

WELL-KNOWN KENTUCKY ATTORNEY ADDRESSES CINCINNATI LITERARY CLUB

Harry B. Mackoy Reveals Many Facts About Dixie Highway.

Harry B. Mackoy, well-known attorney and historian, in an address before the Cincinnati Literary Club, revealed many interesting facts regarding the Lexington Pike, now the Dixie Highway. Taking as his subject "The Old Road," Mr. Mackoy declares few sections of this country are more replete with romantic interest or more picturesque than the hills and valleys of Northern Kentucky.

"Those who have traveled in the mountains or on the coasts of New England, along the palisades of the Hudson or through the more rugged terrain of the great West, whenever they return to the peaceful bank of the Ohio, La Belle Eviere of the French explorers, or to the uplands of the tortuous Licking gaze with contentment at their loveliness," said Mackoy.

His address follows:

"Among the highways and byways which lead through this favored portion of the state, none is more beautiful or more historic than the old road to the Blue Grass, now known as the Lexington Pike or the Dixie Highway. And of this old road the part which extends from Covington to the southernmost end of the little village of Florence is probably the earliest of all trails used by white pioneers and settlers in Kentucky. While its route has been changed in spots, due to the exigencies or conveniences of civilization, it is in the main a survival of the great Buffalo Path, Alanant-o-wamiowee. Followed by aborigines and prehistoric animals who came to Big Bone Lick for salt ages ago, it was known later to pioneers as the Big Bone-Little Miami Trail, and afterward as the Dry Ridge Trace.

"First of explorers said to have traversed this path was Capt. Charles Lemoine de Longueil, brave French-Canadian soldier, at that time commandant at Ft. Niagara; afterward Governor of Montreal and Interim Governor of New France. History states that in 1729 he descended the Ohio from the eastern Great Lakes and discovered the Big Bone Lick, using this well-known Indian trail. Other French and Canadians, explorers, trappers and traders followed de Longueil, but of English blood the first reported to have passed this way was one Robert Smith. He was an Indian trader living at Pickawillany, on the eastern bank of the Big Miami, opposite to what was known as the Twigtwee Town. According to the statements made by him to Col. Christopher Gist, he and others had been to Big Bone as early as 1744.

"We know that Gist himself visited the Lick in 1751, because he narrates in his journal that he brought back a large tooth of a mastodon for the Ohio Land Co.

ing at its mouth, gave her name to another highway, which will some day follow the south bank of the Ohio.

OLD ROAD EXTENDED

"After this time the old road was extended southwardly, and, upon the settlement of Lexington in 1779, it assumed importance as a war-path. Col. John Bowman in that year, and Gen. George Rogers Clark in 1780 and 1782, marched over it on their expeditions against the Ohio Indians. Smaller forays and exploring parties, using the rendezvous where Covington now stands, and where a ferry was soon to be established, would meet on this road as they traveled from the central part of the state, or from the Falls of the Ohio, as Louisville was known. John Filson in the first published history of the state in 1784 showed two roads converging south of Covington. One was marked "General Clark's War Road;" the other was called "Bird's War Road." The former included the Big Bone-Little Miami Trail. In September, 1788, Filson, with his associates, Mathias Denman and Robert Patterson, definitely laid out the route from Lexington on their way to found Losantiville, afterwards Cincinnati.

"Many famous persons visited Big Bone during the years to follow, traveling over the old road. Historians, geologists, geographers and engineers there were, some of them seeking the remains of the mammoth, the mastodon, the pleistocene musk ox, the glacial bison. Benjamin Franklin became interested, and, partly through him, the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, the Royal Society of London and other European societies studied the prehistoric relics and acquired them for their museums. Thomas Jefferson, omnivorous student that he was, sent William Clark, brother of George Rogers Clark, and companion of Meriwether Lewis, to obtain a collection of bones as a donation to the National Institute of France. William Henry Harrison, general and later to be President; Constantine S. Rafinesque, the eccentric and brilliant natural scientist, Sir Charles Lyell, the great English geologist, and others of lesser note, made the trip to see the wonders of the Lick. The critical Mrs. Trollope tells in her "Domestic Manners of the Americans" about having gone to the place with "considerable fatigue," while she was living in Cincinnati. Dr. William Goforth, of this city, renowned practitioner and tutor of Dr. Daniel Drake, made one of the largest collections of the buried bones, only to have them stolen by the scoundrelly British traveler, Thomas Ashe.

CELEBRATED HEALTH RESORT

"Other people there were who visited the springs on pleasure bent. During the first four decades of the last century, Big Bone became one of the most celebrated health resorts in this part of the Ohio Valley. Representatives of old, aristocratic families of the state,

the supply. The newspapers of the period show that there was a ready market for 'good old Kentucky salt,' undebr which name it was commonly sold. When, however, the more abundant and richer wells of Western Virginia and Eastern Ohio were opened, the business at Big Bone grew unprofitable and was abandoned about 1812.

"The old road over which passengers and freight was carried in those days was, of course, only dirt. The first road in Kentucky made after the macadam (or McAdam) plan, which meant a broken rock surface, was constructed in 1829. It ran from Maysville to the little town of Washington four miles away and was afterwards a part of the Maysville, Washington, Paris and Lexington Turnpike. Efforts to secure Federal aid for the building of that highway had been dashed to the ground by Andrew Jackson's veto of the bill authorizing a subscription to the capital stock. Thereupon the General Assembly of Kentucky had become interested and in 1830 made it lawful for the Governor of Kentucky to do what the President would not, though in a smaller amount. This was accomplished doubtless through the efforts of Henry Clay and the Governor himself, who was the redoubtable "Stonéhammer" Metcalfe, then residing on the Maysville-Lexington Pike at "Forest Retreat." After that the system of state aid for roads spread rapidly, and in the 30's many acts of that kind were passed in Kentucky. One of them, approved Feb. 22, 1834, incorporated the Covington & Lexington Road Co., with authority to construct and permanently maintain an "artificial road" through Williamstown and Georgetown. Twenty years were to elapse, however, before the macadamized surface was completed for the entire route. Sixty-one years later, in 1915, the road, having been acquired first by the county and then by the state, was given its introduction to the newer concrete surface, which now extends throughout its length.

"As one today swiftly motors over the smooth four-lane highway, past modern homes, with spacious lawns and fragrant gardens on either side, it is difficult to distinguish the ancient landmarks. To one familiar with the scenes, however, every turn brings recollections of fishing expeditions in the spring, hunting and gathering walnuts in the fall, or a swim in some near-by pond on an August afternoon. And the older man, who lives in a house beside the road, is glad to linger for a while. He almost feels that he can see the vision of those earlier days, and hear the voices and the foot-steps of those who have traveled along the old road.

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