



Harrison Heritage News

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An Apple-Tree-a-Day: W. S. Haviland's Victorian Era Orchard Records



William A. Penn

When William Stewart Haviland was planning just before the Civil War the construction of his new Greek Revival residence north of Cynthiana, in Harrison County, Kentucky, he kept in mind the importance of landscaping. Besides having appropriate walks, shrubs, flowers, and shade trees, he carefully chose and planted 320 mostly apple trees in an orchard, which he listed in a journal.¹

W. S. Haviland was born March 22, 1823, in Havilandsville, Harrison County, died March 13, 1914, and was buried in Battle Grove Cemetery at Cynthiana. Beginning in 1850, he began work as a self-proclaimed "country lawyer" and specialized in collecting pension and other claims on the behalf of his clients. Although the Civil War later provided him with a lucrative income representing citizens requesting Federal reimbursement of property losses from the Second Battle of Cynthiana, by 1861 he had accumulated enough funds to build a fine brick house.²

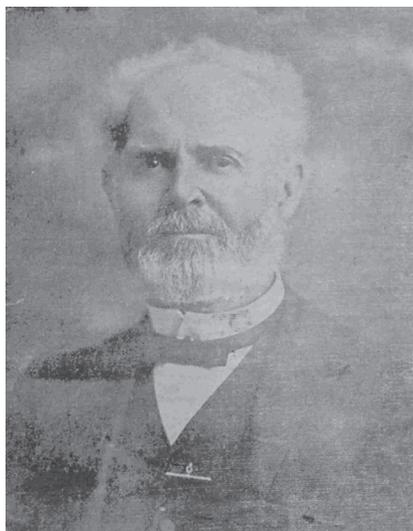
It appears from Haviland's journal that he first purchased 107 fruit trees from "Hooker & Farley, J. Stough agent, Rochester, New York, Nov. 12, 1858." This may

have been about the time construction began on the house, which was finished in 1861. The proper name of the firm was Rochester Wholesale Nurseries, also known as Hooker, Farley & Co. Another entry dated March 8, 1861, added 70 more trees labeled for "New orchard around new house." Haviland ordered some fruit trees from Philip Ammerman Nursery, location unknown.

Orchards were an integral part of influential landscape gardeners such as Andrew Jackson Downing, whose book *Landscape Gardening* and articles in *The Horticulturist*, in which Hooker, Farley & Co. advertised. Downing's unity, harmony, and variety created the correct artistic taste, including "fruit trees among ornamental trees on a lawn."³

Hooker, Farley & Co. was one of many nurseries that made Rochester, New York famous for horticultural developments. By the 1840s, outlets for the sale of fruit trees escalated with the expansion of the Northwest as a transportation hub using canals, railroads, and lake steamers. Soon Rochester nurseries, led by Ellwanger and Barry, received nationwide recognition and by 1851

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(left)
W. S. Haviland,
photo ca. 1875,
courtesy of Robert
Haviland.

(right) W. S.
Haviland built
this residence in
1861. It is located
north of Cynthi-
ana about 1 1/2
miles at North-
side Drive.
Photo, Philip
Naff, 2009



Harrison County Historical Society

Bob Owen, President
 Billy Fowler, Vice President
 Janie Whitehead, Secretary
 Dorothy Slade, Treasurer
 Bill Penn, editor: pennwma@aol.com

April 18 Meeting Program Notes

One-Room Schools of Harrison County

Charlene Wilson presented a program on one-room schools of Harrison County. She has been researching this topic for several years and has accumulated data including photos, descriptions, and location. She has a list of school names that have been referred to in various sources, but their location is unknown. By documenting the one-room schools the Historical Society will be able to better interpret the history of the county's education system. Thank you Charlene for the work you are doing and for the interesting presentation.

Business session: President Bob Owen again asked for suggestions for officers. He also talked about a letter received from the author of a proposed history of Cynthiana with a request for information on various topics. He believes the publication will be part of the popular Arcadia Press series on local history, like "Covered Bridges of Kentucky" by Melissa Jorgensen, who presented a program here last year.

The Little White Schoolhouse by Ellis Ford Hartford

This book was first printed in 1977 as part of the Kentucky Bicentennial Bookshelf series and is still in print in paperback by the University Press of Kentucky. The author states: "No other educational institution in Kentucky has been so influential as the one-room school. The old-time common school was truly the school of the people. For nearly a century the rude log cabins and their successors, the little white school houses, provided the typical school experience for the great majority of Kentuckians." This book gives a concise yet detailed history of one-room schools.

Harrison County History Calendar

HCHS meets at 7 pm in the library 3rd Thursdays - The public is invited

April 18 - 7th Annual Raggedy Ann Festival

May 21 - Program to be presented by Eastside Elementary Fifth grade history class.

May 23 - Grist Mill Day at the Museum.

June 18 - Kevin Stonerock, who will present "Billy Yank-Common Soldier for the Union" and Civil War History Through Song.

June 19-21 - Battle of Cynthiana Reenactment - Elks Farm.

President's Corner

Bob Owen
 robert_owen@bellsouth.net

Cynthiana and Harrison County continue to change and evolve. The Cynthiana and Harrison County of our youth remains only in our minds. The youth and new arrivals will not know the area as we did, UNLESS, we capture and preserve the past for the future. The Museum is an excellent example of such an effort. It contains many items from the past. A major window to the past is the many photographs at the Museum and at the Cynthiana-Harrison County Public Library. In an effort to expand this collection, I encourage members to donate or loan their photographs which record local history to one of those organizations. Pictures of old schools, city and county buildings, fair grounds, tobacco barns, homes, etc are valuable. Too often these old photographs get cast off when the owner passes away and the following generations do not want them.

Another service to the future generations is for people to sit down and record the stories of their lives and incorporate stories of their ancestors. It brings those earlier generations to life as the later generations read about them.

As I reported last month, we need candidates for President and Vice President. If you have any suggestions, please call me at 859-588-5970 or e-mail me at robert_owen@bellsouth.net.

As we discussed at the last meeting, if we are going to maintain a healthy and viable Society we must acquire new and younger members. It takes leadership and drive to maintain the Society and to pursuit its goals. I ask every member to recruit one new member, someone who is interested in history and is willing to commit time and effort to our organization. This means attending the meetings and lending active support to its operation.

We are again working with the Library in providing another stimulating speaker for our June meeting.

Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

Martha Barnes, President

Grist Mill Day - May 23

It's time for Museum Grist Mill Day! Saturday, May 23 is the date for the 11th annual event. Once again, Bill, Sue, Billy, and Trudy Kelly and their family and friends will sponsor Grist Mill Day for the benefit of the museum. The Kellys plan, promote, sponsor, and orchestrate the activities of the day. There will be stone ground grist mills, powered by antique "hit and miss" engines, in operation throughout the day. Have you and your children seen cornmeal created right before your eyes? One bag of freshly ground yellow cornmeal will be given to each visitor as available. There will be other gristmills and antique equipment on display.

Soup beans, corn bread, fried bologna, and drinks will be available from 11:00 A.M. - 2 P.M. As you go through the lunch line, please thank the Kellys and leave a donation for the benefit of the museum. At various times during the day, there will be musical entertainment.

We are hoping Abraham Lincoln will return this year and be walking about the 100 block of S. Walnut Street and will speak to the crowd at approximately 2:00 P.M. from the steps of Whalen and Company. Of course, there will be tours of the museum. Have you visited the museum in the old Rohs Theatre Building? There are continual changes and additions. We have impressive exhibits related to both the Handy House and Griffith Tavern. Models and photographs throughout the museum make us more aware of our preservation efforts or the lack thereof.

Please join us on Museum Grist Mill Day, Saturday, May 23, 2008, 10 A.M. - 5 P.M. This is a local event which is free, fun, and educational. Thanks again to the Kellys and all those who support the museum. Our regular hours of operation are Friday and Saturday, 10 A.M. - 5 P.M. (859.234-7179)

Join the Harrison County Historical Society

Send \$12 for a family membership to:

Harrison County Historical Society
P O. Box 411
Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031

2 NEW Harrison County Marriage Indexes

General Index to Marriages No. 3 (1948-1984) (\$39 postpaid)

10,500+ entries on nearly 300 pages!

Marriage Records Index, 1985-2008 (\$24 postpaid)

7,500+ entries on nearly 200 pages!

Are you looking for info to fill in the blanks in your family tree? Or are you looking to get married and do you want to know who is off the eligible list? Or have you forgotten the date of your wedding anniversary, or have you forgotten if you are married? Perhaps you want to know if your neighbor's kids are legitimate, or just legitimately noisy? These books can help you to find the answers to these questions and possibly others that haven't been thought of yet.

Each volume is a complete alphabetical, every name, bride and groom marriage records index and includes license and marriage dates with their corresponding document numbers and/or book and page citations (*Marriage Records Index, 1985-2008* only lists marriage dates, no license dates). Introductory texts explain how each index was created and how to obtain copies of the original marriage records. All books are comb-bound with protective presentation covers, front and back, for a durable and attractive appearance. These indexes are offered exclusively in print; they will not be posted to the web.

Checks & money orders accepted. Personal checks must clear before any order ships. No returns or refunds are allowed or offered. These indexes are only available from Philip A. Naff (philnaff@comcast.net), 4716 Andover Square, Indianapolis, IN 46226. Shipping (via USPS Media Mail) is included in the price of the books. The indexes will begin shipping on May 15, 2009. Get yours today!

Harrison County's Lost Buildings

McNees House - 1892

Bill Penn



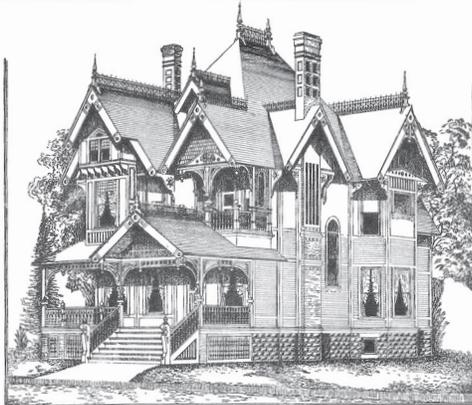
Noted Victorian pattern book architect George F. Barber designed this house built by Mrs. Sarah L. McNees in 1892 at 107 N. Main Street (across from the present library). Barber is credited with establishing the architectural formula called the Queen Anne Style, of which this was a fine example.

“George Franklin Barber (1854–1915) was one of the most prolific American architects of the late Victorian period. Unlike most architects. The bulk of his business followed the ‘catalog architecture’ model.”

Mrs. McNees chose one of Barber’s most popular designs, #36 from his pattern book entitled “Cottage Souvenir #2” published in 1891 and 1892, a book of 59 house designs. The owner demolished the house a few years ago.

References: Quotes from www.en.wikipedia.org. Also, Chris DeMattie e-mail to editor 3/29/09. House photo courtesy Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum. Barber house plans courtesy of Chris DeMattie.

Below: Comparing the photo to the original design, below, #36 from Barber’s pattern book, *Cottage Souvenir #2*, it is apparent that the house was stripped of its Victorian ornaments, bracketed spires, bargeboards, and gingerbread that gave charm to the design and an unsightly exterior stair added.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW.

DESIGN No. 36.

Cost to build, as per description, \$3,180.

NOTES.

This design has been arranged with a view of filling a universal demand for a house of this character. The exterior is all that any one could desire, the veranda especially forming a very important part in bringing out the true proportions of the structure.

Through the vestibule, from the front, we enter the hall, which is large and handsomely arranged. The staircase is intended to be beautiful in plan and design. A front view from the hall is obtained from the nook which is cut off from hall by a neat arch. The fireplace, with a nice mantel, adds very much to the trimmings and embellishments of the hall.

The parlor and dining room are connected by sliding doors. The bed room has been made narrow in order to get a good closet and a large bath room. A good change, however, would be to make this room into a dining room and a sitting room, omitting the closet in the bed room and shortening the bath room into a serving room and connecting with the kitchen. The back hall, while serving as a rear entrance, cuts the kitchen off from main part of house, thus preventing the odors of cooking from entering the living apartments.

In the second story there are four good rooms. The hall occupies very little space, only serving as an entrance way to all the rooms. It connects with the back hall, where the back and attic stairs are reached. Chimneys are arranged so that stoves may be used for heating, but furnace or steam heat is preferable.

This plan can be enlarged, reduced or changed to front in any direction.

(See page 10.)



FRONT VIEW.

DESIGN No. 36.

SIZE.

Over all except steps, 31 feet 6 inches x 57 feet.

Height of first story, 10 feet; second story, 9 feet 4 inches.

Depth of cellar, 7 feet, under all.

OUTSIDE MATERIALS.

The entire building, up to cornice, is weatherboarded; gables and roof shingled. Foundation of stone. Outside blinds. Painting, three-coat work.

INTERIOR.

The hall, parlor, dining and bed rooms are finished in oak or other desirable hardwood; all the rest is finished in pine or poplar, for painting. Plastering, three-coat work, hard finish. Plumbing consists of sink and bowl, with supply and waste pipe connections, and gas throughout.



FIRST-FLOOR PLAN.

SECOND-FLOOR PLAN.

increased in size to one hundred acres, “one section of which contained over two hundred thousand dwarf fruit trees ready for transplanting.” This became Mount Hope Nursery, It grew to four hundred acres and was advertised as the largest in the world. The 1851 New York State Fair was held in Rochester, thus further spreading the reputation of the region, and by that year New York led the nation in the cultivation of trees and plants. Among the 150 nurserymen near Rochester in 1855 was Hooker, Farley & Co., owned by Charles M. Hooker and Joseph Farley, operating as Rochester Wholesale Nurseries. This firm dissolved in 1867 when Hooker bought out Farley.⁴

The Rochester nurseries advertised widely in horticultural publications and newspapers, and advertisements for catalogs of seeds and plants from Hooker, Farley & Co. would have been easily available to Haviland. Although there were local nurseries, such as the Cynthiana Nursery operated by J. A. Mckee near the Old Lair Pike and Cook Pike, as well as in

Maysville and other neighboring towns, they could not compete with the large New York nurseries who offered choices of “One Million Apple Trees.” (See illustration. this page).

Haviland’s journal hints at the location of the plantings, which were “around [the] new house.” Another entry preceding a listing of trees says “...set out commencing at Ice House thence west and back east and continued west and east” apparently in rows, for his journal bracketed trees by rows of ten. The ice house may have been on the north side of the house, for the outlines of several outbuilding foundations can be seen there.

By 1858, the number of apple varieties offered by companies such as Hooker, Farley & Co., had grown tremendously. According to *The Apples of New York*, “In 1845 A. J. Downing made the first attempt to list all of the varieties of apples known in cultivation in America in his work entitled *The Fruits and Fruit-trees of America*. This was revised the second time...in 1869. ...[T]hese two lists [contain] 1,856 varieties named.” Thus, Haviland would had to choose from a large list. This was facilitated by the widespread availability of horticultural publications containing reviews of fruit trees by organizations such as the Kentucky Horticultural Society.⁵

A report of the Kentucky Agricultural Society printed in 1860 contained an essay on orchards and provided a list of apples adapted to the Ohio Valley tested by the Kentucky Horticultural Society, some of which Haviland planted. Officers of the society included Lucius Desha of Harrison County, and so it is likely Haviland had a copy or had seen this publication. Each variety was listed as having summer, fall or winter maturity and had various keeping qualities, hardness, and productiveness. Others were chosen for their flavor, smell, or acidity, and usefulness in cooking or for desserts. One variety was known as a “horse apple” for it was especially liked by horses. In the kitchen, among their many uses, apples were made into jam, cider, pies, puddings, apple sauce, apple butter, and canned apples.⁶

Milam apples had an interesting background: “One of the earliest apples introduced into the West by peddlers, and still valuable in Kentucky.... It is to be found in all old orchards along the Louisville and Frankfort railroad; is a sure, good, and regular bearer; ripens in the fall but keeps to Christmas, or longer. It is only second rate in quality, but comes when many other varieties fail, and in a season of scarcity we have found it a most acceptable fruit for either dessert or cooking.”⁷

Milam apples were also grown in orchards planted by Robert Scott and William Stuart, early settlers of Harrison County. “It is told of Simon Kenton...that he has often helped to make cider in the orchard of William Stuart. It was also visited...by Daniel Boone.”⁸

ROCHESTER

Wholesale Nurseries.

We take pleasure in calling the attention of the public, to the immense stock of Fruit Trees, &c., which we offer for sale this season.

We have now about Two Hundred Acres of very fine land devoted to Nursery purposes, which, with our long experience in the business, enables us to furnish stock of the finest quality, at the lowest Wholesale rates.

We have arranged our business so as to be almost exclusively a wholesale trade,—consequently, Nurserymen and wholesale buyers will find us better prepared to meet their wants, than those who retail the greater part of their stock.

The following are some of the principal items which we offer this season.

One Million Apple Trees.

300,000	Apple Trees, 3 to 4 years old.
300,000	do do do
300,000	do do do
100,000	Dwarf Pear Trees, 1 to 2 years old.
10,000	Standard do do do
20,000	Standard Cherry Trees, 1 to 2 years old.
10,000	Dwarf do do do
20,000	Peach Trees, 1 year old.
10,000	Plum do 1 and 2 years old.
5,000	Orange Quince, 2 years old.

GOOSEBERRIES.
All the best English varieties, also 50,000 Houghton's Seedling, extra, very cheap.

CURRENTS.
Of the following varieties.—Cherry, Victoria, White Grape, White Dutch, Red Dutch, Black Maple, Black English, &c.

20,000 RASPBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES, STRAWBERRIES, &c. All the best varieties in large quantities.

Stocks for Nurserymen.

100,000	Mazzard Cherry, 1 year old, fine.
500,000	Apple Stock, 1 to 2 years old, extra.

We desire to call particular attention to our splendid stock of

CHOICE HARDY GRAPES,

of which we have a large quantity of all the best and newest varieties, Delaware, Diana, Concord, Schosser, Northern Muscadine, Hartford Prolific, Logan, &c., all remarkably thrifty growth.

Also a very fine assortment of Evergreens, Ornamental Deciduous Trees, Hardy Shrubs, &c., &c.

aug-21 **HOOKEE, FARLEY & CO.**

Advertisement from Rochester Wholesale Nurseries where W. S. Haviland ordered most of his fruit trees. Gardner’s *Monthly and Horticulturist*, August 1860.

The following are the names of the fruit trees (most appear to be apple trees) purchased from "Hooks & Farley, J. Stough agent., Rochester, New York, Nov. 12, 1858 and set out commencing at Ice House thence west and back east and continues west and east": [spelling corrected when known]. The numbers were in Haviland's journal.

1 Seeknofurther	48 small red Siberian crab
2 Roxbury Russet	49 Rox[bury] Russet
4 Fall Jennet	50 Rox Russet
5 Seeknofurther	51 Rox Russet
6 Seeknofurther	52 Golden Russet
7 Fall Jennet	53 Golden Russet
8 Golden sweet	54 Golden Russet
9 Seeknofurther	55 R I Greening
10 Seeknofurther	56-62 Northern spy
11 St. Lawrence	63 Rocks [Roxbury] Russet
12 Hawley	64-68 Vandervere
13 Northern Spy	69 Red Checker Pippin
14 Northern spy	70-72 Yellow Belleflower
15 St. Lawrence	74 Wag Jones ?
16 Early Harvest	75 Looknofurther
17 R. I. {Rhode Island] Greening	76 Twenty ounce
18 R. I. Greening	77 Twenty ounce
19 Early Harvest	78 Twenty ounce
20 R. I Greening	79 Baldwin
21 Baldwin	80 Fall Jenetting
22 Baldwin	81 Red Cheek Pippin
23 Baldwin	82-83 Fall Jenetting
24 Baldwin	84 Red Astrachan
25 Baldwin	85-86 Tompkins & King
26 Baldwin	87 Waggoner
27 Northern spy st	88-92 Baldwin
28 Northern spy	93-94 Milam or Tucker
29 Baldwin	95 label lost
30 -36 Baldwin	96 large white crab
37 Golden Sweet	97 Baldwin
38 St. Lawrance	98 Tompkins & King
39 Baldwin	99 Baldwin
40 Northern Spy	98 Tompkins & King
41 Northern Spy	99 Baldwin
42 Golden Sweet	100 Tompkins & King
43 R. I. Greening	101 [skipped]
44 Jensen Sweet	102 Red Astrasham
45 Golden Sweet	103 Red checker pippin
46 Golden Sweet	104-106 Cannada Resset
47 Small red saberian crab	107 Milam or Tucker

Continued from page 5

With an orchard eventually numbering about 320 trees raises the question as to whether Haviland was engaged in the business of selling apples. However, this appears not to be the case, based on his biographical sketch and absence in his journal of retail fruit sales.⁹

In addition to the initial purchase of 107 fruit trees, Haviland's journal for 1859 lists fifty-eight "Pear trees from N. Y.", probably from the Rochester nursery that he ordered the apple trees from: 1- Morris White and 1-Yearly York. More pear trees were ordered from P. Ammerman's nursery (address unknown): 20 Snow peaches; 4 Eve & Le Mignonne; 12 Cooledges Favorite; 1 Heath cling 9?); 4 Sepicanoie cling (?); 4 Dried Hill; 11 Crawford Earl; 7 Early York. Another ten apple trees from Philip Ammerman Nursery, five each of Milam & Tucker and Rhode Island Greening. The fruit trees now totalled 185.

On Nov. 3, 1859, Haviland recorded in his journal another sixty-five apple trees from Philip Ammerman Nursery: 16 Milam; 15 Fall Pippin; 15 Northern Spy; 10 Yellow Belleflower; 1 Baldwin; 6 Rauls Terinett; 2 Broadwell Sweet.

As a present, Philip Ammerman Nursery presented a Norway Spruce to Mrs. Haviland, indicating she had an important role in choosing the fruit trees.

Haviland continued expanding his orchard. On March 8, 1861, his journal records another seventy fruit trees:

New orchard around the new house:	
39	Belleflower yellow before house
9	Swaar
10	Northern Spy
5	Winter Sweet
5	Winter Green
2	crabs
	-- Cherrys & plums

By the end of 1861, W. S. Haviland's journal listed 320 purchases of fruit trees, mostly apple varieties. If indeed these fruit trees were all planted in one orchard, it would have taken up quite an area. According to the Kentucky State Agricultural Society in 1860, if trees in an orchard are planted

Continued on page 7



View from the west side of US 27. Photo, Sharon Fowler, 2009.

“thirty feet apart in either direction, you get the average of forty-nine trees upon an acre, at thirty-three feet apart the average of forty trees and at forty-feet of twenty-seven trees.” Using the thirty-three feet figure as a guess, Mr. Haviland’s orchard would take up eight acres. This publication also recommended placing the orchard on high, flat ground, where trees “can at all times feel the influence of the sun and the air.” The land north of his house would fit this description.¹⁰

Later additions to the orchard

Through the years, Haviland added to the fruit trees planted in 1858-1861. Some of the purchases, especially those in 1894, could have been replacements for old or dead trees.

In April 1867, cherry trees were ordered from Philip Ammerman Nursery:

- 1 Black Tartarian set at the southeast corner of the house
- 3 Black Tartarian set at the South West corner of the smoke house toward the well.
- 6 Gov. Wood, set on north side of yard running from pavement west of wash house
- 1 Knights Early Black set just west of a May cherry in the same row.

In addition, five Buffman’s dwarf pear trees were set at the south end of the garden commencing in the southeast corner running west.

In 1876, fourteen fruit trees were planted, purchased “from Ohio” : 2 Early Harvest; 2 Red Arbrachar; 3 Wild Goose Plum; 3 red Golden Tunic; 4 Scotch cluster Goosberry.

On March 22, 1894, thirty-three years later, Mr. Haviland recorded the planting of forty fruit trees in rows of ten, probably replacing dead trees from his first orchard:

- 2 Early Harvest; 10 Northern Spy; 5 Milam; 4 White Pippin;
- 4 Maiden’s Blush; 2 Large winter sweet; 2 Red Rambo; 2 Red fall sweet; 1 Whiter Pippin; 8 Ben Davis.
- 1 Keifer Pear set in north west corner of new garden south of house.

W. S. Haviland’s journal is the only detailed record found so far of a large orchard on a Harrison County farm. It is through such scarce family records that Harrison County’s history can be better documented and interpreted. Harrison Heritage News thanks Robert Haviland for providing a copy of the journal for this, the second of three articles on W. S. Haviland The first being “W. S. Haviland and the Cynthiana Civil War Claims,” (Harrison Heritage News September 2007, Vol. 8 No. 9). The third article will cover Mr. Haviland’s gardens and other landscaping.

Endnotes:

1. Journal of W. S. Haviland, courtesy of Robert Haviland. The journal does not have page numbers.
2. William A. Penn, “W. S. Haviland and the Cynthiana, Kentucky, Civil War Damage Claims,” *Northern Kentucky Heritage*, Vol. XV, No. 2, 38.
3. Ann Leighton, *American Gardens of the Nineteenth Century* (U. of Mass, 1987, 169-70).
4. <http://history.rochester.edu/flowercity/forties.htm> and/leadership.htm, April 15, 2009. William F. Peck, *History of Rochester and Monroe County*, Vol. 2 (1908) p. 899 ; Thomas Meehan, ed., *Gardner’s Monthly and Horticulturist* (August 1860) (last two from <http://books.google.com>).
5. *The Apples of New York* (p. 15), <http://books.google.com>.
6. George William Johnson, *A Dictionary of Modern Gardening* (Philadelphia, 1847) 42-57; Second Report of the Kentucky State Agricultural Society to the Legislature of Kentucky: For the Years 1858-1859 (Frankfort, Ky., 1860) essay “Fruit Culture in the Ohio Valley” 86-95.
7. Second Report of the Kentucky State Agricultural Society, 91.
8. Perrin, William Henry, ed., *History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison, & Nicholas Counties, Kentucky* (1882) 313. Scott and Stuart lived in the Richland Precinct of Harrison County.
9. *Ibid.*, 658-659.
10. Second Report of the Kentucky State Agricultural Society, 101, 105.



Entrance to W. S. Haviland’s 1861 residence. The orchard may have been on the left side of the house. Photo, Philip Naff, 2009.

The Genealogy Box



A supplemental newsletter for genealogy and family history research in Harrison County, Kentucky .

By Philip Naff.

Farmers Going “Postal”

In a day before telephones were common or radio came into their lives, letters were a most precious means of communication between rural families and the outside world. For the first century of this country’s history rural residents had to go to town or to their local country store to pick up their mail. Nearly two out of three Americans lived in a rural community or on a farm, and even though they paid the same for a postage stamp as anyone else, they had to work harder to get their mail and to keep in touch. Farmers didn’t like it.

In 1896 the government began an experiment called R.F.D., or Rural Free Delivery. Believing that mail delivery to rural residences could be financially risky Congress appropriated only \$40,000 for the first trial runs, but it was proven that R.F.D. could be a success! It was so popular that rural folk everywhere were clamoring for the establishment of mail routes in their own counties.

On November 16, 1901 the *Log Cabin* published the following outline under the headline of “New Rural Routes: Harrison County to be Traversed by Five New Rural Carriers;” it documented the establishment of the first six routes in the county and read as follows:

“Col. H.G. Rising . . . Special Agent of the Post Office Department, Rural Free Delivery Service, dropped into our city quietly Monday evening for the purpose of investigating the five applications for rural delivery routes through this county . . .

“Rural Delivery Route No. 1 to Broadwell, Leesburg, Leeslick, Connersville, etc., was established a year ago last April and has been in continuous operation since that time.

“Mr. Rising has gone carefully over the proposed routes, noting the character and density of the population, number of residences, etc., along the various routes . . . The routes recommended by Col. Rising are as follows:

“No. 2.—Commencing at the Cynthiana postoffice, going north east on the Oddville pike to Smitsonville postoffice, thence west on dirt road to Avena postoffice, thence north to Avena school house, thence return to Cynthiana via Two Lick and Falmouth pikes. The length of this route is 24 ¼ miles and there are on the route mapped out 155 residences. Mr. Z.T. Laforce will be the carrier over this route.

“No. 3.— Cynthiana via Oddville pike via Indian Creek pike via Republican church to the residence of G. Jenkins, thence returning to Sylvan Dell, thence via Venus and Sylvan Dell pike to Oddville pike to Cynthiana. On this route there are 153 residences. Lawson Miller will be the carrier.

“No. 4.—Cynthiana via Millersburg pike to Gibbons toll house, thence on Shadynook pike to

Shadynook, thence to Morning Glory in Nicholas county, thence to Hooktown, thence to Colville, to Gibbons toll house, thence to Cynthiana. On this route are 158 houses. John F. Holley will be the carrier.

“No. 5.—Cynthiana over Falmouth pike to R. Blackburn’s residence, thence to Kelat, thence to railroad one-fourth mile north of Robinson, thence to Dutch Chapel, thence to Breckenridge pike near J.A. Hughes’ residence, thence to Cynthiana via Raven Creek pike. There are 143 houses on this route. Jas. M. Thorp will be the carrier.

“No. 6.—Cynthiana to Breckenridge via Raven Creek pike, thence to Renaker, thence to Rutland, thence by dirt road to A.J. Renaker’s residence on Selma pike, thence to Selma, thence to Cynthiana. There are 155 residences[.]”

Knowledge of R.F.D. addresses can be of aid to the genealogist in establishing where a research subject lived and who his neighbors were. R.F. D. directories were published over the years for the county. Combined with information from U.S. Census records of 1910, 1920, and 1930, one may be able to locate a residence of a research subject on a map or in reality. Or it could just help to make more sense of the addresses on old letters which have become family heirlooms.

For more information on all that is “postal,” seek out a guide offered by the U.S.P.S. entitled *Sources of Historical Information on Post Offices, Postal Employees, Mail Routes, and Mail Contractors* (Publication 119), or visit www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/pubs/pub119.pdf to get a copy.

The National Postal Museum (www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b2_reaching.html) has even more history and info on the web about Rural Free Delivery, what one might call the “farmer’s internet” of the early 20th century.