

Massie Graves

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Ohio County Messenger, Beaver Dam, KY, 26 June 2002, p.3:

Massie graves located

About Tuesday, November 9, 1875, the entire family of Mr. Charles W Massie and Sarah F. (Ford) Massie, who lived near Hines' Mill or Fordsville, were suddenly taken very ill. The family physician was immediately summoned to come. He pronounced that the illnesses were a result of being poisoned. The patients all grew worse and this resulted in the death of the eldest son, William David Massie, aged 14, that evening. The follow day, Mrs. Sarah F. "Fanny" or "Francis" (Ford) Massie and a daughter passed away within five minutes of each other.

William David (age 14) was buried one afternoon and the next day, Mrs. Massie and the daughter was buried. By this time, Charles W. Massie himself was so very seriously ill that there were very slight hopes of his recovery..., as he watched his wife and children pass away and be laid to rest.

The physician first believed that the water in the well, which the family used, was filled with a most deadly poison, either arsenic or strychnine, but how it got there was unknown.

Following this, three other daughters and another son passed away and was buried. All daughters who passed away were Mary R. (age 11), Nancy R. (Nannie) (age 7), Emma, and Artelia. The other son, who passed away, was named Wayne.

Mr. Massie became better and survived. Also surviving were: Thomas Henry Massie, born December 25, 1872, who passed away July 7, 1935, in Owensboro, and Mattie Ford Massie, born March 15, 1875, and passed away on January 29, 1903, in Tallahassee, Florida. She was married to Walter W. Bennett on November 6, 1895,

However, the physicians who had attended the family finally decided that the cause of this tragedy wasn't the poisoning of the well after all, but instead was that of a sickness known as "milk sickness."

"Milk sickness" was an illness suffered by people who drank milk from cows that had grazed on a plant known as white snakeroot. White snakeroot is a shade-loving plant found throughout Kentucky, Indiana, western Ohio, and Illinois. Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died of milk sickness. It was a frequent cause of death in the Midwest and rural South during the 19th century, sometimes killing as many as half the people in a particular settlement. There are estimates that 10 to 25% of those who contracted the disease died. Because farming techniques have improved and due to the modern dairy industry, the chances of contracting milk sickness today are very, very greatly reduced.

More information on Charles W. Massie: He was born in 1834 in Amherst County, Virginia. He was married to Sarah F. Ford on July 3, 1858, in Ohio County, KY. Sarah F. Ford Massie was born in Shelby County, KY, in 1838. Her father was David Ford (born 1811 and died 1856). Her mother was Emily Hardwick.

This mother and six children were buried in graves marked by rocks and it was unknown just where they were located near Fordsville.

But recently, after all this time, the graves were found by Richard Bennett of Elgin, Illinois, who is a grandson of surviving daughter, Mattie Ford Massie Bennett. He has since marked the graves better. They were found on Railroad Bed Road near Fordsville. Richard was helped in locating the graves by David Ford of McHenry.

[Note – Article, “Massie graves found”, by Mrs. David (Betty) Ford, of McHenry, KY was also published in the Ohio County-Times News, Hartford, KY, 27 June 2002, p.15B. Richard Arthur Bennett (1940-), of Elgin, IL and later of Baraboo, WI, a great-grandson of Charles W. Massie & Sarah Frances Ford, was the source for the children’s names in the preceding article. On Ancestry.com there are 117 family trees that list Charles W. Massie (born c1834 VA) but none report when and where he died.]



Ohio County, Kentucky Cemeteries Update, 1982-2002

Ohio County Genealogical Society

(Utica, KY: McDowell Publications, 2002) p.21:

MASSIE CEMETERY

Copied by David Ford

Located East of Fordsville on Hwy. 54. Go 2 miles and turn right on Railroad Bed Road. Go about 1 mile to the address of 770 Railroad Bed Road. Cheryl Hall house on right about 500 feet from back of house on side of hill near cedar tree.

Charles W. Massie's wife and six children all died in November 1875 .
Graves marked with stones.

Sarah Frances Ford Massie, wife of Charles Massie	b. 1838	d. Nov. 1875
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Children:

William David Massie	age 14
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Wayne Massie

Nancy N. Massie

Mary R. Massie

Emma Massie

Artelia Massie



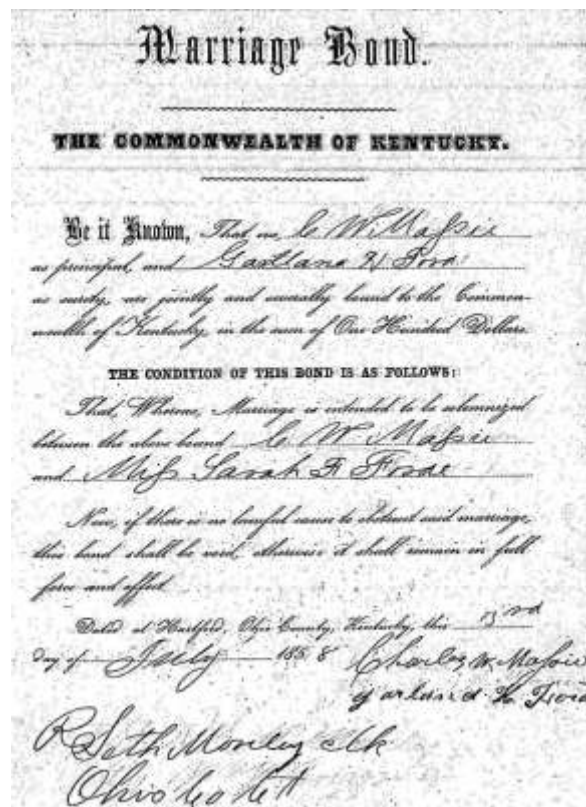
Amherst County, Virginia 1850 Census, Eastern District, p.122B:

Massie, John	60	farmer	born Virginia
“ Sally	54		“
“ Elie	25		“
“ Edmund	22		“
“ Charles	15		“
Campbell, Sally	25		“
“ Marcellus	7		“
“ Melvina	6		“
Moreman, William	28		“
“ Ann	24		“
Massie Judith	21		“

[Note – John Ford married Sarah Campbell 30 October 1833 Amherst County, VA]



Ohio County, Kentucky Marriage Book D, p.427:



Charles W. Massie married Sarah F. Ford 3 July 1858



**Ohio County, KY 1860 Census,
Adam's Fork District, post office Fordsville, p. 558:**

Massie, Charles W.	25	farmer	born VA
		real estate \$600 – personal property \$150	
Massie, Sarah F.	22		born KY



**Grayson County, KY 1870 Census,
Haynes Precinct, post office Short Creek, p.299B:**

Massie, Charles	36	farm laborer	born VA
		real estate \$1000 – personal property \$300	
Massie, Sarah	28	keeping house	born KY
Massie, William D.	9		born KY
Massie, Mary R.	6		born KY
Massie, Nancy	2		born KY



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 10 November 1875, p.2:

FROM SULPHUR SPRINGS.

SULPHUR SPRINGS, KY., Nov. 5.

EDITOR HERALD – It was my lot today to witness the sad burial scene of Mrs. Charles Massie, sr. and daughter, who died from the effects of poison, the victims of some fiend, to whom the sweet and tearful face of mercy should become livid with eternal hate, and heaven's golden gates forever closed as he becomes an immortal outcast, and condemned to pass eternity in the lurid gloom of hell. Some three or four days ago the family of Mr. Charles Massie, sr., who lives in Fordsville precinct, were suddenly taken ill, which was agreed by the attending physicians| to be caused by poison, which in a few hours, despite all medical attention, caused the death of his son, who was buried yesterday evening; and the next day the wife and daughter, who died within five minutes of each other. The physicians discovered the water in the well of which the family used, was filled with the most deadly poison, either arsenic or strychnine, but how it came there is unknown, neither is any particular person suspected of putting it there. The rest of the family are in fair way to recover, Mr. Massie being able to sit up a little, but looking pale and emaciated, and as if he had but returned from the home of the dead. There is no doubt but the ruin was wrought by human hands, but who did the fiendish act will in all probability remain unknown until the day of all accounts. It was indeed a sad, sad scene to see an aged man sit by and see his life companion and children carried from him to their last resting place with no strength left to follow and see them lowered to the place of their last long repose.

Terrible indeed must be the thoughts of the murderer, as he knows his innocent victims are placed in their narrow homes. Wretched indeed must be his blood stained soul as he invokes the mantle of forgetfulness to fall upon him and blot out the crime, a crime that would forever blacken

the character of a devil, or was ever a devil guilty of such savagery. He will only reap his reward when death allows perdition to clutch his helpless soul and punish it in eternal flames.

BILL PERKINS



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 10 November 1875, p.3:

A Whole Family Poisoned.

Again we are called upon to record a horrible crime, that of the poisoning of the family of Charles W. Massie, a resident of Fordsville, a small village in the north end of the county, which happened on Thursday of last week. On the above named day, the entire family were suddenly taken sick, and the family physician was at once summoned, who pronounced their illness that of being poisoned. This at first seemed unreasonable, as the members of the family had not previously been sick, and could not have taken a wrong medicine. The patients began growing gradually worse, which resulted in the death of the eldest son that evening, and on the day following the wife and daughter of Mr. Massie closed their eyes in death. Then came a mystery to be explained, and that was as to how the accident had happened. The bewildered ones were soon enlightened, and the case is now clear to the minds of the people. Some one in passing the well of which the family had been using water, discovered that the surface was covered with a white substance which was supposed to be that of strychnine or arsenic; and had been deposited in the water by the hand of a fiend. When the sad news reached us Mr. Massie himself was so seriously ill as to be unable to follow the dead ones to their last resting place, but there are slight hopes of his recovery. The death of the wife and daughter were in the short space of an hour. Mr. Massie is a much respected farmer of that place, and the loss of his family is much regretted by the entire community. The guilty one is yet unknown, but it is the desire of all that he may soon be brought to justice and receive the punishment that he deserves.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 17 November 1875, p.3:

Last week we made mention of the poisoning of the family of Charles W. Massie, and also chronicled the death of three of his family, since which time we have received intelligence of the death of another one of his children, but are glad to announce that Mr. Massie has about recovered. We also learn from the physician who attended the family that it was what is known as "milk-sick," and not that of poisoning. We gave the statement as we received it, and are glad to learn that it was not the work of man.

