

A Quarterly Publication
of the Hardin County
Historical Society, a
Non-Profit Organization
originated in 1931

Bits and Pieces

OF HARDIN COUNTY HISTORY

www.hardinkyhistoricalsociety.org

VOL. MMXIV NO 4

ISSN 1536-1667

WINTER 2015

Looking Backwards 500 Years Local Family Linked to Virginia's Jamestowne Island and Establishment of Local School and Railroad

By Susan McCrobie, newsletter editor

I've traveled the Gaither Station Road to Glendale many a time. In the late 60s I remember a school bus being stalled on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad tracks crossing and running alongside that road. The bus was hit by the train, sans high school students, who had unloaded only to watch the newsworthy event unfold while waiting for a second bus to arrive.

I have also heard tales of a headless ghost that walks those very train tracks and that a train once stood nearby the old Hazel Hill home where the Meyer/Nicely family lived.

Well, there is a lot that I didn't know about Hazel Hill and its builder that is worthy of mention.

It appears that Greenberry Anderson Gaither built this home in 1832 for his family. The one-and-one-half brick central passage plan with Federal detailing was one of the earliest brick structures in this section of the county. Judge Gaither, a prominent farmer and politician, had several other log structures near the home to house his slaves.

One of Judge Gaither's slaves, Addison, seemed to cause the Judge considerable trouble after indicted in the Hardin Circuit Court for murder. He was unable to stand trial in Hardin County due to the sentiments of the residents and being unable to have a fair and impartial trial the Kentucky General Assembly ordered a change of venue to Meade County in 1845.

I've spent some time checking into Gaither after being told that he is only a handful of generations from the Jamestowne Colony. Greenberry is quite a popular name in the distinguished family. Each lineage from the Jamestowne Island gateway ancestor claims one or two of that handle.

Our Greenberry was born in Maryland on September 3, 1784. His father, Greenberry Gaither was a Lieutenant in the Maryland Militia during the American Revolutionary War before his setting in



Photo Courtesy of Eva Gaither Thornberry

This photo, taken from a painted portrait, is of Greenberry Gaither (1751-1823) who lived in Nelson County on Stewarts Creek (now Rowan Creek.) He was a friend of Judge John Rowan and the father of Hardin County Judge Greenberry Gaither and Dr. Edward Briscoe Gaither. His wife was the daughter of Richard and Priscilla (Briscoe) Anderson.

Nelson County [KY] in 1802.

While 1802 seems to be an early date to have settled in Kentucky just imagine John Gaither arriving from England in 1620 aboard the *George* at Jamestowne or his son, John, being buried at Anne Arundel County, Maryland in 1702, one hundred years before a Gaither even set foot in Kentucky!

Benjamin Hardin Esquire having resigned
his office as attorney for the County
of Hardin the Court do appoint
Greenberry Gaither Esquire attorney for said
County where upon he took the oaths
required by law
Witness Robert C. Stewart and
Esquire James Esquire

Photo Courtesy of Kenneth L. Tabb, Hardin County Clerk

An entry in Hardin County Order Book B 1805-1812 page 502 documents Greenberry Gaither's appointment on Monday, December 9, 1811 as attorney for Hardin County, replacing the formidable Benjamin Hardin.

Our Judge Greenberry Gaither began his life in Hardin County as a bachelor, living with Major Benjamin Helm along with the likes of Duff Green.

If you recall, Duff Green was an educator in the county before moving to Missouri after rising to the rank of Brigadier General during the War of 1812.

In the Minute Book of the School Trustees of Hardin Academy 1799-1856 we read on page 30: "Board of Trustees of Hardin Academy met Friday, 7th August 1812. Steven Stevenson, Benjamin Helm, James Crutcher, James Percefull, H.G. Wintersmith and D.B. Potter Gentlemen and ordered that Greenberry A. Gaither and Richard Pudd be appointed Trustees to the board in place of Benjamin Ogden and Samuel Haycraft. Duff Green was also received as a teacher."

It is important to note that those minutes go on to describe the location of the Hardin Academy, placing it in the same location as the old Elizabethtown High School on the Dixie and where the City Hall parking lot is located.

Ten pages later in the minute book, on page 40, the following is written, "The resignation of Greenberry A. Gaither was received and ordered to be entered of record which resignation follows in these words (to wit). 'The honorable board of Trustees of the Hardin

Academy will please to accept and consider this my resignation of my seat as one of their members. Respectfully etc. G.A. Gaither, February 28th, 1814".

The minute book tells that John Eccles, Esquire was appointed to Gaither's seat May 5th, 1815.

While serving as a Trustee of the school, Gaither also served as the Hardin County Attorney, being appointed to that office and taking the oath required by law on the 9th of December, 1811.

On September 1, 1817, Judge G. A. Gaither was appointed county attorney pro-tem according to Samuel Haycraft in his History of Elizabethtown.

In September 1821, Gaither purchased his first piece of ground in the county. According to the deed lodged in Deed Book J, Page 121-122 of the Hardin County Clerk, lot 19 was purchased from James and Phebe LaRue. It was located opposite James Percefull's Hotel in Elizabethtown.

Gaither built his home, apparently divided his time between work and courting his neighbor's daughter for on November 25, 1822 records in the office of the Hardin County Clerk show Gaither marrying Miss Caroline Percefull, the daughter of James Percefull.

The young couple were soon in need of a large home for a growing family and slaves, building Hazel Hill just ten years after their nuptials.



Photo Courtesy of The News-Enterprise, Thursday, March 27, 1975

Known as Hazel Hills, this home was built in two parts. The first section (the left side) was built in 1832 by Greenberry Gaither. The addition to the right and the bay window on the older section were built by the next owner, Dr. A. Short in 1865. Amney Short was the son of William Short who also owned the home at one time.

Land records, oral history and inspection of the large old home and grounds gives us a glimpse into Hazel Hill's past and the Gaither family history.

Before I forget, I must set the record straight as to the original name of the road at Gaither's (railroad station.) The land description of a 1930 deed between the English and Dyer families, owners of the ancient home many decades after a Gaither, calls the road by the name Hagan County Road.

Gleaning a bit of insight from records, like the original name of the roadway, is how we piece together the history of the home and her inhabitants.

Oral history tells that Greenberry A. Gaither built the Hazel Hill home. If and when he resided there is questionable as title to the land where the house stands only appears in the public record in the name of his brother, Edward B. Gaither, and then his heirs.

One document, recorded in Hardin County Order Book R 1865-1869, page 175, appoints William Short surveyor of the road in the same area and skirting the lands of Green Gaither. Taking in account the time period, this Green Gaither would be the grandson of our Greenberry Gaither. For the record,

Green Gaither was a close friend of General Custer when he resided in Elizabethtown.

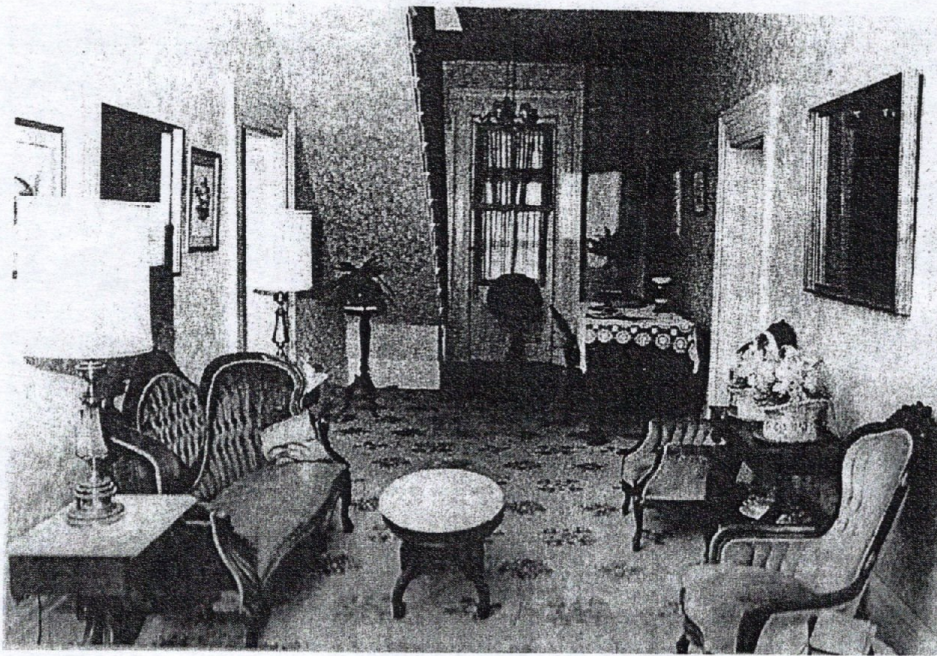
When checking the public land records of the county, Greenberry Gaither can only be found buying Lot 19 in Elizabethtown in 1824 for \$500 and then selling it and the house then standing on it to Thomas Brown for \$1000 in 1842. That 1842 deed recorded in Deed Book V, page 47, speaks volumes when it declares that Greenberry A. Gaither resided in Nelson County.

His father, Lt. Greenberry Gaither, had died in Nelson County the year following our Greenberry's marriage of November 1822. It would have been expected that as the eldest he would have inherited his father's

estate and the responsibility of caring for his widowed mother. With his place on the bench over a circuit that included both Hardin and Nelson Counties, he had other ties to the area that would cause him to reside in Nelson County.

Gaither family descendants report that Lt. Greenberry Gaither's Nelson County home was still standing in 1963.

One son and heir of Edward B. Gaither was John R. Gaither who married Ann Eliza Bland, a daughter of Henry Bland of Hardin County. The Bland family also has ties to the settlement of Jamestowne, VA.



The entrance hallway in the oldest portion of the Hazel Hill home runs the entire width of the home with doorways on each end. The door shown in this photo was the original front door before the public road to the house was moved with the building of the railroad. The grand stairway to the second floor rose from that elegant entrance. Today, the old 'back door' is used as the front door. The current owner, Gil Nicely, Jr., says that the shutters on the windows and wooden storm sliding pocket doors are original 1832 features. While the first floors of the Gaither and Short wings are connected the upper floors are only accessible by their own staircases.

Photo Courtesy of The News-Enterprise, Thursday, March 27, 1975

Judge G. A. Gaither lived in Nelson County during his adult years. The 1830 and 1840 census records list him as a resident. In fact, he also held title to land just over the Nelson County line into neighboring Bullitt County but where his bones rest is still yet a mystery as he is not in the Elizabethtown City Cemetery with his brother, Edward, or found in any cemetery recorded in Nelson or Bullitt Counties.

The newspapers are full of news about his daughters, Misses Mollie V. and Jennie L. Gaither, visiting Elizabethtown and family from where they worked out west with the Indians.

In March 1920, Mollie was Superintendent and Special Disbursing Agent for the Hope Indian School in Springfield, South Dakota. The September 2, 1904 issue of the *Carlisle Arrow*, a newspaper printed by the Indians, disclosed that she had been transferred to the Chemawa School for Indians in Oregon.

Miss Jennie also taught in the Indian Schools where her sister was serving.

During a March 1975 interview from her Hazel Hill home, Mrs. Mary Nicely reminisced that she had met the Gaither sisters when they were quite old and had learned that they once taught school near the Valley Creek at Gaithers.

Mrs. Mary Nicely's son, Gil Jr., now cares for the old home that has been in the family since sold to her grandfather, J. R. Clarkson, and passed down through inheritance to her mother Mrs. Mary Dyer. Mrs. Dyer was born in the house in 1887 and is buried on the grounds not far from it.

In speaking with Gil Nicely, Jr., I have learned there was a smaller home that stood not far from Hazel Hill on the original Gaither land holdings. It

appeared to be built from the same plans as the original 1832 home. This is the home that Phillip Arnold once owned and lived in while trying his hand at farming.

This section of the county was all part of a land grant awarded to Captain Jacob VanMeter. There are many stories to be found attached to the ownership of this land if one only takes the time to search the handwriting in the office of the Hardin County Clerk.



This is one of the many fireplaces in the home. This ground floor fireplace was built in 1832, by Gaith. Notice the door to the right. It was added by Dr. Short in 1865 to join the older section of the home to newly constructed addition.

Photo Courtesy of The News-Enterprise, Thursday, March 27, 1975

MAJOR PEARMAN'S DEATH

The "Squatter Governor of Nebraska" —The Celebrated Third House of Which He Was the Chief-Railway Representative.

New York, Jan. 17.—A Times special from Omaha, Neb., says: Major J. W. Pearman, the "squatter governor of Nebraska," is dead. With his death there is a revival of a most unique episode in the history of this or any other state. The title which Pearman bore was not a relic of pioneer days or an evidence of the times of disruted authority in state government. It belonged only to legislative history.

The lobby became a fixed institution in state affairs twenty years ago, but it became organized as few lobbies are. Chief of the lobbyists were those for and of the railroads. And the leader of this lobby was Major Pearman. Under his direction the lobby organized itself as a real "third house."

It met at regular times in the House of Representatives at Lincoln and these meetings were announced from the chairs of the regular Legislature, just as the meetings of the legislative committees were announced. Any one who wished could be a member of this "third house," but none joined unless he was a quick and ready debater.

The Messages and Vetoes.

The usual officers were elected and a governor was chosen. Major Pearman was the governor for years. His messages were read at each legislative session and were published in the leading newspapers of the state. His vetoes were often elaborate documents and excited general interest.

The sessions of the "third house" were held at night, usually many of the members of the regular Legislature being present. Various bills were discussed, chiefly those which were being introduced into, and being discussed by the real Legislature.

Although this "third house" was a mock affair, it had a real purpose and influence. Pearman received a large salary, simply for his work as governor, from a railroad company.

When these interests were desirous of defeating a measure, such measure was held up to ridicule by this "third house." It was always composed of men of much greater ability than the real house, and their speeches were able and telling. Therefore, many men met ottical death at the hands of this "third house."

The Last Session.

The last session of the "third house" was held during the legislative session of 1881, when both Houses of the Legislature were continuel, Pearman said, because the real continued, Pearman, said because the real Legislature was such a farce that there was no need of his house. The real reason was that public sentiment had been aroused against it.

Early Resident Was A Famous Lobbyist

By Susan McCrobie, newsletter editor

His speeches, many preserved in the Nebraska Legislative record, were full of wit, facts and an urgent call to action in tune with the general populace. A staunch Republican before the Civil War but a strong Union Partyman at its outbreak and until his death, Pearman continued his third-party activities for many years. In 1881 he assumed the title of "Squatter Governor," and convened his "third house" of the legislature at Lincoln, Nebraska during sessions of the elected legislature. In 1889 he resigned his position but reassumed the title in 1891.

The values and education that John Wallace Pearman put to work in his political arena were founded in Hardin County upon his birth on March 16, 1832.

This son of Hugh and Nancy (Whalen) Pearman, grandson of Revolutionary War Major Thomas Pearman and nephew of Samuel Pearman of Pearman Hill (a.k.a. Fort Duffield at West Point) set off westward and arrived at Nebraska City, Nebraska in May 1854 finding employment as a day-laborer until elected County Treasurer in 1856. He held that position until October 15, 1862 when he enlisted in the Second Nebraska Cavalry, Company F. He was appointed and commissioned Junior Major in the unit, doing service on the Northwestern frontier before mustering out in December 1863. At the expiration of his enlistment term he was commissioned Captain and Assistant Quartermaster USA and assigned to duty with the First Brigade, First Division, Second Army Corps, Army of Potomac.

This native Hardin Countian was present at the fall of Richmond and Petersburg, VA. He witnessed the surrender of Lee at Appomattox Courthouse before the Army of Potomac was disbanded and he was sent to Davenport, Iowa and put in charge of the Department of that State until 1877 when he finally mustered out as an officer of the army but was retained as Quartermaster's agent until 1870 where he compiled a list of Iowa's Civil War dead for the Quartermaster General in Washington.

In 1870 he returned to Nebraska City and engaged in agricultural and horticultural pursuits as well as politics.

He married Mary A Swift on February 24, 1856 and was the father of eleven children.

He was a member of the Odd Fellows and a stalwart worker in the temperance cause.

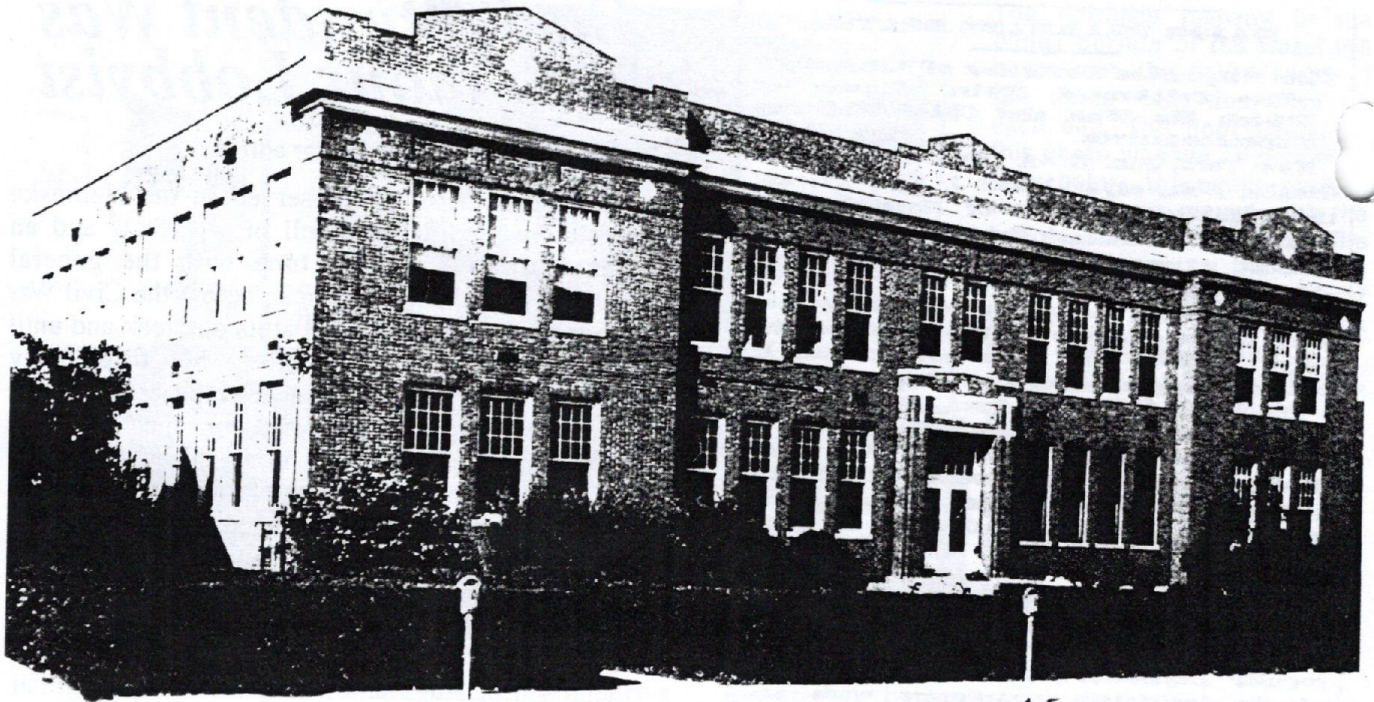


Photo Courtesy of Harrison Evans, Jr.

An election was held at the court house on March 23, 1914 to determine if a new school house should be built in Elizabethtown; the result was 602 votes for the building and 184 opposed. The school board decided to build the new school adjoining the old school lot. A silver-tea and informal house-warming on Monday, January 5, 1915 marked the completion of the school house and its opening for use.

BLAST WRECKS E'TOWN SCHOOL *Site of Classes Since 1799* **OLD SCHOOL DAYS ARE RECALLED**

There has been a school in Elizabethtown since 1799, when an act of the state legislator granted six thousand acres of land to Hardin County for an academy. The first record book of the Board of Education dating from 1799 to 1856, a copy to which is in the files at the Brown-Pusey House Library, states that the first school house in Elizabethtown was erected of logs in 1806, the contract price being \$210. This school house, where Greenberry Anderson Gaither served as Trustee, was not the last school house to stand on Main Cross Street, a.k.a. 'Dixie Avenue.'

The following article by Nell Edmondson was published in the Hardin County Enterprise in 1956.

Fifty years ago, school began, as usual, in Elizabethtown.

The school was on the site on Main Cross Street, between the Presbyterian Church, and the residence of Sheriff and Mrs. George Yates. The building, in the

shape of a Pommee cross, was a two story affair of dingy gray brick. There was a large hall downstairs, from which a wide, well-worn staircase ascended to mysterious regions above. The first grade occupied the back wing downstairs, the one by the church was the second grade room, the one opposite it, held the third, and the front was the place assigned to the forth and fifth. Upstairs was the sixth, seventh and eighth part, and the HIGH SCHOOL. Only the elect ever climbed those steps! If you did not miss a day during a month, you were allowed to wear a little red ribbon bow all day long, and GO TO CHAPEL. And the chapel was upstairs. So unless pestilence or death prevents, one went to school. Education was not compulsory in those days—textbooks were bought by your mama and papa, and you took good care of them. Also, school was not for pleasure. You worked exactly as you were told, sat still, didn't whisper, but you liked it.

Now the sanitary conditions of that little building are worthy of mention. In the downstairs hall was a hydrant. Where the water came from I never knew, but some of the bigger boys at intervals got a bucket of water from this hydrant, and placed it on a table in the darkest corner of the room. Of course, there was no dipper. The girls' room was in the back yard, on Mrs. Yates' side, and the boys' on the church side. A tall board fence ran exactly down the middle of the back yard, from the back blank wall of the building to the alley fence. One never was so bold as to look over the fence, but sometimes a ball came flying over from the boys' side, and of course it was taken to the teacher who tossed it over the barrier. Lights? There were none. The town was lighted by lamps, the smelly coal-oil kind. Heat? A stove in the middle of the room. Those who sat near it cooked, the others froze. And, of course you wore long-legged underwear.

The first grade that year was presided over by Miss Frances Smith. She was tall and slender and had a lot of beautiful red hair. Also, she had been abroad, having won some sort of contest sponsored by the Louisville Courier-Journal. Must have had a wonderful time, and was eager to share her experiences. All year we drew pictures of the ship on which she sailed. It had three smokestacks, and a deck...maybe some other things, but that was what she drew. She saw England; she saw where Mary Queen of Scots, was beheaded, and was so impressed with that gruesome affair that she drew pictures of a chopping block to entertain us. We heard the gory details of that. We also learned, among other songs suitable for children, about a person who went to a funeral just for the ride. (It had a lot of verses.)

But we learned to read...yes ma'am! There was never a better teacher of reading in this system than that lady. Phonics? Yes. Sight reading? Yes, to that too. And speed and accuracy. We were reading Little Colonel books at the beginning of our second grad, thanks to her. We were pronouncing words marked diacritically such as "spinalmengitis" at the end of our first year, believe it or not.

But to continue. A few years later, some thoughtless person invented or discovered GERMS, and the bucket of water was doomed. A campaign was started, and every room was given a water cooler, with a nice spigot, but no ice. And, the dipper was condemned. You brought a drinking cup from home. Soon popular gifts were collapsible drinking cups.

And then, the Old H.C.I. which was a subsidiary of Centre College went out of business, and the county bought the property. The big boys and girls went to High School out here. Then the City bought it, and

the Elizabethtown high school and the eighth grade trudged daily out College Street to where Audubon Court now stands. All went well for a while, then it was thought that the school was too far out of the heart of town, and plans were made to tear down the little gray school house and build a great big building for the entire system. So, Mrs. Yates sold her property to the school board and plans were made. Her house was torn down, and in June, 1914, the old building was razed. One man lost his life in this...fell from the roof, and died as a result.

Of course the building was not ready by September, so school spread all over town. The Poston building was where the Post Office now stands, and it was rented and used for some of the lower grades. But at last, on the first school day of 1915, we entered our new school. No gym—we didn't need it—no auditorium—we had chapel in the Junior-Senior rooms, which had folding doors between, just for that purpose. But we had school and a very good one. Our beloved Pat Goodin entered the school as janitor when we began there, and stayed with us until his death, a short time before the gymnasium on Helm Street burned. From time to time, things were added to the school system; the gym, the auditorium, the library, the yellow building on Mulberry Street, the beautiful gymnasium that was destroyed.

Then, in the summer of 1955, that building, too, was destroyed---forty years of service, and still remembered and loved by those who spent so many happy days in it. "The old order changeth, giving place to the new, and God moves in mysterious ways His wonder to perform."—Tennyson

* * *

By Susan McCrobie, newsletter editor

The study of the complex of buildings along the Dixie and Mulberry used for the Elizabethtown School System delivers some unique facts.

A vacuum system of heating was installed in the building opened for school in January 1915 -- one hundred years ago! The system, installed by Grief and Goranflo came at a price of \$3,950. It also came with a unique story.

The Elizabethtown Women's Club joined in the funding of the cost of the school heating system for it was thought it would be necessary for the school board to borrow the money for its cost.

One hundred representative citizens, along with the Women's club, were to undertake the project so as to secure the school board against loss if it should be held that the trustees were without authority to create the indebtedness. The Elizabethtown Heating Company was incorporated and paid the bill for installing the heating plant in the school.

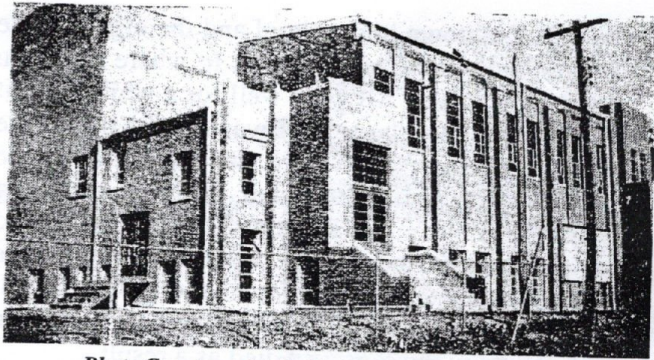


Photo Courtesy of July 11, 1939 - Hardin County Enterprise

Work began in 1938 on this addition to Elizabethtown High School. Graduation was held in its auditorium on May 25, 1939. Fire destroyed the structure during the 1945/46 school year.

When the school opened for classes in January, 1914 it was considered adequate for any increase in enrollment for the next twenty years. No one could foresee the rapid increase in population that would come with the twentieth century. By September 1938, a building made possible by a 45 per cent grant from the Public Works Administration was under construction.

The basement of this fireproof structure contained 4 large classrooms, boys' and girls' dressing rooms and toilet rooms, kitchen and serving room, boiler room and space for coal storage. The first floor was devoted to the auditorium, however, space was provided for a ticket office, lavatory and storage space for chairs. Bleacher seats were constructed in the south end of the building in order the floor could be cleared to permit the playing of recreational games. The stage, located in the opposite end, was made large enough to prevent overcrowding and complete stage lighting equipment was installed. Dressing rooms adjoined the stage at both ends. Acoustical materials were incorporated throughout the facility so that voices would be audible from all angles and two large fans, thermostatically controlled, forced warm air to all parts of the hall. Other equipment in the addition included a picture machine, chairs, steel lockers, window shades and library tables.

It was deemed a first rate school and recreational building when it was completed in March, 1939. The highly rated 'fireproof' structure fell victim to a massive fire during the 1945-46 school year.

Following the loss, the school made use of the Memorial Recreation Center, built in 1941 on South Mulberry Street, for some large public indoor events and the National Guard Armory, on Warfield Street, for basketball practices and games.

No lunchroom was built to replace the one that was lost to the fire. School dismissed each day during the lunch hour for children to eat at home or in the town.

The town, experiencing more population growth, had begun work on a new high school building. The old high school was to house three hundred pupils that included all of the seventh and eighth grades as well as a portion of the fifth and sixth grades beginning September 6, 1956, to ease overcrowding on the current school campus. It was a good plan until a blast wrecked the old high school building.

The thundering explosion, which occurred about 1:20 a.m. on Tuesday, July 19th, shook buildings as much as a mile away and caused residents to hurry into a street littered with glass, debris and dust to discover the source of damage.

It was reported that a typewriter from a classroom was blown into the street, forty-five window lights of the Baptist Church broke and her was interior slightly damaged and the school's joists were knocked down with plaster and bricks scattered all around. What walls of the school could be seen still standing were cracked. The fifteen room building was a total loss.

A small blaze broke out in the debris in the basement about 3:30 a.m. but was quickly extinguished.

Volunteer Fire Chief Richard Bogard said that there was some indication that the blast occurred on the first floor, since the walls were buckled out in one place and buckled in another.

Investigation to the actual cause of the explosion and fire were conducted by a technician from the E. I. du Point de Nemours Co., and by representatives of the State Fire Marshall's office.

The opinion of the E. I. du Point de Nemours Co. representative was that the explosion was not "man made."



Photo Courtesy of The Louisville Times

East wing of the old Elizabethtown High School that was ripped by an explosion at 1:20 a.m. on July 19, 1955.

The following article was written by Byron Crawford.

Ancestral trail leads to a tale of freedom

This page of black and white history does not appear in school textbooks. You might never have read it had Michigan genealogist Dr. Edwin Burrows Smith not stumbled across it while searching a forest of family trees for the footprints of his great-grandmother, Georgianna Mitchem.

"She left no tracks," Smith said. "She never talked about her family or her background, but she was a very interesting woman. She is said to have been black. My family is white. She was the first black woman admitted to the baccalaureate program at Oberlin College, and she was obviously very smart."

In time, Smith, a retired associate provost at Wayne State University, came to Kentucky and Southern Indiana in search of clues to her ancestry. In Harrison County, Indiana, and in Hart, Hardin and Grayson counties in Kentucky, he found a nearly buried chapter of an engrossing frontier slave saga. It unfolded many years before the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Underground Railroad and the Dred Scott Decision. Paul and Susannah Mitchem were average Virginia planters, prosperous but not wealthy, Smith said. Both were apparently illiterate but had accumulated several hundred acres.

Although they owned about 20 slaves at one time in the 1780s, a dramatic transformation occurred in their lives in 1799, when they sold their Virginia plantation, moved to North Carolina and increased their number of slaves to 48.

Within ten years the Mitchems had moved to Kentucky and bought land on Roundstone Creek, a tributary of Nolin River, in what now is Hart but was then Hardin County. One might assume from the census reports of 1814 - which listed 91 blacks on their property - that they were slave traders.

Smith found, however, that the Mitchems labored about 20 years to acquire the slaves and find a new life for them. He thinks that the Mitchems, though not of the Quaker faith, worked with the Quakers to purchase slaves and find safe havens and work for them in free territory. Many of the more than 100 slaves they purchased and freed repaid the Mitchems, but there is no

indication that the Mitchems ever profited from their dealings. In fact, Smith says, they died in meager circumstances.

For about five years the Mitchem "family" lived in Kentucky, some of them working outside the community to earn their keep, buy the freedom of loved ones or to save for a better life in a place of their own.

The way to ultimate freedom was self-sufficiency, the Mitchems taught. And many of their group found a place in Harrison County, Indiana, in or near Corydon, in 1815, when an old and sickly Paul Mitchem moved his colony there.

He died some months later among the people he loved, Smith said.

There were 90 black pioneers in Harrison County in 1820, and more than one-third of them were named Mitchem (with a variety of spellings). Now the Mitchems are scattered across Indiana and the rest of the country.

Tom Stephens, editor of Kentucky Ancestors, the genealogical quarterly of the Kentucky Historical Society, found Smith's work worthy of publication and is offering it as a series in the quarterly.

"African-American genealogy is very difficult, because families were broken up and former slaves changed their names," Stephens said. "So the research that Smith has done is really important for descendants. It's a personal side of history . . . an unknown page."

One of Smith's most heartwarming stories is about John Barry Mitchum, a product of the Mitchem community who worked to earn enough to repay the Mitchems for buying his freedom, then walked 700 miles to Virginia to buy his father's freedom, and walked back to Kentucky. He married a slave woman in Kentucky and had a family.

When the slaveholder moved to St. Louis, John Barry Mitchum followed his family there in 1815 with \$3 in his pocket, then worked as a carpenter and cooper until he earned enough to purchase his wife and children. He later bought some 20 other slaves, most of whom he said paid him back, and all of whom were freed, as he had been.

MORE ON JOHN BERRY MEACHUM

By Susan McCrobie, newsletter editor

When the compelling story of John Berry Meachum was uncovered, Meranda Caswell and I searched the Hardin County Clerk's office to see if a deed was recorded for his freedom. A news story in the Saint Louis Beacon gave a date on his freedom papers...a true date of Independence for a man whose name wasn't his own but that of his master.

*"John Berry Meachum, a slave for life
Has been given his freedom by his owner,
Paul Meachum, on this date July 4, 1811."*

The court order books had not a trace. Perhaps it was never recorded, just carried across the country as John Meachum's own words taken from an address given in St. Louis in August 1846 said he moved across the country.

The purchase of property in the county by Paul Meachum in 1810 was recorded in Deed Book D on pages 409-410.

The marriage of John to a slave known as Lydia can not be found in the records either. Her name and that of their two children, Clempton and Nathaniel, show up in later Missouri records as he became a prominent leader in the black community and perhaps 'the father of public education for blacks in St. Louis' long before the Civil War, Underground Railroad, Emancipation, or Reconstruction.

His is an interesting story that will not fit on this page but worthy of the read should you seek it out.

Below you will find a bit of his August 1846 Address that takes him from the cradle of Old Mother Virginia, through Hardin County, Kentucky and on the road, westward. His story is the stuff that legends are made of...

*AN ADDRESS TO ALL THE COLORED CITIZENS
OF THE UNITED STATES*

BY JOHN B. MEACHUM,

*PASTOR OF THE AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH, ST. LOUIS, MO.
PHILADELPHIA:*

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY KING AND BAIRD. 1846

DEAR FRIENDS:--The author of this little book was born a slave, in Goochland county, Virginia, May 3d, 1789. I belonged to a man by the name of Paul Meachum, who moved to North Carolina, and lived there nine years. He then moved to Hardin county, Kentucky, where I still remained a slave with him. He was a good man and I loved him, but could not feel myself satisfied, for he was very old, and looked as if death was drawing near to him. So I proposed to him to hire my time, and he granted it. By working in a saltpetre cave I earned enough to purchase my freedom.

Still I was not satisfied, for I had left my father in old Virginia, and he was a slave. It seemed to me, at times, though I was seven hundred miles from him, that I held conversation with him, for he was near my heart. However this did not stop here, for industry will do a great deal. In a short time I went to Virginia, and bought my father, and paid one hundred pounds for him, Virginia money. It

was a joyful meeting when we met together, for we had been apart a long time. He was a Baptist preacher, living in Hanover

county, and went by the name of Thomas Granger. While there, on a Sunday morning after I had bought the old man, he was singing and my eyes filled with tears. He turned to me and said, "you are yet in your sins." His words went to my heart, and I began to pray and seek the Lord. Four weeks from that day I found peace in believing upon the Lord Jesus, relating my experience to the church, and was baptized by elder P. in Louisa county. This was in the year 1811, when I was but twenty-one years old. My father and myself then earned enough to pay our expenses on the way, and putting our knapsacks on our backs walked seven hundred miles to Hardin county, Kentucky. Here the old man met his wife and all his children, who had been there several years. Oh there was joy!

In a short time, my mother and all her children received their liberty, of their good old master. My father and his family settled in Harrison county, Indiana.

I married a slave in Kentucky, whose master soon took her to St. Louis, in Missouri. I followed her, arriving there in 1815, with three dollars in my pocket. Being a carpenter and cooper I soon obtained business, and purchased my wife and children. Since that period, I have purchased about twenty slaves, most of whom paid back the greatest part of the money, and some paid all. They are all free at this time, and doing well, excepting one, who happened to be a drunkard, and no drunkard can do well. One of the twenty colored friends that I bought is worthy to be taken notice of, to show what industry will do. I paid for him one thousand dollars. He worked and paid back the thousand dollars. He has also bought a lot of ground for which he paid a thousand dollars. He married a slave and bought her, and paid seven hundred dollars for her. He has built a house that cost him six hundred dollars. He is a blacksmith, and has worked for one man ever since he has been in St. Louis. So much for industry.

I commenced preaching in 1821, and was ordained as a minister of the gospel in 1825. From that time to this, I have been the pastor of the African Baptist Church in St. Louis, which has now more than five hundred members. The Sunday school has an attendance from one hundred and fifty to three hundred.

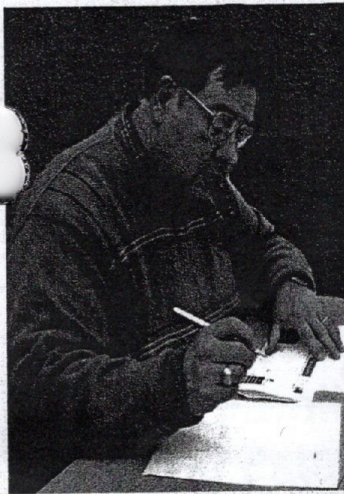
I have written this little book to show you the great desire I have for the welfare of this people. I hope each colored person will read this with a great deal of care, knowing it is for your welfare, both soul and body. My dear friends, I have been looking at the long distance this people is behind others, and it makes my soul mourn their sad state. I will tell you what I have been thinking of,--I have thought it likely that this people is away from home, and God hath got a place somewhere that they can see great comfort and satisfaction. And so friends, let us become united, and keep in union against the time comes.

Do not look at this little book with a careless eye, but receive instruction and advice. I want you to take notice that Israel started very fair for the promised land, all minds bent the way God told them to go. But they rebelliously turned back in heart, and God left them to wander in the wilderness till all the old heads died, excepting Caleb and Joshua. It was only about forty days journey in a straight course, but God made them wander forty years before they reached Canaan. So, my friends, we may start fair for this union, and a great many may turn back in heart, and never enter the promised land. He that puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the kingdom.

My heart is enlarged for the welfare of this people. I wish them to be industrious and religious in their feelings. If it is God Almighty's plan, let us hasten to it. The blessing of God will rest upon us. But we may reject the council of the Father of Light and Knowledge to our hurt.

Be faithful unto death, and you shall have a crown of life.

JOHN B. MEACHUM.
St. Louis, August, 1846.



Message From The President

Greetings to all members,

I cannot believe my first year as president has concluded! It has been a most eventful year personally, with my wife (Sharon) being diagnosed with breast cancer and enduring the chemo regime (7 down and 9 to go). I am so appreciative of Twylane and the executive committee for their assistance. I relate to the statement: "If you ever see a turtle on a fence post - you know it didn't get there by itself."

The society has had a good year. Excellent programs and fellowship. We saw the wall repaired around Helm Cemetery in time for the 100th reunion of the 1914 Orphan Brigade. I was able to speak and share in a very moving program. Not bad for a "damn yankee from Indiana" It

truly was a very impressive program!

I know 2015 is going to be an even greater year. We will meet at State Theater on January 26th and then at Brown Pusey House and Gardens on April 27th.

MEMBERSHIP is how we are able to function and we need you to renew your membership. As I stated last month, to paraphrase Blanche in "A Streetcar Named Desire," the Historical Society is "dependent on the kindness of our friends."

Why don't you invite one of your friends and join us at State Theater on January 26th! If you cannot be there - RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP by mail.

Kindest Regards,
Michael L. Bell

In the local news...

The front page of the Elizabethtown News on Friday, July 29, 1955 announced triplets born at Hardin Memorial Hospital a week earlier were doing well, the death of a 50+ year veteran Elizabethtown City School teacher, and that the cause of the explosion of the high school just ten days earlier was still undetermined.

The News also reported that just the previous day the mercury in the government thermometer at Bethlehem Academy registered a whopping 95 degrees with no relief in sight from the heat and excessive humidity.

The only bright spot in the weather was that the crops were doing fine; in 1954 the heat combined with the drought cooked the crops.

The News also reported that twenty-five years ago, another drought year, the mercury stood at 111 degrees.

The Real Estate Market was "red hot" as well. Just a week earlier, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Tabb had sold Golden Acres, one hundred and twenty-two acres worth prime building lots with frontage of 30 feet each. The lots, situated between Leitchfield Road and Gaither Station Road, fetched a grand total of \$15,334 during the sale.

KENTUCKY, FRIDAY, JULY 29, 1955

VETERAN TEACHER DIED YESTERDAY

Miss Mary Elliott Was Instructor for Over Half Century

Miss Mary Elliott, aged 82 years, died at 8:10 o'clock yesterday morning at her home on Elizabeth street, following a long illness.

She was a teacher in Elizabethtown City schools from 1906 until her retirement, thirteen years ago. Her early teaching experience was at several county schools, and in all she had spent fifty-two years as an instructor.

There were numerous instances in Elizabethtown where she taught two generations, and a few where those of three generations were in her classes. Most of her teaching experience here was in the eighth grade.

She was a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Elliott, and her immediate survivors are a brother, W. H. Elliott, of Louisville, and a sister, Miss Stella Elliott, of this city. She was a member of the Baptist church.

Funeral services will be held at 10 a. m. tomorrow at Perry & Alvey's chapel by Dr. V. C. Kruschwitz, with burial in the city cemetery.

Retired Railroad

CO CO

F P In

A s ty Ag serva din C

Pla fenda man

Pla 1.3 ac

23 de on 2. when

He pena notic

acre. He and

TR DC

T B C

TR

Historical Society announces next meeting



ANNE STOKES MOORE

The Hardin County Historical Society will meet Monday evening, January 26th, 2015, at the STATE THEATER GALLERY, 209 West Dixie Avenue, in downtown Elizabethtown. The buffet dinner, catered by BACK HOME CATERING, will be served at 6:30 PM. The price is \$9.00 per person. Call Twylane VanLahr at 270-765-2515 by **Friday, January 23rd, for dinner reservations**; later reservations for the meal cannot be guaranteed.

The dinner is followed at 7 P.M. by a very special program, *Virginia Migration to Kentucky* presented by Anne Stokes Moore, Jamestowne Society Genealogist.

Moore grew up in the Bluegrass area on stories about pioneer Boonesborough. She resided in southeast Virginia for 20 years where she developed a passion for the Colonial area and gathered knowledge for her current work. She specializes in Virginia emigration and wants to spread the message on how to logically work to untangle the quagmire of 17th and 18th century Virginia where records are destroyed. She believes that knowing Virginia's migration routes and recognizing regionalization is the key.

PLEASE REMIT
MEMBERSHIP DUES
\$2.00 PER PERSON

HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POST OFFICE BOX 381
ELIZABETHTOWN, KY 42702