

George Beck Served "Mad Anthony" Wayne

George Beck, classicist, was born in England in 1749 and became instructor of mathematics at Woolwich Academy, near London when twenty-seven years of age. He was married to an English woman of culture and emigrated to the United States in 1795, reaching these shores in time to serve General "Mad Anthony" Wayne as a scout in his Indian campaign.

Thereafter, he ventured to the Blue Grass country, arriving in Lexington in 1800; and it was not long before he began to send short original poems and spirited translations of Anacreon, Homer, Horace, and Virgil to old Gazette of John Bradford.

At about this time, too, Beck was doing many portraits and a group of landscapes in oils of the Kentucky river country, a few of which have come down to posterity. Eighteen hundred and six seems to have been Beck's best year in Kentucky from the literary viewpoint, as the Gazette is full of his verses and translations.

He was widely known as the "Lexington Horace." Besides painting and poetry, George Beck was a rather learned astronomer, as his Observations on the Comet of 1811 prove. With his wife he conducted an Academy for Young Ladies for several years. Yet his last years were much embittered by the lack of appreciation upon the part of the Western public.

George Beck, poet, translator, mathematician, astronomer, artist, died in Lexington, Kentucky, December 14, 1812. His wife survived him until the cholera year of 1833, which swept away nearly two thousand citizens of Lexington and the Blue Grass.

Source: Bibliography. Kentucky Gazette (Lexington, December 22, 1812); Appletons Cyclopedia of American Biography (New York, 1887, v. i).