

Breckinridge County, KY Centennial Celebration

By Jerry Long
c.2024



THE BRECKENRIDGE NEWS.

Cloverport, KY, Wednesday, 26 July 1882, p.3:

Preparing for the Centennial

An enthusiastic meeting of citizens of Breckenridge county was held at Hardinsburg Monday which was presided over by Col. Alf Allen, president of the Centennial Society, an organization that embraces every citizen of the county in its membership, and which is now in complete working order, with its officers and committees, and ready for active preparations for the great event. Col. W. P. C. Breckinridge was chosen orator of the day and Wallace Gruelle historian, with Judge J. W. Kincheloe and Wm. Watkins, sr., as assistants, The full proceedings of the meeting, and the names of the ladies and gentlemen composing the various committees will be published In our next issue.



**The Breckenridge News, Cloverport, KY,
Wednesday, 9 August 1882, p.3:**

INFORMATION WANTED

Of Facts and Incidents Pertaining to the Early
Settlement and Settlers of Breckenridge County.

Having been appointed to write the historical sketch of Breckenridge county to be read at the centennial celebration in November, and desiring to do the work as thoroughly as possible, I will take it as a great personal favor if the ladies and gentleman named below will, at their earliest convenience write out all they know personally of those events, and times or have heard from their parents, grandparents, or other actors in the stirring scenes of those early days, and forward them

to me at Cloverport, my business engagements rendering it impossible for me to call upon them in person as I would like to do. In cases where old age or infirmity renders such a task impossible let some member of the family or intimate friend and neighbor, do the writing I am not particular in regard to the manner in which it is done, as I will put it all in proper narrative shape Please attend to this at once, good friends, as I can only write on the history at leisure moments, and will require all the time between now and then to accomplish the task satisfactorily.

Col. Chas. Hambleton, his recollections and all that he has heard from old settlers and Indian fighters.

John Hardin, in relation to the killing of his grandfather by Indians near the present site of Hardinsburg, and such other information as he may have acquired in conversation with old settlers. Also, if he can, a list of the men in Col. William Hardin's command, and sketches of their personal history.

Mr. Nelson Jolly, sr., information in regard to the killing of his uncle by the savages near the old fort, and such other particulars of the old times as he can remember from his father's conversations.

Mr. Chas. Miller, such information as he gathered from the narratives of his father.

Mrs. Z. Witt, who is a daughter of Mr. Henry Hardin, and grand daughter of Col. William Hardin, and can tell much of the early settlers, and may possibly remember the names of those who were in the fort with her grandfather.

Mr. Vivian Daniel, his recollections of his early days, and what he saw and heard of the first settlers.

Mr. Ralph Lucas, of Sulpherville, who is said to have heard his father tell many tales of the early times in this county.

Mr. Geo. R Bruner, will oblige by forwarding me a copy of the historical sketches of Breckenridge county written by his brother, the late Hon. John B. Bruner, if he possesses it; if not, he will confer a favor by letting me know where I can find a copy. I will take the best of care of it, and promptly return it when through with it.

Mr. – Stevenson – living near Concordia – whose mother was born in the fort, and probably possesses a good deal of useful information obtained from her.

Mrs. – Cunningham, an aged lady living near Owensboro, who, we are informed, can give such information as we desire. Will Dr. Watkins of Owensboro, please interview her and send me her result?

Mr. Wm J. Dean, of Rock Lick, can give an account of the wounding of Col. Wm. Hardin in a field beyond the creek, and will also please give the history of the Big Rock or Stone House.

I would not ask this labor of the friends if I had the time to visit the above named ladies and gentlemen. I want all the information asked for at the earliest possible moment and as I intend to publish in a book form full reports of the celebration, the oration of Col. Breckenridge and the historical sketch as prepared by Judge Kincheloe, Mr. Watkins and myself. I will take great pleasure, as a slight token of my appreciation of their kindness, in forwarding a complimentary copy to each lady and gentleman who will be good enough to comply with the foregoing request.

Respectfully,
Wallace Gruelle
Cloverport, Ky.



The Breckenridge News, Cloverport, KY,
Wednesday, 25 October 1882, p.3:

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Programme of Proceedings and Lists of Marshals and Special Policeman.

At a meeting of the executive committee of the Breckenridge county centennial society, on the 17th day of October 1882, Chairman Beard in the chair, R. S. Skillman was appointed secretary pro tem, the regular secretary being absent. It was resolved to arrange the programme of the exercises on the day of the celebration after the manner following, viz:

1. A procession of the visitors and all others shall be formed by the chief marshal and his assistants at a quarter to 10 o'clock a. m. on Main street in Hardinsburg in front of the court house. As soon as formed the procession will by the marshal be marched on foot to the site of Hardin's old fort where Rev. Dr. S. L Helm will

2. Address the throne of God in prayer.

3. The president of the society, Col Alfred Allen, will welcome the assemblage in a short address.

4. Response to Col. Allen's address by the Governor of the state if present.

5. Mr. Wallace Gruelle, historian of the society, will read extracts from his forthcoming History of Breckenridge County.

6. Dinner.

7. After dinner, oration by Col. W. C. P. Breckenridge, orator of the day, and grandson of John Breckenridge for whom the county was named.

8. Short speeches, or historical sketches, as they please, by Hons. Jas. Stuart, G. W. Williams, and W. R. Kinney.

9. Benediction by Rev. R. G. Gardiner.

While the committee will be glad to see great enjoyment in the large crowd expected, they earnestly request of them perfect order and decorum.

On motion, the following persons were selected for marshals on the occasion and they are requested to appear in Hardinsburg, without further notice, by 9 o'clock on the morning of the celebration – that they shall marshal and form the procession on Main street in Hardinsburg at a quarter to 10 o'clock, and march it to the grounds, and preserve order in the crowd not only on the march but during the day. They will please wear as a badge of distinction a bit of red ribbon tied in the button-hole of their coats.

Hon. W. E. Minor, Chief Marshal Assistants – A. M. Pulliam, A. J. Gross, Taylor Scott, Bate Washington, Samuel Walker, James Bruce, Lucian K. Cox, Wat Skillman, Cass Garner, E. H. Mitchem, J. H. Lennin, David M. Oglesby, John Slaton, Chas. Heston, James Pennington, William Beard, R. S. Skillman, Geo. Mercer, Henry Head, Dr. R. Pennington, L. A. Foote, W. K. Barnes, W. D. Holt, Gabe Meador, Chas. Blanford, Eli H. Smith, Julius Hardin, W. T. McGary, Frank Rhodes, jr., Dr Baker. V. G. Babbage, N. McC. Mercer, Andrew Crawford, Dr. B. Kurtz, F. P. Morton, John Manning, Chas. Mattingly, Taylor Beard, Robt. Glasscock, Clayton Beard.

On motion the following named gentlemen were selected, and are requested, to act as temporary policeman on the grounds during the day of the celebration, the county court having conferred upon them the power to enforce obedience to orders for that day. They are requested to appear on the grounds without further notice, to enforce good order, prevent rushing, to assign

persons to their proper places, and to protect the tables and the cooks. Their badge will be a piece of blue ribbon in the button-hole.

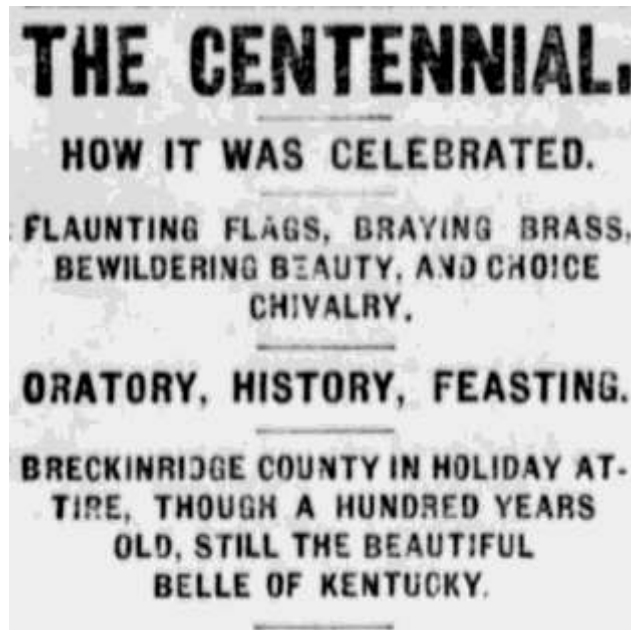
John R. DeHaven, Chief of Police. Assistants – C. W. Moorman, D. R. M. Smith, A. M. DeJernette, Jas. P. Board, Richard Cox, Robt. Frank, Wm. Owen, Wm. Perkins, Henry Herndon, L. R. Rollins, Jos. Porter, Clint Adkisson, Chas. Jarboe, Ed. Burton, Gid Horsley, Jas. R. Drane, Joe Cox, Eugene Haynes, Jacob Pierce, Chas. Oelze, John DeJernette, Burrel Beard, Jesse Reister, George Neff, Alex. West, Allen Rollins, H. B. B. McCoy, Gardner Hawkins, Adam N. Jolly, Tice Jolly, Jubal Hook, Elihu Meador, Jno. Meagher, Noah Cunningham, Jas. Warren, Owen Cunningham, A. M. Glasgow, Frazier Horsley, jr., Wm. Carman, esq., W. G. Herrington, esq., Barney Squires, Horace Squires, Jas. Frank, Hendrick Rhodes. H. H. Hanneger, Wm. E. Moorman, Robt. Owen, Anderson Beavin, Poindexter Pate, Fred Fraize, Richard Bundy, Byron Bundy, John Dowell, Lewis Waggoner, Wm. Hawkins, Geo. Hawkins, Jas. D. Nobbett, Alf. Robards, jr., Joe Taul, Jas. Casey, Tom Pate, John D. Gregory, Grant Gregory, J. L. Miller, Jasper J. Dyer, J. Flage Carter and Chas W. Bohler.

After an adjournment to the grounds, and the laying of them off, the committee adjourned till meeting in course

G. W. BEARD, Chm'n.
R. S Skillman, Sec'y, p. t.



**The Breckenridge News, Cloverport, KY,
Wednesday, 8 November 1882, p.2:**



Thursday, November 2, 1882, is a date that will long be remembered in Breckenridge county....

Welcome Address
[by Col. Alfred Allen]

Tread lightly, my friends! It may be that your feet are resting on the mouldering bones of dead heroes, for all the hills round about and beneath us are full of those relics of a hundred years ago!

Here where we are now standing on the 20th day of April, 1780, William Hardin and his only two comrades, Christopher Bush and Michael Leonard (may their names not be forgotten!) began the erection of a fort and blockhouse, which were to be and did become their home through long years of toil, of privation and of peril. Here was planted the germ of the civilization which we see today so abundant around us; a civilization that has overspread the great Northwestern Territory – then like this a howling wilderness – thence marching westward across the plains that stretch a sea of verdure to the feet of the Rocky Mountains, and down their mighty canons and rocky defiles, swimming rivers and climbing precipices, until it has at last reached the Pacific boundary of the continent, and there taken up its permanent abiding place; a civilization that is seen in the canvas houses of the plains and in the cabins of the miners no less than in the manufactories of the millionaire and beneath the spires and domes of his princely dwelling; a new and vigorous civilization, which takes cognizance of the man and disregards the tinsel and glitter of his rank. Here, I repeat, and in similar spots, and under similar circumstances, and by men of like material as Hardin and his comrades, Bush and Leonard, here planted these germs from which sprung rapidly this new, this vitalized, this mighty and all conquering civilization, which has leveled forests and mountains, leaped over streams and torrents, and overcame every obstacle which opposed its grand march westward to the sea!

Who could have foretold, had we seen those three forlorn men that first night, a hundred and two years ago, lying stretched in slumber by their camp-fire, the wonderful results of their daring enterprise? They did not dream of it in their sound sleep that night, nor bother their thoughts with conjectures at their waking time next morning. They had left their houses in the fastnesses of the Alleghenies in frail boat, laden with their wives and children, their goods and household goods; descended the rushing Monongahela, into and down the placid Ohio, seeking not the establishment of an empire, but to better their condition, and above all, to satisfy the natural craving of the Anglo-Saxon to acquire land and yet more land. They knew the toil and privations they would have to endure; they realized the dangers they would have to overcome; – they knew all these, but the toils, privations and dangers had not terror for such men; but with strong arms, watchful eyes, brave hearts, and hammered iron rifles, loaded with bullets wrapped in greased leather patches, taking their wives and children with them, those three men fearlessly went forth into the unknown wilderness to make it blossom and fructify, or pay the penalty with their lives. This they well knew to be their wager. Life and future prosperity should they succeed, of savage torture and cruel death, should they fail; and yet most cheerfully did they accept the wager.

They ended their voyage at the mouth of Hardin's Creek (now called Sinking) and made their toilsome way to this spot, where enchanted by its beauty and fertility, they here set up their altars. Then the soil had never been pressed by the white man's footstep, and lay so light that the hunter would sink in it to the tops of his moccasins; then there were no thickets or underbrush to be seen, and far as the eye could reach nothing was visible in our woods but its solemn aisles, the green covering of the earth, and the deer, leaping in the peavine pastures, which grew everywhere, and stood to the height of the saddle girth. My father has often told me that when he first saw what is now Breckenridge county there was no difficulty in tracking a wounded deer, or a stray horse,

in this rich growth of peavine, and that there was not a more beautiful country than this beneath the sun.

Here, then, in this lonely scene, by the side of yonder stream, in the rippling sound of that spring whose music has never, for a moment, ceased since they first drank of its waters. Hardin and his men built their fort and blockhouse, and here they abided their enemy; here they ate their jerked venison, and here, let us hope, worshiped their God, and began the business of their future lives. And what a future was before them! No neighbor nearer than Severn's Valley; no doctor in case of ailment; no friend to cry for help; surrounded by the endless woods alive with dangerous wild beasts and venomous snakes, and sheltering a human foe animated by hatred of a hundred years growth – a hatred that never slept and was always pitiless – a hatred that was aggravated by a thousandfold at sight of the white man's footprints in the soil of this, his favorite hunting ground – a hatred, a savage hatred, that never discriminated, but would brain the infant with the same tomahawk that had drunk the life blood of the father and mother and hour before. Here, then, they were, forty miles from the fort in Severn's Valley, forty from the fort where Hartford now stands, and sixty-five from Vienna Falls, on the Green river. These on the south. But on the north, along the river front, not a settlement from the Falls of the Ohio to the French and Spanish settlements on the Mississippi. Where else but in the bounds of Kentucky, as it then was, could be found hearts that would not quail at such surroundings? But they quailed not. Confiding in the protection of Providence and their walnut-stocked rifles, they pursued their way as carelessly as though sauntering along Broadway, New York.

Oh, my friends, we were grandly sired! What though their garments were of dressed deerskin, and the caps that shielded their heads from the pelting of the storm were fashioned out of the pelts of foxes and cat amounts, right royally were they worn, and they encased braver hearts and clearer brains than were ever covered by a crown or the glittering robes of royalty. Oh, I repent, gloriously, grandly were we sired. They were the Godolphin Arabians of the human race, and you see the outcroppings of their breed in every state and territory west of us and on every battlefield in the whole land. They bought with them into the wilderness, brave hearts – none else would answer here. They brought strong and active persons – the invalid and the cripple could have no place in their hardy ranks. They brought clear brains for the use of the future Commonwealth. They brought sound constitutions, or they perished before they could corrupt the blood of the hunter and warrior. They brought their wives, children and rifles, and these were their only possessions.

Had ever a Commonwealth a richer beginning? Give honor to the memory of our peerless ancestry! Nor were our mothers behind our fathers in deeds of heroism. Bravely they stood by their husbands in the fight, loading their guns as they discharged them, cheering their spirits and animating their courage by their presence. The women of that day! Of them a true poet and a Kentuckian has written:

"The mothers of our forest land,
Their bosoms pillowed men,
And proud were they by such to stand,
In hammock, fort or glen;
To load the sure old rifle –
To run the leaden ball –
To watch a battling husband's place,
And fill it should he fall."

Why sirs, one of my own aunts, not a dozen miles from here, shot and killed a full grown bear. I must own, though, that as soon as she fired she dropped the gun and heeled it to the house.

I will not attempt to follow Hardin and his comrades in their numberless conflicts with the savages. I am neither the orator of the day nor the historian of the society, nor was it to listen to me that you have gathered here. I am only the John the Baptist of the occasion, who announces the coming of another and greater. I will say, however, as a matter of history, that very soon after their arrival one of the comrades, Michael Leonard, was killed and scalped by the Indians, leaving but two in the midst of their enemies. But those two never faltered, but toiled on and fought on undismayed till the final crowning victory was achieved and peace had settled on the rude roof of their bullet-battered blockhouse. And yet no monument has been erected to the memory of these brave men by grateful and admiring people for all they endured in those long, long years, or for the benefits conferred upon us by them; though the public square and the very streets of yonder town on the hill are ours by Hardin's munificence. And over near yon hickory tree – but exactly where God alone knows! – is the neglected grave of "Indian Bill" Hardin, with the cattle grazing at will above and about it; no fence to protect it from mishap or desecration; no stone to tell the passing stranger that a Hero lies there. But a better day is coming and I trust speedily.

The other day multitudes assembled at the Blue Lick Springs to do honor to the memory of the heroes who fell on that disastrous battlefield. Governors, generals, soldiers and citizens of high degree, from every where to which Kentuckians had wandered, gathered there, on the hundredth anniversary of that battle, to do honor to those who fell in it, and the foundation of a monument was laid by our governor; speeches were made by many of our best orators; a poem was read on the occasion, which was in itself a monument as lasting as the stone of the other which the governor had begun, not only to the memory of those who perished there a hundred years before, but to the poet who sung the song. My heart was with them on that great day, and responded in exultant throbbings to every shout that was there raised. And yet they celebrated a surprise and a defeat – a defeat caused by the hot-headed impetuosity of one possessed of more valor than discretion – but none the less a surprise, a defeat, a bloody slaughter.

We, though, have met to do honor to one who never knew a defeat, and who could never be surprised by the wiliest foe. Years ago, when I was quite a young man, I met and visited an old man named William Lace, in Muhlenberg county. He was an old Indian fighter and frontiersman, who had lived in every fort, station, and stockade in Kentucky, and had followed into battle every leader of note who had made a campaign into the Indian country. In his opinion, Hardin was the safest leader of them all to his followers and the most dangerous to his enemies, and that such a thing as a surprise to him was impossible.

Let this day a petition to the Breckenridge county court be prepared and signed by every one present, asking it to be appropriate twelve or fifteen hundred dollars to be expended in the erection of a monument at some suitable place in honor of William Hardin and those who were with him in his fort as far as their names can be ascertained, and let there be one section or space reserved for this inscription: "In honor of those brave pioneers who fought for, and have been forgotten by us in the first hundred years after their service was rendered."

I come now, ladies and gentlemen, to an exceedingly agreeable duty. 'Tis to congratulate you all on the entire success of our rude Centennial Celebration, and to warmly thank you all for aiding in bringing about that success by your liberal contributions, and especially your presence on this grand occasion. I have another agreeable duty to perform. It is as president of this society to give you all a hearty, a KENTUCKY WELCOME, to this our holy festival. Would it were worthier."

... President Allen then stepped forward and said: "ladies and gentlemen I now have the pleasure of introducing to you the historian of our society. Mr. Gruelle whom you all know or have heard of, who will proceed to read you selections from his forthcoming history of Breckenridge county."

Mr. Gruelle prefaced his reading with publicly thanking those ladies and gentlemen who had kindly furnished him the information without which he could not have written; and particularly did he thank Col. Alfred Allen, the president of the centennial society, who had not only been industrious, but indefatigable in his researches and assistance. He then read the following

Historical Sketch of the First Settlement.

The story of the life of perils encountered and privations endured by the hardy and daring pioneers who wrestled our fair county from the wild Indian, and carved its broad and smiling fields and pastures and fertile farms and thriving towns and villages from the primeval forest, is one that never palls upon the ear from often telling, nor wearies the patience with constant repetition. And it is both meet and fitting that a hundred years after the date in which they played their part by no means unimportant parts upon the stage of life, their descendants should meet upon an anniversary occasion like this, and recall scenes and incidents illustrative of their heroism in those grand old heroic days, events which, in and of themselves, were important factors in the conception and birth of our fair county.

William Hardin, the pioneer, who effected the first settlement of whites in this county, was a native of Pennsylvania, whose parents removed to Virginia while he was yet an infant. On reaching manhood's estate he was married to Winifred Holtzclaw. The florid descriptions of the new earthly paradise lying to the westward of the Blue Ridge spur of the Appalachian range spread abroad by Boone and his companions on returning from their several expeditions of exploration and discovery, created a fever in the blood of the young Virginian similar to that we witnessed among our own youth in 1849 when the gold discoveries in California were heralded abroad, and at once companies began to be organized for the purpose of taking possession of and erecting settlements in the new land of promise. Among those adventurous spirits was the young, ardent and daring William Hardin, who in 1780, recruited a small company among his neighbors, among whom were several whose descendants are numerous and influential in the county today, as the Bruners, Claycombs, Brashears, Deans, Spencers, Hayneses and others.

In the early spring of that year (1780), Hardin descended the Ohio – then known as the Wabasha, its Shawnee designation – with three companions, to search out a suitable location for his proposed colony. They reached and passed the settlement at the falls, and continued down the beautiful river until, attracted by the surpassing loveliness of the scenery about the mouth of the stream known to us as Sinking Creek – but which for many years in the early days of the county bore the designation of Hardin's Creek – they landed at the point where the village of Stephensport now stands, with the intention of exploring the country back from the river. It chanced that a large hunting party of Indians were in the immediate vicinity, who speedily discovered the presence of the pale-face intruders. The wily savages permitted them to advance some three miles from the river, and then dividing their force, one party was detailed to take possession of the boat while the other started in pursuit of the white men. Fortunately the latter had discovered "Indian signs," and were on the alert against ambush and surprise. They speedily discovered that they were being pursued by a party of Indians largely outnumbering them, and realizing the folly of an attempt to return to the boat, followed the only course left open to them, and that was to push forward with all possible speed for Hynes's fort and safety. This haven of refuge was located on the present site

of Elizabethtown, the capital of the county of Hardin. They kept up their flight during the entire night, directing their course by the stars, and at daybreak reached a large spring, where they halted to rest and slake their thirst. A young Scotchman name Sinclair was the first to drink, and was standing erect while his comrades were prostrate on the ground drinking delicious draughts of the cool and refreshing water. The report of three or four guns shattered the Sabbath stillness of the yet encradled morn, and the ill-fated Scotch youth fell to earth a corpse. Hardin and the other two crawled swiftly through the tall grass to adjacent trees and awaited the onslaught of the foe. Several savages sprang from covert, uttering fierce, discordant cries, and rushed in eager race towards the body of the slain youth, whose scalp would be the prize of the one who should prove the swiftest of foot. The surviving whites each picked his victim, fired at the word from Hardin, and three of the Indians fell to rise no more. This checked the pursuit, and the fugitives continued their flight without further interruption, reaching Hynes's fort and safety about the middle of the afternoon. As they described the scene of the rencontre as being about equi-distant between the river and the fort, there is but little doubt that the village of Big Spring occupies its site.

In the latter part of March in the succeeding year (1781) Hardin, having spent the winter at the forts in what is now Hardin county and at the settlement at the Falls of the Ohio river, returned with two companions (Christopher Bush and Michael Leonard) to the mouth of Sinking, up which they proceeded until they reached the falls, where they disembarked, and where Hardin (there being a tremendous freshet and the whole face of the country submerged) cut a high water-mark on a tree with his axe, a mark that is readily discerned to this day. From there they bent their course in a southeasterly direction, soon reaching higher and dry ground, and continued their exploration until they came upon the spot afterward made historic by their deeds of valor, where, attracted by its wonderful beauty, they concluded to establish their projected colony, and at once began the erection of a fort and blockhouse.

The fort itself was a square log building, pierced with loop holes to shoot from. In addition to this primitive citadel were several cabins, occupied by the families of those who had come prepared for permanent settlement. The whole was enclosed by a palisade, in the shape of an oblong square, composed of slabs and saplings firmly implanted in the earth, and sustained in place and strengthened by props on the inner side.

Any thing like a sustained and consecutive history of the growth and doings of the young colony thus planted in the wilds is now impossible, as those "founders of a noble race" and builders of a new community seem to have kept no written records of their transactions, and all that the historian has to depend upon is tradition received at second or third hands from aged persons, whose failing memories have lost many details that would be of inestimable value to the chronicler, retaining only the recollection of the bolder and more striking deeds, that still stand out in bold relief, yet shorn of dates, and in many instances, of names of participants that deserved something better than empty, blank forgetfulness. Hence it must be of necessity that the succeeding pages shall prove but a discursive, disconnected record of individual feats and events, none the less interesting, we hope, however, on that account.

The first man to ravish the bosom of the virgin earth with a plough was a young inmate of the fort named John T. Barbee, who came from Virginia. Barbee was a most singular character. Born in Havre, France, he was kidnapped when an infant by a sea captain, brought to Virginia, and sold to a planter, with whom he served an apprenticeship at farming. On reaching majority he also acquired his freedom, in accordance with the law regulating the species of slavery known as the apprentice system. Naturally he drifted with the tide of adventurous youths and men to the new world that had been opened up to the enterprise and valor of that age, and thus we find him at

Hardin's fort in the spring of 1781, the pioneer farmer of Breckenridge county. He was quiet in manner, modest in deportment and of speech. His chief peculiarity perhaps was his aversion to the shedding of blood. Daily exposed to death at the hands of the bloodthirsty savage, yet he would not bear arms against the Indian; living in the midst of an abundance of the choicest game, he never killed buffalo, deer, squirrel, rabbit or bird. The plough he used in cultivating the ground for corn at the fort was a primitive implement of his own manufacture, and was made of the limb of a tree, so crooked by nature that the strait portion served as the beam and the curved part as the handle. Through the beam was forced a piece or bar of iron, bent something in the shape of the letter L, the horizontal or bottom part of which was hammered and ground to a sharp edge, and this served as the ploughshare. The harness was constructed of ropes. Mr. Barbee, along about the year 1784 entered a tract of government land being the place now occupied by Anselm Beavin and removed to and opened it up as a farm. Several other families – Bangers, Bruners, Rices and others – left the protection of the fort and built and occupied cabins on adjoining tracts, this forming quite a little colony. One night the Indians attacked the infant settlement, murdered nearly all the families and bore the few survivors off into captivity. Barbee and his little family were overlooked by the raiders, being some distance from the unfortunate settlement, and thus escaped with life and house the terrible fate that befell their neighbors. He died at the early age of 33, and his descendants are membered among our best and most enterprising agriculturists.

Among the families who came out from Virginia to unite their fortunes with those of their old friends and neighbors at Hardin's fort, were those of John Bruner and William McDaniels. They entered a flat boat at the mouth of the Great Kanawha and made the long and perilous voyage to the mouth of Sinking; entered that stream and proceeded up it to the falls where the two men left the boat and women in charge of a negro man, the slave of McDaniels, while they journeyed to the fort to procure conveyance of some sort to carry the females and household plunder to that point. They had not been gone more than an hour when a party of Indians, supposed to have followed them for some distance, attacked the boat, firing upon the inmates. Mrs. McDaniels, in the effort to escape, fell into the water and was drowned. The Indians could have rescued her, but refused to do so. The savages then started with Mrs. Bruner and her babe and the negro, for their settlement in Illinois, not far from Vincennes. While hurrying off with their prisoners and the plunder secured from the boat, making all speed possible to get beyond the reach of pursuit, the red devils became angered at Mrs. Bruner because she, burdened with the weight of her child, could not travel fast enough to suit them, and when they stopped to rest, while she went to a branch near by to wash some soiled clothing for her babe, the inhuman monsters seized the helpless, innocent, split the limb of a tree with their hatchets, inserted the wrists of the babe in the slit, and permitted the wood to close upon them, thus suspending it in the air from this primitive vise. The outcry of the babe reached the mother's ears, and she hastened to the spot only to witness the monsters shooting arrows into its tender body. The distracted woman sprang screaming among them, imploring them not to kill her babe. They paid no heed to her prayers, but threatened to kill her if she did not cease her noise. But she cared not for their threats, the mother instinct and pity for her hapless child being aroused to the degree that her nature was impervious to any feeling of fear. The result was the murder of her babe before her eyes, and one of the cruel wretches seized her by her long and luxuriant hair and relieved her of her scalp, while another plunged his knife into her thigh. An old Indian, who was a chief, now interfered and prevented them from completing her murder, declaring that it was his intention to make her his wife. Determined to have revenge on some one for the woman's obstinacy, the savages then killed his unoffending negro, after which the party proceeded in their flight, leaving the body of the infant hanging to the tree and the corpse

of the negro on the ground. The chief did take Mrs. Bruner to wife, and she became the mother of a child by him. A few miles distant from their village was a trading post kept by white men. These latter hearing the story of Mrs. Bruner from some of the more communicative of the Indians, persuaded them to bring the white woman to do some trading with them. When she came they concealed her in a room and turned the key upon her, sending a message to her husband at Hardin's fort with intelligence of her whereabouts. Mr. Bruner at once went for her and brought her back. They lived together many years and reared a large family of children. She was the aunt of our respected fellow citizen, Mr. G. R. Bruner, and of the late, distinguished Hon. John B. Bruner.

Samuel Spencer was another valiant pioneer who made his mark on the era that seemed to produce only men of stout hearts, strong arms and tireless limbs. William McDaniels, whose advent in the wilderness was emphasized by the tragic death of his ill-fated wife, as hereinbefore related, was himself doomed to follow her in the way and manner so many of those gallant souls went down to death. It seems that it was the habit of the denizens of the fort to permit their milch cows to graze in the adjacent forest, the forest, the wild freedom of which was unfettered by those gyves about the acres known as fences, the leaves and young shoots of the cane and luxuriant and juicy peavine affording nutritious provender. The men took day about in the duty of gathering these cattle and driving them to the fort, a duty not unfrequently attended with imminent danger to life from savages that almost constantly prowled about the vicinity. One day McDaniels' turn at this duty came. The preceding evening he told Samuel Spencer that he had been visited by a bad dream the previous night, and he was haunted by a feeling or impression, he could not get rid of, that something was going to happen to him when he went after the cows next day. On the morning of the eventful, and as subsequently transpired, fatal day to poor McDaniels, Spencer, seeing that the depression still held possession of his spirits, proposed to hunt the cows in his stead. To this McDaniels, who did not lack courage, would not assent, but eventually consented that Spencer should accompany him. They followed the trail of the cattle through the forest and everglades until they reached the water course now known as Tuel's Creek, at a point distant from the fort some four or five miles. Here Spencer discovered an Indian dog and called McDaniels' attention to the animal, exclaiming: "Indians are here!" at the same time springing behind a tree and calling to McDaniels to follow his example. From some cause the latter failed to obey this wise counsel but stood gazing in the direction where they had seen the dog. In another minute a gun cracked and McDaniels fell to the ground shot through the heart. Instantly two Indians sprang from their ambush and rushed toward the body of their victim for the purpose of securing the scalp. One of these Spencer shot down with his own rifle, and springing to the side of his murdered comrade, snatched up his rifle and shot the remaining savage. Immediately the air was filled with the demoniac yells of seemingly a legion of red devils, and the intrepid Spencer was compelled to take flight. Swift of foot and stout of wind, he succeeded in distancing all of his pursuers but three. Loading his rifle as he ran, he awaited a favorable opportunity, when he wheeled and fired, bringing down the foremost Indian. This he repeated until he had slain the second and third savages. As the last one fell Spencer was so badly spent that he was ready to drop from sheer fatigue and was compelled to stop and rest for an hour or more before he could resume his way to the fort. The spot where the last Indian fell before his unerring rifle is in the southern edge of the now town of Hardinsburg, near a giant poplar, a portion of which is yet standing, and which has grown famous in the town annals from the number of times it has been stricken by lightning.

Arrived at the fort, Spencer told his sad story, and at once a party was organized to go out and recover the body of McDaniels. Guided by Spencer, they went to the places where he had shot his pursuers, only to find that their bodies had been removed and secreted to prevent the whites

from securing their scalps, but there was plenty of blood on the ground where each one fell to confirm Spencer's statement. When they reached McDaniels' body, it had been scalped and the bodies of the two first savages slain by Spencer had also been removed.

Samuel Spencer was held in high esteem by Hardin and his associates for his dauntless courage, skill in woodcraft and shrewdness and success as an Indian fighter. While a member of the garrison at the fort, he gave a specimen of the latter quality that is almost without parallel in the history of border warfare. Three several mornings good and true men had been lured by the gobbling of a turkey to the hillside on the west of the fort, who never returned alive, but were afterward found dead from a bullet wound and always scalpsless. On the fourth morning, when the supposed turkey began its gobbling, Spencer expressed his determination to go out and bring him in. Hardin and others endeavored to dissuade him from the rash adventure, assuring him that it was no turkey, but the ruse of an Indian. But he had made up his mind to go, and was deaf alike to the pleadings of the women and remonstrances of the men. He left the fort and made a wide detour, until he had circled around to a point where he could hear the gobbling between him and the fort. He then bent his steps directly for the sound, moving swiftly but with great caution. Finally he reached the immediate vicinity of the noise, and concealing himself, began to search with keen glance ground, bush and tree for that which produced it, but unavailingly. After some time, when his patience was about exhausted, and he was upon the eve of changing his location – a movement that would have undoubtedly cost him his life, the gobbling was resumed. It seemed to proceed from a tall tree right in front and in easy rifle range. Watching intently, he saw a movement in the branches and then the tall form of a gigantic Indian raised up and glanced over towards the fort. Seeing no one coming, the savage seemed to sink back into the very trunk of the tree again emitted the gobble so life like that, up to the moment of seeing him Spencer had been more than half inclined to believe that it proceeded from a real turkey. But cocking his trusty rifle he was ready when next the wily Indian should show himself. He had not long to wait. In a moment or two the savage again raised himself upon his perch and scanned the approaches to the fort. It was his last look upon any thing on the face of this earth. His unseen and unsuspected enemy took deliberate aim and fired. There was a quivering of limbs and foliage, as though the tree itself, instinct with life, had received the bullet in its vitals. And then, crashing down through yielding boughs, scattering twigs and leaves as it fell, with a dull thud the lifeless body of the Indian dropped to the earth. Spencer himself, having thrown himself flat on the ground the instant he fired, lay as one dead, waiting to see if his victim had any companions in the vicinity to be attracted by the report of his weapon. But there was none. It was evident that the dead warrior was conducting a still-hunt for white scalps on his own responsibility and unaided by any of his tribe. Becoming convinced of this fact, he proceeded to where the body had fallen, removed the scalp, and returned to the fort, where his arrival was hailed with delight. From henceforth the gobble of the turkey was nevermore heard on that fatal hillside.

It was impossible in the limits of this sketch of the early settlement of our county for me to use all the material so liberally furnished by kind friends and I have thus been compelled to confine myself to a few examples elected at random in order that we may realize the dangers to which our fathers and mothers were exposed, and the privations they endured when conquering from the blood thirsty Indian and wild nature this goodly heritage of our. But no sketch would prove satisfactory that did not make more than passing mention of the adventurous career of the chief of them all, Col. William Hardin.

As before stated, he was born in Pennsylvania, married in Virginia, came to Kentucky, and established the fort on the ground where we are assembled today. His first wife having died, he was married the second time on July 9, 1808 to Susannah McGee. His children were:

Winney Ann, who intermarried with William Comstock, in Hardinsburg. It is said of her that she grew, picked, carded, spun and wove the cotton into the cloth for her wedding gown.

Henry Hardin, who lived, farmed and died on Sugar Tree Run, in this county.

Malinda, who intermarried with William Crawford, the brother of Mrs. Joseph Allen, lived, died and was buried at the fort.

William, who was for many years postmaster at Frankfort.

Elijah, who was killed at Houston's Spring in Hardinsburg in the early part of 1805 by Friend McMahan for criminal intimacy with his slayer's wife.

Amelia, who intermarried with Horace Merry in 1808.

John E., who died near Brownsville, Pennsylvania in 1850.

Jehu, who lived and died at Hardinsburg.

Col. Hardin also reared a nephew and niece – Daniel Hardin and Polly his sister, the latter of whom married Ben Huff, the first sheriff of the county, who was also a famous hunter and Indian fighter.

John Hardin, the uncle of the colonel, who had come to Kentucky and made his home with his daring nephew, was murdered by Indians (as generally supposed, but some thought by white men) a short distance beyond the limits of the settlement, on what is now the Brandenburg road.

It is impossible in a sketch for an occasion like this, for us to enter upon a detailed biography of this remarkable man, and we are compelled to content ourselves with recalling a few of the salient events that contributed toward making his name famous among his compeers and revered by us today.

It will be remembered that the ground immediately adjacent to the fort was broken up by John Barbee and devoted to the cultivation of corn. It was the habit to detail pickets, who were posted in the forest beyond the field, to guard against the men and women engaged in planting the corn being surprised and massacred or borne off prisoners by the Indians. One day Hardin himself was performing picket duty, when he was fired upon and wounded in the neck or shoulder by savages. Among those at work in the field was a man named McDonald and his three daughters. Hardin, not knowing how badly he was wounded, made for the field to hurry those who may not have taken the alarm and fled to shelter into the fort. He was closely pursued by several Indians. All had sought safety in flight except the eldest McDonald girl, who waited to see if she could be of any assistance to the wounded hero, the blood streaming down and dyeing his shirt apprising her that he had been hit. She ran by his side encouraging him to greater exertion, causing him to turn about twice and raise his empty gun as though about to fire, thus temporarily checking the pursuers until they reached Barbee's plough to which was attached a span of horses by rope gearing. By this time a burly Indian was but a few yards behind them brandishing his tomahawk and uttering triumphant yells, already certain of his prey. At this moment Sallie McDonald exclaimed: "For God's sake, Mr. Hardin, stop and raise you gun, while I loosen the horses!" He did so. The Indian dodged back, threw down his tomahawk, and began rapidly loading his own rifle. But the intrepid girl succeeded in freeing the horses from the plough, almost threw Hardin on the back of one of the animals – such strength did excitement land her – mounted the other and they galloped off as the Indian fired, fortunately in too great a hurry to shoot with accuracy, and they reached the fort in safety. This heroic woman subsequently married Henry Dean, and from them sprung some of our first and most influential families.

A few mornings after this occurrence, John Jolly rode off into the woods for some purpose now unknown. About eleven o'clock, after the men had all left the field and were about to sit down to dinner, they were startled by rapid firing close at hand, immediately followed by Jolly's voice calling for succor. The men sprang to secure the guns while the women, looking out from windows and loopholes, saw Jolly riding in a wild, irregular manner, to distract the arm of his pursuers, across the field in the direction of the fort, which he poor fellow, was destined never again to reach alive. In passing a tree his knee and leg struck the trunk with sufficient force to throw him from the saddle. In an instant several of the foremost Indians were upon the doomed man, and one of them plunged his knife into his throat, while another actually tore his reeking scalp from his head. They then made off into the woods before those from the fort could get in shooting distance. An examination of the unfortunate Jolly's body disclosed no other wound than those made by the knife in his throat, the bare skull shorn of its scalp, and a bruise on his knee where it had come in contact with the tree.

On one occasion a band of Indians made a night raid on the settlement and carried off several horses. They were discovered as they were making off with their equine booty, and were pursued by a party under the lead of Hardin, who being mounted on a fleet animal, soon outdistanced his companions. They followed the red raiders all night, and about six o'clock next morning, Hardin came upon five Indians, who were seated upon the ground partaking of their morning meal. Two of them instantly rose to their feet, leveled their guns and fired, killing the horse Hardin bestrode and one ball wounding him severely, the bullet passing through the hip. Both animal and man came to the ground, the latter in a pitiable condition, being too badly hurt to either take to his heels or make for covert. All that he could do was to recline behind the carcass of his horse and keep the savages on the *qui vice* by demonstrations with his rifle, which he dared not discharge, well knowing that though he fired and brought down his man, the remaining savages would rush upon and finish him before he could possibly reload. Three several times did they start towards him, tomahawk in hand, fearing to use their guns, being satisfied from Hardin's loud and frequent calls that he had comrades in the vicinity whom they did not wish to attract by the report of their weapons. But each time the presented muzzle of his rifle drove them back to a respectful distance. At last one of his men named Weatherholt came galloping into sight, and seeing the attitude of the savages and hearing Hardin's call for help, realized the situation. Being a man of quick wit, he shouted: "Here they are! Come on boys!" and shot down an Indian who was in the act of dispatching his intrepid leader with another bullet. On this the remaining savages fled, leaving their own horses as well as those they had stolen, in the hands of the white men. The remainder of the party coming up, the rude surgery of the woods was called into requisition for Hardin's wound. He was lifted on a horse, the remaining animals were led or driven before them, and the pursuers permitting the Indians to escape without further molestation, returned to the fort. This wound confined Hardin to his bed for a long time, it being fully three months before he could again set foot to the ground.

But the crowning event of his life – a life full enough of adventure to form a good sized volume, was the battle of Saline, in which he, at the head of a company of as resolute men as ever went forth to battle and to death, achieved a victory and inflicted a blow upon the murderous and marauding savages that insured peace and quiet to his settlement for many a month to come.

His spies having brought him information that the Indians were constructing a new village on the banks of Saline creek in the territory now comprised in the state of Illinois, a few miles north of the Ohio, Hardin determined to organize a war party of his own, march to and destroy the village, and scatter the savages before they could effect a permanent lodgment in a vicinity too

close to the border settlements in Kentucky to be comfortable. Accordingly, at the head of a band of eighty selected men, each one a hero in his own person, he marched out of the settlement on his mission of vengeance and reprisal.

After several days of hard marching, they reached the neighborhood of the Indian settlement, and discovering signs of the presence of the foe, moved with great caution upon the village. There they discovered three warriors, whom they fired upon, killing two. The third attempted to escape, but was in turn likewise shot down as he ran in the direction of the forest. This fellow, tenacious of life, after receiving enough bullets in his body to have killed any dozen ordinary men, regained his feet, ran fifty yards, sprang upon an embankment fully six feet high, threw his hands straight above his head, gave his death yell, and fell on his back a corpse.

Finding that these warriors were the only ones in the village, and that the rest of the population comprised old men, women and children, Hardin shrewdly surmised that the balance of the warriors were out on a hunting expedition, liable to return at any moment, and prudence suggested that he should prepare for instant and severe battle. He did not take the necessary precautions a moment too soon. Selecting a clump of timber in the midst of a small strip of prairie near at hand as his position, he had not more than got his men posted to suit him, than they discovered a large band of Indians, numbering not less than one hundred warriors, rapidly approaching on their trail. He enjoined upon his men to keep themselves in perfect concealment and reserve their fire until the savages had approached to within twenty-five yards, or until they could distinguish "the white of their eyes." When the enemy had approached within a hundred yards of Hardin's ambuscade, one of his men, in his eagerness for a shot at them, and forgetful of his commander's orders, fired upon them. Instantly the Indians, uttering their deafening war cry, charged upon the concealed whites, and the conflict began in furious and deadly earnest. At the first fire of the enemy the gallant Hardin was shot through both thighs, but with a Spartan heroism that despised pain and contemned death, he seated himself upon a log, and like some great general astride his warhorse directing the fortunes of a grand historic conflict, uttered words of encouragement to his fearfully beset men, and issued orders shaping their conduct as coolly and calmly, and with as much promptitude and self possession, as though he were experiencing the most pleasant sensations instead of enduring agonies that caused great sweatdrops of pain to stand thick upon his forehead, but of which he gave no other sign. The conflict lasted for several hours, and resulted in the defeat and flight of the Indians, who lost thirty warriors killed outright, and more than half the remainder of their number wounded. The loss of the whites was eighteen killed and twenty-seven wounded. This conflict, one of the severest and most desperately contested in the annals of the warfare of that day, brought comparative peace to the settlements of southern and western Kentucky for many months thereafter.

Hardin lived to see his settlement grow into a town that took his name, and that town became the capital of a new county, and twice represented the county in the congress of the state. He lived to see a neighboring county erected and named alter his honored father, and full of years and honors, laid him down and died the death of a just and brave and conscientious man. Yonder where that flag so proudly flashed its stars and beautiful crimson bars in the air repose his bones – to our shame be it said, in an open field where years ago the vagrant cow and iconoclastic hog have destroyed the last vestige of the mound that covered the mortal remains of the heroic pioneer and founder of our county."



**Semi-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY,
Tuesday, 7 November 1882, p.1:**

A RURAL CENTENNIAL

**Breckenridge County Celebrates the Anniversary of Her Settlement,
and Orators Recount Her Trials, Hardships of the Pioneers**

Hardinsburg, Ky., Nov. 22, 1882. – Although the weather has not been entirely favorable for out-of-door exercises this has been a day long to be remembered all over the country. A large concourse was in attendance, composed of the present and former residents of the county. the latter coming from other counties and States to witness and participate in the commemoration festivities. The scenes of 100 years ago have been vividly described by eloquent speakers who carried their hearers back to the days when the Indians roamed over the country seeking an opportunity to pounce down upon the devoted band who formed the community from which the present population sprung.

Early last spring a correspondent of the Breckenridge News suggested that as the first settlement was made 100 years ago, the centennial should be celebrated, in u appropriate manner, and on the following county court day a primary meeting was held, and the primary steps were taken in that direction. Colonel Alfred Allen was elected president of the Centennial Society, and the necessary committees appointed to take charge of the work, and arrange for the ceremonies. November 2 was selected as the day on which all the citizens of the country, and particularly the oldest citizens should assemble on the fort built by Indian Bill Hardin, where the events that occurred a century ago would be recounted. The oldest inhabitants were hunted up and detailed accounts of pioneer events collected for use on that day. Committees of both ladies and gentlemen were appointed in every precinct in the county to solicit contributions of money and provisions so that the entire population of the county might feast at the old cave spring, a abort distance west of the town, and listen to the orator of the day recounting the history of the county, and all the summer scores of people all over the country have been, enthusiastically at work preparing for the grand event.

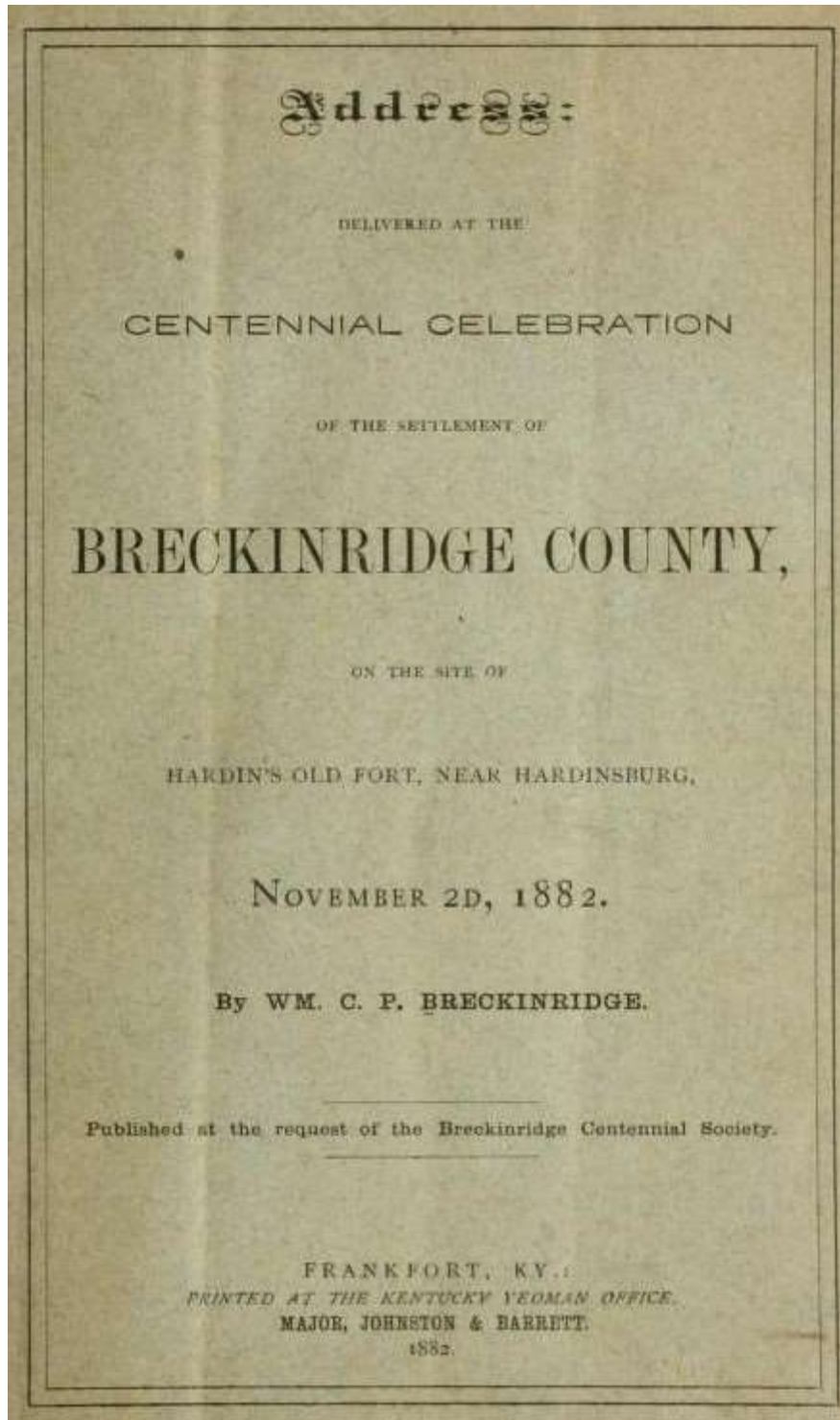
Every former inhabitant of the county that baa moved away and become a non-resident, whose address could be obtained, was invited to return and aid in making the celebration one long to be remembered. The colored people were also remembered, and a special committee was appointed to act with a committee of colored men in providing for the colored people, so that all might participate in the ceremonies.



**The Breckenridge News, Cloverport, KY,
Wednesday, 13 December 1882, p.3:**

The address of Col. Wm. C. P. Breckenridge, delivered at the centennial celebration, is out in pamphlet form, and a copy can be had from Col. Allen.





A copy of the “Address Delivered At The Centennial Celebration Of The Settlement Of Breckinridge County On The Site Of Hardin’s Old Fort, Near Hardinsburg, November 2D ,1882. By Wm. C. P. Breckinridge” (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Yeoman Office, 1882, 40 pages), can be viewed on the website, “Internet Archive” (archive.org).



See also these other articles in [The Breckinridge News](#):

- “Proceedings of the Centennial Meeting”, 2 August 1882, p.3
- “The Centennial Celebration: Pertinent Suggestions from President Allen”, 16 August 1882, p.2
- “The Centennial: Proceedings of a Meeting of the Ladies of Hardinsburg in Relation Thereto”, 13 September 1882, p.3
- “The Centennial Meeting of the Ladies’ Committee of Arrangements at Hardinsburg, 20 September 1882, p.3
- “Errors Corrected”, 27 September 1882, p.3
- “The Centennial: Some Pertinent Suggestions from President Allen, of the Centennial Society”, 18 October 1882, p.3
- “The Centennial: How It Was Celebrated”, 8 November 1882, p.2
- “Governor Blackburn’s Letter”, 8 November 1882, p.2
- “The Dinner”, 8 November 1882, p.2
- “Col. W. C. P. Breckenridge”, 8 November 1882, pp.2 & 3
- “Governor Crittenden’s Letter”, 8 November 1882, p.3
- “Dr. Norvin Green’s Letter”, 8 November 1882, p.3
- “A County Historical Society” and “The Centennial Funds”, 13 December 1882, p.2



William "Indian Bill" Hardin tombstone located at Kentucky Historical Marker #134 on Highway US 60 just outside Hardinsburg, KY. Exact location of the grave is unknown, somewhere near the old Fort Hardin that doesn't exist anymore.



Marker on the Breckinridge County Courthouse lawn in Hardinsburg, KY.