

ELIZABETHTOWN, KENTUCKY, 1779-1879 THE FIRST CENTURY OF ITS EXISTENCE

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A study of the history of Elizabethtown and Hardin County is important to those who delve into the historic annals of our State. A discussion of a century of the events and achievements of the people in the region south of Muldraugh Hill would require more than one large volume. In this glimpse at a century, only a brief synopsis of some of the more important events and achievements can be presented. It is true that during the first century of the existence of Elizabethtown and Hardin County many prominent men in both state and national affairs were produced. It is also true that the struggle for the town's early existence, the hardships of its first settlers, their encounters with the Indians, and their efforts to establish a frontier community, recall to our minds the noble achievements of our pioneers.

Elizabethtown is located in Severn's Valley, beautiful valley so named for John Severn (or Severns), who probably was the first white man to discover the site for the pioneer settlement.

Samuel Haycraft, writing in 1869, records the following: "The valley took its name from John Severns an early adventurer, who, being attracted by the beauty of the location, entered land, and gave the name to the creek and valley . . . The greater portion of this beautiful and fertile valley was taken by John Severns, Andrew Hynes, Thomas Helm, Joseph Stover, Jacob Funk, Claudius Paul Roguet, Osburn Spriggs, John Handley, Jacob Harris, and others not now remembered. It was then in Jefferson County, and belonged to the old mother of States, Virginia; afterwards it was divided and became Nelson County."

Otis M. Mather, in his paper, "Explorers and Early Settlers South of Muldraugh Hill," written in 1923, states that John

Severn in company with Andrew Hynes, Elisha Freeman, Thomas McCarty, and Banam Shaw are believed to have built cabins in the vicinity of Elizabethtown as early as the summer of 1779. It is not likely, however, that any of these men were permanently located in the valley before the spring of 1780. There is evidence, says Judge Mather, which would lead one to believe that companies of hunters and explorers traveled through this region at an earlier date than John Severn. While such pioneers may have been pleased with this country, they evidently did not attempt to erect stations or establish a settlement.

In studying this pioneer period of Kentucky, it must be remembered that unprecedented cold prevailed from the last of November, 1779, to the following March. By the early spring of 1780 the weather moderated, and as soon as boats could move downstream, several families from Virginia and Pennsylvania settled in the pleasant valley named for John Severn. The hard winter checked migration, and permanent settlement of Elizabethtown did not begin until the spring of 1780. Samuel Haycraft, Junior, in his *History of Elizabethtown* states that: "About the fall of 1779 and winter of 1780, the early settlers were Captain Thomas Helm, Colonel Andrew Hynes, and Samuel Haycraft (Senior)."¹

Haycraft further relates that each of these pioneers "built forts with block houses." They were fort-like stockades or stations. The early settlement originally consisted of three such places situated on sites suitable for resisting Indian attacks. They formed a triangle, being spaced equidistant by a mile apart. In spite of these precautions Elizabethtown settlers suffered

¹ Important references concerning Elizabethtown and Hardin County:

SAMUEL HAYCRAFT (Junior): *History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky and Its Surroundings*. This history was written in 1869 and published in book form (188 pages) in 1921 by the Woman's Club of Elizabethtown. Samuel Haycraft, a son of pioneer Samuel Haycraft, was born in Elizabethtown in 1795 and died there in 1878. His "History of Elizabethtown" was first printed in the *Elizabethtown News* in 1869 and reprinted in that paper in 1889-90.

LEWIS AND RICHARD H. COLLINS: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, pages 306-319, a chapter on Hardin County down to 1876.

HARRY A. SOMMERS: "History of Elizabethtown." Sommers' history extends from 1869 to 1921. It was printed in the *Elizabethtown News*, in fifty-eight chapters, the first installment appearing Friday, May 27, 1921. Arrangements have been made whereby his *History of Elizabethtown* will be published in book form.

R. GERALD MCMURTRY: "Highlights in the History of Hardin County." There are fifty-one chapters, printed in installments in the *Hardin County Enterprise* from November 28, 1935, to April 29, 1937. This work will soon appear in book form.

OTIS M. MATHER: "Explorers and Early Settlers South of Muldraugh Hill." Read before The Filson Club, February 5, 1923, and published in *The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, January, 1924, Vol. 22, No. 64, pages 21-39.

² Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, page 12.

several attacks from marauding bands of Indians. The strategic location of the three forts, however, enabled the early inhabitants to resist with comparative few casualties. Depredations were carried on by the Indians as late as 1794, during which period several Elizabethtown families were harassed.¹ One of the most interesting of Indian captivities concerns Mrs. Elizabeth Hart, who was captured in Elizabethtown and taken to Detroit, where she lingered in wretched slavery for several years, until a Frenchman there purchased her from the Indians and sent her home to her relatives.²

The Helm fort occupied the hill on which the old Helm residence now stands. The Hynes fort was on an elevation in the vicinity of the present Elizabethtown waterworks pumping station. The Haycraft fort was erected on a hill above a small cavern which today is called Cave Spring.³

When any one of these pioneer fortifications was attacked by Indians, the firing of a gun was a signal calling for help from the others or a warning to them. Shortly after the erection of these fort-like stations new pioneer families came to Severn's Valley to make their homes. These consisted of the Millers, Vertreeses, Van Meters, Harts, Shaws, Dyers, Funks, Gerrards, Handleys, Rawlings, Linders, Swanks, and numerous others.⁴

In a joint deposition of Daniel Linder and John Hart, two pioneers of the Valley, was asked the question: "What number of settlers was there in Severn's Valley in 1782?" Their answer was: "We are of [the] opinion there was upwards of twenty."

John Handley, a surveyor who came to Severn's Valley in 1780, was asked to estimate the number of inhabitants in the settlements in this region at that time. He was unable to make a definite statement as to the number of settlers, but he was of the opinion that there was a good military company at the station.⁵ For several years after Severn's Valley Station was established, the settlement was regarded as an outpost on the frontier.

Christopher Miller, one of the pioneers of this region, achieved great success as a scout for General Anthony Wayne in Wayne's Indian campaigns. In 1782 he was captured by a band of

¹ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, pages 21-22.

² Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, pages 13-14.

³ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, page 307, says, "These were the only settlements, at that early day, between the Falls of the Ohio and Green River."

⁴ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, page 12.

⁵ Mather: "Explorers and Early Settlers South of Muldraugh Hill," page 33.

Shawnee and Delaware Indians on Wilson's Creek, which was in what was then Jefferson County. Miller was forced to remain with the Indians for eleven years, until 1794 when he was captured by some of the scouts of General Wayne's army. While in the service of General Wayne, he was successful in bringing about a diplomatic mission of peace with the warring tribes of Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Miamis. This feat was widely acclaimed, and Miller was promised a handsome reward by General Wayne. But time went on, Wayne died, and Miller received little in the way of remuneration for his services.⁸

The first settlers of Severn's Valley were very religious, the majority of them having embraced the Baptist faith before coming to Kentucky. Finding a permanent settlement in Severn's Valley, they desired to found a church. The first organization of any kind to be established in Elizabethtown was a Baptist congregation. Eighteen people, all originally from Virginia, met in church covenant under a green sugar tree near the Hynes fort on June 18, 1781, and formally constituted a regular Baptist church. It has been in continuous existence to the present day.⁹ After duly constituting the church, Reverend John Gerrard was immediately ordained and he became the first pastor. They had no house of worship; their services were held in God's great out-of-doors or around the fires in log cabin homes.¹⁰ These pioneers established a congregation that is older than the United States Government. This church was founded four months before General Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, October 19, 1781, and is today considered the oldest church organization in Kentucky. Reverend Gerrard, the first pastor, was a victim of the savage-infested wilderness. It is believed he was killed or captured by the Indians in March, 1782, while on a hunting expedition.¹¹

Within a few years the settlement became an active community. Tradesmen, professional men, and others came to live there. Social life was developed to a high degree; schools were

⁸ Mather: Typewritten manuscript, "Christopher Miller—Indian Captive and Scout of General Anthony Wayne." Read before The Filson Club, December 4, 1933, and before the Hardin County Historical Society, June 1, 1937. See also Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, pages 309-310.

⁹ Ella Cofer: *History of Severn's Valley Baptist Church, 1781 to 1931*, a 23-page pamphlet, published in 1931 for the Sesqui-Centennial Celebration of Severn's Valley Baptist Church of Elizabethtown, page 4.

¹⁰ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, page 15.

¹¹ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, page 14.

established with trained teachers.¹² At this early date Colonel Andrew Hynes foresaw that this settlement would soon become a permanent community. In 1793 he had the ground surveyed and laid off into lots and streets. The town, however, was not regularly established until the July term of court in 1797.¹³ The surveyed areas contained thirty acres; it was originally the property of Andrew Hynes. Prior to his surveying Elizabethtown he was appointed, in the year 1780, by the Virginia Legislature, one of the trustees to lay off Louisville. In 1788 he received a like appointment as an original trustee of Bardstown. Leaving Elizabethtown he became a resident of Bardstown, where he died about August, 1800, while holding the office of Representative of Nelson County in the Kentucky State Legislature.¹⁴

It is of interest to note that Elizabethtown was first called Severn's Valley Station. A few years later it was called Elizabeth, in honor of Elizabeth the wife of Colonel Andrew Hynes, who was responsible for the incorporation of the town. After a court house was erected on the town square, the place was called Elizabeth-Town Court House, and, eventually, with the growth of the community, it became known as Elizabeth-Town.¹⁵ The first mention of the name Elizabethtown appears in the records of the Hardin County Court dated May, 1795.¹⁶ This village was surveyed and plotted after Hardin County was organized, in 1792, out of a part of Nelson County. Out of the original Hardin County have been carved, in whole or in part, thirteen Kentucky counties.¹⁷ The large area then embraced in Hardin County contributed materially to the early growth and development of Elizabethtown.

Elizabethtown and Hardin County may well boast of the prominence of many of their citizens. Some of the hardy woods-

¹² McMurtry: *The Lincolns in Elizabethtown, Kentucky*. A 16-page pamphlet, copyrighted 1932 by the Lincolniana Publishers of Fort Wayne, Indiana, page 1.

¹³ Collins: *History of Kentucky*. Vol. 2, page 308.

¹⁴ Mather: "Explorers and Early Settlers South of Muldraugh Hill," page 31. The first mention of the demise of Andrew Hynes in the records of the Hardin County Court is dated April 13, 1805.

¹⁵ This information was gleaned from numerous letters addressed to Samuel Haycraft, Junior, which are now filed in the Helm-Haycraft Collection, The Lincoln National Life Foundation, at Fort Wayne, Indiana. It might be well to add that some people refer to the town as "E-town."

¹⁶ Mather: "Explorers and Early Settlers South of Muldraugh Hill," page 37.

¹⁷ George K. Holbert: "Ferns of Hardin County, Kentucky," reprinted from *American Fern Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3, July-September, 1937, pages 91-97. McMurtry: "Hardin County—1792," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Elizabethtown, Thursday, September 10, 1936. See also Collins: *History of Kentucky*.

men have achieved a place in recorded history, some have a fame perpetuated only by local tradition. In this brief paper we can refer to only a few.

Depositions of Squire Boone, brother of Daniel Boone, are on file in the records of the Hardin County Court, dated September, 1797, stating that he made several trips through certain sections of Hardin County between the years 1778 and 1780.¹⁸ While it is true that the brother of Daniel Boone has received comparatively little recognition, historians, nevertheless, are cognizant of the fact that he shared with Daniel the dangers of pioneer life and helped him blaze the Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. He has been called a "backwoods Achilles with no Homer to sing his praise."¹⁹ It is of interest to note that in Hardin County, only a few miles from West Point, near the Hardin-Meade County line, there is an old cemetery containing the graves of some of the relatives of Daniel Boone—some of the children and grandchildren of Squire Boone.²⁰

Considerable evidence can be produced which leads one to believe that Gilbert Imlay, the novelist, historian, and surveyor, worked within the boundaries of Hardin County, and that he was familiar with the topographical features of this territory.²¹ A letter written by Imlay dated July 20, 1785, relates that Indians were believed to be near the mouth of Salt River. This letter is one of the evidences now available concerning Imlay's connection with Hardin County.²² Imlay is Kentucky's first novelist, having written, while in Kentucky, *The Emigrants or the History of an Expatriated Family*—Being a Delineation of English Manners Drawn from Real Characters. After spending about eight years in Kentucky he went to London and in 1792 published *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, to which, in the 1793 and in subsequent editions, he added *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucky*, by John Filson.²³

¹⁸ Mather: "Explorers and Early Settlers South of Muldraugh Hill," page 25.

¹⁹ Newspaper article on "Squire Boone," addressed to the Editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 24, 1932.

²⁰ Newspaper article, "Cemetery of Historical Interest," by West Point correspondent, in *The Elizabethtown News*, August 11, 1936.

²¹ McMurtry: "Gilbert Imlay in Hardin County." Newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Elizabethtown, Thursday, March 19, 1936.

²² Original letter addressed to Woolfolk Helm in file of Helm-Haycraft Collection, The Lincoln National Life Foundation, at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

²³ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, page 27. See also John Wilson Townsend: *Kentucky in American Letters*, Vol. 1, page 12.

John James Audubon, the great artist-ornithologist, is believed to have been a resident of Elizabethtown shortly after his arrival in the Ohio Valley. Samuel Haycraft, the Elizabethtown historian, states that: "Audubon and Rozier were merchants in [the] town at an early date. Their clerk was James Hackley, who afterwards became an officer in the regular army, one of the most starchy and fine dressing men that ever lived in our town. This is the same Mr. Audubon who has since been world-renowned as the greatest ornithologist in the world."¹⁴

Constance Rourke, in her biography entitled *Audubon*, makes the following statement concerning the young merchants: "They [Audubon and Rozier] purchased goods and by the Autumn of 1807 had made the journey to the Falls of the Ohio. Audubon liked the little town [Louisville], there with its back against the wilderness and they sold their goods with some success, making trips along neighboring trails as peddlers and scouring the country as far south as the village of Nashville to consider a location for a future store."¹⁵

It is not at all unlikely that the two young impractical business men might have arrived in Elizabethtown with a Conestoga wagon filled with merchandise which they sold for a short period, either from their store on wheels or from a building which they could have rented for a short period, and when their stock of goods was sold, moved on to a new field of exploitation. Haycraft's fragmentary record concerning Audubon is one of the cherished traditions of Elizabethtown.¹⁶

Shortly after Audubon's sojourn in Elizabethtown and Hardin County came the memorable event of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, on February 12, 1809, which, of course, did not then create a ripple of excitement in the back settlements of Hardin County. The story of Lincoln's birth has been told and retold on every continent and will not be repeated here. It must be stated, however, that some new phases of Lincoln's Kentucky environment are being discussed in intelligent historical circles, based on authenticated facts and new documentary evidence. It is not the attempt of Lincoln biographers and historians to make Lincoln "a little Lord Fauntleroy of the wilderness"; nevertheless, historians should not be blind to documentary

¹⁴ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, page 108.

¹⁵ Constance Rourke: *Audubon* (1936), pages 37-38.

¹⁶ McMurtry: "John James Audubon in Elizabethtown and Hardin County," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, January 14, 1937.

recorded evidence, even if it does prove that Lincoln was not born in abject poverty, as some people wish to believe.²⁷ Hardin County is world-famous for one outstanding historical event, and that event is the birth of Abraham Lincoln. It is my opinion that for this reason people throughout the world have heard more about Hardin County than any other county in Kentucky. Elizabethtown has many Lincoln contacts. It was in Elizabethtown that the President's parents made their first home. Sarah, their first child, was born there on February 10, 1807. It was in Elizabethtown that Nancy Hanks experienced her second premonition of motherhood, which resulted in the birth of Abraham Lincoln while his parents resided on their farm on the South Fork of Nolin River.²⁸

The area within the triangle which was formed by the three original Elizabethtown forts today provides the area of Elizabethtown. It is a coincidence that the location of the forts should prove to be outposts of the present town. The sites of the forts are today not within the present city limits. While Elizabethtown enjoyed permanent growth, it is surprising to learn that the census of 1810 listed only 180 inhabitants.²⁹ An important milestone in the development of Elizabethtown was achieved on January 26, 1818, when an independent bank was organized with a capital stock of \$100,000.00.³⁰

The first newspaper in Elizabethtown was the *Western Intelligencer*, which began in the year 1826.³¹ Since that time eighteen different newspapers were published in the town. The *Elizabethtown News*, established in 1869, and the *Hardin County Enterprise*, established in 1926, are the two being published now.³²

One of the most versatile and distinguished men who ever resided in Elizabethtown was Duff Green.³³ He was a school teacher, soldier, politician, diplomat, and statesman. His accomplishments were outstanding and unique, and all that he lacks for enduring fame is a competent biographer to relate his achievements. He served as a teacher in the Elizabethtown

²⁷ Editorial, "Defending Abe," in *The Louisville Times*, December 7, 1937: A comment on "Three Generations of Kentucky Lincolns," by Louis A. Warren, read before The Filson Club, December 6, 1937.

²⁸ McMurtry: *The Lincolns in Elizabethtown, Kentucky*, page 3.

²⁹ Lucius P. Little: *Ben Hardin, His Times and Contemporaries* (1887), page 31.

³⁰ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, page 28.

³¹ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, page 312.

³² McMurtry: "Highlights In The History of Hardin County," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, December 24, 1936.

³³ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, pages 109-111.

Academy, and while engaged in this profession he volunteered as a soldier in a company called the "Yellow Jackets" to fight in a campaign up the Wabash against the Indians. Upon his return to Elizabethtown he formed a mercantile partnership with Major Ben Helm. About one year after his arrival in Elizabethtown, Green married Lucretia Edwards, a sister of Governor Ninian Edwards, the first Territorial Governor of Illinois. In 1817 he received the appointment of Surveyor of Public Lands in Missouri, and while engaged in that work was commissioned a general in the militia. Advancement was rapid in the career of Duff Green. He eventually became Government Printer. The highest peak of his career was confidential adviser to President Andrew Jackson as a member of Jackson's famous "Kitchen Cabinet."¹⁴

At a very early date Elizabethtown was noted for its excellent bar. Samuel Haycraft in his history stated: "By 1806 twenty-two lawyers had been admitted to the Hardin County Bar." The first attorney to be admitted was James Dohertie. This lawyer was recognized as an attorney before the first Quarter Session Court of Hardin County, which convened on February 26, 1793. Some of the early Elizabethtown lawyers were Felix Grundy, Thomas B. Reed, Ninian Edwards, Henry P. Brodnax, John Rowan, John Pope, William P. Duvall, Robert Wickliffe, and others. Several of these men became governors of states, while others represented their people in both houses of Congress. Haycraft observes of certain lawyers who practiced at Elizabethtown that any of them were: "far ahead in legal knowledge, statesmanship, and administrative capacity of some of our presidents."¹⁵

Many historians have recorded the accomplishments of the first members of the Elizabethtown bar. The early life of one of them, William P. Duvall, an Elizabethtown lawyer, became a subject for a sketch in American literature written by the famed Washington Irving.¹⁶ Under the title of "The Early Experiences

¹⁴ McMurtry: "Duff Green, Elizabethtown Citizen," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, November 12, 1936. "Lincoln and Duff Green April, 1865," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Wednesday, November 25, 1936. "Lincoln, Green and Buchanan, Three Former Hardin County Residents In National Politics In The Year 1860," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, April 19, 1934.

¹⁵ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, pages 171-184, 177-188.

¹⁶ McMurtry: "Elizabethtown Lawyer—Subject of Sketch By Washington Irving," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, February 4, 1937. "William P. Duvall In Elizabethtown, Kentucky," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, February 11, 1937.

of Ralph Ringwood," appearing in Wolfert's Roost and Other Papers and in the Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Irving discussed some of the interesting local events in the early manhood of Duvall.³⁷ This noteworthy character became Territorial Governor of Florida in 1822, by appointment of President Monroe, and was reappointed by Presidents Adams and Jackson. Duvall practiced before the Elizabethtown courts for many years, holding the position of County Attorney of Hardin County for a considerable period. While residing in Bardstown Duvall married a daughter of Colonel Andrew Hynes.³⁸

The fact that James Buchanan, the fifteenth president of the United States, resided in Elizabethtown during part of the year 1813 has received little notice.³⁹ At this time young Buchanan had just completed his legal education and had been admitted to the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, bar. He came to Elizabethtown to represent his father in his Hardin County land litigations. While Buchanan was residing in Elizabethtown, young Abraham Lincoln was living on his father's farm on Knob Creek, twelve miles from Elizabethtown. Here, for a while, lived two persons who became succeeding presidents of the United States and were destined to control the nation's affairs in the most critical period of its history.⁴⁰ In addition to Hardin County's two succeeding presidents, whose terms ran from 1857 to 1865, records show that three Kentucky governors—James Proctor Knott, Simon Bolivar Buckner, and John Young Brown—whose terms ran from 1883 to 1895, all lived, for a time, in Hardin County and succeeded each other to that position.⁴¹

The most notable stepmother of all history was Sarah Bush Johnston, a native of Elizabethtown. She was the daughter of Christopher Bush, of German descent, an early settler in Elizabethtown and an industrious and influential citizen. Sarah Bush first married Daniel Johnston, a jailer of Hardin County, who died in 1816. She married Thomas Lincoln on December 2, 1819, and accompanied her husband from Elizabethtown to the Lincoln home in Indiana. There she presided over the Lincoln

³⁷ Washington Irving: "The Early Experiences of Ralph Ringwood, Noted Down from His Conversations, by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent." Published in Irving's *Wolfert's Roost and Other Papers*, also in *Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon* and in *Sketches*.

³⁸ Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, pages 184-186.

³⁹ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, page 310.

⁴⁰ McMurtry: "James Buchanan in Kentucky, 1813," a 16-page pamphlet reprinted from *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, April, 1934, Vol. 8, No. 2, pages 73-87.

⁴¹ Sommers: *History of Elizabethtown*, Chapter 47.

household, including the young Abraham Lincoln, with unusual success. Her encouragement and understanding during the president's boyhood years most likely helped him achieve greater heights in statesmanship than would have been possible if she had not treated him like her own son during his impressionable youth."

A tradition has it that Andrew Jackson passed through Elizabethtown on his way from the Hermitage to Washington, where he was to be inaugurated the seventh president. He traveled by way of the old Louisville and Nashville Turnpike and while enroute to the capital spent the night in the old log Munford Inn at Munfordsville."

Other famous travelers along this highway were Jenny Lind, Nathaniel P. Willis, and Bayard Taylor. Willis in his work *A Health Trip to the Tropics* and Taylor in his book *At Home and Abroad* both went into detail concerning this well-known route of travel."

Recorded military history relates some interesting facts in regard to Elizabethtown and Hardin County. Military records reveal that many soldiers were recruited from this area during the Indian Wars, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War." One entry dated August 31, 1847, shows that a company of infantry was organized from Hardin County for service in the Mexican War." Civil War records contain the names of numerous Elizabethtown and Hardin County soldiers who fought for the North and the South in the War Between the States. Many of the old graves contain the remains of Revolutionary soldiers who settled in Severn's Valley after the War for Independence.

An Elizabethtown lawyer attained great eminence in the military legal profession, eventually becoming a contemporary of Abraham Lincoln during the period of the Civil War. This attorney was Judge Joseph Holt, who began the practice of law

" Louis A. Warren: "Sarah Bush Lincoln, The Stepmother of Abraham Lincoln," a 12-page pamphlet, reprinted from the *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1926.

" There are many local traditions pertaining to well-known men and women having stopped in Elizabethtown and other parts of Hardin County, but our limited space permits no further reference to them.

" Samuel G. Boyd: "The Louisville and Nashville Turnpike," read before The Filson Club, November 2, 1925, and published in *The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, May, 1926, Vol. 24, No. 71, pages 163-174; pages 168-170.

" McMurtry: "Captain Spier Spencer's Mounted Riflemen—The Yellow Jackets," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, April 1, 1937.

" Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, page 55.

in Elizabethtown in the year 1828. He achieved the positions of Postmaster General, Secretary of War, and Judge-Advocate General. Judge Holt bore a conspicuous part in various court-martials and military commissions, especially in that which tried the assassins of the martyred sixteenth President.⁴⁷

Elizabethtown was the home of two governors of Kentucky, John L. Helm and John Young Brown. Governor Helm served his state from the year 1850 to 1852 and was re-elected after the close of the Civil War. On September 3, 1867, while on his deathbed in Elizabethtown, he was inaugurated for his second term as governor.⁴⁸ On September 8, 1867, Governor Helm died and his remains today lie buried near the ancestral Helm home in Elizabethtown. Governor Helm had a distinguished son named Ben Hardin Helm who was a Confederate general, commander of the "Orphan Brigade," and a brother-in-law of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.⁴⁹ This gallant soldier was born and reared in Elizabethtown and now lies buried in the Helm burial lot. John Young Brown, who served as Governor of Kentucky from the year 1891 to 1895, was born only a short distance from the Helm homestead—a family of many distinguished Kentuckians.⁵⁰

An eventful occasion in the history of Elizabethtown was the visit of Jenny Lind on April 5, 1851.⁵¹ Among the legends concerning the Swedish nightingale there is hardly a more pleasing one than the Elizabethtown tradition. Elizabethtown was, at that time, and would be today, incapable of contributing materially any large financial returns to such an artistic genius. Yet this noble woman stood upon the elevated steps of an Elizabethtown inn and sang in her wonderful voice, to a multitude of people, without thought of gain or acclaim.⁵² Fortunately those stone steps are preserved; they lead to the entrance of the Brown-Pusey Community House of Elizabethtown.⁵³

Probably the most important and most talked-of trial ever brought before the Hardin County court was the case of the

⁴⁷ *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. IX (1932), page 181.

⁴⁸ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, page 312.

⁴⁹ McMurtry: "Ben Hardin Helm—Elizabethtown's Forgotten Hero," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, November 5, 1936.

⁵⁰ Sommers: "Some Governors I Have Known," newspaper article, *The Elizabethtown News*, December 20, 1935.

⁵¹ McMurtry: "Jenny Lind's Tour of Kentucky, April 1851," *Kentucky Progress Magazine*, January, 1932, Vol. 4, No. 5.

⁵² Affidavit of Ella Thomas Welch, of Danville, Kentucky, dated October, 1931.

⁵³ Samuel G. Boyd: "The Louisville and Nashville Turnpike," page 168. See footnote No. 44.

Commonwealth vs. Matt. F. Ward for the murder of Professor W. H. G. Butler.⁶⁶ This killing, which occurred in Louisville, is recorded as one of the outstanding criminal cases in the Kentucky courts. By a change of venue it was transferred from the Jefferson Circuit Court to the Hardin Circuit Court. It aroused the most intense feeling, and the press featured the affair as one of the big news stories of the year. This case was brought before the docket at the first term of the Hardin Circuit Court in April, 1854. The counsel for both the prosecution and the defense was composed of some of the most distinguished lawyers in Kentucky, with the bulk of the talent and ability on the side of the defense. The Hardin County jury brought in a verdict of not guilty, which verdict was considered the outstanding miscarriage of justice in the annals of the Kentucky courts.⁶⁷

During the Christmas holidays of the year 1862 the citizens of Elizabethtown witnessed the most exciting event that ever occurred in that community. From Alexandria, Tennessee, rode the fearless Confederate General John Hunt Morgan and his force of 3,900 men. Their chief object was to destroy the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Union forces had erected a garrison in Elizabethtown to resist Confederate attacks. On the night of the twenty-sixth of December, Morgan's men went into camp a few miles south of Elizabethtown. A regiment of Illinois troops, 652 strong, was stationed in Elizabethtown. After determining the strength of the Union forces, General Morgan threw a cordon of men around the town and, placing his artillery upon the cemetery hill, opened fire. Approximately one hundred shots were fired, which demolished not only the Elizabethtown garrison, but other places as well. The Federals, realizing they could not maintain their defense, surrendered to General Morgan.⁶⁸

On July 11, 1864, Elizabethtown was attacked by a band of guerrillas, but they were dispersed.⁶⁹ On December 23, 1864, almost two years to a day from the date of Morgan's raid,

⁶⁶ McMurtry: "The Hardin Criminal Court Trial of Matt F. Ward For The Murder of Prof. W. H. G. Butler—April Term 1854," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, September 17, 1936.

⁶⁷ Among other books on the subject is *A Full and Authentic Report of the Trial of Matt. F. Ward*, reported by A. D. Richardson (176 pages, New York, 1854). Another covers the trial as reported by George Cole for the *Louisville Courier* and the *Louisville Democrat* and republished in 1854, in a book of 174 pages.

⁶⁸ Hal Engerud: "Morgan's Christmas Raid, 1862," *Kentucky Progress Magazine*, December, 1931, Vol. 4, No. 4, pages 13, 36-38.

⁶⁹ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, page 135.

General H. B. Lyons' Confederate force seized a train at Nolin Station, in Hardin County. They captured 200 Federal troops and wildly galloped to Elizabethtown the same day. After laying siege to the Union garrison of forty-five men, they burned the stockade, railroad depot, and two bridges. With the arrival of a Federal detachment, General Lyon hastily retreated south. He by no means had the success of Morgan in disabling, for any length of time, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.⁵⁰

Located on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, Elizabethtown was a strategic point during the Civil War. In the years following the first outbreak of hostilities, the village viewed with great concern the inevitable struggle during which time it would be torn first by one side and then by the other. The town and county has never again experienced such hectic and exciting days as those of the Civil War; nevertheless, the town's citizens led a gay existence, and its social life was then at its height. Many hosts were continually busy entertaining first a general or some other officer from the South and then one from the North. Activity in society, business, and military affairs caused the village to awaken from its lethargy, and Elizabethtown soon became one of the most important places between Louisville and Nashville.⁵¹

The growth of Elizabethtown was exceptional in the year 1868, when about seventy new houses were erected within the town's limits.⁵² In 1869, on the 7th of August, at one o'clock in the afternoon, a fire broke out which spread with such rapidity that a large portion of Elizabethtown's business section was reduced to ruins. It has been said that within two hours the earnings of twenty years were destroyed. The loss was estimated to range between one hundred thousand and one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.⁵³ About the time the fire was subdued, there occurred a total eclipse of the sun, the most remarkable since the year 1806. Kentucky was in the main belt of obscurity. The thermometer rose and fell fourteen

⁵⁰ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, page 150.

⁵¹ McMurtry: "Stirring Events of The Civil War In Elizabethtown and Hardin County," newspaper article, *Hardin County Enterprise*, Thursday, January 18, 1936.

⁵² Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, page 194.

⁵³ Collins: *History of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, page 197.

degrees in one hour, and birds and fowls went to roost."²² Superstitious people, emotionally affected by the conflagration, believed the world was coming to an end. August 7, 1869, was the saddest day in the history of Elizabethtown.

From 1871 to 1873 General George Armstrong Custer was stationed in Elizabethtown with his famous battalion of the Seventh Cavalry and a battalion of the Fourth Infantry.²³ This command was stationed in town for two years, with the pretext of suppressing the Ku Klux Klan and the Carpet Baggers, and to break up illicit distilleries which began to flourish in the South during the War. As Elizabethtown was not affected by any of these groups, Custer and his men settled down for a prolonged rest, which they deserved after years of active warfare. The two years' residence of General Custer in Elizabethtown was one of the most pleasant periods of the town's existence. Custer was accepted by both Northern and Southern sympathizers as an outstanding general. His courteous and distinguished bearing made him appear as a Richard Coeur-de-Lion of the Nineteenth Century. In the spring of 1873 Custer and his command were ordered to Dakota Territory. In 1876 when news of Custer's Last Stand reached Elizabethtown, there was much sorrow expressed over the death of this valiant soldier. Probably no community in the United States was more affected by this massacre than Elizabethtown, for there Custer and his men had many sincere friends.²⁴

Elizabethtown has never been a boom town, yet it has always enjoyed a steady growth and development. Its history is rich with facts and traditions; its people are intelligent and cultured; its geographical location affords it an important place on the arteries of travel; its physical characteristics are beautiful and healthful, and its private homes and business buildings are quaint and interesting. Since 1879, the close of the first century of its existence, the town has made rapid strides, and it is today one of the most progressive communities in the State. It can

²² Haycraft: *History of Elizabethtown*, pages 86-91.

²³ Sommers: *History of Elizabethtown*, Chapter 6, "General Custer Stationed Here." For Sommers' forthcoming history see our footnote No. 1.

²⁴ McMurtry: "The Two-Year Residence of General George A. Custer in Elizabethtown," *Kentucky Progress Magazine*, Parks Edition, Summer, 1933, Vol. 5, No. 4, pages 32, 33, 50.

be said to the credit of its citizens that they are mindful of their historical traditions and are making every effort to preserve them for posterity. The future of the town is well described by a paragraph in the *History of Elizabethtown*, written by Samuel Haycraft, Junior, in 1869, near the close of the first century of Elizabethtown's existence:

"For who can tell what Elizabethtown will be with her delightful and healthy location, with her enterprising and energetic population, her railroad facilities, her fine water, and her surrounding of intelligent and gentlemanly farmers, the best fruit country in the world, and her future manufactories that must spring up, and when it becomes a large city it will be well to look back upon her starting point."