

HISTORIC CARROLL COUNTY

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Compiled by Mary Masterson

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On the Cover

The Butler Mansion was built by Philip Turpin and his wife, Mary Eleanor Butler, on land settled by the Butler family in 1796. The house, now a part of General Butler State Park and open to the public, is of the Federal style and is furnished with period pieces of Kentucky workmanship.

THE BOATMAN'S HORN

By William Orlando Butler

O Boatman, wind that horn again,
For never did the list'ning air
Upon its lambent bosom bear
So wild, so soft, so sweet a strain.
What though the notes are sad and few,
By every simple boatman blown;
Yet is each pulse to nature true
And melody in every tone.
How oft in boyhood's joyous day,
Unmindful of the lapsing hours,
I've loitered on my homeward way
By wild Ohio's brink of flowers,
While some lone boatman from the deck
Poured his soft numbers to that tide,
As if to charm from storm and wreck
The boat where all his fortunes ride!

Delighted nature drank the sound,
Enchanted echo bore it round
In whispers soft, and softer still
From hill to plain and plain to hill;
Till e'en the thoughtless, frolicking boy,
Elate with hope and wild with joy,
Who gamboled by the river side,
And sported with the fretting tide,
Feels something new pervade his breast;
Bends o'er the flood his eager ear
To catch the sound, far off, yet near—
Drinks the sweet draught, but knows not why
The tear of rapture fills his eye.
And can he now, to manhood grown,
Tell why these notes, simple and lone,
As on the ravished ear they fell,
Bind every sense in magic spell? . .

THE BUTLER FAMILY

General Butler State Park is named for William Orlando Butler, son of General Percival Butler, one of the five famous Butler brothers, who with their father served with distinction in the Revolutionary War. Percival Butler was with Washington at Valley Forge and the Battle of Monmouth, and served under LaFayette at Yorktown. He is buried in the family cemetery at Butler Park with three of his sons: Thomas, Richard, and Percival.

Major Thomas Butler, aide to General Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans, later became a well-known Kentucky statesman, as did his youngest brother Percival (Pierce.)

Richard Butler was Assistant Adjutant General in the campaign of 1812, and in 1838 sponsored the organization of Carroll County, which he served as Clerk for many years.

William Orlando Butler (1791–1880), also aide to General Jackson, married Elizabeth Todd of Lexington and began a career of law and politics, representing Gallatin County in the Legislature. He was elected to Congress in 1839 and nominated Democratic candidate for Governor in 1844.

In 1846 he was appointed Major General of General Taylor's Volunteers. In Mexico he was made Commander-in-Chief of American forces and cited by Congress for distinguished service. Two years later he was nominated for Vice President on the Democratic ticket and was defeated by Taylor and Filmore.

His last public service was as one of the six Commissioners from Kentucky to the Peace Conference in Washington in 1861. Best known as a soldier-statesman, General Butler was also an eminent lawyer and poet.

HISTORY OF CARROLL COUNTY

This region of rolling hills and bottom lands, formed by glaciers at the end of the Ice Age, was first inhabited by Indians whose encampments ranged along the rivers. It was not until the early Nineteenth Century that the last tribes disappeared across the Ohio into the Northwest Territory, and their mounds and burial sites are still a feature of the countryside.

The area first entered American history as a part of Fincastle County, Virginia; but in 1776 after the people along the Kentucky River sent emissaries to Williamsburg to ask for powder, they were recognized as Kentucky County. Five years later, as the settlements grew, the area was divided into Jefferson, Fayette, and Lincoln counties and became the District of Kentucky with its own court.

When Kentucky became a state in 1792, the eastern side of the Kentucky River basin became Woodford County, and in 1799 a later division formed Gallatin County with Port William (now Carrollton) as the county seat. In 1838 Carroll County, named for Charles Carroll of Maryland, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, was formed from the western section of Gallatin. Port William became Carrollton after Charles Carroll's home in Maryland and was chosen as the county seat of the new county.

At first the towns of the area were dependent on river traffic and transportation. Carrollton and Prestonville were connected by ferry, and a road followed the shoreline of the Ohio. English, named after Captain James Wharton English (War of 1812) who owned most of the land on which the town was built, and Worthville, known as Coonskin until its name was changed to honor General William Worth (Mexican War), were accessible to the Kentucky River; but the cattle raising section around Sanders and Eagle Station used overland trails until the coming of the railroad in 1867.



One of the best log houses in this part of the country is Grass Hills, located off Interstate 71. It was built in 1823 by Lewis Sanders, who brought the first pure bred cattle from England to the Ohio Valley in 1817.



Overlooking the Ohio River, east of Ghent, the Craig House, home of the Craig family for generations, gives some of the atmosphere of the Old South to the scene.

FIRSTS in PORT WILLIAM and COUNTY

December 13, 1794, first trustees of the new town met at the home of Richard Masterson (page 7); and in their first official business named Percival Butler, father of William O. Butler, as first town clerk. May 17, 1799, the first court of the newly established Gallatin County met at the same site. John Van Pelt, with a commission from his Excellency, James Garrard, Governor of Kentucky, took the oath of office as the county's first sheriff. Percival Butler was sworn in as the first county clerk. The first wedding recorded in the county was that of Nicholas Lantz and Mary Pickett. Henry Ogburn, first resident minister, performed the ceremony on July 18, 1799.

A pair of stocks for the punishment of gossip and slander was erected July 9, 1799, on Water Street, opposite the site of the present Courthouse. The first jail, built of logs in 1800, stood on the same site.

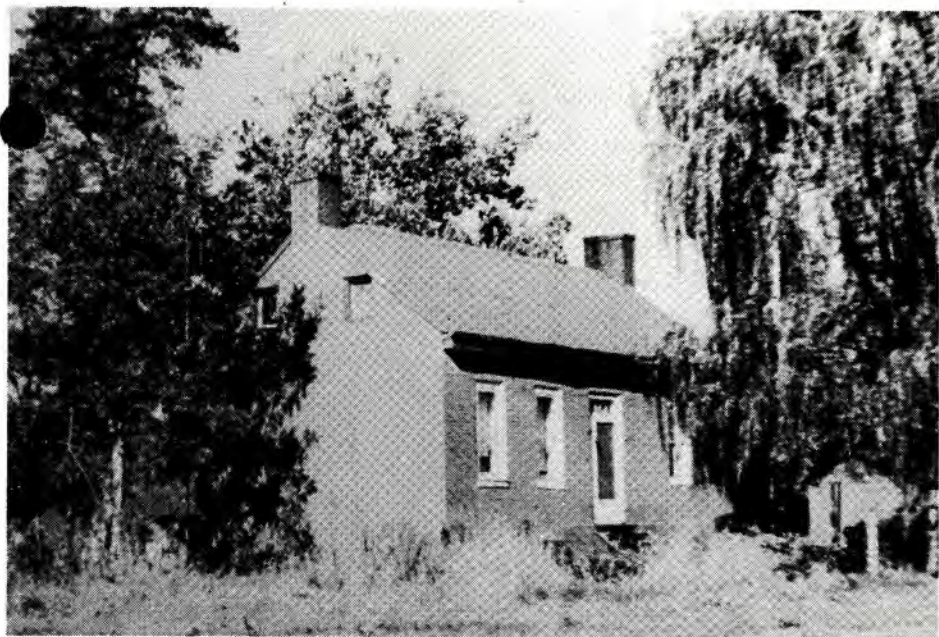
The first church, also of logs, was built on Henry Ogburn's land in 1810. Before this, church services were held in homes of the members.

The census in 1810 showed Port William with a population of 120. The census of 1838, the year Carroll County was established, showed a population of 600.

In 1838, when Carroll County was formed, Levi Abbott became the first sheriff. Richard Butler was the first county clerk; Garland Bullock was the first county judge; and William Winslow, the first county attorney.

Port William, with its name changed to Carrollton, became the county seat of the new county.

The first newspaper — the Carrollton Eagle — with G. W. Hopkins as editor and owner — began publication, May 17, 1848.



The oldest two-story brick house still standing on the Ohio between Pittsburg and Louisville was built by Richard Masterson in 1790. The bricks, burned on the site and laid in Flemish bond by slave labor, are in excellent condition today.



Quinn Acres, restored by Mrs. Ralph Quinn in the 1940's, was built by Henry Ogburn, between 1795 and 1800. The hill behind the house was the home of a group of friendly Indians, who lived there in caves.

EARLY HISTORY OF CARROLLTON

The first white man to visit the mouth of the Kentucky River was James McBride, who in 1754 came down the Ohio River with a canoeing party from Pittsburgh. Twenty years later, the area was surveyed by Hancock Taylor of Virginia, and two thousand acres were awarded to Colonel William Peachy for his services in the French and Indian Wars.

Two subsequent attempts at settlement were made: in 1784 by a man named Elliott, who was killed by Indians, and later by a Captain Ellison, who was driven away. These were followed in 1790 by General Charles Scott, who built a blockhouse as a base for his Kentucky Volunteers, a militia organized as a defense against the Indians. With this protection, settlers began to arrive, and in 1792 Colonel Peachy sold the site of 613 acres to Benjamin Craig and James Hawkins, who laid-out the town of Port William and sold lots for building.

The Kentucky General Assembly passed the Act of Incorporation in December, 1799 and named a group of residents as the first town trustees. These first trustees who completed the organization of the new town were Cave Johnson, Thomas Montague, Jeremiah Craig, Richard Masterson, John Van Pelt, and Simon Adams. A few other names from the rolls of the early townspeople were Bailey, Scott, King, Dean, Lowe, Price, Waller, Goddard, Grimes, Hawkins, Gatewood, Lee, Thomas, and Hayden.

During its first ten years, Port William became well established with a public market for produce and handicrafts and a community fish trap near the mouth of the Kentucky. The town also had a large boatyard, a wharf, which received traffic from both rivers, and a warehouse, where hogsheads of tobacco were stored for shipment on flatboats.



An outstanding example of the Georgian Colonial style, the home of General William O. Butler was built in 1825. Many of the great men of the nineteenth century were entertained here.



One of Port William's finest houses was built in 1810 by Nicholas Blair of the family that became well known in state and national politics. Now the Carrollton Nursing Home, it was the home of the VanPelts and was later bought by William F. Howe.

EARLY HISTORY OF CARROLLTON (continued)

The Point House, a well-known tavern, was built in 1805 on the site of General Scott's blockhouse and was frequented by George Rogers Clark and other explorers. Much of the early history of Port William centered around the Point and on Water Street — a street between Main and the Ohio River. This street has been completely washed away by changes in the course of the river. The first log courthouse (1800) also on Water Street was replaced in 1810 by a brick building on the present site which was obtained from Benjamin Craig.

The earlier settlers were predominantly Colonials, but in 1853 when Bishop Spalding laid the cornerstone for the first Catholic Church, there were twenty-five German and eight Irish families in the community.

In its earliest days the town's location on two navigable rivers made it a rival of Fort Washington (Cincinnati) and Corn Island (Louisville) in size and importance, and it was even mentioned as a possible site for the capital of the new nation; but nothing came of the suggestion. When in the 1860's a group of influential citizens refused to allow the L&N Railroad to run its tracks through the town because of "noise and undesirable strangers" a railroad would bring, Carrollton's future as a town, instead of a city, was settled.

Although tobacco has always been the economic mainstay of the area, the latter part of the Nineteenth Century saw the growth of several thriving industries — the Darling and later the Jett distilleries, the Carrollton Woolen Mills, established by John Howe, and the Carrollton Furniture Factory, which furnished a bed room of the White House during the Cleveland Administration.

When Carrollton marked its 100th year in 1894, its general plan was established, and many of its old houses remain to this day.



The DeMint House, corner of Third and Main, is one example of riverfront homes still standing and in good condition. It was built in the 1840's and was successively occupied by three Carrollton doctors – Dr. Winslow, Dr. Leonard Taylor, and Dr. Levin Goslee.



This house, for many years the home of the late Miss Lizzie Framme, stands on Fourth Street between Seminary and Sycamore streets. In the early 1850's before the old St. John's Church was built, Catholic services were held here.

HISTORY OF GHENT

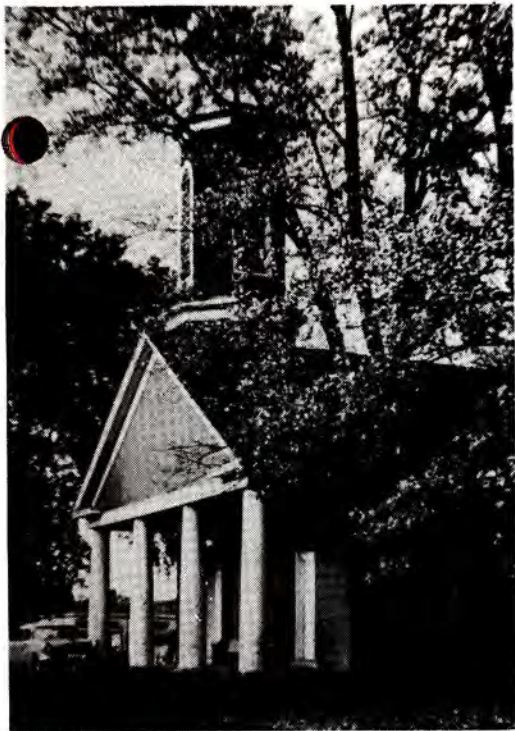
The second largest town in Carroll County was settled in 1795 and called McCool's Creek. Many of its pioneers were Virginians, a number of whom had entered Kentucky in 1781 with the Traveling Church under the leadership of Lewis Craig and Captain Ellis. Their over-land route followed well-marked buffalo traces which led to a ford just below the present ferry crossing. Other settlers brought their possessions and livestock down the Ohio on flatboats.

The town was laid out by Samuel Sanders and is known for its wide streets and fine old houses. Among its early residents were the families of Bledsoe, Craig, Ellis, Gatewood, Keene, McCann, Sanders, Tandy, Scott, and Smith.

In 1815 Henry Clay, who was a guest in the community, was asked for a suitable name for the town and suggested Ghent after the city in Belgium, where he had recently served as a member of the Peace Commission which ended the War of 1812. This name was accepted by the townspeople and used on their charter in 1824.

At the close of the War Between the States, Ghent College was built by local subscription, and for the next twenty-two years was noted throughout Kentucky and Indiana for the excellence of its music department and the high standards of its leadership.

More recently Ghent became well-known as the home of James Tandy Ellis, Kentucky poet and humorist, whose column "The Tang of the South" was a popular feature in newspapers throughout this part of the country.



The First Baptist Church in Ghent was completed in 1844 on land donated by John Scott. The cost of \$1,250 for the building was made up by contributions of money, wool, hay, and several barrels of whiskey.



This stately old house has been owned by several different families. It was built about 1838 by a Mr. Brookings as a wedding gift to his daughter, who was married to Theodorick Fisher.

A SONG OF CARROLL

By James Tandy Ellis

There's a county dear that is full of cheer
As the sunlight of the morn,
Where the latch string's long-Oh, I'll sing a song
Of the place where I was born,
Up in dear old Carroll.

Then take me back to the rock-ribbed hills,
To the valleys green and fair,
Where the blue of skies makes a paradise-
Oh, my heart still longs for there,
Up in dear old Carroll.

'Tis a pleasing thing in the balmy spring,
When the pulse of nature thrills,
To see some boy with his plow and mule
On the crest of the bloom-tipped hills;
And the world below with its weal and woe
Is a phase of itself apart,
And he sings a song as he lags along,
'Tis a song of nature's heart.

When the day is done and the crimson sun
Has sunk into the West,
When the sweet full moon comes a-rising soon
To smile on the river's breast;
Then the whippoorwill on the distant hill
Sings day song-birds to sleep,
And the stars swing high in the silvered sky
And their silent vigils keep,
Up in dear old Carroll. . . .



The Hampton House owned by five generations of the family was built by Major Moses Hoagland (War of 1812) in 1838. The Classic Revival front was added 50 years later. Mrs. Hoagland was a Paine of Lexington, grand daughter of a signer of the Declaration of Independence.



The home of Mrs. W. N. Tandy, with its rounded, instead of squared, corners in the front downstairs rooms, is built atop a perfectly symmetrical mound approximately 100 feet in diameter and 30 feet high. The mound is designated as a burial mound by both Dr. Williard Jillson and Constantine Rafinesque.

HISTORY OF HUNTER'S BOTTOM

The district bordering the Ohio just west of Carrollton and stretching for nine miles between Locust Bridge and Camp Creek was named for Mr. Hunter, who, along with Squire Boone, was the first white man to camp in this area. At that time the land was an unbroken forest, where deer and wild turkey roamed, and in the distance could be seen the curling smoke from Indian wigwams where Madison, Indiana, now stands.

In 1799 Cornelius Hoagland, a veteran of the Revolution, purchased a large tract of this territory and returned to help settle Hunter's Bottom in the big migration of 1801, which flowed across the new state of Kentucky and into what was then Gallatin County. Other pioneers of this period were the Conways, Deweeses, Ferns, Giltners, Snyders and Whites.

Hunter's Bottom soon prospered as a farming district, and the growing river traffic of the Nineteenth Century gave access to markets as far away as New Orleans.

The many fine old houses lining the river road were built between 1830 and 1850 by the second generation of the early settlers. Those of one story white brick were built by the Hoaglands, Ferns, and Whites as copies of the ones that their pioneer ancestors had left in the East, while the larger houses show the influence of the Old South.

Today some descendents of the early families live in Hunter's Bottom along with later generations of the German settlers who came here at the close of the War Between the States.

INDIANS OF THE DISTRICT

Eons ago prehistoric animals made regular trails between the salt springs of Drennon, Big Bone and Blue Lick. These traces, later enlarged by herds of buffalo, were used by Stone Age men, who made salt at the springs and set traps for the animals that gathered there. Archaeology has proved that these early hunters — some Indian legends describe them as white men — armed only with flint-tipped spears and stone axes, killed beasts whose teeth weighed eight pounds and whose ribs were eleven feet long.

This vanished race, which was wiped out by an alliance of Indian tribes, left artifacts of excellent workmanship in its local villages. The best prehistoric sites in the neighborhood are Gap Hill, Mound Hill, and the mouths of the Kentucky and Little Kentucky rivers.

In later times the Iroquois Confederation claimed this area and discouraged permanent settlement, although both war and hunting parties roamed the countryside during the summer months; and their stone meal grinders and flint hoes show that crops were raised. Since the Indians chose to stay where the soil was sandy and well drained with water near by, their relics are numerous in this district. On a single campsite, flints may be found which were made by tribes that came from Canada, the Mississippi Valley, east of the Allegheny Mountains and south of the Great Smoky Mountains. Some of these flints are of types thought to date back 12,000 years.

The Indian fort mentioned in Collin's History is near the old Heath's Ferry crossing of the Kentucky, and many Indian graves have been found on farms in Carroll County.

Contributed by Charles Johnson



Carroll County Jail was turned over to the Fiscal Court, March 1, 1880 by the building committee – J. A. Donaldson, Jno. F. Forbes, W. F. Howe, and John Hogan – with the comment – “We now present you the keys to the best prison in Northern Kentucky”.



Carroll County's fourth Courthouse was built in 1884 at a cost of \$16,437. During the 1937 flood, Coast Guard boats passed through the lower hall before the water got too high for them to go through the doorways.

CARROLL COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Carroll County Chamber of Commerce wishes to dedicate this booklet to the late Vernon P. Gillock, former mayor of Carrollton, to all the people of Carrollton and Carroll County, and to the thousands of visitors who tour the area each year.

The Chamber acknowledges its indebtedness to those Kentucky pioneers, who were foresighted enough to lay the groundwork for the town of today, and to all those dedicated citizens of today, who have also contributed to the growth and progress of the community.

Carrollton today has good churches; one of the most adequate educational systems to be found anywhere; medical and hospital facilities, of which it can be proud; and growing industries, which are bringing in new people and new opportunities for continued growth.

The Carroll County Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to promote progress through cooperation of business and government, and it promotes activities and programs to this end throughout the year.

The Carroll County Chamber of Commerce stands ready to help anyone at any time it can be of service to individuals and to the community. Harold Clifton, president, Carroll County Chamber of Commerce.