

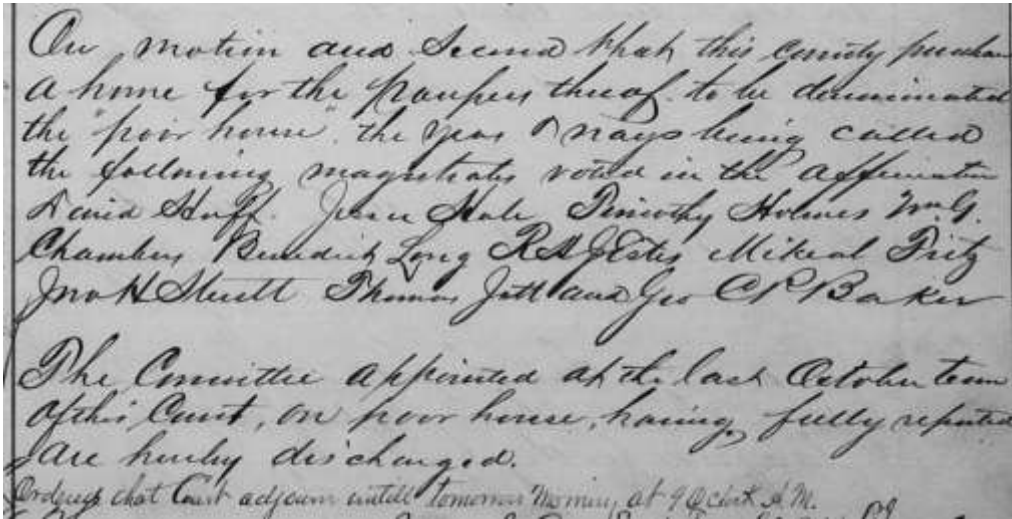
Hancock County Poor Farm (1874-1956)

By Jerry Long

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**Hancock County, KY Order Book 1872-1876
pages 349, 352, 353 & 355:**

page 349 – Court of Monday, 23 November 1874:



On motion and second that this county purchase a home for the paupers thereof to be designated the “poor house”, the yeas and nays being called the following magistrates voted in the affirmative David Huff, Jesse Hale, Timothy Holmes, Wm. G. Chambers, Benedict Long, R. A. J. Estes, Mikeal Fritz, Jon. H. Sterett, Thomas Jett and Geo. C. P. Baker.

The committee appointed at the last October term of this court, on poor house, having fully reported are hereby discharged.

Page 352 – Court of Monday, 23 November 1874: It is ordered that Dr. Green Sterett he and he is hereby appointed commissioner and Receiver of the Poor house & farm of this County until the 1st November 1875 at which time said office of Commissioner & Receiver is to expire or until his successor qualifies & when the Receiver goes out of office take receipt from his successor for all personal property belonging to the poor house or farm. It is also ordered that Dr. Green Sterett as Commissioner of the Poor house purchase upon his warrant as Commissioner all the necessary furniture bedding & c that may be necessary to the comfort & welfare of the inmates of the Poor house and that the said Commissioner order so drawn shall be allowed by the Court of Levy next following said orders. It is also ordered that the Commissioner & Receiver shall be allowed a reasonable compensation for their services.

It is ordered that the Commissioner in connection with the presiding shall receive sealed proposals from physicians to do the pauper practice for one year to end 1st Nov. in each year.

It is ordered that the commissioner of the Poor house exercise his discretion in letting out of the Poor house farm & paupers and any thing he does in the premises to be binding he is to let said farm, Poor house & paupers to the lowest & best bidder for a term of one year, expiring 1st Nov. each year after advertising for at least 2 weeks naming the term when said Poor house & c shall be let.

Page 353 – Court of Wednesday, 25 November 1874: It is ordered a majority of the justices concurring that the sum of two hundred dollars be appropriated to draw ten per centum per annum from this date to purchase necessary furniture bedding & c for the inmates of Poor house said amt to be paid out of the County Levy for 1875 on or before 1st Nov. 1875. Dr. Green Sterett the Commissioner & Receiver of the Poor house is hereby authorized to sell this order at public outcry after advertising to the highest bidder for cash and expend the same for the purposes aforesaid.

Page 355 – Court of Friday, 11 December 1874: It is ordered that after the 1st day of January 1875 no allowance will be paid committee of paupers for and on behalf of paupers claim. Such committee will take notice of this. The Poor house will then be ready for occupancy and all are notified to turn over their paupers to the keeper thereof. It is ordered that a copy of this order be served on C. B. Duncan & p_ W. W. Taber, S. Powers & son, W. S. Gibbs, Louis G. Lane, John J. Carder & co.

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Owensboro Examiner, Owensboro, KY, 1 December 1876, p.5:

The rental of the Hancock county poor farm is \$906 per year, and the keeper receives \$2 per week for the care of paupers.

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**Hancock County, KY 1880 Federal Census
Hawesville District, 25 June 1880, p.201B:**

				Poor House			
437	464	Thyre Jane	10	f	80	1	
		Faulconer Lucy	10	f	82	1	
		Probus John	10	m	60	1	
		Clark Mahala	10	f	20	1	
		Miller John	10	m	50		0
		Wilkie Wm	10	m	30	1	
		Burnett Thos	10	m	55	1	
		William James	10	m	27	1	
		Head Mrs Eliza	10	f	35	1	
		Remington Sarah	10	f	60	1	
		Smart Lenny	13	f	19	1	
		Burnett Priscilla	10	f	33	1	

Additional notes: Jane Thrye – widow, blind, born KY; Lucy Faulconer – widow, born KY; John Probus – married, blind, born KY; Mahala Clark – single, idiot, born KY; John Miller – divorced, born Germany; William Wilkie – single, born Germany; Thomas Burnett – married, born KY; James Williams – married, born KY; Mrs. Eliza Head – married, insane, born KY; Sarah Remington – married, born KY; Lunny Smart – Black, single, born KY; Precious Burnett – married, born KY.

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Breckenridge News, Cloverport, KY, 20 December 1882, p2:

Miss Lee Carlton has rented the Hancock county poor-farm for \$800.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 11 December 1894, p.8:

Expensive Pauper.

Tom Burnett, who has been in the Hancock county poor house fifteen years, died last week, after costing the county not less than \$2,000. He was quite old and had been nearly blind for a long time.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 23 March 1900, p.6:

Under the present management the poor farm is selling sufficient eggs and butter to pay for all groceries used on the farm. – Hawesville Plaindealer.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 30 August 1900, p.5:

HAWESVILLE.

This county has only two paupers and both crazy, and owns a \$10,000 farm, and pays a man \$175 to look after their welfare, and support him and his family. This is the first time this condition has come up in the history of the county, and under these circumstances the fiscal court should send the inmates to Hopkinsville, sell the farm, invest the mopey in good roads and buy about twenty acres of hill land away from the busy haunts of man, erect a cheap house and there will be plenty of men who would gladly keep the paupers for the rent of the place.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 27 May 1902, p.8:

TEN DOLLARS AN ACRE
For Part of Property of Hancock County Poor Farm.
Hawesville, Ky., May 26.—That portion of the Hancock county poor farm which lays south of Lead creek was sold at the court house door today by order of the fiscal court. James Lawson was the highest bidder and the land—130 acres—was sold to him for \$1,300.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 26 December 1902, p.7:

Mr. George Keown, the keeper of the poor farm, will move his family the first of January to Lyonia.

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 6 October 1905, p.6:

Justice Smith Dies Suddenly.

Hawesville, Ky., Oct. 3. — Esq. E. W. Smith, aged seventy-five years and a prominent farmer, died suddenly of heart disease while seated in the court house here late yesterday evening. Mr. Smith was keeper of the Hancock county poor house for several years.

Note – Elias Washington Smith (1831-1905)

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 November 1905, p.9:

Fiscal court was in session three days this week. A few unimportant claims were disposed of. The principal object was to elect a poorhouse keeper for the next year. There were only two applicants, W. D. Keown and Joe Harp. Mr. Harp was chosen and will have charge another year which will make the third year he will have had charge of the poor farm.

Note – Joseph Harp (1839-1911)

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 November 1909, p.1:

At a special and called meeting of the Hancock county fiscal court at the courthouse in Hawesville Saturday, Jailer David J. Phillips, who retires from that office January 1, was chosen poorhouse keeper for Hancock county. His was the only name placed before the magistrates. He will assume his new duties with the beginning of the new year.—Hawesville Clarion.

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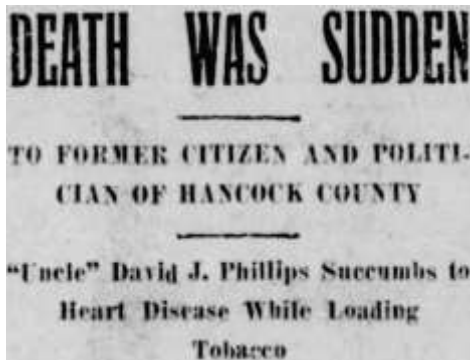
**Hancock County, KY 1910 Federal Census
Hawesville District, 16 April 1910, p.1B:**

County Poor Farm , River Road
David J. Phillips (1847-1911), keeper of county poor farm – farmer, rents

27	Phillips, David J.	Head	M	W	62	M	44		Kentucky
	Sarah F.	Wife	F	W	62	M	44	5 3	Kentucky
	Young, Martin	Pauper	M	W	72	Wd			Kentucky
	Painter, Marion	Pauper	M	W	71	Wd			Kentucky
	Hardway, Mysses	Pauper	M	W	35	S			U.S.
	Bessell, Susan	Pauper	F	W	73	S			Kentucky

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 10 January 1911, p.2:



Hawesville, Ky., Jan. pi. "Uncle" David J. Phillips, one of the most popular and best known citizens of Hancock county, dropped dead Monday afternoon of heart failure, while loading tobacco. He was for four years county assessor, then for four years he was jailer, and during 1910 he was in charge of the county poorhouse. Recently he bought out the Pellville hotel and moved there to take charge. Monday morning he came in to deliver his tobacco, with the above results.

He was seventy-two years of age and was a lifelong Baptist and Democrat. He is survived by his wife and the following children: Mrs. Ben Phillips of Owensboro, Mrs. Murt Carder of the same city, and Mrs. S. Errington of Pellville. The burial was at the Pellville cemetery.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 2 April 1913, p.7:

Frank Staples is current caretaker of the Hancock County Poor Farm.

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**Hancock County, KY 1920 Federal Census
Hawesville District, 14 January 1920, p.240B:**

County Poor Farm, Hawesville & Owensboro Road (River Road)
Edward Freeman (1862-1952) – keeper, farmer, rents

243	Freeman, Edward	Keeper R	M	72	68	M				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Susan	Wife	F	71	69	M				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Mabel	Daughter	F	71	38	S				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Clarence	Son	M	71	28	S				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Sarah	Daughter	F	74	20	S				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Angie	Daughter	F	71	17	S				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Behnet	Son	M	71	16	S				6/20/60	Kentucky
	Berrell, Bill	inmate	M	71	74	M				7/20/70	Kentucky
	Nancy	inmate	F	71	66	M				7/20/70	Indiana
	Mitchell, Martha	inmate	F	71	78	M				7/20/70	Georgia
	Joseph, Joe	inmate	M	71	74	M			1/20/70	7/20/70	Franklin

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 8 July 1923, p.10:

Hawesville, KY: Poor Farm Contract – The fiscal court met in regular monthly meeting Monday and rented the poor farm to J. T. Burk for a term of two years. Mr. Burk has been on the farm for the past two years and during that time has had charge of the poor people of the county. So well has he performed his duty with the unfortunate inmates that there was not a dissenting vote in the court when it came to engaging him to keep the place for another term.

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 27 February 1927, p.2:

Constable Hardin Brown with his bloodhounds was called to Hancock county Saturday morning to trail the robbers who broke into the meat house of the Hancock county poor farm and stole 100 pounds of sausage. The dogs lost the trail at a creek.



**Hancock County, KY 1930 Federal Census
Hawesville District, 2 April 1930, p.241A:**

County Poor Farm, River Road
John Thomas Burk (1877-1956) – keeper, farmer, rents

River Road	9 5	Burk John J.	Head	R 24	20	M	W	52	M	21	no	gn	Kentucky
		— Martha A.	wife	H	X	F	W	50	M	19	no	gn	Kentucky
		— Ambrose W.	son		X	M	W	21	S		no	gn	Kentucky
		— Rebecca M.	Daughter		X	F	W	13	S		gn	gn	Kentucky
		— Annie J.	Daughter		X	F	W	11	S		gn	gn	Kentucky
		— Fred J.	Daughter		X	F	W	9	S		gn	gn	Kentucky
		— Dorinda J.	Daughter		X	F	W	6	S		gn	gn	Kentucky
	5456	Valley Tom	Inst			M	W	72	S		no	no	Kentucky
		Constance Litch	Inst		X	M	W	84	S		no	gn	Kentucky
		Gett Edward	Inst		X	M	W	74	WD		no	no	Kentucky
		Harriet Hatched J.	Inst		X	F	W	86	WD		no	gn	Kentucky
		Margerson Beaus	Inst		X	F	W	68	WD		no	gn	Kentucky
		Hoffner American	Inst		X	F	W	24	S		no	gn	Kentucky
		John Egan	Inst		X	F	W	70	WD		no	gn	Kentucky
		Louisa Young	Inst		X	M	W	24	S		no	gn	Kentucky
	Corinne Harold	Inst		X	M	W	20	S		no	gn	Kentucky	
	Carman Charles	Inst		X	M	W	22	S		no	gn	Kentucky	



**Hancock County, KY 1940 Federal Census
Hawesville District, 22 April 1940, p.30A:**

County Poor Farm, River Road
Hal Young (1890-1965) – keeper, Hancock County Sheriff

3010	1	Young, Hal O.	Keeper	1	M	W	50	M	20	8	1	Kentucky
	1	— Myrtle B.	Wife	1	F	W	45	M	20	8	8	Kentucky
	1	— Emerson	Son	2	M	W	24	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	— Thurman	Son	2	M	W	22	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	— Edyan	Daughter	2	F	W	20	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	— Leroy	Son	2	M	W	18	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	— Julia Grace	Daughter	2	F	W	13	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	— Herbert	Son	2	M	W	11	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	— Mary Edith	Daughter	2	F	W	7	S	20	14	20	Kentucky
	1	Harris Cora	Inmate	1	F	W	55	S	20	14	20	Kentucky

Cora Harris was also an inmate at the Poor Farm in 1935



**Forgotten Pathways, Vol. XVII, No. 3, 2001, Genealogical
Society of Hancock County, KY, Hawesville, KY, pp.56-57:**

Lease of poor farm for crop years 1947 and 1948

This lease made and entered into this the 10th day of September, 1946 by and between the Fiscal Court of Hancock County, by its authorized agent, Robert M. Gillians, County Judge Hancock County Kentucky, party of the first part or lessor and Hal Young, party of the second part or Lease.

Witnesseth that for the sum of four hundred (\$400.00) dollars to be paid each crop year of 1947 and 1948 and the condition hereinafter set out, the parties of the first part does hereby let lease and set over to the party of the second party for the term of two years beginning January 1, 1947 the following designated real estate in the county of Hancock, State of Kentucky:

The Hancock County poor House farm of 50 acres more or less situated on the Ohio River about 2 miles West of Hawesville, Kentucky. Subject to the following stipulations:

- (1.) The lease is to take care of all persons committed to the poor house by the County Judge, to have full control; of each one so committed. To care for the inmates feed them, furnish fuel, light, heat, and light for them, nurse them, wash for them, keep them clean, and furnish them at least three meals a day of good clean wholesome food
- (2.) There is one room of the dwelling to be set aside for an emergency and in case females are committed to the home, this room is to keep ready for an emergency by the lessee. The work done for lessee by any inmate shall be voluntary on part of inmate and with the permission of the County Judge.
- (3.) It is understood and agreed that the lease will keep at least ten acres of this farm in grass each year during the time of this lease.
- (4.) If lessee has a telephone, he is to pay the rental for same.
- (5.) The lessee is to build all fences, necessary to be built on this farm and to erect any building or building necessary to be built during the term of this lease and keep the repairs up on the present buildings thereon but the Fiscal Court is to furnish the material for repairs and the material for fencing or building erected thereon or repaired.
- (6.) Lessee is to give bond approved by County Judge that he will faithfully perform his agreements herein made in the penal sum of one thousand dollars, which bond will include the faithful payment of the rent herein specified.
- (7.) In consideration of lessee doing and performing the foregoing conditions, the Fiscal Court lessor herein, agrees to pay the lessee three dollars per week for taking care of each adult inmate and one dollar and fifty cents for each inmate child six years of age or under and to furnish clothing, medical care, bed and bedding and rooms for each and every inmate.
- (8.) As long as the lessee keeps his agreements or as long as this lease is in existence the Fiscal Court agrees to keep the lessee in full free possession of the premises herein leased. But if lessee breaks any of his agreements, then this lease is to be null and void and the Fiscal Court is to have the possession of said premises return to it by said lessee.

In witness whereof the name of Fiscal Court has been placed here to by Robert M. Gillians, County Judge this day and year afore-written.

Fiscal Court of Hancock County, Kentucky
By Robert M. Gillians
County Judge of Hancock County, Ky.

State of Kentucky
County of Hancock

The Foregoing Lease to Hal Young was produced to me in said County and State and signed and acknowledged by Robert M. Gillians, County Judge Hancock County, Kentucky, for and on behalf of the Fiscal Court of Hancock County, this the 10th day of September 1946

Cullen D. Mayfield,
County Clerk H.C.

BOND: Hal Young, as Principal and Homer Young, as his surety each bind themselves to the commonwealth of Kentucky, in the penal sum of one thousand dollars, that said Hal Young, will faithfully keep the agreements of the foregoing lesse and will faithfully pay to the Fiscal Court the rent of 400.00 on or before January 1st of each said crop year, and if he so does then this instrument shall be null and void else remain in full force and effect.

In witness whereof each have placed their name this their 10th Day of Oct. 1946

Accepted and approved by: Robert M. Gillians, Judge of Hancock County Ky.; Hal Young, Principal – SURETY

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**Hancock County, KY 1950 Federal Census
Hawesville District, 21 April 1950:**

County Poor Farm, River Road
Junius Anderson Shadwick (18931978) – keeper, farmer

Shadwick, Junius	Head	X	M	56	Mar	Kentucky
— Bessie	Wife	0	F	50	Mar	Kentucky
— Lenora	Daughter	0	F	14	W	Kentucky
Shadwick, Pearl	Daughter	0	F	11	W	Kentucky
Zuggard, Murray	Inmate	V	M	68	W	Kentucky
Richardson, John	Inmate	V	M	64	W	Kentucky
Simpson, Edwin	Inmate	V	M	40	W	Indiana

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 30 October 1954, p.12:

J. A. Malone
LEWISPORT, Ky.—J. A. Malone, 82, died in the Hancock County Infirmary at 4 p.m. Friday.
Only survivors are nieces and nephews.
The body is at the Taylor Funeral Home, Lewisport, where services will be conducted at 2 p.m. Sunday by the Rev. Roy Clark, pastor of the Lewisport Methodist Church. Burial will be in the Lewisport Cemetery.

[The Hancock County Poor Farm was also referred to as the County Infirmary. In 1956 the Hancock County Poor Farm was closed.]

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Messenger- Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 1 July 1956, p.12D:

“Birdie’s Breezy Bits” column, by L. D. ‘Birdie’ Gasser

... “Over the hill to the Poor House.”

An old saying, but with federal old age assistance and Social Security, the “Poor Farms” are fast passing from the scene of our daily lives.

In recent years the “Poor Houses” have been operated as “County Infirmary” or “Home for the Aged, Infirm and Dependents.”

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Messenger- Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 23 September 1956, p.12A:

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Hancock County Fiscal Court will accept sealed bids for the purchase of a tract of land containing by survey 55 acres, and known as the “County Poor Farm,” located 1½ miles Northwest of Hawesville, on the Hawesville-Lewisport River Road, and fronting on the Ohio River.

This farm has 50 acres in cultivation, 1.2 acres Burley Tobacco base, 18 acres corn allotment and 15 acres of wheat; good barn and two story brick dwelling; on mail route and school bus route. (Mineral rights are not included.)

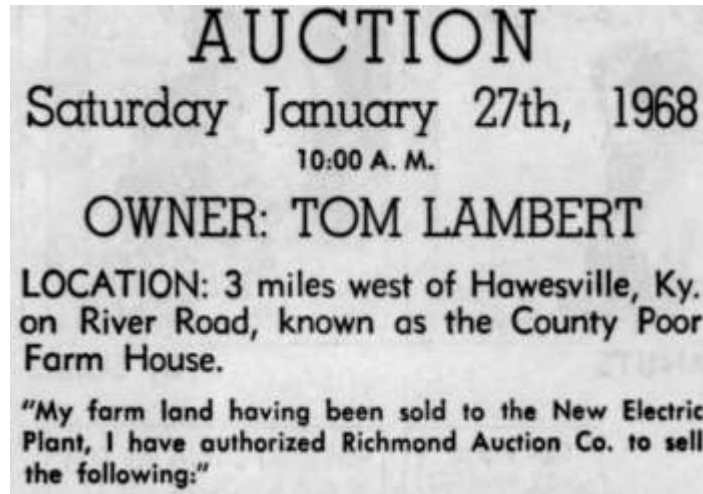
No bids accepted after 9:00 a.m. October 8th, 1956. Bids will be opened and read October 8th, 1956, at 10:00 a.m.

Sale will be for cash to the highest and best bidder, with the Court reserving the right to reject any and all bids. Possession on or before January 1st, 1957.

Cullen D. Mayfield
Clerk, Hancock County Fiscal Court.

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Messenger- Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 26 January 1968, p.10B:



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**Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 24 April 1980, "So It's Been Told:
Footnotes To Hancock County History" column by Jack Foster:**

Civilized man has tried to cope with those too poor to care for themselves since antiquity. Chapter twenty-seven of the Gospel of St Matthew tells of taking the "blood money" Judas accepted to betray Christ to buy a "potters field," a plot where indigents, and in those days, criminals, were buried. English literature has many references to paupers, and even today men can be heard to say after a family shopping trip. "You're going to spend us right into the poor house." Until about three generations ago Hancock County operated a Poor Farm for people unable to provide for themselves.

Mrs. Truman Lemastus Jackson of Hawesville recalls as a girl, her father Joe Lamastus, was appointed by the fiscal court to operate the Poor Farm just after he had run and lost the race for jailer. The poor farm was west a few miles of Hawesville on River Road. She remembers that there was a farm house there where her family lived and a few cabins where the inmates lived. She said that there were never more than eight or ten inmates at a time. Once there was a married couple and a lady among them and quarters were found for them in the farm house, but that the other men lived in the cabins nearby.

She continued that one cabin was used for a dining room, that her mother cooked all the food, and that the inmates ate the same food as the Lemastus family. One of the inmates was paid a small fee to help serve and clean up.

To be admitted to the Poor Farm a man or woman had to appear before the county judge, declare himself or herself a pauper. If they needed clothes or other personal effects the county would provide them even to chewing tobacco. She recalls that most of them were elderly and gave no trouble, but that many were "jealous" of the one hired to help with the food. She said they were free to take walks, play cards, swap stories, and whittle, but that there was no formal "program". She added that they could have visitors or go visiting as they pleased.

She remembered well one of the lady inmates who claimed to be able to "tell fortunes" by using cards, and how "her own fortune" as a ten year old fired her imagination.

After the appointment to the position, she remembers it taking three wagons full to move the Lemastus family from their home near Easton; an all day job. Prior to the appointment she said that her father was a logger on week-days and ran a grist mill on Saturdays near Easton. Her job at the mill was to scoop out and measure the "tol" (payment for the grinding) before giving the customer back his ground corn. She remembers that her grandfather migrated from England, Elijah Lemastus, to work the Victoria Mines, and that as far as she knows there is no other Lemastus family in this area.

She spoke of her mother not only cooking all the food in a coal burning "Home Comfort" range both for the Lemastus family and the inmates, but did the laundry for them all as well. On wash day, the children would gather up drift wood on the banks of the Ohio River and build a fire under the wash pot out in "the open." Washing was an all day job and she recalls her mother's pride in her home made "pure white" lye soap.

When an inmate died the family usually claimed the body for burial, but she recollects one case where this was not so. It was common for "shanty boats" to ply the river in those days, and some would seine or dig for mussels. They would pop them in boiling water, some would eat the meat, and the shells would be sold to a button factory that was then operating in Cloverport. She said a shanty boat was found abandoned one day near Hawesville, and in the boat was found a baby boy who was retarded. He could not dress himself and would often undress himself if dressed.

The county remanded him to the care of the Poor Farm. He was named simply Dick, never caused much trouble, but had to be watched for he never learned to feed himself well, could not dress himself, and would often undress himself or rip his clothes off. She remembered one time he was "missed" and when found he was near the door on one of the schools where a pie supper was going on--without a stitch on. She laughed when she said it was lucky for all concerned that he was caught and returned before he made his grand entrance. Dick died at about age thirty five and lies buried in Paupers Plot in the Old Hawesville Cemetery.

The Poor Farm house was heated by fire places, as she recalls, but the cabins were heated by coal stoves. She said the fiscal court furnished them with Lysol spray in five gallon lots for sanitation. Although there were outhouses, she remembered with no smile, that one of her jobs in winter or in case of illness, was to empty and clean the chamber pots. If an inmate became ill the county would send a doctor, and she feels that, all in all, the needs of the inmates were met in a very humanitarian manner. The appointment as Poor House operator was for a year, and she said when the year was about up, the fiscal court would come out to inspect. Mrs. Lemastus would serve them a meal, and Mrs. Jackson says this was almost a festive occasion, and that the operator was usually appointed for an additional year. One magistrate especially made an impression on the ten or twelve year old Lemastus young lady; Kearby Blake with his shock of flowing white hair.

Note – Mary Lemastus Jackson (1905-1995) daughter of Joseph Lemastus (1862-1939).



**Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 31 July 1980, "So It's Been Told:
Footnotes To Hancock County History" column by Jack Foster:**

Also in the mailbag came a letter from Mr. R.O. "Bob" Beauchamp. P.E. and from his signature it is assumed he is a retired consulting engineer. He writes from Kettle, Kentucky 42752. His letter: "I read with interest the column in the Hancock Clarion of April 24, 1980 concerning

the Hancock County Poor Farm on very good information furnished by my good friend Mary Lemastus Jackson.

I was raised near the County Poor Farm on River Road, am the son of French and Eva Overby Beauchamp, and I remember well the operation of the poor farm and the good Lemastus family, also the Staples family then operated the farm before the Lemastus family did, and the Edd Freeman family that ran it after the Lemastus family... and the John Burk family that followed the Freemans. All these families were very large which was necessary due to the large amount of work involved, all were good neighbors and fine people.

I remember the inmates Mary mentioned and many others; one was a one legged man named Poynter, and Mr. Lemastus called him "Pinter," and two women, one was named Blanche and I do not recall the name of the other, but I believe they stayed in the main residence and not the cabins, they wore bonnets; also a man named Taylor Chambers, he would walk the dirt road to Hawesville and in passing our home I would go out and talk to him (I was about 10 years old). Chambers stuttered in his speech, and, kid-like I enjoyed hearing him talk. This was about 1916-1920.

Mary did not say so, but I know she did a lot of the cooking even at her tender age. During the heavy snow and cold winter of 1917-1918 Mary and we would wade through the deep snow on the way to and front school throwing snow balls at each other on the way.

I have many fond memories, of visiting, playing, and eating with the folks who ran the poor farm."

Note – Robert Overby Beauchamp (1906-1988).

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**Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 5 February 1998, "So It's Been Told:
Footnotes To Hancock County History" column by Jack Foster:**

**Who recalls the Poor Farm
from days gone by?**

A clip also from the "Herald News" in a December 31, 1947 edition, reports that Mr. H .M. Garner was elected "Keeper" of the county's home for the aged and infirm. Just about every county operated such a home in days gone by, and were commonly referred to as the "poor farm." Those living there were expected to work if able-bodied, but many recall the rules were not too rigid.

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**Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 28 October 1999, "So It's Been Told:
Footnotes To Hancock County History" column by Jack Foster:**

Poor Farm

Several months ago Herbert Young, Hawesville, did some research on the history of the Hancock County Poor Farm. Here is a rental agreement from 1943 which Mr. Young shares:

"Whereas the Fiscal Court of Hancock County Lease the "Poor Farm" to me, Hal Young for a two year period beginning at or on January 1, 1944 and ending on or before December 31, 1945 for the sum of two hundred dollars per year payable on or before December 31, of each year subject to the following conditions, towit:

(1) Hal Young is to take charge and control of all people sent to the home by the County Judge, to care for them, feed them and nurse them and for adults committed to this home he is to receive the sum of three dollars per week and for inmates under the age of six years of age he is to receive three dollars and fifty cents per week and any work done by inmates for Hal Young shall be voluntary or upon the permission of the County Judge. The food furnished inmates shall be good, clean wholesome food and at least 3 meals on each day. He is further to furnish all fires for inmates and wash and laundry for them.

(2) Hal Young is to build all necessary fencing and build all necessary building but the Fiscal Court is to furnish the material for fencing or buildings, clothing for the inmates and all bedding, beds and rooms for the inmates.

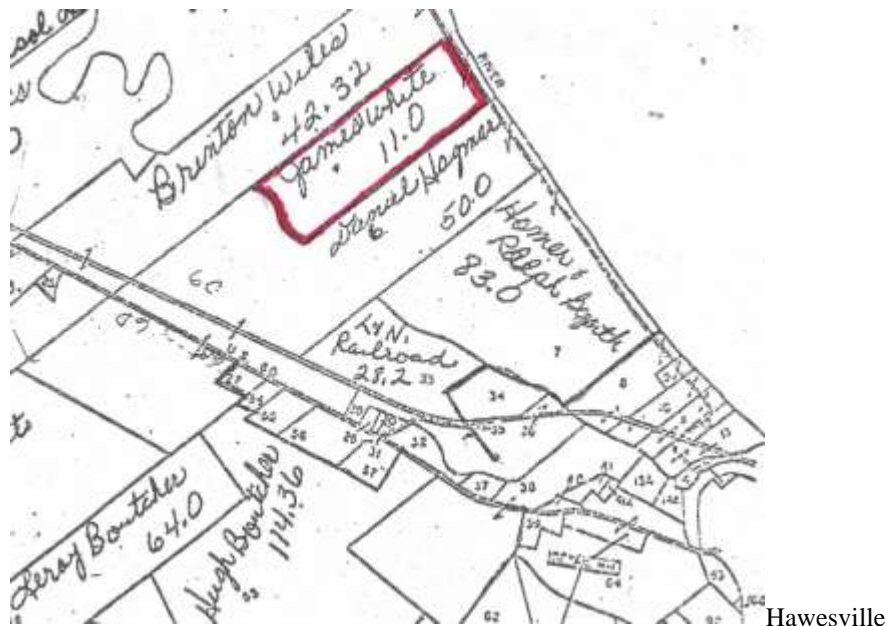
(3) Hal Young further agrees to set apart one room in the building in an emergency for female inmates.

Therefore, to insure the said Hal Young's performance of the above condition to be kept, he, as principal, and Homer Young as surety binds themselves to the Fiscal Court in the amount of \$1,000.00 to void however, if the said Hal Young keeps his agreement. In witness hereof each has placed his name this day of October, 1943.”

It appears to be signed by Hal and Homer Young and approved by the then county judge George Newman.

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During the 1937 Flood, River Road below Hawesville was inundated for miles, and the majority of people living on the road between Lewisport and Hawesville had to move. The house where the Hancock County Poor Farm keeper's family resided was washed away. It was rebuilt. In 1975 James Donald White (1936-2013) purchased the home that had formerly been part of the Poor Farm. James D. White's home along the Ohio River (1183 River Road), about one and one-half miles northwest of Hawesville, is shown on the following 1980's plat map of Hancock County.



In March 1997 the former Poor Farm property was again flooded. In the picture below the home of James D. White, the former home of the caretaker of the Poor Farm, is shown. James D. White on left is checking the water depth, his son, Kevin White, on right, is stepping out of boat, and in center is neighbor, Wilford Morris. Picture was made on 4 March 1997 and appeared in the 5 March 1997 edition of the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer (p.3A). James D. White sold the property in 2010 to his son-in-law, Michael J. Claise (1954-2020).



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Residence of caretaker of the Hancock County Poor Farm – 1183 River Road



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 9 September 2010:



ABSOLUTE AUCTION



THURSDAY • SEPT. 30TH • 5:30 PM
1183 River Road, Hawesville, KY

Hancock County Home

Beautiful home with historic past! Once known as the "Poor Farm," this unique, riverfront property is being offered at Public Auction on Thursday, September 30, at 5:30 p.m.. This two story brick home features four bedrooms, 1.5 baths, large family room, living room, kitchen/dining area and basement. There are 6 1/2 acres (+/-) per deed. **Seller: J.D. White**



INSPECTIONS:

Prospective Purchaser is responsible for any and all inspections. Prospective Purchaser has 10 days prior to auction to conduct lead-based paint inspection.

Announcements made from the Auction Block will take precedence over printed material. Not responsible for accidents.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: 10% down day of sale with balance due with delivery of deed within 30 days.

Hancock
REAL ESTATE & AUCTION



155 Main Cross St.
Hawesville, KY 42348
(270) 927-8997
1-800-365-1086

Glenn Hamilton **Tim Gooch**
Auctioneer *Auctioneer/Broker*
Mike Powers **Jim Burnette**
Auctioneer/Broker *App. Auctioneer*





Former residence of keeper of the Hancock County Poor Farm
1183 River Road, Hancock County, KY

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Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 16 September 2010, p.3:

The Poor Farm

Long before Gov. assistance some folks had no where to turn

Young, Allard recall their families operating the “Poor Farm”

By Ralph Dickerson

On Thursday, September 30, the house at 1183 River Road west of Hawesville goes up for auction. Every day people drive by the home on the way to the factories located nearby, but give little notice to the large, two-storey brick house nestled on a slight rise on the banks of the Ohio River. To most, it appears as an nondescript, old brick home, but appearances deceive in this case.

The home actually possesses quite an interesting history. At one time, the home served as the residence for the caretaker of the Hancock County Poor Farm. The property contained not only the brick home, but cabins to house residents of the farm, as well as 50 acres of crop land.

What is a poor farm? Imagine living in a time before Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. No food stamps, WIC, Aid-for-Children or community based services existed. In

addition, no nursing homes existed. If a person fell on hard times, to whom did the person or family turn? What safety net existed for the less fortunate?

In a time before the Welfare State existed, people turned to the poor house. These government run facilities cared for the needy by providing a place for them to stay.

According to Wikipedia, poor farms started in the mid-1800s. In many places local government ran the poor farms like a prison, with many residents sentenced to the poor house by the courts.

Hancock County Fiscal Court created its poor farm in the mid-1870s. A document from the Hancock County Archives, which dates to 1880, calls residents of the poor house "inmates."

While the courts did sentence some people to the poor house, others resided there voluntarily. Often, a person wanting to go to the poor house appeared before the courts and declared him or herself a pauper, which allowed that person to go to the poor house. In Hancock County, it operated differently.

"If they wanted to come down there, we signed them in," Herbert Young said.

As a child, Young's father, Hancock County Sheriff Hal Young, operated the county poor farm. His father started operating the farm in the late 1930s, and served as caretaker until the late 1940s.

Young said the population of the farm varied. He recalls as many as 10 people living at the farm, and as little as five. By the time his father assumed the responsibility of the farm, the elderly served as the base population of the farm.

When originally started, the courts expected residents of poor houses to pitch in. Betty Allard's grandfather, John Burk, ran the poor house in the 1930s, just prior to Young's father taking over. She said her grandmother often found odd jobs for various residents to do.

Allard remembers a gentleman there they called Uncle Tom. He often helped her grandfather with the cows. Allard said another resident of the farm, an elderly woman, did sewing and needlework. She patched clothes and pieced quilts when possible.

"My grandmother was real smart keeping these people employed as much as possible," Allard said. "It was good therapy for them."

Young said he remembers his mother cooking food for the residents every day. As a child of 10, his family expected him to help out where possible. He received 'the job of taking the food to the people. Young said he took the food to a man named John Tichenor, and he distributed the food to the other residents.

Young's father became caretaker of the poor farm after the family's house burned in the late 1930s. As part of his compensation, the county allowed him to farm the land and keep the profits.

"He raised a lot of tobacco," Young's wife Patsy said.

Allard remembers her grandfather farming the land during his tenure as the caretaker. She also remembers talking to her aunt, Katherine Taylor, about life on the farm. Most poor farms produced much of the food needed for the year, and she remembers her aunt telling her about making Kraut at the farm.

"It took a wagon load of cabbage to make the Kraut," Allard said.

The elderly started becoming the most common residents of poor houses due to legislation passed by most states. According to the web-site encyclopedia.com, when poor houses first started, they housed entire families. When the Irish Immigration started in the 1830s and 1840s, the people frequenting poor houses changed.

The widowed, mostly men, started using poor houses. So too did young men temporarily out of work. Many young, single women used poor houses as maternity homes, the site said. The states acted to change this situation.

"Throughout the nineteenth century, state governments removed special categories of inmates from alms houses (another name for poor houses)," the site said. "First came the sick and mentally ill, then, starting in the 1870s, children. By the early twentieth century, most short-term residents, mostly young men, were also gone. Thus, by World War I most alms houses had acquired their present identity as public old-age homes."

While the poor farm housed mostly elderly residents by the time Young's father became caretaker, they took anyone in with a need. He remembers two young twin boys that came to live at the farm.

According to Young, the father remarried and the stepmother refused to accept the boys. He said the stepmother forced the boys to live in a barn for some time. Eventually, they made their way to the poor farm. Young does not know the exact method in which the youths came to the poor farm, but they stayed there until it closed.

Being named the caretaker of the poor farm carried immense responsibilities. Governments expected the caretaker of the poor farm to take proper care of the inmates/residents.

When a caretaker failed to properly care for residents, the law quickly stepped in to right the situation. The Hancock County Archives contains an indictment on an E.W. Smith dated July 25, 1898. The indictment required him to appear in court to answer to a charge of neglecting to properly perform his duty as the "keeper of the poor house of Hancock County, and as provider of the inmates or paupers confined therein."

Residents of Hancock County's poor farm did not live in the large, two-storey brick house. Instead, they lived in two long sheds on the property. Each shed contained separate rooms for the residents. The sheds provided the bare minimum of comfort, Young said.

Young said the county closed the poor farm approximately five years after his family moved away from it. Young spent a good portion of his early life at the farm.

"I started out as a little boy," he said. "By the time we got out of there, I was graduating high school."



View of Ohio River looking north from the former Poor Farm