

First Settlement Made In The Virginia Military District In 1790

How Maysville And Washington Of Mason County Played A Part In That Early Settlement

By Sue Lackey - 2005

The preliminary account of history explains that following the Revolutionary War the 13 states, by common agreement, ceded to the United States government the public lands claimed by them stretching from the Alleghenies, west to the Mississippi, and beyond the state of Virginia in 1784. They reserved certain territory on both sides of the Ohio River (Kentucky and Ohio) for the purpose of payment of land warrants to her troops in the Revolutionary War. The necessity of reserving the lands for this purpose on the Kentucky side of the river was never questioned, but not until August 1790 did Congress recognize the necessity of the reservation on the Ohio side of the river.

Now as for the first settlement on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River, the *History of Kentucky* by William B. Allen (1872) contains an account of the early settlement of Kentucky, including Mason County, in which Maysville (what is known as Maysville and Washington) are situated. It states that Limestone, at the mouth of Limestone Creek, was founded in 1784 and established as a town in 1787 by the Virginia legislature, it being in the Virginia Military District.

Daniel Boone lived at Limestone in 1787-1788 and ited the place after that time before going into Missouri in 1798. Washington, located three-and-a-half miles south of west of Limestone, was laid out as a town in 1786 by the Virginia Legislature. As early as 1790 Washington is said to have had 460 inhabitants. It was the county seat of Mason County until 1847. It overshadowed Limestone, what is now Maysville, from the beginning until many years afterwards. It had a newspaper as early as 1797.

Simon Kenton, almost as famous as Daniel Boone, lived at Drennon's Spring or Kenton's Station, in 1784, stayed there only a short time. Drennon's Spring was about six miles southwest of Limestone and one mile from Washington. A number of other small settlements, many of them called "Licks," were made in the vicinity before 1790. During this time there was a large immigration from

the East into Kentucky, which preceded the immigration into Ohio.

Adams County made up the largest part of the Virginia Military District (The first Adams County survey was made by John O'Bannon. It was printed in the *Peoples' Defender*, Thursday, July 10, 1969, written by Judy Fields).

From the old stockade at Three Islands (Manchester), Nathaniel Massie along with Beasleys, Washburns, McDonalds, Leedom's, Wades, and Edgington braved the wild animals and more Indians. Together they explored the remotest regions, surveying its richest valleys and fertile plain. The land between the Scioto and Little Miami rivers was to be given to the veterans of the Continental lines in the Revolutionary War. They were to be given lands as follows:

Private, 200 acres; Noncommissioned Officer, 400 acres; Subalter, 2,000 acres; Captain, 3,000 acres; Major, 4,000 acres; Lieutenant Colonel, 4,500 acres; Colonel, 10,000 acres; and Major General, 15,000 acres.

Deputy surveyors for this region were John O' Bannon, Arthur Fox, Nathaniel Massie, John Beasley, William Lytle, Cadwallader Wallace, Allen Latham, Robert Tod, Benjamin Hough, Joseph Riffs, E. V. Kendrick, James Taylor, Joseph Kerr, James, Poage, John Ellison (Jr.), John Barritt, William Robe, and G. Vinsonhaler.

In the winter of 1790 Massie and a few brave men made the first settlement in the Virginia Military District. They erected rude cabins for shelter opposite the lowest of the three islands and enclosed them with strong pickets driven into the ground, forming a rude kind of stockade for protection from the Indians. From here Massie and his men ventured forth to make their surveys. The surveys were done in the following manner to insure as much safety as possible.

Massie usually had three assistant surveyors, each surveyor was accompanied by six men. The whole party amounted to the total of 28 men. Every man had a prescribed duty to perform. In front went the hunter, who kept in advance of the surveyor by 200 or 300 yards. He looked for game and was ready to give notice of any danger from



Nathaniel Massie made the first permanent settlement between the Little Miami and Scioto rivers.

the Indians. They then followed the surveyor, the two chain men, marker, and the packhorse man with baggage. They all kept near one another for defense from an attack. Two or three hundred yards behind came the spy, to make certain of no attack from the rear. Each man carried his rifle, blanket, and other needful supplies. On the packhorse were carried the cooking utensils and other necessary equipment. When Massie gave the signal the whole party would

leave the warm fires and carry their blankets with them. Carrying firearms and baggage they walked several hundred yards away. There they scraped away the snow and huddled down together for the night. They would spread half of the blankets and fastened them together with skewers to prevent them from slipping apart. The whole party crouched down together with their rifles in their arms and their pouches under their heads for pillows.

Among the chainmen and markers for O'Bannon were: John Nealey, J. Britton, Sylvester Munroney, George Abed, William Hood, William Christie, John Williams, Thomas Palmer, and Josiah Stout; for Arthur Fox they were: William Leedon, George Edgington, Robert Smith, Duncan McKenzie, James Thompson, Robert Walton, James McCutlin, and John Reed; for Massie there were: John McIntyre, Edward Walden, Zephaniah Wade, William Colvin, William Campbell, Thomas Kirker, Duncan McArthur, David Lovejoy, John Riggs, John Beasley, John Yochum, and Nathaniel Hart.

A *History of Brown County, Ohio*, published by W. H. Beers & Company, Chicago, 1883, and also, a *History of Adams County*, published about the same time, from which accounts of the founding of Manchester, Adams County, Ohio, on the north bank of the Ohio River, in the winter of 1790-1791; by a colony of about 25 families recruited at Washington and Maysville, Kentucky, and headed by General Nathaniel Massie.

The Reservation was known as the Virginia Military Lands or District. The part on the Ohio side of the River extended from the Little Miami to the west (which empties five miles above Cincinnati), to the Scioto on the east



A look back at Maysville, Mason County, Kentucky. The city is at the confluence of Limestone Creek and the Ohio River and was formerly known as Limestone. Early growth of the town was slow because pioneers sought safety from Indian raids by settling at Washington on the hill above Maysville, away from the river.

(which empties at Portsmouth), and as far north as the source of the Little Miami. Included in this is Adams County, which at that time took in a part of Brown County on the west of Adams County.

In 1787 Virginia took steps to have the lands north of the river surveyed. The first surveyor sent out was James O'Bannon. O'Bannon Creek in Adams County is named after him. The best-known among those sent out to survey these lands was Nathaniel Massie, an expert surveyor of rugged character of the Daniel Boone type. Massie had already made a reputation in Kentucky. Until 1790 surveying on the north side of the river was very dangerous on account of Indian hostility and the surveys made by O'Bannon and others were made by stealth. Massie decided to organize a settlement to be used as a base for his operations.

The *History of Brown County* reads: "The first permanent settlement between the Little Miami and the Scioto was made by General Nathaniel Massie at Manchester, Adams County. It was just five miles east of the present Brown County line."

The Contract Articles of Agreement

"Of one part and several persons who have hereunto subscribed, of the other part, witnessed; that the subscribers hereof doth oblige themselves to settle in the town laid off, on the northwest side of the Ohio, opposite the lower part of the three islands; and make said town or the neighborhood, on the northwest side of the Ohio, their permanent seat of residence for more than two months at a time, and during such absence, he shall furnish a strong

able-bodied man sufficient to bear arms at least equal to himself: no subscriber shall absent himself the time above mentioned, nonsubscriber shall absent himself in case of actual danger, or if absent, he shall return immediately. Each of the subscriber's duth obliges himself to comply with the rules and regulations that shall be agreed on by a majority thereof for the support of the settlement.

"In consideration whereof, Nathaniel Massie duth bind and oblige himself, his heirs, etc., to make over and convey to such of the subscribers that comply with the above conditions, at the expiration of two years, a good and sufficient title unto one in lot in said town; containing five poles in front and 11 back, one outlet of four acres convenient to said town, in the bottom, which the said Massie is to put them immediate possession of; also 100 acres of land, which the said Massie has shown to a part of the subscribers; the conveyance to be made to each of the subscribers, their heirs and assigns.

"In witness whereof each of the parties has hereunto

set their hands and seals thi
1790: John Ellison Allen Sinn
John Lindsey, William Wade, J
Black, Andrew X, Anderson, S;
X, Hart, Henry X, Nelson, Joh
Jessie X, Wethington, Josiah Wa
Thomas Stout, George Wade, R
Wade, and James Tittle."

It has been said that this agr
subscribed at Kenton's Station i
ington, Kentucky. It is probable
Limestone and subscribed there
ment was begun immediately; the
lots and named Manchester, aft
gland the home of the ancestors
settlement was known for years:

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ers.*