

IN THE BEGINNING

by

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1983

A History of EARLY Port William

DATA FROM Gallatin Co. COURT Order Book #1
1799-1804

ORIGINAL COPY

LET THE FACTS TELL THE STORY

In The Beginning

The events of history are the results of actions and activities of people. I shall try to tell you of some of the events and the people involved in the beginning of Port William and early Gallatin County, Kentucky.

Collins History tells us that the Elliott and the Ellison families were the first to settle here at the mouth of the Kentucky River. The Elliott family in March 1785, and Capt. Ellison built a block house in 1786/7, but the Indians chased them away.

About 1789/90 Gen. Charles Scott built a blockhouse on the second bank of the Ohio River, fortified and occupied it until Port William was laid out in 1792.1794

FACT

Mrs. Keturah Moss Leitch, afterwards the wife of Gen. James Taylor of Newport, Kentucky, with her husband Maj. Leitch, was traveling from Cincinnati, Ohio to Frankfort, Kentucky in 1791. The country was still filled with the dreaded Indians, and before going any further, they sought an escort from the Stockade at the mouth of the Kentucky River. They were furnished an escort for twenty miles. A Mr. Thomas Lindsay was one of them. A few miles out an Indian was discovered in the bushes. Mr. Lindsay was in the rear, unconscious of danger. Mrs. Leitch rode back to warn him with no regard for her own safety.

The Indians across the river were Delawares and Shawnees. They were numerous and troublesome still making raids into Kentucky. In 1791, by arrangement of the Kentucky Board of War, Gen. Charles Scott with 800 mounted Kentucky Volunteers, crossed the Ohio River at the mouth of the Kentucky River, and marched against the Indian towns on the Wabash River in Indiana. They gathered here on 19th. of May 1791, stayed here until the 23rd., transporting the troops across the river, having them mustered and issuing provisions and ammunition.

FACT

Port William founded when George Washington was President of the United States, and before Kentucky was a State, on land that belonged to Col. William Peachy of Richmond County, Virginia, who was granted 2000 acres of land at the confluence of the Ohio and Kentucky Rivers in consideration of his military service as a field officer in the war between Great Britain and France. Col. Peachy sold all of this land to Benjamin Craig and James and Martin Hawkins ~~about 1792~~ because in 1794 they proceeded to lay out the town on 613 acres in lots and streets, instructing the surveyor "to give good measure" as they would rather have too much ground in each lot than too little.

not 1792
1794

1792
Craig
not
correct
shd.
be 1794

1794

An Act for establishing a Town by the name of Port William on the land of Benjamin Craig and James Hawkins was approved by the General Assembly, 13th. December 1794. Cave Johnson, Thomas Montague and Jeremiah Craig were appointed the first trustees. One year later on 21st. of December 1795, Simon Adams, Richard Masterson, John Vanpelt and William Hayden were appointed trustees by the General Assembly in addition to the first three.

FACT

The first Minute book of Port William has been lost. The

Craig
agreement with
M. Hawkins + Jas
Hawkins was
verbal.

Peachy Contract with
Ben Craig
5 April 1794
laid out the
town June.

May 1795 - 1797

second book starts with 4 April 1797 and ends 8 March 1819. In the first Fränklin County, Kentucky, Court Order Book and the first deed books can be found a few things about Port William, as it was a part of Franklin County until Gallatin County was formed in 1799. Before that it was in Woodford County 1789-1795.

The trustees met in their homes. Twelve different names were mentioned from 1797 to 1816 -- means there were twelve houses.

Gallatin County Court Order Book No. 1 May 14, 1799 to 1808 tells us some things about Port William as it was the County Seat. The first court was held 14 May 1799 at the house of Richard Masterson. The first day John Vanpelt, first Sheriff, took his oath of office, and Percival Butler was appointed Clerk. The second day 15 May 1799, "Ordered that John S. Travis' lower room at the west end of his house be made use of as a jail until another can be produced, and that said Travis be allowed one dollar per month for the use of the same, to be paid out of the first County levy."

John S. Travis had a tavern on lot # 85, corner 3rd. and Water streets, deeded to him 27 August 1797. He was issued a liscense to operate a Tavern in 1796. In 1798 John S. Travis advertised in "The Palladium" at Frankfort, Kentucky, Sept. 3, 1798, that he was in the boating business--that he had several good boats, and had engaged a number of experienced hands , and offered his services to merchants, traders and others who may have goods, etc. to send to any place on the Western waters," he also said "ware-house room for depositing goods can be had." This was probably on lots # 10 or 11 or both, located on First Street between High and Sycamore.

The first Court adjourned til Court in Course to meet at the house of Richard Masterson in the Town of Port William. Which was "At a Court began and held at the House of Richard Masterson in the Town of Port William, in the County of Gallatin for said County 11 June 1799 " They chose by ballot for the Seat of Justice lots #86 and 87--where the Richland Hotel stands--but they were never used, "It is ordered and determined by the Court that until the public buildings for this County are erected or until the expiration of 4 years from the commencement of this County, that the Courts shall be held at the house of Richard Masterson in the Town of Port William, and at the expiration of the aforesaid term the house to, or rooms, to be returned in as good order as at the time of receiving it." This house stood on lot # 57, corner of Second and Water Sts. which was deeded to Richard Masterson by the Trustees of Port William August 28, 1797.

The Court proceeded to order the Sheriff to let a contract to some person to make two new benches, a bar, a seat for the Sheriff, and a partition in the Jury room.

Robert Plummer was granted a liscense to keep a Tavern and Store in 1800. It was a brick house located on lot # 1, on Water Street between First and Second Streets, and faced the Ohio River. He was the first Postmaster of Port William, appointed Jan. 1, 1807 by Thomas Jefferson. He was one of the Trustees in 1800-1806-1807 and 1808. He died in 1817.

From a History of Switzerland County, Indiana. "1810 -- If they wished to get letters or papers from their friends or to send any, they were obliged to go to Port William, it being the nearest Post Office that supplied mail once in two weeks, or at most, once a week." Zedekiah South was the second Postmaster, appointed in 1808. Henry Winslow the third in 1810, and John B. Bernard the fourth from 1812 to 1817.

In 1799 John Fistar had a blacksmith shop on lot # 29 on Water Street between First and Second. In 1801, he bought part of lot # 110, corner of Third and Water. He sold it in 1814 to Edward McIntyre. This McIntyre started a village called "Erin" opposite Port William on the Indiana shore, but it was abandoned.

Ordered by the Court that a stray pen of 40 feet square be built on Richard Masterson's lot near the present place of holding Courts for this County on Second Street within 40 feet of the House in which the Court is held, and that it shall be erected of Walnut or White Oak posts, and rails of like timber, with a good gate and lock. William Berry was the first Keeper, and Mathias Riley was the second. Court also ordered a pair of stocks to be erected on the Ohio River bank opposite the present place of holding courts, and they ordered a jail to be built 14 feet square, two stories high to be completed by June 1800.

In January 1800, the Court "do accept certain proposals this day delivered in writing for furnishing four lots of ground in the Town of Port William to wit: 185-186-206-207 (the four corners at 5th. and High) for the purpose of building thereon a temporary jail to be built on the Northwest corner of lot # 207" (where Dr. Ryan's house stood). The jail that was ordered to be built in July 1799 never materialized. By March 1800 this jail on # 207 had been built and prison bounds changed to include the "new jail" and "that John S. Travis have his house, which has been made use of as a jail, be returned to him."

A partition was put thru the room adjoining the Court House beginning at the East corner of the chimney and running to the West side of the end window for the purpose of an office for the clerks of this County. This work was done July 12, 1800 by Vachel Lindsay. By April 1802 it was ordered that the Clerk's remove and keep their offices in the back room of Robert Plummer's brick house, and he be allowed \$15.00 per year for rent.

Up until 1802, the warehouse for inspection of hemp, flour, tobacco, etc., had been owned by William Hayden, but he had not kept it in good order so the Court ordered it removed from "present place to lot #12, corner of First and Sycamore, the property of George Craig." Lot # 85 - Acts of Assembly

In April 1802, the Court proceeded to fix on the permanent seat of Justice and accordingly determined to fix it on lots #185-186-206-207, including the ground whereon the burnt jail formerly stood. Seems that a negro slave of Benjamin Craig was accused of burning down the jail, but a jury found him not guilty. Again the Court ordered a jail to be built 50 feet East of where the burnt jail stood, two stories high of brick lined with logs and to be enclosed with a brick wall. This jail was never built either.

Meanwhile the far end of Francis Barners house was appropriated as a jail until another could be built. Mr. Barners brick house stood on lot #227 - where the red brick is standing on North side of Main between 5th. and 6th. Streets- which he had bought in 1799, and which he sold to John V. Conover, a hatter, in 1802.

In August 1802, the Justices of the Court were summoned "to attend here at the next term to take into consideration the erection of a public jail for the County." By March 1803, the Sheriff was ordered to let to the lowest bidder, the building of a jail 12 feet square, two stories high, of large logs, to be built on some convenient spot towards the Southwest corner of the public ground. In April 1803, the jail was finished. It was built by Joseph Thomas.

In Sept. 1803 "The time for which this Court had agreed with Richard Masterson to have the use of the rooms in his house, in the Town of Port William, for holding Courts, in this County, having expired, the said Richard Masterson came into Court and agreed with the Court as follows to wit: (then it says "see agreement") whereupon the Court do agree and order that the said house shall be appropriated to the purpose of holding Courts in this County until this Court shall judge proper to erect the public building or provide a different place, and the house or rooms shall be then returned in the order as specified in the proposals of said Masterson."

May 26, 1806 "Ordered that John Bernard and David Owen do make out a complete draft and description for a brick Court house 30x40 feet square, 24 feet pitch from the foundation. The first story 16 feet, and the second story 11 feet high, and make report thereof to the next Court to be held for this County."

Once again the seat of Justice is changed. An indenture of bargain and sale from the Trustees of the Town of Port William to the Justices of the Gallatin County Court and their successors for the use and benefit of the County for four inlots in said Town to wit: #182-183-184-185 was presented in Court and acknowledged by the Trustees. (site of present Courthouse.) Also an indenture of bargain and sale from John M. Price to the Justices of the Court for the use and benefit of the County for an inlot in the town known as #183 - presented and acknowledged.

June 1806- The Court ordered the removal and the rebuilding of the jail. The commissioners appointed were William Berry, John B. Bernard and John V. Conover to have the power to direct what part of the timbers of said jail shall be reused, and also to direct on what part of the public ground said jail shall be rebuilt, to be completed by July 20, 1806.

July 23, 1806 - Commissioners were appointed to let to the lowest bidder 14th day of August, the building of a Court House for this County agreeably to the plan and description this day delivered by John B. Bernard, provided same shall not cost this County more than \$2000.00. The building to be completed by the 4th. Monday in November in the year 1808, and to be built on the center of the line between lots # 183 and 184. Moses Baker entered his protest against the Court House as being oppressive to the County. This was the first Court House ever built by the County and stood just about where the present Court House stands.

Gallatin was a large County in the beginning. Date enacted Dec. 14, 1798--Date effective May 13, 1799. "Beginning six miles above the mouth of Corn Creek; thence up the Ohio River to the mouth of Big Bone Creek; thence south with the Campbell County line sixteen miles; thence to the Kentucky River at Rock Spring, near Clay Lick; thence down the river within two and a half miles of the mouth of Eagle Creek; thence a direct line till it strikes the road from Shelbyville to the mouth of the Kentucky River two miles north of Henry Dougherty's; thence a direct line to the beginning." Yet the 1799 tax list for Gallatin County --- only 89 white males above 21 years of age, and only 10 between 16 and 21. There were 208 slaves; 101 above 16; 232 horses; 1 retail store; 2 taverns and 4 stud horses.

John Bullock had the retail store. It was located in Port William on the corner of 3rd. and Main on Lot # 85. He bought it in 1798 from William Haydon and sold it in 1804 to Ashford Violet. John Bullock was one of the Trustees in 1799.

John S. Travis had one of the taverns on Lot #85, corner Third and Water. He sold out to Jeremiah Philips in 1800, and he sold it to Brook Bennett in 1802. John Wilson had the other Tavern. Location unknown.

I went thru first deed books A1 and A2 at Warsaw, and picked out some deeds that mentioned houses and businesses.

- 1799- Brick on #227 Francis Barner- John V. Conover, latter, 1803 north side Main between 5th. and 6th.
- 1801- 2 story frame on #4 on First St. between Water and Main, built by Martin Hawkins.
- 1801- brick house on #111 begun by John Bullock corner 3rd. and Main. Sold to George Craig 1801. Sold to John Gayle 1808.
- 1801- Abraham Wigley living on #1 next to Robert Plummer. Trustee 1801.
- 1801-Brick house on #1 -Robert Plummer on Water St. Trustee in 1800-1806-1807-1808. Tavernkeeper and ferryman.
- 1802-Buildings and houses on #6 to Brook Bennett on First St. Trustee 1799-1800-1801-1802-1803-1804-1805-1806-1807.
- 1802-House on #6 Reuben Gaunt on First St. between Main and High. Trustee 1801-1802-1803-1806-1807-1808.
- 1805- William Berry on #1 - other side of Robert Plummer. Trustee 1805.
- 1805- David Owen's Brick house on #61 -Main near Second. Trustee 1804-1805-1808.
- 1805- William Fauntleroy on #1, corner house at 1st. and Water. Trustee 1804-1805. Married the daughter of Baker Ewing.
- 1805- Col. Baker Ewing's brick house corner 7th. and Main.
- 1804- Where Elijah Craig lives # 228 on Main. Where Coca-Cola plant stood. Trustee in 1800-1802-1803-1808.
- 1811- Brick house on # 208 where Carter Tarrant lives. Where the Rest home is. Howe house.
- 1800- Percival Butler on # 59 and 60 on Main St. Gen. Wm. O. Butler said "we lived in Town before moving to the country."
- 1815 - Old log house on #1 to be torn down.
- 1814- Market house in 4th St.
- 1814- Horse mill and tan yard, John Barnard on 3rd. St.
- 1801- Saw mill and tan yard, Francis Barner on 4th St. So^l Brook Bennett.
- 1810- Rope walk - William Scandrett on First St.

These had houses; where Trustees met.

- 1797 John Travis
- 1799 Richard Masterson
- 1803 Elijah Craig
- 1803 Benjamin Kenady
- 1804 Ash ford Violet
- 1805 Brook Bennett
- 1809 Hugh S. Gatewood
- 1810 Will Winslow
- 1811 John Johnson
- 1814 John B. Barnard
- 1814 Edward McIntyre
- 1816 Robert Plummer

There were lots of ferries. Had to be one mile apart.
Fish trap on Eagle Creek.

1807 Court ordered measures to be taken to keep water from overflowing any part of town !!!!!

TAVERNS

Franklin Co. Order Bk.-- Gallatin Co. Order Bk.--Port. Wm. Minute Bk.

1796 and June 1799 John S. Travis & Robert Plummer granted lisc.
Feb. 1796 and Oct. 1799 John Grimes .
(He was 2nd. Sheriff and Clerk of Port. Wm in 1802.)

- Jan. 1800 William Simpson
- Dec. 1800-1802-1803 Robert Scanland
- Mar. 1801 Henry Blunt
- May 1802-1803-1805-6-7 Ashford Violet
- May 1802 Benjamin Kennady
- Aug. 1802 John Utley .
- Nov. 1802 Elijah Craig
- Apr. 1805 Wm. Fauntleroy
- June 1806 Zedekiah South

12 Aug. 1800 Inhabitants who were Lotholders
from Port Wm. Minute Book #2.

John Tandy, Jr.	Enoch Talbut	
William Berry	James Jones	Not Lotholders
Henry Blunt	Vachel Lindsay	John Glinn
Martin Hawkins	John Fistar	David Owen
Percival Butler	John Grimes	Robert Pulliam
Simeon Crosby	Francis Barner	John Jones
Reuben Gant	Wiley Barner	William McCall
James McLane	Elijah Craig	
Isaac Owens	Mathews Perry	
Robert Plummer	William Simpson	
Brook Bennett	Francis Cunningham	
John Vanpelt		

Wills recorded 1800-1810 Gallatin County, Ky.
Nicholas Braston date Mar. 22, 1807 Proved Nov. 1807
(willed his horse mill in Port Wm. to James Spraul, Sr.)
Jacob Caton date June 7, 1808 Proved Aug. 1808
Archibald Campbell bond date Nov. 24/25 1806
John Crawford bond May 27, 1805
Philip Edmondson date Feb. 27, 1805 Pro. Apr. 1805
Sarah Gaunt date Dec. 9, 1800 Pro. Apr. 1801
Drakeford Gray Inv. Nov. 1804 (Corn Creek Baptist Church)
John Gardner date Apr. 1806 Pro. Sept. 1806
John Ginn bond Dec. 1808
Vincent Harris bond Apr. 1805
Philip Calvert bond Jan. 1800
Cornelius Hoagland bond Nov. 1806
William King bond Dec. 1805
James Mattox bond Sept. 1806
Richard Masterson bond Aug. 1806
Christianna McNair date June 1801 bond Mar. 1803
John Sanders, Jr. date Jan. 1803 bond Jan. 1804
George Smith date Oct. 1801 bond Jan. 1802
Benjamin Sneed date Mar. 11, 1800
Henry Stafford date Aug. 1803 bond Nov. 1803
Richard Whitehead bond Nov. 1805
William Williams bond Mar. 1807
Joseph Williamson date Nov. 2, 1807 Pro. Nov. 23, 1807

These were the men. They came down the Ohio River in flat-boats; down the Kentucky River in boats; overland in wagons. They came on horseback and on foot. They cleared land; they built roads; they made streets; they built homes and raised families. They worked hard. They were the founding fathers of Gallatin County and of Port William.

"Lord, give me the strength of the pioneer
And the faith of his hardy Soul!
Provide me with courage to persevere;
Make me fight till I reach my goal.

Let weaklings indulge in a sheltered life
Where they curse when their luck goes bad,
But fit me for battle with storm and strife;
Give me brawn like my Fathers had !

By O. Lawrence Hawthorne

Kathryn Salyers ^{Craig}
For Polly Hawkins Chanter
Daughters of American Revolution
March 9, 1983

First day 14 May. Second day.

First Dist. Co Court 15 May 1799

at the house of Richard Masterson

"Ordered that John S. Travis' lower room at the west end of his house be made use of as a jail until another can be produced, and that said Travis be allowed one dollar per month for the use of the same, to be paid out of the first County levy."

John S. Travis was on lot # 85
corner 3rd and Water.

First Jail built -- MARCH. 1800. built ON NW COR.
OF Lot No. 207 ^{So. E} CORNER 5th AND High AND

"that John S. Travis have his house, which has been made use of as a jail. be returned to him."

Jail