

# Daviess County's Connections to George Mason of Gunston Hall

By Jerry Long



George Mason (1725-1792) of Gunston Hall



**“Daviess County Bicentennial Chronology: 200 Historical Events”, by Jerry Long, Daviess County, Kentucky, 1815-2015: Celebrating Our Heritage, Daviess County Bicentennial Committee, M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., Evansville, IN, 2015, p7:**

1794, 6-21      George Mason (1725-1792), of Gunston Hall fame and author of the Virginia Bill of Rights & Constitution, owned about 60,000 acres in Western Kentucky. His heirs on this date deeded lands in Kentucky to his son, George Mason, Jr., for the purpose of distributing the land among his heirs; the deed was recorded in Daviess County's first deed book (A pp210-3). Some of his grandchildren, including George W. Mason and Leannah Mason Barron, moved to Daviess County settling on some of the land and they have descendants here.



**In the Beginning: Historical Facts About the Earliest Days of Present Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, researched, written and edited by Hugh O. Potter, Radio Station WOMI, Owensboro, KY, 1968, commemorating WOMI's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; pages 5, 6, 7, 25, 26 & 27:**

A Reluctant Statesman

[George] Mason, who was termed a "reluctant statesman", a "silk-stocking rebel," and "one of the generals in the intellectual leadership of the revolution," was born into wealth, and was the fourth member of his family to be named George. Because of the number of George Masons in the family line, before and after him, he is known to history as "George Mason of Gunston Hall," his home and estate on the Potomac, near George Washington's Mount Vernon. Like Mt. Vernon, Gunston Hall is a national shrine and is open to the public.

After the English imposed the Stamp Act on the Colonies in a move to collect more revenue, George Mason changed from a gentleman planter, who took only an occasional notice of politics, into a patriot in the eyes of the colonials; and a rebel, or an outlaw guilty of treason, in the eyes of the British.

He drafted the 24 Fairfax Resolutions which were read at the July 18, 1774 conference of Fairfax county, Virginia, free-holders by Chairman George Washington. The resolves urged a renewal of the boycott on English goods if constitutional rights were denied the free-holders.

Even though Mason and his fellow Virginia planters were slaveholders, the document contained a strong indictment of the slave trade which had been conducted by the British. It urged a complete stop and assailed it as "wicked, cruel and unnatural."

Mason Succeeds Washington

In 1775 when Washington was made commander of the Continental army, Mason was drafted by his neighbors to take the General's vacated seat in the Virginia legislature. He tried to excuse himself, offering reasons of health and business, and, besides, he said he was trying to be "father and mother both" to his nine children. His wife, Ann Eilbeck Mason, to whom he was married in April of 1750, had died two years before – in March of 1773 – causing him to go into deep mourning from which it took the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 to bring him back into the mainstream of colonial events. His neighbors were insistent that he serve, and persuaded him to accept the office.

In the Constitutional convention, thirteen years afterward, he and General Washington were members of the Virginia delegation, but Mason's displeasure with the result of that body's work and his efforts to keep Virginia from ratifying it brought about a coolness which resulted in the father of our country afterward referring to him as his "quondam", or former, friend.

A man of little patience with babblers, Mason had a natural dignity and was described as a grouch, especially when afflicted with the gout, and a man who frowned as much as he smiled. Feeling the need for "a few weighty members" at the 1776 session of the legislature, he agreed to stand for reelection and was returned to Williamsburg. It was during this session that the resolution was passed authorizing the Virginia constitutional committee to which Mason, Patrick Henry and others of the deeper thinking, eloquent Virginia patriots were chosen as members. The job of drafting concrete proposals for the new government fell to Mason because of his acknowledged qualifications and background of study.

Edmund Randolph, President George Washington's first attorney general and his secretary of state during part of his second term, was "awed by the blend of ability and technique" he saw

in Mason's work. He later recalled that many suggestions for a bill of rights were received by the committee but that the plan proposed by Mason "swallowed up all the rest."

### Virginia Bill of Rights

Mason's Virginia Bill of Rights opened with the declaration that "all men are by nature free and have certain basic rights" including the "enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."

It provided that "all power is vested in, and consequently derived from the people; that magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at all times amenable to them."

It declared that "government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, and security, of the people, nation or community" . . . "and that whenever any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, unalienable, and indefeasible right, to reform, alter or abolish it....."

It called for a separation of the legislative and executive powers of the state from the judiciary.

It provided for a speedy trial by an impartial jury for any man charged in a capital or criminal prosecution, and specified that no man can "be compelled to give evidence against himself." This was the forerunner of a part of the widely known Fifth amendment to the United States Constitution.

The Virginia declaration contained, in all, sixteen articles which, among other things, frowned on excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishments in trials; asserted that search warrants ought not be granted "without evidence of a fact committed"; that "the ancient right of trial by jury" in controversies respecting property, "ought to be held sacred"; called for the adherence to "justice, moderation, temperance, frugality and virtue" by the government, and the "free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and held that it is "the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity, towards each other."

The document was a statement of principles. A constitution was next needed by Virginia, for, as one of Mason's biographers said, "the declaration without a constitution was a conscience in search of a mind; a kind of motionless morality awaiting directions."

The draft of the Virginia constitution which soon appeared on the floor also came chiefly from the brain of Mason. It was adopted on June 29, 1776, almost a week before the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed in Philadelphia.

### Jefferson Praises Bill

Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, was liberal in his praise of the Virginia Bill of Rights.

In view of this outstanding service to his state it was natural that, when the need was seen for a revision of the Articles of Confederation, Mason was called back into the spotlight as a member of the Virginia delegation to the Constitutional convention. At it, in Philadelphia, he was ranked with Washington and Jefferson as the three most eminent Virginians of their day.

There he made his opinion felt but was finally unable to get his ideas sufficiently incorporated into the new document, so he refused, at the end of the long session, to sign it. He went so far as to declare he "would sooner chop off his right hand than put it to the Constitution." The document was signed by George Washington as president of the convention, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, Jr., and among others, a delegate with the elegant name of "Dan of St. Thos. Jenifer".

Mason freely participated in the discussions held on many parts of the Constitution as it was being framed. He opposed the idea of the nation having a single chief executive, because of the danger he envisioned of the republic being turned into a monarchy.

Mason was at all times conscious of the need of human rights being plainly spelled out. "We ought to attend to the rights of every class of people", he declared in a statement which explained his underlying reasons for being one of this nation's earliest advocates of the rights of men. He asked how members of the "superior classes of society" could be indifferent to the rights of humanity, declaring that, no matter how wealthy they were, or how elevated their stations, "the course of a few years not only might, but certainly would, distribute their posterity throughout the lowest classes of society. Every selfish motive, therefore, every family attachment, ought to recommend such a system of policy" as would provide for the rights and happiness of all orders of citizens without respect to their temporary rank, he contended.

Mason was speaking as a student of history and the father of nine children who in the course of human events could be expected to (and did) produce many generations of "posterity." A better argument for advocating the recognition of basic human rights, and assuring their future recognition by law, would be difficult to find.

### Mason, the Philosopher

While the convention was considering the form the new national legislature should take, Mason made another sage observation on human nature. "From the nature of man," he said at the July 11, 1787 session, "we may be sure that those who have power in their hands will not give it up while they can retain it."

Mason made the most powerful attack heard by the delegates on the slave trade and slavery. He termed the slave traffic "infernal" and said it had originated "in the avarice of British merchants." As to slavery, he said it "discourages arts and manufactures" and "prevents the immigration of whites." He termed "every master of slaves" a born "petty tyrant" and held it was essential that "the general government should have power to prevent the increase of slavery."

Mason was crushed by Virginia's ratification of the United States Constitution over his opposition and the oratory of Patrick Henry. He returned to Gunston Hall where he remained while Madison kept his promise to procure the enactment of the so-called federal bill of rights, based on Mason's own Virginia bill.

"With two or three further amendments—such as confining the federal judiciary to admiralty and maritime jurisdiction", and other constitutional repairs he had sought at the state and national conventions, Mason wrote he "could cheerfully put" his "hand and heart to the new government."

Senator William Grayson died on March 12, 1790 and Mason was offered his seat by Virginia Governor Beverly Randolph. He declined the offer, thus closing the door finally on his public career.

Exactly when George Mason first obtained his warrants to land in present Daviess county is not now known, but at a hearing held on February 25, 1807, at the Bill Smeathers' cabin at Yellow Banks, in the land suit of May, Banister and Company against James Adams, the heirs of George Mason and others, a witness testified he saw Colonel Mason in 1779 and Mason "wanted him to undertake the location of his (Mason's) warrants." The witness said he declined but gave such information as he could about the land around Panther creek to Mason's agent, Hancock Lee. Some of Mason's land near present Owensboro was surveyed in October of 1783, four years before the Constitution of the United States was drafted.

## Deed Lists Children

A deed on record in the Daviess county clerk's office lists the names of Mason's nine children. It was witnessed in Virginia by Lawrence Washington, and is recorded on page 210 of Daviess county Deed book A. It was made for the purpose of distributing Mason's land on the Ohio river among his five sons and four daughters, the girls to receive 4,000 acres each, and the boys the remainder in equal shares. They were listed as George Mason of Lexington, William Mason, Thomson Mason, John Mason, Thomas Mason, Mrs. Rinaldo (Ann Eilbeck Mason) Johnson, Mrs. Daniel (Sarah Mason) McCarty, Mrs. John (Mary Mason) Cooke and Mrs. William (Elizabeth Mason) Thornton. This document was executed in 1794, two years after the death of George Mason of Gunston Hall,

A deed, dated August 6, 1830, was made by George Mason and his wife of the county of James City, Virginia, to George W. Mason of Daviess county, Kentucky, a grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall. By this deed, the George Mason of the county of James City relinquished his interest in "tracts or parcels, (in Daviess county) which were originally supposed to contain in the whole about 60,000 acres." The instrument explained that a portion of the land had been lost, and another portion was still in controversy.

The George W. Mason of Daviess county lived at Clifton Lodge, east of Owensboro a short distance beyond the "forks of the Hawesville and Hardinsburg roads."

Thomas Mason, the youngest son of George Mason of Gunston Hall, was three years old when his mother, Ann Eilbeck Mason, died. He was reared by his father and stepmother and was married to Sarah Barnes. Their daughter, Leannah Mason, was married to William H. Barron in 1817. Thomas Mason Barron, their son, and the great-grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall, was born at Washington, D. C. on January 30, 1818. He married Penelope McFarland of Utica, Kentucky, in 1842, and lived in Daviess county until his death on November 9, 1866. It is through the offspring of this marriage that a number of present and former residents of Daviess county trace their ancestry to George Mason of Gunston Hall.

## Mason Descendants

The first child of Thomas Mason and Penelope McFarland Barron was Cecelia Barron.

Next was Elizabeth Barron who was married to Hamilton Alexander. Among their children were Hamilton Alexander, Joe Alexander, well-known Owensboro men, and Penelope Alexander who married Beauregard Evans.

Colonel Urey Woodson Alexander of the United States Army and Mrs. Warren Trowbridge Rockwell of Washington, D. C., are children of the late Hamilton Alexander and Mrs. Elizabeth Woodson Alexander.

Letitia Ann Barron was the third daughter. She was married to Dr. Charles C. Lewis. Their children were Miss Cecelia Lewis, Lindsay Lewis, Thomas Barron Lewis, and Charles C. Lewis.

Mrs. Charles A. (Florence Bush Lewis) Dorroh of Hopkinsville is the daughter of Thomas Barron Lewis. She is the mother of four sons.

The fourth daughter was Leannah Mason Barron who married Jacob Harsh, Their children were Emma Harsh who married William L. Delker, Mary Harsh who married Walter Parrish, and Barron Harsh.

Edward Delker is a son of the late William L. Delker and Mrs. Emma Harsh Delker. His sons are James Edward Delker, William Boyd Delker and Thomas Mason Delker.

The fifth daughter was Emma Barron who married Benjamin Poindexter. They had no

children.

The sixth daughter was Mary Lou Barron who married W. W. Owen. Their children were Thomas B. Owen, Jesse L. Owen and W. W. Owen, Jr., who lives on his grandfather Barron's home place on the Veatch road. It is a part of an original survey made here for George Mason of Gunston Hall. This land has been owned by George Mason's descendants since the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Children of the late Thomas B. Owen, Sr., are Rear Admiral Thomas Barron Owen of Seattle, Washington and Chevy Chase, Md., and Mrs. T. F. (Mary Sue Owen) Bruner of Seattle. Admiral Owen has two sons and two daughters. Mrs. Bruner has no children.

Mrs. D. S. (Mary Owen) Vester of Norfolk, Va., and Mrs. H. W. (Nancy Owen) Woodhouse of Norfolk, are daughters of the late Jesse Owen and Virginia Stuart Owen. The Vesters have two daughters and the Woodhouses have one son and two daughters.

The only son of Thomas Mason Barron and Penelope McFarland Barron was William Thomas Barron who was married to Sarah Field, a daughter of Larkin Field, in 1882. They were the parents of Thomas Mason Barron II, William Barron and John Field Barron.

Thomas Mason Barron II was the father of Thomas Mason (Tommy) Barron, Jr., William Eilbeck Barron, who moved to Madisonville, Edward C. Barron of Brooklyn, New York, John Sim Barron, Benjamin Field Barron, the late Joseph Phelon Barron, and the late Mary Barron Hilton Saxon. She was the first wife of Conrad Hilton, one of the leading figures in the hotel world. Mary Barron and Conrad Hilton had three sons, Nicky Hilton who was the first husband of movie star Elizabeth Taylor, Barron Hilton and Eric Hilton.

Children of the late William Barron were Miss Mary Noel Barron of the staff of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill., Jarred Mason Barron and his children, Mrs. Michael P. (Elizabeth Dickey) Sopchak, Jr., William Griffin Barron, John Field Barron and Sally Noel Barron; the late James Barron, whose children are James William Barron and Robert Noel Barron; James William Barron, whose children are Kimberly Ann Barron, Chris Ann Barron and David Barron; and Robert Noel Barron whose children are Robert Barron, Jr., and Cindy Barron.

The late John Field Barron moved to Hattiesburg, Mississippi. His only son was the late Elliott Barron.

Descendants of Virginia Mason Barron, a granddaughter of George Mason of Gunston Hall, include Henry Pardon and Oliver Pardon; Dr. Frank Pardon and Mrs. William (Jean) Skillman, who are children of Henry Pardon; Dr. Henry H. Pardon, Frank Pardon, Jr., and Ann Pardon, children of Dr. Frank Pardon; William Raymond Skillman, Jon Alan Skillman and Janice Skillman, children of Mrs. William Skillman; Louis Pardon, Allen Pardon and Mrs. John (Ruth) Colvin, children of Oliver Pardon; Charles Ralph, and Mrs. Charles (Melvina) Monahan, children of the late Mrs. Ditzler (Pardon) Ralph, and Mrs. Melvina Kennedy Cain.

#### George W. Mason Lived Here

George W. Mason, the grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall, lived near Owensboro for at least 25 years but today he is a forgotten man in his adopted county.

The 1883 Daviess County History merely mentioned that he died and made no reference to his life or famous ancestor.

Inscribed on his tombstone in the St. Lawrence Church cemetery in Eastern Daviess county is this brief biographical sketch:

"The Grave of George W. Mason. Born at Hollin Hall in the county of Fairfax, Virginia, May 4, 1791. Died at Clifton Lodge in the County of Daviess, Kentucky, June 11, 1855."

Beyond that and the fact that his daughter, Frederica Mason, married John P. Devereux, a lawyer who served as circuit judge here in 1851, the story of his life is obscure.

His arrival here was apparently sometime prior to August 6, 1830 when "George Mason and his wife of the county of James City, Virginia," deeded to him their interest in tracts or parcels of land "originally supposed to contain 60,000 acres." Records of deeds in the Daviess county clerk's office provide this clue.

The Kentucky tax records for Daviess county for the year 1831, which are on microfilm at the Kentucky Historical Society library in Frankfort, show that he owned land on the Ohio river, had 21 slaves, 24 horses, and one carriage, with a total taxable value of \$5,115.00. The assessment specified that there was only one "white male on the premises," undoubtedly Mason, himself.

Three years later his assessment listed 2,420 acres of land on the Ohio river, plus other assets with a total evaluation of \$21,312.00. The land was east of Owensboro and west of Yellow creek, where the Green River Steel mill and Dewey and Almy chemical plant were built in the mid-twentieth century.

By 1837 the assessment had increased to \$27,300.00.

#### Owned Land and Slaves

After that George W. Mason's land holdings decreased but the value of his property increased. In 1852 he had 1,491 acres (a shrinkage of 929 acres since 1834), thirteen slaves, 10 horses, and twelve head of cattle, all valued at \$28,500.00.

In 1855, the year of his death, Mason again listed 1,491 acres of land at \$29,820.00, fourteen slaves, nine horses, eight mules, 25 head of cattle, gold and silver plate worth \$250.00; silver, gold, watches and clocks valued at \$200.00, carriages, etc., valued at \$400.00, making a grand total assessment of \$36,032.00. There was still only one "white male over 21" listed.

The fact that he assessed silver and gold plate and owned carriages gives some insight into the gracious manner of life at Clifton Lodge, which is said to have had a widow's walk on top from which the Ohio river could be seen for miles, and from which he could view his private steamboat landing.

Some of George W. Mason's land was possibly sold to raise money with which to pay a claim made against his inheritance by other heirs of George Mason of Gunston Hall. Court records show he borrowed \$4,900 from Philip Triplett, early Owensboro congressman, attorney and land dealer, in 1841, giving Triplett a mortgage on Clifton Lodge which was described in the legal instrument as "the plantation" on which Mason lived. Six years later Mason sold 600 acres of his land fronting on the Ohio river and bordered by Yellow creek, to James D. Adams, Eliza Hobbs and John Snyder for \$8,462.

#### Clifton Lodge Burns

In 1856, the year after Mason's death, his widow, Mrs. Mary Ann (Patton) Mason, his daughter, Mrs. Frederica Devereux, and his son-in-law, John P. Devereux, sold 710 acres of land to Thomas H. Crutcher and Burr H. Crutcher for \$24,771.38. This was the Clifton Lodge property, then described as being about four miles above Owensboro on the Ohio river and on Yellow creek.

Clifton Hall was destroyed by fire on January 23, 1869. Another residence was built on the location and stood until after the Green River Steel plant was built. For a while the old Crutcher residence, then known as the Chip Gerteisen place, was used as an office by the steel mill.

John Devereux and Frederica Mason were married on December 2, 1843 by the pastor of St. Stephen's Catholic church, who signed the marriage return on the license, "W. S. Coomes",

using no clerical title.

Devereux's political career started upward from that date. The next year he spoke at a meeting of the Daviess County Clay Club, and in 1846 was elected a member of the Kentucky house of representatives. Five years later he became circuit judge but soon gave up this office.

The Devereux family left Owensboro in 1859, moving to Kansas City where he joined the legal staff of the Union Pacific railroad. By 1878 he was a resident of Denver.

Hollin Hall, the Virginia estate on which George W. Mason was born a year and five months before his grandfather expired at Gunston Hall, had been owned by the Mason family since 1720 or earlier. George Mason of Gunston Hall inherited it from his father and he, in turn, gave it to his son, Thomson Mason, when he married Sarah Chichester.

The Hollin all land was on the Potomac river near Alexandria, Virginia. It has partly been converted into an attractive sub-division. Originally It adjoined George Washington's Mt. Vernon.

George Mason of Gunston Hall who was described by Thomas Jefferson as "one of our really great men", was a patriot and a devoted parent. It was in keeping with his character that, one of his final wishes was that he could "live to see the American Union firmly fixed, and free government established, and can leave my children but a crust of bread and liberty." If he could do this, he said he would "die satisfied, and say with the Psalmist, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace'."

And so he departed from life, in peace, on a Sunday afternoon—October 7, 1792—at Gunston Hall on the Potomac.



**History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter, Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing, Montgomery, AL, 1974, pages 20-22:**

A grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall, inherited that portion of the family estate on which city of Owensboro was established, was a career soldier whose assignments placed him in contact men of historical note and made him the military go nor of the territory of California during the historic gold rush. He was Brig. Gen. Richard Barnes Mason.

Mason was commissioned a second lieutenant in the 8th United States Infantry on September 2, 1817, twenty-three days afterward became a first lieutenant. Less than two years afterward he was advanced to captain and ten years later became a major.

The Military career of Mason took a pleasant turn on March 4, 1833, when he was transferred from the infantry to the new and glamorous First Dragoons predecessor of the United States cavalry. But this in no way mellowed his caustic disposition or caused him to relax the strict discipline he exercised over the troops and officers under his command.

At Fort Gibson, Arkansas Territory, on the rainy Christmas Eve morning of 1834, young Lieutenant Jefferson Davis learned this when he failed to leave his quarters to answer roll call. Major Mason sent for Davis and gave him an opportunity to explain his absence. Davis cited an army regulation permitting rolls to be called in rainy weather in quarters by chiefs of squads.

Mason was incensed. He reminded the future United States Senator, United States Secretary of War, and the President of the Confederate States of America, that his orders were for all officers to attend the reveille roll call in their respective companies. Lieut. Davis then, according to Mason's official report of the incident, turned and walked off in a contemptuous manner, "saying at the same time, 'Hm' ".

This was more than the major could take. He ordered Davis back and told him to consider himself under house arrest.

At his court martial trial in Memphis the following March on a charge of "conduct subversive of good order and military discipline," Jefferson Davis entered a plea of not guilty and complained of "the harshness of Major Mason's manner to subordinates". Davis described Mason as having a "jaundiced eye of passion" and a "haughty tone" of voice. These and other countercharges used in his defense apparently impressed the military court sufficiently that it returned a conditional verdict of guilty which was the equivalent of not guilty. Three and a half months after the trial, realizing the verdict would constitute a black mark on his military record and retard his chances of future advancement, Jefferson Davis resigned from the regular army.

Major Mason was later required to defend himself before a court of inquiry after Lieut. Lucius Ballinger Northrop charged him with three offenses and listed fifteen specifications including "arbitrary and oppressive conduct", and "conduct unbecoming to a gentleman and a commanding officer." The court ruled in favor of Mason, concluding that the charges "had their origin in a spirit of recrimination. . . furnishing evidence of temper far from creditable to the party who indulges in it."

Neither his failure to win a full conviction in the Jefferson Davis trial nor his own court of inquiry adversely affected Mason's military career. On July 4, 1836, he was advanced to the rank of lieutenant colonel and sent to Fort Des Moines, Iowa, where he wrote "a town has been laid off at this place and lots sold." Perhaps this reminded him of the acreage already laid off in town lots which he had sold at Owensboro, Kentucky, fourteen years before to Robert Triplett.

Lieut. Col. Mason's promotion came five months and one week after the 40-year-old military martinet had taken as his bride, 14-year-old Elizabeth Margaret Hunter, the daughter of J. W. Hunter of Augusta, Georgia.

On October 15, 1836, their first daughter, Emma Twiggs Mason was born and on August 20, 1838, their second daughter arrived. She was named Elizabeth Mary Ann Sally Mason but would be known throughout most of her long life as "Nanny."

In anticipation of war with Mexico, the need for a larger regular army was seen by the federal government, and Lieut. Col. Mason was sent to New York early in the Spring of 1846 on recruiting duty. War was declared on May 13, and Col. Stephen W. Kearney was promoted to brigadier general on June 30, 1846. Mason became a full colonel and succeeded to the command of the First Dragoons effective the same day. The First Dragoons were ordered to move West. They saw some service in New Mexico but by January of 1847 were in Los Angeles.

Mexico, faced with defending its homeland from invading United States troops, paid slight attention to its California territory. On February 12, 1847, Colonel Mason arrived in San Francisco with orders that General Kearney was to have undisputed authority over the province of California, as military governor. This ended a period of confusion during which Lieut. Col. Fremont had disputed Kearney's authority. Fremont had wielded power at Los Angeles and Kearney at San Francisco. After Mason's arrival a period of stable military government began. On May 31 Kearney named Col. Mason as his successor as military governor and started overland for St. Louis. Col. Mason found his hands full of trouble almost from the day of his arrival in California.

First, the hot tempered Fremont, pathmaker of the west and later the first presidential nominee of the Republican party, crossed his path. They collided with a resounding bang.

Fremont had been ordered, late in March, to appear before General Kearney in Monterey and made his sensational ride there, a distance of 420 miles, in less than four days. He arrived saddle sore, weary and irritable. When he reported to General Kearney and found Col. Mason

waiting for him with the General, Fremont objected. He requested that he be permitted to make his report to Kearney in private. General Kearney refused the request, and Fremont heatedly asked: "Did you bring him (Mason) to spy upon me?"

Such a question, or accusation, could not be expected to endear him to a man of Colonel Mason's temperament.

Following the meeting, Fremont was ordered to return to Los Angeles and wind up the affairs of his battalion.

Colonel Mason was sent after him early in April to take full charge of the Southern district of California. When Mason arrived he sent his orderly with a formal summons, ordering Fremont to report for an interview. A sentry was on duty and refused Mason's messenger admission. On a third attempt the messenger was able to deliver the summons, and by the time Fremont appeared before Mason, the senior officer was in no conciliatory mood.

An angry outburst followed, during which Mason accused Fremont of being insolent and threatened to arrest and put him in irons.

Fremont demanded an apology which Mason refused to make. Fremont then challenged Mason to a duel, and Mason accepted. Having the choice of weapons, Mason specified double-barrel shot guns.

Fremont requested that Mason give him the satisfaction at his earliest convenience, and Mason assured him he would remain ready and willing. But Fremont was soon ordered to return East and was on his way before the shotgun duel could be fought.

Evidence that General Mason remained in readiness was provided three years later when he sent Fremont, then about to become United States senator from the new state of California, a message that he was in St. Louis and would gladly oblige him there at any time.

Fremont did not respond.

Mason's death on July 25, 1850, brought an honorable, and perhaps to Fremont, a welcome end to the incident.

Two young army officers, Lieutenant William T. Sherman whose fame would be earned seventeen years later by his capture of Atlanta followed by his electrifying march to the sea, and Lieutenant Henry Wagner Halleck who would succeed McClellan as Lincoln's top general early in the Civil war and then go into military eclipse, were assigned to assist Colonel Mason when General Kearney turned the government and military responsibilities over to him.

Sherman became Mason's adjutant, and Halleck became the commandant's chief aide on the political front as acting secretary of state.

In the spring of 1848 two men came to Monterey to see Colonel Mason. Lieut. Sherman met with them and was sufficiently impressed by their mission to give them immediate access to the military governor. They had a half-ounce of placer gold that had been found near a saw mill in the Sierra Nevadas.

A Captain Sutter owned the land on which the yellow metal had been discovered while a race was being dug for a new mill. He wanted to establish a claim to another quarter-section of land, but Colonel Mason told him he was compelled to deny the request, because California was still under Mexican law and would be until the United States could set up a civil government.

At first Mason was inclined to give little thought to the gold strike, but within a few weeks could n brush it aside. Men were finding more gold in the mountain streams and along the pathways. Members of the First Dragoons were deserting to seek their fortunes, and ships had to anchor well off-shore along the northern California coast to keep from losing their crews and being stranded. By August of 1848 the shortage military manpower had become so acute Lieut. Sherman

wrote home that "Colonel Mason is cooking meals."

In another letter Sherman said, "Colonel Mason went to the Sacramento river to examine into the truth of the rumors that were swelling each day the amount of gold found there. I, of course accompanied him, and we had an agreeable tour by way of San Francisco..."

"We spent many days at Sutter's fort and were at the first Fourth of July dinner ever given publicly at the fort. Sutter presided at the head of the table, Governor Mason on his right and I on his left. About fifty sat down to the table, mostly Americans, some foreigners, and one or two Californians. The usual toasts, songs, speeches, etc., passed off, and a liberal quantity of liquor disposed of, champagne, Madeira, sherry, etc... I have no doubt it cost the givers \$1,500 or \$2,000. At Sutter's we began to see the full effect of the gold; rooms in the fort were rented at \$100 a month, and one indifferent house at \$500 a month..."

The strain of being military governor of a new territory, with no authority from Congress to provide a legal civil government and much difficulty in keeping troops under gold-rush conditions, began to tell on General Mason's health. On November 24, 1848, he requested a transfer to his home base, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. His replacement arrived on April 13, 1849. A year and a quarter later he died at Jefferson Barracks at the age of 54.

General Mason's widow was married to Major Carlos Buell on November 19, 1851. During the Civil War he became a major general and following the conflict moved to Muhlenberg county, Kentucky, when the former Mrs. Mason lived the remainder lives.

(A more detailed and annotated biographical sketch of General Richard Barnes Mason, written by Hugh O. Potter, appeared in Volume 69, Number 1, of The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, dated January 1971.)

(In The Beginning, written by Hugh O. Potter and published in Owensboro in 1968, contains additional detailed information on George Mason, Col. John Banister, James Madison and David Ross).



**History of Daviess County, Kentucky**  
**Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1883:**

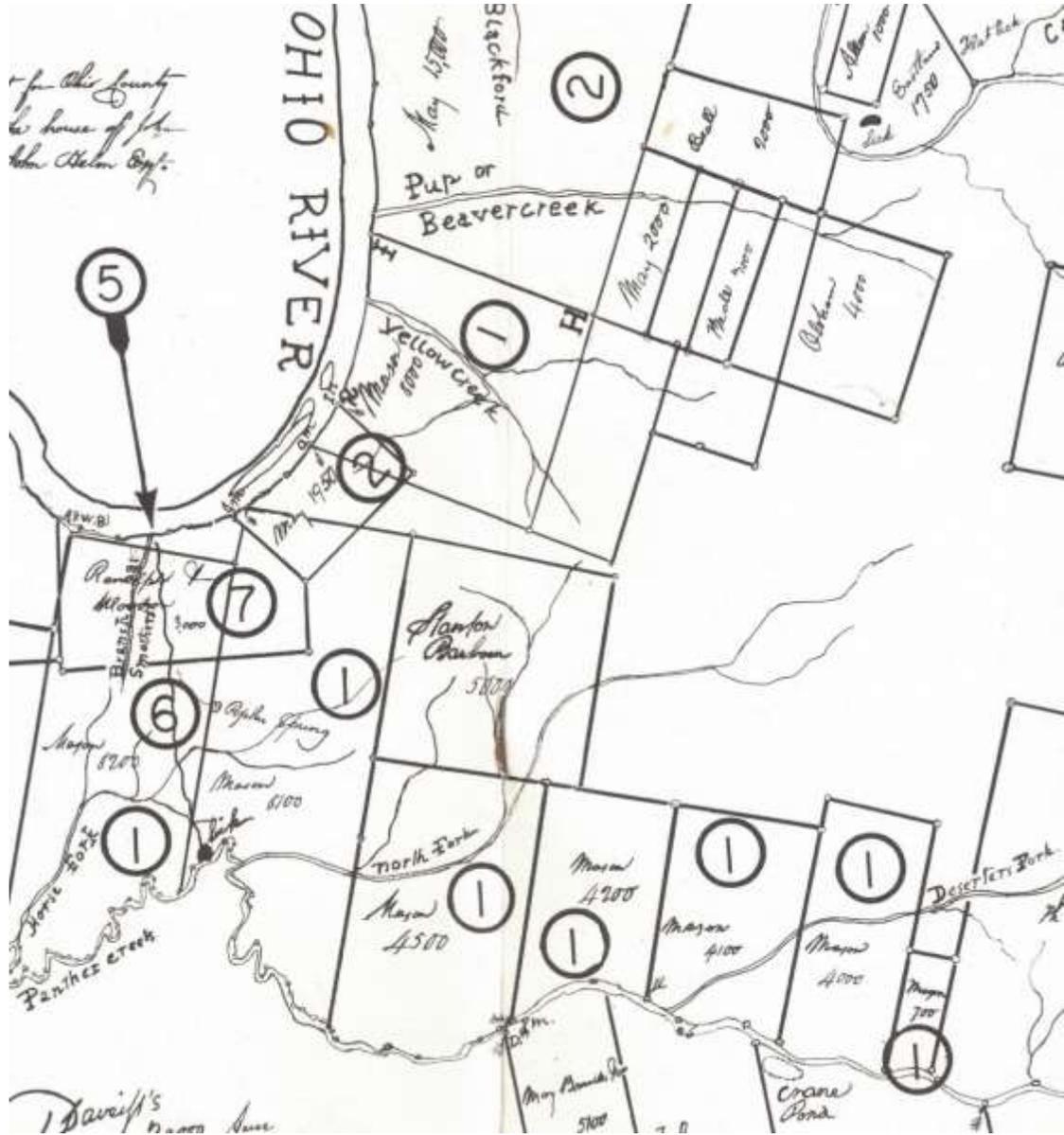
Page 658: The village and precinct of Masonville derive their name from Mr. Mason, the original owner of the village plat. The first village was laid off' by Judge Triplett...

Page 663: MASONVILLE is a village of ten or twelve houses, situated on the Hartford road, in the forks of Panther Creek, near the southwest portion of Masonville Precinct. It contains one general store, kept by Henry F. Carpenter, one blacksmith and wagon shop, three churches, and a lodge of F. & A. Masons. A postoffice was established there in 1857, with Henry F. Carpenter as Postmaster. Mr. Carpenter served four years and was succeeded by John Lee, who was com-missioned in 1861, serving but a short time when he was succeeded by James R. Cady. For a time during the war it was discontinued. The present Postmaster is H. F. Carpenter.

**Kentucky Place Names, Robert M. Rennick,**  
**The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1984, pp.190-191:**

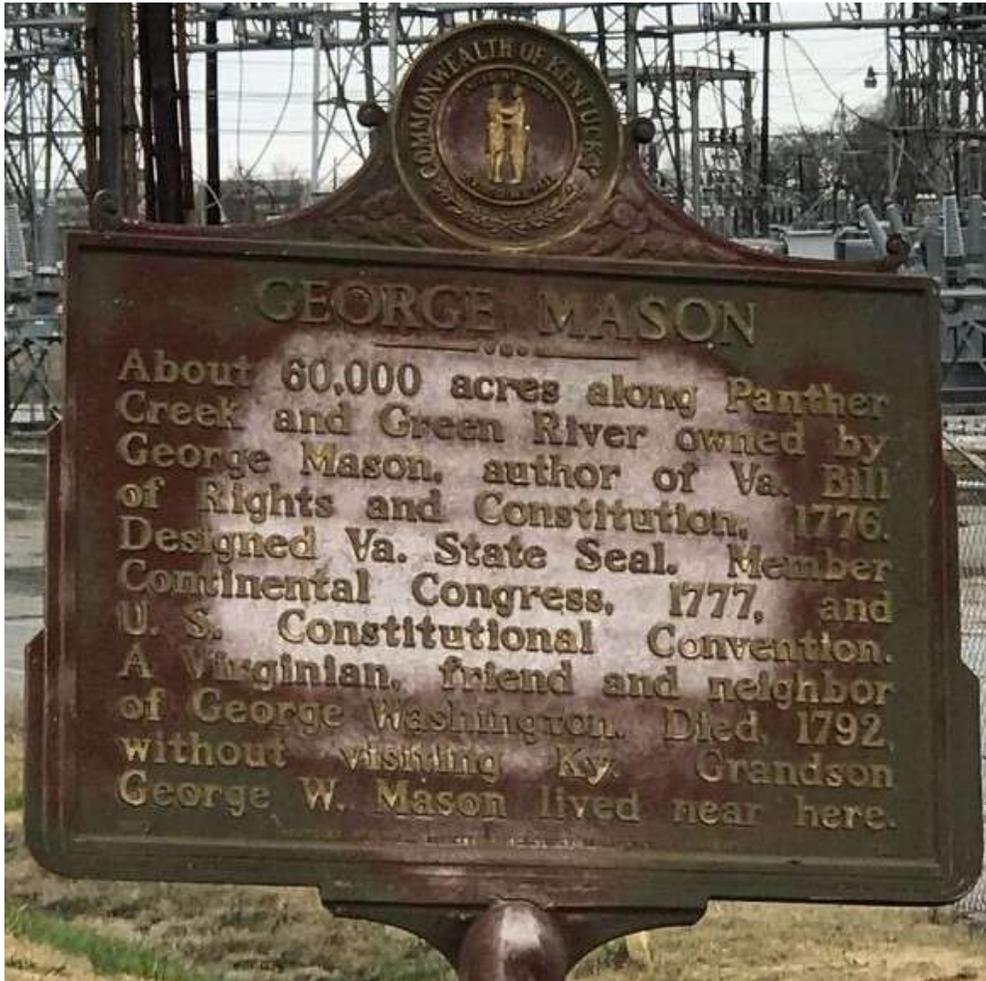
**Masonville** (Daviess): This hamlet extends north on US 231 for about 1 ½ miles from its junction with Lashbrook Road, about 5 miles south-southeast of Owensboro. Settled shortly after

the War of 1812, it was laid out as a town by Judge Triplett ... The Masonville post office was established on August 21, 1856, with Henry F. Carpenter, postmaster, and closed in 1907. At some unknown location another Masonville post office was begun by Samuel Haynes on July 16, 1842. Eight years later it was moved to and/or renamed Fillmore, and with this name was in operation until December 1855.



September 1806 map of some of the early land surveys in Daviess County, KY; published in booklet, *In The Beginning: Historical Facts About the Earliest Days of Present Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky*, Hugh O. Potter, 1968, p16A. Labeled “1” are surveys of George Mason (1725-1792). Mason’s grandson, George W. Mason (1791-1855), settled on the 8,000-acre

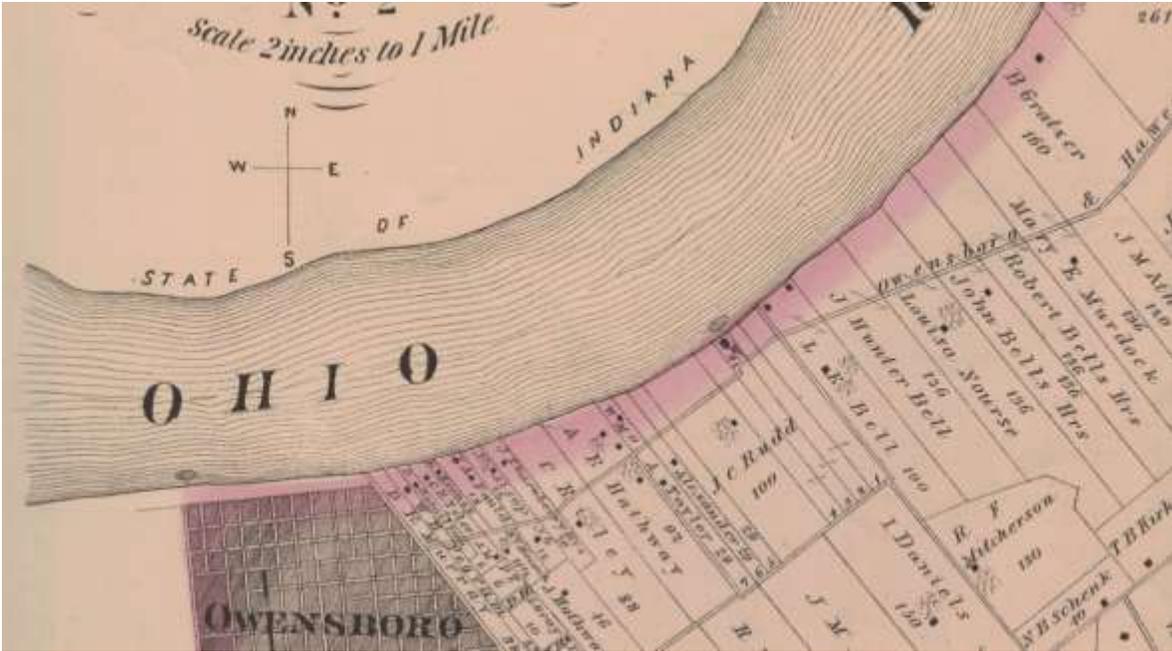
survey on Ohio River a short distance below Pup Creek and the family of his granddaughter, Leannah Mason Barron (1798-1826), settled on a 8,200-acre survey (bottom right) on north side of Panther Creek near Horse Fork Creek.



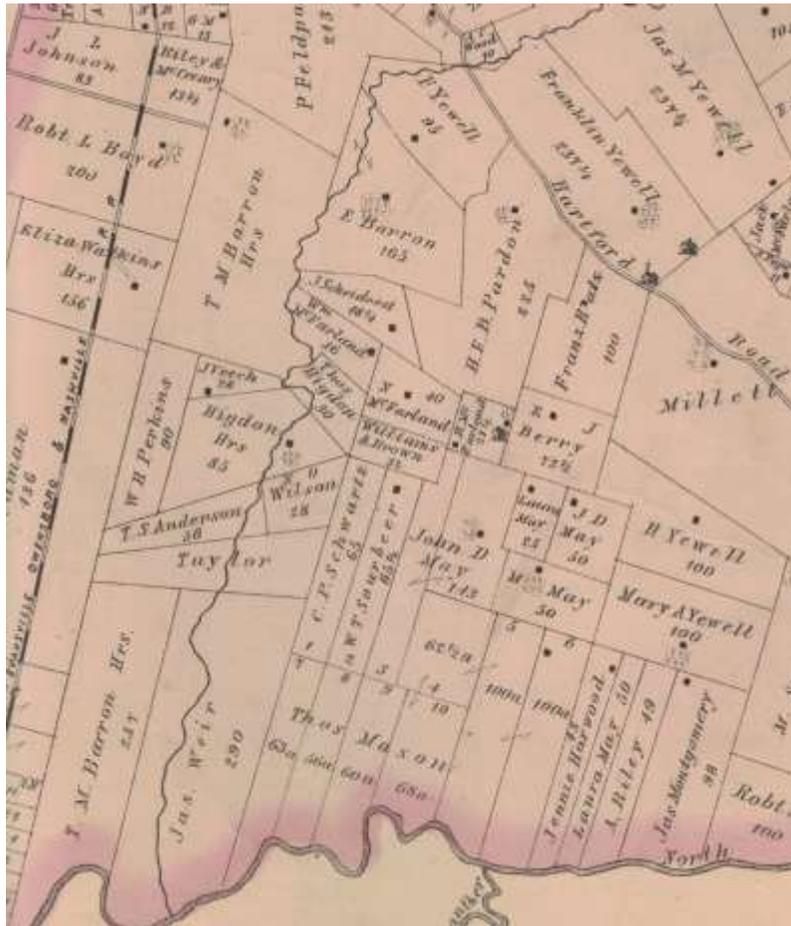
Marker is near Owensboro, Kentucky, in Daviess County. Marker is on State Road 2830, 0.1 miles north of Ellis Smeathers Road (County Road 1091), on the right when traveling north. Inscription: “About 60,000 acres along Panther Creek and Green River owned by George Mason, author of Va. Bill of Rights and Constitution, 1776. Designed Va. State Seal. Member Continental Congress, 1777, and U.S. Constitutional Convention. A Virginian, friend and neighbor of George Washington. Died, 1792, without visiting Kentucky. Grandson George W. Mason lived near here.”



**Plat of the Uppertown Precinct from the Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, KY.  
Leo McDonough & Co., 1876, page 38:**



Benedict Gratzler farm (160 acres) in upper right corner was formerly the Clifton Lodge farm of George W. Mason (1791-1855). Gratzler in 1872 purchased it from Thomas H. Crutcher, who acquired it from Mason's heirs in 1856.

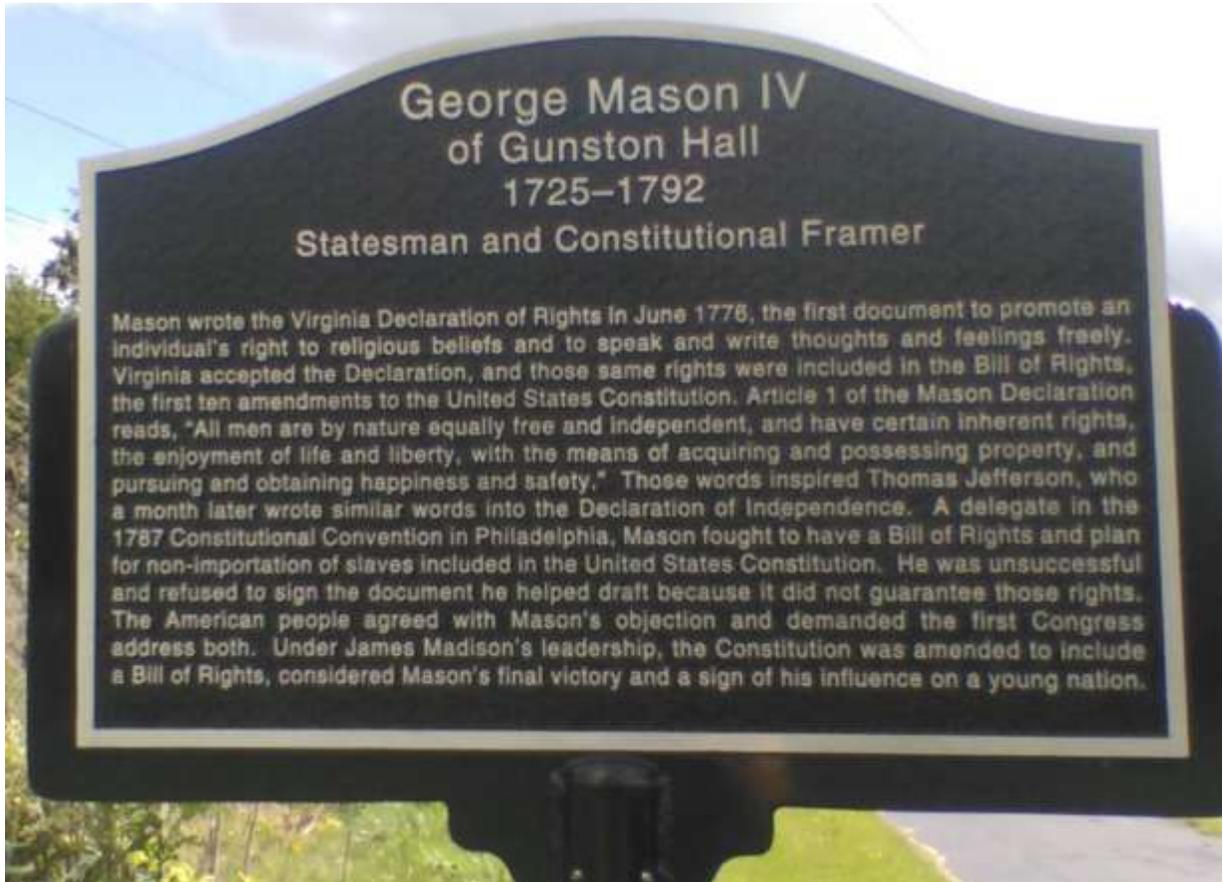


George Mason descendants owned several tracts of land on plat between the Old Hartford Road, Burlew Boulevard, J. R. Miller Boulevard and North Panther Creek – tracts labeled T. M. Barron heirs (257 acres), Thomas Mason (63 a., 56 a., 60 a., 68 a., 62 a., 100 a., 100 a.), H. B. P. Pardon (225), E. Barron (165) and T. M. Barron heirs (acreage not listed).



On 24 October 2003 the following marker was dedicated on the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt in Owensboro. It is several hundred feet south of Byers Avenue and east of the Veach Road and the Owensboro Country Club Golf Course. When the City of Owensboro negotiated the purchase of an easement along this land for the Greenbelt, the Mason heirs never sold it, but instead leased it to the City of Owensboro for 100 years.

side one:

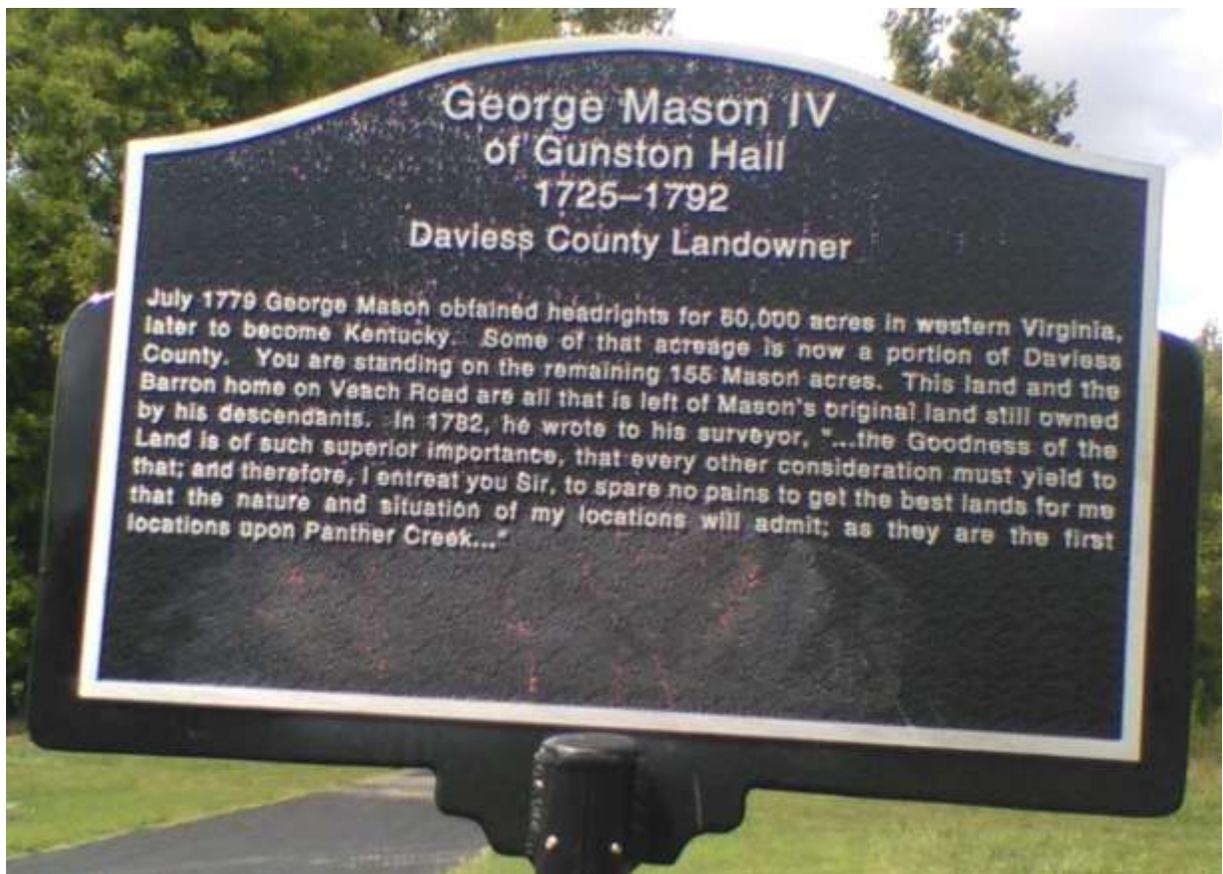


George Mason IV  
of Gunston Hall  
1725-1792  
Statesman and Constitutional Framers

Mason wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights in June 1776, the first document to promote an individual's right to religious beliefs and to speak and write thoughts and feelings freely. Virginia

accepted the Declaration, and those same rights were included in the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. Article 1 of the Mason Declaration reads: "All men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." Thomas words inspired Thomas Jefferson, who a month later wrote similar words into the Declaration of Independence. A delegate in the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia Mason fought to have a Bill of Rights and plan for non-importation of slaves included in the United States Constitution. He was unsuccessful and refused to sign the document he helped to draft because it did not guarantee those rights. The American people agreed with Mason's objection and demanded the first Congress address both. Under James Madison's leadership, the Constitution was amended to include a Bill of Rights, considered Mason's final victory and a sign of his influence on a young nation.

side two:



George Mason IV  
of Gunston Hall  
1725-1792  
Daviess County Landowner

July 1779 George Mason obtained headrights for 60,000 acres in western Virginia, later to become Kentucky. Some of that acreage is now a portion of Daviess County. You are standing on the remaining 155 Mason acres. This land and the Barron home on Veach Road are all that is left of

Mason's original land still owned by his descendants. In 1782 he wrote to his surveyor, "...the Goodness of the Land is of such superior importance, that every other consideration must yield to that; and therefore, I entreat you Sir, to spare no pains to get the best lands for me that the nature and situation of my locations will admit; as they are the first locations upon Panther Creek..."



## Owensboro, KY Newspapers Articles

Owensboro Bulletin, 13 January 1843, p.4 – land for sale by George W. Mason five miles above Yellow Banks (Owensboro)

Owensboro Monitor, 21 November 1866, p.3 – Thomas M. Barron, age 48, died of typhoid fever on 9 November 1866 at his home in Daviess County

Owensboro Monitor, 9 January 1867, p.3 – [abstract] sale of the land of the estate of Thomas M. Barron on the plank road 2 miles south of Owensboro on January 17 by his administratrix, Penelope Barron, including tracts of 80 & 100 acres, "under good fence, with a good hewed log House."

Owensboro Messenger, 26 February 1900, p.5 – [abstract] five farms four miles south of Owensboro known as the Mason lands are for sale; farms of J. H. Wagner (100 acres), Peter Wagner (100 acres), Levi Rowan (90 acres), Ben Yewell (110 acres) and Sam Huebt (50 acres)

Owensboro Inquirer, 14 October 1900, p.1 – [abstract] Henry Francis Bates Pardon died 13 October 1900 at his farm on the Hartford Road three miles from Owensboro; son of William & Mary Pardon, he was born 19 July 1819 at Plymouth, Devon County, England; learned printing & stenographer's trade in England, served as official reporter in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords; came to the US in 1845 or 1846; served as a reporter in the US House of Representatives & in the Senate; married Miss Virginia Catherine Mason Barron on 30 April 1851, daughter of William & Leannah Barron and sister of William & Eilbeck Barron; took his family to England, where they lived until after the Civil War when he returned to take charge of the farm where he died, his wife had inherited it as a descendant of Col. George Mason, of Gunston Hall, Fairfax County, VA, who is famous as the author of the Virginia Bill of Rights; had 6 children, two are deceased, Ebenezer & Leannah; survived by sons, Francis Henry Pardon & Philip Victor Pardon, daughters, Mrs. Isaac (Laura) Kennady & Emily Hanson Pardon; buried at Elmwood Cemetery in Owensboro

Owensboro Messenger, 4 September 1904, p.9 – "Pioneers of Daviess County", by W. W. Cavin:

... George W. Mason moved to this county about 1830, and settled on Yelvington creek, where Lee Castlen now lives. He was a Virginian and was considered the only real bought-up-and-and-fetched-down aristocracy in the country, as he owned the only carriage in the country – it was a handsome one-thousand-dollar affair, and as heavy as a four-horse wagon. Boys would go for

miles to the "big road" on Sundays to see it pass, and make bets as to whether the hind wheels wouldn't run over the front ones, and then go out in the road to inspect its tracks. Mrs. Mason was a zealous Catholic, and when funds were needed to build a new church at St Lawrence, near Knottsville, she rode horseback all over the Green river country, soliciting contributions, and the success of the effort was mainly due to her faithful work...

Owensboro Inquirer, 28 June 1905, p5 – [abstract] Thomas Barron & Mayme Mulligan were married on 27 June 1905 at the home of the bride at Sorgho, bride is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. J. S. Mulligan and groom is the son of Will Barron. See also: Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 18 September 1969, p.7A ("Owensboroan's Grandson Receives National Note", the late daughter of Mrs. Mayme Mulligan Barron, of Owensboro, Mary Barron Hilton, was the wife of Conrad Hilton, president of Hilton Hotels, Mrs. Barron's grandson, Barron Hilton, age 41, was made president of Hilton Hotels in 1966) and Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 12 March 2014, p.1B ("Owensboro native was first wife to Hilton Hotels founder")

Owensboro Messenger, 5 December 1905, p.2 – "Prominent Woman: Mrs. Virginia Pardon Dies at Home of Son-in-Law":

Mrs. Virginia Catherine Mason Pardon died at the residence of her son-in-law, Mr. Isaac Kennady, Sunday morning, December 3. The deceased was born in Prince Williams county, Virginia in 1823. She was eighty-two years of age at the time of her death.

She was a great grand-daughter of the Hon. George Mason, of Gunston, Hall, a neighboring estate to Mt. Vernon. Va. Mr. Mason was the author of the Virginia bill of rights.

Mrs. Pardon was named for her native state. Her early years were spent in and around Washington city, where she was associated with many of the illustrious characters of her day.

After her marriage to H. F. B. Pardon, an Englishman, she went with him to England, where they resided for a time, returning after some years to the states. They came to Kentucky to make their home on her estate inherited from her Mason ancestry.

She was the mother of six children, four of whom survive her, Mrs. Isaac Kennady, Miss Emily Pardon, Mr. F. H. Pardon and Mr. P. V. Pardon.

The funeral services were held at the residence of Mr. Kennady at 10 o'clock Monday morning, Rev. Mr. Gabby officiating. The interment was at Elmwood.

[See also and Owensboro Inquirer, 4 December 1905, p.5 – "Mrs. Pardon Dead: She Was a Woman of Rare Traits and Illustrious Connections"]

Owensboro Messenger, 14 August 1921, p.1B – "Captain Holmes Has Seen Owensboro Grow Into City: Aged Veteran of Two Wars Talks of Olden Times":

... Frederica was the first street to have a name. It was named for Miss Frederica Mason, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Mason, prominent people of Owensboro. Miss Frederica had just returned, a graduate from a school abroad, and

T. W. Watkins. father of the late P. T. Watkins, who had just come from Baltimore, gave the prominent street of the town her name. This was the only street named until the 50's or 60's ...

... During his early life in Owensboro there were no churches, and all preaching was done in the courthouse by itinerant preachers. The Baptists attended services at Rock Springs church, near Yelvington; the Cumberland Presbyterians at Rev. Samuel Calhoun's, southwest of the town; the Methodist fit Mr. Beckley's place, on the Leitch field road; the Catholics at George Mason's, five miles above town and Mr. Coomes, three miles below town. Rev. Father Durbin would make stops on his regular trips from Bardstown to Uniontown ...

Owensboro Messenger, 14 June 1931, p.1B & 9B – "Old River Road of Long Ago Recalled", by C. W. Bransford:

... Leading off the Hawesville Road and down to near the river was a beautiful avenue of honey locust and pecan trees that took you to Clifton Lodge, the residence of Burr Crutcher, formerly the home of George W. Mason, who died June 11, 1855." Crutcher came to Daviess County in 1856 and bought a 610-acre farm. When the house was destroyed by fire Jan. 23, 1869, Crutcher "replaced it with a substantial two-story brick. There was a regular steamboat landing at his place." "On another part of the Mason tract was the residence of John P. Devereux who married Mason's daughter, Frederica. He was circuit judge in 1851, moved to Kansas City in 1859 and entered the railroad business. ...

Owensboro Messenger, 27 September 1931, p.7 – "Birds' Breezy Bits", by L. D. 'Birdie' Gasser:

Dear Birdie: Apropos of the limelight, the young wizard golfer, Eilbeck Barron, is now basking in, it would be appropriate to give a history of his uncommon given name. It comes from his great-great great grandfather, George Mason, of Gunston Hall, who by the way was the author of the Bill of Rights of Virginia. George Mason married Ann Eilbeck. daughter of Sir Wm. Eilbeck, and this young man who will not be 18 years old until next February is named for his maternal grandfather, Wm. Eilbeck. So his name properly spelled and pronounced is Wm. Eilbeck Barron. Is it any wonder then, that backed up by his far away English and Scotch blood and the fighting Irish blood of his mother, who is a Mulligan, he is a fighter and a winner? P. H. B.

Owensboro Messenger, 6 January 1946, p.1B – "George Mason, Author of Bill of Rights, War Ancestor of Several Daviess County Families":

The recent appearance of copies of the Bill of Rights on walls of all Owensboro schools has stimulated an interest in founding fathers of the United States, among whom was an ancestor of several Owensboro families, who figured prominently. His name was George Mason.

R. Miller Holland, local attorney, in a talk before last week's meeting of the Rotary club, gave a biography of George Mason, whose Virginia bill of rights

served as the pattern for the first ten amendments to the federal constitution. Mr. Holland disclosed that upon Mason's death his heirs conveyed to his eldest son, George Mason, lands hi Daviess county, the deed being recorded in the clerks office of the Daviess county court. His biography of George Mason follows:

"George Mason, citizen, statesman and philosopher in the early days of our republic, was born in Fairfax county, Virginia, in 1725. He died at 'Gunston Hall' in his native state in 1792, the year in which Kentucky became a state. He was only sixty-seven years of age and yet few of the founding fathers of this nation bore a more heroic and important part in the economic, political and spiritual progress of our country.

"At the time of his death, George Mason was the wealthiest man in Virginia. He owned a thousand slaves. Fifteen thousand acres of Virginia land surrounded his home of 'Gunston Hall'. He owned eighty thousand acres of land in Kentucky, a vast estate in Ohio, he had fifty thousand dollars in cash and one hundred thousand dollars to the credit of his account in various projects in which he was interested. He owed nothing. He owned and chartered ships sailing from the shores of Virginia and Maryland and red in the carrying trade between the colonies both north and south to England, France and the West Indies. Three of these ships bore the names of 'Washington,' 'Augusta,' and ' Confidence.'

"As a rule the men of wealth at that time were favorable to the British government, which had enabled them to amass great fortunes. They were content with the rule of the English king and were opposed to the revolution. This was not true of George Mason. He was among the very first to declare for independence and take up the cause of liberty. The revolutionist is usually a man who has nothing to lose and everything to gain by public tumult and the overturning of long established social and political institutions. But this man was wealthy, highly educated, socially powerful and politically influential. He risked all that he had, including his life, that be might gain for himself and posterity a free country and a people's government.

"In 1750 George Mason married Ann Eilbeck, the daughter of William Eilbeck of Maryland, a wealthy planter. Tradition says that she was the famous 'Lowland Beauty' who captivated the affections of George Washington, then a young man and neighbor and friend of George Mason. About the time of his marriage, he began the building of 'Gunston Hall' naming it in honor of his ancestral Home in Staffordshire, England. It required three years to build his house, and much of the material was brought from England and Scotland. He occupied this home for more than forty years. He had five sons and four daughters. His wife died when she was only thirty-nine years of age. He was a man of deep religious convictions and the first paragraph of his will is indicative of his profound faith in God. It is as follows:

"I, George Mason, of "Gunston Hall," in the parish of Truro and county of Fairfax, being of perfect, and sound mind and memory and in good health, but mindful of the certainty of human life and the imprudence of a man's leaving his affairs to be settled upon a deathbed, do make and appoint this my last will and testament. My soul, I resign into the hands of my Almighty Creator, whose tender

mercies are over all his works, who hateth nothing that he hath made and to the Justice and Wisdom of whose dispensation I willingly and cheerfully submit, humbly hoping from his unbounded mercy and benevolence through the merits of my blessed Savior, a remission of my sins.'"

"He was buried in the cemetery at 'Gunston Hall' and for nearly an hundred years no stone marked his last resting place. A simple monument was finally erected over his grave by the Sons of the American Revolution.

"Shortly after his death, and in order to facilitate the settlement of his estate, his children conveyed their lands in Kentucky to his eldest son, George Mason. That deed is dated June 21. 1794, and is recorded in Deed Book 'A' at page 210, in the Clerk's Office of the Daviess County Court. Subsequently deeds of division were made so that the children acquired their separate interests in the Kentucky lands. Thomas Mason is named in this deed as one of the sons of George Mason. He was the father of Lee Anna Mason, who married William Barron. Their son, Thomas Mason Barron, became the owner by inheritance of a large tract of land in Daviess County just beyond Legion Park. He married Penelope Morton McFarland, and among his descendants who are now living in Owensboro are William Owen, Mrs. Penelope Evans, Hamilton Alexander, Mrs. Emma Delker, Barron Lewis, C. C. Lewis and William Barron and the children of Thomas Barron, one of whom is named Eilbeck Barron, evidently deriving his name from the family name of the wife of George Mason.

"Colonel Mason was co-author with Thomas Jefferson of the statute for religious freedom in Virginia. In this day of religious independence, it is difficult for us to envision what a tremendous political step it for the State of Virginia to deliver itself from an established church supported by taxation, and say to every citizen that there should be no further governmental supervision of his conscience that he might support his church or not do so as he pleased. Similar statutes are now in all the states and the federal constitution guarantees that there shall never be any restraint upon the right of an American citizen to choose his own method of worship or to choose none at all.

"The Virginia bill of rights was almost entirely the work of George Mason and it served as the pattern for the first ten amendments to our federal constitution. The Virginia bill contained thirteen articles and its preamble is as follows:

"A declaration of rights made by the representatives of the good people of Virginia assembled in full and free convention; which rights do pertain to them and their posterity as the basis and foundation of government.'"

It would unnecessarily lengthen this story to quote the Virginia articles, but it will be sufficient to say that they provided for a speedy trial by jury; that the accused should be confronted by the witnesses against him; that excessive bail should never be required nor cruel or inhuman punishments inflicted; that there should be freedom of speech and of the press and that soldiers should not be quartered in private homes in time of peace; that the legislative, executive and judicial powers of government should be separate; and that religion or the duty which we owe our creator and the manner of discharging it can be directed only by

reason and conviction, not by force or violence, and therefore, all men have an equal, natural and unalienable right to the free exercise of religion according to the dictate of conscience and that no religious sect ought to be favored or established by law in preference to others.

"A few days after the adoption of the bill of rights by the State of Virginia, as written by the hand of George Mason, the first ten amendments to the federal constitution were offered as a charter of liberty intended always to keep government in the hands of the people and to guard the rights of the individual against encroachment of any ruling class. The very language of the amendments to the federal constitution is almost identical with the Virginia bill of rights. To George Mason more than to any other person not excepting Thomas Jefferson, is due the credit for the protection to life, liberty and property which the American citizen has even against the power of his own nation. George Mason was a member of the Continental Congress that drafted the constitution. He fought for the bill of rights and won; but he also fought for an amendment to the constitution which would bring about the gradual abolition of slavery. At the same time, he was the owner of a thousand slaves. In this effort he was unsuccessful and stiff-necked and stubborn as he was, he refused to sign the constitution or to vote in favor of its adoption.

"In these early days of our country's history, it can be truthfully said that among the founding fathers, George Mason created, Thomas Jefferson proclaimed, George Washington executed and John Marshall interpreted.

"Now we have come to a new era. Nations can no longer live alone. International union is now as vital to our existence as national union was in 1776. The great minds of the world are straining to create a workable federation of nations. They have agreed in principle and are moving slowly and carefully toward what is intended to be a permanent organization. It has been determined that the home of the united nations, the capitol of the world federation, shall be in our own land. This is an auspicious beginning. It locates the machinery of peace in the very birthplace of freedom where it can grow and develop in the atmosphere of liberty and justice for all. We should see to it that this international organization should be constantly surrounded with the spiritual posterity of George Mason and those who worked by his side in the inception of our government. The visiting representatives of the united nations must feel constantly the pressure of a political society which he fed upon the principles of free speech, free press and free conscience. Let us not be afraid of being called too generous or a Santa Claus to other nations. Who is there among you in these fearful days when the world is in tears, that would have these United States give stones for bread and scorpions for fish or refuse meat and drink and clothing when the children of the earth are hungry, thirsty and naked or refuse shelter to the stranger nation and decline to visit those who are sick and in prison. May we be careful lest we selfishly forget why our men and women fought and with what purpose they died. Like a breeze that blows through a garden of flowers, come the voices from the battle fields whispering to you and me of a new world – a world tortured by pain and sorrow, beset with false teachers and untried doctrines; but a world regenerated by their death and baptized in their blood. These voices call upon us to dedicate ourselves to the solemn duty of contributing from our treasure and from the spirit of our free government to the building of a new

creed that shall have for its purpose the establishment of the golden rule as a principle of international law and in this vast undertaking may we have the guidance of the great apostle of freedom, George Mason."

Owensboro Messenger, 31 January 1954, p.1D – "Land First Owned By Famed Virginian, Deeded To Son in 1794", by Charlotte Baumgarten (article also published Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 5 October 1965, p.7C):

Audubon slept here. A former owner fought a duel across the river from its location, and slaves lived in its basement. These are some of the fascinating facts about Haphazard Farm, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Delbert J. Glenn.

Possibly the oldest as well as the most completely restored residence in Daviess County, Haphazard sits on a tall, tree-covered hill on East Highway 60, about a mile from the city limits. Rich in heritage and history, it stands on land that first belonged to George Mason of famed Gunston Hall in Fairfax County, near neighbor and long friend of George Washington. Mason acquired the land by grant before Kentucky was admitted to statehood and was still a county of Virginia.

A record showing where the property was conveyed to Mason's son, Richard B. Mason, by other Mason heirs in 1794 is in longhand in one of Daviess County's earliest deed books. The certified copy of the transfer from Virginia records is dated Aug. 7, 1820.

Richard Mason deeded the property, listed as containing "one log dwelling house of two rooms, 20 by 20 feet with a 12 foot passageway between," to Robert Triplett in 1822. It was this owner who enlarged the house to its present dimensions. Also a Virginian, Triplett! came to Daviess County two years earlier and was one of the most enterprising and energetic pioneers in its history. He was a vast land owner, a distiller and founder of a coal mine in Bon Harbor hills that had its own railroad the first in Kentucky... etc.



Historic Old Home – Haphazard Farm on East Highway 60, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Delbert J. Glenn, has known only five owners In the past 134 years. The main portion of the house was built sometime before 1820 by slave labor. East and west wings were added by 1811.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 15 May 1963, p.2B – “Historical Papers of George Mason To Be Published”:

The board of regents of Gunston Hall, a committee of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America, and the Institute of Early American History and Culture, of Williamsburg, will sponsor a project to collect, edit, and publish the historical papers of George Mason, Mrs. George H. Johnson, first regent of Gunston Hall, and Lester J. Cappom, director of the Institute, announced Monday.

Descendants of George Mason live in Owensboro and Daviess County.

Under the Joint agreement, the board of regents of Gunston Hall which administers the home of George Mason, will finance the collecting and editing of Mason's papers, and the Institute will publish them. Professor Robert A. Rutland of the University of California at Los Angeles will assemble and edit the Mason Papers.

On May 15, 1776, the Virginia Revolutionary Convention authorized a committee to draft a Declaration of Rights. As a member of that committee George Mason wrote the Virginia Declaration, which was adopted on June 12, a forerunner of the Federal Bill of Rights. He also wrote a major part of the Constitution of Virginia (1776), one of the first written state constitutions that converted the American colonies into Commonwealth during the war of Independence. Mason later participated in the Constitutional Convention which drafted the Federal Constitution in 1787, but he refused to sign it because it lacked the Bill of Rights.

Rutland is the author of “The Birth of the Bill of Rights” and “George Mason, Reluctant Statesman.” The project is one of several major editorial projects undertaken with the encouragement of the National Historical Publications Commission.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 5 October 1965, p.11C – “President Madison Owned Land Here: Some of the Fiercest Litigation in American History Result Of Land Owned Here By Third U. S. President”:

James Madison, third President of the United States, once owned land in Daviess County which was the object of some of the fiercest litigation in American history.

The complicated story has been partly clarified in a recent six-volume scholarly biography of Madison by historian Irving Brant.

Combining Brant's account with extensive records which survive at the Daviess County Courthouse, many facts, along with a few contradictions and uncertainties, emerge.

It all started in the spring of 1780 when Hancock Lee, a land scout, went into the Western Kentucky wilderness and singled out 8,400 and 8,300 acres for George Mason, 10,000 acres for William Moore, and 10,000 acres for James Madison Sr., father of the future President.

The land was located in what is now Daviess County. All the claims were recorded, the 8,400-acre tract by close description and the others by reference to it.

A few months later, in the autumn of 1780, it was discovered that the key 8,400-acre had been incorrectly described, thus making the entire claim inaccurate. This error was corrected later in a special entry.

The whole 36,700 acres was surveyed in 1783 on the basis of the corrected entry. The partners then paid \$47,000 - the price of the land - to the state of Virginia.

Shortly, one George Wilson entered a claim for 30,000 acres, including all of the erroneously described property of Mason, Moore, and Madison except the corrected entry of 8,400 acres, which he used to describe the remainder.

Wilson then entered caveats against the three, asking the Kentucky Supreme Court (part of the Virginia judiciary) to validate his claim.

At the trial which followed it was established that Wilson was in partnership with Assistant County Surveyor Handley, with whom the original claim had been registered

A fellow-employee of Handley testified that the Wilson entry was made after a study of the Mason, Moore, and Madison survey "in a late hour of the night and that he held the candle to give them light.

George Mason, one of the original claimants and a friend of ; Washington and Jefferson, died in 1792, and the litigation, as a result, was temporarily interrupted. It was renewed, how- however, in federal district court in 1797.

Three years later District Judge Harry Innes ruled Wilson's claim fraudulent. He had had full notice Judge Innes declared, by reason of his partnership with the assistant surveyor, to know he was infringing a recorded claim older than his own.

Wilson, however, appealed to the Supreme Court, engaging Joseph Hamilton Daveiss to argue the case for him. Daveiss, historian Brant comments, was "a protégé of George Nicholas both in law and land piracy."

The case did not seem complicated to Chief Justice John Marshall. Mason's revised entry was a "removal," not an "explanation," therefore did not carry the other entries with it.

The land he said belonged to Wilson under the rule laid down by Lord Kaims that in order to protect himself against a loss a man is free to take advantage of another man's error... [etc.]

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 5 October 1965, p.14C – “Daveiss Won 5,000 Acres Near Owensboro, Fame As A Lawyer In Supreme Court; Wed Justice Marshall’s Sister”:

The Daviess County home of Joseph Hamilton Daveiss, known in the earlier nineteenth century as "Cornland," has a turbulent history much in contrast with the serene antebellum setting of the place.

To discover the beginning threads of Cornland's story, one must look backward to 1780, a year when the American Revolution was still in progress. It was then that the first land grant was filed for property in what is now Daviess County.

George Mason, a Virginia aristocrat, was the first actor in the drama surrounding the estate. He was a friend of George Washington, a member of the

Constitutional Convention, and had the distinction of being regarded by Thomas Jefferson as "one of our really great men, and of the first order of greatness."

It was this important public figure who held altogether more than 60,000 acres in Kentucky and Indiana. One of the properties that Mason claimed was an 8,300-acre tract which years later would include the farm known as Cornland.

The Daviess County land was surveyed for Mason in April, 1780, but this area was then part of the largely uninhabited Western frontier, and the unfamiliar quirks of the terrain played tricks on the surveyors. They apparently did not know, for example, that Panther Creek divides into forks.

The result of the surveyors' naivety was an incorrect description of Mason's new property. In 1783 the recorder's office in Louisville noticed the mistake and notified Mason's agents, Hubbard Taylor and William Mason.

The two, however, were slow to act, and when no new survey seemed forthcoming, an employe of the recorder's office, John Handley, took advantage of the delay. Handley and two associates, Christopher Greenup (later governor of Kentucky) and George Wilson, entered in 1784 a deed for 30,000 acres here, including Mason's original claims.

The Virginian delayed no longer. In 1784 Mason sued Handley, Wilson, and Greenup for usurping his property, and the Supreme Court for the District of Kentucky at Danville decided in his favor. The Court of Appeals reaffirmed the judgment in 1799.

It was after the second court test that Joseph Hamilton Daveiss, then a young lawyer in his middle 20s, entered the fray.

Gambling on the proposition that he could secure a reversal of the two court judgments for Mason, Daveiss bought the supposedly worthless claims of Handley and Greenup for a total price of \$2,200. Then he took the case before the United States Supreme Court.

Daveiss, who was the first lawyer from west of the Alleghenies to argue a case before the high tribunal, is said to have appeared in court, to the astonishment of everybody, dressed in the unsophisticated buckskin clothing worn by the pioneer residents of his state.

Whatever he may have worn, Daveiss' oratory, for which he was to become famous, smooth and persuasive. He was able to convince the court, headed by Chief Justice John Marshall, to reverse the decision of the lower courts, and when the trial was finished he found himself sole owner of a large tract of river land comprising some 5,000 acres. His accomplishment was magnified when in 1803 he persuaded the chief justice's sister, Anne, to come to Kentucky with him as his wife.

Although Daveiss won legal rights to the land in 1801 and soon acquired other lands here, he did not settle in this area immediately. As late as June 28, 1802, Ben Field, one of his prospective neighbors, wrote a front a frank letter, apparently to acquaint the lawyer with new property... [etc.]

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 10 July 1966, p.1B – "Hugh Potter Addresses SAR Meeting":

The influence of two early Daviess County landowners on the U. S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights was the topic of talk by Hugh Potter, manager

of radio station WOMI, to the Lieutenant Robert Moseley Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution, held July 7.

The two landowners referred to were President James Madison and George Mason of Gunston Hall, Va. They both owned land in Daviess County and both have descendents living here today. The two men had much to do with the writing of the Constitution and its Bill of Rights.

Potter said the two men were among the most influential leaders in the convention at Philadelphia in 1787 at which the Constitution was written. Madison, whose notes on the convention debates provides an invaluable record of the closed and guarded meeting, has been described as "The Father of the U. S. Constitution" and the chronicler of the convention, Potter said.

He said Madison was one of the early statesmen of the convention who recognized that the great division of interest in the United States did not lie between the large and small states which had been jockeying for equal and acceptable representation in the new Congress, soon to be formed, but between those which had and did not have slaves. History proved him true.

Potter said George Mason was "at all times, conscious of the need of human rights being plainly spelled out."

His Virginia Bill of Rights opened with the declaration that "all men are by nature free and have certain basic rights" and stated later that "we ought to attend to the rights of every class of people," Potter said. These statements by Mason possibly explained his underlying reasons for being this nation's earliest advocate of the rights of humanity, Potter said.

President Madison owned approximately 40,000 acres in which is now Curdsville - Sorgho section of the county. Mason had title to 60,000 acres in and near what was then Yellow Banks near Panther Creek. This land roughly is bounded on the north by the Ohio River, east by Pleasant Valley Road, west by Veatch Road and south by Panther Creek. There are several records of titular transfers of this land in the Daviess County court house. Many descendants of Madison and Mason are living presently in Owensboro on land which they have inherited from the two estates.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 10 December 1969, p.2C – "Around The Town", by Ann Whittinghill, Messenger-Inquirer:

OWENSBORO DESCENDANTS of the father of the Bill of Rights have a heritage that is at the heart of American history. The enormous influence of George Mason was realized on Dec. 15, 1791, when the first 10 amendments to the Constitution became the keys to the document's greatness and durability.

George Mason of Gunston Hall in Fairfax County, is an ancestor of more than a half dozen residents of this area. Among them are Mrs. W. L. Delker, Edward Delker, William W. Owen, Henry Pardon, Oliver Pardon, Dr. Frank Pardon and Mrs. William R. Skillman.

Although related to Mason, the wise and articulate giant of his age, Miss Mildred Griffith is one of the many members of the National Society of Colonial

Dames of America who rank the 178th anniversary of the Bill of Rights with that of July 4, 1776.

The Colonial Dames have been responsible for restoration of Gunston Hall which has come to rank along with Mt. Vernon and Monticellos as shrines to America's freedom.

Miss Griffith also holds membership in the Kentucky Chapter of the NSCDA, as did the late Mrs. D. D. Bogard.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 23 June 1991, p.1A – “upscale housing market booming recession not stopping plans to build more six figure homes”, by Keith Lawrence:

... Bill Barron has begun installing sewers for Alexandria, an upscale subdivision on Veach Road. Construction of the 27 houses - with price tags starting at \$180,000 and going rapidly upwards - will begin in late summer.

Benny Clark of Clark-Howard Builders Inc. said houses he intends to build in Alexandria will sell for \$200,000 to \$250,000. The lots alone cost \$40,000 to \$45,000, he said.

But Alexandria offers prestige along with the price tag. Barron said the property was part of a 60,000-acre land grant to George Mason, father of the Bill of Rights, at the end of the American Revolution.

This will be the first time in 200 years the property has been outside the Mason family, said Barron, a descendant. The development is named for Alexandria, Va., where Mason lived. ...

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 3 January 1995, p.3S – "Community histories", by Glenn Hodges, Messenger-Inquirer:

... The village of Masonville received its name from George Mason of Gunston Hall, Va., the author of the Bill of Rights who had large land holdings in Daviess County and was the original owner of the plat on which Masonville was built. The town was laid out by county surveyor George W. Triplett...

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 19 July 1997, p.6C – “Oldest Catholic church turns 175”, by Karen Owen, Messenger-Inquirer:

... St. Lawrence's cemetery includes the grave of a grandson of George Mason, a Virginia statesman whose work on the Virginia Declaration of Rights influenced Thomas Jefferson and James Madison...

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 30 May 1999, p.1F – “Leaving a Legacy Landmarks Memorials to Famous Local People”, by Mark Cooper, Messenger-Inquirer:

George Mason was a statesman during the American Revolution, the indirect author of this nation's "Bill of Rights" and the former owner of a small community in Daviess County...

... George Mason is more well known in Virginia, where he drafted the state's declaration of rights in 1776, served in the state's legislature and been a state delegate to the Federal Convention in 1787.

It was at that convention that Mason made his name - not as a constitution supporter, but a detractor. Mason urged the newly formed nation's leaders to include a bill of rights in the new constitution, advice that was ignored until James Madison introduced a bill of rights to add to the constitution in 1789.

Mason's pamphlet "Objections" that was circulated around the country outlining his reasons for a bill of rights is given credit for starting the groundswell of support for the constitutional amendment.

But as treasurer of the Ohio Co. in the mid-1700s, Mason owned large tracts of land in the Ohio River Valley - including the spot of land now known as Masonville...

... The county's name is actually intended to honor a lawyer and soldier who owned land near Owensboro - Col. Joseph Hamilton Daveiss.

Born in Virginia in 1774, Daveiss and his family migrated to Kentucky when he was five.

Daveiss became a skilled lawyer and, ironically, argued a case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1801 against George Mason that involved a dispute over the title to land near Owensboro. Daveiss won the case and clear title to the land...

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 17 April 2002, p.1B – "Owensboro residents have famous ancestor", by Suzi Bartholomy, Messenger-Inquirer:

When Dody Payne was in high school more than 60 years ago, she was given an assignment to write about a prominent person of the Revolutionary War era. Her dad told her to write about one of her ancestors, George Mason, a Virginia statesman and landowner. Mason also wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which is the basis of the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Last week, Payne and her husband, Henry, went to Washington, D.C., for the dedication of the George Mason Memorial. The memorial is between the Tidal Basin and the 14th Street bridge.

"It's a little bit isolated, but it's a fitting location because George Mason was of a retiring nature," Dody Payne said.

She said that Mason is her fifth great-grandfather. Payne said one time she asked her grandmother to tell her something about Mason, and her grandmother said, "Just try not to do anything that would make him ashamed of you."

Payne said she took those words to heart, and that is how she has lived her life.

She said that Mason had acquired about 60,000 acres of Daviess County land and that part of the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park is on former Mason property.

Owensboro is home to more descendants of George Mason, including Jarred Barron, who also attended the ceremonies in Washington.

Other local relatives of Mason are Jan Evans, Dr. Henry Pardon, Dr. Jon Skillman and Charles Ralph. For more about George Mason go to [www.gunstonhall.org](http://www.gunstonhall.org)

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 26 August 2002, p.1B – “David C. Atkinson Greenbelt Park: Horse Fork land leased - Work on last trail leg to begin soon”, by Joy Campbell, Messenger-Inquirer:

The start of construction on the final half-mile leg of the 2 1/2-mile Horse Fork Trail, one of four walking/biking paths comprising the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park, could be just a couple of weeks away, city officials report.

This much-anticipated trail, which has been about four years in the making, will take five to six months to complete.

Easements had to be acquired from 14 property owners along Horse Fork Trail. In recent years, the city has been securing land for the remaining section of the trail from the Alexander-Evans estate that has nine heirs scattered around the world. The last lease document arrived Friday, project director Sue Fowler said.

"This has been an emotional issue for the families, since that property is what's left of nearly 60,000 acres that dates back to George Mason IV of Gunstan [sic] Hall, Va., in 1779 - when Kentucky was still part of Virginia," Fowler said Friday. "They didn't want to give up the land, so they gave us a 99-year lease."

Mason was honored in April with a national memorial on the mall in Washington, D.C.

The city will have a dedication ceremony in the spring and invite the public, with special invitations to property owners. A historical plaque will convey the land's history, Fowler said...

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 22 October 2003, p.1B – "City to honor George Mason IV on Friday - Volunteer Center joins Make a Difference Day":

Owensboro officials will honor George Mason IV, a prominent figure in Colonial history, in an 11 a.m. ceremony on the Horse Fork Trail of David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park. Mason's descendants inherited about 60,000 acres of land in Daviess County and have granted the city an easement for a segment of the Horse Fork Trail.

City officials will recognize Mason's descendants and install an historical marker near the trail honoring Mason's contributions to the country. The ceremony will be on the Higdon Road end of the Horse Fork Trail.

Mason is said to be the principal architect of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which was used in drafting the first section of the Declaration of Independence and was a forerunner to America's Bill of Rights.

Mason received the Daviess County land in exchange for his purchase of passage for individuals who couldn't afford to travel and settle in America.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 14 November 2013, p1B – “Frederica who? still the question”, by Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer:

I thought for a minute there that the mystery of who Frederica Street is named for had been solved.

Circuit Judge Joe Castlen sent along a copy of a story in the June 14, 1931, Messenger-Inquirer about the rich and famous people who lived on the Old River Road in eastern Daviess County in the 19th century.

The story mentions that "down near the river was a beautiful avenue of honey locust and pecan trees that took you to 'Clifton Lodge,' the residence of Burr Crutcher, formerly the home of George W. Mason, who married Miss Patton and was the father of Frederica Mason, for whom Owensboro's principal street was named."

So, the street was named for Frederica Mason?

Probably not.

As Castlen wrote in his note, "Difficult to find an historical account without some inaccuracies, so don't know if this is true or not."

There are two discrepancies here.

First, Mason family genealogies spell her name "Fredrika."

That's the way most people pronounce the name of Owensboro's main street.

But not the way it's spelled.

And second, those genealogies say Miss Mason was born in 1820 ? more than three years after David Ross and John May drew up a "Plan for Rossborough" ? the town that became Owensboro.

Ross and May jointly owned 3,000 acres of land here.

They set aside 80 acres for the new town.

Today, the city has more than 11,100 acres.

There have been two legends about the street's name.

One says that it was named for one of Ross' slaves.

One says it was named for his daughter.

But he didn't have a daughter named Frederica.

And there is no evidence that he had a slave ? he had more than 400 ? by that name.

He did have a son named Frederick A. Ross.

It wouldn't have been the first time that the feminine form of a masculine name had been used as a place name.

Fort Frederica, Ga., established in 1736, was named for Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales (1702-1754).

We may never know the truth of the street's name.

But at least the search is interesting.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 8 October 2015, p.1B – "1807 lawsuit sheds light on history", by Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer:

On Feb. 25, 1807, William Smeathers' cabin at the Yellow Banks — about where the VFW post downtown is today — was being used for a hearing in a lawsuit over some land.

The firm of May, Banister and Ross and the heirs of George Mason were contesting the property in question.

In the room were Philip Taylor, a Pennsylvania veteran of the American Revolution; William Bailey Smith, another veteran who had become a wealthy man while living in the western part of the county; Anthony Thompson, another veteran who was currently justice of the peace; Ben Duncan, who lived in eastern Daviess County; and James Adams, an early land speculator in eastern Daviess County.

The testimony in the case that day provided some interesting insights into Daviess County history.

Taylor was questioned by Adams.

Asked about Pup Creek, Taylor, who was about 50 years old, said that about 1790 the creek was named "by the company I belonged to on account of a bitch having puppies when we camped on that creek. We drowned them in the creek, from which circumstances it was named by us."

Asked if the creek had once had another name, Taylor said, "It appears to me it was before that time called Beaver Creek, for I was then trapping and recollect to have wondered why the creek was called Beaver Creek when none of those animals were found there."

Asked about Yellow Banks, Taylor said he first visited the place about 1790, "but no one was settled there. I had heard of it before from the people of Vienna (Calhoun) who had come here to move settlers out."

Apparently no one bothered to ask about those settlers, who they were, how long they lived here or why they needed help moving out.

Smith was also questioned on the same topics.

He said he had been here since 1780.

Blackford Creek, he said, had been known as Otter Creek before Joseph Blackford built a station camp on it between 1780 and 1782.

Smith said he first heard of Yellow Banks in 1776.

Asked about how Panther Creek got its name, he said that Leonard Helm and Edward Hagan were camped at the mouth of the creek in January 1776 and killed a "remarkable panther."

The creek, Smith said, was named for that animal.

Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, 25 August 2016, p.1B – "Old River Road was the height of local culture", by Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer (article by C. W. Bransford published in the "Owensboro Messenger" on 14 June 1931 about the settlement along the Old River Road east of Owensboro.)

See also article:

"Owensboro's Original Proprietor", Hugh O. Potter, The Register, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY, Vol. 69, No. 1, January 1971, pp.1-16; account of Brigadier General Richard Barnes Mason (1797-1850), grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall.





Grave of George W. Mason (1791-1855) in the St. Lawrence Catholic Church Cemetery, in Daviess County, KY. Grandson of George Mason (1725-1792) of Gunston Hall.



In Washington, D.C. are statues that honor our founding fathers in the National Mall and Memorial Parks. In 2002, George Mason's statue was added, becoming the only National Memorial of a person that has not served as President of the United States.