

HISTORIC KENTUCKY

Photo and Text by J. Winston Coleman Jr.



MARSHALL KEY HOUSE, MASON COUNTY
—On the east side of Main Street (U. S. 68) in Washington, four miles south of Maysville, is this stately two-story brick house erected in the early 1800s on a lot which Joseph Brown purchased from the town trustees in 1799. Col. Marshall Key became owner of the property in 1807. He was an outstanding citizen in the town and on April 18, 1816, married Harriet Sellman, daughter of Dr. John Sellman, a pioneer physician and first president of the Cincinnati Medical Association. In the summer of 1833, Mary Dutton and Harriet Beecher (later Stowe) of the faculty of Western Female Institute in Cincinnati, visited Elizabeth, daughter of Col. and Mrs. Key, in their home in Washington, then the county seat of Mason County. During their visit to the Key family Miss Beecher witnessed a slave auction on the lawn in front of the old stone Courthouse. Later, in 1851, after her marriage to Prof.

Calvin E. Stowe, the family moved to Brunswick, Maine, where Mrs. Stowe drew upon her experiences and observations in Kentucky to write the famous antislavery novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The Key house passed out of the family in 1866, and from that time to 1879, it belonged to John S., and Charles W. Forman. James Marshall and wife owned the property next until 1930, when Amos and Calvin Case and William Davis acquired it. In 1951, James and Ruth Allen, the present owners, purchased the old home. Entrance from the sidewalk leads through a beautiful Georgian doorway into a wide hall with winding stairway. To the left is a large room, 20 x 24 feet, with a fine hand-carved mantel and closets that reach from the floor to the ceiling. About 75 years ago the one-story frame portion on the right containing three rooms was added to the ancient structure.