

GREATER JEFFERSONTOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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February 2014 Meeting

The February meeting will be **Monday, February 3, 2014**. We will meet at 7:00 P.M. in the meeting room of the Jeffersontown Library at 10635 Watterson Trail. The Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society meetings are now held on the first Monday of the even numbered months of the year. Everyone is encouraged to attend to help guide and grow the Society.

February Meeting - African Americans in Thoroughbred Racing

The Kentucky Derby Museum will discuss the role African Americans played and their accomplishments in the sport of thoroughbred racing from early colonial times to the present. The program is presented in association with the library.

April Meeting

Steve Wisner is going to speak about the architecture of Louisville covered in his second book about unique houses in Jefferson County.

June Meeting

We are going to be entertained by the award winning Thoroughbred Chorus that meets in the old Lutheran Church, now called Thoroughbred Hall. There will be a short history of the Chorus, and then a few selections by some of its members. This program will be presented in association with the library.

December 2013 Meeting

We met for lunch at the Café at Main Street, which is located in the Blankenbaker House on Watterson Trail. There were fourteen in attendance. Lunch is the only meal served at this time at the Café at Main Street.

October 2013 Program

Dale Josey, Executive Director of Blackacre, spoke to us before the scheduled presentation. Dale was born in North Carolina, grew up in New York, and graduated from the University of Michigan. He has been at Blackacre for about one and a half years and his mandate is to make Blackacre more open and provide more family-related activities. Success has been built with activities, such as American Girl Sundays in April, a program for mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, a Pioneers Now and Then Program in August. On October 12 they had square dancing and had the Corn Island Storytellers October 28, with an early program for children and an evening storytelling for adults. Meet the Tylers was the November program and Blackacre closed the year with a Country Christmas.

Anne Bader presented "Evidence of Slavery at the Yeager-Ward Site", Site 15JF741 located at the Claibourne Crossings subdivision, an archeological study by Anne's firm, Corn Island Archeology. The dig site has been destroyed by construction. The general public never sees many of the reports on projects Corn Island issues, but Anne hopes to get permission to put this report online once it is finished.

Many do not think of Kentucky as being a large slave-holding state. Most think large slave-holding states were all in the Deep South. They weren't. The Bluegrass area had the largest number of slaves and Louisville had a tremendous number of slaves, mostly as house servants. Some claim that half of

the residents of Louisville owned slaves prior to the Civil War. Anne doesn't think that is correct from the research they have done. What is known for sure is thirty percent of the Louisville population before the war was African-American. They were being brought here, being born here, living their lives raising their young, and dying here. But very little is really known about how the African-American population lived their day-to-day lives at that time. That is what archeology can do for us.

Slave trade in the Upper South had contributed to Kentucky's growth and prosperity and through the 1850s the city had exported 2500-4000 slaves a year to the Deep South. The demand for slaves in Kentucky decreased as changes in agriculture occurred and mechanization grew and that is why so many were sent down river.

By 1790 there were 903 slaves and five freemen in Jefferson County. The largest percentage of African-Americans was in 1820, when 4,824 slaves and 29 freemen comprised 38.1% of the Jefferson County population. (Fig. 1, Last page)

From the 1850 census here is the number of slaves some of the better known Jeffersontown families owned:

John Seabolt	6	George Seabolt	10
Vaughn	10	Hikes	6
Hikes	2	Dravo	4
Bryan	13	Conrad	16

Slavery was not as critical to the economic stability of Kentucky as it was to the Deep South, since the agriculture was based on smaller, multi-crop farms rather than the larger one crop plantations of the Deep South. But slavery was significant, especially during the anti-bellum period.

After emancipation freed slaves tended to stay in the general areas of where they had been enslaved and seek work consistent with what they had been doing, such as, cooking, laundry, and share cropping. They felt more secure working for their former owners and they didn't want to leave family connections. As freedmen they set up communities, especially in central Kentucky, that were organized like the farms or plantations on which they had been enslaved.

All this leads us to how the presence of slavery is recognized in the archeological record and to the Yeager-Ward farmstead off Old Henry Road at the Gene Snyder Expressway. The site has a lot of ties to enslaved individuals, cabins and such, which were occupied by slaves. It is very difficult to determine if the objects found were from slaves or the white tenants or farmers who owned or worked the property. This site along with others like Farmington and Locust Grove are shedding light on how slaves lived their lives.

Of course before construction completely destroyed the farmstead, it was a land of rolling hills and contained a small cemetery that caused the county to require an archeological survey of the property because they were concerned there were old building sites and other historical remains. The site is not too far from the Jefferson/Oldham County line. On the other side of that county line was once Henry County, from which Oldham County was carved. That is why the road is called Old Henry. And Floyd's Fork flows nearby.

Another firm did the original survey and didn't find much. When Phase II of the survey was let, Corn Island got the job and was allowed to excavate across the entire property. In the cemetery are graves of families by the name of Yeager, Duncan, Rowe, and Ward that go from 1828 to 1864, starting two years after Benjamin Yeager moved to the county from Virginia. It is known the families had slaves, but there is no record of where the slaves were buried. They were probably buried outside the cemetery as was the custom, so the developer is required to maintain a thirty-foot buffer all around such a cemetery in case there are other graves there. Anne has not gone back and checked.

Yeager, as we know, is a good Jeffersonstown name (Yeager's Market). The 1858 map shows Ben Yeager on the north side of Old Henry and Ward on the south side and Corn Island wasn't sure which site was the site being studied. When they looked at the 1879 map, there was J. Ward on the north side of Old Henry and neither name on the south side. When the census and property records were searched, they found that Benjamin Yeager purchased two properties in Jefferson County. In 1826, he purchased the first parcel (that likely includes the cemetery and historic site) from Sarah Mason and Harriet and William Kyle. The Yeagers did not come to Jefferson County until after 1820 according to census records and the Jefferson County deed index. Yeager first purchased land in the county in 1826 and was identified as a resident of Oldham County when purchasing 201.75 acres on Floyds Fork. The eldest daughter of Ben Yeager, Mildred, was born November 10, 1798, in Madison County, Virginia. She married Proctor Ballard Rowe in 1819 in Madison County. After Proctor died, Mildred Yeager Rowe remarried after 1838 to John Duncan, the widow of her cousin, Frances, who is buried near John in the Yeager Cemetery. Though both of Mildred's husbands are buried at the family cemetery, she was interred at the Floydsburg Cemetery at the Duncan Memorial Chapel in Oldham County after she died on January 13, 1874. This may indicate that the property was no longer in the family by 1874. John Duncan was born in Fauquier County, Virginia to Moses Duncan (1766-1845) and Cynthia Withers (1772-1849). He came to Crab Orchard, Lincoln County after 1810 and married Frances on December 18, 1822.

In 1850, the slave schedule lists five enslaved workers for Benjamin Yeager, one woman, age 76, and four men (ages 26, 24, 20, and 16). Ben Yeager's son, Silas, had 11 slaves, one of which was listed as a fugitive.

Anne said it isn't often we learn the names of slaves, but that information was found. In January 1824, Ben Yeager still of Madison County, Virginia, sold to his son Aaron, also of Madison County, a "negro girl called Nancy, age 12 years" for \$1. On September 23, 1824, Ben transferred ownership of the girl from Aaron to his daughter Mildred Rowe but in trust so that Aaron retained the "control, management and direction" of the girl (Oldham Co. Deed Book A Page 19). On December 21, 1843, he wrote, "It is my will and desire that my old negro woman, Mourning, shall not be sold, but shall have the right from among my children to choose a home, and that when she make such selection, the child thus selected shall be required to support her during life, without charge to my estate" (Will Book 5 Page 213). The will was executed December 28, 1857. This is likely the slave listed in the 1850 census as 76 years old. Ben Yeager's Estate Inventory (Estate Book 21 Page 15) shows transactions from the 1840s to 1858. The following entry in the deed book had no date, but revealed the names of four enslaved workers.

To Sale of negro Urial	\$750
To Sale of negro Jackson	\$1000
To cash for Sale of negro Jenny	\$300
To cash for Sale for negro Milly	\$300
To amt. B.F. Moss hire of negro	\$125

In 1863 William placed an advertisement in the paper for an escaped slave:

\$100 REWARD.

RAN AWAY FROM THE UNDERSIGNED,
 living in Oldham county, Ky., near Floydsburg,
 a negro man, about 27 years old, 6 feet 1 or 2
 inches high, dark copper color. Had on when
 he left tow-linen pants, dark jeans coat, and black
 wool hat. Said man is named Allen. I will pay the
 above reward if delivered to me or secured in any jail
 so that I get him.

WILLIAM DUNCAN.

j27 d7*

Louisville Daily Journal, Louisville, KY, Saturday, June 27, 1863. (Courtesy of Mary Bruce Caldwell)

According to local histories (Oldham County Historical Society 1996:35), landowners utilized few slaves for farming tobacco in the early years of the Oldham (then Henry) County. However, the use of slaves for this purpose increased as the demand for tobacco rose, and between 1840 and 1850 the number of slaves increased considerably. These were imported from Virginia and the Carolinas and purchased based on their prior experience with handling tobacco. At the beginning of the Civil War, the number of slaves in the county had reached 1,660. But as was stated earlier, as farm mechanization grew in the middle of the century, the use of slaves decreased.

The Yeager/Ward Site's location along major transportation routes made access to remote markets comparatively easy. It was also just a short distance from the old River Road which followed the Ohio River from Cincinnati to Louisville. Nearby Floydsburg, which is just south of Crestwood, was located along the main stagecoach route between New Castle, Kentucky and Louisville. This stretch of roadway was part of the main overland route from Philadelphia to New Orleans and was one of the major historic corridors of the region. The Yeager/Ward Site was positioned along one of the three main roads leading from Floydsburg, namely the Middletown Road. It connects to the Old Harrod's Creek Road which was surveyed in March 1797. In May when Middletown was incorporated, the court ordered Sam Blankenbaker and others "to select the nearest and most convenient way for a road from Middletown to Jeffersontown". Anne thinks this road is Watterson Trail. If you look on the map, this would have been the easiest route to Floydsburg where Anne has unearthed Conrad pottery. And both Jeffersontown and Floydsburg have many family names in common.

Anne put some information in context. Floydsburg on Kentucky 1408, is eighteen miles east of Louisville and was incorporated in 1831, with Elijah Yeager appointed as a trustee. Duncan Memorial Chapel in Floydsburg was built by Alexander Duncan, the grandson of John Duncan, who is buried at the Yeager-Ward site. In 1939 Alexander had the stone wall built around the cemetery.

The other intertwined family, the Rowes, had three brothers, a doctor, a preacher, and an undertaker. As Anne said: "One patched them, one matched them, and one dispatched them!"

Corn Island Archeology started work in August 2011 at the site. At the top of the hill near to the cemetery, they dug 22 shallow strips in the ground with a backhoe, looking for variations in the ground color (possible burial sites), or any evidence of foundations, etc. On the last day they moved down on the slope of the hill and there is where they found remains of old houses.

Structure number one had a huge, very well made hearth that had the one of the deepest foundations they had ever encountered. Any remains of what had to be a large chimney were not found. The ground showed evidence of the largest pit cellar they had seen – almost nine foot square and three feet deep.

Structure number two, which the first archeological survey firm totally missed, was found in the woods. It was larger than the first, again with a very large hearth opposite the entry door. They determined this was the main house.

The third structure's foundation was mostly gone. It had a pit cellar in front of the hearth that was stone lined and loaded with all kinds of stuff. What kind of stuff Anne didn't say. Since it was stone lined, it would act as a safe vault.

The three structures were in a line across the slope, which is unusual. They guess the buildings were constructed mostly log or frame since very little brick or large stones found in the search areas. They did find a lot of old nails. In front of the two smaller structures was a pole barn they think, marked by two parallel rows post holes.

So these people obviously owned slaves and there are many known versions of slave quarters in Kentucky – stone, log and frame, and brick. Standing examples can be seen on the Bullitt Farm at Oxmoor, and in a drawing of the Conrad-Dravo House, one of which was still standing when condominiums were built on the land in the late 1990s.

Since there is no recorded evidence of there being slaves on the Yeager-Ward site, Corn Island had to look at the remnants found at the site. Slave quarters would have more bowls represented in assemblage than plates, jars, jugs, or other vessels. Slaves would get fragments of bone and less expensive cuts of meat, or small pieces of more expensive cuts on bone where the marrow had been removed. Their pots would have a certain polish called bone-polish indicative of soups and stews. Bones found on the site were taken for faunal analysis, by experts to determine what kind of animals were consumed. The bones were more pig and wild animals than cow, which was common in the Upper South diet and the wild animal bone is indicative of the slave diet.

Ceramic ware and bone fragments remains found in Structure 1 were varied, and the presence of the pit cellar and how it was built, speaks of a higher economic status, they theorized that the Yeagers built it as their first house and later it became slave quarters.

Some investigators say that ceramics of higher quality and highly decorated, therefore more expensive, would be found more in the main house compared to being found in the slave quarters. However, it has also been said that once vessels became chipped or damaged, they then would be passed on to the slaves. This can account for the number of high quality ceramics found in slave quarters and this is what they found at both Locust Groove and Farmington. In many surveys of slave quarters evidence of conjuring and hoodoo is being found. Numerous clues related to tangible items used in the art of conjure, rituals, folk-beliefs, and superstitions were discovered at the Claibourne site. The rationale for this comes from the work of three people who realized that former slaves could provide valuable information. H. C. Bruce, a man born into slavery then freed after the Civil War, published *The New Man: Twenty-nine Years a Slave, Twenty-nine Years a Free Man* in 1895, in which he relates stories of his life and others. Zora Neale Hurston (1935) and Newbell Niles Puckett (1926) recorded histories during the 1920s, each living and studying with former slaves and working conjurers and root doctors themselves. Thomas and Thomas (1920) traveled the state of Kentucky recording superstitions and folk beliefs, including those of former slaves in the state.

Based on what they found at the Claibourne site, which was occupied from the late 1820s through the late 1800s, the presence of pit cellars associated with two structures at the site, the recovery of numerous unusual items, such as curated and re-utilized prehistoric artifacts - sulfur and alloy metal nodules, a raccoon baculum, numerous modified items from within the pit cellars, and the apparent intentional placement of curious pieces in the house, they sense the residents of the site (or at least some of them) participated in some form of magical folk beliefs and/or rituals.

Many of the things you could find that relate to enslaved individuals (those in bold print were found at Yeager-Ward), that suggest rituals are: white buttons, gourd instruments, **spoon marked with an “x”** (Klingelhofer) Bird skulls, chalk, medicine bottles, **machine parts, tools, bent wire, marbles, musical instruments and parts** (Dunaway 2003), animal jawbones as a musical instrument (Samford 1996, 1999);)Dunaway 2003:222), *African American Family in Slavery and Emancipation*); **overabundance of buttons**, (Kelso 1984; Klingelhofer 1987; Wilkie 2000), **coins and coins with holes in them**. Some other objects like needles, straight pins, nails, black glass bottles, any shiny metal, chicken breast bones, knives and forks scratched with an “X”, snakes, toads, frogs, the list goes on. One object found was an Intaglio stone, a small gemstone that has been carved, in the Western tradition normally with images or inscriptions only on one face. This one hasn’t been figured out yet.

The presence of any of these things and many more objects doesn't necessarily mean that anything ritualistically is going on, but when you take the objects and how they are placed around the house gives the idea that something was going on.

Hearth areas are one of the key locations for transformed/modified objects to be placed to "direct spirits, protect, diagnose, and foretell the future (Leone and Fry 1999:380). Numerous artifacts recovered from the Ward farmstead appear to have been used for other purposes than their original intent. Items such as wire twisted into odd shapes or clusters of items (such as tools or seemingly unrelated items) may have special meaning (Trinkley 2001). Many of the listed items were found in the pit cellars of the two smaller houses. The large house in the woods, considered the main house, did not have a pit cellar.

Slaves would wear or carry the objects, Anne had a photo of an old coin on a man's ankle and a man wearing a cloth flannel band on his arm with buttons sewn on it (Puckett Collection, Cleveland Public Library 2013), and they would carry old coins to the point of wearing off the stamped image, or even until the coin was worn down. The coins would be deliberately set in doorways. One thing that has been seen at Locust Grove, Farmington, other places in Kentucky, Virginia, even in an African-American cemetery in New York, is coins scratched with an "X". (And you thought when you saw this in movies; it was something a writer made up).

At the site they found spoons and forks scratched with an X, and other carved markings. Jews harps and harmonicas and parts of each were found. And as Anne said, buttons, buttons made out of everything, a tremendous number of buttons; even buttons with only one hole were found. In one of the pit cellars was a box of buttons. Anne doesn't remember finding the number of buttons and all the different kinds of buttons at any other excavation. She had photos of the kinds she found. Also found was a tremendous number of straight pins of all kinds. So the thought is maybe they found the home of a seamstress or maybe a cobbler.

Other items that were unearthed were brass heel plates for boots/shoes, some with cut-outs of the suits of playing cards. The heel plates were small. Also a piece of reworked metal shaped into an awl or auger, such as a cobbler would use, strengthening the idea a cobbler once lived in one of the houses. Red and blue are important symbolic colors in the Congo cosmology. It has been learned the colors of red and blue had importance in the belief of how the earth was created and organized by Africans brought to America. Beads of the same colors were found at the site. Red and blue beads have been found at Farmington, too.

Prehistoric arrow and spear points were found in particular spots in the pit cellars. Many shells were found, they were important symbols in the burial of African-Americans. Lots of marbles were discovered around the houses, many in the pit cellars and some marked with an X; many pieces of shaped metal, pieces of different types of chain, different small tools, and shot gun shells. These seemed to be placed around the pit cellar in again particular arrangements. They found shiny colored prisms and ceramics.

Items found in and around the main house were many frozen charlottes, little two to four- inch tall porcelain bisque dolls, and pieces of dolls, beautifully carved knife handles, old dinner eating utensils, a redware sieve/colander, possibly Conrad's, but other sieves by Conrad Anne has are glazed, pieces of decorated Conrad dinner redware, and pieces of other decorated redware, possibly from the pottery located up the Ohio River in Bethlehem, Indiana.

Other pieces found were a piece of writing slate and two lead styluses used to educate children, clay pipe pieces, a broach, a piece of a comb, metal door handles and drawer pulls, keys, parts of a hurricane lamp, and clock parts. They found a large amount of various types of ceramics: annular banded/mocha decorated, hand painted and transfer printed, imprinted, shell edged plate pieces which Anne knows is

by Conrad because she found some while digging at the Conrad-Seaton House during this last Gaslight Festival, Flow Blue designs, and molded ware.

Anne and her staff are working on the report for the project, already over 300 pages and are trying to make sense of the thousands upon thousands of artifacts they found; so many Anne thinks they won't be able to classify everything. Laurie Stalgren who is working on her doctorate thesis on slavery through Syracuse University has looked at the artifacts. She has been working at Farmington and Locust Grove and she is going to put a lot of this information in her thesis. She theorizes that the slaves maintained a sense of community with slaves on other farms in the region to find spouses and relationships that were very important to them. Laurie feels sure she can demonstrate her theory. She has found the same colored objects and X-marked pieces at Farmington and Locust Grove.

It's not that these items are found in a slave house or tenant house, but the context in which they are found around the site and in the placement in the house and the relationship with similar artifacts that makes them important. And you have to take into account that sites can be occupied by various people at different times like happened at Claibourne, which causes variations. But with what was found at the Yeager-Ward site, and similar things findings regionally, Anne feels that she can say it's very likely that two of the houses were occupied by slaves at some point.

It makes you wonder when you go out to all the other places in the region, if we had the population statistics indicate we had where were all these folks? How many sites are we missing? What could we be learning about the lifestyles of these people if we don't know where they were?

Anne was asked if she thought everything was found and where were the artifacts going. She feels they found everything of significance, especially since the houses were found on the last day they were going to be allowed to search. Then the real work began. There could be more because a property line was located behind the last cabin, so there could be more cabins in that field, but that is someone else's property and Anne doubts they will ever get a chance to search there. One thing that was not found was where the slaves were buried

The developer wanted all the artifacts back. A deal was struck that the artifacts would be analyzed at a reduced cost if he would allow the artifacts be given to permanent curation in a location where they could be referenced. A place hasn't been found yet. The University of Kentucky doesn't have the space, so many items are being stored in the various facilities of archeological businesses. And why the developer wanted them back - maybe to sell on line? He did say he might make a display for some in the clubhouse, but there were 10,000 items retrieved! The African-American Heritage Center, Down in the West End was an idea, but they are really struggling financially, having problems of keeping open.

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