

Old River Road Of Long Ago Recalled

By Clifton Wood (C.W.) Bransford

Messenger & Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 14 June 1931, pp.1B & 9B:

"Old River Road" Of Long Ago Recalled

Skirted Ohio For Distance Of Several Miles East Of Owensboro And On It Were Homes Of Distinguished Citizens Of State And Nation

(BY C. W. BRANSFORD)

For more than a century Richmond, Va., and Charleston, S. C., generally acknowledged the two most aristocratic cities in the United States, have boasted their culture and refinement along their respective rivers—the historic James and the placid Ashley. No one acquainted with the history of these two great commonwealths, which furnished more great men in the

formative period of the republic than any of the thirteen colonies, will gainsay the justness of their claim. But let it be recorded for the inspiration of future generations that Owensboro, Ky., in the long ago, had a settlement along the Ohio river, that, for beautiful women and gallant men rivaled even the celebrated communities above mentioned.

"The Old River road" as it was originally called, but later the

Hawesville road, skirted the Ohio river from Smock's flour mill, where now stands the Rapier elevator, for a distance of several miles east of Owensboro, and facing the river on this road were the homes of the citizens of whom we write. This old road was lined on either side with majestic forest trees, making it one of the most beautiful thoroughfares the best traveled persons had ever seen.

And just here let me venture the assertion that no strip of ground a

quarter of a mile wide and five miles long in the United States afforded habitation for a greater number of distinguished men. Just think of it! There lived on this small strip, one United States district attorney, one member of congress, one officer each in the United States army and navy, two United States ministers to foreign countries, three bank presidents, two colonels in foreign wars, one

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'OLD RIVER ROAD' RECALLED

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cabinet officer, one circuit judge and one United States senator.

So early as 1806, Col. Joseph Hamilton Daveiss (this is the correct spelling), who had married the previous year Nancy Marshall, the daughter of Col. Thomas Marshall of Fauquier county, Virginia and sister of Chief Justice John Marshall of the United States supreme court, came to Davless county and settled on a tract of 5,000 acres of land bordering this road which is described as "Cornland." Col. Daveiss seems to have been the first settler to recognize the attractiveness of this location, as he built his residence, a large two-story brick, far back on the ridge, thus giving him a splendid view of the Ohio river from the beautiful Bon Harbor hills to the Rockport bend, a distance of about six miles, one of the most picturesque stretches on La Belle Riviere. He opened a law office in Owensboro and soon became one of the most distinguished lawyers in the United States. He was the first attorney living west of the Allegheny mountains to appear before the United

States supreme court at Washington. It is said he made a profound impression upon that august body. He was appointed United States district attorney by President Jefferson, and conducted the prosecution of Aaron Burr for treason in the memorable trial at Richmond, Va., in 1810. In 1811 he joined the army of Gen. Harrison and proved as great a soldier as he had a lawyer in the conflict with the combined forces of the Indians and British on the western frontier. He was killed at the battle of Tippecanoe, November 7, 1811, being then only 37 years of age. The Daveiss blood survives here in the Ogdens and Robertses through Gen. John Daveiss, brother of Col. Joseph Daveiss, and this county, named for the colonel, will ever keep his name and heroic deeds fresh in the memory of Kentuckians.

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The first house after passing the Smock mill was the residence of William B. Pegram, who came here from Virginia about 1850 to engage in the export tobacco business. The house was a two-story frame painted white with green shutters, and set back from the road with an orchard in front. Mr. Pegram married Miss Amelia Hawes, and raised a large family, his daughters being among the most beautiful women in Kentucky. His daughter, Meme, married David Hamilton, of Glasgow, Scotland, who came here in 1859 and built a large tobacco factory on 2nd and Center streets. After his marriage he erected a palatial two-story brick residence on the Pegram tract. He later moved to Louisville and thence to Detroit, Mich., where his descendants now live.

John A. Faulds, another Scotchman, from Perthshire, in 1855, who married Miss Dupuy, a worthy descendant of Major Dupuy, the French Huguenot, who was a member of the noted Manakin-town settlement on James river in Virginia, built next to the Hamilton house a handsome two-story brick and his well-kept yard added much to the beauty of the old road. He was also a tobacconist, having bought the Leo Sims factory, built in 1857. He died July 10, 1880, much lamented in this city.

The next place was that of William H. Kearney, who kept a grocery and supply house on Frederica street, near First. Mr. Kearney built his residence, a four-room brick, so close to the river that it had to be torn down on account of the erosion of the bank and to make way for the road which had to be moved back on account of the bank caving in. Mr. Kearney married Estelle Combs and had two handsome daughters by her.

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The third house was a white frame with a large front yard, adorned with a profusion of flowers. It was built by Joseph Thomas, long connected with the banking interest of Owensboro, who came here in 1837, bringing with him from his former New Orleans home, the bed which General La

Fayette slept in while in New Orleans during his tour of the United States in 1824. Another relic that Mr. Thomas prized very highly was a half dollar given him by General Andrew Jackson in 1828, bearing the inscription, "Gen. A. Jackson to J. Thomas, January 11th, 1828." Mr. Thomas was circuit clerk of Davless county for six years before becoming teller of the old Planters bank and later of the First National bank. He married first Sarah Watkins, a native of Maryland, and secondly, Sarah M. Grissom. His last wife died in 1873, and his charming daughter, Mrs. Alice Burkhardt, thereafter had charge of his household affairs. Mr. Thomas sold his place called "Riverside" to Samuel M. Wing, a native of Greenville, Ky., where he married Miss Weir. In 1855 he succeeded William Bell as president of the branch of the Southern Bank of Kentucky (the parent bank was located at Louisville), which he served as president until 1870. In 1856 he formed a partnership with Benjamin Bransford to engage in the export tobacco business, and they built the fifth factory erected in the town on First and St. Elizabeth streets. Mr. Wing was president of the Owensboro Academy, organized in 1853, an institution that sent out from its walls some of the great men of Kentucky. Among others two of Mr. Wing's own sons—Weir Wing, a vallant captain in the Union army and Rumsey Wing, United States minister to Ecuador. This place was later acquired by James B. Anderson, a native of Fayette county, Ky., who was the first cashier of the branch of the Southern bank of

Kentucky and continued as such till his death, Oct. 17, 1864. Mr. Anderson married Mary Ann Robertson, a native of Franklin county, Ky., and their descendants are represented in the Venable, Tyler, Williams and other families.

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Next in order was the home of George H. Yeaman, a large two-story red brick house that set back on the ridge, part of the original tract of Col. Daveiss. Mr. Yeaman was a native of Hardin county, Ky., and with his brother, Judge Malcolm Yeaman, of Henderson, came to Owensboro in 1853. On May 20, 1855, he married Lelia P. Triplett, daughter of old Robert Triplett, who laid out Bon Harbor and built there the first cotton mill erected in the west. Mr. Yeaman was state senator 1861-1863; member of congress 1862-1865, and in 1865 was appointed by President Johnson, United States minister to Denmark. On his return from Denmark in 1870, he settled in New York City and became one of its leading lawyers. His family left Owensboro for New York January 17, 1871, much to the regret of the entire community.

James C. Rudd, son of James Rudd, an old and prominent citizen of Louisville, came here in 1857, and also bought a section of the Daveiss tract and erected thereon a large two-story frame house near where the Daveiss residence stood until it burned to the ground in 1859. Mr. Rudd married

Colegate Moore, daughter of Dr. John R. Moore, a very accomplished woman, who had received her education in the best schools of Baltimore and New York. Until he left the farm and moved to St. Louis, Mr. Rudd was a large shipper of mules every season to the southern markets. He later returned from St. Louis and engaged in the fire insurance business until his death.

* * *

Just across the lane from the Daviess tract was "Haphazard" the residence of William Bell, who came to Daviess county in the early forties. Upon the organization of the branch of the Southern Bank of Kentucky in 1850, he became one of its directors and in 1853 was elected president of the bank to succeed Junius Alexander, the first president. He married Louise Ewing, of Philadelphia. Next to, or rather adjoining the Bell place, was that of his daughter, Mrs. William Murdock, whose granddaughter, Mrs. W. W. Pier-son lives in Louisville.

Just beyond the forks of the road where the Hardinsburg road leaves the Hawesville road, was the residence of Col. Algernon S. Thruston, a colonel under General Scott in the Texas war for independence and later a member of President Samuel Houston's cabinet in the "Lone Star" state. He came to Daviess county in 1854. His wife was Harriett C. Jacques, of St. Louis. Col. Thruston died March 5, 1864. The last descendant of this marriage, Mrs. David Todd, died just a short time ago.

Leading off the Hawesville road and down to near the river was a beautiful avenue of honey locust and pecan trees that took you to "Clifton Lodge," the residence of Burr Crutcher, formerly the home of Geo. W. Mason, who married Miss Patton and was the father of Frederica Mason, for whom Owensboro's principal residence street was named. Mr. Mason died June 11, 1855. Mr. Crutcher was a son of Isaac and Sallie (Helm) Crutcher, of Nelson county, Ky., and came to Daviess county from Breckenridge county in 1856. His farm comprised 610 acres which he cultivated with slaves. The Mason house was destroyed by fire January 23, 1869, and Mr. Crutcher replaced it with a substantial two-story brick house. There was a regular steamboat landing at his place and the farmers for miles around availed themselves of it in shipping the products of their farms and receiving supplies from Louisville and other cities. Mr. Crutcher married Oct. 3, 1829 Hester, daughter of Solomon and Elizabeth (Swan) Brandenburg. The town of Brandenburg, Ky., was named for his wife's father. A daughter of this marriage, Mrs. Oscar Bradford, is now living in Chicago.

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On another part of the Mason tract was the residence of John P. Devereux who married Mr. Ma-

son's daughter, Frederica. Mr. Devereux was judg. of the circuit court of this district in 1851, but he moved to Kansas City, Mo., in 1859, and entered the railroad business. In 1866 he removed to St. Louis, where he was commissioner of the land department of the Union Pacific railroad until 1876. He was later attorney for the company at Kansas City and later at Denver. Mrs. Joe Perkins a granddaughter, lives in Greenville, S. C.

Adjoining the Thruston farm was that of Col. Colin S. Throckmorton, formerly an officer in the United States navy and son of Major Aris Throckmorton, a soldier of the War of 1812 and distinguished before 1820 as the landlord of the Lower Blue Lick Springs watering place, and from 1825 to 1865 of the Galt House at Louisville. By the way, it was Capt. Marryat another surly Englishman, and not Charles Dickens as generally believed, whom Major Throckmorton kicked out of the Galt House for incivility. Col. Throckmorton married Miss Melvina Ward, daughter of Robert J. Ward, of Louisville and sister of Sallie Ward, the most celebrated of Kentucky's many beautiful women, and Mrs. Throckmorton herself belonged in that class. Col. Throckmorton died Oct. 25, 1878. At that time his only known living son was Maurice Throckmorton, mayor of Birmingham, Ala.

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Closer to the river and just beyond the Crutcher farm was that of Thomas Clay, who settled there in 1807 or 1808. He was the brother of General Green Clay, who was the father of General Cassius M. Clay. A daughter of Thomas Clay married Robert McCreery, and they were the parents of Thomas Clay McCreery, Daviess county's most distinguished native citizen. Mr. McCreery was the first president of the National Deposit Bank, organized in 1860, and in the same year was nominated and elected a presidential elector on the Breckenridge and Lane ticket. He was elected United States senator in February, 1863, vice James Guthrie resigned, and served until March 4, 1871; re-elected September 18, 1871, for the full term from 1873 to 1879. He was considered one of the country's greatest orators. In 1866, while on a visit to Washington City, the writer had the courtesy of the floor of the senate for a week through the influence of Senator McCreery. One day in conversation with several senators, Senator Fowler, of Tennessee, remarked that Senator McCreery was the greatest orator in the senate and this estimate of him was readily assented to by the other senators present. A year or two later "Puck" had a full-sized picture of the senator on its front cover and dubbed him "the silver-tongued sluggard of the senate." Mr. McCreery married Clara Hawes, daughter of Sam Hawes, and their descendants are represented in the Stuart (2 branches), Boone, Herr, Keene and Ditto families. Robert W. McCreery, his eldest son, married Orlean Athy, daughter of Mortimer F. Athy, and their daughter, Mrs. Wynne Dixon, of Henderson, Ky., is still in

possession of the Clay farm that Senator McCreery inherited from his mother over one hundred years ago.

In 1836, Dr. Frank Fitzhugh Conway, born in Orange county, Va., came and settled in this neighborhood. He married Bettie Brooke in 1832 and practiced medicine in Albermarle county Va., several years before removing to Kentucky. He had the misfortune to lose his residence by fire on April 7, 1845, when he removed to the western part of the county. His son, Dr. F. F. Conway, Jr., first a practicing physician in the Oakford precinct, was later clerk of the Daviess circuit court.

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A little further east was the place of Colonel Justus Varien, who came here in the early forties from New Orleans bringing with him a large number of slaves. Colonel Varien was a distinguished officer in the French army and was one of Napoleon's body guard. His wife died before his coming to this county, but he had five highly cultured daughters, who were greatly admired by all who knew them. Col. Varien died May 10, 1872. Two of his daughters survived him, but none of them ever married.

The last place of what was considered the old River Road settlement was 'Ingleside,' the home of Dr. William C. Woolfolk. The house was a large two-story frame and occupied a knoll commanding a fine view of the river and the surrounding country. Dr. Woolfolk was a practicing physician in Brandenburg, Ky., before coming to this county in 1847. His reputation as a successful practitioner had preceded him and he quickly acquired a large practice after settling here. He was a considerable slave owner and under his careful supervision "Ingleside" became one of the best cultivated farms in the county. Accordingly when the Daviess County Agricultural and Mechanical Society was organized in 1850, Dr. Woolfolk became one of its first presidents. This society continued to hold successful fairs until the outbreak of the War Between the States, when it ceased operations. After the war was over the association was reorganized as the Daviess County Fair Company and in 1872, Dr. Woolfolk was again elected president. On January 20, 1943, occurred the marriage of Dr. William C. Woolfolk and Maria Beverly Alexander, daughter of Girard Alexander and sister of Junius Alexander, who lived at "Belle Forest," (which he sold to Col. Throckmorton) and who was the first president of the branch of the Southern Bank of Kentucky, going later

to New York City, where he became one of the wealthiest and most prominent bankers of the metropolis. Dr. Woolfolk died April 4, 1876, and his son, Dr. Junius A. Woolfolk, succeeded to his practice. It is worthy of note that "Ingleside" is still in the possession of a member of the Woolfolk family after a lapse of nearly a century. The writer has mentioned with some detail the distinguished gentlemen who occupied the strip along the "Old River Road," and he would fain describe in living language the feminine beauty and culture that graced the drawing-rooms of their stately mansions did he feel equal to the task. Those who shared the bounteous hospitality of their homes and have been witness of their culture and refinement will wish that more attention were given the present day to the culture of the mind and good manners than to the sordid accumulation of money and the wild, reckless striving after what is supposed to constitute "a good time." Suffice it to say, when the true record for feminine beauty and cultural refinement is made up for Kentucky, the names of Daveiss, Pegram, Rudd, Bell, Thruston, Crutcher, Devereux, Mason, Throckmorton McCreery, Conway, Varlen, Alexander, and Woolfolk will not be excluded from the list.

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Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 August 2016, pp1B & 6B:

Old River Road was the height of local culture

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

In the late 19th century, C.W. Bransford was publisher of Owensboro's leading newspaper - The Messenger. He moved in the circles of high society.

On June 14, 1931, years after Bransford had left the newspaper business, the Messenger-Inquirer published a lengthy article in which he described those social circles of long ago.

"Owensboro, Ky., in the long ago had a settlement along the Ohio River, that, for beautiful women and gallant men rivaled even" Richmond, Va., and Charleston, S.C., for culture and refinement, Bransford wrote.

The Old River Road, as it was known in those days, "skirted the Ohio from Smock's flour mill (Second and Clay) for several miles," he wrote.

It was "lined with majestic forest trees, making it one of the most beautiful thoroughfares the best traveled persons had ever seen," Bransford said.

He went so far as to claim that "no strip of ground a quarter-mile wide and five miles long in the United States afforded habitation for a greater number of distinguished men." The list Bransford put together included one U.S. district attorney, one member of Congress, one officer each in the U.S. Army and Navy, two U.S. ministers to foreign countries, three bank presidents,

two colonels in foreign wars, one former cabinet officer, one circuit judge and one U.S. senator.

There was even a guard to Napoleon.

Bransford, whose wife, Virgie Lee Finley, was the niece of a Florida congressman, fit right in. He was described as a man with auburn hair, a red mustache and brown eyes.

In September 1878, when he was 20, Bransford became a partner in The Messenger. Two years later, he and J.A. Munday bought the Examiner and merged the two papers.

The following year, Bransford bought out Munday. And in 1882, he brought in Urey Woodson as a partner. Woodson would carry the paper on until it merged with the Inquirer in 1929.

In his description of those bygone Daviess County days, Bransford waxed eloquent.

A person "would fain describe in living language the feminine beauty and culture that graced the drawing rooms of their stately mansions did he feel equal to the task," he wrote.

His sentences were sometimes long and hard to follow. But Bransford left no doubts of how great he thought that society was.

"Those who shared the bounteous hospitality of their homes and have been witness of their culture and refinement will wish that more attention were given the present day to the culture of the mind and good manners than to the sordid accumulation of money and the wild, reckless striving after what is supposed to constitute 'a good life,' " he wrote.

Here's the list he compiled of the homes of the then rich and famous: "Cornland," Col. Joseph Hamilton Daveiss' 5,000-acre estate. Daveiss, the man for whom the county is named, married Nancy Marshall, the sister of Chief Justice John Marshall of the U.S. Supreme Court, in 1805.

The following year, he built a large two-story brick house far back on the ridge from the River Road "giving him a splendid view of the Ohio River from the beautiful Bon Harbor hills to the Rockport bend - a distance of about six miles - one of the most picturesque stretches," Bransford wrote.

Daveiss, the first attorney living west of the Allegheny Mountains to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, opened a law office in Owensboro.

He was appointed U.S. District Attorney by President Thomas Jefferson and conducted the prosecution of Aaron Burr for treason in 1810.

He was killed Nov. 7, 1811, in the Battle of Tippecanoe at age 37.

The first house past Clay Street was the residence of William B. Pegram, a tobacco exporter who moved here from Virginia in 1850.

The two-story frame house was painted white with green shutters and set back from the road. There was an orchard in front.

Pegram and his wife, the former Amelia Hawes, had a daughter named Meme who married David Hamilton of Glasgow, Scotland. Hamilton moved to Owensboro in 1859 and built a large tobacco factory at Second and Center streets.

They "erected a palatial two-story brick residence on the Pegram tract." But the couple soon moved to Louisville and eventually Detroit.

John A. Faulds, another Scotsman, in 1857 built next door to the Hamilton house "a handsome two-story brick and his well-kept yard added much to the beauty of the old road." Faulds bought the Leo Sims tobacco factory, which was built in 1857. He died July 10, 1880.

The next house, Bransford wrote, belonged to William H. Kearney, who "kept a grocery and supply house on Frederica Street near First. At first he built his residence, a four-room brick

so close to the river that it had to be torn down on account of the erosion of the bank and to make way for the road which had to be moved back." Next was Riverside, "a white frame house with a large front yard, adorned with a profusion of flowers. (It was) built by Joseph Thomas, who came here in 1837, bringing with him from his former New Orleans home, the bed which General LaFayette slept in while in New Orleans during his tour of the United States in 1824." Thomas "also had a half dollar given him by General Andrew Jackson in 1828." He was circuit clerk of Daviess County for six years before becoming teller of the old Planters Bank and later of First National Bank.

Thomas sold Riverside to Samuel M. Wing, a Greenville native. Wing was president of the Owensboro Academy, established in 1853. He was the father of Weir Wing, a captain in the Union Army, and Rumsey Wing, U.S. minister to Ecuador.

Next was the home of George H. Yeaman, "a large two-story red brick house that set back on the ridge, part of the original tract of Col. Daveiss." Yeaman came to Owensboro in 1853 and married Lelia P. Triplett, daughter of Robert Triplett.

He was elected county judge in 1854 and served as state senator from 1861 to 1863 and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1862 to 1865. In 1865, Yeaman was appointed minister to Denmark. In 1870, he settled in New York City and became one of the city's leading lawyers.

James C. Rudd came to Daviess County in 1857, bought land and erected a large two-story frame house near where the Daveiss residence had stood until it burned in 1859.

Rudd was "a large shipper of mules to southern markets." Later, he founded one of the city's first fire insurance companies.

"Just across the lane from the Daveiss tract was Haphazard, the residence of William Bell, who came to Daviess County in the 1840s. (He was) one of the directors of the Southern Bank of Kentucky in 1850 (and) became president in 1853." "Just beyond the forks of the road where the Hardinsburg Road leaves the Hawesville Road was the residence of Col. Algernon S. Thruston, a colonel under Gen. Winfield Scott in the Texas War of Independence and later a member of President Samuel Houston's cabinet in the Lone Star state." He came to Daviess County in 1854 and died March 5, 1864.

"Leading off the Hawesville Road and down to near the river was a beautiful avenue of honey locust and pecan trees that took you to Clifton Lodge, the residence of Burr Crutcher, formerly the home of George W. Mason, who died June 11, 1855." Crutcher came to Daviess County in 1856 and bought a 610-acre farm. When the house was destroyed by fire Jan. 23, 1869, Crutcher "replaced it with a substantial two-story brick. There was a regular steamboat landing at his place." "On another part of the Mason tract was the residence of John P. Devereux who married Mason's daughter, Frederica. He was circuit judge in 1851, moved to Kansas City in 1859 and entered the railroad business." "Adjourning the Thruston farm was that of Col. Colin S. Throckmorton, formerly an officer in the United States Navy." He died on Oct. 25, 1878. His son, Maurice, became mayor of Birmingham, Ala.

"Closer to the river and just beyond the Crutcher Farm was that of Thomas Clay who settled there in 1807 or 1808. He was the brother of Gen. Green Clay and uncle of Gen. Cassius M. Clay. He was a grandfather of Sen. Thomas Clay McCreery of Daviess County, who inherited the property." In 1836, Dr. Frank Fitzhugh Conway settled in the neighborhood. When his house burned on April 7, 1845, Conway moved to the western part of the county.

"A little farther east was the place of Col. Justus Varien, who came here in the early 1840s from New Orleans, bringing with him a large number of slaves. (He) was a distinguished

officer in the French army and was one of Napoleon's body guards. His wife died before coming to this country.

(He) had five beautiful daughters, none of whom married." Varien died May 10, 1872.

The last place on what was considered the old River Road settlement was Ingleside, the home of Dr. William C. Woolfolk.

It was, Bransford wrote, "a large two-story frame and occupied a knoll commanding a fine view of the river and the surrounding country." Woolfolk, he wrote, was a physician in Brandenburg before moving to Daviess County in 1847. "He was a considerable slave owner. Ingleside became one of the best cultivated farms in the county." Woolfolk was one of the first presidents of the Daviess County Agricultural and Mechanical Society, which was organized in 1850. That group organized the first county fairs here. Woolfolk later served as president of the new Daviess County Fair Co. in 1872. He married the sister of Junius Alexander, who lived at Belle Forest - property later sold to Col. Throckmorton. Woolfolk died on April 4, 1876.

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History of Daviess County, Kentucky (Chicago: Interstate Publishing Co., 1883. pp.202-203:

C.W. Bransford was born in Owensboro, Ky., Jan. 24, 1858, a son of Benj. and Mary E. (Athy) Bransford; attended schools here but graduated in the literary course at Cumberland University Lebanon, Tenn., in June, 1877. He then attended the law school at Louisville, where he completed the junior course, and was elected salutatorian from this class, as a testimonial to his proficiency. He next accepted a temporary position in Clarke & Crutcher's stemmery. At the close of the tobacco business for the season of 1878 he became sub-editor of the *Messenger*, under J.A. Munday. Within two months he was offered a partnership in the paper, which he accepted, in September, 1878, etc., as above noted.

Dec. 21, 1882, Mr. Bransford married Virgie Lee Finley, of Lebanon, Tenn., a daughter of Dr. W.M. Finley, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., and a niece of Congressman Finley, of Florida. Mr. Bransford is a young man of remarkable business and executive talent, and if he lives will make a bright mark in the world. If he should rise to political prominence, he will not be a "*barking dog*," and he therefore might "bite," where there is occasion in some contest. The Hopkinsville *South Kentuckian* truly says of him: "His style of writing possesses a degree of profundity far beyond his years when he is handling editorial subjects. He is very temperate, and is a model young man in his habits, although he does not belong to any church. Concerning his physical appearance the *South Kentuckian* thus words it: "His hair is a bright auburn, and he has a fine red mustache and brown eyes. He is very quiet in his demeanor, and loves his profession more than he does his sweet-heart!"



Clifton Wood Bransford (1858-1936)

BEECH WOODS OF THE PAST

Section of Daviess County
Which Was Once Very
Famous

SOMETHING ABOUT PEOPLE AND HOMES

Of a Neighborhood Noted as Home of
Late T. C. McCreery, Rice E.
Graves and Others

The following story was prepared for the Inquirer by one of Owensboro's oldest citizens, and he tells about a once famous section of Daviess county, and those who read it can not fail to be greatly interested:

"That section of Daviess county lying northeast of Owensboro and beyond Yellow creek was known before the war, and is still denominated by the older citizens as Beech Woods.

"This section was noted for the number of large farms, great landed estates, ornamented with fine houses and dotted with negro cabins.

"While they did not grow cotton as you would notice a little farther down south, nevertheless you could hear the old southern plantation songs in the tobacco and corn fields.

"The plantations were owned and occupied by wealthy, intelligent people, who were famous for their hospitality, the latch string always hanging on the outside and a hearty welcome extended to all.

"I can call to mind many familiar and historic names of people who resided in that section.

Col Howard.

After you leave the city, and just before you reach the Beech Woods, you pass the old home of Col. Howard, land and slave owner and a pioneer Baptist preacher, who has performed the marriage ceremony of many of the older citizens. Near Col. Howard was Col. Newton, a wealthy man who came here from Virginia, and who owned many acres and a large number of slaves. After you cross Yellow creek you pass the old homes of Throckmorton, Thruston and Speed, but the place that deserves special mention was at that time, the large plantation on the left side of the road extending from the road to the Ohio river, known as the Varian farm.

Justus Vairian

Justus Vairian moved from New Orleans to Owensboro after the close of the civil war. He was a native of France, a distinguished soldier, being a member of Napoleon's staff that accompanied him throughout his memorable campaign. He also participated in many hard fought battles and was in the thick of the fight at Marengo and Austerlitz, and was with the French warrior in the retreat from Russia. He was a member of the old guard, of whom it was said 'the old guard dies, but never surrenders.' After moving to Daviess county, Mr. Vairian devoted his time to the cultivation of his large farm. He was an accomplished, educated gentleman, rather eccentric, but very honest and beloved by all who knew him. He educated his children in the best schools, where they were taught to speak French as fluently as they did English. In the home of the Vairians is a picture of Napoleon and many other mementoes and relics of the greatest soldier that ever lived.

Hon. T. C. McCreery's Home.

"A little beyond the Vairian place was the old home of Senator Thomas C. McCreery. It was an old fashioned two-story frame house with a study out in the yard, where he spent many hours in reading and preparing himself for the great position which he afterwards held in the United States senate. Like the old Roman, Cincinnatus, he was called from the farm to the senate, and if I recollect correctly he was the only senator that was ever elected to the United States senate prior to the holding of another office, the usual route being through congress or the gubernatorial chair.

Rice Graves.

"Near by the McCreery plantation was the home and birthplace of Rice E. Graves, the most distinguished soldier of the Green River country in the Confederate army.

"When a youth, Mr. Graves attended the Hart-Woodruff-McIntyre academy in Owensboro and when the war began, was a student at West Point, having received his appointment from this congressional district. Resigning his cadetship at West Point he enlisted with Breckenridge's division known in history as the Orphan brigade. As an artillery officer he was breveted for bravery in the field of battle, and in all the annals of history, there has never been a more brave soldiery than the Orphan brigade, and no one contributed more in honor and valor and went to make up their splendid record than Rice E. Graves.

"I can never forget when his old teacher, Mr. Hart, who was then conducting the school on Davless street near Fifth, in which the Catholic sisters are now teaching, received the news that Major Graves had been killed in battle. He was so overcome and prostrated with grief over the death of this gallant soldier, his old pupil, that he dismissed school for the day.

Samuel W. Tribble.

"These were days of trying times in Owensboro. It had been but a short time that Mr. Hart had accompanied his pupils to the funeral of Lieutenant Samuel W. Tribble, another pupil, and who was a soldier of the federal army. He was the son of Barney Tribble, the leading architect and contractor in Owensboro, and who built the Planters House and many other old-time buildings that are still standing.

Cam Riley Home.

"But to return to the Beech Woods, there lies just east of the Graves farm, the old home of Camden Riley. A lawyer, scholar and gentleman, whose life was as well rounded and as even as the beautiful letters he made in writing his legal pleadings. A typical Kentucky gentleman, brave as a lion and tender as a woman, modest and unassuming, he pursued the even tenor of his loving way and was beloved by every one. He was a large, handsome man, attractive in appearance, with honesty and integrity written in every line and feature of his noble countenance.

"It was his custom late in the afternoon to take a stroll about the town, and he was often accompanied by some younger member of the bar listening with pleasure to his words of wisdom. Like the lamented Circuit Judge W. T. Owen, he was especially kind to young men, aiding and assisting them in their struggle to rise in their profession.

The El Hawes Place.

Just across Yellow creek from the Riley farm is the El Hawes place, an old brick mansion now occupied by George T. Hawes, who is past his three score and ten, and was born in this house. The Hawes and Taylor families have resided in Beech Woods for many years, and this district was represented in congress by Albert G. Hawes, a brother to Ed Hawes, who also served a term as state senator.

Just east of the Hawes place is the little village of Yelvington, where all the Beech Woods people would go to the postoffice for their mail.

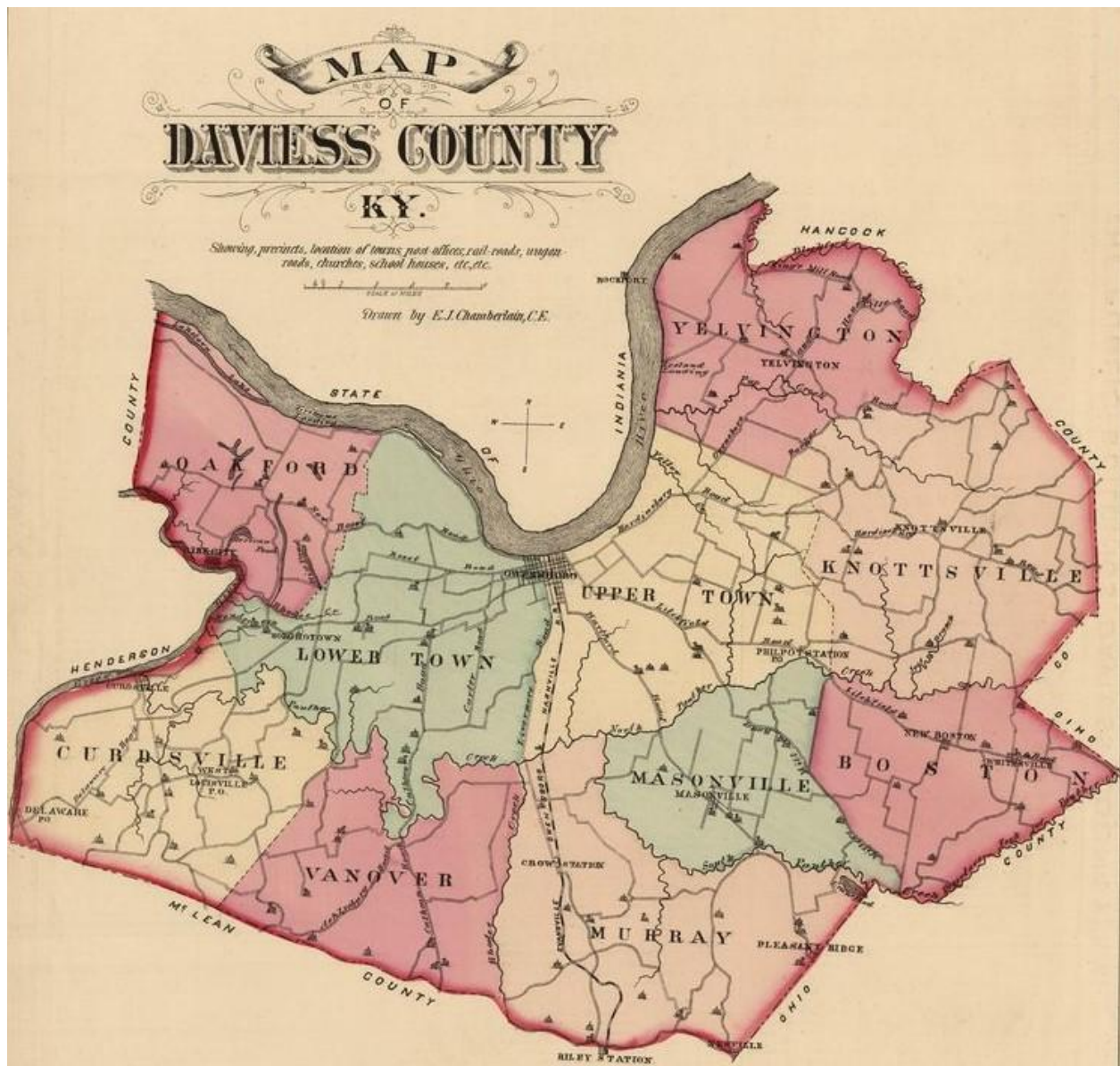
Beyond Yelvington is the famous Allgood spring where they held old-time barbecues and heard statesmen speak in the afternoon, and at night all would attend the party at Gip Taylor's where 'Bill' Stone and Dr.

Conway would play the fiddle.

Mr. Taylor was an ideal Kentuckian, a gentleman, intelligent, generous and hospitable, and had a great hobby for game chickens, and would often go as far as Nashville, Tenn., to see the birds spar with each other.

Memory with golden tipped fingers paints many bright visions of the past, but none brighter than those good old days in Beech Woods."

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An Illustrated Historical Map of Daviess County, KY. (Leo McDonogh & Co., 1876, p18

COMMUNITY HISTORY

By Glenn Hodges
Messenger-Inquirer

The countryside beyond Yellow Creek at Thruston was a panorama of pastoral splendor during antebellum days. It was in the section of Daviess County called the Beechwoods, known for its majestic beech trees and the fine plantations that lined the old river road from Owensboro to Hawesville.

One of the plantation owners was Algernon Sidney Thruston, who had fought for the independence of Texas in the 1830s before moving to Daviess County. The present community four miles northeast of Owensboro would later bear his name.

On another farm lived Thomas Clay, the first settler of the Thruston area and uncle of famous Kentucky abolitionist and orator Cassius Marcellus Clay. Two of the farms were homes for men who eventually became United States senators — Thomas Clay McCreery and Wendell Hampton Ford. A fifth farm was the homeplace of Justus Vairin, a former bodyguard to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Algernon Thruston made his home on a 700-acre tract now bordering Kentucky 405 and spreading southeast along Wrights Landing Road.

The land of Thomas Clay McCreery, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1868-1871 and 1873-1879, bordered the Thruston farm on the west. McCreery's place adjoined the plantation of his grandfather Thomas Clay, who had settled there in 1806 or 1807. Clay was a second cousin of Henry Clay, and brother of General Green Clay, father of Cassius. Both Thomas and Green Clay were members of the convention that drafted Kentucky's second constitution in 1799.

Thruston was born in Jefferson County in 1801 and grew up in Louisville. He owned large grants of land from 1822-1824 in Shelby, Union, Ohio and Daviess Counties, before he apparently sold all of them by 1825 and left Kentucky.

In 1835 Thruston was in Texas practicing law, and got involved in the fight for Texas independence. He raised a company of soldiers and served as a colonel. When that war was won and the Republic of Texas established in 1836, he became a member of Governor Sam Houston's cabinet.

(Thruston's nephew, Mountjoy Luckett Thruston, was among the Texans who died at the Alamo in March 1836.)

After the war, Thruston was a lawyer in Houston with his half brother Henry W. Fontaine, and he held several official offices in the new Texas government, including commissary general of purchases in 1837 and quartermaster general in 1838. Some family sources say he also served as Texas attorney general.

Thruston left Texas in 1850, lived awhile in Florida and Illinois, and brought his family to Daviess County in 1854.

Thruston's Daviess County farm was purchased in 1853 by his brother Alfred of Louisville.

A.S. Thruston lived on his farm here for about 10 years; he died in 1864. His widow, Harriet, moved to a residence at 505 E. Fifth St. in Owensboro in 1868-69. She died of typhoid fever in 1873 at the age of 46 and was buried alongside her husband in Elmwood Cemetery.

Alfred Thruston's association with Major Aris Throckmorton of Louisville may have influenced the latter's decision to also buy land in Daviess County. Throckmorton, a major in the War of 1812, was distinguished for the hotels he operated. From 1835 to 1865 he was proprietor of Galt House in Louisville, one of the most celebrated and popular hotels in the South.

Throckmorton bought ground that ran northeast from the present heart of Thruston at the intersection of Kentucky 144 and 405. The Throckmorton house was originally built in 1840. Throckmorton's son, Colin, moved there in 1855 and stayed for 20 years before moving to Owensboro. The home still stands on a hill a short distance on the left of Kentucky 144 past Yellow Creek Baptist Church. U.S. Senator Wendell Ford lived in the house as a boy in the 1930s and 1940s, and attended Thruston School and Daviess County High School before he went to college.

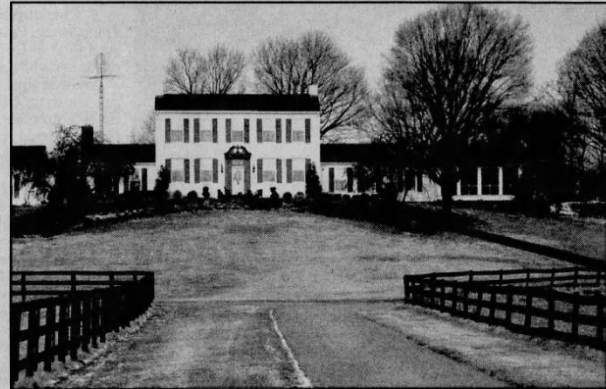
Vairin was a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo and a member of Napoleon's bodyguard. He moved to Daviess County in 1842 from New Orleans, built his home in the Beechwoods, became a tobacco exporter and raised five daughters.

The Vairin home still remains on the Spend A Buck Farm on the eastern edge of Thruston and is owned by Owen Lawson. The Deane family acquired the Throckmorton house in 1947; Si Deane lives there now. The original Algernon Thruston house burned, but C.A. (Ottie) Pantle Jr. of 1641 Wrights Landing Road near Summit now lives there in another house built on the Thruston farm in the 1870s.

Mrs. Gladys Gerteisen, widow of former Daviess County commissioner Jake Gerteisen, lives on the Thomas Clay farm. The old McCreery house known in the old days as Beechwoods was torn down in the 1980s and lawyer Kirby Gordon has a new home on the hilltop where the old house stood.

The present community at Kentucky 405 and 144 grew out of the Throckmorton estate and the 260-acre farm of Manley Berry Tichenor, who was a direct descendant of pilgrims John and Priscilla Alden, made famous in Longfellow's "The Courtship of Miles Standish." A post office was established at Thruston in 1886.

A motorist driving through Thruston today will find two churches, a conve-



Gary Emord-Nettley, Messenger-Inquirer

Top: This is the Vairin Home, named for Justus Vairin, a bodyguard to Napoleon Bonaparte and now known locally as the Spend A Buck Farm. The house is owned by Owen Lawson.

Bottom: The Throckmorton home, now owned by Si Deane, was built in 1840 by the Mayo family. Colin Throckmorton moved there in 1855. U.S. Senator Wendell Ford lived there as a boy in the 1930s and 1940s and attended Thruston School.

nience store, a hardware store, a pizza place, a music business, Yellow Creek Park, an elementary school and the homes of about 150 residents. Only a few miles from downtown Thruston are Reid's Orchard and the new Summit Country Club golf course and housing development.

The little crossroads community named after Algernon Sidney Thruston is in the center of one of the fastest growing areas of Daviess County.

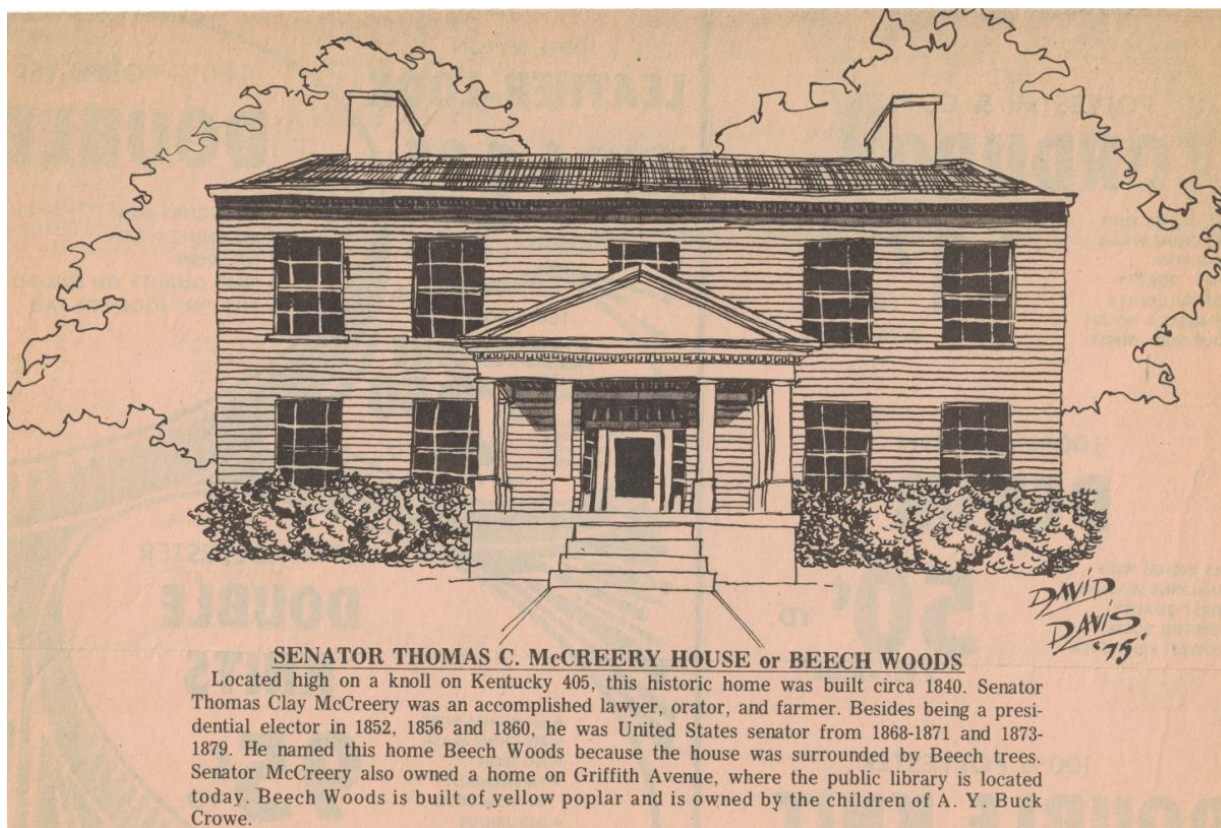
Editor's note — Much of the biographical information about Algernon Thruston came from an article in the Daviess County Historical Society Quarterly written by Jerry Long, a member of the Kentucky Room staff at the Owensboro-Daviess County Public Library. Long has done extensive genealogical and historical research on the Thruston family of Daviess County. If you have information or suggestions for our community history series, call Glenn Hodges at 926-0123 or 1-800-633-2008.

Some Homes of the Old River Road



"BEECH WOODS," the 150 year-old home of Senator Thomas C. McCreery, is located high on a knoll on the Thruston Road. Senator McCreery was born in 1816 near the site. He served in the United States Senate from 1868 to 1879. The impressive, old house is built of poplar, and the small structure at the right of the photo, the kitchen, was added by Mrs. Kittie Robey, granddaughter of Senator McCreery. Mr. and Mrs. A. Y. Crowe are the present owners.

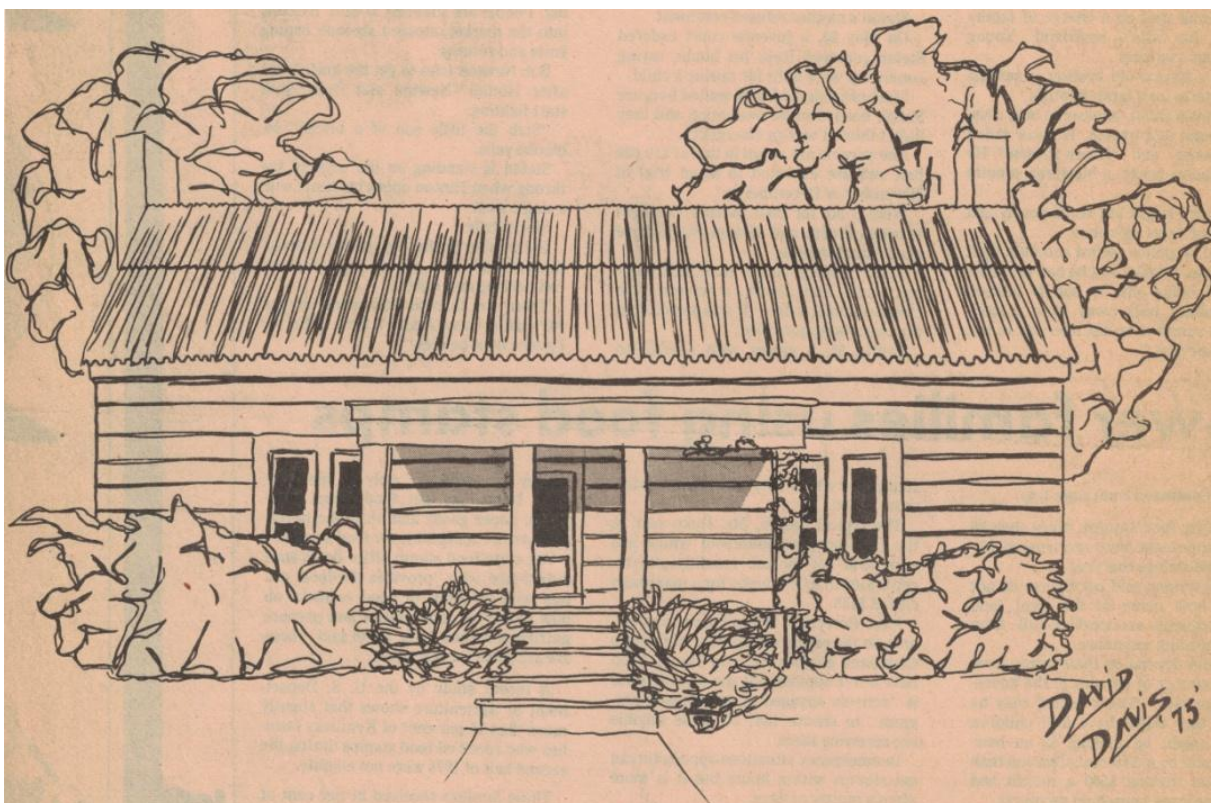
Beech Woods home of Thomas Clay McCreery (1816-1890).
From Owensboro Star, Owensboro, KY, 18 September 1968, p1



SENATOR THOMAS C. McCREERY HOUSE or BEECH WOODS

Located high on a knoll on Kentucky 405, this historic home was built circa 1840. Senator Thomas Clay McCreery was an accomplished lawyer, orator, and farmer. Besides being a presidential elector in 1852, 1856 and 1860, he was United States senator from 1868-1871 and 1873-1879. He named this home Beech Woods because the house was surrounded by Beech trees. Senator McCreery also owned a home on Griffith Avenue, where the public library is located today. Beech Woods is built of yellow poplar and is owned by the children of A. Y. Buck Crowe.

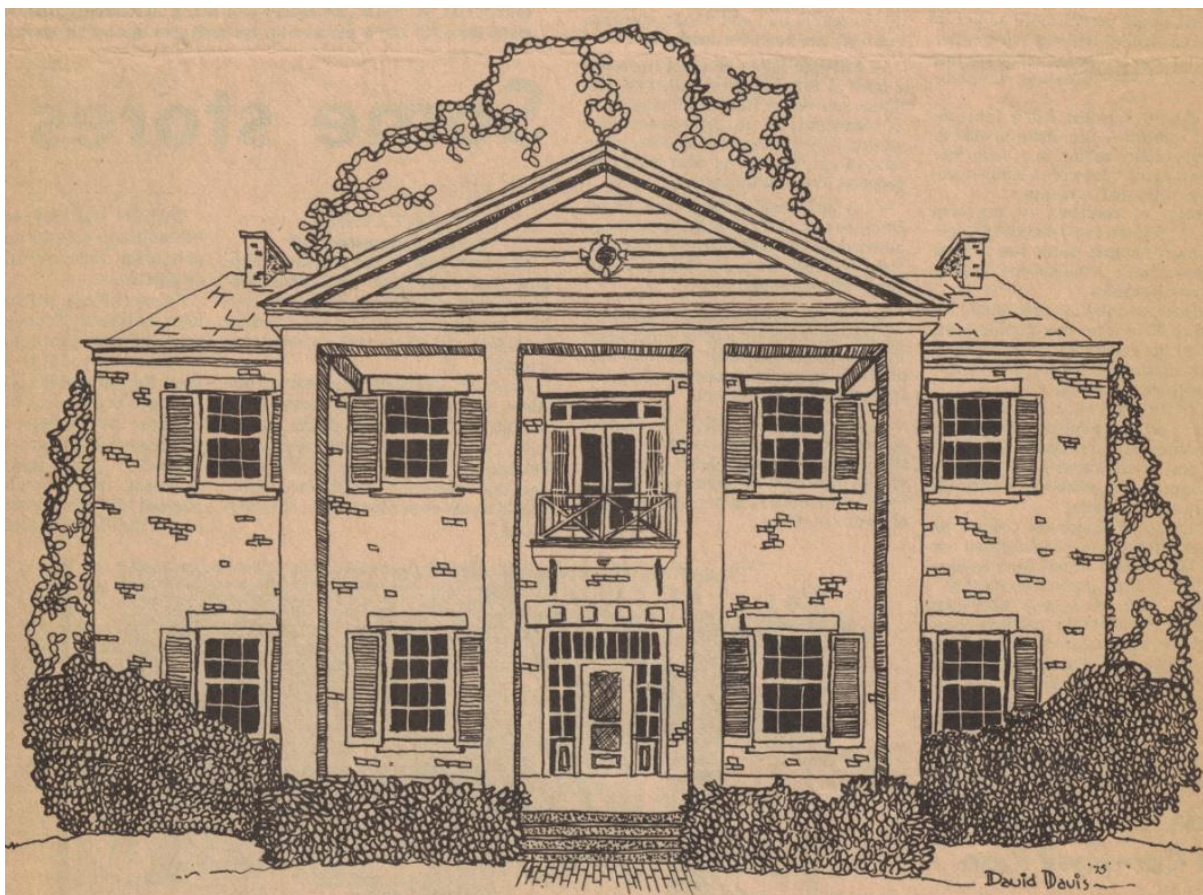
Home of Thomas Clay McCreery (1816-1890).
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 28 September 1975, p7E.



HOME OF THOMAS CLAY

This historic home is located on Kentucky 405. Thomas Clay came here in 1812, although it is unsure as to when his home was built. Clay, a Revolutionary War Captain, was a cousin to John Clay, father of the well-known statesman, Henry Clay. He was an uncle of Cassius Marcellus Clay, famed Kentuckian of the Civil War, and grandfather of U.S. Senator Thomas Clay McCreery. Clay was a member of Kentucky House of Representatives (1792-93 and 1796-98), and Kentucky Senate (1793-95). The home is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Jake Gerteisen.

Home of Thomas Clay (1750-1824).
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 October 1975 p11A.



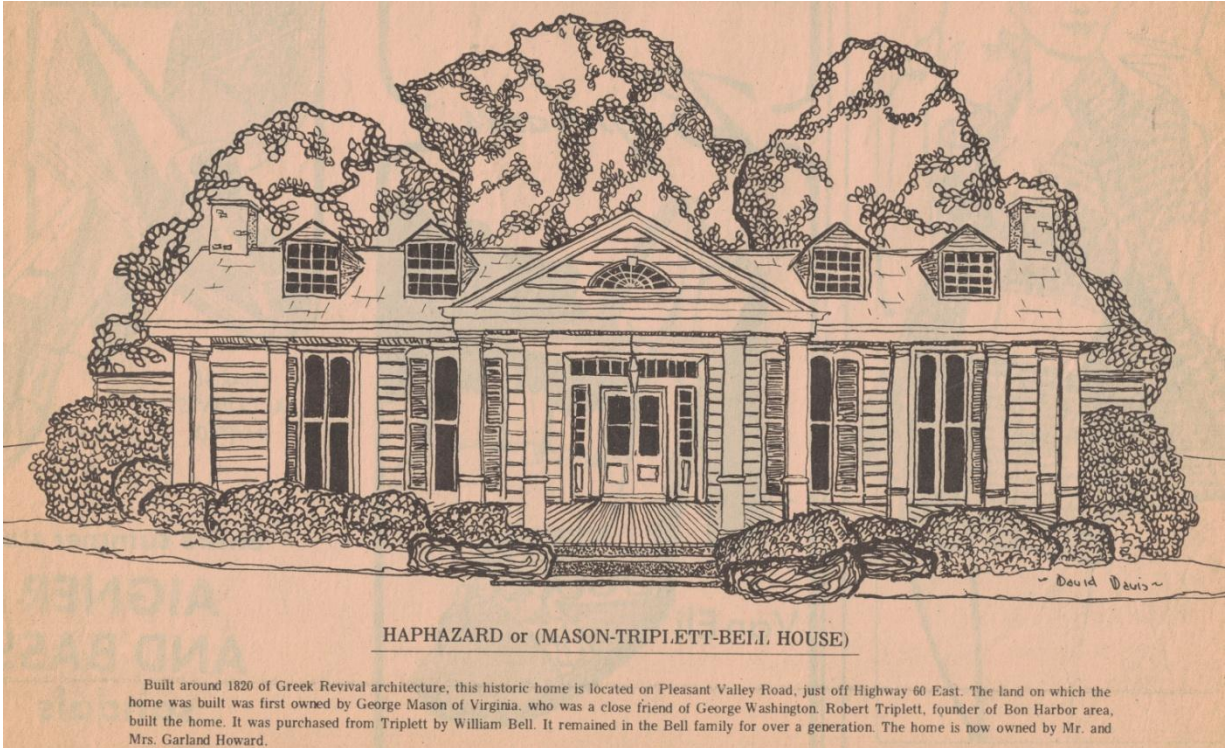
COLONEL COLIN S. THROCKMORTON'S HOUSE

This historic home is now owned by Mrs. Guy Deane, who believes the house was built around 1793 of bricks made and fired on the site. The first occupants of the home were believed to be the Mayo's, grandparents of the Mayo Brothers who founded the famous clinic. Colonel Throckmorton, who died in 1878, was once a resident of this home and an officer in the United States Army. At a much later date, Wendell Ford, now United States Senator, lived here when he was a boy. The home is located off Highway # 144 near Thruston.

Home of Colin Shelton Throckmorton (1818-1878).
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 October 1975 p11A.



Home of Colin Shelton Throckmorton (1818-1878).
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 14 February 1995, Community section p3.



HAPHAZARD or (MASON-TRIPLETT-BELL HOUSE)

Built around 1820 of Greek Revival architecture, this historic home is located on Pleasant Valley Road, just off Highway 60 East. The land on which the home was built was first owned by George Mason of Virginia, who was a close friend of George Washington. Robert Triplett, founder of Bon Harbor area, built the home. It was purchased from Triplett by William Bell. It remained in the Bell family for over a generation. The home is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Garland Howard.

Home of Robert Triplett (1794-1853), Haphazard.
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 29 June 1975, p6C.



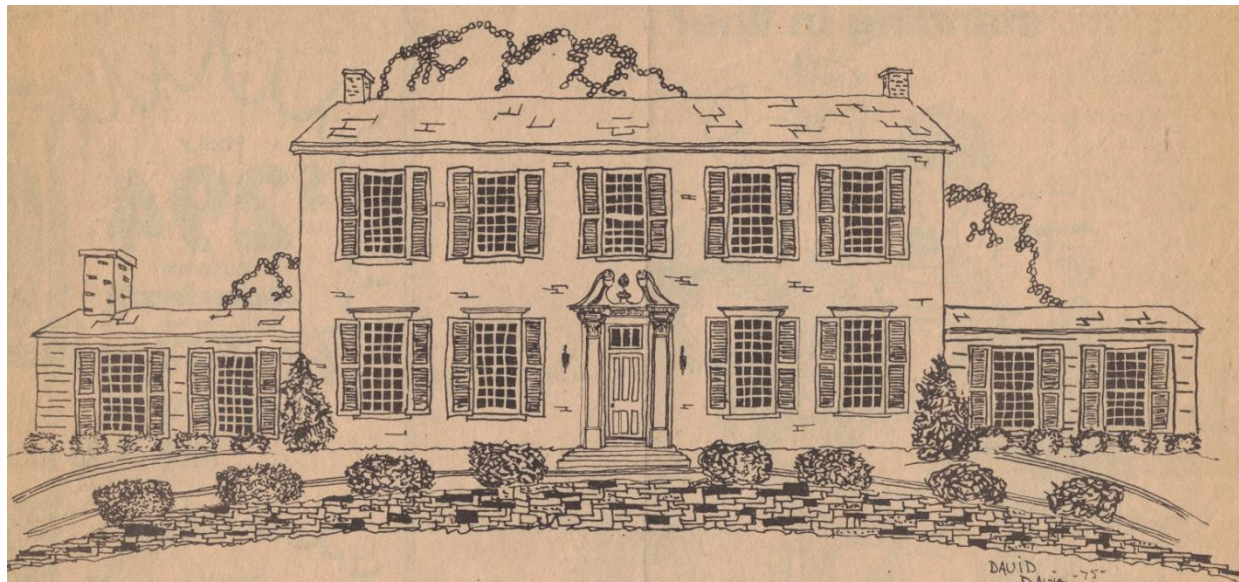
Home of Robert Triplett (1794-1853), Haphazard.
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 14 May 1989, p1F.



Home of Juste Nicola Vairin (1795-1872), Spend A Buck farm.
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 6 July 1986 p1C.



Home of Juste Nicola Vairin (1795-1872), Spend A Buck farm.
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 8 April 2009 p1A.



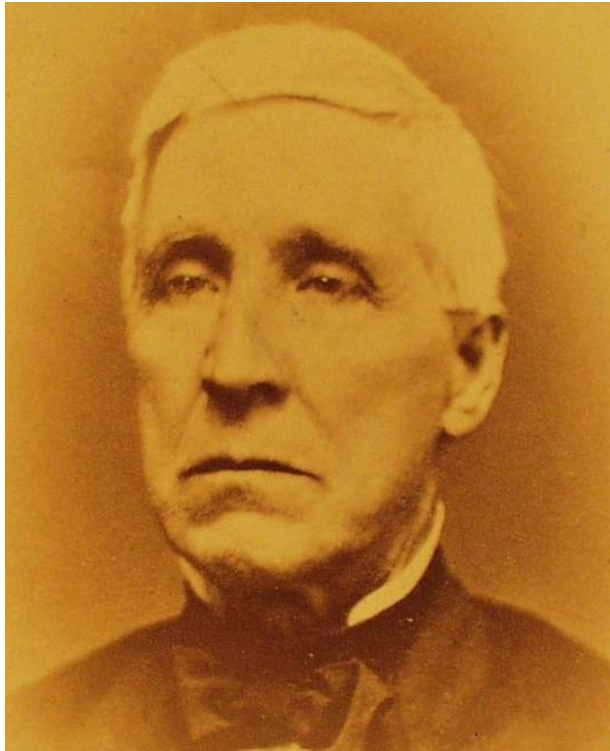
JUSTE NICOLA VAIRIN HOUSE

One of Napoleon Bonaparte's bodyguards spend his last thirty years in Daviess County. Juste Nicola Vairin, who lived with his five daughters, built this historic home around 1842. Besides being a guard of Napoleon's, Vairin also took part in the Battle of Waterloo. After moving to the United States, he saw an opportunity to become a tobacco exporter in Daviess County. The home, located east of Thruston, has been completely remodeled by Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Moorman.

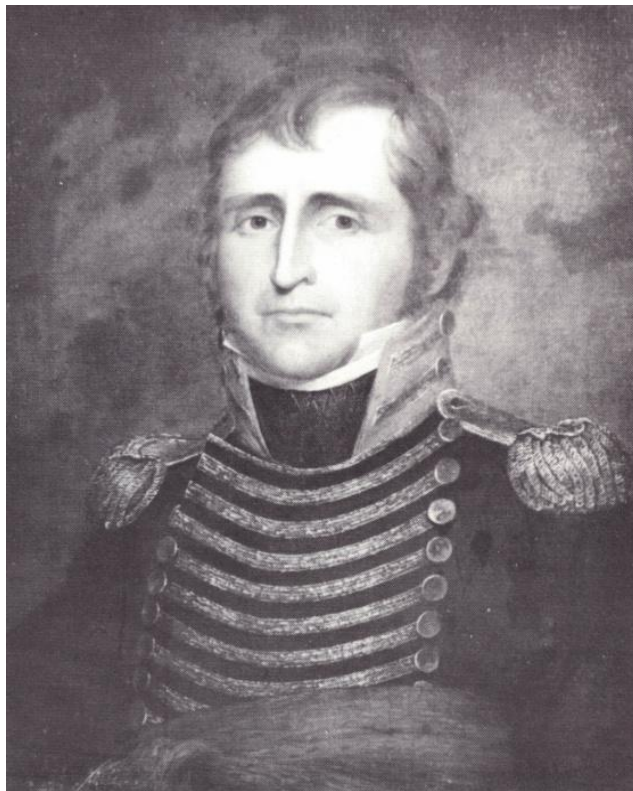
Home of Juste Nicola Vairin (1795-1872).
From Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 20 July 1975, p5A.

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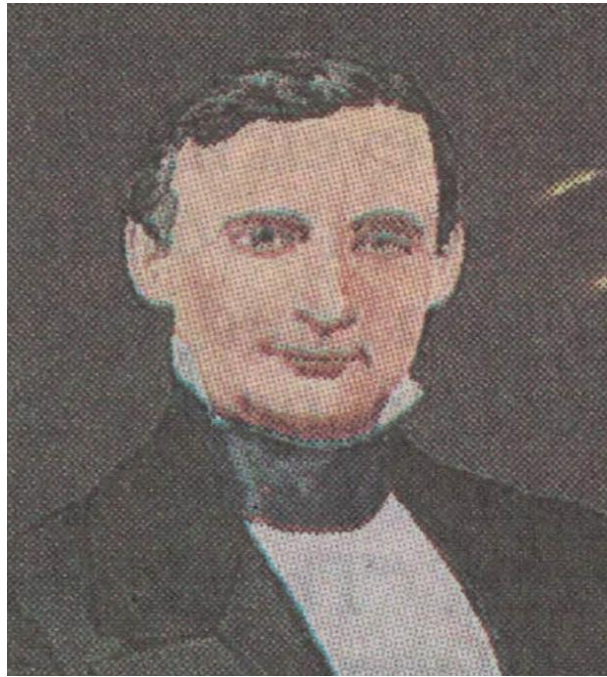
Some Residents of Old River Road



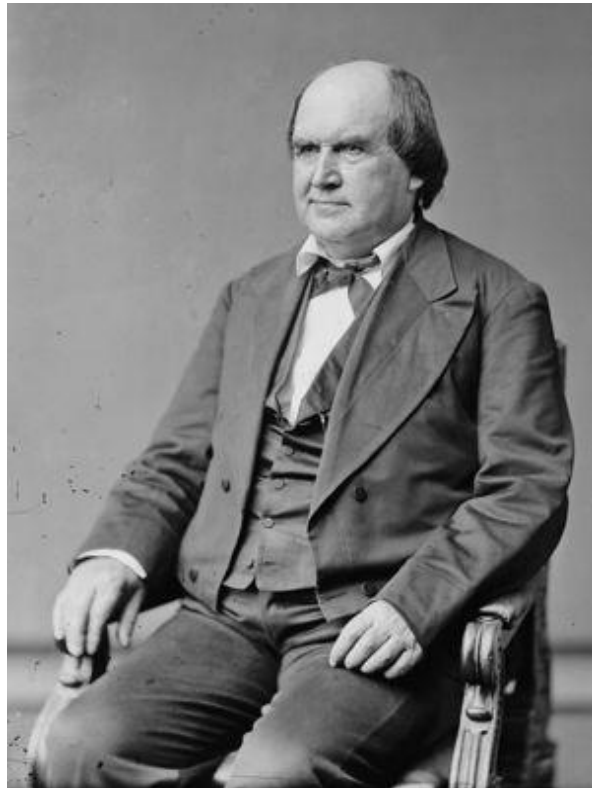
Burr Harrison Crutcher (1804-1902)



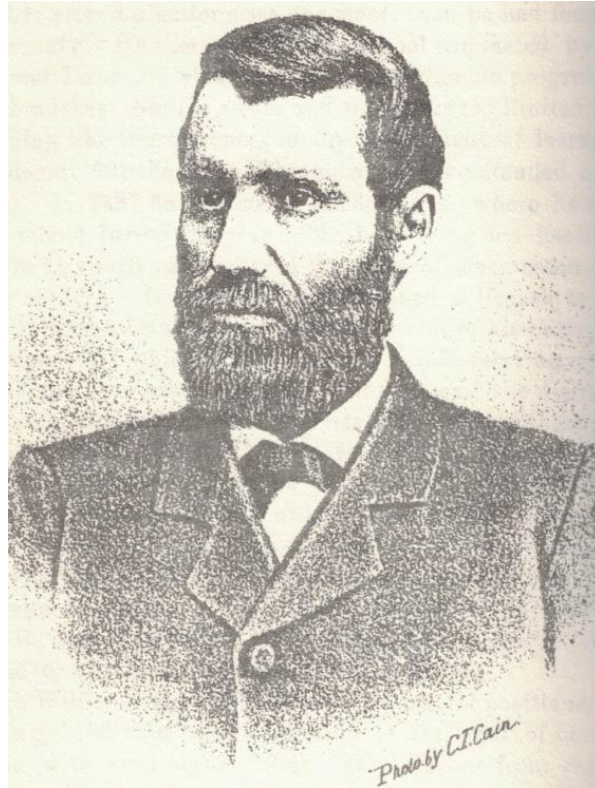
Joseph Hamilton Daveiss (1774-1811)



John Pierre Devereux (1821-1881)



Thomas Clay McCreery (1816-1890)



James Christopher Rudd (1833-1906)



George Helm Yeaman (1829-1908)