

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Historical Background of Gallatin and Carroll Counties, 1799 - 1838

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

OF

THE ORIGINAL GALLATIN AND CARROLL COUNTIES 1799 to 1838

Gallatin and Carroll Counties, Kentucky, are directly descended from the Commonwealth of Virginia, a fact we should all be very proud of. In December, 1776, Kentucky County of Virginia was formed from Fincastle County, which had been organized in 1772; and during the period of Daniel Boone's explorations it was known as Kentucky County. Then by 1780 its population had increased to such an extent that three new counties of Virginia were made from Kentucky County and the name "Kentucky" was eliminated. The new counties were Fayette, Jefferson and Lincoln. Then in 1790 these three counties were subdivided into nine more counties of Virginia; Mason, Bourbon, Woodford, Fayette, Madison, Jefferson, Mercer, Nelson and Lincoln; and on June 17, 1792, Kentucky was admitted to the Union as the fifteenth State. This particular area was then in Fayette, and after 1788 in Woodford, and after 1794 it was in Franklin. This is why the very early deeds, marriages, wills and other records are to be found in these three parent counties. Then in 1798 the people living in this area petitioned the Legislature to form for them a new county, which was done on December 14, 1798, to be effective in May, 1799, and the new county was to be called Gallatin after the noted Swiss-born statesman, Albert Gallatin (1761-1849). It was formed from parts of Shelby and Franklin Counties, and Port William (now Carrollton) was designated the county seat. This was only natural since Port William was the only town in the new county. The 1799 tax list for Gallatin County showed only 89 white males above age 21, and only 10 between 16 and 21; but there were 208 slaves with 101 between ages 16 and 21. There were 232 horses, 4 stud horses, one retail store and two taverns. The store was operated by John Bullock, who was also one of the Trustees of Port William. John Travis had one of the taverns, or inns, which he sold to Jeremiah Phillips in 1800, and he sold it to Brook Bennett in 1802. John Wilson kept the other tavern.

We find in Collins's History of Kentucky that the Elliott and Ellison families were the first to settle here - the Elliotts in 1785, and the Ellisons in 1786 or 7. They were finally driven away by the Indians "who were then troublesome." Then in 1789-1790 Gen. Charles Scott, with 800 mounted Kentucky soldiers recruited to fight the Indians in Indiana and Ohio, built a substantial fort, or blockhouse, on "The Point."

Port William was laid out on a part of a 2,000 acre tract of land which had been granted to Col. William Peachy for his services in the French and Indian War. About 1790 he sold this land to Benjamin Craig, Sr., Martin and James Hawkins, and in 1792 they platted the town of Port William on 613 acres of this grant, and they named their town for Col. Peachy's first name, William.

The Legislative Act to establish a town by the name of Port William was passed on December 13, 1794. Cave Johnson (brother of Col. Robert Johnson, the founder of Warsaw), Thomas Montague and Jeremiah Craig were appointed as the first Trustees; and one year later, December 21, 1795, Simon Adams, Richard Masterson, John Vanbelt and William Hayden were appointed Trustees by the General Assembly to serve with the others mentioned.

The Gallatin County Court Order Book No. 1, May 14, 1799 to December 23, 1804, of which I have a copy and Kathryn Salyers and the Carroll County Public Library also have copies, tells us some most interesting and very important things about Port William and Gallatin County. The first County Court was held on May 14, 1799, at the house of Richard Masterson in Port William (not at the Masterson House above town as popularly supposed). On that first day John Vanbelt took his oath of office as the first Sheriff of Gallatin County, and Gen. Percival Butler was sworn in as the first Clerk. On the second day it was "Ordered that John S. Travis's 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."

FREDERICKSBURG - WARSAW, GALLATIN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Under the date of Dec. 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 Jan. 4, 1794, Gov. 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 townsite of Warsaw.

On Dec. 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 Col. Robert Johnson (1745-1815), of Great Crossings, Scott County, son of William Johnson and Elizabeth Cave, of Orange County, Virginia. After he acquired this land Robert Johnson built on it a two-story brick house with one-story wings on each side, on the bank above the Ohio River, in what we today call "High School Court." This first house in Warsaw was demolished in 1918.

Gallatin County was established Dec. 14, 1798, from Franklin and Shelby Counties, and Port William, (since 1838 called Carrollton), was designated the county seat. Before 1800 Col. Johnson had started a settlement on the 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 Jan. 24, 1810, Robert Johnson and his wife, Jemima Suggett, conveyed 360 acres in Gallatin County to Henry Ely, of Scott County, for £720, which included the village of Great Landing on the river.

On Jan. 30, 1811, Henry Ely (no wife mentioned) conveyed 200 acres for £400, in Gallatin County, to Thomas Hawes, of Gallatin County. This, too, included the village.

Then on Nov. 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 Col. Robert Johnson, with the understanding he would relinquish 100 acres to Henry Yates (1786-1865), son of Abner and Mary, or Mollie, Yates. Mollie was a daughter of Thomas Hawes by his first wife, Elizabeth Fisher. This being for the purpose of laying off a town. The town was platted early in 1815, and was named Fredericksburg after Col. Johnson's home town in Virginia. The new town consisted of 172 lots, each 82 1/2 by 99 feet. By agreement Col. 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, or Moaning, Harris Ellis, who had married Jan. 26, 1807, Martha, or Patsy, Yates.

Col. Robert Johnson's wife, Jemima Suggett, died in 1814, in Great Crossings, and on March 9, 1815, he married in Fredericksburg a young girl, Jemima, or Fannie, Bledsoe, a daughter of William Bledsoe, of Fredericksburg. However, before he could sell any of his lots in the town, Col. Johnson died at his home in Fredericksburg on Oct. 15, 1815, and was buried in the Great Crossings 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 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 Col. Johnson, she was given a 180-acre farm, known today as the Richards farm, slaves and lots in Fredericksburg.

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 name was changed to Warsaw because there was another town in Kentucky named Fredericksburg (in Mason County), and in 1838, when Carroll County was split off from Gallatin County, Warsaw became the County Seat, and Port William became Carrollton. The present-day Court House in Warsaw was built in 1838, remodeled and added to in 1868 and 1939. Our Gallatin County records are intact and go back to the year 1799.