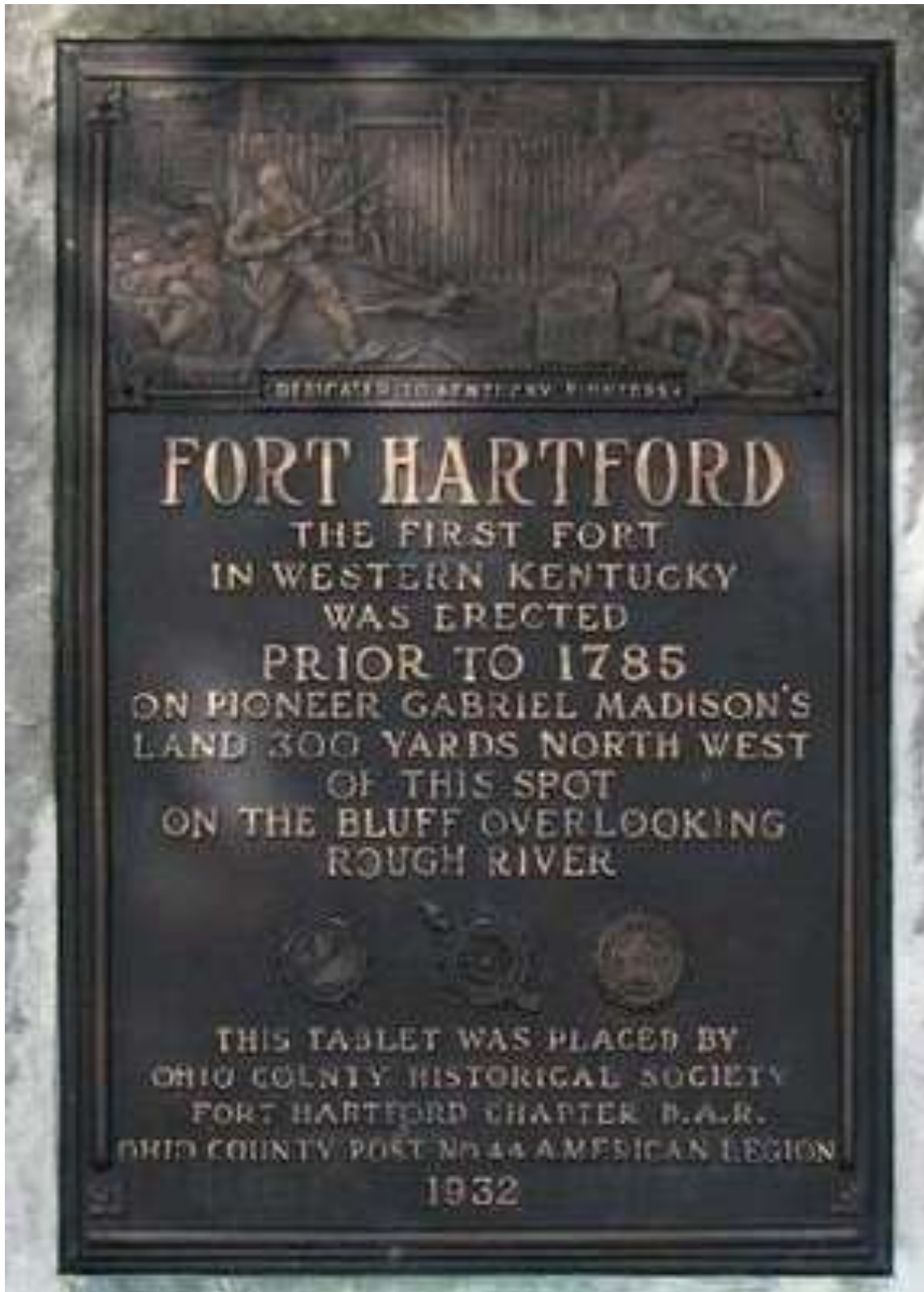


Fort Hartford Memorials

By Jerry Long
c.2024



Memorial marker on the Ohio County Courthouse lawn in Hartford, Ohio County, Kentucky. Marker is at the intersection of South Main Street (U.S. Highway 231) and East Center Street, on the right when traveling north on South Main Street. Inscription: Fort Hartford the first fort in western Kentucky was erected prior to 1785 on pioneer Gabriel Madison's land 300 yards north west of this spot on the bluff overlooking Rough River. This tablet was placed by the Ohio County Historical Society, Fort Hartford Chapter, D.A.R., County Post No. 44, American Legion, 1932.



THE HARTFORD HERALD

"I COME, THE HERALD OF A NOISY WORLD, THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS LUMBERING AT MY BACK"

HARTFORD, OHIO COUNTY, KENTUCKY, MAY 2, 1877.

FRAGMENTS OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF OHIO COUNTY. BY H. D. TAYLOR. CHAPTER III.

..... We have no precise date as to the settlement of Hartford, but by reference to an old land suit, we learn from the deposition of James Harrod, that he came up Green River in 1782, traveled up Rough Creek, on the south side, and after traveling in company with John Isaacs, and crossing a large stream which he then called Muddy Run, he came to a high bluff which he estimated to be fourteen miles from Green River, and, a short distance below that bluff, on a small white-oak tree, cut the initials of his name, as the beginning corner of an entry in the name of Gabriel Madison for four thousand acres. A remarkable incident afterwards occurred in relation to this white-oak. In 1821, or 2, on the trial of an action of ejection, the plaintiffs, claiming under Madison, and defendants under Barnett's title, it became necessary to identify Madison's beginning corner; the same John Isaacs, who then resided in some of the upper counties of the State, was summoned and attended as a witness.

When called to the stand, he gave positive testimony as to the oak still standing, a tree which he had not seen since the country was settled, until his present visit.

As countervailing evidence the defendants produced experts who carefully examined the tree and gave it as their opinion that it never had been marked. So confident was Mr. Isaacs of the truth of his statement that he requested the court to send the jury, under the care of the Sheriff to the tree standing but a few hundred yards from the Court-house. The procession marched to the spot where the tree stood devoid of any mark or scar, but Isaacs, nothing daunted, seized an axe, soon split out a large block from it, and lo! there were the very marks he had stated, and upon a careful count of annulations, they agreed precisely with the date he had given. The reader can readily imagine with what a proud step the old veteran hunter – his character “vindicated redeemed and disenthralled” – marched back to the Court-house and exhibited his blocks to the admiring crowd.

It also appears from the depositions of Isaacs and Matthias Shultz, that Rough Creek was notorious and well-known as early as 1782, and that a company of men raised a field of corn at Barnett's Station in 1785. This old station was about two miles northeast of Hartford and was on the farm which included the late residence of Dr. B. F. Nall [known as Fort Hill Farm], and from traditions of Indians depredations. Hartford was settled during the year 1785 or 6. The Indian depredations will be made the subject of a separate chapter.

How Hartford and the stream upon which it is located acquired their names is unknown. The stream near its head is called Yellow creek, in various entries and surveys, but lower down it invariably bore the name of Rough creek. The following seems the most rational solution of the

question. Near its source the country is broken and hilly; the rains wash the soil from the hill-sides immediately into the stream and kept it turbid and yellow, while lower down, in the wide, level bottom lands the current lost its force, and the stream was greatly obstructed with logs and driftwood, giving it a haggard, rough aspect; hence arose the name of Rough, on the lower, and Yellow, on the upper portion of the stream. Hartford was probably derived from the ford on the stream, where deer and other wild animals were in the habit of crossing in great numbers....

[Preceding was also published in the book, Ohio County, Kentucky, in the Olden Days: A series of old newspaper sketches of fragmentary history By Harrison D. Taylor (Louisville, KY, 1926) pp.8-9.]



Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, Friday, 1 January 1932, pp.6 & 8:

**JUDGE JOHN B. WILSON TELLS OF
EARLY HISTORY OF OLD FT. HARTFORD**

Following is the paper covering| much research work relative to the location and settlement of old Fort Hartford or Hartford Station, presented by Judge John B. Wilson at a recent meeting of the Ohio County Historical Society:

The individual who droles through life, with no interest in the future or conditions surrounding him, and no desire to make life easier and happier for those who come after him, we call a slacker.

Those who go through life with a view only to the present and future and never look backward, with a desire to keep the home fires burning that were built by the heroes, who have made our country what it is and passed on to their reward, with their history lost to us, with no desire to perpetuate their memory and deeds —_what shall we call them?

It is indeed unfortunate and lamentable, that the history of our forts, towns, and entire country during the days of the pioneers has been preserved only in the memory of men, handed down from generation to generation. With this history, based upon what records the writer has been able to find in the courts, private collections, the memory of old citizens passed on to those who came after, and last, the graveyards, we begin our story, with grateful recognition to those who so generously assisted, in finding what few facts that are herein detailed and especially to the early history of Ohio County, preserved by Honorable H. D. Taylor, to A. M. Barnett, Hartford, Kentucky, and many others.

Fort Hartford and Barnett's Station were settled at an early date according to Collin's History, page 666, in which the author speaks of the location of said Forts or Stations, the capture of the children of John Anderson and the scalping of their mother.

The subject of our inquiry, Fort Hartford, was settled before 1790 and before Barnett's Fort or Station (Ohio County, in the Olden Days, by HI. D. Taylor). That it was settled by Alexander Barnett before that date is unquestionably true from the affidavit of the great grandson of Alexander Barnett, A. M. Barnett who testifies on oath that he is a great grandson of Alexander Barnett; that he is a grandson of Robert E. Barnett, son of Alexander. and a son of Robert Barnett, a son of Robert E. Barnett; that Alexander Barnett settled Fort Hartford about the year 1780; that said Alexander Barnett was born in Virginia in 1754, and died in Ohio county in 1818; that Joseph

Barnett, the same referred to in the lawsuits with the Madison's was a brother of said Alexander Barnett, and settled at Barnett's Station and established Barnett's Fort; that all these facts have been transmitted to him from generation to generation and many of them were of record in the home of his father until it was destroyed by fire about fifteen years ago, and that all of the descendents of Alexander Barnett, referred to, lie buried in the Alexander Graveyard about two miles north of Hartford, where Alexander Barnett settled after leaving Fort Hartford.

Mr. Barnett has a very distinct recollection of these facts being handed down from family to family and gave to the writer readily the dates of the birth and death of all the Barnetts from Alexander to A. M. Barnett, and the writer has since verified the correctness of his statements, by examination of the gravestones, referred to by him. He also has a very vivid recollection as does the writer of hearing the story of how two of Joseph Barnett's daughters enroute from Barnett's Fort to visit friends and relatives at Fort Hartford were overtaken by the Indians at approximately half way between the two points, the older one tomahawked and scalped and left for dead, and the other carried by the Indians to Indiana, where she made a favorable impression upon the wife or squaw of the chief, through whose influence she was protected and later returned to her people. The one who was thought killed survived and lived for a long time, was married and has descendents living today. (The writer is informed that this incident is distinct, and apart from that detailed in Ohio County in the Olden Days, By, Harrison D. Taylor, in which reference is made to the scalping of the wife of John Anderson, and the capture of her two children. I have the utmost faith in the correctness of both stories.)

That it was settled in 1780 or before that time is indicated so clearly by records in our courts, as to leave but little, if any room for doubt and but for the fact that then as now good men and true disagreed and violated the scriptural injunction, "If a man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also", we might never have known. Conflicts arose between the early settlers over their valuable land and the prejudice of the early settlers against the lowlands because of "fever" and "ager" drove them to the highest points for health, and their sad, hard experience from Jamestown to Green River with "savage beasts and still more savage men" had taught them to obtain points of advantage over their red enemies as well as health; so December 16, 1782 Gabriel Madison under treasury warrants Nos. 9204, 9197, and 9205 entered 4000 (four thousand) acres as follows:

"December 16th, 1782 Gabriel Madison enters 400 acres on three Treasury warrants Nos. 7204, 7197, and 7205 On Rough Creek about fourteen miles from the mouth and on the south side thereof, a branch of Green River, beginning on a bank of the creek at a white oak marked I. H. thence a southwardly course 100 poles then an eastwardly course between Rough creek and Muddy Run for quantity.

A Copy Test (Signed) John M. Foster, R. L. F. F. By John Moore, D. Regs."

June 20, 1783, Joseph Barnett entered 3700 acres, and on June 19, 1787, he amended his entry so as to include 9800 acres as follows:

"January 19th, 1787, Joseph Barnett amends his entry of 3700 made the 20th of June, 1783. on part of a Treasury Warrant No. 9333 and amended the 9th of August, 1783, also amends his entry of 3082 acres made the said 9th of August, on part of two Treasury Warrants Nos. 11694 and 9333. Also his entry of 1500 acres made the 26th of January, 1785 on the north side of Muddy creek on part of two Treasury Warrants Nos. 7956, 7368, also amends his entry of 1518 acres made the 7th of February, 1786. On part of a Treasury Warrant No. 18568 the whole of the said entries amounting to 9800 acres to be bounded as follows: Beginning at a gum, beech and dogwood on the upper bank of rough creek upper corner of Robert Baird 6000 acres entry; thence running with

the said entry east 700 poles to a sugar tree and two beech trees: thence with another of the said entry N 70 poles to three beech trees; thence with another line thereof east 630 poles, passing the northeast corner at 426 poles to two black oaks. a white oak and dogwood; thence N 20 east 1154 poles to two black oaks and dogwood; thence N 20 east 1154 poles to two black oaks N 80 .W 1275 poles to two beech: trees on the bank of Rough creek; thence down the said creek as it meanders to the beginning.

A Copy Test T. L. Baltzell, D. C. •C. A."

These claims clashed and interfered and in fact the records disclose that Barnett's entry included all of Madison's 4000 (four thousand) acres, and so then as now the lawsuit, which is of record in the Supreme Court for the district of Kentucky at Danville, Kentucky, June 13. 1791, when the state of Virginia was a lad of only fifteen years.

"Pleas before the Honorable the Judges of the Supreme Court held for the district of Kentucky at the Court House in the town of Danville on the 13th day of June in the year of our Lord 1791 and in the 15th year of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"Be it remembered that heretofore towit on the 26th day of February, 1787, Gabriel Madison by his attorney filed in the Clerk's office of the Court aforesaid the copy of a caveat entered against Joseph Barnett in the following words and figures towit:

"Let no grant issue to Joseph Barnett for 9800 acres of land surveyed the 25th day of January, 1787, lying and being in the county of Nelson by virtue of Treasury Warrants. Because Gabriel Madison claims a part of the said survey by virtue of an entry and a survey made thereon under Treasury Warrant.

Entered 26th Feb. 1787. A Copy Test Willis Green, D. R."

Upon this, summon was awarded against Joseph Barnett and after numerous surveys were ordered and executed, several continuances, and proof offered as to the location of the beginning corner of Madison's 4000 acres, which was represented as being on a white oak tree, on the bank of Rough Creek and marked "I. H." just below the first bluff, upon which the town of Hartford then stood, and about twelve or fourteen miles above the mouth of Rough Creek, where it empties into Green River, and a short distance above Muddy (Run) Creek, numerous surveys were made, and testimonies offered, as to the location of this corner, relative to the bluff on Rough Creek, the mouth of Muddy and the mouth of Rough Creek, all of this proof was offered by both the plaintiff and defendant.

One witness, testified as follows:

"The deposition of James Harrod. taken in the caveat, now depending in the Supreme Court, in the District of Kentucky, in behalf of Gabriel Madison, plff., against Joseph Barnett, deft., in the house of Benjamin Grayson, in Danville.

"The deponent being of full age deposeth and saith that sometime in the spring of the year 1782, this deponent in company with John Isaacs went upon the waters of Green River, and on the East side of the s'd river, to explore the lands for the purpose of locating, that this deponent in his journey traveled up on the upper side of Rough creek from the mouth of the said creek about fourteen miles, by the computation then agreed upon between the said Isaacs and this deponent and crossed a creek which this deponent then called Muddy Run that about half mile above the mouth of said run the land on Rough Creek made a bluff or height on the lower end of which this deponent stopped and informed the said Isaacs that he would mark a tree for the beginning of a survey for Gabriel Madison with whom this deponent had previously contracted to locate 6,000 acres of land warrants that this deponent then marked a small white oak tree with the initials of his own name, "thus H with a knife," that this deponent made out an entry to begin at the said tree for

the said Gabriel for four thousand acres and as the surveyor's office of Jefferson was then shut up by the absence of the surveyor from this district he committed the making of the entry for the said plaintiff to the said Isaacs, to whom he also gave the warrants which said entry this deponent hath since seen on the entry book and believes it to be word for word with the memorandum given the said Isaacs; this deponent further saith that in the year 1784 he agreed with the defendant, who was a deputy surveyor, of the said county of Jefferson, to survey the said land and it was mutually agreed that the defendant and this deponent should meet at the s'd white oak tree on the first day of November in the s'd year of 1784 for the purpose of making the said plffs. survey under the direction of this deponent that this deponent then saw the said white oak tree or one in the same place with a similar mark therein such as he had marked when first on the ground. This deponent further saith that he saw a tree about two poles of the said white oak tree which appeared to have been marked for a corner tree but was biased off again but not so deep as to destroy the chop of the axe, this deponent says that he proceeded a small distance below the said white oak tree down the creek to encamp and on his way found trees marked as corner trees, this deponent doth not know who marked the said trees, but was informed a day or two after by one Hall & Williams, who were of the defts. party surveying or some others whose names this deponent doth not recollect as this deponent and the company above referred to were passing the said marked trees that they were made for the plff's beginning by the said defendant. This deponent saith that some time after he met with the deft. who told him he had made the survey for the plaintiff's four thousand acres entry and that he had conceived that "their meeting was to have been on the 1st day of October instead of November but had no particular conversation on the subject neither did he see the field work or plat of the said survey."

The remainder said deposition referred to deals between the witness and one John Holt concerning an entry that has no bearing on the question of consideration.

The deposition was signed "James Harrod."

There are two lines on the left margin of this deposition as follows:

"X that this deponent did go to the said beginning on the said first day of November, but was not met by the said defendant agreeable to promise."

Other depositions were taken but do not seem to have been copied.

Various other orders were made and surveys had, and on the 24th day of June, 1790, judgment was rendered in favor of Gabriel Madison for the survey on Rough Creek.

After the usual preliminaries the judgment continues. "It is therefore considered by the court, that the plaintiff recover against the said defendant 3324 acres of land agreeable to the boundaries herein described and also his cost by him in this behalf expended, except 250 lbs. of tobacco being the surveyor's fee for laying the said interference and it is ordered that the defendant may proceed to resurvey the residue of his claim in order to obtain a patent therefor."

This order seems to have settled the matter between the parties but it did not as will be seen later. May 22, 1799. James Garrard, Governor of Kentucky, issued to Gabriel Madison a patent or grant for 4000 acres situated in Nelson county between' Rough and Muddy creek, waters of Green River.

"Beginning at a white oak marked H and four beeches; thence south 100 poles to an Ash and Elm and three Hickories near the bank of Muddy Creek."

Then follows a general discourse by metes and bounds of the four thousand acres.

A copy of this grant or warrant was filed in the suit herein discussed.

Sometime after this grant the said Gabriel answered his last bugle call and went to his reward. The said Joseph, likewise, passed on, leaving numerous relations, and that he it may be,

went to Egypt to prepare for their coming after him in case of another biblical famine, but the feud did not end. It was transmitted from the parents to the offspring, and Gabriel Madison's heirs filed suit in the Ohio Circuit Court against Joseph Barnett's Heirs in which the same claims and counter claims were discussed and adjudicated. (This is action No. E328).

The only matter germane to this discussion is the proof of location of the beginning point of Gabriel Madison's 4000 acres which is the north or northwest corner of the present town of Hartford, and the description of the tree said to be the corner as relates to adjacent objects. The contention seemed to be in part that Muddy Run was not Muddy Creek, and never had been known as Muddy Creek, that the location of the white oak marked "H" being twelve or fourteen miles above the mouth of Rough Creek, some contended to be measured by the meanders and some on a direct line. Numerous surveys were made among which was one made by Harrison Taylor, great grandfather of the author of "Early History of Ohio County." Among other witnesses, who testified in this action was John Isaacs, who was referred to in the deposition of James Harrod in the suit had at Danville.

This deposition was taken on the 7th day of May, 1824, at his dwelling house in Washington county, Kentucky.

"Deposeth and saith that some time in the spring of the year 1782 he and a certain James Harrod went upon the waters of Green River to locate lands in partnership that being on the upper side of Rough Creek and coming to the creek the said deponent and the said Harrod crossed a run which they then called Muddy Run, and which, I am informed, still retains the same name; that when they came to the first bluff upon Rough Creek above the mouth of Muddy Run, that the said Harrod informed this deponent, that he was under contract to locate some land for Gabriel Madison which he wished to do exclusive of their partnership, and that he, the said Harrod, then proceeded, setting on his horse, to mark a tree, which he said should be beginning of the location, that the said Harrod accordingly took his knife and rode up to a white oak tree and shaved off the rough bark and cut the initials of his name on the said tree, which this deponent then rode by and saw the letter "H" distinctly. but does not remember discovering "J"; that the said tree stood a small distance below said bluff that this deponent sometime in the month of December, 1787, at the request of Gabriel Madison examined the said tree that upon viewing the situation of the ground and trees, he believes that the white oak this deponent showed the deponent as being the beginning of said Madison's survey to be the same tree which the said Harrod marked for Madison's beginning corner in 1782; that there was the letter "H" plainly to be seen on said tree which was about the size of the letter said Harrod marked in 1782. The deponent, and said Harrod then estimating the distance from the mouth of Rough Creek on a straight line to said tree at about twelve or fourteen miles and that in April 1823, he examined the ground and tree which was then standing near the bank of Rough Creek about seventy yards below the "bluff on which Hartford stands," which this deponent believes to be the same tree that said Harrod marked in 1782, also the year 1786, or 1787 as well as this deponent can recollect the aforesaid described tree as the beginning of his 4000 acres made for him by James Harrod; that Madison began at this tree to make his survey; that this deponent accompanied him and his party making the survey in running all the lines except the meandering down Rough Creek. This' deponent further states that in 1782 at the time: and said Harrod made said entry, Rough Creek was notorious well known by that name by the people of that country, and further deponent saith not.

"(Signed) John Isaacs."

The great contention was the location of Muddy Creek, or Muddy Run, the white oak tree marked "H", its distance from the mouth of Rough Creek and from "the first above the mouth of

Muddy Creek." The deposition of Mathias Shultz was taken at the dwelling house of Reuben Bennett in Hartford on June 9, 1825, with the following questions and answers by attorney for the defendant.

Q. "When did you first know Muddy Creek by name?"

A. "In the spring of 1785 or 1786 I came to this country with a surveying party and camped frequently on Muddy Creek, it was then and has ever since that time been called Muddy Creek."

Q. "Is, or is not, Muddy Creek the first creek emptying into Rough Creek below the town of Hartford on the same side?"

A. "It is."

Q. Do, or do you not, know that any person wishing to find the mouth of Muddy Creek in April, 1785, or 1786 could have been directed to it with certainty by the persons then in that neighborhood?"

A. "I lived at the place where Barnett's Fort was afterwards built about four miles from the mouth of said creek in 1786 and any person from that place could be given such direction that the mouth of said creek could have been found with ease and certainty. In the summer of 1786, ten or twelve men raised a crop of corn at the place where Barnett's old Fort was afterwards built and that the mouth of Muddy Creek was well known to them all by that name."

Q. "If you know anything concerning the notoriety of Joseph Barnett's survey made about the mouth of Muddy Creek as early as 1786, please state it."

A. "I was along when part of Barnett's survey was made in the year 1785 I believe, and in the year 1786 Barnett settled with a good many other families on the survey, and I believe the lines of the survey were well known at that time to those persons who settled on it and further the deponent saith not."

(Signed) his mark "Mathias (X) Shultz"

Stephen Rowan and Michael Riley who was the great grandfather of our esteemed townsman and banker, John C. Riley, and a guard at Barnett's Fort, whose office it was to watch for Indians and to supply the fort with meat from the forest, and it is said he was an expert marksman and owned a very valuable gun, and always kept it in a pink of condition, his powder dry, and his flint ready, and he was never known to be out of instant reach of his gun until after the disappearance of the red men and finally located a shingle mill at Hartford, just above the present bridge on the river, both testified the same general facts regarding the location and name of Muddy Creek. Likewise, Robert Mosley (old Bob Moseley) and Benjamin Fields testified, after numerous surveys and surveyors reports and testimony of witnesses including that of James Harrod copied from the suit at Danville, Kentucky. The cause was submitted and judgment rendered in favor of Gabriel Madison's Heirs from which judgment Barnett's Heirs appealed and in November, 1828, the following order was made.

State of Kentucky, Sct. Court of Appeals, November 28, 1828. Barnett Heirs, Appellant. Against, Upon the appeal from a judgment of the Ohio Circuit Court. Madison's Heirs, Appellee. The court being sufficiently advised of and concerning the premises it seems to them that there is no error in the judgment.

It is therefore considered by the court that the judgment of the Ohio Circuit Court be affirmed which is ordered to be certified to said court.

A Copy Test, J. Tigert, C. C. A.

From the foregoing and in the absence of any direct testimony or statement from any one who purported to know more than as above stated, by whom, or when Fort Hartford was established, we are left to draw our conclusions from what evidence we have.

First – The records and testimonies of what witnesses we can obtain show clearly that the white oak "marked "H", or "J. H." is the lower corner of the survey of Gabriel Madison's 4000 acres.

This survey extended south and east and north to Rough Creek and down to the beginning and included in addition to the town of Hartford, and before it Fort Hartford, Barnett's Fort, it is safe to conclude that Fort Hartford and later the town of Hartford had for its lower corner on Rough Creek the same white oak, This white oak stood just at the lower end of the first "bluff or height" above the mouth of Muddy Creek. Comparative elevation made by writer December 10, 1931, of points along Rough Creek and the bluff show that it terminates on the lower side within a short distance of the white oak tree, and the bank of the river at that point is approximately ten feet above low water mark, and the elevation gradually increases upstream to twenty-five feet at the end of Mulberry Street, and to fifty and one-half feet at the summit of the bluff, at the end of the alley between Mulberry street and Main street; then it begins a gradual descent to Liberty Street.

Considering the erosions since 1782, it is very probable that the highest point on said bluff was all of sixty feet above low water mark, and all of fifty feet above the river bottoms lying immediately north At Liberty street on the upper side of said bluff is a swale that extends from Center street to Rough Creek, and west of said bluff is the lowlands extending to and beyond Muddy Creek which empties into the river on a straight line approximately three fourths mile below from the highest point of said bluff. Approximately the same elevation extends southward to Union Street about five hundred feet and then slopes south and southwest to bottom lands.

The bluff herein considered is the bluff overlooking Rough Creek that is immediately on the bank of the creek so far as the writer knows for several miles and there is no point within his knowledge, except this one where the denizens of the fort could have conversed with Stephen Statler, and he with them across the creek as detailed in Harrison D. Taylor's Ohio County in the Olden Days.

Doubtless the two prevailing thoughts in the minds of the early settlers, as well as of our day, was health and safety. They feared settlement in the lowlands on account probable disease, and still more on account of probable attack from enemies, and doubtless they sought the most impregnable points for location, and it will be seen that there is much strategy in a location on the bluff described. An attack from the north or river side would have to be made up the bluff almost perpendicular from thirty to fifty feet under the repulsing acts of the inhabitants of the fort and on the other three sides the attackers would be at a disadvantage because all of their efforts would be uphill and subject to be more easily repulsed by the occupants of the fort.

The writer of the article felt in the beginning his inability to do the matter justice, and now feels, while he has done all he could, it is little enough and imperfect enough. But it is hoped that it will develop some discussion and further research, so that we may know more definitely, and until further and more definite proof is offered our conclusion is and should be that Fort Hartford occupied the bluff just below the present bridge on Rough Creek.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 27 November 1932, p.1B:

FORT HARTFORD MARKER WILL BE UNVEILED DEC. 4

Ohio County Historical Society, D. A. R. And
American Legion To Take Part In Exercises.

Unveiling of a marker designating the original location of Fort Hartford in Ohio county will be held at Hartford at 1:30 o'clock Sunday afternoon, Dec. 4. The marker is being erected on the lawn of the court house by the Ohio County Historical society, the Ft. Hartford Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and Ohio County Post No. 44, American Legion.

The principal address will be given by Judge A. D. Kirk, Owensboro, former Ohio county resident. It is understood that the state commander of the American Legion will attend. The American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps from Owensboro, and Central City, Greenville, Leitchfield and Morgantown have been invited to attend. Rev. W. J. Simpson and Rev. H. H. Jones, Hartford will be in charge of the devotionals. The Hartford high school band will furnish the musical numbers. A number of district and state D. A. R. officers are expected to attend, all persons interested in the history of this section as well as descendants of pioneers are especially invited. D. A. R. chapters of Western Kentucky will be well represented.

Marker Large Boulder

The marker is a large boulder taken from the hills from which Green river derives its source, and is being furnished by George Mischel & Sons, in East Main street, Owensboro. The material is bleaching stone and is seven feet high, two feet thick and six feet wide. It is to be erected on a concrete foundation 24 inches deep. A panel will be cut in the boulder to receive the bronze tablet. The weight of the boulder is 8,000 pounds. George H. Honig, sculptor, Evansville, will inscribe the tablet.

The exact date of the erection of Fort Hartford is unknown. However it was the first fort built in Western Kentucky. Fort Vienna was built in 1785, according to historians, and Fort Hartford was known to have been erected prior to that time. Fort Vienna was built on the Falls of Green river.

First Settlements

The first settlements in this vicinity were known to have been made at Hartford on Rough Creek and at Vienna at the Falls of Green river. Each place was fortified as a protection against the attacks of the Indians.

A number of books and historical sketches have been written about Fort Hartford, Fort Vienna and the people of that time.

Among the early residents who made history were Bill Smothers prominent in the founding of this section, also William P. Duvall, at one time Governor of Florida. It is said that Duvall as a lad learned woodcraft and hunting from Bill Smothers. As a man he was prosecuting attorney. He was a captain in the war of 1812, serving from 1813 to 1815. He served as Congressman and later

became governor of the Territory of Florida. In addition to Duvall and Smothers, Judge Broadnax, Bob Moseley, Joe Taylor, John Miller Wesley, Sally Pigman, Bob Tarlton, Simon Schultz, Patty and Dolly Schultz, Jim Niel, Peggy Pugh, Suky Thomas are listed by Irvington as early residents of the Fort Hartford section.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 6 December 1932, p.5:



Throngs Attend Program Sunday; Judge A. D. Kirk
of Owensboro, Principal Speaker, Lauds Pioneers.

Judge A. D. Kirk, Owensboro, former Ohio county resident, delivered the principal address at the services held at Hartford Sunday when a marker, designating the site of the historic old Fort Hartford was unveiled. Fort Hartford was the first fortified settlement in West Kentucky. Three societies, the Ohio County Historical society, the Fort Hartford chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the Ohio county post, No. 44, American Legion were in charge of the unveiling.

Many from the surrounding country attended the program and witnessed the unveiling of the monument by little Miss Elna Hawkins, a direct descendant of one of the pioneer families, which helped establish the fort at about 1782.

A wreath was placed on the monuments by Mrs. Guy Ranney, of Hartford. L. G. Barrett was master of ceremonies. Invocation was pronounced by the Rev. W. J. Simpson and benediction by the Rev. H. H. Jones. A parade, led by the Owensboro Drum and Bugle Corps of Post No. 9, American Legion, preceded the dedicatory exercises. Visitors attending the program were welcomed to the city by Mayor W. H. Barnes.

In his address Judge Kirk reviewed the early history of Ohio county. He paid tribute to the pioneer spirit of the men and women who claimed this country taking it from its Indian occupants. In closing he said:

"There is no tendency among the thoughtful to draw a line between themselves and these sturdy courageous ancestors who built their fortified outpost here. There is a broad basis of pride in the fact that nearly every family among those early settlers is still represented among us. A call of the roll of those of that early Fort could be responded to here almost name for name by those whose bodies are warmed by blood that continues in direct line from those who built and guarded that Fort. As we unveil this monument we do not nourish animosity nor perpetuate the memory of racial strife. We rededicate ourselves to the adventure of life, believing that to travel nobly is better than to arrive. We have not reached our zenith – we have much further to go. We do not erect this monument as a boast of completed tasks. We set it here as a pointer to continue advancement."



Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, Friday, 9 December 1932, p.1:



A vast throng was in this city Sunday afternoon to attend the unveiling of the eight thousand pound Fort Hartford marker recently erected on the court house square. It had been planned that the exercises would be conducted on the court house lawn but due to a cold breeze it was decided at the last minute to present the program in the circuit court room of the court house.

A parade of members of the American Legion led by the drum and bugle corps of the Daviess county Post was the opening feature of the ceremony. The colors of Ohio County Post, Butler Post and Daviess County Post were carried in the parade.

The exercises up-stairs included the welcome address by Mayor W. H. Barnes and addresses by Judge D. C. Ross, of Calhoun, district commander of the American Legion; Mrs. Alva Bean, of Centertown, regent of Fort Hartford Chapter, D. A. R.; Judge John B. Wilson, of the Ohio County Historical Society; George H. Honig, of Evansville, who designed and manufactured the marker; and Judge A. D. Kirk, of Owensboro, one of the premier advocates of the erection of the marker. L. G. Barrett, historian of the local American Legion Post and vice president of the historical society, presided.

Mrs. Mary Taylor Logan, president of the Ohio County Historical Society, was eulogized for the untiring work of herself and her late grandfather, Hon. Harrison D. Taylor, in preserving in book form much of the early history of the county. Paul Mischel, of the firm, Geo. Mischel and Sons, Main Street, Owensboro, which company contributed the large Green River stone used as a marker, was asked to stand that the audience might know of his firm's generosity. Miss Lettie Marks, now deceased, received credit for starting the marker movement.

The addresses threw much light on the early history of Ohio county and presented numerous references to Fort Hartford made by pioneers in their letters and papers. Some of these addresses and other data pertaining to the old fort will be published in this newspaper at an early date along with a picture of the marker.

The Hartford High School band and the Daviess County Post drum and bugle corps furnished music at intervals during the exercises. The act of unveiling the marker was performed by Little Miss Elna Hawkins, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Hawkins, of near Hartford, and a direct descendent of Gabriel Madison, one of the most prominent of the early Hartford pioneers [ed. note: Madison was not a resident of Ohio County]. Mrs. Guy Ranney, of the historical society, placed a wreath on the marker in memory of the deceased founders of the fort and settlement here.

The invocation was pronounced by Rev. W. J. Simpson, pastor of the Hartford Baptist church, and the benediction by Rev. H. H. Jones, pastor of the Hartford Methodist church.

The immense crowd, only a small portion of which could get inside the court house, included hundreds of people from outside the county, there being delegations present from Evansville and Rockport, Indiana, and the following Kentucky cities: Louisville, Owensboro, Morgantown, Calhoun, Henderson, and perhaps others. Almost every section of Ohio County was represented. Letters and telegrams were received from a number of prominent citizens of this and other states expressing their regret because of their inability to be present. These were read by Mrs. Roy Barnhill, secretary of the historical society, and vice regent of the D. A. R. chapter.

The organizations responsible for or the successful completion of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Ohio County Post 44 American Legion.



St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis, MO, 7 December 1932, p.5B:



HARTFORD Ky. – A marker designating the original location o of Fort Hartford in Ohio County was unveiled here recently.

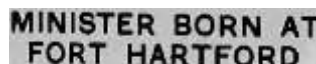
An 8000-pound boulder taken from the hills which are the source of Green River is the marker. The exact date of the erection of Fort Hartford is uncertain. However, it was the first fort built in Western Kentucky. Fort Vienna was built in 1785, according to historians, and Fort Hartford was known to have been erected prior to that time. Fort Vienna was built on the Falls of Green River. The first settlements in this vicinity were known to have been made at Hartford on Rough Creek and at Vienna at the falls of Green River. Each place was fortified as a protection against the attacks of the Indians.



[See also: “Monument on Site of First West Kentucky Fort to Be Unveiled Today”, Courier and Journal, Evansville, IN, 4 December 1932, p.8B.]



Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, Friday, 29 September 1933, p.1:

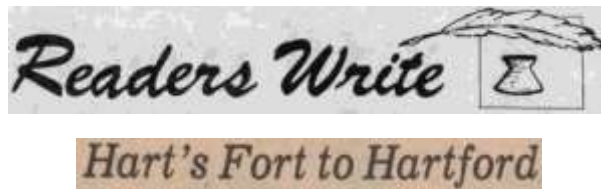


The following is taken from the Filson Club magazine and is an interesting item of history in connection with old Fort Hartford. The magazine was discussing the pioneer churches and ministers in Kentucky. It said:

"William Downs, probably the first preacher that Abraham Lincoln heard, was born in 1782 in a fort located at a point which later became Hartford. Kentucky. He had a fair education and began preaching while in his teens and soon became the regular pastor of Little Mount Separate Baptist Church. Spencer gives a good description of him: 'He possessed extraordinary natural gifts and was one of the most brilliant and fascinating orators in the Kentucky pulpit of his day.' He was fond of controversy and engaged in several debates."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 27 February 1977, p.5A:



Editor:

In your recent article by Joanne Evans, Feb. 6, about my hometown Hartford, you stated you were not sure of the origin of the name Hartford. May I take this opportunity to explain the origin from information handed down to me from my father, Dr. A. B. Riley of Hartford who was a historian, not only of our family, but of Ohio County. I have tried to follow my father's footsteps and continue in a study of history, having taught history for a number of years, and completing my B. S. and, M. A. degrees.

The naming of the city came about as two men from Culpepper County, Va., along with their families, settled at "Yellow Banks" which is now Owensboro. Finding this area unsuitable for their families, they moved westward into Ohio County territory, arriving at a river which was later named Rough. These two men were Major John Hart and Colonel Michael Riley (my great-great-grandfather), both of Revolutionary War fame.

After finding a suitable hill overlooking the river, they decided to build a fort. In a dispute over naming the fort, the two men decided on a marksmanship contest, using flintlock rifles, as a means of naming the fort. The contest would decide between the names Hart's Fort or Riley's Station.

Mr. John Hart won the shooting match, thereby naming the new settlement Hart's Fort which has become the present day Hartford. Michael Riley stayed until the fort was completed, but being a hotheaded Irishman, left with his family and settled Riley's Station in McLean County which today is known as Livia. This change in names from Riley's Station to Livia was made by Michael's son, William Riley, when he rode with J. E. B. Stuart and Mosby during the War between the States. There being a hot bed of Union sympathizers in the community, it became apparent that the name must be changed. Hence, Livia, Ky.

It is my sincere hope that this bit of information will help clarify and document the origin of the name Hartford. If I can be of any further assistance in helping record the history of Hartford, or Ohio County, please feel free to contact me.

A. B. Riley Jr.
P. O. Box 243, LaCenter Ky. 42056



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, Thursday, 17 November 1983, p.2B:

Marker placed on base -- 1932

"Fort Hartford Marker Placed On Its Base" was the headline of a news story in *The Ohio County News* issue of December 2, 1932 and the article announced the public unveiling ceremony of the huge marker for 1:30 p.m. Sunday, December 4.

The newspaper articles before and after the ceremony stated the magnificent bronze tablet was designed by George S. Honig, Evansville sculptor and artist and the 8,000 pound granite boulder was donated by George Mischel & Sons, of Owensboro.

Unveiling ceremonies and the program had been planned for the courthouse lawn but at the last minute, due to inclement weather, the throng of people had to move to the Circuit Court room for the addresses and not all could get inside.

A.D. Kirk, one of the premier advocates of the erection of the marker, gave the welcome address and Mrs. Mary Taylor Logan was eulogized for her untiring work as also was Harrison Taylor. Miss Lettie Marks, then deceased, received credit for starting the marker movement.

Mrs. Guy Ranney placed a wreath on the marker in memory of deceased founders of the fort and settlement.

Delegates came from Evansville and Rockport, Indiana, Louisville, Owensboro, Henderson, Morgantown, Calhoun and almost parts of the county were represented. Telegrams and letters were received from a number of dignitaries who could not be present.

The marker erection was sponsored by the Ohio County Historical Society, Fort Hartford D.A.R., and Ohio County Post 44, American Legion.



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, Thursday, 17 November 1983, p.2B:

Past efforts for Fort Hartford Marker

Efforts to erect a Fort Hartford marker were started several years before it became a reality. Organizations involved included the Ohio County Historical Society, Fort Hartford Chapter, D.A.R., and the American Legion Post No. 44. Serving on the committee were Miss Sue Yeiser, Cecil Martin, Frank Tichenor, L.S. Iglehart, L.G. Barrett, Mrs. Henry Carson, Mrs. E.E. Birkhead, Mrs. Alva Bean and Mrs. A.D. Kirk.

During the project campaign, a poem was written by Mrs. Henry Carson and was sent to a number of persons. Mrs. Carson was the mother of Mrs. L.S. Iglehart of this city. The poem is as follows:

Hartford is a good old town;
Her citizens are kind and true;

We want to keep this spirit up,
So this is why we come to you.

For years and years the town has
grown,
And now we all agree
To place a marker on the road;
That those who pass, may see.

We want to mark our dear old Fort
And place thereon a stone,
So all may know as they pass
through,
The lovely spirit shown.

We cannot buy a stone we like
Without your help or aid,
But now we can commence to
work,
As all our plans are made.

This fort was for many years
A place we could not find,
But now we feel so very sure
That we are thus inclined.

To place this stone upon the road;
At once to mark the spot,
That future generations
May know 'tis not forgot.

The pioneers who fought and died,
That we might have a home,
Deserve the best that we can give
And that is why we come.

To you with this our plea
And ask your kind support,
That one and all may have a hand
In marking this old Fort.

_ Poem by Mrs. Henry Carson



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, Thursday, 17 November 1983, p.2B:

Old Fort Hartford -- 1782

By Dorothy Gentry

As pioneers trekked westward from Bairdstown [now Bardstown] and Harrodsburg along the Buffalo Trail through the Canebrakes, Ohio County was a wilderness covered by dense forests. There was a heavy growth of peavines on the hills and reeds or cane, higher than one's head on horseback in the lowlands. Large numbers of wild animals roamed the forests while wolves made the nights hideous with their howling. Bears, panthers, wildcats and many such animals infested the country.

It was in such conditions as this that adventurous men and women found the hill overlooking Rough River, axed their way through, and built a fortification that would afford an overlook for Indians, and ample supply of water. They planted a settlement which became Hartford. Some believe the pioneers referred to the fort as Hart's fort or station because young deer, or harts as the English called them, had a crossing and forded the stream about where the end of Mulberry Street is now.

Among the pioneers in this first fort, some names found in various history books include Alexander Stewart, who came to Kentucky as a boy and first located at Fort Hartford. He later went to Fort Vienna, now Calhoun, and married Elizabeth Downs. There was a Rev. Thomas Downs, Mrs. Downs and nine-year-old son, William Downs, born in the fort that year.

Fort Vienna was settled a short time later, as was Barnett's Station, some two miles east of Hartford, and residents moved back and forth.

Another family among the first residents of Fort Hartford were William and Sarah Lee. Their daughter, Hannah, married Col. William H. Porter, who was a soldier in the Battle of Tippicano [sic], and they later settled at Morgantown.

One of the bravest and cleverest of pioneers, and in my opinion, far more colorful than stories read of Daniel Boone, was William Smeathers, [also spelled Smithers, Smothers], who was the architect of the fort at Hartford and also Vienna. He came from near the Holston River in Virginia. His father had been scalped and his mother died of heartbreak some nine days later, leaving three children who lived with a family by the name of Fitzpatrick. They had a daughter, Nancy Cecelia, whom Bill married and brought west, along with his sister, Mollie. His younger brother also came a short while later.

Bill and Cecelia had a daughter born in the fort at Hartford. Cecelia died and is probably buried in an unmarked grave around nearby, but when the daughter, Jane, was 15, Bill and his sister, Mollie, and Jane moved to the Yellow Banks, now Owensboro, being the first residents of that city.

There is a marker at Smothers Park in Owensboro, one at the Ohio County Museum, and three in Texas that pay tribute to Bill Smeathers and his many daring acts of courage.

One of the colorful figures in the fort at Hartford was John Miller, called "Tick-Eye John". He was a veteran Indian fighter, lost an arm in a fight with Indians, but was a typical Kentucky hunter who figures in several thrilling episodes in Ohio County's early history.

"Tick-Eye John" was described as a "gray haired man, hardy and weather beaten with a blue wart, like a great beard, over one eye," hence he was nicknamed by the hunters Bluebeard.

Miller was also a member of the Barnett's Station garrison or lived nearby for he it was, who in April, 1790, arrived just in time to save the lives of members of a party of women who were returning to Barnett's Station from preaching services at Hartford when a Mrs. John Anderson was scalped, her two children killed and, Hannah Barnett, the then-year old daughter of Col. Joseph Barnett, was kidnapped. Hannah was later recovered by her brother-in-law, Robert Baird, and Mrs.

Anderson recovered, scalptless, nonetheless. [There is an interesting story concerning the recovery of Hannah Barnett from the Indians that may be used at some later date.]

Samuel Neal was one of the fort's early defenders and saved the life of a woman flax puller when a party of women was attacked by Indians.

Mike Riley was referred to as "the armourer" or guardian at Fort Hartford and was an ancestor of the Riley family in Ohio and McLean Counties.

Riley and Nancy Rhoads also helped build the fort at Hartford, later went to the falls of the Green, started Rhoadsville which was later called Vienna, then Calhoun.

Philip Taylor was the first to leave the "protecting walls" and build a cabin in a forest clearing.

No doubt Fort Hartford was a well established fort with more inhabitants than we have present knowledge of because James Harrod of Harrodsburg fame, came up Green River in 1782, traveled up Rough Creek on the south side and after traveling in company with John Isaacs and crossing a stream which he called Muddy Run, he came to the bluff which he estimated to be 14 miles from Green River and on a white oak, cut the initials of his name as the beginning corner of an entry in the name of Gabriel Madison for 4,000 acres. A four-acre square was donated by Madison for courthouse and other public buildings in 1799.

The original physical appearance of the site of Fort Hartford was the present location, high upon a bluff overlooking Rough Creek, now Rough River. The settlement at first consisted only of a stockade of logs enclosing and rendering defensible a dozen or so residential log cabins. The corners of the palisaded enclosure were no doubt guarded by block houses. and it was the first fortified settlement in the lower Green River Valley.



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, Thursday, 25 June 1992:

**Old Fort Hartford
settled in 1782**

By Dorothy Gentry

As pioneers trekked westward from Bairdstown (now Bardstown) and Harrodsburg along the Buffalo Trail through the Canebrakes, Ohio County was a wilderness of dense forests.

There was a heavy growth of pea-vines on the hills and reeds or cane, higher than one's head on horseback in the lowlands. Large numbers of wild animals roamed the forests while wolves made the nights hideous with their howling. Bears, panthers, wildcats and many such animals infested the country.

It was in such conditions as this that adventurous men and women found the hill overlooking Ruff Creek, they called it, axed their way through, and built a fortification that would afford an overlook for Indians and ample supply of water.

The settlement at first consisted only of a stockade of logs enclosing and rendering a dozen or so residential log cabins defensible.

The corners of the palisaded enclosure were no doubt, guarded by block houses.

As newcomers arrived, the need for other fortifications became apparent and Colonels Joseph and Alexander Barnett, brothers, selected a site a short distance from Hartford.

Among the known pioneers were William Smeathers, also known as Bill Smothers, and Bill Smithers, reputed architect of Fort Hartford, assisted in construction of the second fort known as Barnett's Station. Work began in December, 1782 and was occupied in February, 1783.

Smeathers, one of the bravest and cleverest of frontiersmen, who came to the area from Virginia, and who later was the first settler of the yellow banks which came to be Owensboro, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and later went to Texas and joined up with Stephen Austin's "Old Three Hundred".

John Miller, also known as "Tick-Eye", a veteran Indian fighter and typical Kentucky hunter, also figures in several thrilling episodes with Bill Smeathers in the county's early history.

History records the first male child born in the fort at Hartford was William Sharpe, and William Downs, who became a noted pioneer Baptist preacher, was born in the fort at Hartford in 1782.

Another inhabitant was a man by the name of Samuel Neal, verified by the tradition that it was he who saved the life of a woman flax "puller" when a party of women was attacked by Indians a short distance from the settlement.

Mike Riley was the "armorer" of the fortification, who had charge of the arms, ammunition and other defensive equipment of the fort.

Phillip Taylor is recorded as one to be the "first to leave the protected walls of the fort" and construct a cabin.

About the same period of time, the inhabitants constructed a fortification at what was called "the lower falls" for protection of Indians who were entering the area from the river. Two brothers by the name of Rhoads, located at Fort Hartford, staked grounds for the establishment of a town to be called "Rhoadsville" but complications in the boundaries they established voided their dreams.

Captain William Rowan and family and five other families arrived at the lower falls of the Green River in 1784 and residents of Hartford assisted in helping fortify the area for Indian protection.

It was first called Vienna, later Calhoon, named for Judge John Calhoon, and then Calhoun.

Another early day couple and residents of Fort Hartford were William and Sarah Lee. Their daughter, Hannah, married Colonel William H. Porter, who was a soldier in the Battle of Tippicanoe, and they later settled at Morgantown.

No doubt, Fort Hartford was a well established fort with more inhabitants than history records.

James Harrod, of Harrodsburg fame, came up Green River in 1782, traveled up Rough Creek on the south side and crossed a stream which he called Muddy Creek and cut the initials of his name as the beginning corner of an entry in the name of Gabriel Madison for 4,000 acres of land.

Madison donated a four-acre square to the county in 1799 for a courthouse and other public buildings after the county was designated.



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, Thursday, 9 March 1995, p.6B:



The above photo was made on December 4, 1932 at the unveiling of the Fort Hartford Marker on the northwest corner of the Courthouse Square. The plate is being restored by Bill Wallace, of Louisville, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Wallace, of Hartford. The tablet is engraved, "Fort Hartford the first fort in Western Kentucky was erected prior to 1785 on pioneer Gabriel Madison's land 300 yards north west of this spot on the bluff overlooking Rough River. This tablet was placed by the Ohio County Historical Society, Fort Hartford Chapter D.A.R. and Ohio Post No. 44 American Legion, 1932." An article from The Courier-Journal, dated December 3, 1932 reads: "Marking the site of the first fortified pioneer settlement in Western Kentucky, Fort Hartford, a monument erected recently in Court Square here will be dedicated with appropriate ceremonies at 1:30 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. A.D. Kirk Hartford and Owensboro attorney, will deliver the principal address. Mrs. Graham Lawrence, Shelbyville, State regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution; Carter D. Stamper, Beattyville, Kentucky Department commander of the American Legion, other prominent Legionnaires and George Onig, Evansville sculptor, who designed the plaque, will take part. Among those attending the services will be many descendants of early settlers of the Hartford section, which included the Barnett, Cleaver, Rhoads, Pigman, Jackson, Taylor, Ward, Render, Handley, Isaac, Barrett, Bairds, May, Hatfield, Jones, Statler, McCoy, Carson and other families. Committees in charge of the dedication services include Mrs. A.D. Kirk, Mrs. Henry Carson, Mrs. G.L. Schultz, Mrs. Henry Leach, Miss Pauline Williams, Miss Sue Yeiser, Mrs. Mary T. Logan, Mrs. Alva Bean, Mrs. A.B. Riley, Mrs. E.E. Birkhead, Miss Margaret Marks. Judge John B. Wilson, Cecil Martin, L.G. Barrett and Mrs. Roy Barnhill. -- Photo courtesy of Ohio County Museum

[Picture was also published in the Ohio County Times News on 17 November 1983, p.2B and 29 May 1997, p.9A.]



Ohio County, Kentucky Pictorial History, Turner Publishing Company, Paducah, KY, 1998, p.44:



Drum and Bugle Corps, American Legion, Daviess Co., Post 9 at the unveiling of the Fort Hartford marker by Elna Hawkins (Moore).

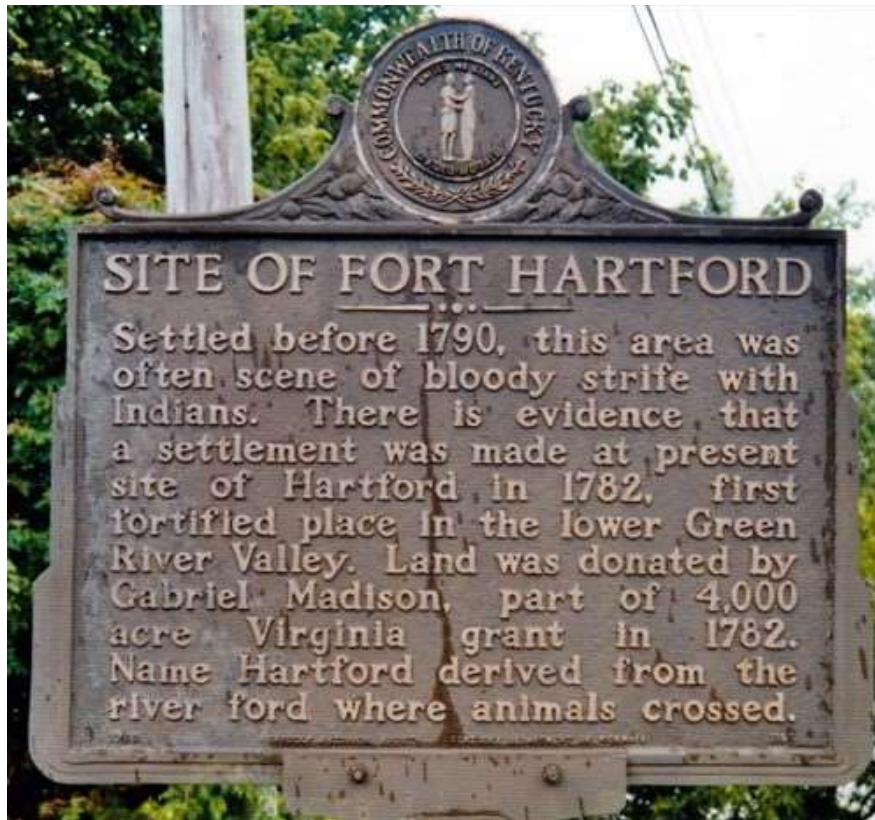


Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 21 August 1996 & 14 December 2000:



*Elna Hawkins Unveiling Fort Hartford Marker
Erected by Ohio Co. Historical Society - Fort Hartford
Chapin D.R. 422 Ohio Co. Post 904 Am. Legion
Hartford, Ky.*

Ceremony Held 65 Years Ago: Mrs. Elna Moore, the former Miss Elna Hawkins, is shown at the unveiling ceremony of the Fort Hartford marker erected by the Ohio County Historical Society, the Fort Hartford Chapter DAR and the Ohio County Post No. 44 American Legion, on December 4, 1932. The marker was removed and restored recently by Bill Wallace, owner of McHenry Brass.



Erected by Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Department of Highways (marker number 1195). Marker is at the south end of bridge over Rough River in Hartford, Ohio County, Kentucky. Marker is on North Main Street (U.S. Highway 231) 0.1 miles north of West Union Street, on the left when traveling north. Inscription. Site of Fort Hartford. Settled before 1790, this area was often scene of bloody strife with Indians. There is evidence that a settlement was made at present site of Hartford in 1782, first fortified place in the lower Green River Valley. Land was donated by Gabriel Madison, part of 4,000 acre Virginia grant in 1782. Name Hartford derived from the river ford where animals crossed.



Fogle's Papers: A History of Ohio County, Kentucky,
McDowell A. Fogle, Ohio County Historical Society, Inc.,
Hartford, KY, 1981, pp.25-26:

Fort Hartford located on the bluff on the south side of Rough River, overlooking the original "Hart" or "hart" ford, was on land then belonging to the original patentee, Gabriel Madison, now the site of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne C. Priest, and, likely, parts of the adjoining property of Mrs. Annie Terry and the Hartford municipal waterworks pumping and purification plant. The land on which Hartford is situated was donated by the public spirited pioneer, Gabriel Madison, on November 3, 1799 when he executed a deed of gift of the site, which, in part, reads as follows:

"Now Know Ye that I, the said Gabriel Madison, for the encouragement, conveniency and benefit of the said town of Hartford, and for other good causes me thereunto moving, do, by these presents, give, grant and convey to the Justices of the said County Court and to their successors, for the use, benefit and advantage of the said town forever, all the land included in the public square of the said town of Hartford, being four acres, together with all and singular the ground contained in the public streets and alleys, as laid down in the general plan of the said town to be forever appropriated to the public use of the said town and to no other use or purpose whatsoever, and I do bind myself, my heirs, &c., the aforesaid premises to the aforesaid Justices and their successors to warrant and forever to defend against all and every person claiming or to claim by, from or under me".

Hartford, as a hamlet or town, was founded at least twenty-six years before it was incorporated. This earliest date of a settlement here, 1782, is based on the statement in Rev. Wendell Rone's "History of the Daviess-McLean County Baptist Association", that the noted pioneer Baptist minister, Rev. William Downs, whose brother, Rev. Thomas Downs, was also one of the "founding fathers" of that denomination in the Green River country, was born in the fort at Hartford in 1782. This statement is, no doubt, based on credible evidence handed down in the families of the two brothers. According to the Joseph and Alexander Barnett saga, epitomized in Miss Mary Barnett's history of her pioneer Ohio county forebears, the date of settlement of Barnett's Station, some three miles from Hartford, is given as 1782-1783. Specifically, family records state that the Barnett brothers began the construction of Barnett's Station or "fort before Christmas 1782, completed it and Joseph moved his family into it in February 1783."



Gabriel Madison
(c1759-1804)

Gabriel Madison, son of John Madison and Agatha Strother and was born about 1759 in what is now Botetourt County, Virginia. He was a second cousin to James Madison (1751-1836), fourth president of the United States.

Gabriel Madison entered the service in 1776. He served as captain and lieutenant with the Virginia forces until 1779 when he retired from the service on account of injuries received in a storm. After recovering to some extent he removed from Hanover, Virginia to the state of Kentucky where he did duty as Colonel of the Militia. He participated in the battle of Blue Licks

where pioneers suffered a bitter defeat and were routed by their Revolutionary War enemies. Captain Caldwell concealed his British and Indian army along the ravines leading from the hilltop to the Licking River. Advancing into this ambush, the Pioneers were outnumbered and forced to flee across the river. A monument memorializing those who died at the Battle of Blue Licks, Kentucky was erected at the Blue Licks state park, established in 1927. The memorial was funded in 1928. One of the names on the monument is Gabriel Madison, who was wounded in the battle but did not die. He frequently engaged in tours against the Indians both before and after peace was declared in 1783. He was also a member of the First Legislature of Kentucky and assisted in framing the state constitution. On 21 January 1783 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace of the Lincoln County, Virginia court, which in 1792 became Lincoln County, KY.

In 1785 he married Miriam Lewis, sister of Anne Lewis and Col. Andrew Lewis Jr. who married Gabriel's siblings Rowland and Elizabeth.

Gabriel Madison is listed in the 1790 tax list of Fayette County, Kentucky – at the time it was Fayette County, Virginia and in 1792 became Fayette County, KY. Gabriel died in Jessamine County, Kentucky in 1804. He was a resident of Jessamine County when it was formed out of Fayette County, KY in 1799. Kentucky Governor, James Garrard, in 1799 appointed Gabriel Madison as one of eleven justices to serve the newly formed county of Jessamine County. The 1799 tax list of Jessamine County lists Gabriel Madison as owning three tracts of land – 400 acres on Elkhorn Creek in Jessamine County, KY, 500 acres on the Big Barren in Warren County, KY and 3,600 acres on Rough Creek in Ohio County, KY. The 1803 Jessamine County tax book list him with the 400 and 3,600 tracts. His widow, Miriam Madison, in the 1804 Jessamine County tax lists was assessed taxes on the same 400 and 3,600 tracts.

His widow in 1843 was granted a pension for two years actual service in the Revolutionary War as lieutenant and captain of Marines, Virginia line.



First car to cross Hartford bridge on U.S. Highway 231 on 15 October 1934 (Schroeter Studio photo – Ohio County, Kentucky Pictorial History, Volume II, Turner Publishing Company, Paducah, KY, 2000, p.86 and “Ohio County History” website, Internet, facebook.com). Fort Hartford was on the bluff overlooking Rough Creek at the southwest end of the Hartford bridge on U.S. Highway 231. The Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Department of Highways erected a historical highway marker at the southwest corner of the Hartford bridge commemorating the site of Fort Hartford. The Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Department of Highways erected another highway marker a few feet away. It has the inscription – “First Bridge. Site of the first covered bridge here, built in 1823, thought to be the first across the Rough River. This was later replaced by another similar one after the decay of the first. Earlier crossings were by ford or ferry. An iron bridge was constructed here, 1875; removed 23 years later to Barnett's Creek. The present bridge was opened to traffic in 1934.”



Replica of a Kentucky pioneer fort