Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Historical Sketch of Dover

Part 1

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF DOVER AND ITS FOUNDER

From The Public, Dover, Kentucky, Saturday, August 16, 1902

The early history of many obscure towns is very often of great interest to succeeding posterily; and, as a contribution to historical annals, is sometimes of vast importance to furnishing data which helps to fill out and complete the full and valuable narrative of early pioneer times.

The landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock; the settlement of Manhattan by the Dutch, or the laying out of Philadelphia by William Penn, were not a whit more romantic, dangerous or tragical, than the true stories of the early settlement of hundreds of towns in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and other former border states.

The most thrilling stories of Western adventure remain unwritten history. So it is with Dover, Ky., whose early history remains unwritten. We ask any one to furnish us with one word of recorded history bearing upon the early and remote settlement of Dover? Yet the settlement of our town was frought with the same elements of danger, adventure and bloodshed as Boonesboro, Lexington and other places in Kentucky.

Miniature lakes were scattered throughout the forest. The largest of these lakes stood where Lucretia and Market streets cross each other. It covered several acres and was afterwards named "Lake Amos" because old "Uncle" Amos Sroufe had a cabin on the South bank of the lake where he made his home. Many of our older inhabitants remember Amos Sroufe and his cabin. The old structure was moved 40 years ago to Hall or Second street. Part of the building known as the Carrie Sroufe house (now owned by Wm. Brooks) is made from the Amos Sroufe cabin. Amos is long since dead, the lake is drained, and its former site is now covered by substantial houses.

Here in the primeval forest of giant trees, about the year 1784, was built the first log cabin or block house on the site of what has since been called Dover.

Arthur Fox, Sr. who preempted the entire Dover bottom by Treasury warrants in 1784 and prior years, was born in England, on February 27, 1764. He came to Kentucky from Virginia in 1780, and first settled in Fayette county.
He was the first representative from Kentucky in the Virginia Legislature from Mason, then Bourbon county, Virginia. He was a cousin of Charles James Fox the eminent English statesman, was a son of Sir Henry Fox. His mother was a daughter of Lord Bailey.

Arthur Fox, Sr. was married to Mary Young, a daughter of Thomas Young of Virginia. To them were born four children two sons, Arthur Fox, Jr. and Richard Fox, and three daughters. Arthur Fox, Sr. was Deputy Sheriff of Fayette County Kentucky (then Virginia) and was a surveyor. About 1782 Mr. Fox moved from Lexington to Washington, Ky., where he at once entered upon the work of surveying and preempting land for himself. Arthur Fox died at Washington, Ky., on April 11, 1794, and was buried in the old Baptist cemetery there. His modest grave is simply marked by a gray and weather-beaten marble slab, and although buried over 108 years ago, his grave and tombstone are well preserved and stand on a beautiful blue grass eminence in the old ivy-grown cemetery.

Mr. Fox left a widow and five children. The children were:

Arthur Fox, Jr., the founder of Dover, whose picture adorns this article.

Richard Fox, born a few weeks after his father's death.

Elizabeth Fox, who married Richard Graham.

Matilda Fox, who married Andrew Wood.

Mary Fox, who married Lawson Dobyns.

H I S W I L L

By the will of Mr. Fox he left a large portion of his estate to his wife, and the balance he left to his children in equal parts. He particularly stated in his will that certain lands were "to be sold and the money used in educating his children in the best manner." To his son Arthur Fox, Jr. he bequeathed the tract of land "lying on the Ohio at the mouth of Lees Creek: excluding the 40 acres sold to Jerremiah Washburn."

Thus passed away at the age of 40 years, a Virginia gentleman, who at the risk of life and fortune, plunged into the wilds of Kentucky to survey and mark out thousands of acre of virgin soil for his children and future posterity to till and enjoy.

Of the vast amount of land which he left, there are now less than 80 acres in the Fox family. Judge E. J. Fox, a grandson owns 45 acres adjoining Dover, which has never been out of the family's possession.

Capt. A. C. Respess and his brother Arthur Fox Respess, the latter now in the Auditor's office at Frankfort, Ky.,own 34 acres inside the corporate limits of Dover, which belonged to the Fox estate, they being great grandsons of the first Arthur Fox.

It is a matter of interest that the oldest deed in the County Clerk's office was that of Simon Kenton to Arthur Fox and William Wood for the town site of Washington in 1789, and it is from the former grantee that the large families of Wood and Fox now resident in this county are descended.

The date of record of the deed is 1789, but by a memorandum of Arthur Fox, now in the hands of the writer, giving a statement of the lands and accounts between Wood & Fox, the following entry occurs written by said Arthur Fox and dated 1787.

"To cash paid Simon Kenton for the first purchase of the land where the town of Washington now stands, which is 324-14-9." Thus, 115 years ago, Arthur Fox and Wm. Wood paid Simon Kenton about $1,500. for the town site of Washington.

To give our readers a better idea of the extend of the land located in Kentucky by Mr. Fox, we herewith append a list of deeds and the number of acres owned by him in Mason County only:

On Lees Creek, above and below.....5,091
On Lawrence Creek.....948
On the North Fork.....640
On Johnson's Fork.....1,400
Bought from Simon Kenton.....4,940
Bought from John Marshall.....525

Total.....13,534

The other lands surveyed and entered by him in Kentucky (then Virginia) on Virginia Treasury warrants, amounted to about 15,975 acres, which gave him a total of 29,509 acres of Kentucky land, valued at his death in 1794 by his executer, General Henry Lee, at 34,818 or about $175,000.

In 1785 Mr. Fox entered into partnership with Mr. Wm. Wood, a Baptist preacher, who was a member of "Henderson's Transylvania Company" at Boonesboro. We give these facts to show to what a large extent Mr.Fox figured in the early settlement of Mason County; particularly of Washington, Maysville and Dover.

He was a half owner of the town of Washington, and was one of its first Trustees. He was also one of the first Trustees of the town of Limestone (Maysville). He was the original surveyor, and owner, and entered all the land where Dover now stands and a great part of the adjoining territory. He was closely associated with Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton for over 10 years, in Mason County. Boone was also a member of the first Board of Trustees of Limestone. Therefore, Arthur Fox was the principal surveyor, land owner, official, and pioneer settler of our county.

But it is to Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton, the brave and daring Indian fighters and heroic pioneers, that our county of Mason owes its first settlement. Boone came through the Cumberland Gap from the Carolinas, and Kenton down the Ohio from Virginia.

In 1700, Arthur Fox and Alexander Dalrymple Orr, were elected members of the Virginia Legislature from Mason county. At that time Lexington was a stockade and was the capital of Kentucky, and Cincinnati was never dreamed of. After 1787, Lexington became an open settlement and the future Blue Grass city grew rapidly.

A few years after Mr. Fox's death, his widow Mary Young Fox, married General Henry Lee, of Washington, Ky., a member of the famous Lee family of Virginia who came to Kentucky in 1779. General Lee was probably the most prominent citizen of Mason County at the time of his marriage. He was afterwards President of the Washington Branch Bank of Kentucky and was County Lieutenant for the whole Northeast military section of Kentucky.

General Lee, not only married the widow of Arthur Fox, but he succeeded to his vast business interest, his lands and his 60 slaves. He became guardian of his minor children and settled up the estate among the heirs. He was a member of the Virginia Legislature from Kentucky, and also a member of the convention which adopted the first constitution of the State. He came to Kentucky as a surveyor. He amassed a large fortune. He died in 1845; 51 years after the death of Arthur Fox, and at the age of 88 years.

Lees Creek was named after General Lee, and his descendants are among the most prominent residents of our county.

Jerremiah Washburn, and his family, were the first persons to settle on the land which is now occupied by the town of Dover. In 1786 on the high bank on the west side of Lees Creek, where it formerly flowed into the Ohio river, near where the Hess property now stands, the elder Washburn and his son Cornelius, or "Neal" Washburn, built the first house in Dover. It was a crude log block house with a single story and slab roof built solely for protection against the attacks of Indians and wild animals.

Among the private papers of Arthur Fox, Sr., in the possession of the writer, who is a great grandson of the first Arthur Fox; is recorded the following memoranda in his own hand writing:
"J. Washburn given permission to build a log house at the mouth of Lees Creek,"
And in Mr. Fox's will he mentions "40 acres sold to Jerremiah Washburn;" but this land was further up Lees Creek.

The will also specifically says:
"I give and bequeath to Jerremiah Washburn, now living at the mouth of Lees Creek, two hundred acres of my military land on the North West side of the Ohio, to be taken out of my part of Samuel Hopkins' track No. 610, agreeably to the general quality of said land, he giving up a

bond against me for about seven pounds."

Mr. Fox then further mentions "my plantation on Lees Creek," etc. Thus, the Washburn block house on the bank of Lees Creek, became an out post of refuge in danger and a strong defense against the Indians.

Neal Washburn was a celebrated Indian scout, trapper and hunter, and the friend of Boone and Kenton.

Collins' History of Kentucky speaks of "Cornelius Washburn who had the cunning of a fox for ambuscading, and the daring of a lion for encountering."

The adventure of Neal Washburn and the other members of his party, while occupying the block house at Dover, would fill this paper, if all were known; but the Washburn family left here about the beginning of the 19th century and it is to be regretted that his interesting biography remains unwritten.

However, we know that he accompanied Boone and Kenton on nearly all of their hunting trips and excursions against the Indians of Ohio and Indiana, and that these celebrated Indian fighters often made the Washburn blockhouse a rendesvous, and many a Redskin has bit the dust on the Dover bottom killed by a bullet from the trusty rifle of these frontiersmen, from a louphole in the Washburn house.

Daniel Boone lived at Limestone in 1786, 87 and 88, and Simon Kenton resided at Washington.

Washington, Ky., was first called "Fox's Station," and was laid out as a town in 1786, by Arthur Fox and Rev. Wm. Wood.

Simon Kenton preempted thousands of acres of land in and around Washington and finally settled down with his wife Sarah Kenton to make his home on a splendid track of land near Washington where he built a stone house which is still standing.

At that time all the merchandise sold in Lexington was brought down the Ohio River in boats to Limestone, now Maysville, and hauled by wagons on dirt roads through old Washington and on to Lexington. Lexington in 1792 was known as "the Athens of the West," and had 1,000 inhabitants. Every dollars worth of goods which passed through Limestone and Washington to Lexington; were vigilantly guarded by Boone, Kenton, Neal Washburn and other frontiersmen, from Indian attacks; but in spite of their watchfulness, several caravans were destroyed, and many men, women and children slain and scalped.

Fortified possession of Mason County was taken by the white men in 1784; the same year the Dover blockhouse was built by the Washburns, and, although the Indians many times attacked it, it was never burned or destroyed by them but stood until 1798.

There were ten of these long cabins or blockhouses build between the mouth of Lees Creek on the West and Mill Creek on the East. They served as a chain of small forts to defend Kentucky against the incursions of the Indians.

The last Indian incursion into Kentucky, according to Collin's History, took place in the summer of 1793. "The scouts, with Neal Washburn among them," had been patrolling the Kentucky bank and discovered where a party of about twenty Indians had crossed the Ohio, and sunk their canoes in the mouth of Holt's creek below Augusta. Simon Kenton was apprised of the invasion, and at once dispatched messengers to the settlements to warn them of the Indians, while he collected a small party of hunters and went after the Indians where their canoes were concealed in Holt's creek. Here Kenton and his party lay concealed 4 days before they heard anything of the Indians. On the fourth day of their ambuscade, their patience was

rewarded for the Indians soon approached the river with 30 horses which they had stolen from the white settlers of Bourbon county. Kenton and his party killed six of the Indians and one white renegade who was with them; destroyed their canoes and recovered all the horses. The other Redskins fled.

This was the last incursion the Indians ever made in Kentucky; and from that time forward the white people were unmolested.

Jerremiah Washburn and his son Neal Washburn, were in their cabin one afternoon in August 1787, when they were attracted to the river by cries of a person in distress. Being accustomed to this method of decoy and deception, practiced by renegade white men and Indians to ambush immigrant _____ who were coming down the _____. As they approached the river, and parting the thick underbrush, they saw coming down the stream two boats, one loaded with men, women and children, and the other with horses, cows, wagons etc. The voice was from the Ohio shore, and called pitteously to help, and asked to be saved from the Indians, as they were only a few miles away.

Waiting until the boats came opposite to the mouth of Lees Creek, the Washburns called out to the men on the boat to beware that the Indians were about to ambush them and advised them to keep in the middle of the river and to pay no attention to any cried of distress from shore. At the same time the Washburns carried their large canoe down to the river and got ready to go to the boat. Some of the men on board the boats would not heed the warning of the Washburns, but steered for the North bank of the river and when in 100 feet of the shore, the white man who had decoyed them disappeared in the woods, and at the same time a party of 14 Indians sprang to the waters edge and opened fire on the occupants of the boats killing one man and wounding two more. Several of the horses were also killed.

The Washburns by this time were close to the boats, but kept behind them out of range of the Indian rifles. When the firing ceased the occupants of the boats were confused and terrified, and some of the women and children were in danger of springing overboard, when Neal Washburn yelled to them to lay down flat in the boat which all did. Neal and his father then arose in their canoe killed two of the foremost Indians who were swimming towards the boats. By this time other three men on board had sprang for their rifles and opened a fusillade upon the savages who turned and hurriedly made for shore, but not until four of them had been killed. The others of the party escaped to the woods and were seen no more.

The Washburns, boarded the boats and induced the men and women to steer towards the Kentucky shore where they landed a mile below Lees Creek. The dead body of the man killed, who was named McAllster, was buried, and the party pushed the boats up to Lees Creek where they remained for the night. The next morning Jerremiah Washburn started for Kenton's station. The immigrants were en route to the Falls of the Ohio, where they settled in safety. Neal Washburn afterwards married Hannah McAllster, the oldest daughter of the man who lost his life.

The Washburn house was built on the trail from Ohio to Kentucky and was known as "Washburn's Blockhouse" or "Station Trail," because Boone, Kenton, Wood, Fox, and the other pioneers, made it their stopping place when in that vicinity.

It was from this house that Fox with his surveying instruments; ran the first and final lines in locating all the land about Dover. Jerremiah Washburn and Neal Washburn

carried the stakes and chain for Fox and assisted him in the most of his surveys. For that reason Mr. Fox gave Washburn permission to erect his cabin at the mouth of the creek, and in his will bequeathed him 200 acres of his Ohio land. The wives of the Washburns, never came to reside in the Lees Creek blockhouse, until 1792 when all danger from the Indians had passed, and other log houses sprang up rapidly around them. The Washburn block house had entirely disappeared before 1800. Arthur Fox Jr., the subject of this article, whose picture is shown above, was born in Washington, Mason county Ky., and March 20th, 1792, and was the oldest son of Arthur Fox and Mary Young Fox.

Washington even at that early period, which was also the birth-year of Kentucky, was a colony of accomplished Colonial dames and gentlemen. It was superior to Lexington as an intellectual center; therefore, Mr. Fox grew to manhood under the most favorable conditions and environments. His father passed away when he was only two years old; but, under the beneficient influence of his noble mother and the celebrated teachers of Washington, he grew to manhood's estate, an accomplished, and courtly gentleman, without ostentation, and a finished scholar.

Mann Butler and Rev. Loring Andrews were among his tutors.

Arthur Fox and Richard Fox were grandsons of Sir Henry Fox, who married a daughter of Lord Balley, of England.

There is no difficulty in establishing the relationship of the Fox family to our first President, George Washington, through his mother, Mary Ball.

John Fox, Jr., the novelist, is at present the most illustrious representative of the family name.

Mr. Fox's "lines were cast in pleasant places" nearly all his life. Inheriting a vast estate in the then rising commonwealth, he had but to sit still and see his broad plantation of 2,200 acres of fertile land on the beautiful Ohio, increase in value ___-fold, Thus with health, education, wealth and a genial and true-hearted nature, it is not to be wondered at that he matured into the noble person whom all unite in declaring him.

He enlisted in the war of 1812 and was in the battle of the Thames, fought in October, 1814, when Tecumseh fell.

In 1814, at the age of 22 years, he was united in marriage to Miss Lucretia Taylor, the third daughter of Ingatins and Barbara (Bowie) Taylor, of Hagerstown, Md., who came to Washington in that year to make her home with her sister, Mrs. John Chambers. Mr. Chambers was afterwards on the staff of General W. H. Harrison, who, after his election to the Presidency, appointed Mr. Chambers, Governor of Iowa Territory, which office he filled with distinction.

Their marriage occured at the home of Governor Chambers, and no wedding in old Washington ever equaled it, both in the splendor of its solemnization or the high social standing and distinguished personal appearance of the bride and groom.

The bride, particularly at that time, "bore herself like a duchess."

The couple at one took up their residence at the home Mr. Fox had made in the wilderness, near Dover, which he afterward laid out in 1818.

Here in the Fox mansion, which he named Webster, from 1814 to his death in 1855 - forty one years - was dispensed the most open, elegant _____ hospitality ever enjoyed in a Southern home.

Here amid every luxury wealth could purchase, with a _____ library of classic English literature, sped the happy years away at Webster with a constant stream of courtly guest from every city in the South.

There was music, feasting and dancing and all the other innocent amusements which were deemed essential accomplishments in old times.

He kept a stable of one hundred Kentucky thoroughbreds and had fifty slaves. He was the most humane of masters to his menials and never allowed them to suffer cruel punishment.

The magnificent silver trophies won by his horses at New Orleans, Memphis and other places, are still owned and treasured by the family.

To Mr. and Mrs. Fox were born thirteen children, eleven of whom reached maturity - four sons, and seven daughters. They were:
Thomas Hall Fox, who married Miss Mary Wood, his cousin, of Washington and died in Denver, Col., in 1872;

Charles James Fox, who married Miss Mary Matilda Nelson of Washington, who now lives in Dover. Mr. Fox died in 1896, aged 84 years.

Arthur Fox the third of the name who married Miss Fanny Lightfoot Taylor, and who died recently in Harrisburg, N.C.

Edward Jefferson Fox, of Dover.

Elizabeth Graham Fox, who married William P. Greer, of Baltimore. She died in 1843, aged 23 years.

Miss Mary Fox who never married, died in 1878.

Jane Matilda Fox, who married Hon. Thomas A. Respess, of Maysville, who survives his wife.

Hannah Chambers Fox, now of Maysville, married the late Captain Thomas A. Curran, of Harrison County, Ky., who died in Dover in 1888.

Lucretia Howard Fox, now of Dover, married Dr. James Conquest Cross, of Lexington, Ky., a distinguished surgeon.

Nannie Letetia Fox, married 'Squire Leonard C. Anderson, now of Bourbon County, Ky., and:

Theodosia Fox the youngest daughter, married James C. Cross. She died in Memphis in 1869. Mr. Cross now resides on his plantation in Arkansas.

Mr. Fox died at Webster, Oct. 13, 1855. Universally. How he stood in the public esteem can be better understood by simply calling the attention of our readers to the subjoined notice of his death, which is taken from a contemporary newspaper.

Mrs. Fox died, August 22, 1875, aged 79 years. Besides possessing great personal beauty and charming affability she united with those graces a mind stored with the most comprehensive information gathered by a lifetime devoted to reading, especially the old English authors.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Fox were members of the Church; but as in every thing else, there was no false pretense or ostentation about their religious views.

So like a tale that is told, endeth these two lives.

From the Maysville Express, 1856.

OBITUARY.

Died at Webster, his residence, near Dover, Mason County, Ky., on Saturday, October 13, 1855, Arthur Fox, Esquire, in the 64th year of his age.

Mr. Fox was a gentleman too long and well known in this community to require any eulogy, other than a reference to his life, to secure that respect for his memory which the just always accord to the character of the good. He was a gentleman, every inch of him; a gentleman all over, a gentleman

inwardly and outwardly; a gentleman, pure hearted; a gentleman really of the kind we all love to call of the old style. If we were called on to testify as to his character - and we think we knew him to the bottom - we should say that his chiefest characteristic, was purity and amiability of heart. He was the kindest husband and father: the most unwavering friend; the most exemplary member of society; his heart, his hand , his house, and his purse were open to every body, and never in his long life did we ever hear, nor do we believe, that he ever displayed in his temper, his disposition, or his acts, one trace of meanness unmanliness, or malignity towards any human being.

His house, evermore, was the seat of an elegant, generous, a boundless hospitality; and thousands - yes, literally thousands - old and young, will remember with admiration and gratitude, and with a sigh "for old lang sine" the days and weeks of unsophisticated enjoyment that have passed under the roof of this "fine old Kentucky gentleman.

He died as he had lived, "sans pure et sans" reproache," without fear and without reproach; the tears not only of his numerous and interesting family, but all of his neighbors, even of strong men and women, bedewed the earth that made a hillock over his grave. An immense crowd, embracing all his neighbors, and friends from a distance of many miles - perhaps more that a thousand men and women - joined the melancholly procession that attended the funeral services, religious, and Masonic, with which his remains were consigned to the tomb.

Mr. Fox, though a son of one of the earliest pioneers of Kentucky, was happily blessed with the means of a superior education; and though no man was ever freer from mere display and ostentation, he was known to every man as a good scholar. He loved learning for its own sake, not to make himself seem brilliant; and in this, he paid his best homage to letters.

Long, long, will his character be green in our memory and his virtues be cherished forever.
(To be continued)

THE FOX FAMILY

They are Descendants of Sir Henry Fox, Who Married a Daughter of Lord Bailey, of England.

From newspaper article, ca. 1906; historical collection of the Mason County Museum

Miss Rosa Freeman, of Austin, Texas, who is a member of the State Historical Society and a Colonial Dame of high standing, has been in this city for several days looking up the records of the Fox family.

Her grandfather was Richard Fox, brother to Arthur Fox one of the early settlers of this county, and they in their turn were grandsons of Sir Henry Fox, who married a daughter of Lord Bailey, of England.

Miss Freeman has had no difficulty in establishing the relationship of the Fox family to our first President, George Washington, through his mother, Mary Ball. John Fox, Jr., the novelist, is at present the most illustrious representative of the family name.

It is a matter of interest that the oldest deed in the County Clerk's office was that of Simon Kenton to Arthur Fox and William Wood for the town site of Washington in 1789, and it is from the former grantee that the large families of Wood and Fox now resident in this count are descended.