldn't steal it.

When General Kirby Smith camped on the Old Lexington Pike he used this tavern as his headquarters. Just before General Morgon was killed, he and his men camped under a large sycamore tree in the yard and used the facilities of the Inn.

After the close of the Civil War, Jerry Glenn bought this land mark and called it Drover's Inn. The drovers who herded their cattle, sheep, hogs and even droves of turkeys along the pike to the Covington and Cincinnati markets stopped for food and a night's rest. The grounds were divided into sections by fences so that the tired droves might separate their stock according to ownership. It was also used as a stage-horse station where horses were changed for fresh ones and fed. While this was an Inn, John Goodson, father-in-law of the late Honorable John G. Carlisle, visited here, and in a spell of despondency, committed suicide by hanging himself from the beautiful curved three floor stairway.

After many years and several more owners, the "Old Brick", as it became known to people living in the Walton vicinity, was converted into an apartment house. Four families were living there when Mr. John Gault, an antique dealer from Cynthiana, bought it in 1937. His plans were to restore and refurnish it with his collection of valuable antiques.

It is now an outstanding landmark in Boone County and can well be proud of it. It is one of the oldest brick houses in the State of Kentucky. The Whitley house at Crab Orchard was built a few years earlier and its dates are in the brick.

Now, let's look at the beautiful old workmanship of the inside of this landmark. There are three stairways, two being of cherry. The front one which is circular, goes to the 3rd floor. The original small, slender spindles are cherry as is the entire curving hand rail and posts ending in a lovely newel post of cherry also. The spindles (or balusters) Mr. Cleek replaced are curly maple. Places can still be seen which the little Betty or greaselamps burned as they dimly lighted the many weary travelers up their winding way to the guests rooms.

Another thing of beauty in this front center hall is the elaborate fan transom above the front door. The carving was done by some of the Colonel's slaves.

The two front rooms are 23 x 24 ft. The room on the right has a secret press which opens at one end of the lovely carved Adam's design mantle. In the far corner of this press, a human skull is hanging just as it was when the press was first discovered. Here, too, the well preserved dried mud with which the bricks are held together can be seen. At the other side of this Adam's mantle is a lovely open press used now to display china ornaments- all lovely. The original plaster is also made of mud. The floor at the door of this room is so noticeably worn that we can readily imagine many feet keeping time to the music of a Virginia Reel or other lively entertaining music.

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In the two rooms directly above this one, there are two corner fireplaces with small Adams' mantles. The little baggage room is also here. The small paned windows look toward the Old Lexington Pike. I found this smaller group of rooms- I might call an apartment- quite inviting and could easily rest and dream before a cheerful fire in this corner fireplace. The board at this door has "G. Hogrife, 1837"- cut on the underside.

Altogether there are twenty rooms, two being secret with hidden doors. The ten carved Adams mantles are all beautiful. The large brass locks and keys we see belong to this era. Another unusual feature this Ky. Colonel added was a secret underground tunnel leading out from the rear of the house for 300 ft. In Mr. Gaines day it was used as an escape from the Indians.

When a friend asked Mr. Gault why he considered his home a haunted house. Mr. Gault - Colonel Gault now, relating many stories of ghosts that existed there at various times. When Mr. Cleek owned it a fair-haired child was seen skipping through one of the rooms early in the morning and stories of headless men were seen there. Several years ago while an electrician was wiring the house a ghost appeared at one of the windows; the workman became so frightened he ran two miles to his home, leaving his car.

Colonel Gault says there are many mysterious things about the house he cannot explain, and, he is an authority of old houses. Window sills in several rooms have been removed to repair or replace only to find messages on their undersides. One: There is \$4,500 in gold hidden in the walls on this old brick house. Be careful how you spend it or you will surely die." (Mr. Gault says this gold has not been found.) Name: "Sanders" was scribbled on another sill underneath on clean wood. This carpenter wrote that, "he was receiving \$2.25 a day from the owner, Mr. Cleek, dated 1873."

Colonel Gault has every reason to call his home an historical landmark, and the location of many unusually fascinating happenings since its building was begun in 1791.

Col. Gault now spends much of his time working on his collection of old cars. He told us he has 25.

I wrote down a partial list.

He's partial to the Fords of which he has:

1. 1915 Ford touring car
2. 1910 " " "
3. 1915 " Roadster which he's planning to use in Walter's Old Fashion Day
4. 1923 Ford touring car
5. 1926 Ford 4-Door Sedan - Before coming to Walter

from Cynthiaana he ran a taxi cab business. He said people preferred the cars without the glass enclosure.

Some of his others are:

1. 1906 Brush which is a 1 cylinder, 6 horsepower
2. 1906 International touring - 2 cylinder solid tires, with back wheels 4 ft. front. It is cranked on the side & the wooden step must be lifted to start it.
3. 1908 Buick - large car - air tires
4. Overland Touring 1912
5. 1918 Chandler
6. 1926 "
7. 1926 Packard -
8. 1927 Cadillac Sport Coupe -
9. 1927 Gibbs body mounted on model A Ford chassis - very rare only few made
10. 1933 - Pierce Arrow - 12 cylinder - sedan in lovely condition - doors shut quietly