

MUHLENBERG MEN IN THE WAR OF 1812

WHEN on June 18, 1812, war against Great Britain was declared by the United States, no State responded to the call for volunteers more readily than did Kentucky. The second war with England lasted over two and a half years, during which time three companies that presented themselves for service were organized in Muhlenberg. Most of the men in these three organizations were citizens of the county. From the "Roster of Volunteer Officers and Soldiers from Kentucky in the War of 1812-15," compiled in 1891 by Samuel E. Hill, Adjutant-General of Kentucky, I copy the following list of officers and privates of these three companies and also the dates as there recorded. These names are here given as printed in the roster, although many of them are evidently misspelled. The only additions I have made to this record are the notes stating that Captain Kincheloe's company took part in the battle of the Thames, and that Captain McLean's company fought in the battle of New Orleans.

ROLL OF CAPTAIN ALNEY MCLEAN'S COMPANY.

In First Regiment Kentucky Mounted Militia, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Caldwell.

Enlisted September 18, 1812. Engaged to October 30, 1812.

Alney McLean, Captain.	<u>James Martin, Sergeant.</u>
Charles Campbell, Lieutenant.	John Ferguson, Corporal.
Jere S. Cravens, Ensign.	John January, Corporal.
William Oates, Sergeant.	Moses F. Glenn, Corporal.
Parmenas Redman, Sergeant.	John C. Milligan, Corporal.
Thomas Glenn, Sergeant.	John Earle, Trumpeter.

PRIVATES.

Ash, James	Dennis, Abraham	Houser, Christopher
Anthony, Jacob	Dudley, Robert	Harrison, Isaac
Bond, Cornelius	Everton, Thomas	Hunsinger, George
Bennett, John	Edmonds, George	Hill, William
Bower, Jacob	Everton, James	Jarvis, Simon
Campbell, William, sr.	Evans, John	Langley, John W.
Campbell, William, jr.	Foster, Thomas	Luce, David
Cummings, Moses	Good, John	Lynn, George
Conditt, Moses P.	Gillingham, Jno. B. C.	Morton, William
Carter, William	Hewlett, Alfred	McFerson, John
Cochran, Bryant	Hemman, George	Maxwell, Robert
Davis, William	Hines, Isaac	Martin, Samuel

Nunn, John
Robertson, Robert
Rice, Samuel
Salsbury, Thomas
Sanders, George

Stroud, John
Skillman, James
Stanley, Mark
Tyler, Charles
Thompson, Philip

Todd, William
Vaught, Abraham
Winlock, Joseph
Wilkins, Bryant
Young, Benjamin

ROLL OF CAPTAIN LEWIS KINCHELOE'S COMPANY.

In Kentucky Mounted Volunteer Militia, commanded by Colonel William Williams.

Enlisted at Newport, Kentucky, September 11, 1813.

(This company took part in the battle of the Thames, October 5, 1813.)

Lewis Kincheloe, Captain.
Charles F. Wing, Lieutenant.

John Dobyns, Ensign.
John W. Langley, Corporal.

PRIVATES.

Baldwin, Herbert W.
Brown, Frederick
Butler, Samuel
Culbertson, Robert W.
Davis, Randolph
Davis, William
Drake, Mosly
Graves, John C.
Ham, David
Harris, Richard
Haws, John
Hill, Asa

Hill, John
Hill, William
McFerson, John
Miller, George
Murphy, Samuel
Neff, Henry
O'Neal, Spencer
Pace, Daniel
Pace, Joel
Penrod, George
Row, Henry

Redman, Parmenas
Roark, William
Raco, Henry
Segler, Jacob
Shelton, John
Smith, Hugh
Uzzell, Thomas
Wilcox, Thomas
Worthington, Isaac
Jones, Fielding
Langley, James

ROLL OF CAPTAIN ALNEY McLEAN'S COMPANY.

In Kentucky Detached Militia, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel William Mitchusson.

Enlisted November 20, 1814. Engaged to May 20, 1815.

(This company took part in the battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815.)

Alney McLean, Captain.
Ephraim M. Brank, Lieutenant.
William Alexander, Lieutenant.
Isaac Davis, Ensign.
John Stull, Sergeant.
Henry Nusell, Sergeant.
Enoch Metcalf, Sergeant.

Jordon O'Brien, Sergeant.
James Langley, Corporal.
Moses Matthews, Corporal.
Edward H. Tarrants, Corporal.
George Hill, Corporal.
Abner B. C. Dillingham, Fifer.

PRIVATES.

Apling, Henry
Anderson, John
Anderson, John, jr.
Allen, Linsey
Allison, McLean
Bishop, James
Barker, Samuel

Bone, Cornelius
Bonds, Lott
Carter, James
Craig, John
Combs, Jesse
Cob, Elijah
Craig, Robert

Crouch, Isaac
Claxton, Jeremiah
Dewitt, William
Donnald, James
Evans, James
Ferguson, John K.
Foley, Mason

Fox, Nathan	Lott, James	Row, Adam
Fowler, Jeremiah	Lynn, Gasham	Ripple, Jacob
Gany, Matthew	Lynn, Henry	Rhodes, Bradford
Gant, Thomas	Leece, Samuel	Sever, Michael
Gamblin, John	McGill, James	Sumner, Thomas
Grayham, William	Moore, Thomas	Sumner, William
Hewlett, Thomas	Matthews, Jacob	Sunn, John F.
Hubbard, Liner	McFerson, James	Sanders, George
Hines, John	Martin, John	Voris, John
Howard, Isaac	Macons, Peter	Wilcox, Elias
Hensley, Leftridge	Nanny, Spencer	Williams, Noah
Hewlett, Lemuel	Norris, Thomas	Wade, Hendley
Janis, Edward	Nixon, James	Wilson, John
Kern, George	Penrod, George	Williams, William
Kennedy, George F.	Ripple, Michael	Yaunce, Lawrence

A century has passed since the War of 1812 began. It is said that for many years after this war accounts of daring deeds performed by Muhlenberg men were told by the soldiers who participated in some of the battles. With the exception of a few, all of these old stories, although handed down for a generation or two, are now forgotten. Most of the men who saw service in the second war with England passed away before the close of the Civil War. George Penrod, who died January 22, 1892, at the age of about one hundred, was the last of the Muhlenberg veterans of 1812.¹

Practically all that is now told in local traditions of this war forms part of the story of the life of eight well-known local men: Larkin N. Akers, who ran the gantlet after the battle of the River Raisin; Charles Fox Wing and Mosley Collins Drake, who took part in the battle of the Thames; Ephraim M. Brank, Alney McLean, Isaac Davis, Joseph C. Reynolds, and Michael Severs, who took part in the battle of New Orleans.

Larkin Nicholls Akers came to Greenville about twenty-five years after his miraculous escape at River Raisin. He was a private in a company organized in Central Kentucky, where he lived at the time he enlisted. The famous massacre of River Raisin took place in Michigan on January 23, 1813, and was one of the most cruel and bloody acts recorded in all our history. The American forces, mainly

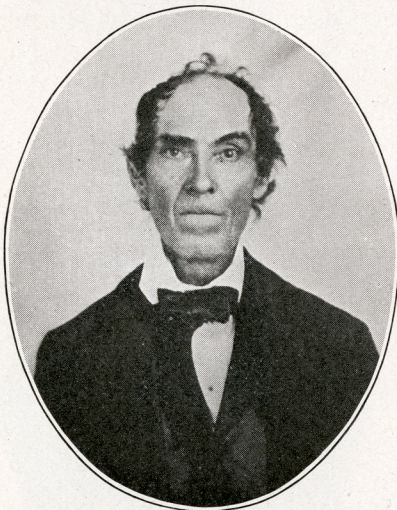


LARKIN N. AKERS, IN 1865

¹ George Penrod was a son of Tobias Penrod, who about 1800 settled near what has since been called Penrod. George Penrod was the father of Lot, David, Samuel, William, Leander, Thomas, and Martin Penrod and Mrs. Nancy (David) Russell.

Kentuckians, after fighting a fierce battle against a superior number of British soldiers and their Indian allies, surrendered under promise of protection from the Indians. But the British made no attempt to carry out their promise. On the contrary, they encouraged the bloodthirsty Indians by offering them pay for all the scalps they would bring in. The unprotected and defenseless American prisoners, who were crowded into a few cold houses and pens, were soon in the hands of the merciless savages. Some of them were killed outright or cruelly burned to death; a number were scalped alive. Many were tortured in various ways, some by being compelled to run the gantlet. In the confusion not many made their escape. But of those few who ran the gantlet and came out alive, Larkin N. Akers was one.

Akers often told the sad story of his River Raisin experience to his family and friends while sitting around the fireside or while working in his tailor shop in Greenville. The treatment he received during that massacre was almost beyond human endurance. His body was virtually covered with scars. Up to the time of his death, which occurred in July, 1865, he frequently suffered intense pain from a fractured skull and other wounds inflicted by the Indians.²



MOSLEY COLLINS DRAKE, ABOUT 1870

Mosley Collins Drake was among the Muhlenberg men who took part in the battle of the Thames. This battle took place on October 15, 1813, in Southern Ontario, near the Thames River, and was the victory gained by American forces under General William Henry Harrison over the British under General Proctor and their Indian allies, led by Tecumseh.

Like some of the other Muhlenberg men who belonged to Captain Lewis Kincheloe's company and who took part in the battle of the Thames, Drake claimed that he saw Tecumseh after the great Indian chief was killed, and often remarked that if any of the soldiers skinned Tecumseh and "made razor strops out of his hide" they must have done so after he saw the dead body.

Mosley Collins Drake was born in North Carolina in 1795, came to Muhlenberg in 1806 with his father, and farmed in the lower Long Creek

²Larkin N. Akers married Sally Harrison, who was related to General William Henry Harrison. Mr. and Mrs. L. N. Akers were the parents of five children: (1) Anna Akers, who married John A. Stembridge; (2) Jane Akers, who married William Lindsey; (3) Matilda Akers, who after the death of her first husband, David Donevan, married Joseph Randall, both of whom lived in Hopkingsville; (4) Thomas Akers, who married Lera Boswell, of Princeton; (5) Sarah Catherine Akers, who married Charles W. Lovell, of Muhlenberg.

country the greater part of his life. He died in 1885. His wife was Louraney Wells, daughter of pioneer Micajah Wells.³

Ephraim McLean Brank's heroic act on the breastworks in the battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815, is one of the most thrilling incidents recorded of any Muhlenberg man, as it is a fine one in national history. To his family and friends he seldom described the part he played in this battle. However, his friends and comrades, John Shelton, Mike Severs, and others, frequently told the story, and although their version was never written, it was in nearly every detail the same as the one here re-quoted from McElroy's "Kentucky in the Nation's History."

McElroy, by way of introduction, says: "The effect produced upon the British army by the daring coolness of a single Kentucky rifleman is thus graphically described by one of the British officers who took part in the historic engagement." He then quotes:

"We marched in solid column in a direct line, upon the American defenses. I belonged to the staff; and as we advanced we watched through our glasses the position of the enemy, with that intensity an officer only feels when marching into the jaws of death. It was a strange sight, that breastwork, with a crowd of beings behind, their heads only visible above the line of defense. We could distinctly see their long rifles lying on the works, and the batteries in our front, with their great mouths gaping toward us. We could also see the position of General Jackson, with his staff around him. But what attracted our attention most, was the figure of a tall man standing on the breastworks, dressed in linsey-woolsey, with buckskin leggings, and a broad-brimmed felt hat that fell round the face, almost concealing the features. He was standing in one of those picturesque, graceful attitudes peculiar to those natural men dwelling in forests. The body rested on the left leg, and swayed with a curved line upward. The right arm was extended, the hand grasping the rifle near the muzzle, the butt of which rested near the toe of his right foot. With the left hand he raised the rim of the hat from his eyes, and seemed gazing intently on our advancing column. The cannon of the enemy had opened on us, and tore

³ Mosley Collins Drake was a son of pioneer Albritton Drake. Albritton Drake and James Drake, his father, were Revolutionary soldiers. It is said they were descendants of Sir Francis Drake. When Albritton Drake joined the Revolutionary forces he called on his sweetheart, Ruth Collins, to bid her goodbye. The story is told that when the two parted they chanced to be standing under an apple tree on which a few dried "second growth" apples were hanging. The girl plucked one of them and gave it to Albritton, saying, "Keep this in your pocket as a reminder of me." He carried it in his pocket, not only during the Revolution, but up to the day he and Ruth Collins were married. That same apple—much shriveled and very hard—was preserved by Mosley Collins Drake for many years, and is now owned by John R. Drake, son of William Drake.

Albritton Drake was one of the best-known pioneers in the lower Long Creek country, where he died in 1834. His wife died in 1847. They were the parents of Reverend Silas, Mosley Collins, Reverend Benjamin, J. Perry, Edmund, and William Drake.

Mr. and Mrs. Mosley Collins Drake were the parents of eleven children: (1) Ruth Ann, the second wife of Moses M. Rice; (2) Albritton M., married to Elizabeth Hancock; (3) Sarah Amandaville, to Moses M. Rice; (4) John Perry, a bachelor; (5) Edmund L., to Ruth Drake; (6) James Marion, to Mary E. Saddler; (7) William M., a bachelor; (8) Susan P., to John Wells, then to John Jenkins; (9) Jackey L., to Thomas S. Saddler; (10) Sophia V., to James P. Drake; (11) Mosley Collins, jr., to Amanda Saddler.

through our works with dreadful slaughter; but we continued to advance, unwavering and cool, as if nothing threatened our progress.

"The roar of cannon had no effect upon the figure before us; he seemed fixed and motionless as a statue. At last he moved, threw back his hat rim over the crown with his left hand, raised the rifle to the shoulder, and took aim at our group.

"Our eyes were riveted upon him; at whom had he leveled his piece? But the distance was so great, that we looked at each other and smiled. We saw



EPHRAIM M. BRANK, ABOUT 1850

the rifle flash and very rightly conjectured that his aim was in the direction of our party. My right hand companion, as noble a fellow as ever rode at the head of a regiment, fell from his saddle.

"The hunter paused a few moments without moving his gun from his shoulder. Then he reloaded and assumed his former attitude.⁴ Throwing the hat rim over his eyes and again holding it up with the left hand, he fixed his piercing gaze upon us as if hunting out another victim. Once more the hat rim was thrown back, and the gun raised to his shoulder. This time we did not smile, but cast glances at each other, to see which of us must die.

"When again the rifle flashed, another one

of our party dropped to the earth. There was something most awful in this marching on to certain death. The cannon and thousands of musket balls playing upon our ranks, we cared not for, for there was a chance of escaping them. Most of us had walked as coolly upon batteries more destructive without quailing, but to know that every time that rifle was leveled toward us, and its bullet sprang from the barrel, one of us must surely fall; to see it rest motionless as if poised on a rack, and know, when the hammer came down, that the messenger of death drove unerringly to its goal, to know this, and still march on, was awful. I could see nothing but the tall figure stand-

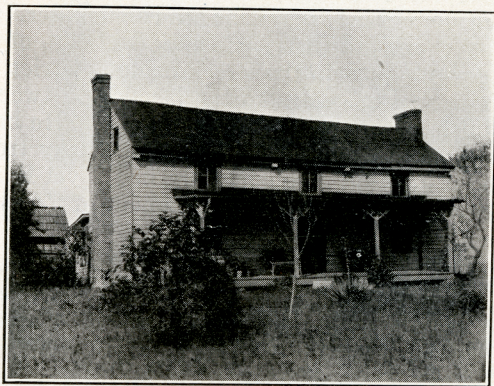
⁴ Tradition says E. M. Brank did not load the guns he shot from the breast-works. He used flintlocks, and fired them as rapidly as Mike Severs and Robert Craig reloaded and handed them up to him.

ing on the breastworks; he seemed to grow, phantom-like, higher and higher, assuming, through the smoke, the supernatural appearance of some great spirit of death. Again did he reload and discharge, and reload and discharge his rifle, with the same unflinching aim and the same unflinching result; and it was with indescribable pleasure that I beheld, as we neared the American lines, the sulphurous cloud gathering around us, and shutting that spectral hunter from our gaze.

“We lost the battle; and to my mind, the Kentucky rifleman contributed more to our defeat than anything else; for while he remained in our sight our attention was drawn from our duties; and when, at last, he became enshrouded in the smoke, the work was complete; we were in utter confusion, and unable, in the extremity, to restore order sufficient to make any successful attack—the battle was lost.”

McElroy's footnote, page 365, following this quotation, reads: “This manuscript is marked ‘Kentucky Rifleman in battle of New Orleans,’ Durrett Collection. The hero here described was E. M. Brank, of Greenville, Kentucky.” The manuscript referred to is not signed, but gives the name of E. M. Brank as the hero of the sketch. The late Z. F. Smith informed me that this description was first printed about the year 1820 in one of George Robert Gleig's books on the campaigns of the British at Washington and New Orleans. I have not had access to any of these works by Gleig and am unable, therefore, to refer the reader to the quotation in the original. At any rate, this interesting description was quoted as early as 1832 by Walter Walcott in “The Republican” of Boston, and later republished, but slightly changed, by various Kentucky papers, clippings of which are still preserved by Rockwell S. Brank and other descendants of E. M. Brank.

Ephraim McLean Brank was born in North Carolina August 1, 1791, and died in Greenville August 5, 1875. He was a son of Robert Brank and Margaret (McLean) Brank, who was a sister of Judge Alney McLean and Doctor Robert D. McLean, sr. His first wife, the mother of his children, was Mary (Campbell) Brank, daughter of Colonel William Campbell. She was born March 27, 1791, and died in Greenville December 4, 1850. His second wife was Ruth B. Weir, the third wife and widow of pioneer James Weir.



THE E. M. BRANK HOUSE, GREENVILLE

E. M. Brank came to Muhlenberg about 1808. He was a lawyer by profession, but devoted most of his time to surveying. He lived in Greenville on Main Street, half a mile north of the courthouse. Although his later years were spent in farming, he nevertheless continued to take a great inter-

est in the progress of the town. Captain Brank was a man of stately proportions and wonderful physical constitution. He was a "crack shot" and an enthusiastic hunter; a well-read and a resolute and systematic man, and very kind to all those with whom he came in contact.⁵

Of all the citizens of Muhlenberg County who took part in the second war with England probably none worked with more zeal or did more for his country than Alney McLean. Immediately after the news reached Western Kentucky that war had been declared he organized a company of volunteers, and was always ready to leave with them at any time they might be called. The official records show that his first company was "enlisted September 18, 1812," and was "engaged to October 30, 1812." Whether or not this company saw any service other than to march from Greenville to Frankfort or Newport, and after remaining in camp awhile, returning home, I can not state with any certainty. However, one tradition says that after this company had been accepted it was discovered that the supply of volunteers was far greater than the number of arms and other necessary war material at their disposal, and that it fell to the lot of McLean's company to turn over their self-supplied equipment to such men as had none but were members of companies that had been chosen for immediate service.

After Alney McLean helped organize Lewis Kincheloe's company in the fall of 1813 he formed another of his own, drilled his men often and had them prepare, like the minute-men, to report on a moment's notice. At the head of his second company he took an active part in the battle of New Orleans. Judge Little, in his "Life of Ben Hardin," says:

After the battle he was assigned to very arduous fatigue duty, of which he complained to General Jackson. He received an insulting rebuff, for which he never forgave his old commander.⁶ . . .

By change of districts Judge McLean, of Greenville, in 1822, succeeded Judge Broadnax in the Breckinridge district. He was always an active politician. His accession to the bench and twenty years service there did not diminish his interest in public affairs. He had served as a captain at New Orleans, and while not with the Kentucky troops, who, in the language of General Jackson, "ingloriously fled," yet he resented this stigma cast upon his State. He was ever an opponent of "Old Hickory." Naturally enough

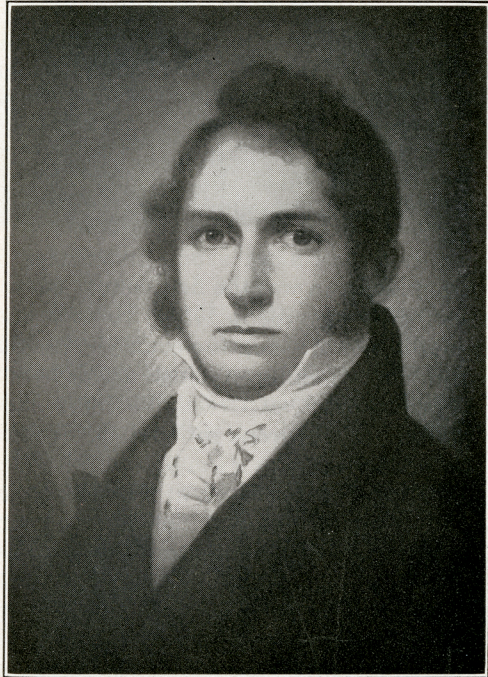
⁵ Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Brank were the parents of five children: (1) Louisa, who married James M. Taylor (no children); (2) Tabitha A., who became the second wife of Doctor William H. Yost (no children); (3) Samuel C., who died in childhood; (4) Reverend Robert G. Brank, who married Ruth A. Smith. He was born November 3, 1824, and died in St. Louis August 21, 1895. Among their four children is Reverend Rockwell Smith Brank. (5) Mary Jane, who became the first wife of Doctor William H. Yost. Through his skill, liberality, and long service "Old Doctor Yost," as he was called, became one of the best-known physicians in Muhlenberg and adjoining counties. Doctor Yost was born July 5, 1820, and died in Greenville November 1, 1894. Doctor and Mrs. Yost were the parents of three children: (1) Mary W. Yost, the first wife of Doctor T. J. Slaton. Their two children are Doctors Henry Y. and Brank Slaton. (2) Judge William H. Yost, who married Lizzie Reno. Their two children, who reached maturity, are Doctor E. R. Yost and Mrs. Mary B. (Reverend W. H.) Fulton. (3) Doctor E. B. Yost, who married Bertha Grimes (no children).

⁶ John F. Coffman, who during the campaign around New Orleans served as one of General Jackson's bodyguard, was, it is said, the only man in Muhlenberg to vote for Jackson in the presidential election of 1825.

he was a friend of Henry Clay. He was, while judge, chosen a Clay elector in 1824 and again in 1832. His taste for and activity in politics shocked those of his constituents specially sensitive as to the proprieties of the bench.

Under the head of McLean County, Collins, in his "History of Kentucky," publishes a brief biographical sketch of Judge McLean:

Judge Alney McLean, in honor of whom McLean county was named, was a native of Burke county, North Carolina. He emigrated to Kentucky and began the practice of law at Greenville, Muhlenburg county, about 1805, but had little to do with politics before 1808. He was a representative from that county in the legislature, 1812-'13; a captain in the war of 1812, a representative in Congress for four years, 1815-'17 and 1819-'21; one of the electors for president in 1825, casting his vote and that of the state for Henry Clay; again in 1833 an elector for the state at large, when the vote of the state was cast a second time for the same distinguished citizen. He was appointed a circuit judge, and for many years adorned the bench. One of the oldest and ablest of Kentucky ex-judges, in a letter to the author, speaks of Judge McLean as "a model gentleman of the old school, of great courtesy and kindness to the junior members of the bar," an honored citizen and a just judge.



ALNEY McLEAN, ABOUT 1820

The following is copied from the record entered by the clerk of the Muhlenberg Circuit Court in Record Book No. 8, at the March term in 1842. It verifies not only some of the statements given above but adds other facts, and also shows the high esteem in which Judge McLean was held by his contemporaries:

Thereupon, on motion of John H. McHenry, the Court suspended all further proceedings for the purpose of attending the following meeting.

And thereupon Edward Rumsey, Esq., offered the following preamble and resolved statement, to wit: At a meeting of the members of the Muhlenberg Circuit Court, on Monday, the 21st day of March 1842, the Hon. John Calhoun was called to the chair, and the following statement and resolution being presented, were unanimously adopted:

“The Honorable Alney McLean, late presiding judge of this Court, was born in the state of North Carolina, in May 1779. In June 1799 he removed to this county, and commenced the practice of law, which he successfully pursued, through a long series of years, securing by his integrity, ability and courtesy the confidence of the bench, the friendship of the bar, and the esteem of the public. In 1812 & 1813 he represented his county with fidelity and distinction in the General Assembly.

“In 1813 and 1815 he aided in repelling the invaders of his country in the memorable battle of New Orleans, at the head of his company, acted the part of a gallant officer and devoted patriot. With honor and reputation he represented his district in the 16th and 18th Congresses. In 1821 he received the commission of Judge of the 14th District in which he presided with eminent impartiality, dignity, and ability, for more than twenty years. The 31st day of December, 1841 his active and useful life was suddenly terminated by a severe attack of bilious pneumonia. Regret and grief for his death, though great and general, may well be somewhat alleviated by the reflection that he lived not in vain, that he died after a long career of public and private usefulness—full of honor, high in the affection of his friends and the esteem of his countrymen, leaving a bright fame, a beloved memory behind.”

Alney McLean was the first county surveyor of Muhlenberg, and laid out the town of Greenville in 1799. He took an active interest in all movements that might help develop the county. His popularity is also shown by the great number of children named in his honor by their parents. Doctor Robert D. McLean, sr., of Greenville (born 1783, died 1875), in his day one of the best-known surgeons in Western Kentucky, was his brother.

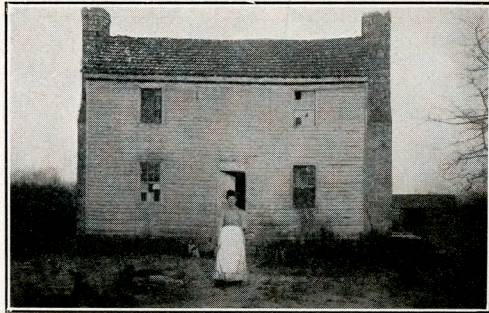
Judge McLean was a son of Ephraim McLean and Eliza (Davidson) McLean. His father, in 1820, at the age of ninety, removed from North Carolina to Greenville, and there died three years later. Judge McLean married Tabitha R. Campbell, daughter of Colonel William Campbell. She was born in Virginia January 25, 1785, and died in Greenville February 17, 1850. No one among the pioneers is more frequently and more creditably mentioned in local traditions than Judge McLean. In his day he was esteemed one of the greatest men in the Green River country, and as such his name will always be recorded in its history, much to the credit of Muhlenberg County.⁷

Isaac Davis was an officer in Alney McLean's company, and was among the Muhlenberg men who took part in the battle of New Orleans. Tradition says he frequently referred to his military experience as “a tramp around with the boys.” While camping at New Orleans, so runs the story, he, like

⁷ Judge and Mrs. Alney McLean were the parents of ten children, all of whom were born in Muhlenberg County. Six of them were married and lived the greater part of their life in Mississippi, where they died: William D., Reverend Thornton, Judge Robert D., Samuel, Mrs. Eliza A. D. McBride, and Mrs. Transylvania McBride. None of the four children who made Muhlenberg their home were ever married: Tabitha was born May 25, 1815, and died September 10, 1898; Alney was born October 27, 1819, and died May 29, 1905; Charles W. was born October 27, 1819, and died October 13, 1893; Rowena was born October 22, 1827, and died September 10, 1861.

Judge William C. McLean, of Grenada, Mississippi, who during 1910-11 was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Mississippi, is a son of Judge Robert D. McLean.

the others, suffered many hardships. He was accustomed to fresh butter and sweet milk, and these he missed far more than any of the other things of which he was deprived. Before leaving New Orleans he vowed that upon his return to Muhlenberg he would not only build a comfortable house, but also dig a large cellar and keep it well supplied with butter and milk. Practically all the well-to-do pioneers used cellars, but none, according to this tradition, was better equipped and supplied than was the one dug by Isaac Davis. The old Isaac Davis house still stands—near Green River, east of Martwick—and although its cellar is no longer noted for its abundance of butter and milk, it is still pointed out as the “Isaac Davis milk cellar.”



THE ISAAC DAVIS HOUSE, NEAR MARTWICK

Davis lived on a farm that in early days was regarded one of the best-managed places in the county. He owned many slaves and much stock, and raised large quantities of corn and wheat. He did not plant tobacco, for he considered tobacco injurious to the soil. It is said that he protected his ground so well and cultivated his corn so carefully that he never had a crop failure, and that even during the dryest years his ridge land never produced less than fifty bushels to the acre. His corn-cribs were always well filled. When his neighbors' crops failed he sold them corn for their immediate need at any price they cared to pay, even though that price was less than half the prevailing market price. If they were in poor circumstances and could pay nothing, he gave them the corn.

In his earlier years he frequently taught school, for which he invariably declined pay. He instructed the rising generation “for the good of the community,” as he expressed it, although in the meantime he had “more than enough to do at home.”

Isaac Davis was born in Virginia October 9, 1782, came to the Nelson Creek country while a boy, and died in Muhlenberg June 6, 1858. His wife, Mary, was a sister of pioneer Moses Wickliffe. She was born April 22, 1785, and died September 14, 1870.⁸

Another of the well-known veterans of the War of 1812 was Joseph C. Reynolds, who was born in North Carolina May 17, 1793, and who while still a boy came to Muhlenberg, where he died January 13, 1868. While visiting in Tennessee he enlisted in a company organized in that State. He showed great bravery at the battle of New Orleans, where he experienced a number of narrow escapes. Tradition has it that General Andrew Jackson complimented him on his courage in battle.

⁸ Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Davis were the parents of seven children: Mrs. Eliza Jane (Richard H.) Jones; Mrs. Mary K. (William Mc.) Sharp; Mrs. Julian Ann (George) King; Mrs. Ellen (Elias Wickliffe) Davis; Aaron W., William, and Edward Davis.

Joseph C. Reynolds was for fifty years one of the best-known men in the county. He was a successful farmer, and up to the time of the emancipation of the slaves was one of the largest slave-owners in Muhlenberg. He was a liberal man, and never hesitated to volunteer to help a neighbor or friend when he felt his help was needed. In January, 1820, he married Mary Fortney Reynolds, a daughter of pioneer Richard D. Reynolds, sr., a

Revolutionary soldier. They were the parents of six children, all of whom were influential citizens. Mrs. Reynolds, like her husband, always had the good of Muhlenberg at heart and did much toward the moral advancement of the county. She came to Muhlenberg in her youth, and died near Greenville August 31, 1868.⁹



MR. AND MRS. JOSEPH C. REYNOLDS, 1867

In addition to Akers, Drake, Wing, Brank, McLean, Davis, and Reynolds, there were many other Muhlenberg men in the War of 1812. Traditions regarding most of them are very vague. Even Michael Severs, who helped load the guns that Ephraim M. Brank shot while standing on the breastworks at New Orleans, and who in

his day was one of the most picturesque characters in the county, is now almost forgotten.

Severs lived in the Bevier neighborhood, where he died about the year 1850. He came to Muhlenberg some time before 1800. He was then, and ever after, a typical backwoodsman and a true representative of the pioneer days. Although manners and customs changed as he advanced in years, he nevertheless continued to wear the hunting-shirt and to use a flintlock rifle. During all his life he wore moccasins in winter and went barefooted in summer.

He was a member of Alney McLean's company and, as already stated, took part in the battle of New Orleans. One story is to the effect that after the victory all the men in McLean's company rode back to Kentucky except Mike, and that although he walked he reached Greenville a few days before any of the others. One of the local traditions has it that he killed General Pakenham in the battle of New Orleans. Whether he is entitled to this distinction can probably never be determined. At any rate he was highly esteemed, especially by the local men who took part in the War of 1812. Every time he came to Greenville such men as Alney McLean and Charles Fox Wing prevailed on him to be their guest while in town. Although clad

⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Reynolds were the parents of Richard D., Thomas H., John T., sr., Benjamin F., Mrs. Nancy Y. (C. C.) Martin, and Mrs. Susan E. (J. A.) Stokes.

in buckskin breeches and hunting-shirt, and often without shoes, he was always placed at the head of the table and given the best room in the house, regardless of other guests.

The progress of the world and the making of money had no attractions for him. He was always interested in his immediate surroundings, and whatever he undertook he did with great enthusiasm. After the death of his second wife, which occurred many years before his own, he lived in a log cabin, but spent most of his days tramping around and hunting. When night overtook him, or when he cared to stop, he went to the most convenient house, walked in without knocking, presented his game, made himself at home, and remained until he was ready to start on another hunt. He was gladly received by every one who knew him. Every man considered it an honor to have Mike Severs enter his smoke-house or corn-crib and help himself. This he often did, for he realized that he was more than welcome to anything he wished to take. He made quantities of maple sugar every year, and distributed his entire "bilin'" among those who cared for "tree sugar."

Severs was evidently a most interesting and unusual character. Very little regarding the story of his life is now remembered by those who heard of him in their youth. The bones of this old hunter rest in the Duke and Whitehouse burying-ground near Bevier, and his contented soul, in all probability, is now wandering around in the happy hunting-grounds of another world.

Many years after his death some of the people in the Bevier neighborhood purposed to erect a shaft over his grave, but unfortunately their plans were never carried out. Severs Hill, overlooking lower Pond Creek, and the nearby Severs Ford, crossing the same stream, now perpetuate the name of Mike Severs, the old soldier and old-time backwoodsman.¹⁰

¹⁰ Michael Severs was the father of nine children, among whom were Michael, William, and Gabriel Severs, Mrs. Nancy Jones, Mrs. Lucinda Underwood, and Mrs. Archa M. Bibb.

A HISTORY
OF
MUHLENBERG COUNTY

BY

OTTO A. ROTHERT

*Member of The Filson Club, Kentucky State Historical Society,
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