

GREATER JEFFERSONTOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2018

Vol. 16 Number 2

April Meeting -- Meeting Time Change. New Time -- 12:30 P.M., Monday, April 2, 2018.

Several members have requested that we meet during the day, so for the meeting in April we will meet at **12:30 P.M.** in the Jeffersontown Library, 10635 Watterson Trail.

April Program

“What is New at the Louisville Zoo?” We will have a visit from docents from the Louisville Zoo. They will speak about new building plans, updates on some of the animals at the zoo, and upcoming programs and exhibits planned for this year. They will also have with them some small animals and animal biofacts for everyone to see and touch. Biofacts are such things as animal horns, hair, pelts, and other items.

The program is open to everyone. It is Spring Break for Jefferson County schools, so bring your kids and/or grandkids to see the animals. Tell your friends and neighbors.

February Program

“The Hannibal of the West: George Rogers Clark and the Revolutionary War in the West” was presented by Jim Holmberg, Archives Curator for the Filson Historical Society.

Clark was born on November 19, 1752 in Albemarle County, Virginia near Charlottesville. He was the second of the ten children of John and Ann Rogers, and five of their six sons became officers during the Revolutionary War. William, the youngest son was too young to fight in the war, however in 1803, became the co-leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



Around 1757, with the intensification of the French & Indian War, the family left the frontier, moving to a small plantation in the southwest corner of Caroline County, VA, which had been left to them by an uncle, John Clark. As were most plantation children, George was mostly home-schooled, but he did briefly attend Donald Robertson's school along with James Madison.

George was taught to be a surveyor by his grandfather and in 1771 he left home to work in western Virginia and later on in Kentucky. He spent two years surveying the Kanawha River region where he learned about the customs of the Indians in the region. During his time in Kentucky, the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix had opened Kentucky to settlement. This influx of settlers led to increasing tensions with the Indians as many tribes from north of the Ohio River used Kentucky as a hunting ground. This led to what is called Lord Dunmore's War, where Clark gained recognition as a formidable Indian fighter.

Clark's military career began in 1774 when he was made a captain in the Virginia militia. As Indian harassment of the Kentucky settlers increased, Clark called a meeting of representatives from all the forts at Harrodsburg, KY in June 1776. He and John Gabriel Jones were elected to go to Virginia to seek a more definite connection between Kentucky and Virginia. They wanted recognition and protection as a

county of Virginia that the General Assembly granted. Clark was given 500 pounds of gunpowder to help defend the settlements and was appointed a major in the Kentucky County militia. He was just 24 years old, but older settlers looked to him as a leader, such as Daniel Boone, and he had great rapport with his men.

Attacks on the settlements continued and the settlers had difficulty planting or harvesting crops to sustain them through the coming winter. Clark learned that the "hair buyer", British Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton, was paying the Indians for prisoners and scalps in Detroit and supplying them from posts in the Illinois country. After receiving reports from two spies he had sent to the Illinois country, Clark returned to Virginia to outline a plan of attack to Governor Patrick Henry and Clark received authority from the General Assembly to raise a force for the defense of Kentucky and was commissioned as Lieutenant Colonel over a force of seven companies with 50 men each. Secretly, Henry gave him written orders to attack Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes in the Illinois Country.

With the Revolutionary War raging in the colonies, Clark had difficulty raising a fighting force, but in April 1778, he set out from Fort Pitt down the Ohio River with 150 men and about twenty settler families, arriving at Corn Island, just above the Falls of the Ohio, in early May.

On June 26, 1778, Clark, with a force of 175 men, shot the falls and headed for Kaskaskia. They rowed down the Ohio River and captured Fort Massac at the mouth of the Tennessee River. They crossed the Ohio and headed north. Dressed in Indian and frontiersman garb they reached Kaskaskia in six days. On the night of July 4, Clark and his small force took Kaskaskia without firing a shot. Clark then sent Captain Joseph Bowman and his company to capture Cahokia, Prairie du Rocher, and St. Phillip, which were all captured without firing a shot.

Clark sent Kaskaskia's priest, Father Gibault, to Vincennes to secure the allegiance of the French there to Clark. With that done, Captain Helm was sent to take command of the garrison at Vincennes along the Wabash River that surrendered to Clark in August. Several other villages and British forts were subsequently captured, after most of the French-speaking and Indian inhabitants refused to take up arms on behalf of the British. Meanwhile, at Kaskaskia, Clark used August and September to gather Indian tribes from as far as 500 miles away.

Clark's recapture of Ft. Sackville at St. Vincent (Vincennes) was recorded in a journal kept by Captain Joseph Bowman from January 27 to March 20. It first appeared in print November 24, 1840, in a newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky, known as *The Louisville Literary News*. From that journal there is a daily record of events up through the recapture of Sackville, the British being disarmed and sent back to Detroit, and Clark's men leaving Sackville, returning to Kaskaskia.

When Lt. Gov. Hamilton learned of Clark's occupation of Kaskaskia and Vincennes, he gathered his forces, consisting of a combination of thirty British regulars, fifty volunteers and 400 Indians, and traveled down the Maumee and Wabash Rivers from Detroit, reaching Vincennes on December 17. Helm was forced to surrender and Hamilton renamed the garrison Fort Sackville. Hamilton then made an ill-fated decision to postpone an attack on Kaskaskia until spring and used the time to strengthen the fortifications at Sackville and allowed his Indian allies to go back to their villages for the winter. Also, Spanish trader, Francis Vigo, was allowed to leave Vincennes for St. Louis, and he promptly reported Hamilton's plans to Clark.

From January 31 through February 5, a volunteer force was raised, a batteau (a flatboat) repaired and loaded with enough provisions "so that each man would have all he needed and desired", two four-

pounders, and forty-six men under the command of Lt. Rogers. The batteau set off to St. Vincent at about two o'clock, and Clark, with the remaining force of 170 men and loaded packhorses, crossed the Kaskaskia and began the arduous march to St. Vincent in a cold rain with melting snow and ice.

The 200 mile march was very difficult in mostly rainy weather, along muddy, water logged roads and flooded plains, and sleeping on floating logs when possible, but usually just in the mud.



On February 23, they were about six miles from Sackville at Horse-shoe Plain that was flooded. Here Bowman writes, "Here we expected some of our brave men must certainly perish, having frozen in the night, and so long fasting. Having no other resource but wading this plain, or rather lake, of waters, we plunged into it with courage, Colonel Clark being first, taking care to have the boats try to take those that were weak and numbed with cold into them. Never were men so animated with the thought of avenging the wrongs done to their back settlements as this small army was."

Arriving at Vincennes, Clark had groups of his small force march back and forth behind small rises around the fort with different flags to make Hamilton think his force was larger than the under 200 it was.

On the 24th the battle began, with Clark's sharpshooters taking out several British each time they opened the cannon ports, while not losing any of his men. Clark and Hamilton exchanged letters of negotiations with Clark saying if Hamilton didn't surrender, no mercy would be shown.

In the meantime a small Indian force sent to the Falls of the Ohio was captured outside of town returning from Kentucky with some prisoners. Clark's men intercepted the party, released the prisoners, and took four Indians to Clark. He took the Indians out in front of the fort so Hamilton could see, and one-by-one Clark had them tomahawked and their bodies thrown into the river. Hamilton surrendered and signed the articles of surrender on the 24th.

On the 25th, while firing thirteen of the fort's cannons in celebration, a six-pound cartridge set off twenty-six cartridges severely burning Captains Bowman and Worthington and four privates.

The batteau, under Lt. Rogers command, did not arrive at Vincennes until the 27th. In Lt. Rogers' possession were orders commissioning Captain Bowman to the rank of major.

The campaign to recapture Vincennes was Clark's most significant military achievement and was the basis of his reputation as an early American military hero. News of Clark's victory reached General George Washington, and his success was celebrated and was used to encourage the alliance with France.

The British were never able to recapture control of these forts, and the American claims in the old Northwest served as the basis of the region being ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Paris of 1783. The British withdrew from Detroit into Canada, and the Great Lakes became the northern boundary of the United States.

General Washington recognized that Clark's achievement had been gained without support from the regular army in men or funds. Clark funded his northwest campaign by signing IOUs, thinking he would be repaid by the United States Congress or Virginia after the war.

Clark wanted to proceed on to take Detroit, but he could neither recruit enough men, nor raise sufficient funds to do so. In June of 1780 a force made up of British regulars and Native Americans moved down into Kentucky, sacked two fortified settlements and took hundreds of prisoners. This was followed in August by a retaliatory raid north by Clark which struck Shawnee villages in southern Ohio.

Promoted to brigadier general in 1781 by Virginia Governor, Thomas Jefferson, Clark again attempted to mount an attack on Detroit, but reinforcements sent to him for the mission were defeated before they could meet up with Clark. In August of 1782 another British and Indian force moved back into Kentucky and defeated the Kentucky militia at the Battle of Blue Licks. Clark wasn't present at the battle, but being the senior officer militia in the region he was severely criticized for the defeat. In retaliation Clark once again led a force into Indian country in Ohio, destroying Indian villages in the Battle of Piqua, the last expedition of the war. Clark accomplished all this and he was just thirty years old.

After the Revolutionary War Clark was appointed superintendent-surveyor and charged with surveying land grants given to Virginia's war veterans. These positions brought him a small income. He was also commissioned to help negotiate treaties with Indian tribes north of the Ohio River in the Treaty of Fort McIntosh (1785) and Fort Finney (1786).

The treaties did little to slow the clashes between the settlers and Native Americans in Kentucky, leading to the Northwest Indian War. In an attempt to end the raids, in 1786 Clark was tasked by Kentucky and Virginia to lead a force of 1200 drafted militia and make a retaliatory raid against the Native Americans along the Wabash River. From the beginning there were disciplinary problems with the unruly troops. North of Vincennes supplies ran short and 300 militiamen mutinied. Clark had to abandon the campaign without a victory, but not before he had secured a truce with the Indians. He dropped back to Vincennes and established a garrison to protect the town before returning to Louisville.

Clark was accused of being drunk during most of the campaign, mostly by James Wilkerson, once a general in the Revolution, turned secret Spanish agent. When Clark learned of the accusations he demanded an official inquiry, instead he received a rebuke from the Virginia governor. He became a victim of a deliberate smear campaign to ruin his reputation. He would never have the opportunity to lead men in battle again.

After 1787 Clark spent much of the rest of his life fighting financial problems and avoiding creditors, since he had financed his military campaigns on borrowed funds and IOUs. Clark had sent bundles of receipts to Virginia and the United States Congress for reimbursement, but all he got in return was a "we never received them or they must have been misplaced." What he did receive was military land grants in southern Indiana and other scattered parcels. This came by way of a Virginia legislative act in 1781 that also stipulated that 1,000 acres be designated for a town on the north side of the Ohio River to be named in honor of Clark. He was land poor, he owned much land, but didn't have the funds to do anything with it. To avoid losing the land to creditors, he signed the land over to members of his family and to friends. He wasn't even included in his father's will.

In 1791 Clark tried to revive his reputation and possibly earn some money, he wrote his memoirs and about his northwest campaign to Vincennes ten years after the fact, but they weren't published during his lifetime.

Clark tried other means to earn funds. He offered his services to the French ambassador in 1793 to lead a force and drive the Spanish out of the Mississippi Valley. The Spanish controlled the Mississippi River

and the lands west of it down to the Gulf of Mexico. (In 1803 these lands became the Louisiana Purchase under.) George Washington wasn't too concerned in getting the Mississippi opened to free commerce. Clark started getting assistance and support from old friends and others, Kentucky Governor Isaac Shelby being one. Clark was even commissioned as a French major general. This was brought to a halt when Washington issued a proclamation forbidding Americans from invading foreign territory, violating United States neutrality in the Spanish/French conflict. France recalled the ambassador and refused to reimburse Clark for his expenditures. Getting involved in foreign intrigue further damaged Clark's reputation.

As Clark's financial and alcohol problems, for which he blamed Virginia, continued to mount, he gained enemies, and stories were told that were believed by people back in Virginia, who didn't know him, but may have been able to help him. In 1803, as what lands he had retained were being seized by his creditors, all he had left was a small plot in Clarksville across the Ohio River to where he moved from Mulberry, the family farm in Louisville located on what is Poplar Level Road near the Audubon Hospital. Six years later he suffered a stroke and was taken in by his sister, Lucy Croghan and her husband, at Locust Grove.

In 1812, the Virginia Assembly presented a ceremonial sword to him in recognition for his Revolutionary War services. Some sources say he tossed the sword into the River, telling Virginia, you want to do something for me, send money. Virginia supposedly replaced the sword and granted him half pay of \$400 per year.

His health continued to get worse and he suffered a severe leg burn that required his leg being amputated. There being no antiseptics, except liquor at the time, he drank the liquor, had something to bite on, and requested that there be a drum and fife play outside the window. His leg was sawed off while he tapped his fingers in time with the music!

George Rogers Clark died on February 13, 1818, and was buried at Locust Grove Cemetery two days later. His remains were exhumed along with the rest of his family members on October 29, 1869, and reburied at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

Several years after Clark's death, the state of Virginia granted his estate \$30,000 as a partial payment on the debts that they owed him. The government of Virginia continued to find debt to Clark for decades, with the last payment to his estate being made in 1913.

In his funeral oration, Judge John Rowan succinctly summed up the stature and importance of George Rogers Clark: "The mighty oak of the forest has fallen, and now the scrub oaks sprout all around."

There are monuments to Clark in several states; several states have counties named for him. There is the George Rogers National Park in Vincennes, Indiana and they have a nice website.

Jeffersontown Magazine

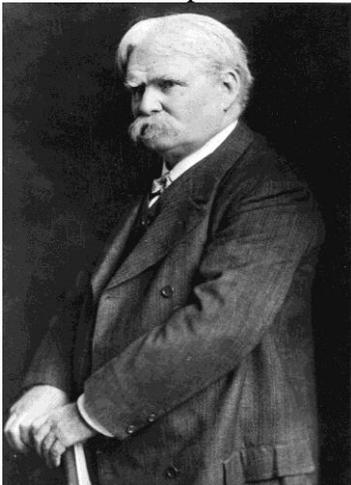
The city has contracted with the Towne Post Network to produce a new *Jeffersontown Magazine*, a monthly publication featuring people, places, businesses, happenings, and the history of Jeffersontown. Beth Wilder is providing one or two great articles on Jeffersontown history each month. The free magazine is sent to J'Town residents and can be found at many businesses around town and at the library.

I will include as many of the articles as I can in the newsletter for our non-resident members. The following piece is what Beth submitted for the July 2017 issue.

HENRY WATTERSON Jeffersontown's Most Famous Resident

Jeffersontown has had several noteworthy residents throughout its history, but none quite so renowned as Henry Watterson, the famed editor of the *Courier-Journal* newspaper. Watterson (Feb. 16, 1840 - Dec. 22, 1921) was a legend in his own time, rubbing elbows with society's elite and making a name for himself by writing colorful and controversial editorials that appeared in newspapers across the country. Watterson also served as a Democratic representative in Congress from 1876-77 and became widely known as a lecturer and orator.

Watterson's Jeffersontown connection existed the last 27 years of his life. In 1894, he purchased land on the outskirts of town that was owned by Joseph Hite, a descendant of one of Jeffersontown's pioneer families, and proceeded to transform the house and property into a grand estate. Watterson left the original 4-room log house on the property intact, but proceeded to add to it until he had created a magnificent, 28-room mansion he named "Mansfield" after his wife's childhood home in Nashville, Tennessee. During his years at Mansfield, Watterson was visited frequently by former presidents, congressmen, statesmen, writers, actors and musicians – including one of his very best friends, vaudeville entertainer Eddie Foy, father of the "Seven Little Foyes."



Watterson had been in the newspaper business since he was a young man, and he became known for his fiercely independent nature and caustic political writings. During the Civil War, although he served as a Confederate due to his strong belief in states' rights and loyalty to his home, he was not a proponent of secession or slavery. He had no problem criticizing General Braxton Bragg in his articles, and the general wanted to have him arrested for treason. Still, his views during the Civil War made him a well-known figure, and he became editor of the *Nashville Banner* when the war ended, bringing the paper back to respectability after being virtually closed down for four years.

Not long after that, George D. Prentice, owner of the *Louisville Journal*, approached Watterson and offered him half ownership and a job as chief editor, in the hopes of reviving the paper's waning popularity. Walter Halderman, owner of the *Louisville Courier*, also offered Watterson an editor's job and some stock – but no ownership in the paper – so Watterson accepted Prentice's offer instead. He did, however suggest merging the two papers, but Halderman declined the proposal.

Watterson quickly brought back the *Louisville Journal* to its former prominence, and his editorials were a source of great interest throughout the country. Watterson again proposed a merger with Halderman, who this time accepted, and on November 8, 1868, the *Courier-Journal* was born. Watterson was chief editor and had a free hand in what to write. He did not like the business side of newspapers, so gladly gave up all but 75 shares of the new *Courier-Journal* – yet the value of these shares was \$75,000, an enormous amount in those days – and his salary was \$10,000 a year, a sum virtually unheard of, even for New York editors at the time. Watterson had just enough shares of the newly established paper to make his personal life very comfortable and his professional life free from interference with his independent nature and ideas. Watterson would remain with the *Courier-Journal* for over fifty years, making it one of the most prominent and influential papers in the country.

Once Mansfield was ready for habitation by the Watterson family in 1896, Henry used it as his home office, penning his articles there in the morning, then riding the interurban into the *Courier-Journal's* Louisville office. The drive from Mansfield into the square in Jeffersontown where Watterson boarded the interurban became known as “Watterson Trail.”



Several local residents worked for Watterson. James Wilson, Sr. was Henry Watterson’s beloved butler, and his wife, Belle, sometimes acted as housekeeper – their son James Jr. grew up to be the founder of Skyview Park in Jeffersontown. Watterson’s cook, Hattie Harris, once owned the Leatherman cabin at 3606 College Drive. And

in 1908, there were *two* Henry Wattersons in Jeffersontown – a man named Henry Watterson from Newark, New Jersey served as gardener for the great editor.

Watterson loved living in Jeffersontown. One of his favorite quips was: “I’m a Jefferson Democrat. I live in Jeffersontown in the county of Jefferson.” Jeffersontown residents knew Watterson as a gentle, friendly neighbor, while most of the country viewed him as a hard-hitting, no holds barred newspaper editor.

At age 74, Watterson’s career reached its zenith. War broke out in Europe in 1914, and Watterson took a decidedly anti-German stance in the conflict. Other papers in town tried to remain neutral, to avoid offending the rather large German population in the area – but Watterson continued with his assertive articles in support of the United States entering the war, eventually earning the paper a Pulitzer prize. As much as World War One brought Watterson added fame, however, it also caused his career to wane. His relationship with the Haldermans became strained, and the paper lost subscriptions because of people protesting his editorials at the time. The paper was sold to Robert Worth Bingham in 1918, and Watterson was asked to stay on as “Editor Emeritus,” penning editorials whenever he wanted, on whatever subject he chose.

Watterson retired from the paper in 1919, settling down to a happy and peaceful life at Mansfield. He passed away in 1921 while wintering in Florida. His wife, Rebecca, remained at Mansfield until her death in 1929. Other family members lived in the old mansion, but gradually moved away as the house fell into disrepair over the years.



Watterson’s daughter, Mrs. Bainbridge Richardson, had hoped to see Mansfield turned into a shrine in memory of her father. While there had always been an interest in the project, something always seemed to happen to prevent it. The family received somewhat of a consolation in 1960, when an expressway was named for the great editor.

His estate, however, continued to deteriorate while people argued about what to do with it. In 1963, Marion Miller, Watterson’s grandson, had hopes that Mansfield would be selected as the site for the proposed Louisville zoo and offered \$25,000 to go along with James Graham Brown’s \$1,500,000 donation for the attraction. Local residents did not like the idea of the noises or smells a zoo would bring to their tranquil town, so they were very much against that idea.

Several groups had differing plans for Mansfield, including residential development. Many legal entanglements ensued, keeping anything from happening to the estate, as it grew ever more dilapidated. Meanwhile, the house repeatedly fell prey to vandals, and on the evening of Thursday, October 6, 1975, Mansfield was badly burned in a fire. The second and third floors were gutted, and the cause was listed as arson. No one ever knew for certain exactly who set the fire, although police at the time highly suspected teens who were constantly to be found there.

Eventually, Watterson Woods subdivision was established on the site of the estate of the most outstanding personality ever to reside in Jeffersontown. Although no tangible shrine to Watterson was ever created, his legacy remains strong not only in Jeffersontown, but in the whole of Jefferson County, and nationwide as well. The outspoken editor of the *Courier-Journal* made himself a part of history, and Jeffersontown is proud to have been the place he called home.

Contact Us

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