

TAYLOR'S MILL

Mason Co.

The spot where Taylor's Mill was located is on the Taylor's Mill Road, 3 1/2 miles, the last 2 1/2 gravel, off the Fleming Road. The Taylor's Mill Road runs into the Fleming Road at the little roadside park north of Lewisburg.

The raising of corn was one of the prime concerns of the early settlers. After the corn was raised it still had to be converted into meal or hominy before it made suitable food for human beings. In pioneer times this process was very time consuming. Daniel Drake in his Pioneer Life in Kentucky writes of the hand mill, the horse mill and the water mill for grinding corn and other grains. The hand mill was indeed a very laborious process. The horse mill, a great improvement, required two horses for power. My old cousin remembers that the owner of the horse mill usually furnished one horse and the horse of the patron of the mill, who brought his corn on horseback, would be used too. Water power mills were a great improvement though they could be used only when the water was sufficient and even then a part of the water<sup>was</sup> used to saw boards.

The first water mill established in Mason County, with distillery attached, was probably that of John Nichols, about the year 1787, on the north side of the North Fork of the Licking, half a mile below the mouth of Mill Creek. (Collins: History of Kentucky. v.2,p.553) Taylor's Mill was established later as we shall see but though it has long been out of existence the name persists to this day, as the name of a road, the Taylor's Mill Road.

It is an interesting example of how one family name becomes associated with a place and continues to be used long after the association was broken. I have enjoyed working with the deeds recorded in the Mason County clerk's office and while I have found a great deal of interest to me I have not yet worked out a complete record of this mill. The first time I find the name Taylor's Mill used is in 1835 (Deed Book 42,p.162) when John D. Taylor and his wife, Elizabeth, of Vigo County, Indiana, conveyed for \$500, and now I am quoting verbatim from the deed "to Robert Taylor, Jr. the mill now commonly called Taylors Mills including one acre taken out of the Shipley tract and condemned for Charles Pelham." I did not understand about the condemned acre but in an early edition of the Kentucky Statutes I find the law that within certain conditions land on the opposite bank of a stream could be condemned to the extent of an acre, in order that a dam could be built to provide waterpower for a mill. This is what was done at Taylor's Mill. In Order Book A of the Mason County Court December 1790, Charles Pelham requests to have an acre condemned for the mill site. It was ordered that a jury of

twelve be summoned to meet on the land and report on the subject. The report was made at the January 1791 term of court and Pelham's request was granted. The acre of land granted was valued at 10 shillings. The Charles Pelham here mentioned is evidently the same Major Pelham whose grave has recently been marked by the Daughters of the American Revolution as one of the Revolutionary heroes buried in our county. O. B. reminisced to Dr. John Phister, in a letter of September 3, 1883, on Major Charles Pelham. He was awarded nearly 7,000 acres of land in Kentucky for his services in the Revolution. It was valued at only about 33 cents an acre and was lost through profitless litigation. Land titles, in early Kentucky, were often very confusing and because of inaccuracies many people lost their lands.

This, however, is like beginning in the middle. I first find the name Taylor's Mill in 1835 but the mill belonged to the Taylors for 25 years before that time and it was evidently so-called. I learned from Miss Mary Wood Taylor and her brother that the mill was owned by an ancestor of theirs, their father's grandfather, and that he took possession, perhaps around 1812. This man, a Robert Taylor, married a first cousin of Daniel Drake, Osee Drake. They had two sons, Robert Taylor, Jr. and John Drake Taylor. I find part of this information in Daniel Drake's book Pioneer Life in Kentucky and the rest in the copy of the will of Desiree Darke which is given in Clift's History of Maysville and Mason County. The ownership of the mill was transferred to heirs of Abraham Drake, deceased, Reine Drake and Robert and John Drake Taylor on Sept. 12, 1810 (Deed Book M p.21) including the acre condemned for Charles Pelham for a mill seat. Milling was not a new occupation for the new owners because Abraham Drake, their grandfather, had built two mills on Lee's Creek a little north of Mayslick before 1794.

The first transfer of this property I find recorded was from Charles Pelham to Lewis Bullock on March 30, 1799. (Deed Book B, p.365). It is stated in the deed that Major Pelham was at that time residing on the tract and that on a part of it was erected the mills commonly called Milton Mills. Along with the transfer of the land the following effects of Charles Pelham were sold to Lewis Bullock at this time for two hundred pounds: One negro boy named Peter, one negro woman named Jane and her child, two beds and their furniture, one desk and book case, three tables, two horses, six head of black cattle, and all the farming utensils. I have not been able to find anything further about Milton Mills.

The property passes out of the Taylor family's possession on August 22, 1854 when it was conveyed from Jane Taylor to John L. Parker. It changed hands often in the next years. Among others the owners were Benjamin H. Farrow, Daniel M. Farris and Edwin Roe and then it was bought by John R. Brodt on Nov. 29, 1879. Mrs. R. C. Knapp, who spent much of her youth in the old Grant House across the creek from the mill, remembers it as an idyllic spot.

At that time there was, in addition to the mill, a blacksmith shop and a small country store, all owned by Mr. Brodt. He was a very thrifty German and kept the entire premises in a parklike condition. It was a favorite spot for outings and her description of the boating (1 boat) swimming and fishing, there were wonderful fish in the North Fork, and the skating and sledding in winter sound like Currier and Ives prints labelled Summer Fun and Winter Frolic. As many as 50 or 75 people could be seen fishing along the banks on a fine day. Of course a girl would remember this side of mill life better than the actual business conducted there. However, she does recall that the blacksmith shop was a busy place and that the mill with its two immense bins of corn was well patronized. I asked her about the name of the mill and she said that though Mr. Brodt owned it and managed it successfully, it was always known as Taylor's Mill.

After Mr. Brodt's time, he sold the mill on Feb. 22, 1901 to Anderson Deneston, it had several owners until it was acquired by Mr. R. C. Knapp, part in 1909, the rest in 1913. Largely through his wife's influence, I think, because he married Jennie Cooper, the little girl who had lived so near and always loved the mill, he rebuilt the dam which had washed out, and operated the mill until 1916. He ground only meal and was evidently not too successful, the day of the water-powered mill was rapidly passing. Today the mill is no more. We have examined the location and can see parts of the retaining wall of the mill pond. It is still a beautiful spot.

The name Taylors Mill Road I find first in April 15, 1876. (Deed Book 78, p.523). I have not been able to get the record of the building of this road. Mrs. Houston Hall says that it was built by her grandfather, George Wells. At the time she first remembers it she was a small girl. The road was narrow and rough but to her it was very elegant as she, a member of the family, was permitted to go through the toll gate without paying.

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