

Historical Background of Fredericksburg - Warsaw, Gallatin County, Kentucky

Under the date of December 12, 1783, a Land Office Treasury Warrant was issued to John Hawkins Craig (1763-1852, son of John Craig and Sally Page) for 1,000 acres of land on the Ohio River in Fayette County "at the lower end of the middle bottom between the mouth of Big Bone Creek and the Kentucky River." Then on January 4, 1794, Governor Isaac Shelby granted to John H. Craig this 1,000 acres (but by then it was in Woodford County) which had been surveyed under the same date by Richard Fox and William Steele, assisted by William Bledsoe and Nathaniel Sanders, Jr., chain carriers; and John H. Craig, pilot and marker. This survey started at the mouth of Craig's Creek (which was named for John H. Craig), extended up the river and included the present town site of Warsaw.

On December 28, 1796, John H. Craig and his wife, Sallie Snelling, of Campbell County, conveyed 400 acres of his survey, then in Franklin County, for \$280 to Colonel Robert Johnson and Elizabeth Cave, of Orange County, Virginia. After he acquired this land, Colonel Robert Johnson built on it a two-story brick house with a one-story wing on each side, on the bank above the river in what we call today "High School Court". This, the first house in Warsaw, was demolished in 1918.

Gallatin County was established December 14, 1798, from Franklin and Shelby Counties, and Port William, since 1838 called Carrollton, was designated the county seat. Before 1800, Colonel Robert Johnson had started a settlement on the Ohio River, which he called "Great Landing" and by 1805 he had laid off and surveyed the road to Georgetown, which we today still call "Johnson Road".

On January 24, 1810, Henry Ely (no wife mentioned) conveyed 200 acres for \$400, in Gallatin County, to Thomas Hawes, of Gallatin County. This, too, included the village of Great Landing.

Then on November 22, 1814, Thomas Hawes and his wife, Susannah (daughter of William Winslow, of Port William, who was first married to a Conniston) of Fredericksburg, conveyed for \$200 this same 200 acres of land on the Ohio River back to Colonel Robert Johnson, with the understanding he would relinquish 100 acres to Henry Yates (1786-1865), son of Abner and Mary, or Mollie, Yates. This being for the purpose of laying off a town. The town was platted early in 1815, and was named Fredericksburg after Colonel Johnson's home town in Virginia. The new town consisted of 172 lots, each 82 ½ by 99 feet. By agreement Colonel Johnson was to have the sale of the lots West of Main Cross Street, which before then was known as the "State Road" and Henry Yates was to sell the lots on the East side of the street. Yates then took as his partner in the venture his brother-in-law, Henry Ellis, son of David and Mourning Harris Ellis, who had married January 26, 1807, Martha, or Patsy, Yates.

Colonel Robert Johnson's wife (Jemima Suggett, daughter of John Suggett and Jemima Spence), died in 1814 in Great Crossing, and on March 9, 1815 he married in Fredericksburg a seventeen year-old girl, Jemima, or Fannie, Bledsoe, daughter of William Bledsoe, a Baptist preacher in Fredericksburg. However, before he could sell any of his lots in the new town, Colonel Johnson died at his home in Fredericksburg on October 15, 1815,

and was buried in the Great Crossing Baptist Church Cemetery beside his first wife. One of his sons, John T. Johnson (1788-1856), acted as Agent for the rest of the heirs in the sale of the Johnson lands and town lots. He was one of the founders of the Warsaw Christian Church in 1836. Another son, Richard M. Johnson (1781-1850), supposedly killed the Shawnee Chief Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames, and later was Vice-President of the United States.

On March 19, 1816, Fannie Bledsoe Johnson married Jabez, or Jaba, Moore, and according to a prenuptial contract she had with Colonel Johnson, she was given a 180-acre farm, known today as the Richards farm, slaves and lots in Fredericksburg. Jaba Moore disposed of Fannie's inheritance and they disappeared from the local scene.

The new town on the Ohio River grew and prospered and became a busy river shipping port for the area as far South as Georgetown. In 1831 the citizens wished to establish a post office there and the name of the town was changed to Warsaw because there was another town in Kentucky named Fredericksburg (in Mason County).

We'll probably never know the true story, but for some reason unknown to us today, the General Assembly of Kentucky passed an Act, which was approved February 9, 1837, by Governor James Clark (1779-1839), to remove the county seat of Gallatin County from Port William to Warsaw "as soon as the citizens of the town of Warsaw and its vicinity shall have erected a good and sufficient courthouse on the public ground in the town of Warsaw". Commissioners appointed for this purpose were: James O'Hara, of Owen County; Cornelius Hughes, of Boone County; and Charles Ruddell, of Grant County, who were to report back to the County Court. This was accordingly done and on December 18, 1837 an Act was approved stating that from and after the passage of this Act the "said town of Warsaw shall be... the permanent seat of justice of Gallatin County and that all Acts establishing Port William as the seat of justice for said county, be null and void." For the citizens of the West end of Gallatin County this intolerable state of affairs was not allowed to last long. The people of Port William got busy, petitioned the Legislature and had an Act passed to establish the County of Carroll, which was approved by the governor February 9, 1838, with Port William (the name later was changed to Carrollton) as the county seat. Therefore Warsaw has since 1837 been the county seat of Gallatin County; and not since 1838, as has been stated many times in the past, and the oldest portion of our beautiful courthouse dates from 1837. It was added to in 1868 when the part facing the Ohio River, with a Romanesque belfry was built. And in 1939 the building was remodeled with a Greek Revival portico facing the main street of the town, thus turning its back on the river.

All records of the original Gallatin County, including northern Owen County, eastern Trimble County and all of present-day Gallatin and Carroll Counties, dating back to 1799, when the organization of the county became effective, are intact and available for research by interested persons at the Gallatin County Courthouse in Warsaw.

Researched and written by Carl R. Bogardus, Sr., 1986