



Harrison Heritage News

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Harrison County's Lost Buildings: Griffith House (1827-2011)

William K. Griffith hired Kentucky architect-builder John McMurtry of Lexington to design and install this Greek Revival doorway, probably ca. 1840-1850, which replaced the original 1827 entrance. A Georgetown antiques dealer once owned correspondence between McMurtry and Griffith that was purchased at the estate sale which discussed the remodeling of the entrance. Part of the stone step is missing. More photos on page four. Photo, 1984, Bill Penn.

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President's Corner

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Program Notes

Billy Fowler announced that the plan to take down the old Griffith Tavern and reassemble it elsewhere did not pan out, however some of the materials were salvaged and will be used for a tavern in Clark County. Also, the Handy farm barns- the oldest barn (1830's) and the one built in 1888 - are completely down and work to bring down the barn built around the turn of the century is in progress.

The Aviation Museum at the Bluegrass Airport in Lexington will have a grand opening on November 19. They will have Open House and feature Storey Musgrave, former astronaut, celebrating the achievements in the progress made in aviation.

In addition to Sharon Fowler's photographs depicting the careful and meticulous destruction of the Handy Farm barns, there were exhibits of square nails and woods used in the barns. Clearly, the builders knew what they were doing and built the barns to last a century or two. Some of the methods used were quite ingenious. After the program, Sharon passed out pegs that had been used in the barn.

Submitted by Marilynn Bell, secretary



President Billy Fowler presents artifacts from the demolished ca. 1830's Handy Farm barn during the November meeting. Photo, Sharon Fowler.

I wish I could say that November is finally here with Thanksgiving ahead of us. I just have to be honest and say where did November go? Thanksgiving has come and gone and December is already here. Seems like a strange thing to say in a newsletter that plainly says November in the header. That is why I never say we put out monthly newsletters; I only say we put out twelve newsletters a year. Well, it could be eleven one year and thirteen the next but it still equals twelve per year.

I am not sure about the rest of you, but at our house this time of year it means eating way too much, spending time with family, Christmas shopping, and of course, decorating for the holidays. Some of our kids used to say that we made the house look like a Christmas store. I am happy to report that most of them are coming around to our way of thinking. You know decorating way too much. Since they are not as old as us they haven't caught up with us when it comes to decorating but they are still enjoying the season with us and other family members and of course eating way too much. Sharon does a good job with making sure there is always too much good stuff to eat. She spent time earlier in life teaching the children how to cook and she now spends time teaching the grandchildren to do the same.

When it comes to shopping for Christmas most of the country probably spends more than they should. As far as that goes they (and we) probably do the same all year! But is that all bad? Well that depends on who you talk to. Some say it is terrible to spend all that money, you should save it. Others will tell you it is a good thing. If you spend your money it will help the economy grow and provide jobs for people manufacturing, shipping, marketing and retailing all those things you are buying. I know how I feel on the subject and it is up to each of you to determine how you feel. Regardless which way each of you go on the subject at least try to spend time with the folks you care about. That is, in my opinion, the most important thing to do regardless what time of year it is.

JOIN THE HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Dues are \$12 a year and includes this monthly newsletter. Send check to HCHS, PO 411, Cynthiaiana, Ky. 41031. Meetings are the third Thursday every month at the Cynthiaiana-Harrison Co. Public Library Annex (Charles W. Feix Room) on Pleasant Street behind Biancke's Restaurant, starting at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome! Back issues are on our Web site.

Harrison County History Calendar

January 20 - Show and Tell

Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

Martha Barnes, President

www.cynthiana-harrisoncountymuseum.org



One of the interesting scenes in the Museum depicts a life-size moonshine still operation. This was constructed by Harold Slade not long after the Museum opened, and has been a favorite with visitors ever since. Photo, 2010, Sharon Fowler.

Rattling Spurs

Bill Penn, Editor

Civil War 150th Anniversary - November 1861

Ohio regiments guarding railroad - A report of the forces in Kentucky prepared by the Department of the Cumberland for General McClellan dated November 4, 1861, listed only the 35th O.V.I. in the area between Lexington and Cincinnati. It was important to keep the railroad open to transport Federal troops concentrating at Camp Dick Robinson, the launching point for operations in Eastern Kentucky between Richmond, Prestonsburg, and Cumberland Gap.

The 35th Ohio soldiers guarding the railroad sometimes held arrested civilians temporarily at Camp Frazer before they were either released or forwarded to Federal prisons in Louisville or Ohio. An example was when a squad of soldiers arrested a Bourbon County man accused of burning the barn of a Union farmer and took him to the Cynthiana guard house in early November 1861.

Representative Lucius Desha indicted for treason

The U. S. district court at Frankfort indicted Desha and Shawhan for treason on November 6, 1861. During the previous month, Desha, to avoid arrest in Cynthiana, ac-

companied to Gallatin, Tennessee some men who had recruited Confederate companies, which probably caused the indictment. Also coinciding with Desha's stay in Gallatin, the provisional Confederate Government of Kentucky convened on November 18-20, 1861, in Russellville, twenty-four miles west of Bowling Green, where delegates elected a governor and voted to join the Confederacy. Although Harrison County was not among the counties officially represented at this convention, and his diary does not mention it, Desha conceivably could have been present, for he had been in nearby Tennessee since November 2 and visited the Orphan Brigade's Ninth Regiment camped at Russellville while the provisional government met.

Civilians arrested in Cynthiana -

Lexington Observer and Reporter, November 30, 1861, stated county clerk Perry Wherritt and sheriff Glave had been arrested for "aiding the rebellion" and "were released Monday last and returned home."



William Griffith House

This house was built ca. 1827 on the east side of Leesburg Road about five miles south of Cynthiana. The building was demolished in November 2011. Exterior photos, 1984; interior photos, 1993, by Bill Penn.



William K. Griffith House in the Civil War

Bill Penn

At the beginning of the Civil War, it appears the Griffith house - Silver Lake Place - was empty and the owner, William King Griffith (1828-1915), who married Margaret Spears of Bourbon County in 1855, lived in her home county of Bourbon in 1860. Katherine Wilson wrote in her survey of old Harrison County houses, *This Old House*, that during the Civil War the Griffiths moved to her family farm near Paris, leaving the Griffith house "for wheat storage - even the great parlor was filled with wheat." The weight of the wheat may have contributed to later structural problems.

Although built as a tavern in 1827, the Griffith house became the residence of William Griffith's father, Burrell Griffith, where William K. and his brother Burrell Jr. were reared. William K. and Margaret Griffith's Bourbon County home was burned by Union soldiers, according to Wilson's book, and the family cleaned up the old mansion and moved to Silver Lake. That the Griffith family lived in Bourbon County in 1860 is confirmed by the U. S. census records, which showed William K. Griffith in Harrison County in the 1850 through 1910 records except for 1860, when he was enumerated in Bourbon County.

The only account of soldiers visiting the Griffith home during the Civil War was when Morgan's raiders passed by prior to the First Battle of Cynthiana, July 17, 1862, and stopped to water their horses in the lake. Soldiers' memoirs mentioned the weather was extremely hot and dry that day, with the temperature reaching one-hundred degrees. The Griffiths were still living in Bourbon County when the Confederates appeared. I described the visit in *Rattling Spurs and Broad-Brimmed Hats*:

"About five miles from Cynthiana, squads of Morgan's Confederates rested near the James Gray house on Mt. Vernon Pike and at the Griffith house, Silver Lake, on the Leesburg Pike near Broadwell. Mr. Gray took his eight older children toward Cynthiana to see the Rebels camped there, and Mrs. Gray brought their other two children to see the Confederates camped at the Griffith house. Upon returning to their home, the Grays were surprised to discover a number of Morgan's men in their yard, probably watering their thirsty horses in nearby Grays Run, and served them a meal."

A review of the William King Griffith Papers, University of Kentucky Special Collections, reveals interesting Civil

War-period activities related to the Griffith farm. These papers were purchased by a Georgetown antiques dealer at the Griffith estate sale and sold to the university.

Two years before the war broke out, William K. Griffith decided to update at least one of his mantels. In July 1859, he ordered a model #14 mantel from a Cincinnati dealer, who instead suggested a model #15 "exactly the same size and style excepting the pannells [*sic*] which are raised and plain instead of the leaf as in No. 14." This indicates the family may have been living in the house in 1859 but moved to Bourbon County the following year. Another indication the family moved about 1860 is a letter to Mr. Griffith dated 1860 inquiring about his advertisement to rent the farm, which may have taken place for the few years the family lived near Paris.

While living in Bourbon County, in February 1862, Mr. Griffith and a "Mr. Fisher" requested a pass from General Don Carlos Buell in Louisville and apparently received it to travel beyond Confederate lines, "to go South to attend to their private business." The nature of the business trip was not mentioned, but since commerce with the South was limited if not banned after the Union occupation of Kentucky, sales of grain or livestock would not have been involved.

While living in Bourbon County in October 1862, Union Brig. Gen. A. J. Smith's brigade foraged forty-eight cords of seasoned wood and twenty-seven cords of green wood along with seven hundred and fifty-two bushels of corn. Griffith authorized W. S. Haviland, of Cynthiana, as his agent to apply for reimbursement from the Federal government.

By June/July 1863, William K. Griffith and his wife were living at Silver Lake, for he is included on an enrollment of men illegible for the draft as of that date prepared by the Harrison County clerk. Another verification of his move to Harrison in the William King Griffith Papers is a notice dated August 18, 1863, for forage purchased by the quartermaster of the 118th Ohio Vol. Infantry. "This is to request that you call at the county clerks office at Cynthiana an acknowledge a power of attorney for the collection of your certified account for corn and hay purchased from you by the Quartermaster of the 118th Ohio V. Inf. Feb. 30, 1863, whilst stationed at Cynthiana Ky. The amount of said account is Forty four dollars. Respectfully yours, W. S. Haviland." Griffith also retained a receipt dated January 1, 1864, that he provided one and a half cords of wood to the Cynthiana subdistrict Provost Marshal's office.

In August 1864, Margaret Griffith's brother, Lt. Solo-

mon Spears, who had joined the Confederate army and was a prisoner in the officers' barracks at Fort Delaware, wrote to his sister at "Broadwell's Crossroads" about problems sending him a box of personal provisions:

"The box you so kindly sent me on the 1st of August I understand has come on the island and on account of you not giving the rank unfortunately it was taken over to the privates camp and was consumed by some scoundrel. So it is lost. For directing the box you ought to give the rank on them. I would not have any difficulty in getting the things you send me. Lo if not to much trouble in sending me another box by the directions I give you in the above lines will feel grateful for your kindness and to return the favor on some future day if you send me another box send me a couple of shirts and two pair of drawers and one hat and one coat. I hope you do not think me much trouble. You can imagine a prison life. My love to all, affect. brother write soon and let me hear from you. Lt. Sol Spears."

In 1860, William K. Griffith owned twenty-six slaves as a resident of Bourbon County. With 1,360 acres in Harrison County, many of these slaves would have worked on that farm, especially after he moved midway through the war. In the Griffith Papers is a Provost Marshal document dated June 2, 1864, indicating Griffith accompanied one of his slaves, Harrison Griffith, to the Kentucky 6th District Provost Marshal's office in Covington to enroll in the Union army. As Harrison Griffith's owner, William K. could receive an enrollment bounty of \$300 from the Federal government. According to Provost Marshal muster records, however, there appears to be more Griffith slaves enrolled, for they apparently list four Griffith slaves enrolled and credited to Harrison County the same day as Harrison:

Griffith, Lewis, 42, June 2, 64, Covington
 Griffith, Harrison, 23, June 2 64, Covington
 Griffith, Joel, 27, June 2, 64, Covington
 Griffith, John, 26, June 2 ,64, Covington

According to the Kentucky adjutant-general's report John and Lewis joined Company F, 100th United States Colored Troops (USCT). Joel Griffith, however, has not as yet been verified as one of Mr. Griffith's slaves, although it is likely, considering they all joined the same day. Although Mr. Griffith condoned the enlistment of these slaves in July 1864 he requested the Provost Marshal's office to return two Negro children he believed Union soldiers "induced" to go to Covington. Harrison

Griffith and John Griffith later wrote letters from their respective camps near Nashville to Mr. Griffith inquiring about the welfare of their families. Harrison Griffith referred to participating in an engagement, which was the Battle of Nashville on December 15 and 16, 1864, for detachments of U. S. Colored Infantry participated. These letters were in Griffith's papers (transcriptions retain original spelling):

January 1, 1865, Camp Foster, Nashville, Tenn.

Mr. Wm. Griffit, Dear sir, I am pleased to say that I am well and I hope when these few lines comes to hand may find you all well and enjoying the same. Tell mother that I would like to hear from her and the children and to no how things are all geting along and gran father & granmother I would be happy to hear from them and all my old friends that I left at home. I hop they are all doing and I would like to hear from uncle Sam and to no what he is doing and how he is getting along. John Wesley Brooks is well and doing well; he wants to no how his wife and children are prospering. Old Tom [or Tarne] Beull is well and hartey. None of our boys got hurt n the fight here. We came out all right and tell mother that I want her to send me a carvat [cravat, neckwear] to wear in her next letter to remember her tell to make it near one inch in width read or blue. I do not care which. [bottom line missing]...and give my respects to Willey and ----- and Mrs. Griffit and that I would like to see them all and tell them that I am coming home in a few days. Tell that they need not make any special preperation till I apear so I will close and await your answer. Write soon and let me hear from you all. Your friend till death, Harrison Griffit.

Direct to me Camp Kuster Nashville Tennesse in care of Lieut. G. W. Jones A. A. Quarter Master.

[P.S.] Tell mother to inquire how Travet Dwen-ts [?] family is; he is hear with me. Dempsey Cembrow [Kimbrough] is well and he wants to no how his family is getting along."

Former slave John Harrison also wrote a letter to William K. Griffith:

January 22, 1865

Camp Foster, Mr. Wm. K. Griffet:

Sir, I take the privilege of you a few lines to inform you of my health. I am well and doing very well & I hope these few lines may find you the same. Sir, I have written some several letters to you but have not as yet received some ancer from you. I would like very well for you to spare the time to write me a few lines to let me know how you are and all my peopple for I would like to hear from them very much whether they ar living or dead. I would send them some money if I thought it would get to my wife. Tell her to write to me and lett me hear from her or rather you Sir for she cant write. Let me know how every [body is] about the place. Give me particulars how you all spend [your] days you. am at present at Camp Foster near Nashville.....

[signed] your most honorable servant, John Grifft.

P. S. Remember my kind respect to Mrs. Magge [perhaps "Maggie," a nickname Margaret Griffith may have had] and tell her I often wished to be home to get some milk for I have not had a good drink of milk since I have bin to the sarvis [service]. Give her my best respects. Harrison [Griffith] sends his love to you and his mother and all his regular friends. How may interest their self about him. Give my love to all his many ----. I want you to tell me know where to direct my letter too. No more at present, but still remane your friend and servant, John Griffit,

Nashville Tenn, care of Capt J. Mason Co. F, 100 USCT

Without reading too much into them, the two letters give some clues as to the relationship between these two former slaves - for they gained their freedom upon joining the Union army - and their master, William K. Griffith. For one, the writings show that these two men were able to read and write, something John Griffith's mother could not do ("Sir, for she can't write"). Although there is no evidence a reader should not take the affectionate and respectful tone of the letters at face value, there are a couple of points to consider. It would be in Harrison and John Griffith's

interest to speak well of Mr. Griffith. Both soldiers were pleading for Griffith to write them about their families, plus the fact that their families probably remained slaves in January 1865. It wasn't until March 1865 that Lincoln signed legislation freeing the families of black soldiers, and the slaves that did not join for whatever reason and their families would still be the property of Mr. Griffith. The letters also point to the owner's, if not the government's, recognition of slave families, with mentioning of John's wife and children, and both soldiers' mothers, and even great-grandmothers and grandfathers.

William K. and Margaret Griffith became the parents of four children: William B., Emma H., Hubert F., and John K. After the war he was well-known as a breeder of short-horn cattle and Cotswold sheep.

Sources:

Katherine Wilson, *This Old House*, 31, 32.

William H. Perrin, *History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison, and Nicholas Counties, Kentucky*, 491, 492, 722,

William King Griffith Papers, Special Collections, 1997MS309 2 boxes, University of Kentucky.

Kentucky Adjutant General's Report - Union, Appendix, p. 24, Roll of Co. F, 100th USCT.

Kentucky Historical Society, Harrison County Enrolled Militia, June/July 1863, 54th Regt. Enrolled Militia. Folder 863.

Harrison County, and Bourbon County, Kentucky, census records and slave schedules, 1850-1860.

Kentucky 6th District Provost Marshal, Record Group 110, entry 4109, Descriptive List of White and Colored Troops Mustered, 1863-1865, National Archives - Atlanta, Ga.

Interview with Jerome Redfearn, Georgetown, November 2011.

Harrison County, Kentucky, History Publications

available from Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, 124 South Walnut Street,
P.O. Box 411, Cynthiana, KY 41031 (859-234-7179);

- Boyd, Lucinda, *Chronicles of Cynthiana*. This is a reprint of the rare 1894 edition, which includes family histories, the famous account of David Sheely and his ghost, and other historical sketches and scattered accounts of persons and events connected with Cynthiana and Harrison County. 262 pp. Hardbound. \$20.00.

- *June 1896 Cynthiana Democrat* reprint. **OUT OF PRINT**

- *Cynthiana Since 1790*. Virgil Peddicord (1986). Mr. Peddicord attempted to list the owners/businesses located on each lot from the founding of the city through the mid-1980s, including subdivisions added through 1923. 171 pp. (See separate index below). Paperback. \$20.00

- *Index - Cynthiana Since 1790* (William A. Penn). Mr. Peddicord did not prepare a comprehensive index for his book. This supplemental index contains about 3,500 names and a reference city street map. 30 pp. Paperback. \$3.00

-- *This Old House* by Katherine Wilson. Now back in print, this book tells the stories of twenty-six early Harrison Co. houses and the families who have occupied them. 70 pp., new index, paperback. \$15.00 (An index is available for earlier editions, which had no index).

- *Cromwell's Comments*, by John M. Cromwell (1862-1951) is a reprint of Cromwell's 1928-1941 Cynthiana Democrat columns on the history of Cynthiana (Harrison Co., KY). William A. Penn and George D. Slade, editors. Paperback; preface; 2 maps; 21 photos; 4 illus.; annotated; index; 200 pp. (Cynthiana Democrat, 2002), \$10 plus \$3 shipping.

Shipping/handling for above books: Please include a handling and shipping fee of \$4.00 for first book (unless otherwise noted above), \$2.50 for each additional book; you will be notified if special shipping fees apply. No shipping fee on Index - Cynthiana Since 1790, if ordered with the book. Make checks/money orders payable to "Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum." No credit cards. Prices/fees subject to change.



Griffith House view from northeast. Photo, 1984, Bill Penn