

Robert Triplett (1794-1853)

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Daviess County, Kentucky Celebrating Our Heritage, 1815-2015
(Evansville, IN: M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2015), p.8:

1853, 4-12 Robert Triplett, of Owensboro, dies while on a visit to Philadelphia. One of the largest land owners in Daviess County he was a distiller, barge operator; developed county's first coal mines in Bon Harbor Hills and to get the coal to the Ohio River built Kentucky's first railroad in 1826. His home, Haphazard, built about 1820, still stands on the Pleasant Valley Road and is on the National Register of Historic Places. His autobiography, Roland Trevor: or, The pilot of human life. Being an autobiography of the author, showing how to make and lose a fortune, and then to make another, published in 1853, can be found in the Kentucky Room of the Daviess County Public Library.



Daviess County, KY Tax Lists:

In Daviess County, KY's annual tax lists Robert Triplett is first listed in the year 1819.



Daviess County, KY 1820 Federal Census, p.370:

Triplett, Robert 2 males 26-45



Daviess County, KY 1830 Federal Census, p.196:

Triplett, Robert	2 males 15-20	1 female 0-5	21 slaves
	26 males 20-30	2 females 20-30	
	2 males 30-40		



Daviess County, KY 1840 Federal Census, p.23:

Triplett, Robert	1 male 5-10	2 females 0-5	22 slaves
	1 male 20-30	2 females 5-10	5 persons employed
	1 male 40-50	1 female 10-15	in mining
		1 female 20-30	6 persons employed
		1 female 30-40	in agriculture



Owensboro, Daviess County, KY 1850 Federal Census, p.352:

Triplett, Robert	53 m	manufacturer & miner owned 13 slaves real estate value \$167,000 [note – highest real estate value in Daviess County]	born Virginia
Triplett, Robert H.	20 m		born Kentucky
Triplett, Lelia P.	15 f		born Kentucky
Triplett, Maria V.	6 f		born Kentucky



Frankfort Argus, Frankfort, KY, Friday, 17 December 1819, p.3:

Land at the Yellow Banks.

THE subscribers offer for sale FOUR THOUSAND ACRES OF LAND, at the Yellow Banks, with a clear and undisputed title, being that part of the surveys of Ross and May, in that quarter upon winch there is no interference. Also, all the unsold lots in

The Town of Owensborough.

This town is advantageously situated for commerce as will be seen by reference to the Map of Kentucky. It is at the Yellow Banks, upon the convex side of a great bend in the Ohio river which throws it far into the interior of the county of Daviess, for winch it is the seat of justice, its situation making it the most convenient landing place for the towns of Hartford, Morgantown, Greenville, Russelsville, and I believe we may say Bowling Green. The bank of the river where it is situated, is from ten to twelve feet above the highest water mark, as it is also for some distance above and below the town, yet at the lowest stage of the river, there is an abundant depth of water to permit steam boats of any size to be immediately at the shore. The situation of Owensborough and the country about the Yellow Banks, is so generally known, and the advantages of their situation so generally understood, that it is deemed useless to speak more minutely than we have done. It may however be remarked as it regards the lands above mentioned, that the clearing of them may be made a source of much profit by selling the wood to steam boats, instead of being a

tax as lands similarly situated, generally are, of from ten to twelve dollars per acre. The lands in the vicinity of the Yellow Banks have been here tofore with-held from purchasers on account of the disputed state or the titles, the parties interested generally, are making some exceptions to bring this state of things to a close, and it is confidently hoped that the time is not distant when they will be enabled to open the door to a respectable and extensive settlement. Applications may be made to either of the subscribers one, of whom R. Triplett makes the Yellow Banks his rendezvous

ROBERT TRIPLETT, Attorney in fact for Thomas T. Bouldin, Exr. of David Ross, Dec'd,
JOHN L. MAY.
DANIEL EPPES.
POLLY EPPES.
619-tf.

[note: Robert Triplett published in the Frankfort and Louisville newspapers during 1819-1850 numerous advertisements for lands in Owensboro and Daviess County.]



Owensboro Bulletin, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 13 January 1843:

p.1 (abstract – Robert Triplett owner of the Owensboro steam-mill),
p.3 (abstract – warehouse being built by Robert Triplett)



Owensboro Bulletin, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 17 February 1843:

p.1 (abstract – Robert Triplett delivers lecture to the Daviess County Lyceum)



Louisville Daily Journal, Louisville, KY, Wednesday, 18 October 1843, p.2:

A SPLENDID ESTATE FOR SALE.

HAPHAZARD, my late residence, is offered for sale, one of the finest estates on the Ohio river, whether we regard fertility of soil or local situation. This farm is so well known, that it is almost needless to describe it. There is not one acre of it which cannot be cultivated, though consisting of one thousand acres, except a beautiful elevation for building on, three or four hundred yards from the Ohio, almost the whole tract may be considered bottom land. About one hundred acres of this land is reclaimed pond, formed by the washings of the richest surrounding country, the alluvion is many feet deep, over one hundred bushels of corn per acre have been taken from it and a greater part is in meadow, from which upwards of two thousand dollars worth of hay, has been sold in one year, the half to one man. For wheat, hemp, or grass, as well as corn, it is admirably adapted, and will pay a better interest on its cost, I believe, than any farm now offered for sale. It binds upward of a mile on the Ohio, has deep water all along its shore, and is within one mile and a half of the town of Owensboro, where there are two fine schools, with several teachers in each, a fine music school with over twenty scholars, and in which there will, in a short time, be two

superior music teachers. There are three churches in Owensboro, and it is growing rapidly The society of the town and country is enlightened and agreeable.

There are near four hundred acres of this land cleared and in cultivation, and a good deal more deadened and ready to be cleared The mansion house is sixty by forty feet, with a portico the whole length in front, and a portico also in the rear, a handsome residence, beautiful yard, and one of the most attractive situations on the Ohio, with an ice house which keeps ice all the year, and all necessary out buildings.

Besides the family residence, there is, on the rear of the tract, a log dwelling with four rooms and a passage, and out houses for a family; and in front, on the river, a brick house, one story high, with three rooms; two frame houses, forty by twenty and forty by sixteen; hay sheds, sufficient to hold nearly the whole crop which could be made on the place, one shed is seventy feet in diameter, circular, and except fifteen feet around the circumference, the balance is shingled; and two hay presses. Being determined to raise money to pay my debts, and to carry on my manufacturing operations at my coal mines, I have, at different times, offered various other pieces of property for sale, but in vain, and being determined to want money no longer if I can sell anything, I now offer this estate, and will take twenty dollars per acre for it. The buildings cannot be put up for much less than half the money, to say nothing of the clearing and fencing; and its proximity to Owensboro' will enable the owner to clear as much more as he chooses, and pay the expense by the sale of the wood.

There is not another farm between Louisville, except in its immediate vicinity, and the mouth of the Ohio, of double its size, which I would exchange Haphazard for. I have seen the time when I would have refused fifty dollars per acre for it, and for some time paid taxes on it at forty dollars per acre. My impatience, at being in debt, and my determination to raise a business capital for manufacturing operations, alone induces me to sell this property, and the very factories and mill which I am erecting Bonharbour will give great additional value to this, as well as other property in the vicinity. Letters, post-paid and no others, will be attended to. Direct or apply to me at Owensboro'.

ROBERT TRIPLETT.

N. B. While this splendid property, on the Ohio, (the Main street of the West,) and in one of the most desirable neighborhoods, with navigation and a market at its door, can be had at \$20, many persons are going to Missouri, and giving as much for inferior lands, while one acre of the Haphazard tract, its local advantages considered, is worth four such.

My friends say I will flinch if offered my price. I pledge myself to take it if offered it before I give public notice that I have changed my mind.

The basement of the house has about sixty thousand bricks in it, and a cellar under its whole extent, divided into four rooms.

The farm may be divided advantageously into three tracts, all making fine farms.

R. T.

[note by J. Long – the last ad by Robert Triplett for the sale of his Haphazard tract was found in The Louisville Daily Journal of 18 July 1844 p.3]



Tri-Weekly Commonwealth, Frankfort, KY, Monday, 19 January 1845, p.3:

DIED.

In Owensboro', on Saturday, the 10th instant, of Typhoid fever, Robert H. Triplett, aged about 24 years, son of Robert Triplett, Esq., of Bon Harbor, Daviess county, Ky.



Louisville Daily Courier, Louisville, KY, Saturday, 23 April 1853, p.3:

We were pained to hear on Tuesday last the death of Robert Triplett, who has been for some months past at Philadelphia, undergoing a series of operations for what has been supposed to be a cancer.

Owensboro' (Ky) Gazette.



Roland Trevor: Or, The Pilot Of Human Life, Being An Autobiography Of The Author Showing How To Make And Lose A Fortune, And Then To Make Another (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, And Co.; 1853) 460 pages. The book begins with the following Preface (page iii):

Preface

The following pages were written for the benefit of an only son who is now no more. It has pleased the Almighty Disposer of human events to take him from me, whereby this work has lost its value unless given to the public.

As it relates incidents of a life as varied as it has been eventful – and, if not thrilling interesting, it is because the story has been badly told – I have yielded to the suggestions of some partial friends, who, having read, have advised its publication. As it produced good fruit in him for whom it was intended, they think it may not have a less beneficial effect upon the sons of other men.

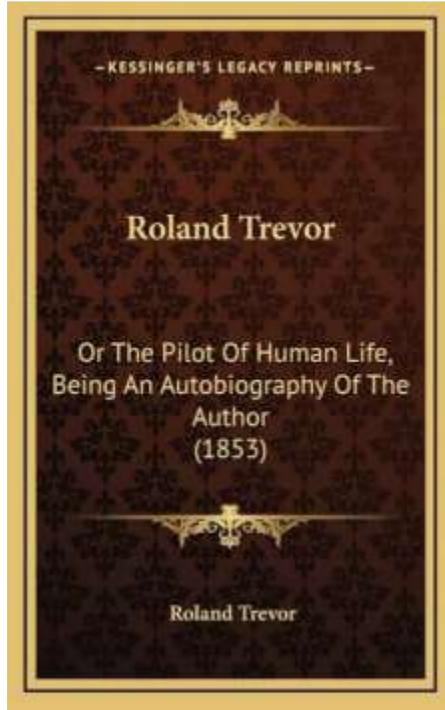
The reader may perhaps imagine that, as I had a moral object in view, the story will partake of a dry lesson like character. Not so. It is the actual history of my own life from the age of fifteen to over fifty, with all the struggles and efforts in my progress : showing how I made and lost a fortune, and how I made another, with the causes thereof; and with a sufficient sprinkling of love adventures to reasonably season the dish...

[note – a full copy of the book can be found on “Google Books” on the Internet]

Amazon.com for a reprint of the book writes:

"Roland Trevor: Or The Pilot Of Human Life" is a book written by Roland Trevor [Robert Triplett] and published in 1853. It is an autobiography that details the author's life, from his childhood to his adulthood. The book follows the journey of Trevor as he navigates through the ups and downs of life, including his struggles, achievements, and personal growth. Trevor shares his experiences and insights on various topics, including religion, education, and politics. He also discusses his travels, relationships, and career. The book is written in a straightforward and honest manner, providing readers with a glimpse into the life of a man who has lived through many challenges and triumphs. Overall, ""Roland Trevor: Or The Pilot Of Human Life"" is a compelling

and insightful autobiography that offers readers a unique perspective on life in the mid-19th century. It is a must-read for anyone interested in personal growth, history, or the human experience. This scarce antiquarian book is a facsimile reprint of the old original and may contain some imperfections such as library marks and notations. Because we believe this work is culturally important, we have made it available as part of our commitment for protecting, preserving, and promoting the world's literature in affordable, high quality, modern editions, that are true to their original work.



Owensboro Examiner, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 3 September 1875, p.1:



THE TRIPLETT BROTHERS.

Robert Triplett, the older of the two brothers, was an extensive land owner in Kentucky. He lived in Frankfort for some years, and afterwards moved to "Haphazard," a farm two miles above Owensboro, on the river, and which he afterward sold to Mr. William Bell, and which is yet owned by Mr. Bell's heirs. Mr. Triplett then moved to town and lived on the river bank in a house since owned by Thomas Pointer and others. Mr. Triplett was a man of large mind, great enterprise, extensive knowledge of men and things, but too far ahead of his time to be extensively successful in a county as new as ours was then. He died of cancer in Philadelphia. His wife was a sister of Mr. William Pegram, of Owensboro. She was a fine, stately, handsome, and dignified looking

lady, and highly regarded by those who knew her well. The only man living capable of giving a correct and extensive memoir of Robert Triplett is Mr. Jas. Weir. He was the executor of his estate, and fell into the possession of all business, books and papers. The history of the Barnharbor estate would show how a man of lofty honor who looked upon the mean and despicable with contempt was made the victim of a wealthy sharper. The remaining members of his family are his three daughters, Mrs. White, of Virginia, and Mrs. Yeaman and Virginia Triplett, of New York....



History of Daviess County, Kentucky
(Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Co., 1883):

Pages 79-93: CHAPTER III

LIFE AND TIMES OF ROBERT TRIPLETT

The substance of this chapter is extracted from a remarkably interesting and valuable work entitled "Roland Trevor," which is in fact an autobiography of Mr. Triplett; and as it gives so much early history pertaining to this region of Kentucky, we feel justified in publishing the following extracts in this connection. The first several paragraphs we quote entire, as they embody the maxims of his life, and seem to be as valuable as the noted sayings of "Poor Richard."

"The life of every man contains a lesson to his successor which may be of value if properly written out. It is a chart, showing where the shoals and breakers lie which produce failures in his enterprises as well as where the deep and smooth waters are found in the sea of prosperity. There are few who have arrived at the age of fifty and have been prosperous, who could not be more so if they had their lives to pass over again, and quite as few who, having been unfortunate, cannot look back and see the causes to which they owe their misfortunes. A father, then, who has the time, should furnish his son with this chart while his mind is yet in that pliant condition which adapts it to receive the lessons of experience; before a dogmatic self-will has impressed him with an idea of his own smartness which makes him deaf to the instruction of others.

"The most important lesson which my experience has taught me is the conviction that the human mind is progressive in all its stages, and that upon no subject has it ever filled the measure of knowledge to be obtained therein. The conceited, therefore, who turn from instruction under a belief that they have nothing more to learn upon any subject, only show the shallowness of their understandings. The mind very quickly determines from hearing a lecturer whether there is a probability of adding anything to the store of knowledge already possessed on any given subject, and if not, it would be waste of time to listen to him; but one should not, therefore, cease to make inquiries through more intelligent sources.

"In politics, religion, medicine, and many other sciences, certain sects have formed their opinions and will hear nothing to shake them. How is it possible that the mind can learn if the book of knowledge is closed? When I observe a man listening with respect to opinions not in accordance with his own as if he gave due weight to them and wished to ascertain what merit they were entitled to, and what he can gather from them to improve his own stock of knowledge, I consider that he has a well-balanced mind; one possessed of natural strength, and capable of gathering strength as it goes. There are, indeed, very few minds of this character that are not of the first order. If, after having heard all that is to be said, although dissenting in opinion, a man gives full weight to all the arguments that deserve it, setting them forth in their strongest light, and even adding others in

support of the views which have been given as suggested by those of the speaker, but still, in a decorous manner, showing why they fail to convince him, I naturally lean to that man. I am satisfied there is no prejudice about him; that he is in search of light, of truth, of justice, — in a word, a well-bred gentleman; for, whether he come from the cottage or the palace, he is one of nature's noblemen. If schools and parental teaching have not made him a gentleman, nature has. The opinions of such a man are always listened to with respect. They always have great weight, and the author will hold friends wherever he goes; such a man will make proselytes. But, on the contrary, if a man listen with an apparent anxiety to detect you in a false position, in a slip of language, showing that his object is victory in argument and not to elicit truth, refusing to admit self-evident facts or reasonable influences, requiring proof of what a candid mind ought to admit, indeed, leaving an impression on his adversary that he is not inclined to deal fairly, — that man may exhibit his ingenuity, his tact, his skill in argument, but he leaves an impression on his adversary of a very unenviable kind, that he is lacking in candor, frankness, honesty, nobleness. There are many grades of all these qualities, and if I had to select a man to transact my business on account of his honesty, and one should be recommended as standing unexceptionably with the world, who suited me in all other qualifications, if I were to hear him offer unfair arguments I would not employ him, because the honest heart can do nothing unfair. He who will make up an unfair account in argument will do it in dollars and cents whenever a sufficient temptation offers.

"Once in conversation with a distinguished politician who aimed to be a leader, I admitted that on a certain point a political opponent was right (he and I agreed in politics); 'Oh, no, no,' said he, 'you are wrong.' Eventually, however, I satisfied him that I thought I was right, if I failed to convince him. Not being able to convince me, he took me by the hand and said, 'You are a young politician, and some hints may be of service to you. Allow me to suggest that we never ought to concede that our opponents are right when they differ from the received doctrines of our party.' 'Why, sir,' said I, 'that would be a monstrous principle to admit. Each party then would maintain its ground from the mere love of opposition. Every member of each would have his opinions molded for him by his leaders; he would be a mere machine, and not an intelligent being. I shall never subscribe to such opinions, sir, and hope our party will not.' From that moment I lost all respect for this man, and he finally forfeited the respect of his party. There is a set of hardened political jockeys who laugh at the idea of political honesty, and view any man's pretention to it as evidence of greenness and simplicity. But for my part I cannot conceive that a man can be morally honest and politically dishonest. If a man is honest at all, the principle prevails with him throughout. It will not travel with him through morality, and then leave him in politics or religion.

"Honest}" consists in never acting unfairly, whether in trade, politics or religion. Many an honest man has gone to jail for debt fairly contracted, but which unexpected events made it impossible for him to pay; many a politician has greatly injured his country by misguided opinions fairly entertained; and many an honest man has incurred public odium from professing religious opinions which he sincerely believed.

"The mind of the young should be honest; that is, open to light and willing to hear the truth and admit it. Every truth stored in the mind is future mental capital; and as it is said money begets money, growing and compounding in its growth in proportion to its aggregation, so do truths. Every addition to the mass of correct thinking strengthens the mind and adds to its power of collecting new truths, which finally constitute a mind so strong and clear that it has no false view of anything. On the contrary, the man who aims only at controversial victory, and seeks only weapons, fair or unfair, to attain success, accepting the fair and unfair arguments of others wherever they can be found to answer his purpose, ceases from that time to strengthen his mind

by accumulating truths; and such a man must always occupy a secondary stand. I do not mean to say that there are not smart and talented men who are dishonest. But such men would have occupied a much more exalted position as men of talent had they been honest; for they lose the greatest aid to the attainment of a high order of talent in the lack of honesty; that aid which the heart gives to the head, — which makes eloquence so powerful and irresistible when there is a consciousness of right.

"The young mind should learn to be charitable, and slow to condemn an opponent for difference of opinion, or for crime where there is lack of proof. This world is awfully uncharitable, and prone to condemn on the first accusation without investigating the justice of the charges. Hence, mischief-makers in society so often succeed in estranging friends from each other by starting reports in which there is no just foundation. The young heart, while it should not be so credulous as to be imposed upon, should be predisposed to a good opinion of human nature, otherwise its own good feelings will be corroded and hardened. While we allow that there is enough of baseness in the world to put us on our guard and give us reasonable caution, we should also allow that there are virtue and merit enough to open and warm our hearts. Happiness depends much on the sympathy of virtuous hearts. To allow that there is but little virtue in the world would be to leave the virtuous heart desolate indeed. Such is not the fact. There is much to authorize us in giving our confidence and affection, observing a reasonable prudence in doing so. In carrying out this idea I do not mean to say that a man must lend his money or his name foolishly to others. No friend would ask it beyond your ability conveniently to spare it. To that extent a man may be justifiable, but certainly not further. An acquaintance will sometimes present himself with a note or bond, and say: 'I wish you to indorse this for me; it is a mere nominal thing; you will never hear of it again.' The nature of trade renders mutual aid sometimes necessary, and all who need it should, if practicable, make arrangements for reciprocal accommodations, securing each other for doing so.

"There are, however, friends who, under certain circumstances, are entitled to our aid, when it would be ungenerous to refuse it; and where we can see that, without dishonesty, we are not very likely to lose we should give it. We are all sometimes so circumstanced as to render such aid necessary, and even at the hazard of losing we ought to give it. But never carry this friendship so far that, if you to pay all, it will injure you. Many men keep no account of their indorsements, and are finally ruined when they were not aware that they were liable as security to but a small amount. Let me now impress on you to open a security account the first time you put your name on paper for any man, and make this entry: 'Security Account to Bills Payable,' for this amount due on the -- day of --, by A. B --, for whom I have indorsed \$--." _

The father of Robert Triplett was a man of great energy and enterprise, and although he met with great reverses of fortune he never became disheartened. Previous to the last war with England he owned coal mines in Virginia, besides a valuable plantation; but the coming on of the war and the blockading of the Chesapeake made bankrupt every coal-miner, himself among the rest. His limited means prevented his giving his son Robert the education which was customary for the sons of Virginia gentlemen to receive. He was well versed in the English branches and could write French with tolerable ease, but his education was not thoroughly classical. This caused great humiliation to the mind of young Robert. At an early age he was put to live with a merchant in Richmond, a wholesale importer, without wages, but merely to learn business. A friend of this merchant, who was in the habit of calling there, was so well pleased with the manner in which Robert discharged his duties that he solicited his services in his own establishment. As his employer had very little for him to do he offered no objection, Robert readily agreed to make the

change and went to work with renewed energy. His new employer was a Scotch importer of salt, china, crockery, queen's-ware, wine, brandy, etc., all of which was sold by the pipe or crate. As he was remarkably fond of his ease, he very soon gave his business matters entirely into Robert's hands. As the time of the latter was not wholly occupied with his duties he spent most of his evenings in reading and study. He made it a rule to read at least 200 pages of solid matter every week. He even wrote out an epitome of the histories of Rome and Greece, His genius ran in the line of mathematics.

Mr. Triplett's first speculation was in the coal mines. There was an immense body of coal piled at his father's yard which he could do nothing with, as the English fleet lay in the Chesapeake, and it could not be exported. Robert observed that coal was \$1 per bushel in Baltimore, and insurance twenty-five per cent. He asked and gained his father's consent to make an adventure in it. He shipped 3,000 bushels and cleared about \$550. He made one or two other adventures and was extremely successful. Soon after this he left his employer and went to work for a merchant at Norfolk at a salary of \$900 per annum. He gave nearly all his earnings to his father to relieve his embarrassments.

In 1817 Mr. Triplett accepted an offer from Judge Bouldin, executor of the estate of David Ross, to come to Kentucky to settle up that estate. There were then no railroads, nor steamboats on the Ohio except one or two that had commenced below the Falls. Horseback was the usual mode of traveling to the West. He made the trip to Frankfort in sixteen days. Here he remained for some time in the discharge of the duties attendant upon his mission.

About the year 1820 Mr. Triplett came to Owensboro in company with an acquaintance. On arriving within twenty-five miles of the town his companion informed him that they had reached the beginning of the great survey of M., B. & Co', which extended six miles below Owensboro; thirty-one miles in length, and containing 160,000 acres. About three miles above the town they came in sight of the Ohio River which Mr. Triplett now saw for the first time. It was very full, nearly up to its banks on the Indiana side. The court-house had been built in Owensboro, and a number of cabins; but there were not more than two or three brick chimneys in the town. After his friend had completed his business they returned to Frankfort.

After making a complete digest of his Kentucky business, Mr. Triplett returned to Virginia, with the intention of joining his brother in business; but Judge Bouldin was very unwilling to dispense with his services and he was induced to continue. So he departed a second time for Frankfort. About this time there was a moneyed crisis in Kentucky, and the "Independent Bank system" was introduced. This was giving a bank to almost every county in the State. Mr. Triplett foresaw a general bankruptcy of those institutions, and wrote several essays, under fictitious signatures, to endeavor to stay the ruin, but all his efforts were vain, (This subject is treated more fully in the "Outline History of Kentucky.")

After the rising of the Legislature this year Mr. T. started for the Yellow Banks, to look into the land there, to see about getting possession of it and selling it. His first object was to survey out all the interfering claims, and ascertain how much of the land was clear in title, and what occupants were on it; then to have all that was clear in title sectionized into tracts of from 200 to 400 acres, with an accurate description attached to each section of the land contained in it, with the probable value thereof, springs, improvements, etc., with the settlers thereon. Having obtained an honest surveyor for the purpose, he started him on the work. But new difficulties presented themselves which were likely to give him much trouble. The occupants refused to surrender the land; he had no leases from them, and they acknowledged no tenancy; but they denied his right. The number of parties concerned would render a suit very troublesome, and it was important to

avoid it if possible. Most of the occupants were reasonable if left to themselves, but an effort was made to create resistance, and many were the "shooting" threats made if Mr. Triplett went on to certain lands. But he braved them all and no serious difficulty ensued. He encountered one obstinate fellow who was afterward killed in a street fight in Owensboro. Mr. T. was successful in his undertaking at this point, and then returned to Frankfort. He proceeded to put in form the materials he had collected at Yellow Banks in regard to the entries of Ross and May, which he had surveyed. They called to begin at the upper end of the Yellow Banks, about forty miles above Green River, and run to the lower end thereof, and back for quantity. He had had a front profile of the bank taken at the upper and lower end and at various intermediate points; had all neatly painted, and an argument framed to sustain the entry, which was in litigation. The large entry of May, Bannister & Co. was also in litigation, but with a decision against them. On looking over the record and applying the facts which he knew of, Mr. Triplett saw there was a fatal defect, which had escaped notice. The argument about the Yellow Banks entries was very long and complex. During this fall Judge Bouldin came out to Kentucky, and Mr. Triplett gave him an exhibit of his work. Judge B. instructed him to abandon the entry of May, Bannister & Co., and rely on the patent only. Mr. T. showed him the condition of everything at Yellow Banks, with which he seemed pleased; and in consequence of there being a large surplus in the entries of Ross & May, which could not be held against an elder patent, he was advised to go to Washington City to see the Masons and endeavor to compromise with them, giving one half for the other. These things being settled, the Judge returned to Virginia.

The papers, including many relating to titles of land, were in Cincinnati, and there it was necessary for Mr. Triplett to go to get them. Having accomplished the object of his visit he returned to Frankfort, and having obtained the necessary powers, proceeded to Washington, where he met the Masons; but none were authorized to act, so he failed in making the desired arrangement. He then returned to Frankfort, where he remained until the time for the sale at the Yellow Banks, when he went down. He had a large number of maps prepared of the sectionized land to be sold, with books of surveys, the lots numbered and described, so that with a map anyone could find any lot and examine it, and the sale and transfer by number was very simple and easy. Such land as he did not sell at auction he was ready afterward to sell in his office. A reference to his book of surveys gave him quantity, quality and value. He had contracts all printed, as also deeds, bonds and every necessary paper, with the prices on the face of each tract; and after he would sell a tract of land, have all the papers signed, and the whole transaction closed in thirty minutes.

During his stay at Yellow Banks Mr. Triplett put up at Mrs. Adams's tavern; and although she had not a brick chimney to her house, she had everything neat and tidy, and her meals were well cooked; indeed, everything as good and comfortable as her means would admit of, and three pretty daughters to set off the whole to advantage.

As long as Mr. Triplett kept his affairs within his own control, he went on regularly upward until his income reached \$7,000 or \$8,000 per annum. But as soon as business expanded until it became necessary to employ agents, although well planned, and upon a basis which in all probability promised success, it then commenced losing, and so continued until a greater portion of what had been previously made was sunk.

The next step was a speculation in coal. His friend G. came with him to the Yellow Banks and was delighted at the prospect. Coal had been discovered in their Bonharbor hills. The coal, for which he purchased the property, was only a thin vein at the river, but a hunter, seeing them working this, said he could show them a better vein in the hills, which he did, to the depth of four and a half feet. And from this to the Ohio, three quarters of a mile they made the first railway, in

1826, which was made in Kentucky and, probably, in the West. The next year they commenced delivering coal to steamboats, being the first attempt below the falls, if not the first attempt in the West, to use coal as a steamboat fuel.

About this time (1826 or 1827), Mr. Triplett married Miss Pegram. He first settled in Frankfort, but his presence being very much needed in Haphazard, a place in Daviess County where he had previously purchased land, a portion of which had to be drained to make it of any value, he decided to move there. The firm was losing money by their distilleries; nothing went well with them, and they stopped the largest, still continuing one and the steam-mill. Everything looked discouraging. There was a ray of hope let in from the coal mines. Their first experiment had been profitable, and it was determined that Mr. B., one of the partners, should go to New Orleans to make arrangements to try to get it into use among the planters or sugar-makers. He authorized an agent to act in the business, and returned, and they proceeded to send down coal, offering it for fifty cents a barrel. The experiment was eminently successful, every load being sold before it arrived. Fortune showered so many favors upon them that they proceeded to make arrangements for the next year's work upon a very large scale.

In February, 1829, a difficulty occurred with their distiller. As this event and its results are very interesting, we give the details in Mr. Triplett's own words:

"The vile business seemed to go wrong in every way. I found our distiller had been cheating us and charged him with it. This brought on a fist-fight, the only one I had ever been engaged in since leaving school. He was a powerful man, over six feet high, and would have gotten the better of me had we not been parted. My brother-in-law, Dr. P., being present, interposed, and I left the distillery, and with him went down to our office, pretending to be entirely pacified, and laughing heartily at the occurrence as a good joke; but as soon as I had thrown the Doctor off his guard and got him to leave me, I returned to the distillery with a tomahawk, determined to drive the distiller out. But, fortunately for me, he had gone, for he was a desperate character, and with his mash-stick would have been an overmatch for me with my tomahawk. I now had the distillery closed and the business stopped. The distiller threatened to sue me for violation of contract, but we compromised the matter by agreeing to leave it to arbitration. In this arbitration occurred a difficulty which caused me circumstantially to relate the above affair with the distiller, which otherwise would not have been worth naming. Mr. T. Y., the most prominent lawyer in our district, a man of naturally good heart but of most ungovernable passion, was my adversary's lawyer, and, in the course of his speech spoke of the 'stratagem of Mr. T.' When the argument was over I remarked to him that he had used an expression which he must withdraw. 'What expression?' said he. I replied that he had accused me of stratagem in my dealings with the distiller. 'I did not allude to you,' he replied, 'I meant your brother's stratagem of argument.' My brother was my lawyer in the case. 'Ah, well,' I replied, 'I am glad to hear it.' 'but,' he rejoined, 'I am always responsible for what I say.'

"About six months before this when T. and myself were taking some depositions, he had been needlessly harsh, as I thought, on my witness. I took him out to give him a friendly talk about it. His usual mode of proceeding in such cases was harsher than I was disposed to bear with; but he was so accustomed to it that he did not see any harm in it. We were neighbors and I was anxious to keep on friendly terms with him. So I told him, and that to this end more courtesy would be necessary on his part. He took this as a threat and said he would not be threatened by any man. I told him that so far from its being designed as a threat, I designed by it to avoid any cause of quarrel if possible. But, as I had missed my object, and to the public, if we did quarrel, there might be a semblance of my being in the wrong, I did not intend then to let him draw me into a quarrel; but at any other time when he felt inclined to seek a quarrel with me he should be gratified. Thus

we parted, and we were both on the lookout for the slightest provocation. Under other circumstances I should not have deemed his remark sufficiently offensive to require me to call him to account for it, nor he would not have refused to let his explanation stand.

“Seeing now that I had mistaken him, and although determined not to take the shadow of an insult from him (especially as he held the whole country in dread, for when in a passion he lost all control of himself), I was still anxious to avoid a quarrel if I could do so with credit. When he said; 'I am always responsible for what I say,' I looked him earnestly in the face and replied. 'Mr. T., while I believed you intended to insult me, I intended to call you to account for it. When I perceived my error I was anxious that the difficulty should go no farther. Your explanation was satisfactory, and under that explanation there is no need for you to hold yourself accountable; there is nothing to be accounted for. Let me beg of you now to let this matter stop where it is?' He replied that he withdrew his explanation. I walked up to him with a view to make a personal attack upon him, when my brother cried out, 'Good God! Robert, you are not going to strike a lame man.' I halted, and looked at him and said, 'I will not strike you, sir, nor will I challenge you, abhorring duelling as I do, but nevertheless I will accept a challenge from you, and that you may not be without provocation for one, I tell you that I only now spare you in consideration of your lameness. Now challenge me if you dare.' Our friends jumped in between us, several taking hold of him, and several hold of me. To those who attempted to hold me, I remarked in the language of a man of whom I had read, 'One man can hold me: the balance of you go and hold Mr. T.'

"In due time the challenge came, and was accepted, to light as soon as I could provide myself with arms. I sent to Hardinsburg for a pair of pistols, said to be the best known. But T. had been there before me. One friend then jumped on a steamboat and went to Louisville, where he found a fine pair belonging to Mr. J. D. B. Another went to New Madrid, where he knew there was a pair which Burr had had on the field with Hamilton. Both pairs were obtained, and so good were they that I did not regret failing to obtain those in Hardinsburg. I now fixed the day for the fight, accepting at ten paces back to back, whirl and fire between the words, "fire" and "three," the seconds to count deliberately one, two, three. T. objected to standing back to back, as he was lame and could not turn as quickly as I could. I then, waived that condition and agreed to stand face to face. He having the advantage of me in practice, I took time to make myself even with him, and soon found that I was a first-rate marksman, and heard that he was the same. The victory then would fall to him who could shoot quickest; therefore my efforts were to learn to shoot quick. During the interim before fighting I was daily engaged with B. in settling up our business, and the evening before in making the final arrangements. B. remarked, it was strange to see a man writing his will, and making such arrangements while yet in good health. * * * *

"The next day we were to meet at a designated point on the Indiana shore at eleven o'clock. "When about to embark to cross over. Judge H., one of my seconds (each had two), asked me how I felt. I replied, 'Strangely indifferent;' I can hardly realize that I am going to fight a duel.' 'But' said he, 'you must realize it, for there is but little time left now.' I then remarked, 'Before we go over, hang up a tape against that tree and let me try my hand.' He objected, saying, 'If you make a bad shot it will affect your spirits.' 'No,' I replied, 'it will not; hang it up.' It was done; at ten steps I took a shot and cut the tape about half an inch below the black spot. 'That will do,' said he.

"Considering the probable dreadful result, to kill or be killed, many would say it argued great want of feeling to go about such a business so calmly. But if the reader has ever been engaged in a duel, if he has had time for reflection before it occurred, and his conscience is at rest as to having used every effort to avoid it, he will then see that the thing being inevitable, and his own safety depending on his shooting his adversary, no question arises in his mind which of the two to

choose. Persons may say that they would as soon be shot as to shoot an adversary. That was not my case; I very much preferred to shoot my adversary. And it was important to my success in doing so, that the awful responsibility of the act should be shut out from my mind as much as possible. I would not think of it but in one way, that it was necessary to my own safety. I had no feeling of revenge to gratify, and when I went upon the ground I had no more animosity against Thompson than against any other man on the ground. When we took our positions and were asked if we were ready, I answered, 'No.' I wished to see if my nerves were steady and took aim at a lump of snow on a wood-pile. Although there was snow upon the ground, and it was dead of winter, — February, — yet I felt a warm glow and a suppleness of nerve which was extraordinary. If Providence would take part with either party in a matter like this, I should think I had his support, for never was my touch so sensitive, my flesh so pliable, nor my aim so quick and accurate as at this lump of snow. I felt as though I could put my ball just where I pleased; and unfortunately for Thompson there was a grease spot very visible just where I wished to aim.

"Being satisfied with my aim, I turned to the second, who had asked if we were ready, and said, 'Now I am ready.' Thompson was asked if he was ready, and answering 'yes,' the word fire was given. Our fires were almost simultaneous, mine a little first. For a moment Thompson stood erect, and, although my aim was good, I began to think I must have missed him. But presently a black scowl came over his countenance, he threw his pistol on the ground before him and said, 'I am a dead man!' Now, all the feelings which had been strained up were relaxed, and my first impulse was to go to his aid. But as I advanced, his second, Mr. G. called to me to keep my post; that Mr. Thompson might wish another fire. I returned, but in a few moments his other second, Judge C. called out that Mr. Thompson was satisfied; he would be unable to take another fire. My ball had entered just under his right nipple, passed through his body, and lodged in his left arm without breaking the skin except where it entered. It was not supposed he could live twenty-four hours. But he did, and finally recovered; and although at first, for some time, we were not friendly, yet ultimately we made up and were good friends. And what was singular, this shot cured him of a chronic rheumatism of ten years' standing, and of his lameness. He said I was a first-rate surgeon, though rather a rough operator. Thompson was a singular man, one of violent passions; sorry for it when the passion was over, and used to tell his friends that he could not control himself, and that he was certain he would some day be killed, — a correct prediction, for he was afterward killed in the streets of Owensboro in 1863, by a man whom he had attacked. He was a man of fine talents and fine qualities, away from his ungovernable passions. The man who killed him was a workman for a carpenter, not particularly sensitive; but the event so preyed upon his conscience that he gradually pined away and died in about a year after with no complaint but remorse. "

This put an end to the distilling business. Both distilleries soon went to wreck, and a large sum of money was entirely sunk. Mr. Triplett felt some consolation in the reflection that, if they had been engaged in the abominable business, they had lost enough to punish them for the sin, and that their account with Heaven was nearly balanced; but at that time it was not considered a discreditable business.

They now made arrangements for a tremendous business in coal, and so brilliant seemed the prospect that the loss by the distilleries seemed but a trifle. They turned into building boats at their steam-mill, turning out one a week, contracted with other mills to build all they could, and various points were all alive building boats for them. They were in high spirits, imagining they were making from \$150 to \$200 a day. But an event occurred to blast their prospects, as unexpected as would have been an earthquake to sink all their coal mines, namely, a frost, which destroyed the sugarcane after it had ripened — an event that had not occurred before for twenty years.

"When, however, by great efforts the evil caused by this misfortune seemed to be remedied by finding a market among the towboats, and they again renewed their shipments, a belief that the heat of the coal caused the boilers to burn out induced the towboats to abandon it; and here was a second great disaster which almost prostrated them, and which it was beyond the power of man to foresee. Determined to die with their colors flying, however, and believing that they need not fear another frost, and that the idea of burning out the boilers would be deemed nonsensical by the next season, they made another struggle and shipped a considerable quantity. But the planters would not buy, and captains of ships would not employ tow-boats which burned coal because the smoke blackened their sails. They were now effectually done for and dissolved partnership.

After this Mr. Triplett went to his original business and rapidly recovered the ground he had lost, but the proceeds had to go to pay dues on his own and the firm's lands; ultimately he began to emerge, and with most of the property with which he started.

He next went into a Texas speculation with an apparent profit of over \$90,000, which induced him to make a purchase amounting to 20,000 acres; and the Government of Texas, failing to carry out its contract, again involved him in embarrassments from which it took a long time to recover. After a long struggle, however, his prospects began to brighten. Indeed, they seemed so flattering that he ventured to purchase a tract of land alongside of Bonharbor, which he wanted in order to command the whole coal field there. For this he gave \$20,000, and cramped himself to make the first payment, confident that he would soon be in ample resources and easy again. But in this he was mistaken. Fortune was not yet tired of her pranks with him. Every thing went wrong with him. He became reckless, and his creditors concluded he was going to ruin. They sued him from all quarters, sold his property, until nearly every lot in Owensboro was gone, and he had owned more than half of the vacant property in the town. According to the laws of Kentucky, if land sold under execution does not bring two thirds its value, it may be redeemed in twelve months by paying ten per cent, per annum interest on the amount of sale. Mr. Triplett managed to redeem the lots which had been sold. At a subsequent period he sold Haphazard for \$13,000, 1,000 acres of the best land in the county, on the Ohio River, one and a half miles from Owensboro, the mere buildings on which were worth more than half the money.

In 1842 the tariff was raised, and an energetic impulse was given to the manufacturing business. Mr. Triplett owned the Bonharbor coal mines and 2,000 acres of land, beginning about two miles below Owensboro, possessing great advantages for manufacturing. He built a small woolen factory for jeans and linseys, and afterward purchased cotton machinery to manufacture their warps. He attracted the custom of steamboats for his coal and with good success. He owned a vast amount of property in various portions of the State, some of which he sold to advantage, and ultimately reached a point of independence.

Robert Triplett died in Philadelphia, in 1853, with cancer in the face. He had nine children. His oldest daughter, Ann, married J. Andrew White, of Petersburg, Va., and soon afterward died. Emily married Honorable George H. Yeaman, now of New York City. Virginia died a few years ago, unmarried. The oldest son, Robert, Jr., died at the age of about twenty-one, in January, 1852, of erysipelas.

Page 189: RAILROADS

... In 1826 a railway was built by Robert Triplett, three quarters of a mile in length, from the Bon Harbor Hills to the Ohio River, – the first built in Kentucky and probably the first in the West. It was probably operated by mule-power.

Page 296: PUBLIC SQUARE

This was laid out in the original survey of the town, and was deeded by Robert Triplett to the county for court-house purposes only. In the original deed is also the condition that the trustees of the town have a certain number of feet on the northeast corner of the square for a market-house. Since that time there have been three market-houses there, but they were all more or less eyesores, and the last one was removed years ago. Forty feet have been cut off the south side for market grounds, and is partially devoted to that purpose now, the city scales being placed there since 1867. For a long time it was debated whether to build the city hall upon this ground.

Page 410: 1848

Jan. 30, Mrs. Robert Triplett died, after a very short illness.

Page 412: 1852

Jan. 10, death of Robert Triplett with erysipelas. [note – this is Robert, Jr.]

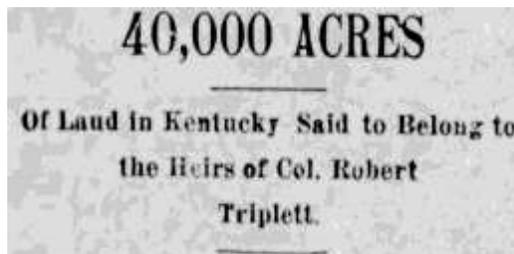
Page 632: BON HARBOR

The first survey of Bon Harbor into town lots was in 1842. The place then bid fair to become a manufacturing town of some importance. A woolen factory was built there, and afterward a large cotton and woolen factory was put up; but the machinery was too old and worn out to accomplish much. It was one of the largest factories at that time in the West. In this business Robert Triplett and Alexander Beard were partners. Triplett went to Europe to bring out factory hands; but the enterprise dragged along so tediously that it was finally abandoned. The Bon Harbor coal mines were the first to be put in successful operation in the county. An old man named Bassett opened the first mine, and the Bon Harbor mine proper, three fourths of a mile from the river, was the next mine worked. About 1830 a considerable quantity of coal was shipped to New Orleans from this point by Robert Triplett. He constructed a railroad from the mine to the river, at the terminus of which was erected the large cotton and woolen manufactory before mentioned. Several houses were built, the population being principally composed of operatives, and numbering two or three hundred.

There is no village now at the old site of Bon Harbor.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 29 June 1890, p.1:



Col. G. W. Daniels, of Frankfort, in the City
Working Up the Original Titles.

An old gentleman from Frankfort has been in the city for several days on a very peculiar mission, The gentleman spoken of is Mr. G. W. Daniels, who holds the position of United States claim agent and has been a lawyer for many years in Kentucky.

The purpose of his visit to Owensboro is to find the whereabouts of the immediate descendents of Col. Robert Triplett, who are said to be heirs to 40,418 acres of land lying in one body in Pike and Letcher counties of this state.

Col. Robert Triplett was a resident of this city during the years of 1852 and '53 and was a lawyer by profession. He was the father of four children, one son and three daughters. The son and youngest daughter died without issue, and the descendents of the other two are thought to be living somewhere in New York.

Col. Triplett was a great uncle of representative Robt. Triplett of this city. He died in 1853, while on a visit to Philadelphia.

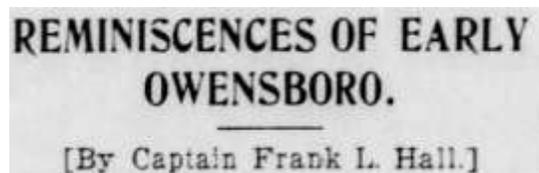
Col. Daniels was seen yesterday afternoon at the Planters Mouse by an INQUIRER reporter in reference to the matter. He talked very freely concerning the big fortune in which he was engaged in unearthing. He said: "Col. Robert Triplett came to Kentucky in an early day as a land agent and attorney for an Eastern company that own vast quantities of land in Kentucky. He bought titles to other lands and was in partnership with one John May. Finally a division was made, Col. Triplett getting 65,418 acres of land bordering on the Big Sandy. He sold 25,000 acres of the land, the remainder never was sold, only being taken up by settlers. I have a good clew to the original titles and can trace all them back and all I want is to find all their heirs. I think they reside in New York. I have a standing offer of \$5 an acre for the entire body of land from an English syndicate providing I can produce the titles. They will take all risks of the rights of squatters and parties now in possession. I intend to go to New York right away, leaving here to-morrow, but will return to Owensboro in about a month to look after some necessary titles. My partner will in all probability go to London in a short time to confer with the syndicate." "

Well, do you contemplate any serious trouble?" said the reporter, in clearing up the titles and getting in possession of the land? "No, I am confident of getting into possession of it, if I succeed in finding all the living heirs. I know shat everything else is in good shape."

This is certainly a valuable fortune to be struck in this day and time. The land is said to be covered in fine timber and some portions of it very good farming country. Of course Col. Daniels will git a big fee out of it, if he is successful in getting into possession of the lands.



**“Industrial Souvenir Edition”, Owensboro Daily Messenger,
Owensboro, KY, Spring 1900, p.26 (section on Robert Triplett):**



Speaking of cotton mills, brings to mind a man of noble birth and name, the sage of Haphazard, which was the name he gave to his new home in the dark and bloody ground of Kentucky before he left his native home in Virginia. He settled on the sands two miles above town on the river now owned by Mr. J. Hunter Bell. This place went by the name of Haphazard for many

long years afterward. On his fine large estate three miles below the city in or about the year 1845 he built a large cotton mill. This place he named Bon Harbor in honor of an eddy that then and for many years existed at a point in the Ohio river opposite the estate. He operated this mill for several years, but it at that time proved a disastrous enterprise. He having encumbered the Bon Harbor estate, together with the mill, by a mortgage to A. B. Barrett of Henderson, Ky., for \$90,000. This sum was used in the building of and equipping the mill. Triplett lived fifty years ahead of his time. The same energy and capital put into such an enterprise now would no doubt prove a dividend paying plant. This city lost heretofore two opportunities of establishing a cotton mill and watch factory, which went elsewhere, and proved successful. It is to be hoped she will not lose this opportunity. This indomitable man had cancer to make its appearance on his upper lip, and after exhausting all known means and remedy without relief or cure, he went to New York or Philadelphia and under the care of the most eminent surgeons of the city had the diseased part of the lip cut out and had his arm cut and scared and drawn to his face and firmly bound to his head and neck in such position as to make the two wounded parts of face and arm come together. In this position he laid in that hospital until the two wounded parts grew or adhered together. Then the arm was cut loose from the face leaving part of the flesh of the arm adhering to the face, with which a new lip was formed. After his face and arm healed over he returned to his home here feeling that he was cured. But alas! alas! he was doomed to disappointment, for a few years later the insidious disease reappeared near the same place on his face. This man of such indomitable will and courage was most beautifully brought out in a late correspondence of the Hon. George W. Triplett a few months ago. He died at his house in this city about 1858.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 27 March 1904, p.7:



One of the most interesting displays in the Walnut street school recently was an illustrated composition on Owensboro. Each of the eight grades took an epoch in Owensboro's history and wrote about and illustrated it. All had merit, but only the work of one grade, the seventh, and only a minor part of that, appealed to the veteran grocer of the city, Mr. R. B. Nunn. This grade developed the railroad era of Owensboro but the teacher, Miss Jennie Cosby, thought the proper way to do this fully was to show the complete evolution of the railway from first to last. She, accordingly, had one pupil to go back and describe and picture the old Bon Harbor tramway built about 1847 for the purpose of hauling coal to the river from the mines. This was done very nicely by little Miss Nanny Robinson The coal cars were shown as drawn by the mules.

The reason this attracted Mr. Nunn's notice was cause he is the one who, as a boy, drove the mules that hauled those cars. He is one of the three now left who worked at those mines before 1850. One of these is Capt. Josh Abshire, of the steamer Gazelle. He dug coal there then as a mere youth. Pete Eans, now eighty-five years old, and who lives four miles west of the city, is the third.

He was an engineer employed at the mines and at a woolen mill operated there then by the late Robert Triplett. Mr. Nunn drove for two or three years and then dug coal for one year.

In this connection Mr. Nunn stated the interesting fact that from 1847 to 1850 a three-horse wagon, hauling twenty-five bushels at a load and making three trips daily, hauled all the coal that was used in Owensboro. Even the driver of the coal wagon is still remembered, but Mr. Nunn does not know whether or not he is yet living. His name was Ike Hudson. He married a widow, mother of Judge J. D. Atchison, left him and went to Texas. And thus are the past and the present linked by a simple composition and interesting reveries and reminiscences stirred up by a little girl's humble effort.



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Genealogy of the Triplett Family

By Rev. Arnold Harris Hord

ROBERT TRIPLETT – 5 (Daniel - 4, Francis - 3, William - 2, Francis - generation 1) was born in Virginia about 1796, moved to Kentucky about 1824, died in Philadelphia 1852. He married Miss Pegram of Petersburg, Va. She died in Owensboro, Ky. in 1848 or 1849. Before he was twenty years of age he had made several voyages to South America as super-cargo of a ship laden with merchandise for trade, meeting with great success. He came out to Kentucky in the year 1824 as agent for May, Bannister & Ross who held large bodies of military lands. He was very successful in locating and selling for some years, generally buying their entire surveys. On this purchase he realized a large fortune. He opened the first coal mines and built the first railroad ever built in Kentucky about 1834 He also built a large woolen mill and cotton factories early in the Forties. His home in Davis County, Ky. near Owensboro, was called "Haphazard" and was patterned after the old Virginia mansion of that name. During the Texan War for independence he gave his services and loaned the State, one hundred thousand Dollars. In the hard times of 1844-5-6, the perfidy of a partner ruined him, but with undaunted courage he made and left at his death in 1852, a handsome fortune to each of his children. His duel with the Hon. Phil. Thompson was a sensation of that time. Thompson was shot through the body but recovered. The *shot cured* Thompson of a lameness in walking. They made friends later on. Thompson said "Triplett was a good surgeon but severe in remedy.", He left children:

(109.) Annie Triplett.

(110.) Lelia Triplett, married Hon. Geo. M. Yearnans, U. S. Minister to Denmark and Sweden.

(111.) Virginia Triplett died at Petersburg, Va. about 1875, aged 25 years.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 14 February 1926, p.1B:

How The Streets Of Owensboro Received Their Names

Triplett Named For Old Family

Triplett street, the long thoroughfare stretching from the extreme south to the far northern part of Owensboro was named for the Triplett family, of which Robert, Phillip, and Judge George S. Triplett came to Owensboro in about 1816. Phillip Triplett acquired the property extending from Fourth street out to where Legion park now stands. The Phillip Triplett home was what is now the Mary Kendall Home in Phillip's court. Robert Triplett's home which was named "Haphazard," is now the Hunter Bell farm while the home of Judge George S. Triplett is what is now known as the Morgan or Morehead farm on the Livermore road....



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 11 April 1943, p.4A:

**Bon Harbor Hills Saw Many Early Business
Ventures Including State's First Railroad**

By Ida Cockriel, Owensboro Messenger writer

..... Although the residence of Haphazard was high on the ridge, part of the farm extended down into the bottoms, and was swampy much of the time. The farm made no money, in fact it was an incumbrance. He couldn't sell it, for the people of this section knew its fault, so he moved onto Haphazard. He planned a drainage system for the farm, and during the ensuing years carried out his plans. Drained, the land became very productive, the farm became an asset. Haphazard in later years was known as Ewing Bell farm and is now the home of Mr. Mrs. Sam C. Coots and Mr. and Mrs. G. Wallace | Thacker.....etc.



**Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 31 January 1954, pp.1D & 14D
and Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 5 October 1965, p.7C:**



By Charlotte Baumgarten

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 and maybe the first west of the Alleghenies, local historians say.

Fought Duel in Indiana

It was over some distillery litigation that Triplett and an attorney for the opposition, a Judge Thompson, fought a duel on the Indiana shore, within sight of Haphazard. The lawyer was shot but survived and later became a friend of his challenger. Tradition has it that the bullets did wonders for Thompson's rheumatism, and he often boasted to Triplett that he was a "good doctor but a rough operator."

Haphazard has seen a number of weddings, births and deaths in its days. One of its brides, a daughter of Triplett, became the wife of the county's youngest judge, George H. Yeaman. He took office for one term at the age of 25. He later served two terms in Congress, was named minister to Copenhagen, Denmark, and eventually settled in New York in his old age.

A notation from a John J. Audubon diary now in Audubon Society files mentions the writer's having stayed at the Robert Triplett home in Daviess County while in this section.

Both the purchase price and the ground involved are listed in the transfer of Haphazard from Triplett to William Bell in 1844. The deed book shows that the house and a tract of 1,000 acres was bought for \$13,500. The late J. Hunter Bell, William's son, was six weeks old when the family moved into the home. He lived in it for 83 years until his death in 1927. The house was remodeled but not substantially changed during the generations of Bells.

The property passed to Hunter's son, Junius, now retired vice president of Standard Oil of Kentucky. His home is in Anchorage. The house was occupied by tenants until 1938, and stood vacant for three years before its next owner took possession.

House Restored in 1941

Credit for restoring the gracious residence goes to Sam Coots, who with Wallace Thacker, a son-in-law, purchased the house and remaining 58 acres of the estate in 1941. A near ruin, the house had last been used as stripping rooms for tobacco. Livestock had been quartered in its basement.

Mr. Coots spent six months on the restoration project, with detailed care to put everything back as it had been in the first days of Haphazard. Since the Glens purchased the home in 1947, redecorating has been done but no other changes or remodeling have been necessary.

Built of logs covered with yellow poplar boarding, the house measures 90 feet from east to west wing. The hallway, actually 14 feet wide instead of the 12 feet listed in the Triplett deed, extends 40 feet from front to rear porch. Slaves furnished labor for the building. Evidence of their work is found in the hand-reeded door facings and woodwork, the hand-hammered fittings on the

windows, doors and shutters. These and even the logs themselves are put together with pegs. Wrought nails with square heads hold the weather boarding in place.

The exact age of Haphazard not known, except for the clue in the deed which shows the main part of the house existed 134 years ago. Coots treasures two items uncovered in the basement when carpenters removed old plaster and lathing. Hidden away on a yellow poplar sill were an empty whisky bottle and a twist of tobacco, put there years ago by a slave.

The bottle, of hand-blown aquamarine glass, bears a picture of General Andrew Jackson and an imprint of the American flag, surrounded by 13 stars. Glass books say it was made between 1824 and 1828, when spirits were handed out campaign tokens.



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. [article also contains six pictures of the interior of the home]



“First Coal By Rail” Historical Highway Marker



Inscription: Robert Triplett built the first railway in Kentucky, 1826. Coal was moved from Bon Harbor hills to steamboats on the Ohio River. Triplett was first to get coal substituted for wood as fuel on river boats below Louisville. Coal was shipped south, sold by barrel. Built cotton, woolen mills and laid out town of Bon Harbor in 1842, which failed.

Erected: In 1964 by the Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Department of Highways. (Marker Number 743.)

Location: In Daviess County, KY on River Road (State Road 331), on the right when traveling north. Marker is at entrance to the Owensboro Riverport Authority.



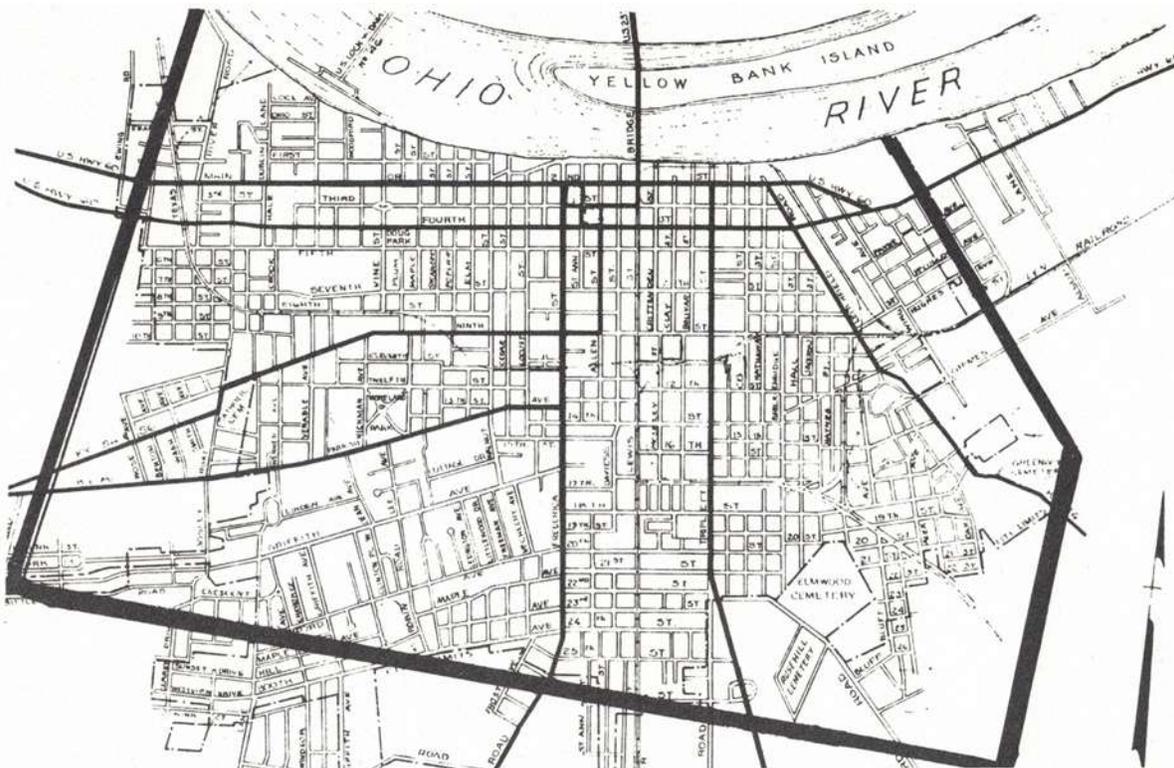
In The Beginning... Historical Facts About the Earliest Days of Present Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter (Owensboro, KY: Radio Station WOMI, 1968), pp.18-19:

THREE-FIFTHS OF OWENSBORO SOLD IN 1822 FOR \$5,000

Would you pay \$1.66 2/3 an acre for approximately three-fifths of the land in Owensboro, including all of the downtown business district?

Sorry, but you're much too late to have the opportunity!

It was in October of 1822 that Robert Triplett, early Owensboro land dealer, industrialist and coal mine developer, paid Richard Mason of Virginia \$5,000 for this 3,000-acre tract of Daviess county land which, according to an 1806 map, covered what has since become some of the most valuable real estate in this city.



The 3,000-acre tract of land enclosed by the heavy black border, above, was sold in 1822 for \$5,000. According to the city engineer's department, the acreage covers present Owensboro, from a point near the Water Works and the Ohio river to one near Bon Harbor: south from the river to the junction of the Bittel and Carter roads, and diagonally south-east across Owensboro to a point beyond the old Hartford road about where 30th street would be if it existed, and then back toward the Ohio river, crossing the Leitchfield road on its way. Today this land would sell for millions.

Triplett, as agent for Ross and May, was sorely in need of a valid title to this land because the approximately 80 acres on which Owensboro was established, was within this tract. The heirs of David Ross and John May had deeded half of the lots in the new town plus two acres for the public square to the county and had sold other acreage and lots to private investors and home owners before the Kentucky court of appeals ruled on October 21, 1821 that the land belonged to the Mason heirs and not to the heirs of Ross and May.

In his autobiography, Roland Trevor, Triplett acknowledged that "Major Richard B. Mason of the United States Army . . . held the legal title to the claims at the Yellow Banks which interfered with Ross and Mays . . ." Triplett came here in the fall of 1817 "to settle up that (the David Ross) estate."

Mason, a grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall, had inherited the land along with many more acres in Daviess county. His sale of the 3,000-acre tract was not the only chance Mason missed to establish a huge family fortune. As a Colonel in the United States Army he was military and civil governor of the territory of California when gold was discovered there in 1848, precipitating the historic gold rush by the '49ers.

Brevetted a brigadier general for his California services, Mason was subsequently transferred to St. Louis where he died on July 25, 1850 while others were becoming fabulously rich in the gold fields he had governed.



**A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter,
Daviess County Historical Society, Owensboro, KY (Montgomery, AL:
Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing, 1974) pp.30-37:**

Chapter VII

PIONEER ENTREPRENEUR

Robert Triplett, pioneer Daviess county entrepreneur, was a man with unlimited ambition, foresight, energy, determination, and talent. Arriving in primitive "Owensborough" soon after the town was established, for the purpose of settling the Kentucky estate of David Ross, wealthy Virginia revolutionary patriot for whom an effort was made to have this community named, Triplett immediately began a career that over the next thirty-three years saw him make and lose one fortune and build another. He also established a record of "firsts" in so many fields he could easily qualify for recognition as Daviess County's all-time "first citizen".

As sales agent for the heirs to the Ross estate, Triplett was Owensboro's first major real estate dealer. In this capacity he conducted private sales, auctions of town lots and had to eject squatters from land on which they had lived and built homes only to learn, as so many other pioneers in Kentucky did, that they either had no title or an invalid one.

As the purchaser of a part of this land, on which the 300-acre "Davis pond" was located, he became Daviess county's first soil conservationist. In this role he drained the large lake and turned it into some of the finest farm land in the new county.

As the owner of this rich land which produced much low-priced corn per acre, Triplett figured he could make more money by turning the grain into whiskey. In carrying out this plan, he became successively the first operator of a steam-powered saw mill which he needed to cut giant trees into lumber with which to build two distilleries. Although he was not Daviess county's first distiller, he was the first to set up his plant in the vicinity of the Ohio River which became the area in which most later Daviess county whiskey manufacturing plants would be built.

As a distiller whose operations proved unprofitable, Triplett became suspicious of his distiller, engaged in a law suit with him and, in court, crossed tempers with the small, lame, fiery, wealthy lawyer-soldier, Philip Thompson. The result was one of the best remembered, if not the first, duels fought by prominent Owensboro area men which, happily, proved to be beneficial instead of fatal to the loser.

Next, Triplett turned his attention to the Bon Harbor Hills, west of Owensboro, where he became the first coal magnate of Western Kentucky whose salesmanship helped to convert early steamboats from wood-burners to coal-burners.

As a coal operator, Triplett became the builder of what he believed, and Kentucky historian Lewis Collins agreed, was the first railroad in Kentucky if not in the West. This was a gravity-powered line used to deliver coal from a mine opening in the side of one of the Bon Harbor Hills, overlooking the Ohio River, to boats moored in the harbor below. Whether the empty coal cars were pushed back to the mine by slave-power or hauled by mules is still a matter speculation.

As a very successful (for a period of time) coal producer, Triplett needed more barges than his steam powered saw mill could provide so he contracted with other mill operators as far away as Salt River to build them and, as a result, became Daviess county's (if not Kentucky's) first barge line operator.

Through his observations of the advantages offered by the attractive good harbor in which his coal barges were loaded, Triplett's fertile mind churned up the idea of converting Bon Harbor into an industrial community. This he did, even though it was ultimately a complete failure and no trace remains of his dream city. His efforts to promote a "Lowell, Massachusetts" of the West at Bon Harbor made him the first and only planned industrial city promoter in Daviess county history.

Not satisfied with his efforts and accomplishments, nor overcome by failures in other fields of endeavor, Triplett became Daviess county's first author. He wrote his biography as his life was nearing its end, from a cancer of the face. This book which was published in 1853—the year of his death in Philadelphia—substituted the name of "Roland Trevor" for his own but it told the story of the life of Robert Triplett and left for future generations much information about early Owensboro, some of its people, and its way of life that otherwise would have been lost. Thus he was also Owensboro's first historian.

Copies of *ROLAND TREVOR, OR THE PILOT OF HUMAN LIFE*, published by Lippincott, S rambo [sic] and Company, Philadelphia, remain in the rare book sections of the Congressional Library, Washington, D. C., the University of Kentucky Library, Lexington, Kentucky, and the Filson Club library, Louisville, Kentucky, and in other collections. Excerpts from this book which were selected for reproduction here because they deal with Triplett's experiences in and about early Owensboro and Daviess county. These excerpts begin with the young Robert Triplett in Richmond, Virginia:

"Judge Bouldin, executor of the estate of David Ross, (one of the early land owners in present Daviess county) now applied to me to know if I would go to Kentucky to settle up that estate.

"Then there were no railroads, nor steamboats on the Ohio (September, 1817), except perhaps one or two that had commenced below the Falls (Louisville); neither were there any stages; and horseback was the universal mode of travel to the West—or in carriages or wagons. Having taken leave of my friends, I was soon on my way to Frankfort, Kentucky, then a sixteen days' journey from Richmond." At Frankfort Triplett wrote he and a companion left for "Yellow Banks to have transfers made of town lots in Owensboro, the grantors having given half the town to the county to fix the seat of justice there". His companion's father owned one-third, and Triplett's "constituent two-thirds". Triplett "went with him, by way of Bardstown—a five days' journey".

"On arriving within twenty-five miles of the Yellow Banks, 'Here', said Triplett's companion, 'begins the great survey of May, Banister and Company which extends six miles below Owensboro'; thirty-one miles in length, and containing 160,000 acres".

About three miles above the town, Triplett wrote "we came in sight of the Ohio River . . . I thought it one of the most sublime watersheets I had ever seen.

"We entered the town—the courthouse had been built, and a number of cabins; but there were not more than two or three brick chimneys in the town. I thought it was the prettiest situation for a town that I had ever seen—level, and high banks, on a great bend of the river".

Triplett had to verify boundary lines and evict squatters from the land. In doing this he had a few unpleasant experiences. One was with an "obstinate fellow by the name of C" who later was killed in a street fight. Here Triplett details this incident:

"I was warned to beware of him—was told he was a desperate devil An application was finally made to me to buy C's place and I sold it. I had agreed to pay each squatter for their improvements who acted reasonably, but C would not. I knew now I had to prepare for an attack knew that the attacking party was, nine times out of ten, the successful one, but I had to await him, and he was not long coming. He presented himself one morning at my office, stood in the door before me, as I wrote at my table, with my back to the fire. I had used an axe-handle as a poker. It was pretty heavy, and stood against the fireplace, convenient for me to reach it. I also kept a dirk by me, which was on the chimney piece. I will premise that this was not kept with an expectation of using it, but, by having it, it answered as a protector

"As he entered the door, his visage looked as red as an old turkey-gobbler's, and there was desperation in it. I never saw a man who seemed so bent on mischief. I saw that there was death in the pot, and that if he got hold of me he would probably kill me. My determination was not to be killed, if I could help it, even if I had to go to any extremity to avoid it

"'What do you want, sir?' said I. 'I want to know if you have sold my place, sir.' 'I have, sir.' 'Then, sir, do you intend to pay me for my improvements?' 'I do not, sir,' 'Before, then sir, you shall get possession of it, you shall walk over my dead body.' 'Ah, indeed!' said I, suddenly rising, grasping my dirk in my left hand, having the axe-handle in my right, and springing at him with a stroke of the latter, which he dodged by jumping back out of the door, when he turned and ran. The end was, I got him to sign a writing giving me up his land.

"As a number saw the whole transaction, it was useless for me to speak of it, and so I did not; but as others jeered him about running, he had to make the best excuse he could, by saying he believed I would as soon kill a man as eat, in the which he was never more mistaken in his life. But the impression answered me a good purpose, for I was never afterwards threatened or had any

difficulty with these men; and moved eighty families off of the land in one year, and had not a single dispute or lawsuit with any man."

Triplett had a large number of maps prepared of the sectionized lands to be sold at Yellow Banks, with the lots numbered and described, so that with a map any one could find any lot and examine it; and the sale and transfer by number were very simple and easy.

"Such land as I did not sell at auction," Triplett wrote, "I was ready afterwards to sell in my office

Triplett told of making a trip into far Western Kentucky and returning to the Yellow Banks where he put up at Mrs. Adam's tavern—his old stopping place; and although "she had not a brick chimney to her house, she had everything very neat and tidy, and her meals were well cooked; indeed, everything as good and comfortable as her means would admit of, and three pretty daughters to set off the whole to advantage."

Triplett wrote that he made a trip to Virginia where he met with Major Richard B. Mason of the United States Army, a grandson of George Mason of Gunston Hall. Mason held the legal title to his family's claim at the Yellow Banks, which interfered with the Ross and May land titles.

Triplett explained that Major Mason "proposed to exchange his claim there for 1200 acres of the P. survey, and though I was not authorized to exchange land, I concluded to do it, and charge myself with the land exchanged at valuation, and take the claim myself, which I had been sent to Washington to compromise, and to complete that arrangement. But finally, finding what I got was a great bargain for what I gave, I concluded, in order to avoid all ground of censure, I would turn it over to the P___ s. I was now ready for a third land-sale, and so advertised on my arrival in Frankfort. In due time this took place with a very large company, and although the lands, compared with present prices, sold very low, yet with prices as then ranging, they sold uncommonly well. J L. May, one of the chief owners, who was present, said they went far beyond his expectations.

"This was in consequence of the low price at which the lands had gone at the previous sales. Persons expected to be supplied at similar rates, but, more attending than could be supplied, it was evident some must return landless, and so the bidding was very spirited. I purchased more than twenty years afterwards some of the property sold at that sale for less than it cost; and sold twenty years after, for less than cost and interest, some which I bought at that sale. My commissions mounted, I think, as well as I can recollect to over six thousand dollars."

"At the last land sales I had purchased in some of the choice lands of May's estate at the upper end of the Yellow Banks. This was done in trying to make them bring a higher price, but J. L. May insisted on my keeping them; and I agreed to do so, on condition that he would insert in the deeds all the circumstances; which he did. At the same sale, he had been induced to buy some lands below Owensboro, now known as Bonharbor. These he regretted having bought, and urged me to take. I did so on the same conditions.....

"Upon this land above town was a very large pond, of three hundred acres, laid down on the original map of Kentucky as Davis's Pond, which had to be drained to make the land of any value. This would cost a good deal of money So at it we went, cutting a ditch around the pond on the outside, throwing dirt inside, our object being to prevent the water of the hills from running in, believing that no more water fell upon any land than it would absorb, or that it would evaporate

It was many years before this was permanently successful, but it was finally so, and reclaimed a large body of the finest land I ever saw, made by a deposit for ages of the rich washings of the adjacent grounds. A tenant to whom we rented part of the ground admitted that he obtained ninety bushels of corn to the acre. But what were we to do with the corn when made? There was no market for it. By distilling it, we could make a market; then in public estimation there seemed no

impropriety in doing so . . . especially while corn sold at sixteen cents per bushel, and whiskey at thirty cents per gallon; and one bushel of corn would make three gallons of whiskey. Since then four are obtained. But at three the value was increased over fivefold, and the slop fed to hogs would pay the expense of manufacturing. So at it we must go, was the conclusion. There were, however no mills in the country to furnish lumber to build the distilleries or to grind the corn. Well, we must build one; the country needed one, and it would be profitable, without regard to our own demand for it. . . . So we commenced vigorously to build the steam-mill. At first scared at the idea that all my commissions and profits were to be absorbed by the purchase of the land, we had step by step gone on, sanguine that it would pay well to build a steam-mill and two very large distilleries, also a large dwelling-house, with various other buildings. Our income and all my means were found insufficient to meet the cost, and we were getting hard run for money. But the pond being put in meadow promised a great result; the saw-mill seemed to be doing a good business, and the prospect was that the distilleries would do finely; so that, although 'in the narrows' temporarily, the chance was we would soon be out, and with a brilliant prospect before us. So our spirits never flagged.

"We had discovered coal in our Bonharbor Hills, too; the coal for which I purchased the property was only a thin vein at the river. But a hunter, seeing us working this, said he could show us a better vein in the hills, which he did, to the depth of four and a half feet. And from this to the Ohio, three-quarters of a mile, we made the first railway in 1826 which was made in Kentucky, or, I believe, in the west; and the next year commenced delivering coal to steam-boats; being the first attempt below the falls, if not the first attempt in the West, to use coal as steam-boat fuel. The field seemed widening all around us, and the beckoning of fortune strong.

"There seemed every reason to believe we were stepping right into wealth at once. But we began to have too many irons in the fire. Our business at the Yellow Banks distracted our attention from our land business; and while it as yet yielded no revenue, it was a constant drain upon us for money."

"All my private means were absorbed, besides the means of the firm, and we were a good deal in debt. We had raised almost a town."

In spite of his financial problems, Robert Triplett went back to Virginia, was married and brought his bride to Kentucky. First they stopped at Frankfort where he wrote that "Judge George M. Bibb, Mr. John J. Crittenden, and my acquaintances generally, calling to see V , (his wife), and welcoming her, cheered her spirits very much, although nothing could compensate for the absence of her own near relatives Before he returned to Daviess county, Triplett found the Haphazard Branch had not yet commenced making money, but on my return the calls were heavy on me for further advances. The little supply which I obtained in Virginia I had hoped would go to lessening accumulated arrearages, but it all seemed required for progressing improvements. Hardly a week passed that I was not called upon for a further advance. I confess I began to feel exceedingly uneasy. My income from my land business had been much lessened while I was absent, and my little stock on hand was fast wasting away. I formed a determination on my first marriage to conceal nothing from my wife, and conferred freely with her about my business. She finally suggested that we had better go to Haphazard; she thought my presence there must be necessary. I was convinced she was right—broke up our office in Frankfort, and moved down.

"The house we had built was a very large one, with plenty of room for both of our families, as B 's wife was a sweet, well-bred, amiable woman."

"I now saw that we were evidently losing money by our distilleries . . . Nothing went well with them, and we stopped the largest, still continuing one and the steam-mill There was, however, a ray of hope let in from the coal-mines; our first experiments had been profitable; and

it was determined that B should go to New Orleans to make arrangements to try and get it into use among the planters, or sugar-makers."

On his way down he met with a Mr. B , a commission-merchant, who undertook to act as their agent in the coal business.

"This matter being arranged, B returned, and we proceeded to send coal, offering it at fifty-cents per barrel The experiment was eminently successful. Mr. B sold every load we sent, before it arrived, and wrote to us that, if we could afford to send it for fifty cents per barrel, he could sell all that we could send him. We were now the only shippers except Judge McLean, who had opened a small vein opposite to Hawesville, at what is now Cannelton. This was not over half the thickness of ours, and we did not much fear the competition I could see no reason why we could not send down two hundred thousand barrels, making thereby thirty or forty thousand dollars....

"About the beginning of 1829, my wife blessed me with a daughter—a beautiful child, which was an additional link to that affection, before already as strong as it well could be.

"And now afterwards, some time in February..... I found our distiller had been cheating us, and charged him with it. This brought on a fist-fight, the only one I ever had been engaged in since I left school. He was a powerful man, over six feet high, and would have gotten the better of me, had we not been parted I now had the distillery closed, and the business stopped. The distiller threatened to sue me for violation of contract; but we compromised by agreeing to leave it to arbitration."

From this abritration [sic] ocured a difficulty which caused a duel with the distiller's lawyer, Philip Thompson. Triplett wounded his adversary, who later recovered and became his friend. The pistol wound was credited with curing the lawyer's rheumatism and lameness.

"We now made all arrangements for a tremendous business in coal, and so brilliant seemed the prospect there that the loss by the distilleries was thought but a trifle.

"We turned in to building boats at our steam-mill, turning out one a week; contracted with Judge Huston for all that he could build at his mill on Sinking Creek; engaged other mills on Salt River, and, indeed, various points were all alive building boats for us. . . . We were in the highest conceivable spirits, imagining we were making from one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars per day.

"But in the midst of our glee we received a letter from Mr. B , saying that an unprecedented frost had occurred, which had killed the sugarcane, and there would not be half a crop to grind. The planters, therefore, would not want the coal, and if they wanted it, they could not pay for it. That we must stop shipments, and draw no more drafts on him....

"I jumped upon a steam-boat, and went immediately to New Orleans.

"On my arrival there, I found some twenty boats in port, and no demand for the coal, which some of the boatmen would have had sacrificed to pay their wages, but no one wanted it, and they could not sell it."

"My great fear now was that the boatmen, in order to enforce the payment of their wages, might put me in the calaboose, as they could have done.... There was then no coal burnt in New Orleans in grates, except a little Cannel coal by a few English houses....It was winter. I went down to Richardson's hotel; first, however, ordering a load of coal to be there immediately. It was very cold and chilly, and not half those who crowded in to the hotel could get to the wood-fire. The cart appearing at the door, I asked permission of Mr. Richardson to let me put a few lumps of coal upon his fire, saying it should cost him nothing. With some reluctance he consented. Soon the coal was in a blaze, and soon the heat began to expand the crowd, until there was plenty of room for all. All

were delighted, and Richardson, smiling, said, 'Well, I believe you may put me out that load of coal. What is the price?' I answered four dollars. Turning to his barkeeper, he said, 'Pay this gentleman four dollars.'

"I now began to feel confident that I could make a market for all our coal, and started up to see the boatmen; but on my way saw the tow-boat 'Livingston' taking in wood. I went on board, and proposed to her captain (Morrison) to try coal. He did not know how it would answer. I agreed he might take on one hundred barrels, and if he did not use it, he should not pay for it. . . . I directed the firemen how to use it . . . Captain Morrison was perfectly astonished at the effect, and after running down several miles, 'put about,' and returned to New Orleans to let the agent and owners know how finely the coal answered, to get them to make a contract. They came on board, and we went down some miles, when all seemed highly gratified with the experiment; but made no contract for the present. They paid me, however, for the coal. . . .

"Things were now going on swimmingly, and the prospect of a brilliant fortune lay before me. Never were my spirits so buoyant and triumphant. . . . But how vain are all human calculations! The "Shark", on her last trip from the Balize, took out her grates for burning coal, and replaced those for burning wood; the captain saying the coal fires were so hot that they burnt out his boilers. . . ."

"I took my departure for home, very much dispirited at the result of the season's operations; for we were not only short the said \$7,000, but also all the resources which we could raise at home. It was a most disastrous year's work. . . ."

"In 1842, the tariff was raised; an energetic impulse was immediately given to the manufacturing business. I owned the Bonharbor coal-mines, and two thousand acres of land, beginning about two miles below Owensboro, possessing great advantages for manufacturing. I was anxious to enlist some one to engage with me in establishing a small woolen factory, for jeans and linseys, and for this purpose sent on a proposition eastward. It happened that such an establishment had been sold out, and the machinery purchased by a gentleman who believed it was of the best kind; and he agreed to furnish the machinery, if I would furnish the engine and building. The bargain was closed. . . . I had an engine, and soon I had the building ready, which was filled with the machinery that had been forwarded from the east. We commenced operations under the management of a man who was sent out by my eastern partner. But, after running some time, he failed to make the turn-out he had promised, and we parted. I now proceeded to the residence of one in whom I had great confidence, and engaged him to take charge of the factory. On his arrival, and examining the machinery, he said it was behind the times, would not do at all, and he would not undertake with it I wrote the gentleman who had sent it that he must either provide good machinery, or I would. I went to Louisville, made arrangements to raise two thousand dollars, and sent the new manager to Philadelphia to obtain it. In the mean time, I purchased out my partner.

"On the arrival of the new machinery, everything went well, and the new manager undertook to furnish all the labor against capital and the establishment, and to divide profits. Now we moved on swimmingly. Our goods were the best in market, and were sought for by all who saw them. But we had no cotton-machinery to manufacture our warps, and were compelled to have those made in Lexington, paying twenty cents per pound for them, when, if we had had the machinery, we could have manufactured them for fifteen. In the mean time, I had been using every effort to attract the custom of steamboats for my coal, and with success. We were selling a good deal, and things wore a cheerful and promising aspect.

"About this time, a Mr. B , (Barrett) of Henderson, and several lawyers, who were attending court at Owensboro, went to Bon Harbor to see my establishment. I at the same time had sent them an invitation to spend the evening with me. When they came, they told me they had been down and were very much pleased. B said he could not see what was to prevent my making a fortune. I answered, nothing but one to make it with; that I was too much cramped for money. B

was a man of great resources, and from this commenced a negotiation which resulted in a sale of half the property. The conditions were that he was to pay me fifty-five thousand dollars, with a fraction, to be laid out in improvements on the property; putting thereby this sum against the property, although I considered it worth twice as much. But I wished to be out of debt at any sacrifice. I told B that I must withdraw fifteen thousand dollars to pay my debts. To this he objected, as less than fifty-five thousand dollars would not do for our purposes, and he proposed lending me for five years the extra fifteen thousand dollars, to which I agreed, and so we closed the contract; he giving me his acceptances for seventy thousand dollars, which I placed in the several banks at Louisville for collection....

"Here it is necessary to stop," Triplett concluded, "or else go on to fill another volume. That cannot be done for the present, and so I will here close my memoirs, having carried them to the making and losing of a fortune, and the making of another...."

In his efforts to finance and build his dream town of Bon Harbor into the metropolis to Daviess county, Triplett also turned to European money markets. He had a detailed pamphlet printed in London, England, in 1849, which was intended to attract the attention of manufacturers and capitalists by showing "the eligibility of Bon Harbor as a site for a manufacturing town."

Among the "clearly established" advantages claimed for the town were that its supply of coal "may be considered as inexhaustible", that the "site for trade from convenience of harbor, depth of water, and goodness of landing, as well as from the extent of back country which it may be made to command, is one among the finest on the Ohio river," and the "advantages we have over Lowell (Mass.) are the whole cost of getting the raw material from New Orleans to Lowell, as we can get it from the cotton region to Bon Harbor for the freight from said region to New Orleans"

A further advantage envisioned for Bon Harbor was that "it is the finest point in the West for shipbuilding, because of the unlimited supply of the white oak timber, which it commands, and because the rigging and sails which may be manufactured on the spot . . ."

Included in the brochure are descriptions of the cotton factory then at Bon Harbor and Triplett's hopes for the future of the community, which follow:

"The Bon Harbor cotton factory is designed to accomodate [sic] 7,000 spindles, and with an additional room to be built, looms to weave up all the yarns. The present room will suffice for the said number of spindles and one hundred looms. The building is constructed with such a thickness of wall, and of floors, that it is intended the jar of machinery shall not be felt. The roof is of slate, lower shutters and doors are of iron; heated by steam; not a fire-place or stove within the factory; the engine house so far fire-proof, that if all the fire in the furnace was scattered over the floor, which is of brick, it could hurt nothing.

"Cisterns in the attic story, have copper pipes leading down to the ground floor, with cocks and connecting hose for every story, so that any part of the building can in a few moments be flooded. The picker house is so constructed that it might burn down without burning the main building, but could not well burn, if water would save it. We have as yet only 2,000 spindles in operation, intending to increase as operatives are learnt. More machinery is already ordered. We have not been in operation quite twelve months, weaving; but see enough to satisfy us that our best

hopes will be realized, and that we have fully twenty per cent advantage over eastern manufacturers in cost of the goods.

"Believing that such establishments thrive best in communities, we shall offer liberal inducements for others to locate along side of us. We have been applied to for lots for a foundry for glass, and axe manufactory, and have applications in regard to other establishments. We have in operation a very fine saw mill, capable of turning out, and which does turn out, between five and seven thousand feet of lumber per day.

"We have the machinery for a flour mill, and all the wood work framed, ready to go up, as also apparatus for kiln-drying corn meal; which is intended to be in operation for the next crop.

"Connected with the factory is a corn mill, which now does the business of the place and neighbourhood.

"We have a store and smith's shop. There are five carpenters, who have purchased and built, besides others who are at work here, in addition to various other mechanics. A wharf boat and general appliances for a business place, with a rapidly growing village, owned by the firm, except, where mechanics have purchased and built; no lots being sold, except to workmen.

"The plan of the Bon Harbor Company, is to invite enterprise by all convenient means, and the following branches could not fail to do well:

"A rolling mill; because the pigs go chiefly by our doors, to be manufactured at Pittsburgh and Wheeling, and much of it returned to us. A nail factory, for the same reason; and because.....one which has been in operation about a year, in Wheeling, is estimated to be clearing twenty-five per cent; an evidence of the truth of which, I was told, while lately there, that one stockholder to the amount of \$10,000 had sold out for \$17,000, and another of \$14,000, had refused \$27,000. A waggon, cart, and plough factory, because these articles give employment to a large amount of capital, and a vast number of hands, at Wheeling and Pittsburgh, where timber is much higher than here, and inferior in quality; and those places find their chief market on the Mississippi, below us.

"Glass factory; because sand, used at Wheeling and Pittsburgh, goes from below us to be manufactured there. Cotton, for the same reason.

"Tannery, and shoe and boot making; because the hides go with the bark to New England from our very doors, and come back to us made up, and our food goes there to feed the workmen. Saddlery ditto. Stone and crockery ware, because we have fine clays for the purpose. Hats, because we have the furs and steam cheap. Woolen factory, being near the wool growing country. Coopers, because of abundant stave timber. Engine shops, because soon engines will be wanting for every branch of business, and especially for steam-boats to be built here. Ship yards, because no where in the west can ship timber be found in greater abundance, of better quality, or cheaper, and no where better ground for building on, or deeper water for launching.

"And that is not all: when ships are ready for departure here, cargoes of tobacco could always be had, as this is the centre of the great western tobacco region. Besides what is made on the Ohio, it is estimated that sixteen thousand hogsheads come annually out of Green river, most of which would be shipped directly for England, at a freight equalling that to New Orleans, added to that thence to England, as thereby the shipper would save the landing at New Orleans, drayage, inspection, cooperage, forwarding commission, and a great amount of other charges; and here could be manufactured sails, rigging, and every want of a sail or steam ship. I predict that this will be a great ship building point, at some future day, not very far distant."

Exactly when and why Bon Harbor became a ghost city and faded completely away is not now known but it has been suggested that failure to find ready funds in Europe and the approaching

fatal illness of its promoter, who died four years after the pamphlet was published, were possible reasons.

Haphazard, the home which Robert Triplett completed near Owensboro (on the Pleasant Valley road just south of U.S. 60, East) for his young bride in or about 1820 was destined to serve as a much more permanent monument to the life of Daviess county's pioneer entrepreneur. In 1973, as this was being written, Haphazard remained in splendid condition after serving as a residence for most of its then 153 years.

On October 5, 1965, the Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer told this story about Haphazard : [note – article is on pages 20-22]:



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, Ky., Sunday, 29 June 1975, p.6C:

**HISTORIC HOMES
of OWENSBORO**



HAPHAZARD or MASON – TRIPLETT – BELL HOUSE

Built around 1820 of Greek Revival architecture, this historic home is located on Pleasant Valley Road, just off Highway 60 East. The land on which the home was built was first owned by George Mason of Virginia, who was a close friend of George Washington. Robert Triplett, founder of Bon Harbor area, built the home. It was purchased from Triplett by William Bell. It remained in the Bell family for over a generation. The home is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Garland Howard.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 16 October 1975, p.2C:

National Register selects 19th century 'Haphazard' for historic places listing

"Haphazard" on Pleasant Valley Road, Owensboro, has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The site was nominated for selection last spring and announcement of its addition to the register has been made by the Kentucky Department of Public Information.

Present owners of the house are Mr. and Mrs. Garland W. Howard who acquired the property from Mrs. Delbert J. Glenn. She and her late husband had made their home at "Haphazard" for about 25 years after it was restored by Sam Coats, and the utilities modernized.

The William Bell family owned the house from 1844 to 1941. It is thought that Bell added the one-story Grecian portico.

Haphazard, named for the eddies in the Ohio River which it faces, was built prior to 1822. It is the last remaining early 19th century house on a ridge that extends east of Owensboro along the river.

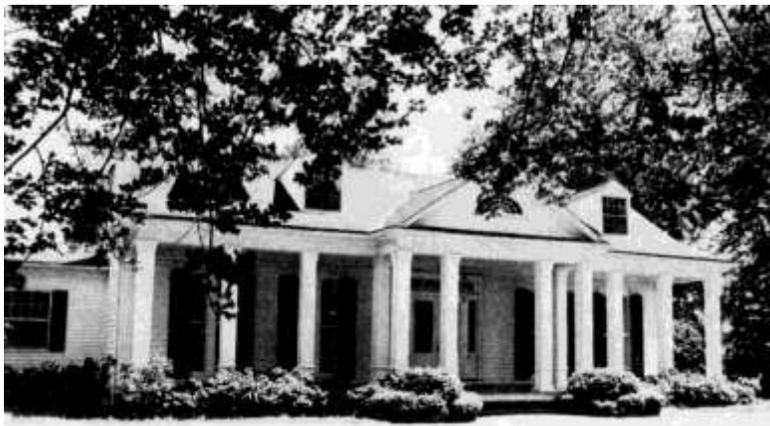
The house reflects various architectural influences because of its several owners. The main portion of the house dates before 1822, when it was purchased by Robert Triplett. It is made of logs covered with yellow poplar boarding. The fittings on the doors, windows and shutters are handcrafted and they, along with the logs, are constructed with pegs.

Richard Mason is credited with the early construction. His father, George Mason, received the property as a land grant, surveyed in 1787.

Triplett added the Federal interior and probably the gable on the north side. Also he is thought to have added the wings on either side of the house.

Triplett was Owensboro's first real estate dealer, the first successful operator of a steam-powered saw mill, owner of two distilleries, operator of a coal mine and possibly builder of the first railroad in Kentucky.

The railroad was a gravity-powered line used to deliver coal from a mine opening in one of Bon Harbor hills overlooking the Ohio River, to boats moored in the harbor below.



Accepted for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places is the 150-year-old house, "Haphazard," that is the current home of Mr. and Mrs. Garland W. Howard on Pleasant Valley Road. The home which was first owned by George Mason, was nominated last spring for national listing, by the Kentucky Heritage Commission in June, and approved recently by the National Park Service.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 24 June 1983, p.6C:



Located just off Highway 60 East on Pleasant Owensboro, Kentucky. WATCH FOR SIGNS!!!
Since we have decided to build a smaller home, we have authorized Valley Road only a few minutes from Downtown Kurtz Auction & Realty Company to sell "HAPHAZARD".
Owners Mr. & Mrs. Garland Howard

[note – ad also includes a diagram of the floor plan and a history of Haphazard.]



Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks, Lee A. Dew & Aloma W. Dew,
(Bowling Green, KY: Rivendell Publications, ,1988) p.24 (picture) & p.32 (text):



By the time of Bill Smothers' departure from the Yellow Banks, work had already begun on the house that was to become "Haphazard," the oldest house still standing in Owensboro.

The industrial potential of Owensboro was firmly fixed in the vision of one of the town's most remarkable citizens. Robert Triplett was a Virginian by birth who arrived in the town about the year 1820. He was employed to survey land claims but soon became interested in coal deposits at Bon Harbor, where Roosevelt had fueled his steamboat years before. Triplett was convinced that this coal could be dug and marketed successfully.

He began digging in a thin vein that outcropped near the river, but a hunter showed a seam some four and one-half feet thick further back in the woods, about three-fourths of a mile from the bank. Triplett began stockpiling coal on the bank, selling it to steamboatmen, and eventually built the first rail line west of the Appalachians (more precisely, a tram line) to haul the coal from the mine. Eventually he began marketing coal to New Orleans as fuel for tug boats and for the sugar industry, but proved unsuccessful.

Triplett envisioned Bon Harbor as a major factory town and soon branched out into a variety of enterprises. He established a small woolen factory for the making of linsey and jeans, two popular fabrics of the day which combined cotton warp threads and woolen fibers. He even built a small cotton mill to supply the warp threads. Unfortunately these enterprises failed, and Triplett moved with his family to Philadelphia where he died of cancer of the face in 1853, a man of independent means thanks to his many land-holdings throughout Kentucky.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 17 July 1988, pp.1D & 8D:



Haphazard Plantation, the oldest standing house in Owensboro, follows the Georgian style.

Story by Laura Skillman, Photos by Allen Lake, Messenger-Inquirer

Haphazard is not the way to describe Bruce Beck's care of the 1820 plantation home bearing that name.

When Beck bought the famous home in eastern Owensboro one year ago, it had fallen into disrepair. So much so that he fell through the front porch on his first visit. Many of the ceilings in the home were also needing repair.

"It broke my heart," Beck said.

Since buying the old home, Beck, a college professor, has spent hours renovating the place – an endless job, he said.

Haphazard is listed as the oldest standing house in Owensboro in a recent published history of Daviess County. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Beck said he greatly enjoys renovating old houses, which goes along well with his career and other pastimes. He has a doctorate in archeology and has visited various archeological sites around the world.

This is not the first home Beck has adopted and renovated. He recently sold a 21-room Victorian mansion in Louisville and also has renovated several homes in Owensboro.

"I'm sort of the Don Quixote of old homes," he said.

Haphazard is one house he plans to keep as a long-term project and home, he said.

"I'm in love with the house," he said. "I like old things."

Part of the enjoyment of owning the home is being able to share it with others, Beck said. Some groups have toured the home since he has renovated it and he also brings his students there on occasion, he said.

Beck said he didn't know how the home got its name. But a 1975 issue of the Messenger-Inquirer reported the name, Haphazard Plantation, was for eddies, or whirlpools, in the Ohio River, which the home faces and the plantation once overlooked.

Touring the home with Beck offers not only a chance to see its beauty, but also learn a little of its history.

A tour of the house includes a look at each room and the fireplaces in them. All the fireplaces are a little different because a different group of slaves was assigned to build each room, Beck said.

With the house's antique wallpaper and mixture of modern and antique furniture, you sense the house's rich history.

The walls in the dining room are decorated with a hand-painted mural that is covered with a corn starch finish, Beck said. In order to repair the mural, the finish had to be removed first.

The floors are the original wooden ones, as are the shutters and weatherboarding. Every door, window, shutter and stair is constructed with wooden pegs.

The chandelier in the dining room may be the original kerosene one, he said. It has been converted to electricity. Other fixtures in the house also date back to the early days of the home.

Many of the old slave quarters in the lower level of the home have been converted into a garage and family room, but some of them are still there.

"They are something visitors ask about and like to see," Beck said.

Beck has been planting new trees on the property alongside the aging ones to encourage birds to stay there.

John J. Audubon is said to have stayed at the home. Beck said he liked to think the artist did some of his work there.

Haphazard's origins date back to 1787 when George Mason, a close friend of George Washington, received the property through a land grant. Mason's son, Richard, built the original portion of the house.

An addition to the house was made by Robert Triplett, who purchased it from Mason. Triplett was Owensboro's first real estate dealer, and possibly builder of the first railroad in Kentucky.

In 1844 the house was sold to William Bell and it remained in the family until 1941. Other owners of the home included Sam Coots, Delbert Glenn and Garland W. Howard. Haphazard contains 15 rooms, 4½ baths and a garage. Porches adorn the front and the rear of the home.

A wooden plank fence surrounds the 5-acre hilltop property. When Beck bought the property, he spent many hours painting and repairing the fence, he said.

He also has repainted the exterior of the home doing almost all the renovation work himself.

Beck has collected many pieces of furniture and ornaments, both modern and antique. He tries to take special care in placing a piece in such a way that both it and the room are complemented, he said.

The next renovation project at the property will be the old stables near the house, Beck said.

Beck has spent much of his life renovating and excavating around the world, and Haphazard offers him the chance to do this without leaving Owensboro.

" I always wanted to do in this area what I was doing in other places," Beck said.

[note by Jerry Long – In 1989 Bruce Lynn Beck sold Haphazard, 717 Pleasant Valley Road, to John M. & Emma Riley Hess, who in 2025 sold Haphazard to Jeffrey Clay & Sara Marie Rafferty.]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 14 May 1989, p.1F:

HOME SHOWCASE – This home open today 1:30 – 3:30



Haphazard Plantation, the oldest house in Owensboro, sits on a high, tree-covered hill on Pleasant Valley Road, off Hwy. 60 East, just five minutes from downtown Owensboro.

Its origin dates back to 1787 when George Mason, a close friend of George Washington, received the property through a land grant. Mason's son, Richard, built the original portion of the house, a log dwelling of two rooms and a passage between. The log portions and later additions have been weather-boarded in yellow polar with hand-wrought square poplar nails.

Floors throughout the home are the original wood ones as are the shutters and weatherboarding. Every door, window, shutter and stair is constructed with wooden pegs.

Because of its many previous owners, the home reflects a variety of architectural influences. The main portion of the house, dating back prior to 1822, the Federal interior, and probably the gable on the north side are credited to Robert Triplett who purchased Haphazard Plantation from Richard Mason. Triplett was builder of the first railroad in Kentucky.

Slaves are believed responsible for the intricately hand-carved wood work, including the home's fireplaces, each beautiful, and each unique.

The estate's richness in heritage and history is immeasurable. An entry in John J. Audubon's dairy, preserved by the Audubon Society, mentions the artist's stay at the Robert Triplett home in Daviess County.

Triplett owned the home until 1844 when he sold it to William Bell. The property remained in the Bell family until 1941.

The beautifully landscaped grounds of the estate now comprise about five acres. The home has been completely restored and modernized. A lovely kidney-shaped swimming pool with large patio for outdoor entertainment have been added.

The home has 15 rooms, 4½ baths, a four-car garage and large porches adorning both the front and rear.

Haphazard Plantation has all the amenities for truly gracious living and elegant entertaining.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 30 March 1992, pp.1C & 2C:



By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

If things had gone differently, Bon Harbor would be celebrating its sesquicentennial this year. And Robert Triplett would be honored as the founder of the bustling 150-year-old Daviess County metropolis.

Maybe, as he envisioned, the growing Bon Harbor would have swallowed up its older and larger neighbor, Owensboro.

But fate wasn't kind to Triplett's vision of an industrial city in the hills west of Owensboro. Triplett's 19th-century utopia died within months of his own death from cancer in 1853.

All that remains today is the name it gave to the hills near Ben Hawes State Park. And that's a considerable improvement over the first name those hills bore. The early settlers called it Buzzard Roost because of the birds found in large numbers there.

But Triplett had apparently selected a good location for industry. The Owensboro Riverport Authority, home to half a dozen industries, is located on what was the eastern fringe of the town he founded in 1842.

Triplett was an entrepreneur whose ideas were often ahead of the times. In fact, he might have been the first to tout Kentucky coal as a major energy source.

In his memoirs, Triplett wrote that J.L. May bought the property at Bon Harbor around 1820. It was named for a peaceful eddy in the Ohio River there, which made a good harbor.

But May soon regretted his purchase of "Bonharbor," as it was then spelled. He urged Triplett to buy him out.

Soon after the sale, Triplett discovered coal in the hills around Bon Harbor. In 1826, he built the first railroad west of the Alleghenies, a 3/4-mile line to haul his coal to the river.

It wasn't a railroad in the modern sense. It had no locomotives. Cars loaded with coal simply rolled down the gravity-operated line to the river and were hauled back up again.

Triplett claimed to be the first to sell coal as steamboat fuel. In his memoirs, he wrote that his Bon Harbor mine was the "first attempt in the west to use coal as steamboat fuel" rather than wood.

County legend, however, holds that the New Orleans, the first steamboat to navigate the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in 1811, stopped near Bon Harbor on its maiden voyage to take on coal from an exposed vein.

At first, Bon Harbor was simply a coal-exporting center. Business was booming until a late frost killed the sugar cane crops of southern planters who had ordered coal to run their mills. The orders were cancelled.

Triplett hurried to New Orleans, which used very little coal for fuel. He took a barrel of coal with him to the Richardson Hotel and gave a free demonstration of the advantages of coal over wood.

The 50-cent barrel of coal was quickly sold for \$4.

Then he went from steamboat to steamboat, demonstrating the superiority of coal to the captains.

"Things were now going on swimmingly, and the prospect of a brilliant fortune lay before me," he wrote.

The captain of the Shark dashed his hopes, however, when he reinstated wood. Coal fires, he said, were so hot they ruined his boilers.

By 1842, Triplett was dreaming again. He had his Bon Harbor mines plus other interests in Daviess County and 2,000 acres around the mines.

The tariff on foreign goods was raised. And Triplett began a scheme to build a great manufacturing center on his land. He enlisted a partner in establishing a small woolen factory for jeans and linsey.

A Henderson lawyer named Barrett paid \$55,000 for a half-interest in the property. And he loaned Triplett \$15,000 for five years to pay some debts he had incurred.

In 1849, Triplett and Barrett had a pamphlet printed in London, describing the advantages their town offered.

Its coal supply was "inexhaustible." Its harbor was "one of the finest on the Ohio River." Transportation of cotton from the south to the Bon Harbor mills and return of finished goods to the port of New Orleans would be relatively inexpensive.

The large woolen factory had thick walls, a slate roof, iron doors, brick floors and a built-in fire prevention system with cisterns in the attic to flood the building in case of fire.

A sawmill was already in operation, turning out 5,000 to 7,000 feet of lumber a day. A flour mill was about to open with a corn mill beside it. Also "we have a store and smith's shop.

There are five carpenters who have purchased and built (homes) and various other mechanics," Triplett wrote.

There was a wharf boat and a "rapidly growing village," he wrote, "no lots being sold, except to workmen."

Plans called for a rolling mill, a nail factory, a wagon-cart-and-plough factory, glass factory, cotton factory, tannery, saddlery, stone and crockery factory, coopers, shipyards and tobacco factories.

There was one church – Fredonia Baptist.

The church was formed by members of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in 1841. The Rev. Wendell Rone, local Baptist historian, wrote: "Her prospects for a time seemed to be flattering as she was located near a newly erected manufacturing plant and adjacent to extensive coal fields."

Rone added: "The rapid increase in the population (of Bon Harbor) also encouraged the idea that this would become in the near future a place of considerable importance." Fredonia's membership was 22 in 1844 and peaked at 71 in 1851 – two years after Triplett's pamphlet was printed.

In 1847, 40 men from Bon Harbor came to Owensboro to vote. They attracted a lot of attention, riding in a large cart with wheels 12 feet in diameter, pulled by nine yoke of oxen.

But things began to change. Triplett learned in 1850 that he had cancer of the face and went to Philadelphia for treatment.

Frank L. Hall, a pioneer Daviess County merchant, wrote in 1900 that surgeons cut off Triplett's lip and made a gash in his arm. His arm was then pulled around his head and sewed to his face until the skin grew together.

Triplett lay like that, Hall said, until the skin graft was complete. Then surgeons cut his arm loose, leaving skin on his face to form a new lip.

He returned to Owensboro after he had healed.

Bon Harbor's population at the time was between 200 and 300. Owensboro then had 1,215. And Triplett still dreamed of annexing the larger town someday.

But his cancer returned. And once again, he left for Philadelphia. He died there in 1853.

Bon Harbor died with him.

Rone's book shows that Fredonia Baptist began to lose members in 1854 – down to 43 from the 71 of two years earlier. The loss was attributed to the closing of a big plant in Bon Harbor, Rone wrote.

Within a year, the church closed its doors. The people were gone.

Today, nothing remains of Triplett's dream, except the name he gave to the hills in that bend of the river.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 9 July 2020, p.1B:

There's a local
connection
to 'Hamilton'

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

So, you watched "Hamilton," the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical, on Disney-Plus.

But did you know that there's a local connection?

In 1829, Phillip Thompson and Robert Triplett were the wealthiest men in Daviess County. Thompson had settled in Owensboro in 1815.

Triplett came two years later.

Both were known for their business acumen — and their tempers.

Their feud began with a lawsuit in which Triplett took offense to Thompson's questioning of him.

Thompson was a small man with a noticeable limp and a speech impediment.

Triplett stormed up to him and roared, "I tell you now, I only spare you in consideration of your lameness. Now challenge me if you dare."

So, he did.

On a snowy Feb. 10, 1829, the two men rowed a boat across the Ohio to the sparsely populated Indiana shore to settle their quarrel with gunfire.

In the boat with them were the dueling pistols with which Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton had fought 25 years before.

Triplett had borrowed them from their owner, who was living in New Madrid, Missouri, at the time, some sources say.

At 11 a.m. that day, the men stood facing each other — 10 paces apart.

At the count of three, the pistols barked in unison.

For a minute, the men stood still.

Then Thompson collapsed, saying, "I am a dead man."

A Vermont newspaper reported that Thompson had indeed died.

The bullet had passed through his chest from right to left and lodged in his left arm.

Doctors gave him less than 24 hours to live.

But Thompson recovered and people said both his lameness and a case of rheumatism were cured by the bullet.

In time, the men became friends.

But Thompson was killed seven years later in a fight with a carpenter in the 100 block of Frederica Street.

Triplett died of cancer in 1853.

In 1883, a Natchez, Mississippi, newspaper wrote about the famous pistols, saying they had been used in 11 duels, including the one in Owensboro.

In 1904, the Owensboro Twice-A-Week Messenger reported that George Graves of Owensboro had the pistol that Thompson had used.

But UntappedCities.com suggests that that wasn't likely.

It says, "After the infamous Hamilton-Burr duel, the pistols were used in the Civil War, and then in 1930 were purchased by Chase Bank, now JP Morgan Chase Bank, the descendant of Burr's company, the Manhattan Company."



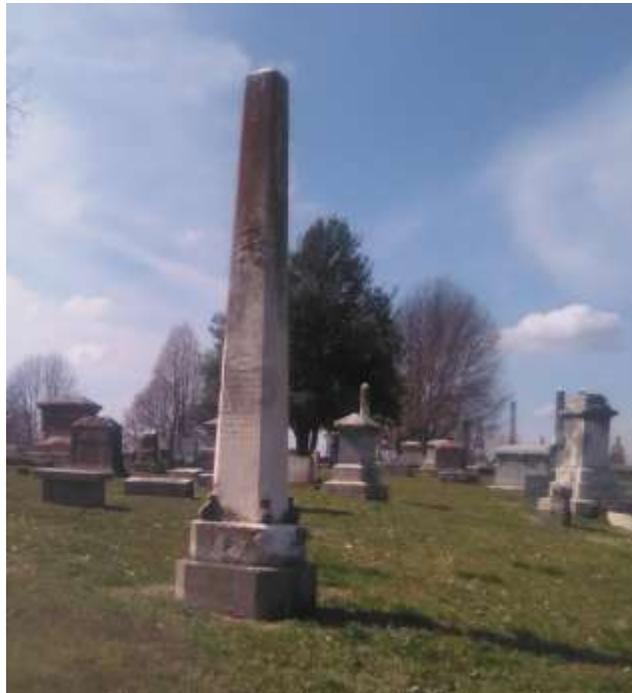
See also:

- ("Aaron Burr's Celebrated Dueling Pistols the Property of a Gentleman In This City", Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, 14 April 1883, p.9)

- “Aaron Burr’s Pistols”, Daily Democrat, Natchez, MS, 3 May 1883, p.1
- “Famous Duel Between Pioneers of Kentucky”, Courier-Journal (Louisville, KY, 7 November 1897, p.2D). The article was preceded by “Written for the Courier-Journal”. The article was signed by George V. Triplett. This was Judge George Vest Triplett (1856-1931), of Owensboro, KY. This article was also published in The Kentucky Explorer, Vol. 13, No. 5 (Jackson, KY: Charles Hayes, Jr., October 1998) pp.23-26; copy in article “Philip Burton Thompson (1789-1836)”, Jerry Long, Internet (West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, Biographies section, 2023)
- "Historic Weapon Now Owned in Owensboro", Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 17 April 1904, p.15A (gun used in Thompson-Triplett duel); copy in article “Philip Burton Thompson (1789-1836)”, Jerry Long, Internet (West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, Biographies section, 2023)
- “Pistol Used By Triplett in Duel That With Which Aaron Burr Killed Hamilton”, Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 24 August 1924, p.1B; copy in article “Philip Burton Thompson (1789-1836)”, Jerry Long, Internet (West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, Biographies section, 2023)
- “Duel Fought By Prominent Settler – No Death: Daviess County’s Initial Bid For Industrial Prominence Came In The Early 1800’s, Pioneer Entrepreneur Built, In Bon Harbor, The First Railroad In Kentucky”, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 October 1965, p.6C
- “Triplett – Thompson One Shot Cure-all”, Ralph Lewis, Owensboro Star, Owensboro, KY, 7 August 1969, p.1; copy in article “Philip Burton Thompson (1789-1836)”, Jerry Long, Internet (West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, Biographies section, 2023)
- Haphazard nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 18 May 1975, p.4D
- “Onetime Owensboro rival – Town was cancer victim”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 24 February 1976, p.1A
- “Death of founder Triplett dashed hopes for town – Bon Harbor 1st effort at manufacturing center”, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 2 May 1976, Bicentennial Section, Part 1, p.3
- “1829 duel avenges prominent insult”, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 July 1976, Bicentennial Section, Part III, p.12
- Flask found at Haphazard came from 1824 campaign, Joe Ford, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 17 June 1979, p.2E
- “After surviving duel, opponents became friends”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 30 May 1992, Kentucky Portrait, 1792-1992 special edition, p.71
- “Political careers die when you fight a duel”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 16 November 1995, p.1C
- “Should we remove dueling pledge?”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 October 2009, p.1E
- “Owensboro Riverport sits on old industrial city”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 November 2009, pp.1B & 3B
- "Triplett book offers glimpse into early Owensboro", Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 15 November 2012, pp.1C & 3C [Robert Triplett wrote autobiography, Roland Trevor or The Pilot of Human Life, which was published in 1853, a copy of his

autobiography can be found in the Kentucky Room at the Daviess County Public Library, Owensboro, KY]

- “Yeaman finds fame 100-plus years after his death”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 November 2015, pp.1B & 4B
- "Nothing remains of Bon Harbor but the name", Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 November 2015, pp.1B & 3B
- “Duel between Thompson, Triplett area's most famous”, Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 21 July 2016, pp.1B & 6B
- Several historic documents related to Robert Triplett can be found on the History of Owensboro, KY Facebook Internet site



Tall obelisk monument in the center of section D at Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY – “Our father and our mother: Robert Triplett died 12 April 1853 age 60 years and Virginia Triplett died 20 January 1845 age 33 years”

Robert Triplett, son of Daniel Triplett and Elizabeth Richards, was born during 1793-1797 in Virginia. His grave marker has that he was 60 years old and the 1850 Daviess County, KY census gives his age as 53. Numerous family trees on Ancestry.com and Familysearch.org record that Robert was born on 25 May 1794; these files do not report the original source for this date.

