

## Gilbert Imlay of Louisville, Kentucky



Gilbert Imlay

Gilbert Imlay, the first Kentucky novelist, was born in New Jersey, about 1755. He was captain of a company in the Revolutionary War. Afterwards, he went West, reaching the Falls of the Ohio River (Louisville, in 1784).

In the little river town he worked under George May as a commissioner for laying out lands in the back settlements. Imlay had not been a Kentuckian many months before he had obtained patents for thousand acres of land, all of which he subsequently lost.

It is not certainly known how long he remained in Kentucky before going to London in 1792, but it was about eight years. His first edition of his *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* was published in Loondon. This work is made up of a series of descriptive letters which the author wrote from Kentucky to an English friend. The second edition of 1793, and the third edition of 1797, reproduced John Filson's

Kentucky and Thomas Hutchins's History, together with much new material. While a resident of Kentucky Gilbert Imlay wrote the first Kentucky novel, entitled *The Emigrants, or the History of an Expatriated Family, being a Delineation of English Manners drawn from Real Characters*. (written in America, by G. Imlay, Esq. (London, 1793, 3 vols.; Dublin, 1794, 1 vol.).

Source: Bibliography. *London Monthly Review* (August, 1793); *Kentuckians in History and Literature*, by John Wilson Townsend (New York, 1907); *Dictionary of National Biography*; biographies of Shelley, Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft.