

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

Sherrill Williams, Researcher
Michael L. Bell, Compiler
mike@glendalecc.org

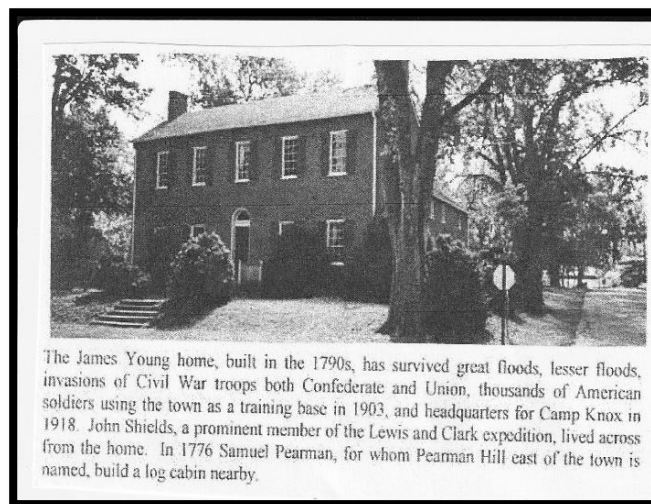
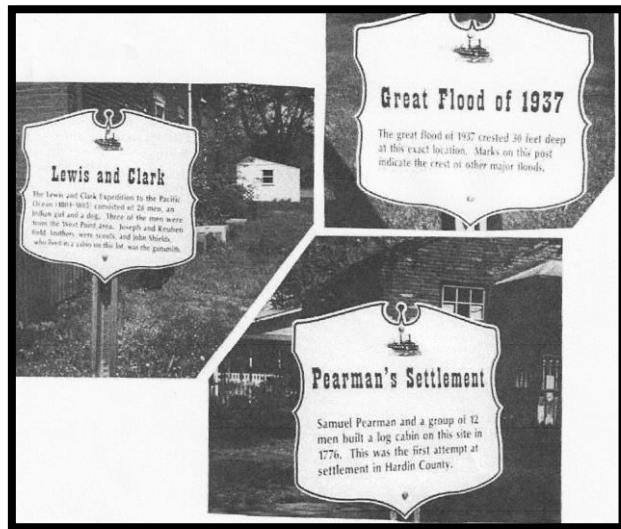
WEST POINT: ITS' EARLY DEVELOPMENT

By Gary Kempf and Sherrill Williams

Located at the confluence of the Salt and Ohio Rivers at the northernmost point of Hardin County, the city of West Point and its' surrounding area has a rich and fascinating history dating back to 1776 when Samuel Pearman and twelve fellow pioneer explorers built a log cabin near the junction of the two rivers. Although forced to abandon the area due to attacks by native Americans from north of the Ohio, the intrepid Pearman would eventually return, and in 1780 the settlement of West Point was established. The name "West Point" came from the fact that it was the nation's westernmost English-speaking settlement at that time.

Native Americans resisted European settlement in this area, of course, and attacks on the early West Point settlers occasionally occurred. In 1781, at the mouth of the Salt River, eleven settlers were attacked with only one able to escape and survive. In 1788, farther up the Salt, the "Salt River Massacre" (or "Battle of the Kettles") saw nine of twelve male and female river travelers killed while attempting to reach Bullitt's Lick salt works near present Shepherdsville. Of the three settlers who survived this "massacre," one woman was taken captive by the Indians, but years later would be purchased by European traders who returned her home.

Overlooking West Point, the Ohio River and the Salt River, is "Pearman's Hill" a short distance to the south and east of town, and atop its' steep cliffs can be found extensive earthworks constructed in the early months of the Civil War. These Civil War earthworks—among the best-preserved remaining examples in Kentucky it is claimed—were constructed by Federal troops for the protection of the city of Louisville from Confederate attacks via the Louisville & Nashville Turnpike and/or the Ohio River. The soldiers named this fort "Ft. Duffield," and nearby is a small cemetery where several Union soldiers are buried. Considered nearly-impregnable, the fort never came under attack from either Confederate land forces or gunboats during the four years of war.



The town of West Point was originally laid out and platted in 1796 by the previously mentioned Samuel Pearman and James Young, this latter, the man who built the impressive two-story brick home still standing and occupied near the rivers' confluence today. In 1798, the Hardin County Court officially chartered and established the town of West Point.

Needless to say, the early lifeblood of West Point was the Ohio River, and perhaps to a lesser degree, the Salt River flowing inland across central Kentucky. It is claimed that, in River with a cargo of 720 barrels of flour, and with this event, and for the next 120 years or so, West Point was a booming river town, with its' port serving a large portion of central and western Kentucky, as well as middle Tennessee. Indeed, much of everything shipped into Hardin and surrounding counties from 1800 until the completion of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad in the 1850s came by river.

Among other significant events relating to the town's early history is the Lewis and Clark Expedition across the continent to the Pacific Ocean during the years of 1803-1805. Three of the expedition's twenty-eight men were from the West Point area. These three were brothers Joseph and Reuben Field, both "scouts," and John Shields whose log cabin sat near the Salt and Ohio confluence. A historical marker can be seen at the site today. After leaving the Falls of the Ohio opposite Louisville, the expedition had stopped and camped at West Point where they picked up these three men.

Prior to the Lewis and Clark journey, in 1801, the Kentucky State Legislature passed an act establishing a customs inspection station at West Point. Specifically, this act provided for the inspection of hemp, flour and tobacco. With this and other activities related to its' prime location on two rivers, West Point's business community was thriving. Store boats, sailboats, keelboats, flatboats (and later steam and showboats) frequently docked at its' landing, and as a result a thriving boat-building industry developed.

In 1811, just prior to the great New Madrid earthquake, the first steamboat passed West Point traveling west from Pittsburgh. Operating this boat was Nicholas Roosevelt, the ancestor

of both Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt.

Adding to the prosperity brought to West Point by the river trade was the completion of the Louisville & Nashville Turnpike in the 1830s. The original turnpike, as described by historical markers in West Point today, ran directly through West Point, and then on to Elizabethtown through land that would later be purchased by the government to create Fort Knox. Eventually this route would be abandoned however, and the route would be moved a mile or two west through the city of Muldraugh and down “Muldraugh Hill.” Remnants of the original turnpike can still be seen today. This abandoned stretch is now part of the “Bridges to the Past” hiking trail.

Ironically perhaps, the opening of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, just prior to the Civil War, marked the beginning of a long decline in West Point fortunes as river traffic and trade on both the Ohio and Salt Rivers diminished. Nearly a century later, in 1941, the rerouting of Dixie Highway from the center of town to the outskirts also diminished the town’s prosperity. Then later, in the 1950s, the opening of I-65 several miles to the east took away even more traffic, trade and business activity. Coupled with frequent floods—the most devastating being the “Great Flood of 1937”—the town’s population aged and dwindled. And with this, businesses closed their doors. As fewer folks with long-time West Point roots remained, there was less pride taken in the town’s rich history, and truthfully, in its’ appearance. But those long-time residents with deep roots didn’t give up, and today things are on somewhat of an upswing. There has even been a slight increase in population, and an industrial park has attracted several businesses.

Historically, if truth be told, the role of West Point in this region’s history has largely been overlooked and ignored. Much is owed to a handful of local historians, especially recently



-deceased Richard Briggs, whose decades of research and collecting related material and artifacts has helped keep alive the town’s rich legacy. Too, the West Point History Museum, under the direction of curator Monie Matthews, has done much to preserve this colorful river town’s history. (The museum, including family history files, is regularly opened on Friday and Saturdays, but arrangements can be made for other days.)

*Copied from the OWENSBORO
MESSENGER 2/11/1897*

WEST POINT LOOMING UP

The old town of West Point has taken on new life and new energy and is waking up after a sleep of many years, says the Breckenridge News. The town is not on a boom, but is enjoying a good healthy growthy, both in business and general prosperity. New business houses are going up, and within the past year a number of beautiful residences have been built. These homes are all furnished with natural gas which is abundant and cheap, making them very desirable and convenient in the way of fuel and lights. The News was shown a row of cottages which had but recently



West Point 1937 Flood = Facebook – History of Hardin County

West Point was a childhood residence of the 44th Governor of Louisiana, James A. Noe, Sr., a wealthy oilman and landowner

WEST POINT, KENTUCKY'S BRICK-MAKING INDUSTRY 1895-1970

West Point, Kentucky, to many of us old enough to recall, may best be remembered for its' brick-making kilns located just west of town along old Dixie Highway.

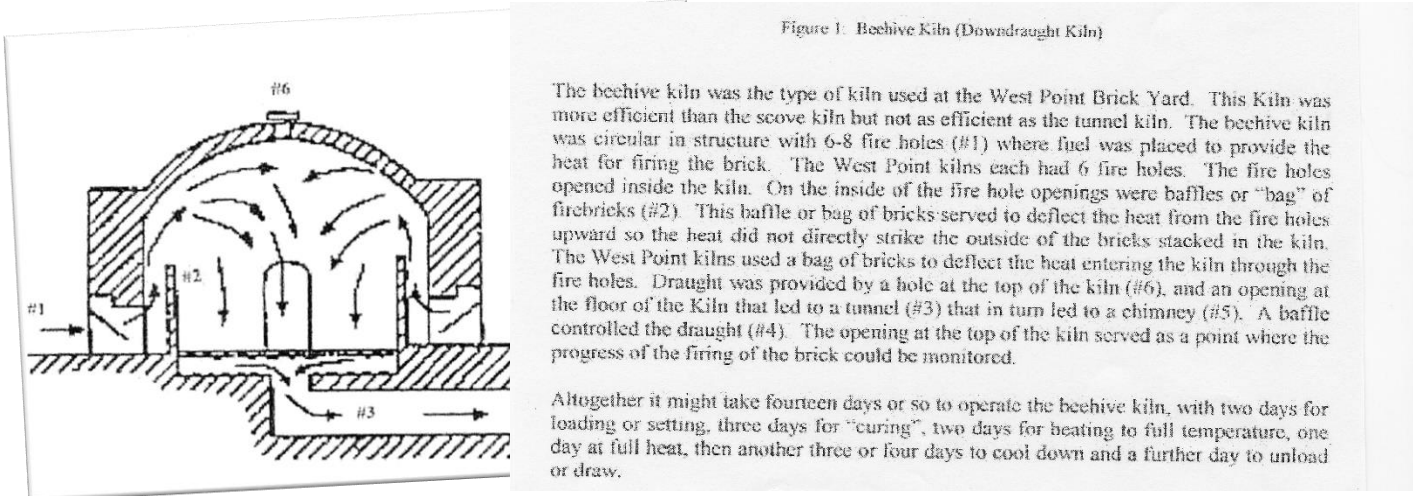
Brick manufacturing here began in 1895, when W. T. "Dock" Smith of Vine Grove constructed and operated a small brick-making plant known as the "Smith Brick Company." Dock Smith operated this company only for a couple of years, during which time he made only building bricks, and not fire or paving bricks. Smith sold his business to West Point businessman J. W. A. Myers, who in turn sold the company to Robert E. Woods, the Louisville Postmaster. Later however, Woods sold the business back to Myers who, under the name "Myers Brick Company," incorporated it in 1908, thirteen years after the business was started by Dock Smith.

It was in or shortly before 1908 that a competing brick company opened in West Point under the name "Shane and McCoy Brick Company." This company operated only a short time on the bank of the Salt River near the present 31W bridge. The reason it closed its' doors in the winter of this same year was the death of co-owner Charles Shane. Like the "Myers Brick Company" down the road, the "Shane and McCoy Brick Company" produced a "signature brick" with the company's name and/or logo imprinted on it. These are valued collectors' items today.

Four years after the “Shane and McCoy Brick Company” opened and closed its’ doors in 1908, J. W. A. Myers sold the “Myers Brick Company” to Alfred F. Kleymeyer, whose family owned several other Kentucky brick-making companies. Kleymeyer owned and personally managed the West Point Brickyard for eight years until his death in October of 1920.

Still involved with the company as owners or co-owners, Kleymeyer’s family hired Arthur Garland Shields as Superintendent of the West Point Brickyard. Despite a devastating fire in 1947 (as well as the “Great Flood of 1937”), the business was rebuilt. Shields held this position for forty years, eventually retiring and moving to Valley Station in 1960.

Replacing Shields as Superintendent of the West Point Brickyard was Clarence Herkle. After Herkle’s death a few years later, the brickyard would be operated by two brothers named Smith. In or about 1970, the brickyard was incorporated as the “Hardin County Brick Company.” But In an effort to secure a source of fuel to fire the kilns, the company officials drilled for gas on the property. Unsuccessful in this endeavor, the business failed and the brickyard, after 75 years of operation under different companies, closed its’ operations.



WEST POINT’S OLDEST RESIDENT DIES

Mrs. Elizabeth Y. Hayes, 97, member of an early West Point family and oldest living inhabitant of that community, died at 6:45 p.m. Saturday at her West Point home. The widow of Hercules Hayes, she was the daughter of the late J. S. Hall and Mrs. Eliza Young Hall, former owners of the plantation which now comprises much of the Fort Knox reservation. She is survived by a son, Samuel H. Hayes, West Point; two granddaughters, Mrs. Orville Funk, Detroit, and Miss Nadine Hayes, West Point, and two great grandchildren. Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Monday at West Point Methodist Church. Burial will be in South Jefferson Cemetery.

The Courier-Journal
Louisville, Kentucky
 08 Mar 1942, Sun • Page 51

Bloody Rencontre at West Point, Ky. A correspondent, writing to us from West Point, under date of yesterday, says: "An affray occurred at Murrier's Toll Gate, a precinct seven miles from West Point, late yesterday evening, in which A. G. Torrence stabbed T.Y. Davis through the heart. The friends of Davis pursued Torrence with the intention of taking his life. He, however, reached his home in safety, barred the doors, and thus kept the infuriate mob from him until a late hour in the night. The proper authorities left our town at 2 o'clock last night with the intention of arresting Torrence; but since we have learned that T. J. Davis, a brother to the deceased, shot Torrence through the window. Of the authenticity of the last report, however, we are somewhat doubtful. The parties were neighbors, highly respected by all who knew them, though perfect maniacs: on their respective sides in politics, out of which, we are informed, the difficulty originated." ...

The Louisville Daily Courier
Louisville, Kentucky
09 May 1859, Mon

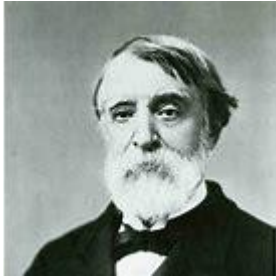
West Point No Longer Nestles - It Bustles

Our enlivened little neighbor, West Point, out Fort Knox way, is experiencing a defense boom, whether it is being enjoyed or not. To be sure, a defense boom is no novelty, what with acres of factories springing up in cornfields all over the country; but West Point is exceptional. The only phase of industry to disturb the placid existence of that community is transportation.

The Hardin County sanitary survey discloses that West Point's population has increased 80 per cent, to 1,772, the last 17 months, which probably is its most rapid growth since its census jumped 100 per cent upon the arrival of the second family a century and a half ago. And 5 per cent of the inhabitants live in 26 trailers, while the other 342 white families occupy but 244 houses. Large cities are not being crowded to this scale of living. Further details of the sanitary survey are all that might have been expected.

Yet the time was when, with but a slight stretch of poetic license, West Point could be described as a quiet village nestling at the foot of Muldraugh Hill where Salt River consigns the historic waters of Rolling Fork to the broad bosom of the Ohio. That was before the old pike became T.J. S. 31-W. No trucks were roaring past to drown the lilting notes of Jenny Lind when she sang for a crowd in the public room of Young's Inn there in 1851. Now West Point bustles about the hour the smell of frying bacon begins to permeate the morning fog.

The Courier-Journal
Louisville, Kentucky
09 Sep 1941, Tue • Page 6



William Ward Duffield

Brigadier General, United States Army

By Monie Matthews

As we visit West Point, I was interested in how Fort Duffield got its name and who was Duffield. I visited an excellent website *fortduffield.com* that is managed by Friends of **Fort Duffield** is a support group for this site

William Ward Duffield was born at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1824, the son of (Presbyterian) Reverend George Duffield & Isabella Bethubne Duffield. He married Annie Louise Ladue in 1854, and their children were Will Ward Duffield, 1858-1939, and Louise Angel Duffield, 1855-1941. William was educated at Columbia University, where he graduated, in 1843, with a degree in Engineering.

Duffield fought in the Mexican War with a Tennessee regiment. He went to California as a paymaster after the war and qualified as a founding member in the Society of California Pioneers. When the Civil War broke out, he recruited a unit and commanded the 3rd Michigan Infantry Regiment. He resigned before they left the state and then commanded the 9th Michigan Infantry Regiment, in October 1861, as a Colonel.

Colonel Duffield was recognized as a just man and was appointed to the Military Board of Review, in January 1862. He wrote the "School of the Brigade and the Evolution of the Line", in 1862. He was Military Commander of the State of Kentucky, in May & June 1862, and promoted to Brigadier General. He was wounded and captured at the battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in June 1862. General Duffield was discharged after a lengthy recovery.

Following the Civil War, William managed coal mines in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Kentucky for several years and also surveyed for railroads. In 1894, he was appointed as head of the Coastal & Geodetic Survey in Washington, D.C. He left office when William McKinley was elected President and lived in Washington, D. C. until his death. Duffield died, in June 1907, and was buried in Section 3 of Arlington National Cemetery.

Fort Duffield Heritage Committee, West Point, Kentucky, 502-922-4574, FortDuffield@insightbb.com

Red Cross Untangles West Point Realty



This jackstraw heap of splintered wood represents five, houses which were piled up on a spot in West Point where none had ever stood before. Awards have been given by the American Red Cross to four of the owners to provide for the construction of new homes. The fifth, owner of other properties and therefore not a Red Cross case, sold his wrecked house for \$25.

The Courier-Journal
19 Mar 1937, Fri • Page 14

BIG CLIFTY Feb. 6th-- Our little town has enjoyed peace and quiet for several months until last Monday when several fellows got to imbibing a little to freely and mixing Owensboro whiskey with Big Clifty whiskey and engaged in an altercation in which one poor fellow, HARDIN HATFIELD received three severe stabs with a knife, one in the breast, below the heart, one in the side, one in the back. Have not heard all the particulars as to how the fracas was brought about, but it seems that JOE COOK , SAM KEYSINGER and FULKERSON were arrested by Sheriff WOOLDRIDGE, the others making their escape. They have had no trial yet as HATFIELD is in a very dangerous condition and the authorities are waiting to see what the result will be of the cutting.

The ELIZABETHTOWN NEWS
March 8, 1889

West Point is home to one of the few remaining Rosenwald Schools which are historically significant as reminders of the contributions of Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the Tuskegee Institute to rural African American education in Kentucky and 14 other southern states. Constructed in 1926, the school served as the only elementary educational facility for African Americans.

DID YOU KNOW: General Patton was one of the top swordsmen at West Point and among the foremost fencers in the United States. He redesigned the Army's saber combat doctrine for the cavalry by favoring thrusting attacks over slashing maneuvers and designed the Model 1913 Cavalry Saber, a new straight-blade weapon designed for thrusting that became known as the "Patton sword."



We need volunteers to help with opening the Lincoln Heritage House first weekend of August and September, 1-4pm on both Saturday and Sunday. You can sign up for either day. Calling Twylane at 270-765-2515. Help!

Our July speaker is Alice Hart, Director of the Patton Museum.

She will be speaking about Gen. Patton's brief visit to Ft. Knox, and his son, George S. Patton IV, Commander of the Post.

Mostly she will be talking about how the museum had to re-invent itself when the Armored Division moved to Georgia. Also, the importance of history organizations working together to keep our stories alive for the benefit of the community future generations.

HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL BE ELECTING OFFICERS AT OUR OCTOBER 28TH MEETING. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO SERVE AS AN OFFICER OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO NOMINATE A MEMBER TO SERVE, PLEASE CONTACT KENNY TABB OR MIKE BELL. **A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PRESENT LEADERSHIP!**

MEAL FOR OUR JULY 29TH MEETING AT THE CUNNINGHAM GARDENS at the Brown Pusey House: Our caterer is **Love at First Bite.** MENU: BBQ Pork Sandwiches, Corn on the Cob, Cole Slaw, Peanut Butter pie or Brownie, Tea and lemonade, coffee. Cost is \$12.00. Please make your reservations by call 270-765-2515 before July 25th.

On March 4, 1802, the father of Indiana's most notorious outlaws and the world's first train robbers (Reno Brothers Gang) Wilkinson Reno was born.

Wilkinson Reno was born to James and Anne Bates Reno, who according to Jackson County (Indiana) Historian, Loren Noblitt, migrated to Jefferson County, Kentucky and Russell's Corner in 1798. Noblitt tells me that the Wilkinson Reno family Bible states that Wilkinson was born at the mouth of the Salt River. Research by either of us has thus far been able to determine the exact location referred to by Reno as Russell's Corner.

Wilkinson Reno returned to the Mouth of the Salt River area in 1828 to visit (unknown) relatives. He again, in 1832 either returned or sent someone. It was 1832 when the greatest flood ever on the Ohio occurred. Washing away most of the cabins in the town of Williamsville.

The Great Settlement Area by L. E. Hoskinson

President's Message, July 2019

Greetings, I hope you had a great Fourth of July celebrating the birth of our great nation and the freedom we enjoy every day.

I am happy to report that our request for matching funds to restore the Sara Bush Lincoln Cabin has been granted! I am grateful to Mayor Gregory and the City Council for sharing our concern and taking action to help preserve this memorial site. I will keep you informed on the progress.

Our editor, Brother Mike Bell, has put together some interesting articles in this issue of "Bits & Pieces" that focus on West Point and the Ohio and Salt Rivers. History has never given the Salt River its due in the importance of settling the Northwest Territory. Its name came from the many salt licks along the river banks which attracted great herds of buffalo, deer and elk. This created a bountiful hunting ground for Kentucky's Native Americans and settlers during the late 1750s through the early 1800s. I hope you enjoy reading about this gateway to the Midwest.

I look forward to seeing you at the Brown Pusey House on July 29th for a great meal and program with Alice Hart from the Patton Museum. Please make your reservations at 270-765-2515 by Friday, July 25th.

Jwylane Van Lahr

HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 381

Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42702

Meeting: July 29th

Cunningham Gardens

Brown Pusey House

Call (270) 765-2515 to RSVP

before 7/25 Meal at 6:30

