

but ourselves at the entrance when we started in. Very soon we found it was our friends. It took them some time to conceive how they had got where they were. They were sure they had kept straight on for the mouth of the cave, and had gone about far enough to have reached it.

In contrast, Heth only wrote that "There was nothing worth mentioning about this cave except its immense size. We were informed that its entirety had never been explored. All caves are pretty much alike; stalagmites and stalactites abound, differing only in the queer shapes, which they assume."

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THE PUBLIC SPRING OF LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

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Although tradition holds that Lexington was first named at the McConnell camp in 1775, it was not until four years later and a mile and a half east that the actual construction of the Lexington community began. In mid-April, 1779, Colonel Robert Patterson set out from the fort at Harrodsburg, thirty miles distant, to establish the first garrison north of the Kentucky River. With a party of twenty-five men, he reached the intended site on the evening of the 16th and camped "at a magnificent spring, whose grateful waters emptied into a stream nearby."¹

This spring was previously known to Patterson. He had built a small hut of buckeye poles by the same spring in 1776 and planted some crops. Recovering from wounds at his Pennsylvania home early in 1777, he described the location of the spring and hut so well to his brother William, about to set out for Kentucky, that the latter had no trouble finding it in the wilderness. A few months later Robert had recovered sufficiently and made the trip to Harrodsburg, meeting William there, and with "a small armed party" had gone on to the spring and his cabin and "raised a small crop of turnips from seed I had brought along, about all we had to eat most of the winter except jerk, as the Indians had destroyed crops and run off the live stock." When the orders from Virginia came to find a suitable location for a fort north of the river, Patterson knew just where to go.²

On April 17 construction of the blockhouse was begun. The first tree was cut by Josiah Collins, a burr oak two feet in diameter that stood at the head of the spring. When trimmed, the log was used in the foundation of the blockhouse. The blockhouse and spring were located near what is now the southwest

corner of Mill and Main streets. By April of 1780 a stockade had been erected a few feet north of the spring, enclosing twenty-two cabins. The cabins were built so that the two outer rows formed part of the stockade walls, pickets filling the spaces between.³

The Public Spring, as it came to be called, supplied the water needs of the occupants of the fort and continued to do so for many years after the Indian alarms ceased and the community expanded beyond the bounds of the fort. Attempts were continually made to improve the spring as the demands of the town increased, originally by clearing out the opening of the spring. Martin Wymore, a resident, observed that they "dug that one in further and more, and it got stronger as they went further into the bank." When the stockade was finally torn down, more permanent improvements were made. The spring was dug even deeper and walled up, and a large tank constructed so that horses might be watered from the spring.⁴

The rapid growth of Lexington brought attendant problems with the usage of the spring by not only the residents of the community but also by the inhabitants of the county and travelers, for "there was but one spring and altho' forty or fifty persons only used to attend, the townsmen had to go and bring up all the water they needed before these persons would come, for the spring would be muddied then so as to be unfit for use." Several new springs eventually opened up along the banks of the Town Branch and eased the demand upon the single spring for a few years, but there still remained problems in keeping the spring clean and orderly. During the summer of 1790, the town trustees issued orders that "the public spring on Main Street and the one near the school house, no longer be used as washing places." Apparently not a great deal of attention was paid to this notice, for in July of 1795 the trustees "issued threats to prosecute anyone doing washing at the public spring." Evidently the unsanitary conditions at the spring were such that the trustees were required to appoint men to supervise their use. Maintenance costs for the Public Spring were also allocated out of the town budget.⁵

Sometime after the beginning of the nineteenth century the water supply was facilitated by piping the spring flow. The pipes used were wooded, made from logs that had been hollowed by burning through the interior, most likely with a red-hot iron rod. Some log pipes may have also been made by boring through the center with a long auger, a practice that is known to have been used at that time in other areas of the state. Each log was tapered at one end so it would fit snugly into its neighbor and form a continuous run of pipe. In April of 1981, during excavations for the new Vine Center in downtown Lexington, just such a log pipe was uncovered and rescued. In excellent condition, the pipe had the tapered end and its interior showed signs of charring. An extensive plumbing system could be constructed of these wooden conduits, leading to a reservoir. Along the twenty foot length of the pipe found in Lexington were holes bored at intervals through the sides; when fitted with a wooden stopper, these allowed the inhabitants to uncover the holes at will and collect a bucket of water--the origin of the word "fire plug."

Property became more valuable in Lexington as the town continued to grow, and although many lots and houses were advertised to include a "spring of cold water," others were filled in so that better use of the land might be

made. The Public Spring, however, continued to be used and was regarded as a valuable asset. In 1807 William W. Worsley subleased the Public Spring lot from Joseph Charless, who had obtained an eighteen year lease from the Town Trustees at an annual rent of eighty dollars. When Charless transferred his lease to Worsley, it was ruled that regardless of the leaseholder, it "was in no case to affect the privileges granted Englehart Yieser by the Trustees of Lexington to convey water from the Public Spring."⁶

The Public Spring lot was eventually sold by the Trustees. The value of the land eventually caused it, like the other small springs in town, to be covered and buildings erected upon their sites.

When, in December of 1980, heavy earth-moving equipment began excavating the Vine Plaza in downtown Lexington, they dug into the buried fragments of Lexington's pioneer days. From the rubble of two centuries' development, water seeped. Water that may well have been the long buried and diverted remnant of Robert Patterson's lovely spring, the spring that provided the first settlers with water. A little time passed, the machines renewed their work, and a giant building rose against the sky. Perhaps, in another century, the hidden spring may again be exposed to the light.

FOOTNOTES

¹William H. Perrin, History of Fayette County, Kentucky (Chicago, 1882), p. 225; John D. Shane's 1841 interview of Josiah Collins, Lyman C. Draper Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, 12CC64-78, 97-110.

²Charlotte R. Conover, Concerning the Forefathers (New York, 1902), pp. 144, 163.

³John D. Shane's 1841 interview of Josiah Collins.

⁴John D. Shane's interview of Martin Wymore, Lyman C. Draper Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, 11CC128; George W. Ranck, History of Lexington, Kentucky: Its Early Annals and Recent Progress (Cincinnati, 1872), p. 24.

⁵John D. Shane's interview of Martin Wymore; The Kentucky Gazette, August 15, 1790, and July 3, 1795; Charles R. Staples, The History of Pioneer Lexington (Lexington, Ky., 1939), p. 140.

⁶Ibid.; p. 173; C. Frank Dunn, Old Houses of Lexington (unpublished manuscript, copy of Lexington Public Library), pp. 137-38.



HUNTER'S CAVE, PENNSYLVANIA, POST OFFICE

William R. Halliday

Recently, I acquired a registered cover postmarked Hunter's Cave, Pennsylvania, dated February 1, 1880. This post office was unlisted in the Speleo Stamp Collector, and I can not recall ever hearing of a Hunter's Cave in Pennsylvania, much less one important enough to have a post office. In any reader has any information on this, please let me know.