

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Historic Places of Mason County

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HISTORIC PLACES OF MASON COUNTY

BY

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HISTORIC PLACES OF MASON COUNTY.

In the spring of the year 1775, Simon Kenton and Thomas Williams came to Kentucky from Virginia, having explored the country for miles around, and finding a beautiful fertile spot with a fine, clear spring of water (a very important thing in those days), they camped there for several months and built a cabin: planting the first corn grown north of the Licking River. This cabin was built before the first fort.

These men being of rather a nomadic disposition wandered on, but returned again to this spot in 1779 and built a cabin, which they called Kenton Station. This cabin was added to afterward, and was owned by the Forman family, who sold it to Dr. Alex Marshall. Some thirty years ago, he tore away all but one room and built quite a handsome residence. That one room is still there, with its high mantle and quaint old fireplace, and is used as a kitchen by its occupants, John Chambers and his wife, who was Miss Annie Wood. (Mr. Chambers is a grandson of Governor Chambers of Iowa, an ex-Kentuckian.)

The town of Washington was laid out in 1784 by Arthur Fox and William Wood, but was not established as a town until 1786. According to Collins' History, Maysville was established as a town two years later, 1788. There are many places of historic interest in old Mason: one of the oldest is the house built by Arthur Fox, (which still stands opposite the home of Miss Lillie Blanchard). It must have been built as early, or perhaps earlier than 1786, for in that year he married and brought his wife there. This house has the distinction of being the birth place of the two first white children born in the county, they were Dolly Wood Forman and Elizabeth Fox Graham.

Probably the oldest house in the county of any importance is the home of General Henry Lee. It is of frame and was built by him

in 1795 or 6. He had previously to this time built a block house immediately in front of where the house now stands, as a protection against the Indians. Afterward he built a log cabin and brought his father and mother to live with him. About the same time, Alex K. Marshall built a handsome brick house in close proximity to Leewood, (as the place was called). These houses were finished in beautiful style, the woodwork being of walnut, the walls and stairways handsomely wainscoted after the fashion of the times: every part of them was wrought by hand, nails and all. They both had hard wood floors. Each of these families had its own burying ground. Alexander Marshall lies buried in the garden of his old home, and General Lee's father, Stephen Lee, who died in 1791, lies buried in the family burying ground, one of the oldest in the county; six generations are buried there.

The old court house at Washington was once a beautiful structure, it was built in 1794 of limestone, but has now fallen to decay. After its day of usefulness as a courthouse had passed, it was used as a school house, and many learned and influential people received their schooling there. It is still used for a school house, such of it as is left, the court room and the colonial porch were torn away some years ago.

Just across from the court house stands the house where General Albert Sidney Johnston was born, it is not an imposing residence now, but may have been in his time. We may say of it, as some poet said of Alexander the Great, "'Twas not his stature made him great, but greatness of his name." So 'twas the greatness of Johnston's name that adds lustre to his birthplace.

The Duke property stands on Back Street around the corner from the Johnston house, it was built by Dr. Bazil Duke, whose wife was Charlotte Marshall, a sister of the Chief Justice. The family burying ground was just opposite.

The old Marshall home on the hill is another place of note in Washington, it was built by Captain Thomas Marshall, another brother of the Chief Justice, in 1800. The father and mother of the Chief Justice

lived and died there, and are buried in the family burying ground, (which lies adjacent to it) with many succeeding generations.

The house built by Governor John Chambers in the early part of the nineteenth century is now occupied by Colonel Maltby and his son, the latter a grandson of Colonel Goggin who owned it for many years; it has recently been remodeled and modernized, and is quite a beautiful and attractive place. Another old house is the one built by Mr. Robert Taylor at a very early date, now owned and occupied by a son and daughter.

The old Bayless house, built by Captain Benjamine Bayless, is a well known place, it is now owned by the Forman family, and has long been a happy place of resort for the many relatives and friends.

The home of Miss Jennie Wood, built by her grandfather, William Lashbrook, is a quaint handsome old place, and has more handsome old furniture than any place in the county.

I neglected to mention another old place in the county, the Beckley place, (built by another pioneer) adjacent to the homes of the Marshall's and Lee's. It was the property for many years of the late George Wood, and, like many other old landmarks, it and the Alexander K. Marshall house were burned some years ago.

There seems to be some dispute among historians regarding the date of building of the first brick house in Mason County, some of them claim that the the Alexander D. Orr house is the oldest, and others the Alexander K. Marshall house. It may be hard at this date to settle the question, and as I have used my best endeavor to be accurate, I shall not dispute it.

There many other places of note in the county, but time and place forbid me. I must be brief as, "Brevity is the soul of wit", lest my hearers grow weary.

Lucy C. Lee