

Fordsville – Its Settlement & Growth

By Jerry Long



Kentucky Place Names, Robert M. Rennick, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1984, p.105:

Fordsville (Ohio): This 6th class city with post office is centered at the junction KY 54 and 69, 15 ½ miles northeast of Hartford. It is believed to have been first settled by a family of Huffs around the early 1830s and later named for Elisha Ford, its first merchant and probable founder. The post office of Haynesville, established in 1837 some 4 miles northwest, was moved to this site in 1846 and renamed Fordsville with Haden Wells as postmaster. [Source – “Fordsville Has Witnessed Steady Growth Since Establishment in 1833”, Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, 3 February 1966, p.7.]



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 7 July 1875, p.3:

From Fordsville

Fordsville, Ky., June 25.

Editor Herald: – I have concluded to write, not because I have any news, but that you have something from all parts of the county except this.

FORDSVILLE,

the history of which I intend to give you, is situated in a beautiful valley between Clark's and Panther Mountains, and is on a small mound, which renders the site both healthful and picturesque, drained on the east by a lovely little stream, which meanders and ripples its course through the fertile valley, in which dwell some of the most thrifty farmers of the county.

The soil is a rich sandy loam, adapted to the growth of all the products of the State. The surrounding forest contains the best timber in the country. The mountains are full of the very best stone coal, equal (for smithing purposes) to the best Pittsburgh coal. Of all this hidden wealth we are possessed, yet have no chance to develop it, owing to our having no means of transportation to market. If we had a railroad to connect us with the outside world, this town would not be the Nazareth of Ohio county.

Fordsville was first settled by Elisha Ford, who was the father of James Ford, of Hartford, and from whom it takes its name. Ford resided here but a short time, and when he left there was but one house of importance in the place. After him came Jack Haynes, who resided here some time without making or allowing any improvements to be made. After Haynes moved away, John

T. Smith became the purchaser of the site on which the town is built. I think he moved here some fifteen years ago. Under his supervision Fordsville has improved very much. There are now some twelve or fifteen dwelling houses in the town, and some five or six business houses.

Fordsville is healthfully located, and is a good business point, commanding the trade of large portions of three counties, viz., Breckinridge, Hancock and Ohio.

Our business men are the very best in the county A. J. Gross, whose business qualifications and affable manners render him the favorite of all who know him. Whitler & Magan, merchants, are polite and accommodating gentleman, and show off well behind the county. John T. Smith & Son, saddlers, are very accommodating, and are excellent workmen. John M. Johnson, druggist, is fully up to all the requirements of the times. Our professional gentlemen, Drs. Lightfoot and Sander, are worthy of notice, especially as their medical skill makes it almost an impossible fact to "shuffle off this mortal coil" when they obtain a fair shot at the "dread enemy." Take it all in all, Fordsville lacks a great deal of being the meanest tow-twin the county.

A WEDDING.

Married, on the 27th ult, at the residence of the bride's father, Mr. John A. Reynolds, by Rev. Mr. __, Dr. J. F. Lightfoot and Miss Rebecca G. Reynolds, all of this district.

It seems that for some twelve months or more, Cupid has been setting snares for our young Doctor, and at last the fascinating charms of the beautiful little Rebecca laid hold on him, and, like an incubus, haunted him by day and by night, until he at length yielded a willing and infatuated victim to the siren spell of her rare beauty and equally rare accomplishments. We are truly glad that the Doctor has married and settled down in our midst, where we hope he may spend the remainder of his days. May good Juno smile on him and his lovely wife.

THE CROPS

are in a very thriving condition in this section. The farmers think they will harvest the largest and best crops they have had for many years. There is a very large planting of tobacco in this section, and it is thriving very well. The merchants' think they will get pay next spring for the goods they sold a year ago. Wheat, oats, corn and grass are all in a very thriving condition. The wheat crop is now about ready to be harvested. The recent rains have done some injury to the crops, especially on low lands.

POLITICS

are nearly forgotten in this section, though the Democrats are determined to stand by their color", and cordially support the Democratic State ticket.

GRANGERS

contemplate a meeting on Saturday the 29th, in the l6wn of Fordsville for the purpose of raising contributions for the destitute counties of this State. God speed their work. Yours,

AGRICOLA.

From Another Correspondent.

Fordsville, Ky., July 2.

Editor Herald: – As I have seen no report from this part of the county, I hope you will allow this space in your good paper, as it is the first. Our people are very despondent on account of the deplorable condition of the crops. A great deal of the corn and tobacco, is entirely ruined. Some of the oldest citizens say they have never known the waters as high at this season of the year. All the watercourses, both large and small, has swept the fencing wherever it obstructed the pathway of the rushing waters.

The farmers arc using every exertion to get through with their wheat harvest, for fear of more rain. The candidates for the Legislature have not as yet created much stir among our good people, but I have been told by Mr. J. T. Smith that Mr. Hocker was in our town yesterday, and I find that he has gained many friends here. More anon.
 H. C. T.



Twelfth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Statistics of the State of Kentucky, Geo. G. Fetter Printing Co., Louisville, KY, c.1897, p.126a:





Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 16 June 1886, p3:

OHIO COUNTY.

Facts and Figures From the Assessor's Books --- An Interesting and Exact Description.

The County Clerk, Mr. T. J. Smith, has kindly put us in possession of the following summary from the Assessor's Books, which have Just been completed. We give the property of all kinds, and its value by precincts:

Fordsville has 66,256 acres of land, valued at \$307,090; 1004 horses valued at \$50,000; 281 mules valued at \$14,365; 1 jenny valued at \$10; 1,434 sheep valued at \$1,590; 1,639 hogs valued at \$1,795; 2,234 cattle valued at \$6,100; 9 stores valued at \$15,050; value of carriages, &c., \$1,470; value of watches of all kinds, including silver plate and pianos \$245; total assessed value of personal property, excluding value under the equalization law \$90,685, value under the equalization law \$20,150; grand total assessed value \$417,875. While males over 21 years of age who pay poll tax 762, legal voters 791, children between 6 and 20 years old 1,093; pounds of tobacco 1,320,250; 310 tons of hay; 139,875 bushels of com; 4,675 bushels of wheat.



**Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 19 August 1908, p6 and
Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 9 August 1908, p1B:**



For those who never having seen Fordsvllle, Ohio county Ky., and knowing that it is not a county seat, imagine the town to be a mere cross-road village, there is, if they only would visit the little city, a pleasant surprise in store. The town is scattered over a rolling area of about a square mile, and while the residence portions are interspersed with large vacant lots and even fields, the principal business houses, except those convenient to the depot, are arranged compactly on or near the town's main street.

Fordsville is very picturesquely situated, and a short walk about the streets brings one to many points from which can be had views of nearby high-pointed, forest-clad hills, open valleys with small clear streams, and over all blows a breeze free from smoke and lowland dampness, and singularly invigorating to the denizen of a crowded city in the Ohio river valley, especially in the morning about sunrise.

Fordsville is situated in the northwestern part of Ohio county, about eight miles from the Daviess county line. It 25 miles from Owensboro and 20 miles from Hartford, the county seat. It is easy of access, for besides having as many roads and as good roads as is usual for a town of its size, it has unusually good railroad service, being on the Illinois Central from Owensboro to Horse Branch and on a spur of the Henderson Route run over from Irvington. And the railroads did not build to this town blindly, for Fordsville imports and exports a good deal. From the surrounding hills, great quantities of lumber have been cut and shipped. Although most of the valuable timber is now removed, the farmers are now giving their attention not so much to lumbering, but to the improvement of their farms, and this improvement is coming to be so general that the face of the country for miles is assuming a more pleasant and cultured appearance. From Fordsvllle are shipped large quantities of cattle, and an unusually large amount of poultry and eggs. Neither is the town to be neglected as a tobacco center, for the tobacco hereabouts is considerable in quantity and good in quality. An asset to the town that must not be omitted, is its cheap coal supply. Abundance of this indispensable article is found in the nearby hills and only occasionally, when the roads become too bad for heavy hauling, are the railroads called upon to bring in coal from a greater distance.

In 1834 Elisha Ford came to this place from Shelby county. It is now a town of 800 or 900 inhabitants, nearly all white, and bids fair to prosper so as to perpetuate the name of Ford in a creditable, if not in a glorious, manner. For the town is growing.

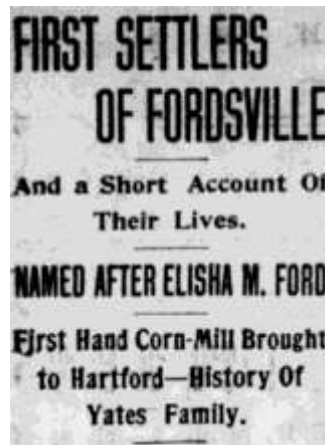
A traveling salesman, some time ago asked one of the town merchants how many stores there were in town. He replied that he thought about six. "Let us see," said he, "we'll count them."

And naming them all over together, they discovered there were 13. There are, moreover, three banks, three tobacco factories, going to be three railroads, two grist mills, a carding machine, sawmill, two livery stables, and a fine poultry house. Besides all this, the town has many concrete walks and is constantly laying more. Regarding tile number of the town's pretty girls, Fordsville is perfectly satisfied. All the men say that their town contains more really pretty girls than any other town of its size in the United States. Perhaps the salubrious air, above referred to, and the influence of music, of which the town is full combine to bring about this soul-satisfying result. For Fordsville is a musical town. It has four good music teachers and an amateur brass band, and it is said that in nearly every home there is a piano, the few being without one, supplying its place with an organ.

It goes without saying that Fordsville is a "dry" town. To help keep its people on the "dry" path and out of the slough of despond. Fordsville has three churches, one good school and a town marshal. The town is yet without a water or light system, but the question of installing both has been ag__, and probably when the laying of concrete walks is completed and that expense cancelled the proposition for light and water systems will meet with favorable consideration. Owing to its favorable situation, Fordsvllle does a large business, drawn from a wild tract of country. Competition between merchants keeps prices low, and if while competing in prices, they would get together and advertise their town in modern energetic ways, and so keep at home an immense mail order business that goes away, there is little doubt that their business would increase and the town would grow still faster. It is the wish of some progressive citizens that some manufacturing enterprises may be started, they believing that owing to the abundant supply of cheap material and cheap labor, such an enterprise could be made a success.



**Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 22 September 1909, p.2 and
Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 26 September 1909, p8B:**



Fordsville Ohio county Ky., was settled by three early Kentucky settlers, viz: Benjamin Kelley, Ancil Hall and Richard Huff. Huff settled on the north-east side of what is now the town of Fordsville. Hall settled on the west side. Huff settled about the year 1793, but it is not known at what time Kelly and Hall settled their farms, other than that they were among the first settlers of this part of the State. Benjamin Kelley, when a small boy was one of Daniel Boone's party taken prisoner by the Indians while making salt at the Blue Licks in Nicholas county and was taken to Detroit, Mich., where he made his escape, taking with him an Indian tomahawk presented to him

by Colonel McKee, the British Indian agent and principal advocate of the war then existing between the United States and the savages. This tomahawk is now owned by a grandson of Benjamin Kelley, living near Fordsville.

Ancil Hall was a prominent Baptist preacher of his time and his descendants are now numerous in this part of the State. Richard Huff was an energetic settler, raised a large family of sons and daughters and his posterity is now widely scattered over several states.

Each of the early settlers had a graveyard on his farm and their remains and many of their relatives and friends were buried in them The Kelly graveyard is now the Fordsville cemetery The Huff graveyard is now surrounded by the residences, gardens, lots &c., of the citizens of the town and them Hall graveyard is on Cedar Hill, near the western corporation line.

The early name of Fordsville was Kelley's Precinct, in honor of Benjamin Kelley and so remained till about the year 1848, when Galin Crowe, of Hartford, established a post-office there and named the hamlet Fordsville, in honor of Elisha M. Ford, at that time the main business man of Hartford and the first man to establish a mercantile business at Kelley's Precinct.

About the year 1830 a widow lady from Virginia bought that part of Mr. Huff's farm on the south-east side of a small stream which is a tributary of Adams' Fork . This lady was Mrs. Nancy Yates, widow of Lieutenant Reuben C. Yates, who died in the United States army near City Point, Va., during the war of 1812. Mrs. Yates' family at that time, consisted of her son, Wm. H. Yates, and a num her of slaves. She said she was a native Virginian, that her maiden name was Yates and at the age of 12 years she had married her cousin, Reuben C. Yates, and that she was but 13 years older than her son. She further said that her husband was a Lieutenant in the army and died there when person her son was a little child, and produced letters from John Tompkins and other army officers corroborating this statement and exhibited some of her husband's army effects. One of them being his portrait painted while he was in the army and another being a copy of "Cushing's Tactic," at that time being the discipline of the United States army. She also received letters from Ann Washington and other prominent Virginia ladies, showing she was of a high-class, Virginia people.

In the fall of 1869 I called to see Mrs. Yates. I told her that my grandfather was a soldier in Washington's Continental army and an officer in the war of 1812 and that I had called to see her as the widow of one of my grand-father's comrade officers.

Mrs. Yates was feebly reclining on her bed and at that time she was suffering from cancer of the breast, which soon terminated in death She was cheerful and very courteous to me and appeared to be greatly interested in my grandfather's services in the army, as they had been told to me. After I had addressed her for some time she made some remarks about her husband's services in the army and the close attachment his men had for him. She handed a bunch of keys to a servant and ordered her to bring some small portrait from a bureau drawer. On the return of the servant Mrs. Yates exhibited some old-time daguerreotype portraits of the Yates family. One of the portraits was taken from a French painting of her husband.

After the death of Mrs. Yates I copied the Lieutenant Yates portrait for my military drawing book and at this time I think it is the only one that is in existence The original one and other relics of the Yates family were destroyed when the Yates homestead was burned some years ago.

Many prominent persons called to see Mrs. Yates and among the presents sent to her was the hand cornmill brought to Hartford by Hon. Elisha M. Ford on his return from the Legislature in 1845 and the balance, wheel of this mill was at the Yates farm a few years ago. Mrs. Yates died November 9, 1869, and her son, William, preceded her June 30, 1864 Some years before Mrs.

Yates died she selected a burial place the farm near her home and her remains and those of her son now lie side by side on the east side of a large oak tree.

EDWIN FORBES



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 8 December 1909, p.6:



Editors Herald: – In The Herald of November 24, I read of the many fatalities on the Ridge of Death in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, but for a chain of accidental deaths, I think the northeastern corner of Ohio county is well up with the Pennsylvania Ridge of Death. Under the heading “Valley of Death,” the Fordsville Star of Nov. 21, 1894, published the following account of the fearful deaths in this beautiful valley:

“Mitchell’s Station, one mile east or here, is on the west side of a beautiful fertile valley which extends from Rough river to the Breckenridge county line. From Mitchell’s to Askins Station, which is in Breckenridge county, the objects of public interest are old Mt. Pleasant Baptist church, now Grant Army Hall, Tank No. 3, and Jones Station or Oaks. On the east side of the valley from Mitchell’s, the east prong of Adams Fork creek winds its way down the valley Rough river. Tank No. 3, is on this stream and above Jones Station the railroad crosses the creek and after running parallel with it for some distance, it leaves the stream and enters the summit on the Ohio county side of Askins Station.

The scenery along the valley from the railroad on the valley margins is not only romantic to visitors but they admire its fertile fields and rural life on its borders. During the verdure season the green fields of waving grass and growing grain, the rich foliage of the trees and shrubbery and the white homes of the farmers and villagers, all lend enchantment to the vista of the scenery. But as the passengers, from the car windows, view the picturesque scenery from Tank No. ,3 to Mitchell’s Station, how little do any of them know that they are crossing “The Valley of Accidental Deaths,” which were not only terrible in their nature but according to the population and their character, will outnumber all other communities in this part of the State.

From Mitchell’s to a short distance back of Grand Army Hall, but little over one-half mile, are the places where five human beings have met death in a fearful manner. About 120 yards south of Mitchell’s house was a tree in the center of the old road. On August election day in the year 1843 Mr. James Nichols, a brother-in-law to the now venerable Thomas Phillips, and some others were returning from the election, they were running their horses past this tree. It appears Mr. Nichols’ horse aimed to pass the tree on one side and the other horses the other, when Nichols’

head struck the tree and he was almost instantly killed. His dead body was taken to his family and his grave can now be seen from the home of Mr. Phillips.

About the last of March, 1852, Martha, the six-year-old daughter of the Rev. J. J. Keown, went to the field back of the Grand Army Hall to see the broom sage burn and was I caught in the flames and burned to death. October 1, 1861, the Confederate spy, Bennett, from Missouri, was killed near Tank No. 3, by a member of the Adam's Fork Home Guards while resisting arrest. He was the first Confederate killed in Kentucky during the Civil War.

November 22, 1863, Sarah, the six-year-old daughter of George W. and M. J. Roberts, was in the field where her father and brothers were at work, when a sudden blast of wind blew down a true mill she was almost instantly killed.

January 4, 1876, Charles W., the sixteen-year-old son of Geo. W and M. J Roberts started out with a rifle to kill a hawk and in looking for the hawk, was careless with the gun, when it was discharged, sending a ball through his brain. He lived three days and died in dreadful agony.

About 10 o'clock p. m., Thursday, November 8, 1894, as Samuel C., the fourteen-year-old son of S. C. and M. J Roberts, was returning from meeting at Fordsville to his home two miles east of there he was killed by a fall from his horse within less than twenty yards of where Mr. Nichols lost his life.

The children were all related to each other. Charles Roberts was an uncle to Samuel C. Roberts, Jr. Sarah Roberts was his aunt and Martha Keown a cousin to him.

“EDWIN FORBES”

Since the above was published, two more names have been added to the roll of horrors. November 11 1898. Lee Phillips was killed by his horse falling on him at the creek bridge about 100 yards from where Samuel C. Roberts was killed. He was a young man, the son of a widow and dependent mother.

July 16, 1909 Flexter Jenkins a colored boy from Alabama, was accidentally shot through the brain by a colored hand on the railroad and died in a few days. “Dock,” as he was called was but 17 years old and was killed near where Mr. Nichols and Samuel C. Roberts were killed. He was an employee on the M. H. & E railroad, a native of Birmingham, Ala., and a favorite among the railroad hands.

EDWIN FORBES



**Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 22 December 1909, p.1 and
Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 December 1909, p6:**



Fordsville, Ky., Dec. 16.

Editors Herald: – In The Herald of December 8 you published my list of fatalities in what is called here “The Valley of Death,” but In that communication I did not mention the many historic and romantic places in this beautiful and fertile valley.

From Mitchell’s to Jones’ Station, in this county, and within a radius of about one mile long and about half a mile wide, there are more strange objects of interest on this small piece of land than I have ever seen in any State. A short distance above Mitchell’s, on the left side of the valley is the noted Hedden Cave ,which has been visited and explored by tourists from various of our States and the European countries.

Near the cave is the site of old Mt. Pleasant Baptist church, organized by the first settlers of the community. Hon. Elisha M. Ford was for years its clerk before he moved to Hartford .

Near the church site is the Indian Arrow Head Ridge, where the points were made, and many of them and broken pieces of flints left in their making can yet be found on the . I now have a box of them at my home to interest visitors.

North of the ridge in a small stream is a large limestone rock ,partly submerged in water, and on the face of the rock above the water are the trucks of little children’s feet. The rock is now turned to blue flint.

Near the ridge and further up the valley is the Indian Council Rock and near it is the Mammoth Knot Tree, of which an engraving and description of it appeared In the Chicago Saturday Blade of March 14 1891.

Across the valley from the Indian Arrow Head Ridge is the old John B. Haynes farm. On some large rocks sear the site of his residence are some fishbones, now petrified to white marble. On the opposite side of the field is the John B. Haynes graveyard, and in the center of the yard is a sugar tree which measures 13 ½ feet in circumference near the ground and has a shade of 74 feet in the yard. In clearing the field, Uncle John, as he was called, killed a bear on this tree and the last buffalo known to be in this community were two seen beneath its shade.

On the east side of this tree is the tomb of John B. Haynes and his wife, Rhoda A. Haynes, and on the west side of the grave is the Confederate spy, Bennett. On this farm, across the valley from the Indian Council Rock is the Dark Hollow, so much visited by tourists at all seasons of the year. In the summer season the school children and others enjoy their picnics in this gloomy retreat where, before the trees that surrounded it were removed, stars could be seen from it on any clear day.

October 15, 1807, John Whittinghill settled the farm now embracing Jones Station, in the valley on the east side of the John B. Haynes farm. While erecting a cabin for a dwelling he lived in a camp back of East Fork Baptist church, which is located at Jones’ Station and whose present members are nearly all the descendants of the early settlers of this part or the county.

John Whittinghill was a native of Rockbridge county, Va., and his wife a native of Chester District on the Catawba river in South Carolina and n schoolmate of Gen. Andrew Jackson at the Waxhaws. Her maiden name was Copper and she was a sister of the late Joseph H. Cooper, Sr., of Breckenridge county.

In the year 1840 John Whittinghill built a corn mill on the creek near his home and hauled the mill stones from Mercer county. They are French buhr stones and were no doubt brought to Virginia during the early colony days and later to Fort Harrod, now Harrodsburg These stones are now lying in the mill pond near the site of the old mill. They are 32 inches face measurement and the iron bands around them are in a good state of preservation.

I have prepared a map from Mitchell's to Jones' Station which contains all the roads, streams and places of interest in the valley and thirteen 8x10 inch paintings of views in this picturesque part of the county Those paintings are much admired by sightseeing visitors. They are: The Hedden Cave, the Indian Arrow Head Ridge, the Dark Hollow, the Mammoth Knot, the Whittinghill Homestead, Etc. The map and painting were made for James Barr, of Glasgow Scotland, and they will be sent to him, accompanied by an assortment of Indian arrow points.

EDWIN FORBES.



Ohio County Messenger, Beaver Dam, KY, 18 March 1955, p1B:

Fordsville, Founded In 1833, Is Second Oldest Town In Ohio County

Fordsville, Ohio County, Ky, was founded about 1833. It is said to be the second oldest town in Ohio County...

... The "earliest known settlers came here in 1790. They were Mobberleys from Virginia. This was twenty-five years after Daniel Boone came to Kentucky for the first time, and two years before Kentucky became a state, Patsy Mobberley died on December 22, 1823 and is buried in what is now known as the Wells Cemetery. She is an ancestor of Mrs. Pearl Williams, who now lives near Fordsville.

The Huffs, who came here from Virginia, are said to be ancestors of the present Huff families. They selected their home site at the edge of the branch which goes under Highway 54 near the Christian Church, and at the point where the old Louisville and Nashville Railroad crossed the branch. They built a log cabin there which stood until fire destroyed it a few years ago. Nancy Huff, who is the great-grandmother of Mrs. G. E. Fuqua, and the great-great-grandmother of Elaine Marlow, was related to these first Huffs.

Later Young Johnson lived in the cabin with a Negro boy and girl. The boy was named Scott and the girl Tiba.

William Yeates, another early settler, is an ancestor of Mrs. V. A. Matthews. He came here from Virginia, after receiving a land grant for four hundred acres of land from the Government of Virginia. He is said to have brought the first slaves to this part of Kentucky. He built a house and lived on the hill near the John Whitler farm. He and his slaves are buried there. H. J. Odell boarded with Mrs. John Yeates and attended school in Fordsville. He got wood and water after school and worked on Saturday to pay the board.

Among the early settlers was John Ford, who is the great, great, great, grandfather of Elaine Marlowe. At the age of 12 he came to Shelby County from South Carolina, in 1832. Later he moved to this vicinity. He married Nancy Garth of Henry County. He brought with him little Negro girl named Adeline. On the way Adeline was missed and a search found her in a barrel of soft soap where she had fallen. At the next creek they washed off the soap and it is said the whole creek was a mass of soap bubbles. When Adeline became a woman she cared for Mrs. Lorenzo Marlowe and her brothers and sister, since their mother was dead.

Johnny B. Haynes, his wife, and two slaves are buried in the Haynes Cemetery near here. He is buried under a great sugar tree on which, in his youth, he is said to have shot one of the last bears in this county. He is a great, great grandfather of Elaine Marlowe.

This section is rich in old graveyards and many interesting things can be learned by observing them.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 29 November 1890, p.1:

Fordsville Boom.

Although Unheard of for Months. It is Still On in the Biggest Sort of Style.

Last spring there was a good deal heard and said of a boom at Fordsville, the little town that was brought out of a slumber of half a century by the building of a railroad from Owensboro. Up to that time and within a year more houses had been built in the place than were in existence before. The same thing has kept up ever since, and there are more houses in the place that are not a year old than there are of houses of all other ages from the pioneer log house of the Huff's, built more than seventy years ago and still standing and in good repair, to the neat cottage of last year. Every house is taken as soon as it is finished, and there are demands for more houses than can be furnished, many people who would live in the place being forced to put up with houses that are entirely inadequate and at a distance of from one to two miles. The local people are building as fast as they are able, but they can by means supply the demand.

The timber and coal business of the town is constantly growing. A switch is to be put in shortly the Gaines coal mine, then the coal will be mined in great quantities. Those of the citizens of Owensboro who have used the Fordsville coal will have no other, and there is no limit that could be placed on the demand if it could be properly supplied. The coal lands around the town have been involved in litigation for several years, and this has been the reason that the industry is not more extensively prosecuted. This trouble will all be settled in a short time, and then mines will be put down under every hill.



Kentucky Gazetteer and Business Directory For 1895-1896, R. L. Polk & Co. & A. C. Danser, Detroit, MI & Louisville, KY, 1895.:

FORDSVILLE: On the O., F. of R. & G. R., R. and L., St., L. & T. Rys., in Ohio county, 20 miles northeast of Hartford, the county seat and 75 southwest of Louisville. Population, 600. Exp., Adams. Tel., W. U. J. T. Smith, postmaster,

Bristow Rev. J. W (Baptist).

Brite, G. W., grocer.

Cooper. J. D., druggist.

Cooper .J. F., general store.

Ford, C. R., stationery.

Ford, T. S., live stock.

Fordsville Banking C. (Capital \$15,000),

J. T. Smith Pres., Ike C. Adair, cashier.

Hale, J. W., watchmaker.

Howard Hotel, J. B. Howard propr.

Johnson. L. T., railroad and exp. agent.

Krawn Bros., livery.

McCarty, J. W., physician.

McCuen & Shawn, general store.

Matthews, D. M., physician.

Matthews, H. F., lawyer.

Miller, J. A., carpenter.

Miller, N. J., carpenter.

Osborne, T. W., painter.

Reynolds, J. S., flour mill anti feed.

Roberts James, deputy sheriff.

Roland, Rev. T. F. (Methodist).

Smith, C. M., horse trainer.

Smith, J. T. Jr., Harness maker.

Smith, J. W., barber and confectioner.
 Star (weekly), I. M. Key propr.
 Stines, T. P., teacher,
 Tabor, C. B., police judge.
 Wallace, B. F., farm implements.

Wedding, T. S., blacksmith.
 Wedding & Dasch, shingle mnfrs.
 Wilson & Co., general store.
 Wright, Reuben, blacksmith.



U.S. Appointments of U. S. Postmasters, National Archives

Haden Wells 20 Jan 1846
 John Haynes 23 Dec 1847
 John W. Payne 16 Apr 1855
 John Hall 12 Feb 1856
 John Haynes 8 Feb 1860
 Addison Mayo 13 Nov 1862
 Charles W. R. Cobb 9 Dec 1862
 Mark Wedding 20 Jul 1865
 Charles W. R. Cobb 16 Nov 1866
 Bettie D. Cobb 14 Mar 1873
 John M. Johnson 6 Feb 1874
 James F. Cooper 18 Aug 1885
 Morris Wilson 13 May 1889
 Samuel C. Roberts 19 Aug 1891
 Bessie Smith 21 Jul 1892

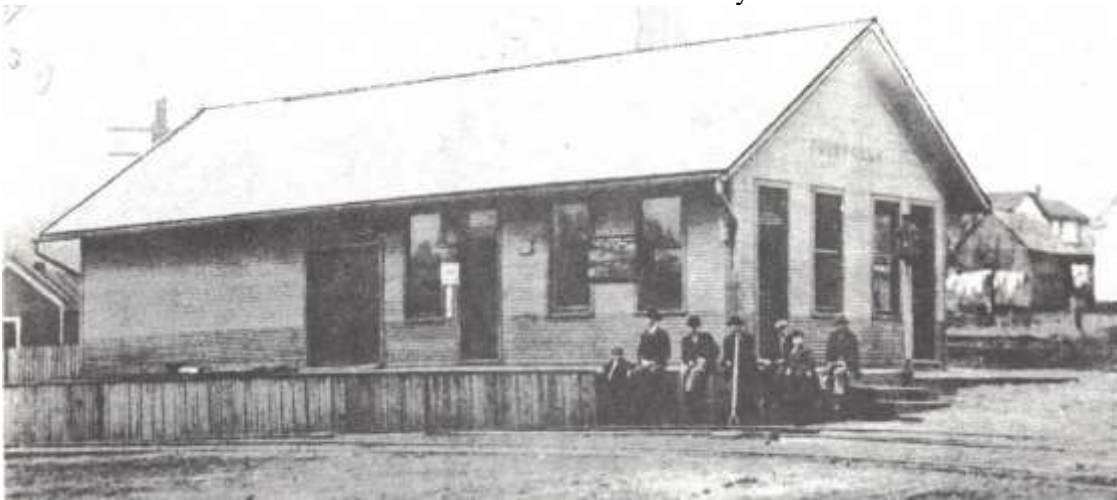
Bessie Ford 18 Oct 1892
 John T. Smith Jr. 17 Aug 1893
 Henry D. Smith 10 Jul 1897
 William S. Gaines 21 Nov 1905
 Garland G. Lanum 23 Apr 1914
 Robert A. Rusher 1 Aug 1924
 Virgil A. Matthews 30 Jan 1925
 Virgil A. Matthews 31 Jan 1929
 Arthur E. Smith 1 Dec 1933
 Arthur E. Smith 14 Mar 1934
 Arthur E. Smith 22 May 1939
 Russell R. Davison 1 Jun 1949
 Russell R. Davison 29 Jun 1950
 Mrs. Buda D. Patton 3 Apr 1971



Main Street in Fordsville circa 1900



Parade in downtown Fordsville in early 1900's



Illinois Central Railroad Depot in Fordsville as it looked in the early 1920's. At one time the town had two railroad companies (I. C. and L. & N.) with routes into and through the town.

Fordsville's prosperity began in 1889 when a railroad spur was completed between Owensboro and Fordsville. This allowed coal, timber, tobacco and other freight to be shipped economically, and for 85 cents roundtrip ticket, Fordsville residents could catch one of two daily passenger trains to Owensboro.

The Illinois Central Railroad Depot was one of two depots in Fordsville, Kentucky during the late 1880's and early to middle 1900's. It was located on the corner of Walnut Street and what is now known as the Old Railroad Bed Street. The 26-mile segment from Owensboro, Kentucky to Fordsville was opened October 1, 1889. Originally, there was only a passenger train making 4 round trips each day. Later, freight was added. On 15 June 1941 the last passenger train ran from Irvington to Fordsville and the last train rolled along the tracks in 1982. The following year the rails were removed.



L. & N. Railroad Depot in Fordsville



L. & N. Railroad Depot in Fordsville; now the Fordsville Historical Society Museum

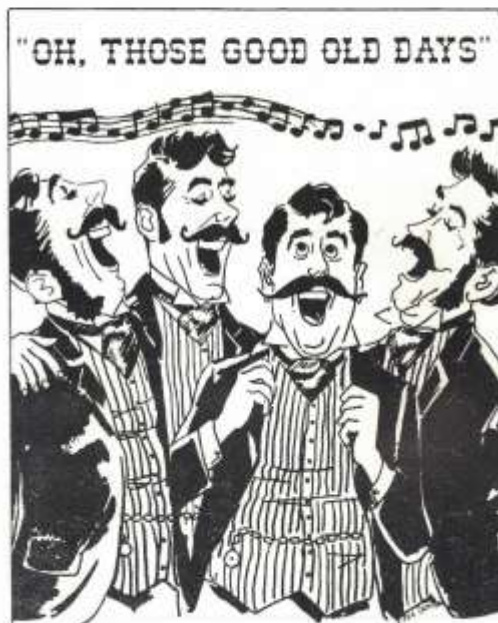
Fordsville's L. & N. Railroad Depot is on the National Register of Historical Places. The building was constructed in 1916. It is now home to the Fordsville Historical Society Museum. The depot was opened on 19 September 1992 as a railroad and community museum. The renovation work was primarily done by community volunteers, in an effort to be community minded and progressive, endeavoring to promote civic pride. The museum continues to be run on fund raisers and donations. The predominant fund raiser used to maintain the museum is "Fordsville Days" Street Festival. This occurs every 3rd Friday and Saturday of September, in downtown Fordsville.



**Book, History of Fordsville, Ohio County, Kentucky,
by Edith Freer (1907-1993),
Sandefur Printing Co., Fordsville, KY, 1992:**

HISTORY OF FORDSVILLE

OHIO COUNTY, KENTUCKY



WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY
EDITH FREER



Elisha Milstead Ford (1809-1851)

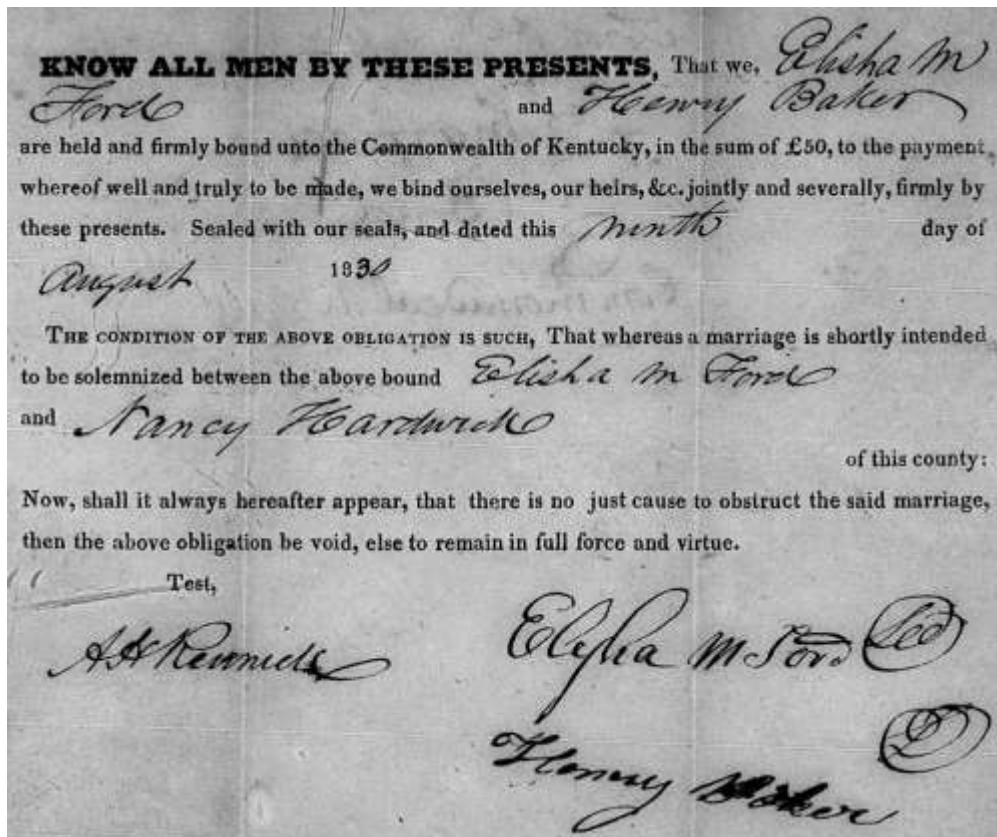
By Jerry Long

John Ford, son of Elisha Ford and Sarah O'Neill, was born 3 October 1787 in Newberry County, S. C. John's father, Elisha Ford, served eight years in the Continental Army in the War for Independence. In Shelby County, KY on 28 June 1808 John Ford married Nancy Garth. She was the daughter of David Garth and Sarah Sneed and was born 25 March 1789 in Rockingham County, Virginia. John Ford was a soldier in the War of 1812. He fought with Gen. Harrison and was wounded at the Battle of Tippecanoe, one of his sons he named after his company commander, John Simpson. During 1834 he moved to Ohio County, KY, where he made his home near the present town of Fordsville, which was named in honor of his son, Elisha Milstead Ford (1809-1851) in 1846.

John Ford died 20 September 1871 and his wife, Nancy, preceded him on 15 October 1865. They were buried in the Haynes-Ford (also called Miles) Cemetery about one and one-half miles southeast of Fordsville, KY. From Fordsville, go east on Highway 54, past Highway 261, then Highway 54 turns south. Go past the Old Askins Rd (KY 629), past Marlo-Seaton Lane. On left (east) will be a private road which is the Miles Cemetery Lane (also known as Bob Taque Lane). Cemetery is about 1/4 mile up the lane. Property is owned by Darrell Miles.

John Ford and Nancy Garth were the parents of twelve children; . Elisha Milstead, David G., John Simpson, Bijah O'Neal, Amanda M., Milton Sneed, Martha Susan, Sarah Frances, William H., Nancy Garth, Harvey Thomas and Mary E. Ford.

Elisha Milstead was born 25 June 1809 in Shelby County, KY. He married Nancy F. Hardwick (1814-1852), 12 August 1830 Shelby County, KY.



This is to certify that I did celebrate
the rites of matrimony between Wm Hearford
and miss Jane Mitchel on the 6th Day
July 1830.
also Elisha M Ford to miss Nancy
Heardwick on the 12th Day of August
1830
also Jason Chamberlain to miss Sarah
Homes on the 4th Day of October 1831
October the 18th 1832 W. M. Ford

After arriving in Ohio County Elisha M. Ford lived in the vicinity of where the town of Fordsville was established. He was a merchant and tobacconist. In some accounts he is reported to have been the first merchant in Fordsville. The town of Fordsville, in northeastern Ohio County, was originally called Haynesville; a post office of that name was established some four miles northwest on 11 March 1837. The post office was moved to the present site of Fordsville and was renamed Fordsville on 20 January 1846. It was named in honor of Elisha M. Ford, the town's Kentucky State Representative. Ford served two terms, 1845 and 1848, in the Kentucky Legislature (House of Representatives), representing Ohio and Hancock Counties. Haden Wells was appointed the town's first postmaster on 20 January 1846. Fordsville was the county's second oldest town and is now its third largest town.

Ohio County, KY Deed Book I, pages 186-187:

Know all men by these presents that I John Ford of the County of Ohio & State of Ky have this day bargained & sold to E M Ford of the County & State afd the tract of land on which I now live in the County & State aforesaid & on the East fork of Adams fork of Rough Creek containing 260 acres & one negro Girl by the name of Adaline of a Dark Complexion about 14 years old also one cupboard & one beuro for and in consideration of the sum of four hundred Dollars to me in hand paid the rcept whereof is hereby acknowledged and the s'd partie of the first part for himself his heirs & every other person will warrant & forever defend the title Title to all the above property Except the title of the s'd Negro he only binds himself to defend s'd title to his life Estate or the title to her during his Natural life that being all the claim I hold on s'd Negro Slave but the condition of this obligation is such that if the s'd Ford or any person for him shall and truly pay to the s'd E M Ford of the second part the above named four hundred dollars which bear even date with ??? together with the interest thereon by the first day of April 1843 then this to be null & void otherwise to remain in full force this Jany 20th 1843

John Ford

Attest John W Tilford
Franklin Mitchell
Kentucky Ohio County to wit

I Charles Henderson Clerk of the County Court for the county aforesaid do certify that this mortgage from John Ford to E M Ford was proved before me in my office by the oath of John W Tilford one of the subscribing witnesses thereto to be the act and deed of said John Ford on the 31 January 1843 and again on the 3d day of July 1843 the said Mortgage was acknowledged before me in my office by the said John Ford to be his act and deed and thence admitted to record in my office together with this certificate

Given under my hand the day and year aforesaid

Ch Henderson

About the time of returning from his service in the state legislature Elisha M. Ford moved from Fordsville to Ohio County's seat in Hartford. In 1845 he sold land on Adams Fork Creek near Fordsville and by December 1846 he was residing in Hartford. In the 1850 federal census of Hartford, Ohio County, KY he is listed as a tavern keeper. In the 1850 census slave schedule he is reported as being the owner of fourteen slaves. He died 12 November 1851 and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Hartford, KY. Elisha M. and Nancy Hardwick had five children – Elizabeth, John, Eliza, Ellen and James W. Ford.

The following biography of Elisha's son, James W. Ford, was published in the book, Kentucky: A History of the State (J. H. Battle, W. H. Perrin & G. C. Kniffin) in 1885:

JAMES W. FORD was born January 25, 1842, at Fordsville, Ohio Co., Ky., a son of Elisha M. and Nancy (Hardwick) Ford. Elisha M. is a native of Shelby County, Ky., where he was reared and educated; when a boy his father moved to Ohio County. His parents were natives of North Carolina, and were among the first settlers of Shelby County. Elisha M. was a tobacconist and farmer by occupation, and served his district two terms in the State legislature. He was a leading citizen, and took a prominent position in all local enterprises. His death occurred in 1851; his wife died in 1852. They were Baptists; he was a Mason. They were the parents of five children, two living: Mrs. Eliza Ogelvie, of Charleston, Mo., and James W. The latter was reared in this county until fourteen years of age, when he went to Missouri to live with his sister. In company with four other boys he worked his way through to Pike's Peak in 1859. After his return from Missouri and Pike's Peak to Hartford, Ky., after an absence of about four years, he attended school until 1861, when he enlisted under Capt. Pendleton, in Company C, Ninth Kentucky Infantry (Confederate service), and served four years. "There were 140 enrolled in his company at its organization, and but twenty-six returned, and these bore forty-seven wounds." He enlisted as a private, was promoted to sergeant, later elected lieutenant. He participated in the battles of Shiloh, Baton Rouge, Murfreesboro, Vicksburg, Hartsville and in the Atlanta campaign, and never missed a battle of his regiment. Upon his return from the war he entered the drug business, at Hartford, in partnership with Mr. Taylor, whom he afterward bought out, and has since carried on the business himself, with the exception of a short term of partnership. He carries a large stock, is well located on the public square, and enjoys a

flourishing trade. November 12, 1872, he married Miss Abbie E. Rowan, of Ohio County. They have one daughter, Jessie, ten years of age. Mrs. Ford is a Methodist.



Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, 18 November 1851, p.2:

[For the Louisville Journal.]
HARTFORD LODGE, Nov. 12, 1851.
Whereas, it hath pleased our Great Grand Master, to call from labor, our Brother Elisha M. Ford, by a sudden and unexpected death. Therefore—
Be it resolved, By this lodge that while we submit with Christian and Masonic resignation to this afflicting dispensation of Providence, we extend our sympathies to his bereaved widow and her afflicted family. Our brother having died without leaving any request to be buried with the forms and ceremonies incident to our order, we therefore deem it inexpedient to do so. But in lieu thereof—
Be it resolved, That we will accompany his remains to the grave, and, as a testimonial of our respect for a worthy and departed brother, we will wear crape on the left arm, and the usual badge of mourning for the space of thirty days. And be it further—
Resolved, That the secretary be directed to forward a copy of the above resolutions to the editors of the Louisville Journal and Democrat, and request their publication, and that he deliver another copy to the bereaved family of our departed brother.
THOMAS C. TAYLOR, Secretary.





Oakwood Cemetery, Hartford, Ohio County, KY



Wendell Hampton Ford

Wendell Hampton Ford (1924-2015), of Daviess County, KY, is a great-great-nephew of Elisha M. Ford. Wendell was the son of Ernest Milton Ford (1896-1967), grandson of Richard Hampton Ford (1868-1956) and great-grandson of Milton Snead Ford (1818-1902), who was a brother of Elisha M. Ford. Wendell H. Ford served as the 49th Governor of the state of Kentucky (1971-1974) and as a United States Senator representing Kentucky in the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C. (1974-1999).

