

# **Accommodations for the Tourist and Business Travelers in Early Grant County**

Written by John B. Conrad

Published in "Footsteps of the Past" on January 9th, 1997.

Transcribed & Edited for Grant County Historical Society Website by Colton Simpson

"The early explorers and settlers in the area that would become Grant County had to develop their own travel accommodations. They made good use of a well-travelled north-south Indian path following the crest of the "dry ridge." This is the drainage divide separating the waters of the Licking River and its tributaries to the east from the springs and streams falling into the Elkhorn and Eagle Creeks, tributaries of the Kentucky River, on the west.

The first travel facility constructed in the area was "Campbell's Block House," believed to have been erected by John Campbell in 1784 or later as a safe place to "hole up" on his periodic trips through the area. A trader and trapper, Campbell needed protection from Indians and unscrupulous trappers who might want to steal back the skins and furs he bought from them. The site of this facility is believed to be on the east side of U. S. 25 near the corporation line between Williamstown and Dry Ridge.

In 1788, John Filson and two partners undertook to develop a town (now Cincinnati) on the north side of the Ohio River partly with settlers from Lexington. Filson surveyed a road along the dry ridge as he went. With no streams to ford or bridge, it was accepted and established by the County Courts as a "tolerable good wagon road." It was known as the Dry Ridge Trace or Dry Ridge Road.

Possibly two facilities that would offer services to the general traveling public were established as taverns in 1791. One was Littell's Station, the fortified home of the James Littell family built about 1790 southeast of present-day Williamstown. The other was established just south of present day Crittenden by Archibald Reed and became known as "Reed's Tavern on the dry ridge." Both Littell's and Reed's operated for many years as taverns. By 1796, the home of Thomas and Sarah Clark, on the dry ridge between present day Williamstown and Littell's was licensed as a Tavern. Following Thomas Clark's Death in 1803, Sarah was probably the first woman so authorized in the region. A listing of the tools, equipment and personal property available and used in the operation of the Clark Tavern may be found on pages 159-162 of the History of Grant County, Kentucky. In 1799, William Arnold, at the site of present day Williamstown, was licensed to operate a tavern in his home. This home, which has been preserved today through the efforts of Virgil Chandler Sr. and many others, is owned by the City of Williamstown and maintained as a museum by the Grant County Historical Society, Inc.

By 1805, George Brown also had established a tavern near Crittenden and Simon Nichols was licensed to operate a tavern in his home west of present-day Dry Ridge. A tavern was established at Sherman in 1812 by Louis Myers. After it was acquired by the Cason family in 1832, the original was enlarged and equipped with waiting rooms to provide stage coach travelers with meals while waiting for fresh teams of horses to be harnessed and hitched to the coach.

By 1814, James Gouge, who may have first settled at present day Mason as early as 1798, opened a tavern in his home on the site where the later Mason High School stood.

Richard A. Collins established a tavern near present-day Williamstown in 1815, Griffin P. Theobald opened a tavern in his home north of present day Dry Ridge in 1817. Samuel Simpson licensed a tavern in 1817 "3/4 mile above (south of) present day Williamstown." Reuben Hopkins and Son opened a tavern where the "Son" may have been the William Hopkins who was appointed as the first Postmaster at Dry Ridge.

In 1818, Richard Lucas and William Harrison opened taverns. Location, other than along the dry ridge, is not known today. Henry Childers established a tavern in his home on the south side of present day Dry Ridge and William Mountjoy opened one near present day Williamstown. In 1819, three more appeared on the scene, William Fugate, John W. Collins and James Theobald.

All the above taverns were established while the area that would become Grant County was a part of either Campbell County, or after 1799, a part of Pendleton County. All of the above were located on or near the Dry Ridge Road, which because of increased traffic was upgraded in 1819 to a state turnpike, maintained by tolls, known as the Covington-Lexington Turnpike. Undoubtedly, there must have been a few taverns in the County not on the dry ridge in this time period in some of the communities that are known today as Delia, Downingsville, Flingsville, Folsom, Holbrook, Jonesville or Stewartsville. If so, they have not been identified.

Licensed taverns were authorized to provide "bed, board and drink " for travelers and stabling and feed for horses, at places established by the county court. For the most part, tavern owners were people of good repute. Licenses and/or renewals were refused if the applicant didn't measure up as a respected and influential resident of the county. Besides accommodating travelers, the tavern was a meeting place for the community and the exchange of information. Tavern owners were paid in cash or skins; some carried a book of accounts for local residents. Before post offices were established the owner received mail brought in by travelers for local residents and dispatched mail by travelers going in the direction outgoing mail was addressed. The number of taverns licensed after 1815 and the upgrading of the Dry Ridge Road to a state turnpike are indicators of the increasing traffic flowing through the area. In April, 1820, Grant County, named for one or more of the three Grant' nephews of Daniel Boone, was created out of Pendleton County. The Grant County Court, the governing body of the county involved with all that had to be done to initiate the various county functions, found some time to provide for various county functions, found some time to provide for taverns for the benefit of the traveling public and the socializing of county residents. Such action taken during the first year are copied from Grant County Order Book A:

### **Licensed Taverns**

April, 1820: On the Motion of Samuel Simpson Esq. Ordered that he be permitted to continue to keep a Tavern at his house in, this County under the License which he holds under the Pendleton County Court, until that License expires according to Law, which will be on the third Monday in December next.

License is granted William Pierce to keep a Tavern at his bouse in this County, whereupon be entered into and acknowledged bond in open Court in the penalty of one hundred pounds with Bennett Williams his security, conditioned as the Law directs:

License is granted James Gouge to keep a tavern at his house in this County, who entered into and acknowledged bond in the penalty of 100 pounds with James Stewart his security. Conditioned as the law directs:

License is granted Henry Childers to keep a tavern at his house in the County on the dry ridge road, who together with Simon Nichols his Security entered into and acknowledged bond in Open Court in the penalty of 100 pounds. Conditioned as the law directs. License is granted William Arnold to keep a tavern in his home in this country and together with John Marksberry, his security entered into and acknowledged bond in open court in the amount of 100 pounds. Conditioned as the law directs. Ordered that the tavern rates for this County shall hereafter be as follows To wit: "For Breakfast, Dinner and Supper 25 cents each, Lodging 12-1/2, Horse to fodder or hay per night 25, Com or oats per gallon 12-1/2, Pasturage per night 6-1/4, whiskey or Brandy per half pint 12-1/2, Rum French, Brandy or wine per half pint 50. Cyder or beer per quart 12-1/2 cents.

Court Meeting June, 1820: Tavern License is granted Griffin P. Theobald to keep a house at his house in this County on the dry ridge road, who executed & acknowledged Bond in the penalty of 100 pounds with Hubbard B. Smith his security Conditioned as the law directs. License is granted John Ford to keep a tavern at his house in this County who thereupon executed bond in the penalty of 100 pounds, with John Sipple his security conditioned as the law directs. Ordered that the seat of Justice of this County be known and called by the name of Philadelphia.

Court Meeting July, 1820: It appearing to the satisfaction of the, Court that there is another Town in his Commonwealth called Philadelphia with a Post office Established therein; It is ordered that the order passed at the last Court, calling the seat of Justice of this County Philadelphia be rescinded and set aside; and that the seat of Justice be called and known by the name of Williamstown.

Court Meeting September, 1820: License is granted Price B. Hume to keep a tavern at his house in Williamstown, who executed bond in the penalty of 100 pounds with Nathaniel Henderson & Samuel Simpson his securities Conditioned as the law directs.

Court Meeting October, 1820: Ordered that the tavern rates be fixed for the next six months at the same as the last six months, except peach Brandy, & that is fixed at 25 cents per half pint.

Court Meeting January, 1821: Tavern license is granted to Samuel Simpson to keep a tavern at his house on the turnpike road, who executed bond in the penalty of 100 pounds with P.B. Hume his security Conditioned as the Law directs.

Court Meeting March, 1821: License is granted James Theobald to keep a tavern at his house in the County, whereupon he together with Charles Sechrest his Security acknowledged bond in open Court in the penalty of 100 pounds. Conditioned as the Law directs. License is granted Charles Sechrest to keep a tavern at his house on the Turnpike road in this County, who together with James Theobald his security executed & ack'd bond in open Court in the penalty of 100 pounds. Conditioned as the Law directs.

It will be noted that these taverns were established in the homes of the license holder. These were all log cabins, most with two rooms on the ground floor and some with lofts. Filled to overflowing with families living in them, it does not appear to be possible to find much room to bed and feed strangers, usually men, sometimes men and women, who are passing through. Not all tavern owners renewed their licenses every year. The tavern may be operated one or two years, then discontinued one or two years followed by a license being applied for again. Whether this was due to the tavern owner or his family needing a rest from the duties of tavern keeping or whether there wasn't always enough tourism or local trade to make it profitable, or both, is not known today. In the next decade many changes will begin to take place. No longer was it just the travelers on foot, horseback or in the occasional wheeled vehicle. The road was used regularly by drovers driving livestock from central Kentucky to the Cincinnati markets. The livestock needed to be watered, so the drovers would drive them off the crest of the ridge, finding water in nearby hollows. This worked very well until the area became settled by resident owners who objected to trespassers with livestock grazing through their fields, perhaps trampling crops, on their way to water. The drovers and their herds were restricted to the right-of-way of the Covington-Lexington Turnpike, which did not cross any streams. As a result taverns with more facilities including overnight accommodations for drovers and stock pens or feed lots and water for livestock became much in demand.

Stagecoach service is said to have been inaugurated by Abner Gaines in 1818 between Cincinnati and Lexington, initially requiring two days or more to make the trip one way. Gaines had contracts with taverns to change horses and provide bed and board for passengers as needed. O. P. Hogan of Williamstown started stagecoach service to Covington and Georgetown in 1832. He later expanded his business with service to Maysville. Hogan's home was sometimes used to keep passengers overnight. Improved maintenance of the Covington Lexington Turnpike reduced the travel time between these points to twelve hours eliminating overnight stops (if the equipment didn't break down and there were no accidents).

Taverns believed to be in operation during the antebellum period from the creation of Grant County in 1820 to the Civil War (1861-1865) are listed as follows by community:

**BLANCHET-** Reported to have a stage coach inn located on the Covington Lexington Turnpike in the Bridgetown Blanchet area. This inn may or may not be the Williamstown Hotel operated in the area by David W. Williams (1819-1900) and Eliza Williams (1825-1898). A picture of this old two story hotel owned by a granddaughter, Mildred Williams Haggard, is said to be too faint to reproduce.

**CARTERSVILLE-** In 1820 a tavern was licensed by William Pierce on his land on Williams Branch and the Turnpike.

**CHERRY GROVE-** The Clark Tavern, established by Thomas and Sarah Clark in 1796, was continued in operation during this period by descendants. The Samuel Simpson Tavern, opened in 1817, closed sometime after Samuel's death in 1822. In 1860, Squire Lucas was granted a tavern license for his residence on the Covington Lexington Turnpike, the "40-MILE HOUSE." Located in Cherry Grove, the distance from the mouth of the Licking on the Ohio River would be 40 miles.

CORDOVA- The earliest record found of a license in this community is a 1858 "merchants license," authorizing the sale of spirituous liquors by the quart, gallon or barrel (not by the drink) issued to Jeremiah Morgan at his store. In 1859, a similar merchant's license was held by Alexander William in his store. William T. Wallace was licensed as a tavern keeper in 1860.

CORINTH- It is said to have inns and taverns in operation here from its earliest days of settlement about 1825. None have been identified in the Grant County records, but in this time period the western half of the community was in Owen County. Taverns may have been licensed by Owen County or even nearby Scott County. A number of well-known hotels in Corinth were not developed until after the Civil War.

CRITTENDEN- Except for the Henderson-Rouse Tavern, the taverns and other developments at "The Wells" just south of present day Crittenden closed and went out of business as Crittenden proper developed. Here, new services were opening, including Sechrest's Tavern in- 1821, followed by Dyas' Saloon. The term, "saloon," newly adopted, was generally used to identify a place serving spirituous liquor by the drink, with food or meals available but no overnight accommodations. The Crittenden House opened by Peyton Woodward in 1847, offered upscale accommodations and facilities for glittering parties. It was not equipped for drovers and livestock. Schneider's Saloon was opened in the 1850s by Samuel Chambers and Holton's Tavern was open during the Civil War period. The 1860 Census for Crittenden lists George W. Drinkard as a hotel keeper and Orsemis Canfield as a bar keeper. Taverns with more luxurious accommodations were being developed along the Covington-Lexington Turnpike. The first of these was the Henderson-Rouse Tavern at the south edge of Crittenden. The original building, built in 1815, was very large for its day with three rooms on the first floor and three on the second. About 1840, a second house was acquired, a two story, five room building which was moved and attached to the rear of the tavern. The addition was occupied by the Henderson family, upgrading by leaving all six rooms in the original building free for tavern use. Surrounded by supporting facilities, barns, grainery, saddle house, slave cabins, corn crib, poultry houses and pens for livestock, it appeared to be a village in itself. It is said to have reverted to a private residence following the ravages of the Civil War, the freeing of the slaves and the stage coaches doing business with the newer taverns in Crittenden.

DOWNINGSVILLE- According to Collins' 1847 History of Kentucky, Downingsville contains, among other specialties, "one tavern." The writer has been unable to identify the holder of this license.

DRY RIDGE- Taverns in the vicinity of Dry Ridge licensed before 1820 continued to operate in this time period. In addition, it appears that nearly every postmaster, Griffin Theobald, Sidney Donovan, Albert and Napoleon Stephenson, B. Bartlett, David Craig, E. Elstner, Moses Theobald, Fleming Nesbett and Alvin Hume operated a tavern as least during the period of time served as postmaster. G. W. Tucker and employees operated a livery stable and general store with a merchant's license to sell liquors by the quart, gallon or barrel. This business was sold to and operated by David Humphrey from 1852 to 1858, when it was sold back to Tucker. In 1848, James B. Kinslaer bought 235 acres from William Tucker, located on the Turnpike at the north edge of Dry Ridge. Here he erected a commodious brick home. It was composed of two stories, built in a "T" with each of its rooms eighteen feet square and heated by two fireplaces.

Kinslear secured a license to operate a tavern in his home with the barroom in a separate building between the house and the barns where the horses and carriages of the travelers were kept. Facilities were also available for drovers and herds of livestock. Like the Henderson-Rouse tavern at Crittenden; the Kinslaer family carried on extensive farming operations, converting the home to a private residence following the disruptions of the Civil War.

ELLISTON- The first tavern licensed in this community was that of John W. Collins in 1819. Other early tavern owners before the Civil War were John Ford, William Sasher and John Vaughn.

MASON- The Gouge Tavern established in 1814 near the site of the Mason High School is believed to have continued to operate after the County was established in 1820.

MT. ZION- Tavern licenses were issued to William Montgomery and John J. Beach in 1858, the earliest identified for this community.

SHERMAN- The Sherman Tavern continued to operate through this period. This tavern, like the Henderson-Rouse Tavern at Crittenden and the Kinslaer Tavern at Dry Ridge, was also upgraded by the Cason family to meet the needs of the carriage trade. Extensive farming operations were carried on and facilities for drovers and livestock maintained.

STRINGTOWN- A tavern was licensed in the home of Samuel and Sara Dunn Barnes in 1852, "13 to 14 miles southwest of Williamstown."

WILLIAMSTOWN- Many taverns were operated here in the county seat at various times in the antebellum period leading up to the Civil War. Among those licensed were the homes of: William Arnold, Daniel Harrison, William Harrison, Price (Prue) B. Hume, James Johnson, Abraham Jonas, Samuel Jonas, William Mountjoy, Thomas Murphey, John G. Richter and Thomas Wilson. In the 1850 Census for Williamstown, William A. Wilson is listed as a tavern keeper and John Thomas is listed as a hotel tavern keeper. One Williamstown tavern which continuously operated on a full time basis was that of innkeepers James W. and Cordelia Carlisle Collins after they were married in 1837. On Main street across from the county courthouse, it was known initially as the Collins Tavern. It was one of the first to adopt the name "hotel" as more descriptive of its operations than "tavern." Full time bartenders and restaurant workers were employed. A number of men without families, one attorney, a schoolteacher, a farmer. 4 carpenters, a stage driver and others listed the Collins House as their home in the 1850 Census. Facilities were available for guest's horses and carriages but there were no facilities for drovers and livestock. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1864 and was not rebuilt. The site was purchased in 1866 by Dr. W. C. Johnson."