


Northern Kentucky
Views presents . . .

Lewis Sanders

ANDERS, LEWIS, Agriculturist, and one of the distinguished business men of Kentucky, was born August 9, 1781, in Spottsylvania County, Virginia. Mr. Sanders never studied a profession, but throughout his active life followed business pursuits, engaging in farming, stock-raising, and manufacturing; and, although decidedly a man of the world in his manners, was greatly devoted to all the industrial and useful arts. He gave his attention, at an early day, to improving the breed of sheep, horses, and cattle, and, as early as 1816 or 1817, imported to Kentucky, from England, the first of the now famous Durham or Short-horn stock of the State. He was mainly instrumental in forming a company for the purpose of making importations and improving the stock of the State, even, to a considerable extent, advancing the means for carrying out the enterprise; and brought over a pioneer herd of Durhams. In any circle of men or women, however accomplished, he was the recognized superior, without making any pretensions. His knowledge was various and valuable, reaching to every interest in life, and always available for the edification of others. He was fond of discussing political matters. He was a Democrat in his creed, his discourse, and his intercourse; the same easy and attractive man in all companies. He expended large sums to develop Kentucky. At Lexington, he introduced the woolen cloth industry, and built the mill, which probably still stands. About 1796, John James Dufour, the pioneer wine-grower, came from Switzerland, and found his way to Lexington, Kentucky; and, although that place was then, to a great extent, the seat of culture and refinement in the West, and was made famous by the presence of such men as Clay, Rowan, George Nicholas, Col. Thomas Marshall, Jesse Bledsoe, Wickliffe, Joe Davess, Gen. Wilkinson, and others, none of them appreciated, as did Lewis Sanders, the importance to the country of the grape culture. Dufour started a vineyard near Lexington, but it was not successful. Through the encouragement of Mr. Sanders, he brought a small colony, composed chiefly of his own family and relations, from Switzerland. But the little colony running short of funds at Pittsburg, and Dufour not being able to supply them, Mr. Sanders met them there with great kindness, and conveyed them to Lexington. And no man watched their progress with greater solicitude than did he, or saw with deeper regret the failure of the efforts to make grape culture of great value to his adopted State. These people afterwards established themselves on the Ohio, at Vevay, in Switzerland County, Indiana; and, although the great staples of the Ohio Valley have long ago taken the place of the grape, not even the descendants of the Dufours ever forgot the kindness of Lewis Sanders, their first American friend. Mr. Sanders expended an immense amount of money on the breed of blood-horses in Kentucky. He established race-courses, and bred and trained many famous sires and sons of the turf. To him, as the beginner, Kentucky owes much of her unrivaled fame for the best race-horses in the world. In his old age, he sat down at his splendid homestead farm, in

Carroll County, called "Grass Hills," and made the peach, as well as stock, his crop. He succeeded perfectly, by his skill and assiduity, in growing the best article, and protecting the tree from its foes. Personally, he charged himself with the care of his orchard, and wielded the knife, which he held to be the only means of stopping the worm. His vast old mansion at "Grass Hills" was never finished—probably for the want of time, but to some extent, no doubt, from the habit, especially of the old-time Southern farmer, of leaving his house forever half complete. But there he lived, and his hospitality was always to the fullest extent—there was no lack of completeness about that; and his enlarged views and genial manners gave untold attractiveness to the place, and left upon his friends and guests impressions of the fine old days of the past that would endure for all time. Although devoted so variously to business pursuits, he gave much of his time to reading, and especially in connection with the history of his country. His opinions were considered of great importance on almost every subject. He sometimes assembled his neighbors to discuss public affairs. He took an active part in the Texas annexation movement of 1844, and at his house near Ghent the movement really had its origin; and from this movement came the nomination of Mr. Polk, who favored annexation, and the Mexican War. Just before the opening of the late deplorable sectional war, he led off in the attempts to solve the great questions before the people. At Ghent a meeting was called, at which he delivered his opinions at length, taking a strong position in favor of a union of strength in the great West, for the purpose of giving the West its true position and independence in the Federal Government; setting forth in a set of resolutions, of which he was mainly the author, the condition of the East and its political power, and the great comparative strength of the West in the revenues to the Government, and declaring in favor of organizing the popular branch of Congress, so as to give to the South and West leading and controlling committees of that body. His bold opinions were published in the newspapers, but gained no wide-spread following. Although remaining strictly domestic and quiet in his habits, and never relinquishing his attachment to his agricultural interests, he continued to exert his influence in public affairs, but lived to see little of the great civil strife, or to see of what little value were the efforts of one man to stop the course of the inevitable tide. He died and was buried at "Grass Hill," Carroll County, Kentucky, April 15, 1861. He was a man of medium height and size, and of dark complexion. Mr. Sanders was twice married. His first wife was the daughter of Col. George Nicholas, who greatly distinguished himself in his profession, and in politics as the Democratic champion, and was one of the most learned and able of all the early lawyers of Kentucky. He had two sons and one daughter. The wife of his old age was a Miss Dumesniel, and by that union he had no children.