

John I. Claybrooke

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John I. Claybrooke, of Route 2, Maysville, is one of the progressive agriculturists of Mason county and also figures prominently in business and public affairs. He was born February 16, 1885, in Springfield, Washington county, Kentucky, and is a scion of one of the old and highly respected families of the state. His great-grandparents, Thomas and Sebina (Washington) Claybrooke, were Virginians and in 1816 left their home in Hanover, Culpeper county, casting in their lot with the pioneer settlers of Washington county, Kentucky. The former acquired a tract of fifteen hundred acres of land in the vicinity of Springfield and through untiring effort and systematic methods developed one of the fine plantations of that locality.

His son, Thomas M. Claybrooke, was a boy when the family left the Old Dominion and was reared on the homestead in Washington county. He succeeded his father in the ownership of the plantation and devoted his life to the cultivation and improvement of the estate. He married Miss Lucy Jeffries, a daughter of Richard and Rachel Jeffries, who were also numbered among the early settlers of Washington county. Mr. and Mrs. Claybrooke were devout Baptists and aided in organizing the Bethlehem church of that denomination, contributing generously toward the erection of the edifice. Thomas M. Claybrooke responded to death's summons in 1854, when sixty years of age, and his wife passed away in 1856, at the age of sixty-seven years.

Their son, James Richard Claybrooke, was born May 10, 1835, on the homestead and received his higher education in Centre College at Danville, Kentucky. After his graduation he attended a law college in Louisville and was admitted to the bar. He began his professional career in Owensboro, Daviess county, Kentucky, and established a remunerative clientele, also serving for two terms as county attorney. He returned home to attend his father's funeral and during his absence his office and law library were destroyed by fire. Thereafter he confined his efforts to farming and stockraising and remained on the homestead until his demise, November 25, 1910. He was a stalwart democrat and an earnest worker in behalf of the party. He was a member of the state legislature during the session of 1869-70 and while holding that office enjoyed the distinction of being the first man to introduce a bill allowing a negro to testify in his own behalf. He was a zealous member of the Baptist church,

of which he was clerk for forty-five years, and also served on its board of trustees. He was a man of sterling integrity and exceptional worth.

James R. Claybrooke was married May 5, 1869, to Miss Jennie Durrett, who was born March 29, 1851, in Nelson county, Kentucky, of which her parents, William and Elizabeth (Smith) Durrett, were also natives, and her father was related to Colonel Robert Durrett, one of the influential citizens of Louisville. Mrs. Claybrooke survives her husband and still makes her home in Springfield. In their family were twelve children: William Durrett, who became one of the prominent lawyers of Washington county and also served in the state legislature; James Richard Jr., a prosperous farmer and tobacco grower of the same county; Mary C., who married William D. Ragsdale, now deceased; Joseph S., who aided in organizing the Robertson-Claybrooke Company, a well known dry goods firm of Springfield, Kentucky; Hubert H., who was a successful merchant and banker of Scottsburg, Alabama, and passed away November 16, 1909; Bessie, who was united in marriage to William H. Cleveland, of Lebanon, Kentucky; Jennie, who became the wife of John L. Offutt, of Bloomfield; Ida, single; Annie, who married Job D. Turner, of Lexington, Kentucky; John I., of this review; Pearl, single, who chose the career of an educator; and Ruth, who was united in marriage to A. B. Hooper, Jr., a banker of Albertville, Alabama.

John I. Claybrooke obtained his early instruction in Texas, Washington county, Kentucky, and attended the high school at Springfield. He entered the employ of the Falls City Clothing Company of Louisville and was later associated with his brother, Hubert H. Claybrooke, in merchandising at Scottsboro, Alabama. He was afterward inspector of mill feed at the agricultural experimental station maintained by the University of Kentucky at Lexington and since 1912 has engaged in farming in Mason county. He is associated with his father-in-law in operating the latter's place, which is situated near Washington. The tract comprises three hundred and seventy-seven acres of fertile land and in the cultivation of the soil Mr. Claybrooke brings to bear system and science, carefully planning each detail of the work. He is also a director of the State National Bank of Maysville, treasurer of the Turner-Elkhorn Coal Company of Lexington and director of the Hayswood Hospital in Maysville, all of which have profited by his association therewith.

Mr. Claybrooke was married May 10, 1911, to Miss Sadie B. Hunter, a granddaughter of David and Salina (Gault) Hunter, of Mason county. Her father, David L. Hunter, was born October 14, 1851, on the farm in Mason county, and was married December 21, 1881, to Miss Mamie Valentine, a daughter of the Rev. Richard and Sallie (Smith) Valentine, of Henry county, the former a Presbyterian minister. Mrs. Claybrooke, their only child, was born March 23, 1886, and has become the mother of five children: John I. Jr., who was born May 29, 1912; David L., born January 4, 1914; Mamie V., whose natal day was June 20, 1916; Job T., whose birth occurred June 29, 1920; and James H., born April 1, 1925.

Mr. Claybrooke is a deacon of the First Baptist church at Maysfield and he casts his ballot for the candidates of the democratic party. He is a director of the Germantown Fair Association and chairman of the Mason County Board of Education. In 1916 he organized the Washington Improvement Company to erect a high school at Washington, Kentucky and has been president ever since. The building cost twenty-three thousand dollars and there are about three hundred children in attendance. Mr. Claybrooke has also manifested his public spirit by effective service for the general good and is a broad-minded man of high principles, esteemed and respected by all with whom he has been brought in contact.
