

Old Vienna Sketches

By Jerry Long

c.2025



1818 Kentucky map – Vienna is now Calhoun and Yellow Bank is now Owensboro



**The Kentucky Encyclopedia, John E. Kleber, Editor
(Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992) p.151:**

CALHOUN, the county seat of McLean County, is located on the Green River and KY 81. The town was first laid out in 1785 by Henry Rhoads and called Rhoadsville. Solomon Rhoads, his brother, then built a fort. John Hanley, who took the Rhoads land by lawsuit in 1787, is said to have renamed the town **Fort Vienna**. On February 23, 1849, the town was named in honor of Judge John Calhoun, first circuit judge of Fort Vienna, who also served in the U.S. Congress during 1835-39. The town, incorporated January 7, 1852, became the county seat in 1854 when McLean County was formed. For many years the town of Calhoun was listed as Calhoon, a local spelling. In 1860 the population was 511 and by 1870 it reached 950.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, 2 May 1877, p.1:

FRAGMENTS OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF OHIO COUNTY

By Harrison D. Taylor

Chapter III.

The first log cabin of which we have any proof was built in 1780 on what was called Muddy creek, afterwards Blackford's creek, in consequence of a man of that name building it; and which became notorious in consequence of a man of the name of Cleaver, while with a hunting party, dying there. It seems that hunters and land speculators most usually passed down the Ohio and up the Green river in the hunting and exploring expeditions. It is not certainly known whether the old, town of Vienna or Hartford was first settled, but owing to the convenience of water navigation down the Ohio and up Green river, probably Vienna was the first point where anything like a permanent colony was planted. From an old suit of John Handley against Myers, Chase and John Dorsey's heirs, the following facts are gleaned:

Jacob Myers issued his instructions to Henry Rhodes, Isaac Cox, and Isaac Morrison, dated 23d of February, 1785, authorizing them to lay off a town at the Long Falls on Green river, and grant lots to settlers upon their building cabins, and actually settling on the same; and from an old plan of the town it appeared that they laid off said town containing 172 half acre inn lots, with a public square of more than four acres, and numerous outlots of eight acres each, and that the following persons became settlers of the same. Henry Rhodes, Daniel Rhodes, (senior and junior.) Abram Unsel, Adam Hay, Michael Hay, William Casebear, Nicholas King, Jacob Knight, Thomas Gardner, Henry Hatfield, Thomas Adam Young, James Clark, Daniel McCoy, William Kelley, John Keith, John Hogarth, Henry Grass, Isaac Vantree, John Berry, Elias More, Aaron. Rollings, Benjamin Huff, John Handley, Adam Shepherd and others.

This town which it appears had previously labored under the unpretending name of Rhodesville. now assumed the name of Vienna. How it came to assume so exalted a name is now unknown. Perhaps some quondam, wandering Austrian Count, overflowing with admiration of his royal Empress, Maria Theresa, (who recently tarnished her good name, by joining with Frederic, whose extraordinary strategic duplicity had acquired for him the name of great, and that cruel, soulless monster Catherine, in partitioning proud but prostrate Poland) was for the time being a denizen of this town of forty cabins, and as we Americans have always had an extraordinary admiration for foreign nobility, the settlers may have yielded to him the honor of calling this embryo emporium of the west (as they then no doubt considered it) Vienna, in honor of his Mistress' own capital, and be no doubt would have given the river running by, the classic name of Danube, had not its green, deep waters proved its just title to that given it by the earliest pioneers.

It appears that one of the original proprietors of the lands at Vienna, visited the country in March, 1786 and in a letter of instructions directed to John Handley, whom he appointed his agent, among other matters, inserted the following clause: "As it appears that there is much danger from the Indians in that quarter, and the inhabitants think it dangerous to cultivate their respective outlots, you will give them leave to cultivate the commons, *in common, observing only to kill the heavy timber.*" From the tenor of Mr. Larkin Dorsey's letter of instructions, the following facts may be inferred. First, that the country was much infested with red-skins; second, that the settlers were but slightly indebted to cultivation for support; and lastly, that Mr. Dorsey was no farmer, for even Cuffy would have laughed to scorn the idea of raising corn and potatoes among brambles, bushes and briars, *observing only to kill the heavy timber.*

[Note: The preceding passages also were 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.6-7.)



Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger.

Tri-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 13 January 1885, p.3:

Incompleteness of Kentucky History.
[Louisville Commercial.]

There is a readable letter in the last Owensboro MESSENGER on old Fort Vienna – now Calhoun, McLean county – which, it is claimed, is entitled to rank in age with Boonesboro and Harrodsburg. "At this, point," says the writer, "there was a town, a regular Green-river metropolis, laid off, established and inhabited by a goodly and, in part, by an illustrious company of white settlers a full century since." When a town reaches the age of a hundred years it is time that its history be written. Few towns in Kentucky have had full justice done them in this respect. Consequently one looking over the written history of the State will suppose all of the important early men and events to have belonged to Mercer or Jefferson or Mason county, and that little of interest could have occurred elsewhere. Doubtless Fort Vienna was the scene of pioneer life that was worth recording. Where is the journal of Col. George Croghan, which would give a description of that section before the days of the Revolution? Some of the early settlers must have been brave defenders of their families against the Indians, and many families must have furnished a population for newer counties.

[Ed. note: The first article of the series "Old Vienna Sketches" published prior to 13 January 1885 could not be located. In <https://www.newspapers.com/> online copy of the 10 January 1885 edition of the Tri-Weekly Messenger there is an article that has been removed from page one. This is possibly the missing article.]



Tri-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 22 January 1885, pp.1 & 2:

We publish to-day the second paper of the series of "Old Vienna Sketches," which an accomplished correspondent of the MESSENGER has been unearthing about the capital of McLean. Before he is done the world will learn that the early settlement of Kentucky was not all about Louisville, Harrodsburg, Maysville and Boonesboro. This section of the State was all surveyed between 1780 and 1783, and during that time a permanent and thrifty settlement was established.

OLD VIENNA SKETCHES.

**A SECOND CHAPTER ON THE FAMOUS
GREEN RIVER.**

**Interesting Reminiscences of Early Steam-
boating on the Emerald Stream—
Capt. Vanmeter's "Bracelet."**

(Special correspondence of the Messenger.)
Calhoon, Ky., Jan. 16, 1885.

The theory has been advanced that in a prehistoric age in parts of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Virginia there was an immense basin of water. The Alleghanies were the eastern rim, while the Blue Ridge and Cumberland mountains on the south and Muldraugh's hill held the waters on the west. Finally this western rim suffered a crevasse and the water made its way to the Mississippi. So the Ohio river had its origin.

Green river did not originate in a crevasse. Hence there is room to argue that it is the senior of the two. Green river has its beginning in Lincoln county. Thence it flows through Casey, Taylor, Green, Hart, Edmonson, Warren, Butler, Ohio, Muhlenberg, McLean, Hopkins, Webster, Daviess and Henderson to its junction with the Ohio. Why it did not form an early partnership with the Cumberland, and why the latter did not unite with the Tennessee, and why the syndicate thus formed did not boldly strike westward for the Mississippi, I never could understand. Thus a golden opportunity was lost. In Casey, Cumberland and Monroe part of the waters flow to Green and part to the Cumberland river. Lincoln impartially contributes not only to these two, but gives "Salt river" a fair share. A glance at the streams in Kentucky originating in the Cumberland mountains is suggestive. Licking starts in Floyd and its course is N. N. W. The Kentucky originates in the neighboring county of Perry and its course is nearly due north. The Cumberland, after rising in Harlan, instinctively starts for the "Father of Waters." After reaching Nashville, however, like many another wanderer, it forsakes its Southwestern path to return to the State of its birth. Green river travels westward until its junction with Big Barren, when its general course is changed to northwest, reaching the Ohio after traversing three degrees of latitude.

Among all streams flowing solely through Kentucky soil, Green river is entitled to rank first. It is navigable the whole year for 200 miles of its course. It is divided into shoals or falls and pools. The shoals always mark a fall or produce rapids. These pools, from thirty to fifty miles in length, are of a depth unequalled in inland rivers. One hundred and fifty yards is about the river's

width at the mouth, which is diminished so slowly that it appears almost as wide 100 miles up stream.

The river and its tributaries are largely fed by springs. To this is in part attributed the exceptional purity of its waters. That phosphorescent phenomenon so noticeable at night in the wake of vessels in motion on the large lakes and the ocean, is more nearly approached on this than any other river, attributable to its depth. Except in times of floods and freshets its waters are a translucent emerald. Notwithstanding its depth, or perhaps because of it, its banks are not washed away by its current, as is the case with the Ohio and Mississippi. For the greater part of its course the sycamore, sweet gum, water maple, birch and willow grow to the low water line. When spring has clothed the forest, views might be continually formed whose natural beauty would fairly surpass the historic Rhine.

In the early settlement of the country it was not ordinarily navigable for steamboats, but the canoe, the perogue, the bateau, the keel boat and broad horns served all the purposes of river commerce. Keel boats from New Orleans brought cargoes of sugar, coffee and molasses to the settlements. These were propelled in part by oars, or by the process of "poling," or towing by hand, canal-boat fashion.

In 1820 30 Henry Clay sought to convert Congress to his pet views in favor of internal improvements. Some degree of success crowned his effort. To what length this popular doctrine might have carried him can only be conjectured, since Andrew Jackson happened to reach the Presidency. The glory Clay enjoyed in persuading Congress to pass his internal improvement bills were quite eclipsed by the secret satisfaction Jackson had in vetoing them. Jackson's veto, however, was limited to national measures. Kentucky was Whig, and for Clay and internal improvements. Jackson might veto, but Kentucky would defy him by following Clay. So she took Mr. Clay's path to greatness and glory. She built turnpikes almost everywhere and locked and damned her rivers. By 1836 the State had spent all her money and hard times set in. It must have been a grim satisfaction to Old Hickory to see Mr. Clay – the representative of such an ardent internal improvement constituency turn aside from his pet hobby to introduce and pass a national bankrupt act. Thus locks and dams were built upon Green river.

James R. Skiles is said to have introduced the first steamboat. In 1844 I remember how I saw my first steamboat at lock No. 2, at the then prosperous, but now dismantled and well nigh deserted, village of Rumsey. I was a country boy of six muddy winters. The time was early dawn in summer. Barehead and barefoot, I ran a half mile, the length of the town. I reached the lock and stood watching what was to me the compound tincture of the seven wonders of the world.

It was the old "Gen. Warren." She was a strict member of the old school of high pressure boats. In an evil moment for me she "let off" steam – an operation audible under favorable circumstances from 10 to 20 miles. I went – nor stood on the order of my going. I flew. My yellow, unkempt hair stood erect. The goose flesh on my person was confluent. But to this day I honestly admire the speed I made on the home stretch.

Other old-time boats were the Maj. Barbour, Sally Anderson, Glasgow and Gov. Breathitt. When somewhat over thirty years ago the "Belle Quigley" first ascended the river with one of the modern whistles, until then unknown in all that region, great consternation prevailed. The theories of those that did not know the origin of the unusual sound were varied and ingenious. Some recognized the yell of wild animal, others took it to be the devil himself, while a respectable minority realized that Gabriel and his trumpet had come. It was related of M__ C__ Esq., an old man of sound sense and good wit, that he was roused by the unusual noise, being in a half intoxicated condition from over indulgence the previous evening. He called his body servant,

sleeping in the same room. "Get up, Georgig, get. up; don't you hear the trumpet of Gabriel? Get up, you rascal, and black my boots and saddle my horse, "Brimmer," so that your master may be prepared to meet the Lord in glory, as becomes a gentleman." The statement that the banks of the river are not washed as other rivers is true, but occasional landslides occur. A quarter of an acre or more has been known to slide into the river without disturbing the timber growing on it. There was a period when these slides were so frequent as to interfere with navigation. The timber upon them being the source of trouble, was cut down even with low water mark. If I mistake not, the "H. Bridges" was sunk by a stump on one of these slides about 1856.

Few accidents have attended the navigation of Green river. Those occurring have rarely been attended with fatality. Rival boats have often plied to and fro, but the narrowness of the stream and the frequent recurrence of "locks" render racing impracticable. In ante bellum days I was on one occasion a passenger down stream on the "Bracelet," commanded by Capt. Wm. Vanmeter – dead now – but the prince of gentlemen while he lived. The boat was loaded to the guards with pork in barrels. It was a pleasant boat, and I looked forward to the following two or three days with pleasant anticipation. I was a young man satisfied with my clothes and myself, and there were certain "things" of beauty in the ladies' cabin who promised joy forever if the voyage lasted that long. I was on the point of retiring late of a very dark night, and the dense forest on shore seemed walls of blackness, when the whistle of an approaching boat attracted my attention. I stepped on the guard, and, although the other boat was 200 yards away, the idea of a collision flashed on my mind. In a few seconds sudden short whistles confirmed my apprehensions. It looked very much like we would be cut down. I retreated as far from the scene of danger as possible, and resolved to rescue at least one fair victim from a watery grave by my own gallant efforts. The bow of the other boat struck our "nosing" on the right, just forward of the boiler. The other boat being light, her guard swept our starboard from bow to stern. Stanchions, spars, cook-house, and part of the wheel-house were smashed, and enough pork thrown overboard to maintain the catfish of the river at least a year in utter idleness. As soon as I ascertained that we were not a wreck, I hastened to assure the tender souls aft of their safety. Meanwhile Capt. Vanmeter and the mate delivered spirited stump speeches from the hurricane roof to the officers and crew of the "Union" steamboat, in which all the profanity of the English language was freely and energetically quoted. The remainder of our voyage to Louisville and back was all the more pleasant for the dangers we had past.

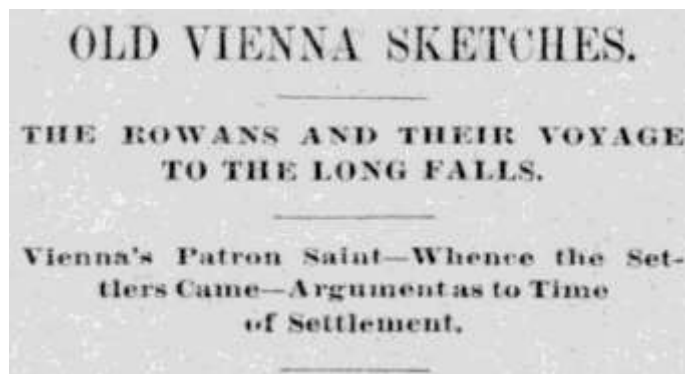
While navigation has been comparatively free from accident, yet have I known that peaceful stream to engulf its victims like an inexorable dragon. There are stages of the water when the current is extremely rapid and difficult to stem. At such times the vicinity of the dams is dangerous for water crafts. In short, to be drawn over the dam is as certain death as to go over Niagara. Collins records that in November, 1838, fifteen men were drowned at once at lock and dam No. 3 – sometimes called the Mud river locks. The circumstances of that tragedy are not related. Many instances have occurred of persons being drawn over the dam at Calhoon and lost. Many have been recorded, as their peril would be in such plain view of the town as generally to attract attention. But how many in the silent night, ignorant of their peril till rescue was hopeless, have gone down to a watery grave about those dams – unseen by human eye – will never be known until the sea gives up its dead. Some marvelous escapes from such perils have occurred. Before the war, Sam O__ kept the ferry at Calhoon, which is a half mile above the dam. Late one night, patronage having ceased, he started across the river to his abode. How he happened to go to sleep in his skiff was never known. People sometimes drank too much in that remote age, but whether Sam had been overtaken by temptation was never disclosed. Anyhow, when the morning sun arose,

Sam was missing and so was his skiff. The grave apprehensions that arose for his safety were soon dispelled by his return. He could not explain how he got into the skiff, but when he awoke he found himself in it, peacefully floating down stream a few miles below. His craft had gone over the dam, having a fall of twenty-five feet or more at an angle of 45 degrees and safely past the dangerous undertow and whirling eddies without disturbing his slumbers.

[Ed. Note: The Messenger did not report the name of the author of the 3-part article, “Old Vienna Sketches”, that was published in the Tri-Weekly Messenger on 22 January 1885, 12 February 1885 and 28 March 1885. McLean County author and historian, Ken Ward, in his column, “Meandering through McLean” published in the McLean County News, on 12 August 1976 (p.7) reported that the article, “Old Vienna Sketches”, was written by Fernander May. At the time the article was written May was a correspondent for the Owensboro Messenger newspaper. He later was editor of a McLean County newspaper. May was identified as the author of an earlier article, “M’Lean and Her Capital: A Description of Our Neighboring County and Town. Fernander May Writes up Some Historical Facts Concerning McLean County and Calhoun, and Mentions Some Enterprising Merchants,” published in the Owensboro Messenger, 25 March 1884 (p.4). Fernander May (1858-1914) was buried in the Calhoun Cemetery in McLean County, KY.]



Tri-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 12 February 1885, p.4



(Special Correspondence of the Messenger)

Calhoon, Ky., Feb. 9, 1885 – The first attempt of white men to acquire title to this Green river section of country was in 1775. Col. Richard Henderson and his associates entered into a treaty with the Cherokees at Wataga, agreeing to give L10,000 for all that territory bounded on the west by the Cumberland river, north by the Ohio, east by the Kentucky river and Cumberland mountains. Unluckily for this enterprise, Lord Dunmore, Governor of the colony of Virginia, by proclamation, forbade all such purchases.

In 1778 Virginia compensated Henderson & Co. for their trouble and expense by a grant of 200,000 acres below the mouth of Green river, lying within the present limits of Henderson county. Subsequently the country in the region of the Long Falls was surveyed and entered by various parties, the patentees mostly residing in Virginia and Maryland. These absent patentees were represented by surveyors who usually made the surveys for a certain share of the lands. Many of these surveyors laid the foundations of their fortunes in this way. Not only were these first

surveyors skilled in the use of the compass, but they were also good judges of land – its quality and prospective value. Of this respectable class was Jacob Myers, a German. He was the first to enter a large body of land including the present town of Calhoun. This was between 1780 and 1784 – certainly as early as the latter year. By his authority a town was laid off, of which more will be said hereafter. Myers lived in a boundless sort of territory in the eastern part of the State, then called Lincoln county. He was a thrifty man and seems to have coveted the whole State. He visited all the accessible portions, and entered lands wherever he could find a vacant acre. Collins has this of him :

"The only fortification or station in early times in what is now Bath county was a block-house in 1786 on the old State ore bank, where Jacob Myers afterwards erected the slate iron furnace, in which the furnace hands took refuge on the approach of the Indians." (2 Hist. Ky. 47).

Subsequently Myers left lands and furnace and turned steamboatman. He established the first line of Ohio river boats from Cincinnati to Pittsburg in 1793. This he did, according to his own disinterested testimony, "influenced by a love of philanthropy and a desire of being serviceable to the public." The spirit of Myers still hovers above, far above, the Cincinnati marine, and "if the modern navigator in that service has a fault, it is the indiscreet "love of philanthropy."

Steamboating in those days was carried on conditions requiring the captain and crew to depend more on providence than is done by modern skippers. Myers' poster explains this:

"No danger need be apprehended from the enemy, as every person on board will be under cover made proof against rifle or musquet balls, and post-holes for firing oil. Each boat is armed with six pieces carrying a ____nd (?) ball; also a number of good musquets and amply supplied with ammunition, strongly manned with choice hands, and the masters of approved knowledge. A separate cabin is partitioned off for accommodating ladies on their passage. Conveniences are constructed so as to render landing unnecessary, as it might at times be attended with danger."

There is more of this advertisement (see 2 Collins' Hist. 115), but the above is sufficient to show what kind of a patron saint "Old Vienna" had. He neglected the town he founded. The town reciprocated by forgetting him. It would long since have forgotten his name, except that it is worn by a poor miserable creek that enters Green river just beyond the eastern limits of "Old Vienna's" present heir at law. It is probable that a "settlement" at Vienna preceded any survey, of which the writer has information. It is stated by Collins (2 vol., Hist. of Ky , 19), that Hardinsburg was laid out as a town in 1782. He says it was originally a station – implying that the station preceded the laying out of the town by some period. The station at Hartford doubtless had an origin equally early. H. B. Taylor, Esq., of Hartford, in his historical sketches of Ohio County, published some years ago, fixes the settlement at Hartford at a period at least as early as 1782. There is reason to believe that these settlements were made a year or so earlier than the above date. It has been assumed that the settlement at Hartford preceded that at Vienna. It was stated as a fact by the late Hon. G. W. Triplett that the settlement Vienna originated in this way: The fort at Hartford were frequently attacked by marauding bands of Indians. It was discovered that these Indians habitually came from the mouth of Green river, crossing it at the Long Falls. Prior to the erection of locks and dams, Green river could be crossed almost dry shod at these falls, though elsewhere (except in times of high water), by stepping from rock to rock in the rapids. To prevent these incursions or cut off retreat the fort or block house at Vienna was projected and settled by emigrants from Hartford. On what date Judge Triplett's theory is based is not known.

There is, however, strong reason to urge that the settlement at Vienna was as early as that at Hartford or Hardinsburg. The pioneers were partial to travel by water craft where practicable. Vehicles were unknown. Horses were scarce. Roads did not exist. This region was for the most

part a brake, and when out of the cane brake the tangled briers, vines and underbrush were little short of those jungles that frowned on Stanley from the shores of the Congo river. By means of the simplest water craft the settler could easily transport himself and family and household stuff to eligible points for settlement along the navigable streams. That the adventurous pioneers at the falls of the Ohio had this view is evident. Before 1780 they had voyaged to the mouth of Salt river and up that stream. That they should have hesitated to go further down the Ohio is utterly inconsistent with the hardihood that ever characterized the pioneer Kentuckian. Hence it seems not improbable that adventurous spirits had ascended Green river as far as the Long Falls in the earliest times and there possibly locating.

But these chances of Vienna having been first settled by emigrants ascending Green river are probably less than those that it was settled by those descending from the early forts on its head waters. Pitman's station, in the limits of what is now Green county, and also Skagg's station, were founded in 1779 or 1780. According to Filson's map (published in 1784), compiled from information derived from Daniel Boone and other pioneers, several salt licks were located on or near the river, some high up and others as low down as Rough creek. From like information he represents the river in his map, with many of its important tributaries, giving their names. While the map is necessarily imperfect – not being based on actual surveys – yet its approximation to correctness indicates a knowledge of the country inconsistent with this being the *terra incognita* it is ordinarily deemed to have been at that early day. The argument is very strong that the river above the Long Falls had been so frequently navigated before that time as that it and its tributaries had become matters of familiar knowledge. The fame of the Long Falls had reached the settlement at the falls of the Ohio before the spring of 1784. The block house or fort must have been already built and occupied. This seems a fair deduction from the voyage of the Rowans thither in April, 1784. The following account of that voyage is compiled from Collins:

"In the latter part of April, 1784, William Rowan, father of the late Hon. John Rowan, of Louisville, set out with his family, accompanied by five other families, from the falls of the Ohio to the Little Falls of Green river. They travelled in two flat boats, in one of which were cattle, in the other the families. The intention was to descend the Ohio to the mouth of Green river and then ascend the latter. About 10 o'clock one night the boats were gliding down amid stream, after having made one hundred miles of the journey, unconscious of any enemy or danger. Suddenly the yelling of Indians were heard, some two or three miles below, on the northern shore of the Ohio. The boats had not floated far when a number of fires were seen. The yelling continued, and it was concluded that the Indians had captured a boat which had passed them about midday, and were massacring their captives. Rowan's boats were lashed, and all practicable arrangements made for defense. The seven men of the party were posted to resist attack. The boats made the Kentucky shore as noiselessly as possible – yet dared not approach too closely lest Indians should be there also. The Indian fires were extended half a mile or more. When the boats arrived opposite the center of this line they were discovered and ordered to come to. The boats did not reply. The yelling savages ran to their canoes and commenced pursuit. On the boats all was silent. The Indians approached within one hundred yards. It was apprehended that they would attempt boarding the boats. Mrs. Rowan collected the axes and silently placed one beside each man. A hatchet she retained for her own use. The pursuit continued nearly three miles, when it was abandoned, to the great relief of the voyagers. Reaching Yellow Banks (now Owensboro), a landing was made on the northern shore. Andrew Rowan started into the woods with a loaded gun, but without ammunition – seeking amusement rather than game. During his absence the boat's people discovered Indian signs and hastened away. When Andrew returned he discovered his dilemma. He thereupon struck out for

Vincennes one hundred miles distant. He soon lost his way in the trackless forest, and, after three days' wandering, he laid down, exhausted, to die. Hearing the report of a gun, he arose and walked in that direction. An Indian seeing him, raised his gun to fire, when Rowan turned the butt, of his gun. The Indian responded similarly. Moved by compassion the Indian took him to his wigwam and treated him with the kindest hospitality. When strong enough the Indian guided him to Vincennes. There Rowan offered him \$300 to reward him for his generosity, which the Indian declined. He finally accepted a blanket, and, wrapping it around him, said with feeling: 'When I wrap myself in it I will think of you.' "

In the spring of 1784, when John Rowan was eleven years old, his father with five other families made a settlement at the Long Falls of Green river, one hundred miles, says Collins, from any white settlement. (2 Hist. Ky., 663.) This is incorrect. Hartford and Barnett's station were within less than thirty miles, while Hardinsburg, Elizabethtown and Bardstown were within one hundred miles and all settled before 1784. At that period the Vienna region was the resort of a band of Shawnee Indians, who came thither hunting game, and many were the mortal encounters between the settler and the savages.



Tri-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 28 March 1885, p.1:



Calhoon. Ky.. March 25. 1885. — The packet boat that twice a week passes down Green river approaches the modern town of Calhoon from the northeast. For two miles or more up stream the old time court-house — now the "college" — and the bold hill on which it stands constitute a prominent land mark. As the town is neared the river gently winds to the west. West-wardly it runs for a mile, passing the town and the falls and the rapids be low. The direction is again to the northwest, entering where the river contracts its width, but increases its depth, called in "Old Vienna" days the "Long Narrows."

At the present ferry landing a ravine enters the river, spanned by an earthen embankment, familiarly called by the natives "the dirt bridge." Through that ravine formerly wound a considerable stream, which suddenly became formidable after violent showers. The "dirt bridge" and the iconoclastic hand of improvement has left scarce a trace of that old time stream. Beyond the ravine the ascent of the hill begins, hardly perceptible at first, but growing more decided. From the river the ascent is 30 degrees naturally, but human hands have modified this by a road. Seventy or eighty feet to the highest altitude is about the measurement. The hill continues parallel to the river till within a few hundred yards of Long Falls creek, that coming due south entering Green

river on the falls. The hill sweeps around from the river to the north, leaving a strip of low land between it and the creek. Along the crest of this hill the land runs off in a level plateau. As, however, the plateau approaches the east again, it is intersected by ravines that enter that one channel by the "dirt bridge." One of these ravines separates the hill fronting the river from one in the rear, that may be termed the second hill. In former days, before the erection of pleasant homes upon it, it was known as "Graveyard hill." Within forty years it was used for interment, but not of late. A few rickety grave stones are protesting in an infirm, silent and inefficient way against encroachment on the houses of the dead. A few generations hence will doubtless dig there for "Indian bones."

When, two scores of years ago, old Johnny C___w, after a life of indolent indulgence, paid the debt of nature, a wake was held at the ferry house. The mourners drank deeply. The appointed hour for the funeral came. The remains were placed upon a slide, and one affectionate nephew, Bob D___n, too drunk to walk, straddled the coffin. As the procession proceeded Bob's mind not unnaturally turned to future things. "Cousin Wess," said he to a mourner able to walk, "Cousin Wess, where do you reckon Uncle Johnny is now?" "Well," answered Wesley, "Uncle Johnny was a mighty good man, except, may be, he loved his dram a little too well; but I think Uncle Johnny is in heaven." "I hope he is," responded the philosopher on the coffin, "but, if he is, I don't see any use of keepin' up a hell." Uncle Johnny reposes in the graveyard, awaiting the trump of resurrection, or the virtuoso who shall by and by hunt "Indian bones."

This graveyard hill has been thus emphasized, because tradition says that upon it stood Fort Vienna. A friend who pointed out its foundation once on a time (he will pardon the reference) was mistaken as to that particular indentation. Anciently there was a brick kiln near that spot. It was an excavation about that which the writer's friend had discovered.

Jacob Myers had obtained title to the land of which the topography has above been given. He resolved to build a town. So February 23, 1785, he issued what he termed his proclamation to certain leading settlers there. The following is an extract from it: "To Henry Rhoads, Isaac Cox, Isaac Morrison, &c." "You are hereby requested and authorized to lay off from my tract of land, situated at the Long falls of Green river, and from each part thereof as you judge most convenient, the quantity of two thousand acres to be by you laid out into convenient streets and in lots of half an acre and out lots of eight acres and five acres each." "The terms which you are authorized to propose to those who wish to become settlers in this town are as follows: All persons who build an house or cabin, sixteen feet square by or before the first of August next, provided their number does not exceed fifty, shall have one in lot of half an acre and an out lot of eight acres – thirty-two of which lots are to be at the choice of the said settlers, or in such other way as you may direct. Those taking an in lot and out lot and building thereon by the time named, shall be entitled to the in lot and out lot on paying the proprietor three pounds."

John Handley as surveyor laid on and made a plat of the proposed town. That plat "all tattered and torn" lies before the writer. The town laid south of the ravine running to the river. One hundred and seventy-two half acre lots were laid off. The first street on the river east and west was "Water." First, Second, Third and Fourth street ran parallel with "Water." The cross streets beginning on the east, "Elizabeth," "John," "Market" and one unknown – being obliterated. The numbers of the lots began with No. 1 at the southeast corner of the town and lots 1-18 fronted the river. A public square was laid off one square from the river and was intersected by Second and Market streets. In addition to the streets, the two acre squares were divided into four equal parts by alleys. In the rear of these lots were the "out lots" numbered 1-49.

The town was called "Rhoadsville." By the 1st of August, 1785, the following "adventurers" had chosen lots and complied with the terms proposed: Henry Rhoads, Daniel Rhoads, Abraham Unsel, Adam Hay, Michael Hay, William Casebier, Nicholas King, Daniel Rhoads, Jr., Jacob Knight, Thomas Gardner, Henry Hershfield, Nicholas Moieston, George C. Briscoe, Thomas Newman. John Prottsman, John Paul, Adam Young, James Clark. Daniel McCoy, Thomas Gilliland, William Kelly, John Keith, John Bozarth, Henry Gross, Isaac Vertresse, John Sigwalt, John Berry, I. Elias Moore, Aaron Rollings, Benjamin Huff, Daniel Rhoads, Sr., Daniel Loud, John Handley.

Henry Rhoads, Isaac Cox and Isaac Morrison were the trustees. These were authorized to give certificates on which Jacob Myers would convey title. Something will be said later of these titles and how they passed.

The ferry was located on the west of the ravine instead of the east as now. Daniel Rhoads owned the ferry and ferry rights, and claimed some land on the east of and at the mouth of the ravine – about five acres. The value of the ferry was at that day prospective. A canoe was perhaps the only craft for transportation. Horses were few and could swim. Vehicles were unknown.

The most important man of this community was Henry Rhoads. Like many of his coadventurers, he was a native of Pennsylvania. He had been a man above the common run before emigrating to the West. He was a member of the Colonial Legislature of Pennsylvania when independence was declared. Afterwards emigrating to Kentucky he was always a leading citizen. He was a representative from Ohio and Muhlenberg in the Kentucky Legislature in 1800. The subsequent events of his life and the time of his death are unknown to the writer. Cessna Jackson, who died before the late war in McLean county, was his grandson. The late Christopher D. Jackson, of Daviess county, was another grandson. Col. Q. C. Shanks, of Hartford, is a lineal descendant. A number of the name in McLean and Muhlenberg trace their lineage to these Pennsylvania Rhoads. Daniel was a brother of Henry.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 13 September 1928, p.5:

D. A. R. BOULDER NOW COMPLETED

To Be Unveiled With Special Ceremonies At Calhoun Afternoon Oct. 11.

The General Evan Shelby chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will unveil a boulder marking the site of old Fort Vienna the afternoon of October 11, at Calhoun, with appropriate ceremonies. George Mischel & Sons, 412 East Second street, have donated the boulder and completed the inscription yesterday. It is a very handsome piece of work, made of Green river bleaching stone. It stands about four feet high and will be placed on a base.

The inscription, with the D. A. R. emblem used, reads: "This boulder marks the site of Fort Vienna, which was founded 1784 or earlier, to repel attack on settlers by the Indians. Corn planted by John Hays, 1776." Below the D. A. R. emblem – "Erected by tr> General Evan Shelby chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1928."

The boulder will be on display at the Main street plant, until about October 1, when it will be taken to Calhoun and erected on a site donated for this purpose by R. Alexander.

The "corn planted by John Hays, 1776" is the earliest recorded date in history for this settlement, hence it was included in the marker inscription.

[See also articles: "The Pocket Periscope", by Thomas James de la Hunt, Courier and Journal, Evansville, IN, 19 August 1928, p.6 and "Historian Tells of Fort Vienna in Redskin Days: General Shelby D.A.R. Chapter To Mark Site, Now Calhoun, October 11, With Pageant", Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 26 August 1928, pp.1B & 3B.]



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 12 October 1928, p.2:

M'LEAN COUNTY FAIR OPENS FOR 3-DAY PROGRAM

**D. A. R. Holds Unveiling of Marker, With Ceremonies At Vienna Site;
Big Crowd Present.**

Calhoun, Ky., Oct. 11. – Calhoun was beautifully decorated today for the opening of the fourth annual county fair, and the patriotic program put on this afternoon by the General Evan Shelby chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, of Owensboro, the opening day of the fair. The chapter unveiled a marker for the site of old Fort Vienna, with ceremonies immediately after a parade of some thirty or more floats representing a bit of history of McLean county. The D. A. R. float represented the life of General Evan Shelby, for whom the chapter was named. Some very elaborate floats were included in the parade and prizes awarded after being reviewed.

Judges were Mesdames John Gilmore, Q. L. Reno, Freeman Little, W. E. Couty and Miss Cora Webb.

Glover Cary Presides

Glover H. Cary, formerly of Calhoun, now commonwealth's attorney, was master of ceremonies for the unveiling program. Congressman D. H. Kincheloe, also a former resident, gave an address on "McLean County Pioneers," and R. C. Thruston Ballard, Louisville, honorary president general of the Sons of the American Revolution and president of the Filson club, spoke on "The Value of Historical Markers."

Holloway Hawes, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Bright Hawes, unveiled the boulder. Mrs. W. H. Brannon, Jr., regent of the D. A. R., presented the marker to Calhoun, and it was received by Mayor James Epley. The site was deeded by R. Alexander, The boulder was given by George Mischel & Sons, of Owensboro.



**THE HISTORY QUARTERLY
of THE FILSON CLUB**

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LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, APRIL, 1929

No. 3

**The History Quarterly of the Filson Club, Vol. 3, April 1929,
No. 3 (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton & Company) pp.105-112:**

The Beginning of Old Vienna, Now Calhoun in McLean County,

By Alvin L. Prichard

When the General Evan Shelby Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, on October 11, 1928, dedicated a marker commemorating the founding of Fort Vienna, or Vienna Station, now Calhoun in McLean County, it revived interest in the history of the early posts along lower Green River. Mrs. Nancy Lampton Allen's account of the erection of this marker is published in the January number of THE HISTORY QUARTERLY. Mrs. G. Bright Hawes, of Maceo, Daviess County, has in her possession some original papers throwing valuable light on the early settlement of Vienna. Of these she has kindly allowed The Filson Club to make photostat copies for the Club's archives.

At least one historian, Harrison D. Taylor, of Hartford, Ohio County,

[footnote 1 - *Ohio County, Kentucky, in the Olden Days*, a series of old newspaper sketches of fragmentary history, by Harrison D. Taylor, prepared for publication in book form by his granddaughter, Mrs. Mary Taylor Logan. (Louisville, 1926,) These sketches were published in the local papers in 1857 and again in 1877. The second and third chapters contain material on old Vienna.]

evidently had access to some of these papers many years ago, but as his work was first published in a newspaper without the footnotes he would otherwise have used, he did not identify his authorities, and those on old Vienna were lost again to future investigators until recently when Mrs. Hawes showed them to The Filson Club. Anyone searching for the beginnings of the lower Green River country will find these papers full of interesting data. The following is an attempt to present, in a general way, the contents of the Hawes documents on Old Vienna.

In February, 1780, Jacob Myers, a land speculator: acquired large bodies of land around the Falls of Green River,

[footnote 2 - The certificate upon which the Vienna land seems to have been issued was based on a 400-acre claim filed by Jacob Myers, February 8, 1780, before the Virginia Land Commissioners of the District of Kentucky, then setting at Harrodsburg. Myers had purchased this 400-acre claim of "James Hays, heir at law of John Hays" who, as set forth in the land certificate, had raised a crop of corn "in the year 1776" on land lying on "the north side of Green River adjoining the falls of said river." By the same certificate Myers was also granted "the pre-eruption of 1000 acres adjoining" the Hays claim. This certificate, consisting of about one hundred words, appears in "Certificate Book" published in *The Register* of the Kentucky State Historical Society, September, 1923, p.184.

The Jacob Myers warrants are tabulated in W. H. Jillson's *Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds*, Filson Club Publications No. 34 (1926), pp. 256, 261-264. It may be well to add that the Falls of Green River is thus commented on in a footnote in Taylors' *Ohio County*: "Calhoun was never called Long Falls but was frequently spoken of as The Settlement at Long Falls. At one time there was a long falls in Green River, at Calhoun, near the mouth of a little stream. This falls made it possible, at times, to walk across Green River at that point, but with the erection of locks and dams in 1834 the falls were obliterated." In 1854, or earlier, the name of old Vienna was changed to Calhoun, in honor of Judge John Calhoun.]

a frontier section at that time within the bounds of what was then Jefferson County. On February 23, 1785, Myers issued a proclamation appointing Henry Rhoads, Isaac Cox, Jr., and Isaac Morrison trustees to lay out two thousand acres at the Falls for the establishment of a town. It is probable that the three men (or one or two of them) were already on the ground and familiar with it, for Judge Lucius P. Little, of Owensboro, an authority on the Green River country, has stated that Henry Rhoads first located his claim for land at the site of the present town of Calhoun (Vienna) in 1784.

[footnote 3 - *Ben Hardin: His Times and Contemporaries 1784-1852*, by Judge Lucius P. Little. (Louisville, 1887.) See also *History of Kentucky*, by Richard H. Collins (Covington, 1882), under McLean County, in Vol. 2., and *History of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky*, by Otto A. Rothert (Louisville, 1913).]

Henry Rhoads, however, seems to have recognized the Myers title, for, on the day of the proclamation, Myers executed his bond to him for ten acres adjoining and on the upper side of the town, which land was laid off to Rhoads July 18, 1785.

The town was laid out in 172 in-lots of one-half acre each, and 50 out-lots of eight acres and five acres each, respectively. To encourage settlement, the first fifty persons to build a house or cabin at least sixteen feet square by August 1, 1785, were to have free an in-lot and an eight-acre out-lot, thirty-two lots being at the choice of the settlers. Those persons who complied with the building requirement by August 1, 1786, were to have an in-lot and a five-acre out-lot by paying £3 to the proprietors.

The town thus established was called Rhoadsville, as the earliest certificate among the Hawes papers, dated July 20, 1785, reads:

"We the subscribers two of the trustees for the town of Rhoadsville do hereby Certify that Abraham Unsell is intituled to An inlot No. 6 in the town aforesaid On Account of building a Cabbin thereon at least sixteen feet Square and becoming an Actual Settler before the first day of August 1785 And also to an Out-lot of Eight Acres No. 15 And do hereby Require that the proprietor of said town Grant a Deed to the said Abraham Unsell Accordingly Given under Our hands this 20th July 1785.

Henry Rhoads, John Handley"

In March, 1786, or earlier, the name was changed to Vienna, according to one of the letters. An interesting suggestion as to the reason for the change appears in Taylor's *Ohio County*.

Following Jacob Myers' proclamation a number of settlers flocked into the town and took up their free lots. If all of them complied with the building proviso, the town must have presented a fairly populous appearance. Since all the names of the original Vienna settlers have not been published heretofore, we give the complete list of them and the numbers of the lots assigned to each man, as recorded in the petition in chancery, John Handley plaintiff:

[footnote 4 - Taylor records many of these names in his *Ohio County*. He gives Unsel as Undel, Bozrath as Hogarth, and Virtuse as Vantrace. Handley gives Birtrose as another spelling of the last named. Malyton may be Malston. The penmanship in all cases is far from good, and therefore some names appearing on the old document are subject to more than one transcription.]

Name	In-lot No.	Out-lot No.	Name	In-lot No.	Out-lot No.
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Henry Rhoads	3	30	James Clark	22	45
Daniel Rhoads	98	6	Daniel McCoy	106	40
Abraham Unsel	6	15	Thomas Gillaland	11	...
Adam Hay	48	23	William Kelly	42	18
Michael Hay	43	31	John Keith	16	11
Wm Casebear	49	8	John Bozarth	92	35
Nicholas King	23	2	Henry Grass	78	44
Daniel Rhoads	4	19	Isaac Virtuse	28	...
Jacob Knight	2	16	John Sigwalt	177	...
Thomas Gardner	84	12	John Berry	120
Henry Hershfield	96	32	J. Elias Moore	152	...
Nicholas Malyton	44	24	Aaron Rollins	124	...
George C. Briscoe		Benjamin Huff	12	...
Thomas Newman	50	17	Daniel Rhoads	4	19
John Bratsman	16	38	Daniel Loud heirs	5	20
John Paul	158	4	John Handley	10	...
Adam Young	29	25			

The John Handley who appears as an original settler and a trustee of the town so early as July 20, 1785, rapidly became the dominant figure in its affairs. It seems that, while Jacob Myers had the legal title to the town-site, he owned only one-third of it, the remaining two-thirds being owned by Thomas Dorsey, John Dorsey, and Samuel Chase, of Maryland. Some time in the spring of 1786 Larkin Dorsey, son of John Dorsey, came to Kentucky as agent for the other proprietors, who were greatly dissatisfied with Myers' management. They complained that, unless he relinquished control, it would speedily dwindle to nothing. Accordingly, a compromise agreement was reached by which the area for the town was reduced to 1,200 acres instead of the original 2,000, and Myers conveyed his title to Dorsey, with a bond for receiving back his one-third of the 1,200 acres and for the carrying out of his agreements with the settlers.

On March 29, 1786, Larkin Dorsey, who was then at Bardstown, wrote Handley, giving him a power of attorney to "Superintended Direct & manage the Settlement of the town of Vienna on Green River (Known by Rhoadsville)." At this time a number of settlers apparently had moved away after taking out their land, and Handley was directed to advertise that such action was contrary to the spirit of the grant and the lots were subject to forfeiture unless these owners became residents by October 1, 1786. Handley was further directed to reserve the "six out-lots"

[footnote 5 - It is probable that in-lots were meant instead of "out-lots." Dorsey had erased and rewritten part of this sentence; he could hardly have intended to say out-lots.]

fronting the river and all unappropriated lots surrounding the public square of four acres, and to lay off no lots nearer to the river than three-quarters of a mile. The price of land was raised to £6 for an in-lot and a five-acre out-lot.

A plat of the in-lots and out-lots was prepared, on a scale of 400 feet to the inch, and kept in Handley's possession. The out-lot plat is roughly nineteen inches square, with one quarter missing, but the in-lot plat fits in this space very closely. It is probable, therefore, that both plats were originally laid out on the same paper. The draftsman evidently had some difficulty in determining his scale, for on the out-lot plat are several erased lines where he tried out various figures to reach the not entirely accurate conclusion that "209 feet Square makes 161 Square feet

More than One Acre." Although some of the out-lots were only five acres, all are laid out of equal size with the eight-acre lots. All of the out-lots mentioned by number in these papers are eight-acre lots. Water Street fronted the river, and parallel to it were First, Second, Third, and Fourth streets. Market, John, Elizabeth, and another, whose name is obliterated, ran at right angles to the numbered streets. Market and Second were the widest, and surrounding their intersection was a four-acre public square.

Handley seems to have had great faith in the future of Vienna, for, while he was selling lots, he was also purchasing them from other settlers. Sometime after April 24, 1786, he bought lots from John Sigwalt; on May 10, 1786, from Abraham Unsell; May 2, 1787, from John Owens; November 2, 1790, he bought out-lot 19 from Daniel Rhoads; and December 3, 1790, Christopher Beeler sold lot 8 and an out-lot to him for £4 5/. Eventually he acquired all of the lots, as will be noticed presently.

The settlers of Vienna were subjected to sporadic Indian raids. We have no record of their seriousness, except one unsuccessful siege mentioned in Taylor's *Ohio County*, but Larkin Dorsey on March 29, 1786, observes: "As it appears there is much danger from the Indians in that quarter and the Inhabitants think it Dangerous to Cultivate there Respective out-lots you will Give them leave to Cultivate the Commons in Common, Observing Only to Kill the heavy Timber." These commons appear to have extended between the block north of Fourth Street and the out-lot section, also east of the block along Elizabeth Street.

For protection against their enemies the Vienna pioneers seem to have made a distinct departure from the conventional type of early fort. There is a ridge or bluff along the river front near Water Street, which Hon. Ben F. Landrum, of Calhoun, who died early in October, 1928, recalls as the site of the Vienna fort. On November 11, 1924, he made an interesting deposition, stating that he was born in 1846 near the present Calhoun and remembered the old fort as a boy. The ridge curved so as to make a rock formation on three sides of it, leaving the river on the fourth. Landrum says that the settlers dug some fourteen tunnels back under the hill and that they were ten to twenty feet in length. He explains that: "This rock formation prevented the Indians from gaining access to the Fort because the tunnels were under the rock and they could not throw arrows or anything into the Fort from the top of the ridge or Hill."

The proprietors did not expect Indian raids to depopulate the town; they had great hopes of Vienna becoming a manufacturing city. November 3, 1787, Thomas Dorsey, of Elk Ridge, Maryland, wrote Handley that he had acquired John Dorsey's title and was sending a Mr. Even Gaither to inspect the land with a view to establishing an iron works there, if ore were discovered nearby. No such manufacturing was started, then or thereafter. Settlers, after building their cabins, were still leaving, and on April 12, 1788, Handley wrote Dorsey for an interpretation of Myers' agreement to give them a clear deed in fee simple upon the erection of such cabins. In reply Dorsey wrote November 20, 1788, that lands would be forfeited if the houses were not kept tenanted. Soon afterward Thomas Dorsey died and his title passed to his widow, Elizabeth, and his son, Archibald. Archibald wrote Handley November 9, 1791, that he expected to visit Kentucky shortly; he said: "The Inhabitants of Vienna may make themselves perfectly easy until that period. Do assure them from me that every man's claim shall be canvassed then: with the utmost impartiality and adjusted on the strictest principles of Justice according to the plans on which the Settlement of the town was originally founded." This seems to indicate that distribution of the land was still in a state of confusion.

In the meantime Handley entered into an agreement with Jacob Myers by which he acquired the latter's one-third interest in the 1,200 acres. He also acquired all the interests of the original thirty-odd settlers, as well as the ten acres laid out to Henry Rhoads.

Disagreements at length arose between Handley and the two Dorseys in Maryland. Some time after 1798

[footnote 6 - No date is given on the old copy of Handley's bill in chancery now in the possession of Mrs. Hawes. The suit was brought in the Ohio Circuit Court. Ohio County was not created until December 17 1798, to be effective after July, 1799. (Littell's *Laws of Kentucky*, printed for William Hunter, Frankfort, 1810, Vol. II, p.208. Also Taylor's *Ohio County*, p.15.) Internal evidence in the bill places the date after 1794.]

Handley brought a suit in chancery against Mrs. Elizabeth Dorsey and her son, Archibald, setting forth the whole land situation and claiming they were "Endeavoring to Cheat and Defraud Your Orator in the premisses herein above set forth." He named the original lot-holders as co-defendants, and from his bill it appears that almost half were at that time nonresidents of Kentucky. He asked for all the lots as previously listed, Myers' one-third share of the 1,200 acres, the ten acres assigned from Henry Rhoads, and other proper relief.

Handley won his suit eventually. The final solution of the tangled land questions arising may possibly be found by search in court records. The fact that anything definite can be known concerning the settlement of Vienna is due to the interest of Judge Lucius P. Little and his daughter, Mrs. G. Bright Hawes, descendants of John Handley.

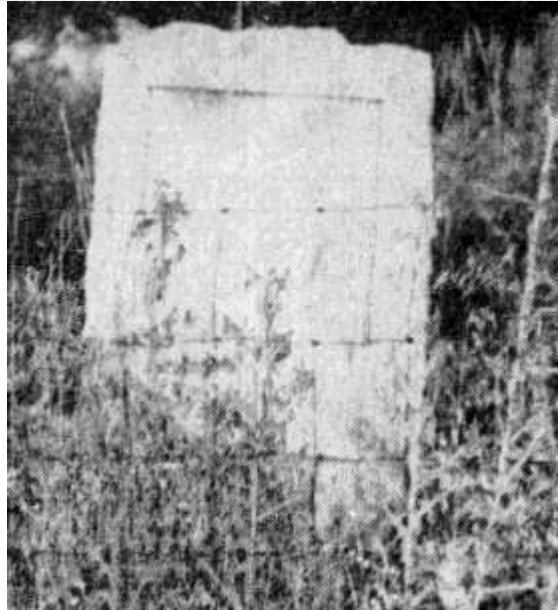
The following is a list of the photostatic copies of papers relating to the founding of Vienna and now in the archives of The Filson Club. These copies, as already stated, are from the originals owned by Mrs. Hawes. The photostatic copies comprise twenty-three sheets, here temporarily classified into thirteen parts:

1. Plat of in-lots and out-lots, photostatted together.
2. Plat of in-lots.
3. Back of in-lot plat.
4. Plat of out-lots.
5. July 20, 1785: Certificate of title for in-lot 6 and out-lot 15 to Abraham Unsel, by Henry Rhoads and John Handley, Trustees. May 2, 1787: Receipt to John Handley for in-lot 7 and out-lot payments, signed by John Owens.
6. March 29, 1786, Bardstown: Larkin Dorsey to John Handley.
7. April 24, 1786: Assignment of title of in-lot 6 and out-lot 15 to John Sigwalt. December 3, 1790: Bill of sale of in-lot 8 and out-lot to John Handley, by Christopher Beeler.
8. May 10, 1786: Receipt for payment for in-lot 5 and out-lot to John Handley, signed by Abraham Unsel. October 25, 1786: Assignment of title of in-lot 142, in-lot 79, in-lot 23, and several out-lots to John Sigwalt by Abraham Unsel.
9. November 3, 1787, Elk Ridge, Maryland: Thomas Dorsey to John Handley.
10. March 20, 1787: Certificate of title to in-lot 1 and out-lot, by John Handley. November 2, 1790: Daniel Rhoads' bill of sale to John Handley for out-lot 19.
11. November 20, 1788, Elk Ridge, Maryland: Thomas Dorsey to John Handley.
12. November 9, 1791, Baltimore: Archibald Dorsey to John Handley.
13. Petition in chancery, John Handley, Plaintiff.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 4 July 1937,p.3B:

Stone Marks Site Of First Settlement In This Section



The marker of Fort Vienna at Calhoun is within a few hundred yards of Green River.

Calhoun, Ky., July 3. – The same Green river flows by within a few hundred yards and the same sun and moon shine down on it from above, but Fort Vienna, the first settlement in this section of Kentucky, which was located a short distance west of the Green river bridge here, presents quite a different picture today than it did in the 1780's when it was built by Solomon Rhoads.

What was then a wilderness is now the town of Calhoun, and what was then the fort is now an orchard, with the only reminder of the fortification that protected the white settlers from the Indians being a stone marker which was dedicated on October 11, 1928 by the General Evan Shelby Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

A wire fence, and weeds that have grown prolifically around it, now all but hide the marker and its inscription from public gaze. Large numbers of people, a band and speakers including the late Congressman Glover H. Cary, spoke at the dedication service.

The Inscription carved on the stone tells much of the story of the necessity for the fort, and what it does not tell is recounted by Collins' History of Kentucky, which records instances of the settlers being murdered by Indians when they were outside it.

"This boulder marks the site of Fort Vienna which was founded 1784 or earlier to repel attack on settlers by the Indians," reads the stone's inscription. "Corn planted by John Hays 1778. Erected by the General Evan Shelby Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1928."

The vague story of Indian attacks is told in the inscription, but Collins' History gives more accounts of them.

"A party of trappers from Fort Vienna, in 1790, while at the mouth of Green river, was attacked by Indians who killed ___ McElmurray and wounded William Faith, a lad of 17, who made his escape and returned to the fort. About the same time the Indians killed Thomas Downs near the fort," the Collins account read, according to the history book, the fort was not built until 1788.

[Ed. Note: The Downs referred to should be William not Thomas Downs.]



McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, 1 July 1976, Bicentennial Issue, p.12:

Fort Vienna

First local Settlement departed from building 'style'

By Kenny Ward

When we think of a fort, we generally picture a square or rectangular area enclosed by upright, sharp end poles. The settlers at Fort Vienna, McLean County's first settlement, appear to have made a very distinct departure from this hold.

In 1924, Ben F. Landrum made a deposition concerning the fort. Ben had been born near Calhoun in 1846 and remembered the old fort from his boyhood days.

I remember old Vienna Fort, as far back as 1857. The Fort itself was under the ridge or hill running along and near Green River: I remember seeing the places of entrances into the Fort; the Fort, as you know, was tunnels dug back into the ground and ran back some ten or twenty feet. The top of this ridge or hill is formed of solid rock and is curved in such a manner as to make a rock formation on three sides of the Fort and the river formed the fourth side. The old Fort was in a big hill or ridge near the present site of the Government Dam on Green River and on what is at this time known as Water Street (First Street) in Calhoun... This rock formation above the tunnels prevented the Indians from gaining access to the Fort because the tunnels were under the rock and they could not throw arrows or anything into the Fort from the top of the ridge or hill. At my earliest recollection there were about fourteen, what I might well term tunnels, in the Fort, these entrances running back some ten or twenty feet-running South under the rock and hill, the rock many feet thick covers the earth at this particular place, making a most remarkable formation as a protection for a Fort, the three sides, as I have said, protected by solid rock and the South side protected by the River and what I would say the only unprotected side of the Fort.

In a second statement, Landrum writes, "Old Vienna Springs is just at the foot and left end of the ridge or hill and was a very fine spring ...The first settlers of Calhoun lived just about where the town of Calhoun now is and they had easy access to the fort when necessity forced them to take refuge therein. The Fort was well stocked, I was told, with necessities whereby the settlers could remain at the Fort several days at a time without suffering any great discomfort."

Very few instances of Indian trouble have come down to us although there were such problems. One mention is made by Larkin Dorsey, one of the original owners of the land that became Calhoun.

Dorsey wrote, on March 29, 1786, "As it appears there is much danger from the Indians in that quarter and the Inhabitants think it Dangerous to Cultivate there (their) Respective outlots you will Give them leave to Cultivate the Commons in Common, observing Only to Kill the heavy

Timber." Dorsey was either no farmer or he had never tried to plant corn in a briar patch since he conditions that only the heavy timber is to be killed.

Philip Taylor, a witness in a land suit concerning Yellow Banks (now Owensboro), said in a deposition made in February 1807 that he first knew the Yellow Banks about 1790. "I saw the place, but no one was settled here; I had heard of it before from the people of Vienna who had come here to move settlers out." Although he does not explain further, the main reason one group moved another group in those days was Indians.

Another incident of Indian trouble, which I have mentioned a number of times, was the attack on three hunters from Vienna in 1790. John McIlmurray (or McElmurray) was killed, Martin Vanada was captured but later escaped; and 17-year-old William Faith was wounded in the shoulder. Faith managed to swim Green River and make his way through the wilderness back to Vienna.

John Rowan, builder of My Old Kentucky Home, mentions in this unfinished autobiography that Indians stole their horses the first night the Rowans camped at the "Long Falls of Green River." (To correct a misconception I fear that I've created, Calhoun was never officially called Long Falls. However, it was spoken of as the "Settlement at Long Falls" and the "Long Falls of Green River" was often used as a geographic description to locate Vienna.)

In some of the old histories of Kentucky, it is stated that William Rowan, father of John, and five other families "made a settlement at the 'Long Falls of Green River,' and that the region was visited by a band of Shawnee Indians.

Stephen Rowan, brother of John and son of William, , figures in the only other two known incidents concerning Indians at Vienna. These incidents came down as tradition and were published in "Ohio County, Kentucky in the Olden Days." This book was composed of a number of newspaper sketches by Harrison D. Taylor, compiled and published by his granddaughter, Mrs. Mary Taylor Logan, in 1926. The items were originally published in newspapers in 1857 when many of the incidents were still remembered.

The first incident concerns a time when Vienna was beseiged for several days by a large Indian war party. The fact that they lasted several days bears out Landrum's statement that the fort was well stocked. Eventually the situation became serious and two men volunteered to go for help. Slipping through the Indian lines at night, the two daring men managed to reach Hartford safely.

In a short time, all Hartford men that could be spared were on their way to relieve the settlers at Vienna. Before the rescuing party could get here, the Indians had lifted the seige and cut out.

It would be nice to know the names of both of these brave men who risked their lives to save the Vienna settlers. But only one name has come down to us, that of Stephen Rowan.

Another incident also concerned Stephen. In this case his horse and his shiny new rifle are given credit for saving his life.

During the day cows were allowed to roam through the woods for pasturage. One night the animals failed to come in as normal. The next morning their bells could be heard some distance away. Although an Indian trap was feared, young Stephen volunteered to look for the animals.

Mounted on his horse and carrying his new rifle, Stephen, set out. He soon found the cattle at the head of a narrow ravine. The sides of the ravine were so steep the cattle couldn't climb out nor apparently did they appear willing to come out the open end.

As Stephen attempted to ride into the ravine, his horse began to act up. A blow caused the horse to rear. This threw Rowan high enough that he could see over a log and there he saw an Indian. Wheeling his horse, Stephen saw a second Indian across the ravine.

Stephen was met at the fort by a Mr. Downs who demanded to know where the cows were. Rowan replied by shouting, "Indians! Indians!"

Downs is said to have made some contemptuous remarks and that he would go for the cows. Rowan, evidently angered by Downs' remark, dared him to go. Downs immediately set out. Several of the other settlers tried to dissuade Downs but he kept walking. Rowan even relented and told him he had seen the Indians and asked Downs not to go. But Downs went on.

The settlers gathered around Stephen and heard his report. They decided to send out an armed force to hunt down the Indians. Before they could get fully armed, the settlers heard a number of shots. As Downs did not return, the armed settlers moved toward the spot where Rowan had seen the Indians. Downs body was found, scalped and mutilated. The trail of a small body of Indians was found and followed to the Ohio River.

In "Ohio County, Kentucky, in the Olden Days," Taylor states: "Young Rowan was largely indebted for his life to his fine horse and his bright, beautiful, silver-mounted rifle, which restrained the Indians from firing until he had passed so far up the ravine that he could escape.

Partial support of the story of Downs comes from other sources which state that the last white man killed by Indians in the Fort Vienna area was William Downs. One source, without giving his full name, lists Downs as a Baptist preacher and the father of William and Thomas Downs.

By 1800 Indian contact had ceased in the Green River Valley, except for an occasional group of friendly Cherokees who passed through following the war of 1812. The McLean County area was to know peace until the Civil War split the country and turned white against white.



McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, 8 September 1988, p.1:

***Monument for Fort Vienna
stands as historic reminder***

By Gina Hancock, News managing editor

After 204 years, a few people are still trying to remember Fort Vienna. Their remembering was done by placing an American flag at the monument marking the location of the fort next to KY 256 near Shepherd Street in Calhoun.

Not much is known about the fort and what is known came from a deposition made by Ben F. Landrum in 1924. Landrum was born near Calhoun in 1846.

Unlike Fort Boonesborough, Vienna's fortification was found among the natural formations on top of a hill overlooking the Green River.

Kenny Ward, in his column, "Meandering through McLean County," described the fort in the March 23, 1971 issue of the NEWS by referring to Landrum's deposition.

Landrum described the fort as consisting of tunnels dug back into the ground for ten to 20 feet. The top of the hill was formed by solid rock with rock formations on three sides of the fort. The river formed the fourth side.

Landrum wrote that the rock formation above the tunnels kept the Indians from getting into the fort. He remembers that there was 14 tunnels and that the fort was well stocked so that settlers could seek refuge there for several days.

The Shawnee Indians seem to have been one group to have plagued the Calhoun settlers. There were several incidents involving Indians in this area.

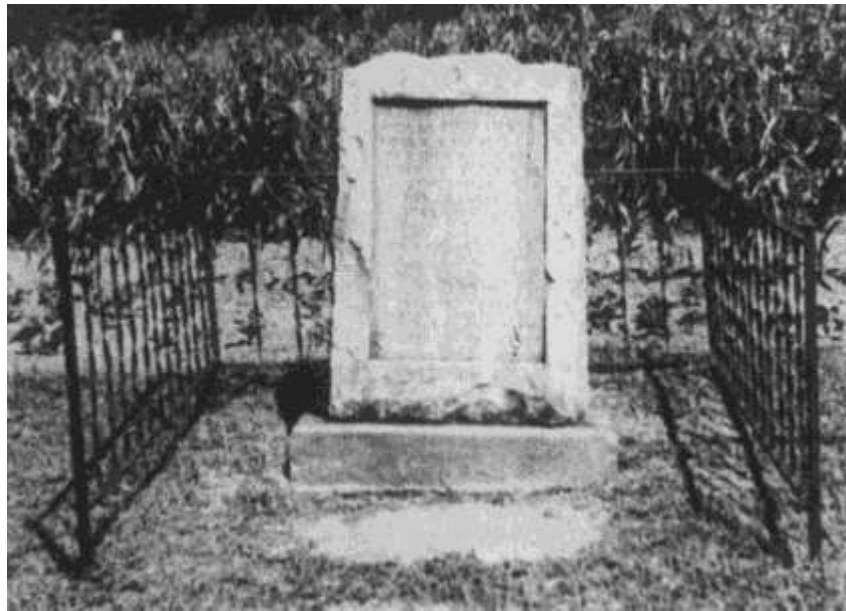
Once, according to Ward, Vienna was besieged for several days by an Indian war party. Eventually, two men volunteered to go for help at Hartford, but by the time the Hartford rescuers arrived, the Indians were gone.

In 1790, three hunters from Vienna were attacked by Indians.

According to Ward, they were John McIlmurray, who was killed, Martin Vanada, who was captured and later escaped, and William Faith, who was wounded in the shoulder.

Observations have been made that Fort Vienna declined in importance as Rumsey grew. By 1850, only a few houses remained there.

Vienna is constantly remembered now with a marker that was erected in 1928 by the General Evan Shelby Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



This monument on KY 256 marks the site where Fort Vienna once stood.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 21 December 1992, p.1C:

Kentucky's bicentennial residents struggled with land, Indians

By Glenn Hodges, Messenger-Inquirer

The origin of what is now McLean County dates back to the middle 1780s when white settlers from the East began to inhabit land at the "Long Falls of Green River," the future site of Calhoun.

William Rowan of Pennsylvania and five families arrived there on May 11, 1784, and others are known to have settled at that location at about the same time. Henry Rhoads, a native of Germany and veteran of the Revolutionary War, laid out a town on a 2,000-acre site there in 1785 and called it Rhoadsville.

During the same period, John Hanley came to Long Falls as an agent for the Dorsey family of Maryland, which had partial claim to the settled land. To resolve uncertainty over the land titles, Hanley filed a lawsuit against Rhoads and won the court case.

Afterward, Rhoads moved southeast to what is now Browder and became the founder of Muhlenberg County. Hanley assumed leadership of the town, and by March 1786, its name was changed to Vienna.

From the beginning of the settlement there, residents were subjected to sporadic raids by Indians. The Rowan family's horses were stolen the second night after their arrival. So a fortification was needed for protection. The fort built by Henry Rhoads' brother Solomon in 1785 was not the usual wooden stockade constructed on the frontier, but actually a series of tunnels dug back into the ground from the north bank of Green River and running 10 to 20 feet into a rocky hill in what is now Calhoun.

The top of the ridge was solid rock and offered natural protection on three sides, while the river provided security on the fourth side.

The rock formation itself was a formidable citadel against attack and the settlement took on the name Fort Vienna.

In a deposition given in 1924, Ben Landrum, a longtime resident of Calhoun, said he could remember old Fort Vienna as far back as 1857. "The first settlers of Calhoun lived just about where the town of Calhoun now is and they had easy access to the fort when necessity forced them to take refuge there. The fort was well stocked, I was told, with necessities whereby the settlers could remain several days at a time without suffering any great discomfort."

One recorded raid by Shawnees provided proof of the fort's unique defensive capability. According to a story told by Stephen Rowan, a son of William Rowan, Vienna was besieged for many days by a large war party. The situation became so serious that two men volunteered to go for help. They managed to slip past the Indian lines and reached Fort Hartford in Ohio County safely. Soon all the Hartford men who could be spared arrived in Vienna to help the settlers. Before they got there, however, the Shawnees had given up, lifted their siege and left.

By 1800 the Indian threat had ended along Green River and the fort was no longer needed for defense. The site of the old fort is about 200 yards from the Calhoun-Rumsey bridge and was designated with a Daughters of the American Revolution historic site marker in 1928.

McLean County's second settlement was Pond Station, built in 1790 by James Inman, five miles south of Vienna. The portion of McLean County south of Green River was in Logan County in 1792 and included in Muhlenberg County, formed in 1798.

But Pond Station faded away, and Rumsey - situated on the south bank of the Green opposite Vienna - became the next leading settlement in the Muhlenberg County portion of what would become McLean County. The new town was founded in 1834 and named for James Rumsey, a pioneer in steamboat navigation.

Construction on a lock and dam at Rumsey began in 1835, causing an economic boom, and the town was incorporated by 1839. Rumsey, for a time, was the largest town in the area with groceries, taverns, shipyards, woolen mills and carriage and wagon factories.

In 1837, William Brown founded a new town at the confluence of Green and Rough rivers, and donated land for its streets and public square. County historians believe the town was named for Alonzo Livermore, the engineer who built the dam at Rumsey. Livermore turned into a thriving community with the advent of furniture factories and the coming of the Owensboro-Russellville railroad line in 1872.

At the same time Livermore and Rumsey were growing, Vienna, despite its promising beginning, declined in importance. As late as 1850, there were only a few houses there. In 1852, former circuit judge John Calhoon was given a charter for a new town, the site of which encompassed all of old Vienna.

An act was passed by the state legislature Jan. 28, 1854, forming the county of McLean out of Muhlenberg, Ohio and Daviess. It was named for judge and former Congressman Alney McLean, a distinguished Muhlenberg County resident who had died in 1841. What had been old Vienna was renamed Calhoon in honor of Judge Calhoon. The spelling of the town's name was changed to Calhoun over the years.

A spirited fight soon took place between Calhoon and Rumsey over which town would be the county seat. Charles Hambleton of Breckinridge County and F.M. Bristow of Logan County were brought together to decide the matter at James Landrum's tavern in Calhoon. Concurrently, the Green River flooded and the water covered most of Rumsey. So the decision was made to put the county seat on the highest ground, which was in Calhoon.

The other McLean County communities of size which were established by the mid-1850s were Island and Sacramento.

Island was a coal mining settlement founded in about 1829 by William Worthington and first called Worthington Station. It was renamed Island in 1882 because, according to county historians, it was always surrounded by water when the Green River flooded. By 1912 when large underground mines were in operation there, the community had a population of 1,100.

The community of Cross Roads was laid out by George Helm nine miles south of Calhoun in 1854. By 1860 the name was changed to Sacramento by Kentucky miners who had been to the California town of that name during the 1849 Gold Rush.

McLean County experienced a great era of development after the Civil War. Railroads were being built across the United States and millions of McLean County trees were used to make the crossties on which they were laid.

Green River offered easy delivery by barge as the timber went to Evansville to be converted into lumber and to manufacture furniture.

As the timber was cut the land was cleared for farming. The rich bottomland along the Green was transformed into fields of corn, wheat and tobacco. Factories in the county shipped the tobacco down the river, which became the chief means of communication and transportation until the building of the county's road system in 1923.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 30 April 1996, p.1D:

Long Falls of Green River, Fort Vienna, Calhoon, Calhoun:
McLean County community has had several names, identities since 1700s

By Glenn Hodges, Messenger-Inquirer

In the middle 1780s, white settlers from the East began inhabiting land at what was called the "Long Falls of Green River" – the future site of Calhoun in McLean County.

Five families led by William Rowan of Pennsylvania arrived there on May 11, 1784, and another group of pioneers settled at that location at about the same time.

Henry Rhoads, a native of Germany and veteran of the Revolutionary War, laid out a town on the 2,000-acre site in 1785 and called it Rhoadsville.

During the same period, John Hanley came to Long Falls as an agent for the Dorsey family of Maryland, which had partial claim to the settled land.

To resolve uncertainty over the land titles, Hanley sued Rhoads and won the court case. Afterward, Rhoads moved southeast to what is now Browder and became the founder of Muhlenberg County. Hanley assumed leadership of Rhoadsville, and by March 1786, its name was changed to Vienna.

From the beginning of the settlement there, residents were under the threat of Indian raids. The Rowan family's horses were stolen the second night after they arrived, so a fortification was needed for protection.

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The top of the ridge was solid rock and offered natural protection on three sides, while the river provided security on the fourth side. The rock formation itself was a formidable citadel against attack and the settlement took on the name Fort Vienna.



Left: Judge John Calhoun. Right: The site of old Fort Vienna on the north bank of Green River at Calhoun is about 200 yards west of the Calhoun-Rumsey bridge and is designated with this historic site marker placed there in 1928 by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In 1924, Ben Landrum, a longtime resident of Calhoun, said he could remember old Fort Vienna as far back as 1857.

"The first settlers of Calhoun lived just about where the town of Calhoun now is and they had easy access to the fort when necessity forced them to take refuge there. The fort was well stocked, I was told, with necessities whereby the settlers could remain several days at a time without suffering any great discomfort."

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But before a team of fighting men from Hartford arrived to help the Vienna settlers, the Shawnees had given up and lifted their siege. The impregnable earthworks along Green River had forced them to withdraw.

After the Indian threat ended along Green River around 1800, the fort was no longer needed for defense.

The site of the old fortification is about 200 yards west of the present Calhoun-Rumsey bridge and was designated with a Daughters of the American Revolution historic site marker in 1928.

Despite its promising beginning, Vienna declined in importance in years to come, and was overshadowed by the community of Rumsey across the river. As late as 1850, there were only a few houses at Vienna.

In 1852, former Circuit Judge John Calhoun was given a charter for a new town, the site of which encompassed all of old Vienna.

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McLean County was established out of Muhlenberg, Ohio and Daviess counties on Jan. 28, 1854.

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