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HISTORY OF LEWISBURG AND MILL CREEK,
MASON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

by

Mrs. Virgil T. Fryman

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HISTORY OF LEWISBURG AND MILL CREEK,
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In the year 1773, General William Thompson of Pennsylvania at the head of a company landed at the mouth of Cabin Creek and made a Survey in July 1773, on Mill Creek. November 20, 1773, they made another Survey on Lee's Creek about two miles north of Mayslick. Their Surveys were quite extensive, embracing the rich lands on the North Fork of Licking and its tributaries. 1776, saw these lands swarming with visitors from Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, many of them coming to select their future homes.

Samuel Boggs, William Lindsay, Joseph Lindsay, John Vance, David Vance, Andrew Steele, and William Bartlett built two cabins each, thus making 14 improvements on the waters of Mill Creek and its small branches. While these improvements were being made Bartholomew Fitzgerald "a member of another company" paid them a visit and selected a sight where he afterward built a mill dam well known in 1796, as Fitzgerald's Mill. This community was known as Millwood for sometime. Fitzgerald owned the land joining the Early farm, now owned by Harvey Rice. The home of Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Kelley, Sr. was the home of the Fitzgeralds and presumably built by them. It is on a knoll overlooking the waters of Mill Creek. The foressaid Fitzgeralds were the ancestors of George Fitzgerald of Edgemont. Fitzgerald's Company improved land upon and near Mill Creek and kept an accurate journal of their improvements which they used, and all parties relied upon when the permanent Surveys were made in 1784. When they reached the mouth of Mill Creek just a short distance west of Lewisburg they found an improvement had already been made there. Samuel Strode and William McClary made an improvement for Sam Strode at a spot on Strode's Run, a branch of the North Fork, just north of Lewisburg. Clark Station

on the North Fork where Lewisburg now is, was settled by George Clark in 1787, but was abandoned.

Isaac Lewis, Sr. with his sister came from Maryland at an early date and settled about two miles northwest of what is now Lewisburg. His son, George Lewis, resettled in 1789, the station abandoned by Clark in 1787. There was a chain of ten such stations which extended from Dover to Mill Creek as a protection from the Indians. These defined the limits of the new frontier.

Lewisburg was established on December 17, 1795, on the lands of George Lewis, when the General Assembly on this date enacted that seventy acres of land belonging to Lewis lying on the north of Main Licking beginning at Samuel Strode's Corner running with his line north fifty-one degrees, east one hundred poles crossing the creek, thence down the creek its several meanders to the beginning to include the creek. The first Trustees were Thomas Young, Jesse Hoard, Alexander K. Marshall, William Triplett, William Durratt, and Duval Wayne. To these men fell the usual duty of laying the town off into lots and streets and of establishing the town to be called Lewisburg. As soon as the seventy acres were laid off, the Trustees were empowered to sell them for credit or ready money as should best suit the proprietor. The time and place of the sale was first to be advertised at least one month in the Kentucky Herald. Lewis after entering into bond with one or more securities to the Trustees, was to receive any and all the money taken for these lots, and the town of Lewisburg was born. George Lewis was a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1796. He married Mary, the second child of Thomas and Jane Forman. He built the Lewisburg Mills but failed in Business. On the sale of his property, Thomas Forman bought the mills and station and settled his daughter, Mary Lewis, on them. Mary Lewis and George had three children. Jane

married William Greathouse. Betsy married William McIlvaine and Isaac married Sara Brent. The McIlvaines were a much loved family in Lewisburg for many years. They later moved to Maysville. I am sure many of us can recall Mr. Winn McIlvaine, Miss Betsy, and Mrs. Linda Tuggle. George Lewis is buried on the land owned by George and Lee Comer. Sixty years ago there was a marker at his grave.

The first water mill established in Mason County with distillery attached was probably that of John Nichols about 1787, on the north side of the North Fork, about a mile below the mouth of Mill Creek. After the settlement of Lewisburg, a dam was made across the North Fork about 100 yards north of the old covered bridge. A canal or race as it was called then, was dug to let the water run through to turn the wheel of the mill which was situated on the property formerly owned by the Gaithers. Mr. Gaither helped organize the Lewisburg Baptist Church and the Gaithers have always been prominent workers in the Baptist Church of the Lewisburg community. Later a distillery was built downstream. It was quite a large building made of native stone. Late in the 1800's it was used as a tobacco prising house. It was torn down not too many years ago.

Strode's sometimes called Strode's Run on the North Fork at the mouth of Strode's Run was settled by Samuel Strode in 1785. Strode's Run Road bears his name today. On this road have lived many of the old families of Lewisburg such as the Strodes, Longs, Hords, Calverts, Lashbrookes, Lindsays, and Rileys. These families have taken much pride in their homes and farms down through the years, and today the names are perpetuated by prosperous farmers.

There is not much known about the first schools of Lewisburg but many of the older people of the community today affectionately remember Miss Lyde Dawson. Miss Dawson came from Missouri and taught many

years in Lewisburg. She married Oscar Calvert but continued to teach.⁴
She was the mother of Mrs. Ben Marshall, a former member of this Club.

For many years there was a post office at Lewisburg but the post office was named North Fork. There happened to be another post office in Kentucky named Lewisburg. It is now Maysville Rural Delivery.

The colored people have always lived in a little settlement across the North Fork. It is called Kinktown. They have their own churches, the Methodist and Baptist. ✓

The Lewisburg Baptist Church was formed in 1844 by 44 members who were dismissed from the Mayslick Baptist Church to form the Lewisburg church. The church is located across the North Fork from Lewisburg. Although we have not found records, it is legend that George Lewis would not let a church be built in Lewisburg. On April 25, 1844, the Trustees bought a little over 3 acres of land for \$65. on which to build a church and have for a grave yard. They bought the land from George Chinn. The Trustees were Harlow Yancey, John Chamberlain, and Walter Calvert. The church was built of brick with two front doors. The ladies entered by the right door and the men by the left. The people entered the church facing the congregation and they still do so today although there is now a side door by which you can enter.

Mr. Cleon Keyes served here for over 50 years. On April 27, 1911, Rev. Keyes was buried in this church burying ground. In paying tribute to Mr. Keyes, Dr. M. B. Adams of Frankfort, Kentucky said, "Too much can not be said in praise of his lovely and pure Christian character. Here was the citadel of his strength. His strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure. No one could be long in his company without saying, 'Truly this man is a child of God. He wrought well and has earned his reward.' "

The Lewisburg Baptist Church stands today as a beautiful example of a country church.

✓ Colonel Thomas Marshall of Revolutionary fame was sent on a mission as Surveyor General of the lands in Kentucky which were appropriated to the officers and soldiers of Virginia. On that trip he located lands which later became his own. In addition to large holdings in Central Kentucky and other parts of Mason County, he received 6000 acres at the mouth of Mill Creek. By the terms of Col. Marshall's will he bequeathed the Mill Creek lands to his sons, Alexander K. Marshall and James Marshall. On his portion Alexander K. built a lovely home which has been handed down from generation to generation until today. The Alexander K. Marshall of the third generation was born at this ancestral home in 1832, and was married to Miss Eliza Dudley of Flemingsburg in 1859. This Alexander K., the father of Mrs. M. B. Adams (Mae Marshall) inherited a handsome estate from his father which he increased by prudent management. In early life he turned to raising fine live stock and with a view of selecting the best breeds that the world afforded, he paid a visit to Europe. After a thorough investigation he returned with a choice herd. A railroad depot is on his place and he fostered a little town at Marshall Station. He speculated successfully in tobacco and other produce.

James, the brother of Alexander K. Marshall, built a large frame house on his portion of his father's estate, fronting on the waters of Mill Creek. His land did not remain in the hands of his descendants. He gradually disposed of his holdings. Courthouse records show where James Davis bought from James Marshall and his wife Amelia, 20 acres on waters of Mill Creek. Bit by bit the James Marshall land melted away. Some was bought by the Ray family and some by the Hords. On what is now part of the Hord farm there may be seen today the remains of an old grist mill. The mill

stones are said to be the largest ever seen in this country. The road leading to the mill was called Thompson's Mill Road. The surrounding neighborhood up to the Duval Payne place which is known in modern times as the Halfway House was known as Millwood.

In 1789, Duval Payne with his wife Hannah Brent, moved to Kentucky from Virginia and settled at Lexington. In 1792, Payne removed to Mason County and settled on his farm at Mill Creek. He was twice shot at by Indians near his own home, and had his horses stolen out of his stable. He was a practical Surveyor, extremely popular and for many years was in politics. Later the Weedon family owned the Halfway House and the name of Wedonia was the name given to the community from the Weedon House including the present limits of Wedonia.

John R. Proctor sold a part of what had been the James Marshall land to John O'Mara on April 17, 1863, according to Deed Book 69, page 271. A young priest named Fether Hickey was making his home with the O'Mara family. At that time there was no Catholic church in the Lewisburg, Mill Creek, or Mayslick vicinity. Father Hickey walked to the homes to serve his parishoners, or they came to see him. The heirs of Partick O'Mara sold 90 acres of land in 1874 to Father Hickey. He built a chapel on this land, a rather crude building but it served as a church for some years. This chapel has been preserved and may be seen on the farm of Mrs. Rebekah Hord today. Patrick O'Mara was the great-grandfather of the late John Michael Walton, the Tierney family, and Pat Collins.

The Mill Creek Christian Church was organized in 1843. The people first worshipped in a log house but in 1847, on January 8th, William Lindsay, the great-grandfather of Alex Calvert deeded one acre of ground to the Trustees for the sum of \$100. The Trustees were Perry S. Layton, Joseph Little, and John Charles Dobyms. The timbers in the

church were cut from wood on the ground, and the brick was burned on the ground. You entered the church facing the congregation. This was changed in 1950, when the church was remodeled. The church was always warmly and loyally supported by the Hords, Lindsays, Proctors, Rices, Cooks, Dobyms, Youngs, Bullocks, and Bramels. The church has been fortunate in the selection of ministers. Most of them were young men, students from the College of the Bible in Lexington. One of the early ministers was J. W. McGarvey who became the third president of the College of the Bible at Lexington. He was president there from 1895 to 1911. In 1914, J. Leslie Finnell was the first full time minister with preaching every Sunday and it has continued. The old communion service of solid silver is on display at the church. In 1915, the individual service was given by Mrs. J. Boyd Jones (Hattie Hord).

It is impossible to tell of all the prominent and important families of both the Lewisburg and Mill Creek neighborhoods due to the scant records. The social life was not neglected in the prosperous communities and many were the big dinings and sumptuous "in-fares" after the big weddings.

Captain James Davis, a very colorful and dramatic character who lived in the "Rock House" on the farm now owned by Mrs. Rebekah Hord, was known as the "Tobacco King". He gave a party which was written up in the local paper on December 7, 1887. I will read you of that party. The original clipping belongs to Mrs. Rebekah Hord. It is headed "Captain Davis Among his Friends".

Captain James M. Davis is one of the best known and popular citizens of Mason County. In the last six or eight months he has been a large dealer in tobacco and made a handsome fortune. In November, his profits amounted to over \$12,000 and since July, he has cleared over \$100,000. Captain Davis is a plain farmer, not given to putting on style but is noted for generosity and hospitality. On last Wednesday evening

he celebrated his good fortune by inviting about fifty of his old friends and neighbors to supper. The Captain felt that in this way he could best show his regard for those who had known and stood by him throughout all of the ups and downs of life. He said: "I have had good luck, and I want my friends around me to enjoy a little of the fruits of it." His friends came and to say that they enjoyed the good things provided, barely expresses it.

The provision made for the entertainment was royal. The waters of the Chesapeake, the orange groves of Florida, the tropical fruits of the West Indies, the vineyards of sunny Italy and France, the plantations of Louisiana, the swamps of Michigan, the graperies of California, the fig groves of Smyrna, and the rich fields and pastures of Mason and Fleming were drawn upon to furnish a banquet good enough for Kings, Princes or Presidents. The guests were seated to tables groaning with oysters, quail, turkey, old Virginia ham, celery, fruits, cake and wine served by members of Captain Davis' family and in a style that would do credit to professional caterers. Of the fifty guests invited, the following were present: Dr. John T. Fleming, David Heckinger, John W. Alexander, Geo. T. Simonds, S. S. Riley, Alexander Piper, Chas. B. Pearce, Jr., Henry Ort, L. M. Tabb, A. A. Wadsworth, of Maysville; David Trumbo and Andrew Trumbo, of Bath; A. P. Hord, of Fleming; Will McClellan, Will Gabby, John Steers, Elza Clift, Thomas Berry, Jos. Alexander, Edward Latham, Ad. Hord, Dr. Sam Marshall, Dr. Wm. Ross, Cleveland Hughes, Johnson Branch, Wm. Branch, Wm. Rice, Jeff Rice, Thos. Luttrell, Wm. Luttrell, Mat Pearce, Az Thomas, George Chim, James Marshall, Tip Evans, Richard Young, Paris Wheeler, James Duley, Thomas Byron, Henry Latham, J. E. Cahibb, J. R. Lashbrook, Thomas Brannen, J. T. Stover and Richard Davis.

Miss Pollie Davis, sister of the Captain, Mrs. Joseph Alexander, his daughter, Mrs. Richard Davis, his daughter-in-law, acted as hostesses, assisted by Mrs. Hughes, Mr. W. P. McIlvaine, Miss Lena Alexander, Miss Bertha Davis, Miss Maggie Thompson of Sharpsburg, Miss King and Miss Allie Roe.

It was remarked that none of the birds served at the feast had any shot marks upon them. This was explained by Captain Davis. He said that some time ago he informed some of his Maysville friends that the time would come when birds could be killed on his place with silver dollars and if silver dollars were not heavy enough, they could be brought down with twenty dollar gold pieces.

While the later dishes were being served, Dr. Fleming paid a compliment to the hospitality of the host, and called Mr. Wadsworth to his feet, who made a most happy response to the health of Capt. Davis. Mr. A. P. Hord also made fitting remarks speaking of Capt. Davis as a good neighbor, a straightforward trader and a genial gentleman. Remarks were also made by others. Haucke's string band from Maysville relieved the hours with excellent music, during the evening, and contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the occasion. Prominent among those who added to the pleasure of the evening was Mr. John W. Alexander, whose popularity is established in Mason. He is a candidate for sheriff, but this fact was not alluded to by himself. Judging by what we saw of Mr. Alexander, Mason will do well to select him for sheriff and he will doubtless get there.

Major Dave Trumbo, Mr. Berry and Mr. Simonds of the Central Hotel, Maysville, labored industriously to contribute to the evening enjoyment. The night was pitchy dark and most of the guests were compelled on this account to postpone their departure until the moon rose at 4 o'clock in the morning. The guests left with the heartiest wishes for Capt. Davis' continued health and good fortune. Capt. Davis last year handled one-sixth of the tobacco of Mason County. He says he is a Kentuckian and believes in Kentucky and therefore makes all of his sales at Louisville.

I regret that I cannot say the prosperity of Captain Davis continued, and that he lived happily ever afterward, but fortune seems to have turned her back upon him. He became penniless and died in the Poor House.

Thus completes my story of early Lewisburg and Mill Creek, communities rich in heritage, built by men believing in the dignity of work, facing hardships and enjoying pleasures, and most important, making God and church first in their lives.

MASON COUNTY MUSEUM
215 SUTTON STREET
MAYSVILLE, KENTUCKY 41056