

# William Worthington ( 1761-1848) of Island, Ky

By Jerry Long  
c.2025



A History of Muhlenberg County, Otto A. Rothert,  
John P. Morton & Company, Inc., Louisville, KY, 1913, pp.19-21:



Graves of Judge and Mrs. William Worthington, near Island, McLean County

Judge William Worthington was one of the most influential firstcomers in that part of Muhlenberg which later became a part of McLean County. He owned a large tract of land on what, for more than a century, has been known as the "Island" — a territory of about eight square miles, surrounded during high water by back water from Green River, the Thoroughfare. Black Lake, and Cypress Creek. His home was about a half mile north of what is now the town of Island. The post-office for that section of the country was at his residence for many years, and bore the name of Worthington up to about 1860, when it was transferred to Point Pleasant on Green River. When the Owensboro & Russellville Railroad was built, a station was erected near the old Worthington

place and a new post-office established. This was appropriately called Island Station, and formed the nucleus of the town now known as Island, which in 1910 had a population of 547. A more appropriate name, however, would have been the former name of Worthington, for no pioneer in Muhlenberg was more worthy of having his name perpetuated in that manner. Worthington 's Chapel, three miles west of Island, called so in honor of his son Thomas, who gave the land on which this church is built, is now the only place that bears the name of this pioneer family.

William Worthington came to Muhlenberg about fourteen years before the county was organized. He took part in many of the early county court meetings and often presided over the court of quarter sessions and a number of the circuit court meetings. He was a member of the State Senate from 1814 to 1826. About the year 1830 his residence burned, and practically everything in it was destroyed. Among the few things saved was the cane presented to him a few years before by his fellow-members of the State Senate. This walking-stick is now owned by T. M. Worthington, of Dallas, Texas.

About the year 1845 Judge Worthington moved to Point Worthington, a plantation in Mississippi owned by one of his sons, and a few years later died there. His body was packed in salt and shipped by boat to his old home in Kentucky, where he had spent more than sixty years of his life, and was there buried by the side of his wife. Two stone-walled graves, each covered with a marble slab, mark the last resting-place of the old judge and his wife. On one is carved, "Wm. Worthington, Died June 5, 1848, aged 87 years." — on the other, "Mary Worthington, Died August 25, 1827, aged 66 years."

Judge and Mrs. Worthington were the parents of a number of children. Two of them lived and died in Muhlenberg or McLean counties, near Worthington 's Chapel — Mrs. Elizabeth Kincheloe and Thomas Worthington. One daughter, Mrs. Polly Wickliffe, lived in the South.

Elizabeth Worthington married Reverend William Kincheloe. They lived on a farm about two miles southeast of Judge Worthington's home. William Kincheloe was for many years one of the few preachers in that neighborhood. After his children became large enough to go to school he employed a teacher for them and extended an invitation to the boys and girls of his neighbors to attend this school at his expense. He ran a store for many years, and in that connection made a number of trips by boat to New Orleans and return. R. M. Kincheloe, of Sacramento, who represented McLean County in the Legislature in 1891 and 1892, is a grandson.

Thomas Worthington, son of Judge Worthington, was born May 27, 1786, in Fort Vienna, now Calhoun. There is a tradition to the effect that his parents, with their two small daughters, had a few weeks before gone to the Fort for protection from the Indians. In 1808 he married Elinore Barnes, of Ohio County, and shortly after settled near Cypress Creek on a farm that had been presented to him by his father. He, like his brother-in-law William Kincheloe, was a preacher, and also maintained a school in his neighborhood at his own expense. He died near Worthington's Chapel in 1853. Shortly after his death his wife and all their children, except three daughters, moved to Mississippi. These three were Mrs. Matilda (W. B.) Lawton, the mother of Alexander Lawton, of Rumsey; Mrs. Caroline (James) Henry, the mother of Joseph G. Henry, of McLean County; Mrs. Emily (Joseph L.) Gregory, who is the mother of Reverend Thomas Gregory, now of Marshall County.

Polly Worthington, the second daughter of Judge Worthington, married Aaron Wickliffe. They moved to Greenville, Mississippi, and there he became one of the wealthiest planters in the South. They had no children, and left their estate to one of Judge Worthington's grandsons, whom they had adopted.



**McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, Thursday, 20 March 1986, p.12;**

## Island... history of community compiled

Submitted by Virginia Ferguson Davis, Route 1 Calhoun, KY

"An Island With no Water in Sight" might describe this eight square mile tract of land first called Worthington.

William Worthington, a son of Robert Worthington of Worthington's Marsh in Berkeley County, Virginia, was born 1 May 1761, Frederick County, Virginia, a few miles from the site of Charles Town, West Virginia. He moved with his parents to Westmoreland County Pennsylvania about 1769. On the 4th of June 1781 he volunteered to serve on an expedition against the Northwestern Indians under George Rogers Clark, and was captured below the mouth of the Miami River. He remained a prisoner of war until his escape from an from an Island in the St. Lawrence and made his way through enemy territory and after many hardships arrived home in Westmoreland County in December 1782. He married Mary Meason (Mason) shortly after his return to Pennsylvania and remained in Westmoreland County until February of 1786 when the family began the migration of Kentucky. They arrived at Fort Vienna (now Calhoun) in March of that year and remained in the area about 13 years, then moved about 10 miles up stream on the south side of Green River, Muhlenberg County, (now McLean County) where he accumulated several large tracts of land. He was appointed Circuit Court Judge of Muhlenberg County in 1803 and served in the legislature from 1812 to 1826.

In 1829 William Worthington was appointed postmaster of the Worthington Post office located in his home, Muhlenberg County, (now McLean County). His son-in-law, William Kincheloe, was appointed postmaster 5th October 1836. (Ref. Listing of Muhlenberg County Post offices and report from GSA Records Service, Washington, D.C.)

On the 25th of August 1827, Mrs. Mary Worthington died and was buried in the orchard near her home (property now owned by H.I. Eaton). About 1845 Judge Worthington moved to Point Worthington, plantation in Mississippi owned by one of his sons, and a few years later died there on the 5th of June 1848. His body was packed in salt and shipped by boat to his old home in Kentucky, where he had spent more than 60 years of his life, and was there buried by the side of this wife. Two stone-walled graves, each covered with a marble slab, (now destroyed) marked the last resting place of the judge and his wife. On one was carved, "Wm. Worthington, Died June 5, 1848 aged 87 years." – on the other, "Mary Worthington, Died August 25, 1827, aged 66 years."

The writer and several residents of Island remember these graves being located at the rear of the old Elementary School in the town of Island. Worthington Post Office was moved near Point Pleasant in McLean County about 1856 (McLean County being created in 1854) and operated as such until it was discontinued November 1, 1860. Mail and freight at that time arrived by boat via Humphrey's Landing and Point Pleasant.

Worthington's Chapel was established as a Methodist Episcopal Church, South, about 1884. However, the church had long before been constituted as a place of worship and two previous buildings and a school house were built on land given in 1854 by the widow and heirs of Thomas

Worthington, born 27 May 1786 in Fort Vienna (now Calhoun). Thomas was the son of William Worthington, Revolutionary Soldier.

When the Owensboro & Russellville Railroad was built in 1872 a station was built on Worthington land and a new post office was established May 20, 1873 and called Island Station. The name was changed to Island November 29, 1882. (Ref. GSA Administrative Records, Washington, D.C.) Island was rightfully named. When Green River overflows and flood waters comes through the Thoroughfare, Black Lake and Cypress Creek, it is a small Island. At the time of the 1937 Flood, Island was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile wide and less than two miles in length.

An Act by the General Assembly 23 March 1873 changed the name of the Owensboro Nashville Railroad Company to the Evansville-Owensboro-Nashville Company. This Company later went into bankruptcy and was sold to the Louisville Company for one million two hundred thousand dollars on 1 July 1880 and became the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company.

Enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 6 April 1873, was "An Act to prohibit the sale of spirituous, vinous, or malt liquors at Island Station, or within two miles thereof in quantities, less than one quart." (If less than one quart was sold the person or persons doing so would be deemed guilty of keeping a tippling-house (a saloon) and would be fined as provided by law. (Ref. Law Library, Frankfort, Ky.)

About this time, 30 March 1872, the Island Baptist Church was organized by a group of about 20 members from New Hope Baptist Church in Muhlenberg County. The earlier church was destroyed by fire and land was purchased and a new building was built almost immediately. In 1922 the building was moved to town at the site of the present building and served as a place of worship until a new building was erected and dedicated August 3, 1969.

The population had increased, the town was progressing and farmers had a way to ship hay, grain and lumber by rail. A need for a larger school was recognized and on April 30, 1896 land was purchased from William H. Ellison and his sister Minnie Gross, for a total of \$51.25. A building was erected near the Baptist Church about one fourth mile east of Island. This building served grades one through eight until 1931 when a more modern plant was built in the town of Island on the site of the old Worthington home place just south of the Worthington Graves.

The turn of the century saw the beginning of a new industry. The sale of coal and mineral rights was increasing and larger and more modern mines were being opened and coal shipped by rail. E.H. Flanagan operated the Slope Mines, with the exception of a few non working periods, from 1901 to 1935. These mines brought into Island some of the first out of State miners from Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. Some of those were, Louie Freulinger, George Busick, Bruno Halneider, W.M. Overhultz, Steve Leuchosh and from Lynch Kentucky, Mr. and Mrs. Ira G. Reynierson in 1926. Other mines were the Big 4, Memphis Coal Co., Pittsburg & Ky. Coal Co., West Virginia Coal Co., the E.M.T. owned by Edwards, McHargue and Thompson which was sold in 1929 to Clarence S. Rose and became the Island Coal & Mining Co., which employed over 160 men.

The Harris Colliers Company was one of the first Strip mines known in this part of Kentucky which operated with the most modern equipment and coal screening processes of the day (1923); however it was soon found that the coal was too far underground thus necessitating a double removal of dirt to reach the vein, and the Company went into bankruptcy.

Other smaller mines were in operation and at one time there were about 700 miners in the Island coal fields. There were Commissaries to accomodate the miners and their families.

One of the first oil wells on the south side of Green River in McLean County was drilled by using a wood constructed derrick and located near Fox Hollow in 1923.

On August 18, 1904, the M.E. Church South purchased a parcel of land from Dr. C.D. Almon and his first wife Lena (for and in consideration of the sum of \$35 cash in hand paid) (Ref. Deed Book V. page 25, McLean Co. Ky.) This tract was a part of the William Worthington land later sold by his heirs to Jonathan Eaton, later to W.T. Ferguson who set aside a part for the Union Cemetery (now east side of Island Methodist Cemetery).

In 1907 the Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company built the first line across Green River at Livermore linking Island and southern counties with those of the north. The line was strung by linemen "Bud" Smith, Clayton Ferguson and Kelly Hite. In 1908 a Telephone Exchange was already operating in rented space in Island. In 1910 lease agreement was made and entered into the 1st day of June between Isaac T. Nall of Island, Kentucky and the Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company for the "front room 18' x 18' in which room is now occupied by the party of the second part as a telephone exchange."

Until 1914 few students in the Island community had the opportunity to acquire an education higher than 8th grade. At that time an arrangement was made with the L & N Railroad Company and the McLean County School System for Island students to attend Livermore High School which was a city school. Transportation was paid by the students who were issued ticket books by the L & N for a months travel from Island to and from Livermore. In 1926 thirty six students rode the trains to school in Livermore.

After experiencing the depression, loss of the coal industry, shipping by rail and several fires, Island has had a hard struggle toward becoming growing community, but it is still an Island with no water in sight – until Green River and all the creeks rise.

[Note: The author of the preceding article, Virginia Ferguson Davis (1912-2014) also compiled a booklet, "Island, Kentucky and the Worthington Family." Copies can be viewed at the McLean County KY History Museum & Regional Family Research Center in Calhoun, KY and in the Kentucky Room at the Daviess County Public Library in Owensboro, KY (library call #KR 976.9826 Davi).]



### **McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, Thursday, 2003:**

#### **History and Genealogy News**

**By Euleen Rickard**

In 1781, William Worthington volunteered in Westmoreland, Penn., and served as a private in the American Revolutionary war under George Rogers Clark He was captured below the mouth of the Miami River and was a prisoner of war until he escaped and made his way back home in 1792. There he married Mary; Meason (Mason) and in 1786 the family migrated to Kentucky, arriving at Fort Vienna (Calhoun) in March of that year. They stayed in Fort Vienna for thirteen years, then moved upstream on the south side of Green River in Muhlenberg County where Worthington acquired several large tracts of land. In 1803, he was appointed Circuit Court Judge and he was a member of the state Senate from 1814 to 1826. In 1829 he was appointed postmaster of the Worthington post office that was in his home. When the railroad was built in 1872, a station was built on Worthington land, and the town was called Island Station, later changed to Island in November 1882.



Mary Mason Worthington died in 1827 and was buried on the home place. Judge Worthington left Kentucky in 1845 and died in Mississippi in 1848. His body was packed in salt and shipped by boat back to be buried beside his wife.

Their graves were just back of the Island School that I attended. They were stone-walled about eighteen inches above ground and covered with marble slabs. The inscriptions were "Wm. Worthington, Died June 5, 1848, aged 87 years." and "Mary Worthington, Died August 25, 1827, aged 66 years. To the students who played on the hill, their graves were to be respected, and we were not allowed to go there without a teacher.

In the 1950s, the marble slabs were destroyed and their graves plowed over, a careless act that destroyed a part of the early history of Island and McLean County.

Virginia Davis, an Island native and descendant of Worthington was instrumental in getting a marker placed at the site of the graves, and a Kentucky Historical Highway marker in honor of Judge Worthington placed on the lawn of the Baptist church at the corner of Highways 431 and 85. In a heritage day program sponsored by the Island Community Development Association, it was dedicated on Nov. 14, 1987.

As you pass this marker be reminded that it is a memorial to the life of William Worthington, a pioneer with courage and fortitude, a life to be celebrated along with Lewis and Clark.



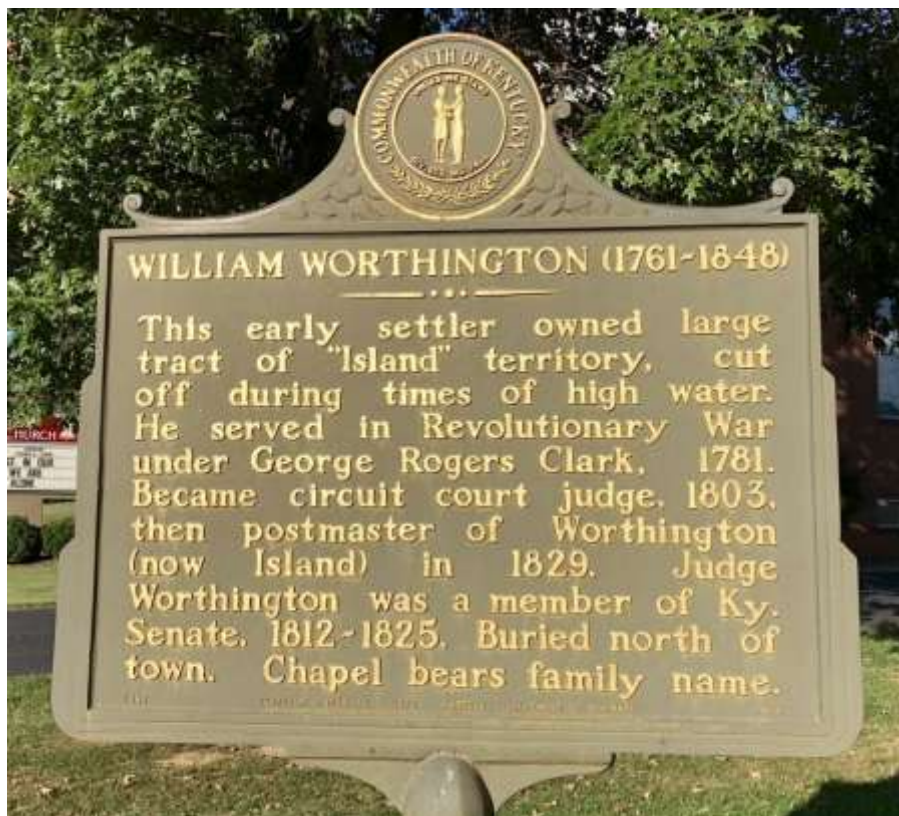
### **Worthington Cemetery, Island, KY – [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com)**



grave of “William Worthington , Pvt Continental Army, Revolutionary War, 1761 – 1848”.



parts of slabs that had marked the graves of William Worthington and his wife, Mary



Marker erected in 1987 by the Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Department of Highways (marker number 1812). Marker is at the Island Baptist Church in Island, McLean County, KY. It is at the intersection of Adams Avenue (U.S. 431) and East Main Street, on the right when traveling north on Adams Avenue.