

Bryan-Taylor Mills
on
Lower Howard's Creek

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Introduction

The natural and industrial history of Lower Howard's Creek in Clark County is currently the subject of intense local interest. The valley contains unique biological and cultural resources and is particularly noted for its sites of early mills, distilleries and quarries. Property near the mouth of the creek acquired by the Clark County Fiscal Court has been set aside as the Lower Howard's Creek Nature and Heritage Preserve. Several projects have been completed at the Preserve and additional work is in progress. Much of the early effort focused on the John Martin house and mill.¹

Archaeological surveys of other structures in the valley have identified the remains of several additional mill sites upstream from the Martin Mill on Lower Howard's Creek and West Fork. A preliminary report of these findings has been published.² One of the sites is at the mouth of West Fork and another is just upstream on the main stem of the creek. This essay was prepared as part of an effort to identify and interpret the structures found at these two sites. Early mills at these locations were associated with the Bryan and Taylor families.



Bryan Family

James Bryan (1723-1807) was one of seven sons of Morgan and Martha (Strode) Bryan of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Morgan Bryan is thought to have been a trader who resettled in what later became Frederick County, Virginia. There, in about 1730, he and Alexander Ross were involved in a scheme to bring one hundred families out to this backcountry in return for a grant of 100,000 acres. In 1748, after successfully completing the settlement project, Bryan moved his family to the forks of Yadkin in North Carolina.³ His son, James Bryan, married Rebecca Enochs in 1756. James served in the French and Indian War, was a member of the North Carolina House of Burgesses and a justice of the peace in Rowan County. Sometime after his wife died in childbirth with their sixth child, James came to Boonesborough.⁴

The state of Virginia awarded James a patent to 1,400 acres of land on South Elkhorn Creek for "raising a Crop of Corn in the country in the year 1776." In 1779, he helped his brothers—William, Joseph and Morgan—bring their families out from the Yadkin River valley to settle Bryan's Station. James' motherless children reportedly spent much time in the household of Daniel and Rebecca Boone. Boone's wife, Rebecca Bryan, was James' niece.⁵

James served as a private in John Holder's company at Boonesborough in 1779, a lieutenant in the militia defending Bryan's Station in 1780, and a private in George Rogers Clark's Illinois Regiment in 1782-1783.⁶

Jonathan (1759-1846), born in North Carolina, was the second son of James and Rebecca Bryan. Jonathan married Mary Hughes Coshow, a widow with one son. He lived in close proximity to Daniel and Rebecca Boone all his life, first in North Carolina, then in Kentucky and finally in Missouri. James lived with his son in Missouri and died there in 1807 in consequence of falling from his horse. He was buried in the Jonathan Bryan Cemetery in present-day Marthasville. Daniel Boone and his wife were buried in the David Bryan cemetery nearby. Jonathan Bryan reportedly fashioned a rough tombstone for Boone's grave.⁷

Jonathan Bryan’s Gristmill

In 1790, James Bryan purchased 247 acres at the junction of Lower Howard’s Creek and the West Fork. The tract was part of Charles Morgan’s grant of 650 acres that began at the mouth of the creek. Morgan sandwiched his grant between the claims of John Holder to the west, William Bush to the east, and James Morrow, David McGee, Bryan McDonald and James McMillan on the north.⁸ The oddly shaped tract is shown in Figure 1.

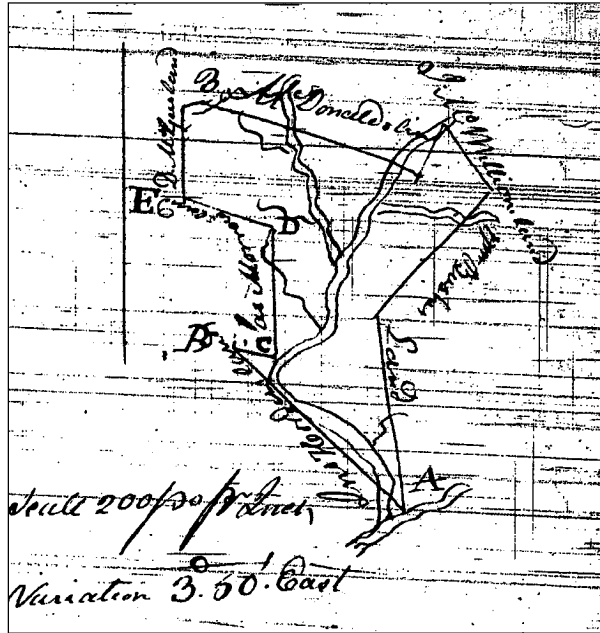


Figure 1—Charles Morgan’s 650-acre tract on Lower Howard’s Creek. Surveyed by James Morgan in 1784. Next to the boundary lines on the plat the adjoining property owners are shown, as follows, beginning at A on the Kentucky River: Jno. Holders land, Jas. Morrows land, D. McGees land, B. McDonalds land, J. McMillions land, and Wm. Bushes Land.

James’ son, Jonathan Bryan, petitioned the Clark County court for permission to build a water gristmill on Lower Howard’s Creek, and the court issued a writ of *ad quod damnum* in March 1793. This writ directed a jury to inspect the site for possible inconveniences to property owners or the public. A jury of citizens was selected from the neighborhood and included

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Philip Bush | Francis Bush |
| Edmund Hockaday | Benjamin Combs |
| John Frame | Francis McKinney |
| Augustin Webb | John Drake |
| Robert Richards | Jonathan Taylor |
| James Rayborn | James Morrow |

In May, the jury reported that no damages would result from the proposed dam, and Bryan was granted leave to build his mill.⁹

The location of Bryan’s Mill can be determined from clues provided in a deed for a parcel of land later known as Factory Bottom.¹⁰ The tract had its beginning corner “on the Creek Barr below Briants Mill dam & on [William] Bushes old line.” (Figure 2)

Remnants of stone dam abutments in this location are still visible on both sides of Lower Howard's Creek. (Figure 3) Below the dam, one finds the footprint of a 625-foot millrace that parallels the creek and terminates at the remains of a mill structure. The mill is north of the William Taylor House and the dam is east of the house. These structures could be the remnants of Jonathan Bryan's gristmill or later structures built of the site of Bryan's Mill.

Bryan's Mill was mentioned in several county road orders. In 1796, the court ordered a road viewed "from Martins Saw Mill on Howards Creek to the stone meeting house" and another, in 1797, from the Lexington Road "near Stephen Boyle's to Martins & Bryans Mill."¹¹

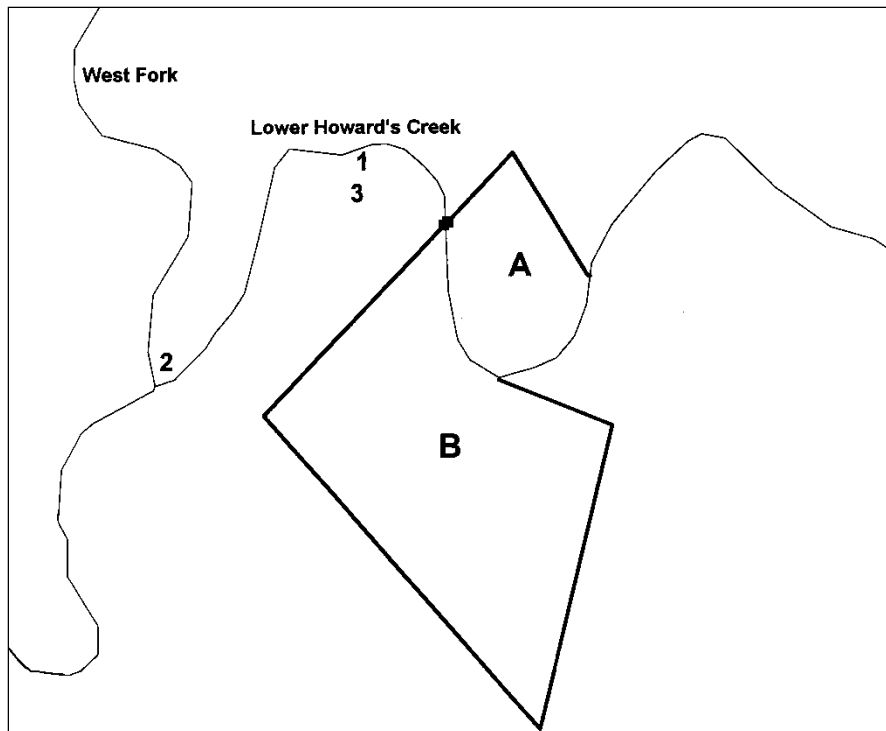


Figure 2—Location of the Bryan and Taylor Mills. 1—Site of Jonathan Bryan's gristmill and William Taylor's fulling mill. 2—Site of Edmund Taylor's merchant gristmill. 3—William Taylor house. A—Orson Martin's "Factory Bottom" tract purchased from William Bush in 1796. The beginning corner (filled box) was "a small sycamore tree standing on the Creek Barr below Briants Mill dam & on Bushes old line." B—Orson Martin's 105-acre tract purchased from John Martin in 1798. The beginning corner (filled box) was "two Sugar trees & Hickory on the bank of Howards creek at Taylor's mill pond."

James and/or Jonathan appear on the list of Clark County taxpayers from 1793 until 1797. In December 1797, James Bryan sold the mill tract of 167 acres to John and William Taylor.¹² Some time after the sale, James and Jonathan Bryan left Kentucky for Missouri. There they lived near Daniel Boone and his family, continuing the close relationship between the Bryans and Boones. According to a history of St. Charles County:

In 1800 [Jonathan] moved his family to Missouri in a keel boat, and landed at the mouth of Femme Osage creek on Christmas-day of that year. He

settled first in Lincoln county, near the present town of Cap-au-Gris, but there they were greatly exposed to the attacks of the Indians, and the location proving to be a sickly one, he moved and settled on Femme Osage creek, near Nathan Boone's place, where he lived during the remainder of his life. In 1801 he built the first water mill west of the Mississippi river.¹³

Bryan reportedly chiseled out his own millstones and could grind six to ten bushels of corn per day at his mill that "had no gearing . . . the buhrs being located over the wheel and running with the same velocity as the wheel."¹⁴ This description best fits a tub mill, a primitive type mill that was could be built cheaply and quickly. He later replaced it with a horse mill. Jonathan Bryan's log house, stone horse mill, and water mill site are located near Marthasville, Missouri.



Figure 2—Mill dam abutment (left) and mill ruins (right) at the site of Jonathan Bryan's gristmill and William Taylor's fulling mill. The dam abutment and mill ruins are both on the south bank of Lower Howard's Creek.

Taylor Family

John and William Taylor purchased Bryan's mill tract. Due to conflicting claims regarding the genealogy of these two men, a special effort was made to identify this Taylor family. First, a review was conducted of local histories.

One study stated that William was the son of Edmund Taylor.¹⁵ Edmund was one of the sons of George and Rachel (Gibson) Taylor, of the well-known Taylor clan out of Orange County, Virginia. Family histories claim that eleven sons of George and Rachel fought in the Revolutionary War, nine as commissioned officers. Edmund was a captain in the Virginia Line.¹⁶ One son of George and Rachel settled in Clark County: Jonathan Taylor lived in the Boone Creek area and died there in 1803. Jonathan's cousin, Hubbard Taylor lived nearby.

Three of Edmund's children had Clark County connections. George Gibson Taylor lived for many years in the Boone Creek area. Thruston M. Taylor lived in the county for several years. He married Mary "Polly" Clark, a daughter of Robert Clark Jr., in 1808. Frances "Fanny" Taylor and her husband Dr. John Wallace lived in Clark for some years before moving to Henry County, Kentucky.

Edmund had a son, William, and it is certainly plausible that William would have located in Clark County too. There is no indication that he did. William is positively

identified in a number of deeds as an heir of Edmund (will probated in 1787) and a brother to one of the other known children of Edmund. The following serves as an example:

Indenture, June 1, 1820, William Christy and Martha T. Christy, his wife, who was Martha T. Taylor, one of the ten children, heirs and devisees of Edmund Taylor, deceased, of St. Louis, Missouri Territory, to William Taylor, brother of said Martha, now of Jefferson County, Kentucky. . . .¹⁷

William came to Kentucky after the Revolutionary War and lived in Jefferson County until about 1810, when he moved to Point Coupee, Mississippi Territory. He was back in Jefferson County in July 1820, and in Norfolk, Virginia, in December 1820.¹⁸ This William could not be the one who owned a mill on Lower Howard's Creek and who died in 1814.

There are several other William Taylors of the Orange County family who had no Clark County connection and can be eliminated as the one who had a mill on Lower Howard's Creek.

Another study identified William and Edmond Taylor as sons of John Taylor, a Revolutionary War veteran. John was not associated with any specific family. No supporting evidence was provided and none has been uncovered in this work.¹⁹

The Clark County Chronicles mention a William Taylor who married Hannah Hinde Kavanaugh and who was "a native of Ireland, but who was brought up and trained to business in England." While this fits for the William Taylor of Taylor's Mill on Lower Howard's Creek, the Chronicles article provides no documentation for William.²⁰

* * *

Since published studies did not provide clear cut answers about the origin of the John and William Taylor, another strategy was attempted in this work: An effort was made to find all the John and William Taylors of Clark County and then determine which ones were associated with the mill.

There was a John Taylor of Berkeley County, Virginia, who came to Kentucky in 1779 and was an early resident of Strode's Station. John McIntire mentioned him in a deposition regarding a land claim:

Late in December 1779 he came in company with John Taylor and others from Strode's station to this place at which time John Taylor informed him that this was called [John] Morgan's cabbin.²¹

In recalling the men from Berkeley County, William Clinkenbeard named "John Taylor and son Samuel" plus a number of other men who "all came from one neighborhood" and "all came in one Company" to Strode's Station in 1779.²² Reubin Rankin's deposition refers to "one-eyed John Taylor" whom Rankin had known since coming to Kentucky in 1784. He stated that Taylor "lived at Boonesboro mostly in the year 1784, but in 1785 at Col. John Holders."²³

John Taylor held several large land grants in present-day Estill and Powell counties. Taylor and John Holder jointly entered and surveyed a 49,665½ acres on the Kentucky River in 1785; Taylor assigned his share of the tract to Robert Trimble. The same year Taylor and John South jointly surveyed a 10,000-acre tract on Red River. Taylor patented other lands in his own name and in partnership with others, including a 4,000-acre tract on Stoner Creek with Charles Morgan. The presence of John Taylor in Clark County, living

at Holder's Station about one and a half miles from Taylor's Mill would seem to make him a likely candidate for our mill owner. However, this John Taylor seems to have left the area before Clark County was formed in 1793. No John Taylor appears on the county tax rolls from 1793 to 1800. This John Taylor was living in Mason County in 1806, when he sold his half interest in his land on Red River to John Rankin of Clark County.²⁴

Another John Taylor appeared briefly in Clark County in the late 1790s, about the same time as William Taylor, and left soon after. John Taylor witnessed a deposition of John Hart's in 1796 and, jointly with William, purchased Bryan's Mill in 1797. After that, he cannot be found in Clark County and left no further record of association with the mill. Due to the commonness of the name, it has not been possible to track where he went. In 1800, there were 26 John Taylors in Kentucky—none in Clark County.²⁵

* * *

There is no record of a William Taylor in the Clark County area until 1797, the year he appeared for the first time on the tax rolls. In 1799, Taylor married Elizabeth Owen, daughter of the Methodist minister Lawrence Owen. They were divorced in 1811, an uncommon event for the times. Two years later he married Hannah Kavanaugh (1777-1852), daughter of Dr. Thomas Hinde and widow of Methodist minister Williams Kavanaugh. She outlived her second husband as well, and after his death married Valentine Martin.²⁶

Some information on William Taylor is available in a biography of Hannah's son, Bishop Hubbard H. Kavanaugh. William was said to be

a native of Ireland, but who was brought up and trained to business in England. . . . Mr. Taylor was a fuller or cloth dresser . . . a religious, good man; and his surviving son, Edmund, occupies a high position in public confidence and esteem.²⁷

As several of Hannah's children, including son Edmund, were still alive when the author prepared his work, he should have had access to accurate information. This identifies William as an immigrant, not a Virginia native, and specifically ties him to the fulling mill. It seems probable that John Taylor also would have been a native of Ireland. We still are unable to establish his relation to William, but John could have been his father or brother.

William Taylor's Fulling Mill

In December 1797, John and William Taylor bought James Bryan's 167-acre mill tract. The Taylors gave Bryan a note for the purchase price of the mill tract, payable in 1799. Bryan gave the Taylors a penalty bond in the amount of £1,200 obliging him to provide the Taylors with a clear title to the land when their note was paid off. The beginning corner of the mill tract was a red oak on the bank of Lower Howard's Creek in John Martin's line and 40 yards below "the freese stone spring." The boundary continued to Henry Bryan's spring branch by Zealy Moss, then along John Wilson's line, then with James McMillan's line, and finally with William Bush's line to the beginning.²⁸ When plotted the tract is found to include both sides of Lower Howard's Creek and West Fork to the confluence. (Figure 5)

The location of Taylor's Mill can be inferred from a sale of land by John Martin to his son Orson. According to the deed, the beginning corner of the tract was "two Sugar

trees and a Hickory on the bank of Howards creek at Taylor's mill pond."²⁹ This puts Taylor's Mill in the same location as Bryan's Mill. (Figure 2)

After the purchase from Bryan, John Taylor had no further association with the mill and did not subsequently reside in Clark County. William Taylor appears to have been sole proprietor of the land and mill.

William's occupation is confirmed by a letter left for him at the Lexington post office and addressed to "William Taylor, cloth manufacturer, at Bryan's mill in Clark County."³⁰ The address indicates that his mill was still sometimes referred to as Byran's Mill. Soon after acquiring the tract from Bryan, Taylor put in a fulling mill to carry out one of the steps involved in manufacturing woolen cloth. Fulling meant

to tread or beat newly woven woolen cloth in order that it might be cleansed of its animal grease and soil, shrunken to a firmer weave, smoothed of its knots and excrescences, and stretched to dry.³¹

In addition to his main occupation, Taylor farmed, operated a gristmill, and built and ran a small distillery.

Roads were important to the success of any mill, and there was already a road down Lower Howard's Creek at that time. Taylor's Mill appeared several times in county road orders. In 1798, the court appointed Orson Martin overseer of the road "from the Stone Meeting house to Taylors Mill" and William Taylor overseer of the road "from Taylors Mill to Holders Mill." In 1802, Orson Martin was again appointed overseer of the road "from the Stone Meeting house to Taylors Mill," and William Taylor was appointed overseer of the road "from Taylors Mill to Pattons Mill on Howards Creek."³²

Sometime before 1802, William built his home on the hill overlooking the mill on Lower Howard's Creek. Described in a newspaper ad as "an elegant two story Dwelling House," the home was constructed of locally-quarried Kentucky River Marble.³³ This well-known building stone from the Oregon Formation is a tan to grayish dolomite containing variable amounts of limestone. Although the house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it has been vacant for some years and is badly in need of repair and restoration.

By 1802, William was having serious financial problems and still owed Bryan £500. He was forced to mortgage his land, mills and personal property to Jonathan Bryan of "Boons District of new Spain," Missouri. The mortgage described the property as follows:

A parcel of land containing 196 acres lying on lower Howards Creek whereon the said Taylor now lives, including a water Grist & fulling Mill and all its other appurtenances whatsoever; also two horses, seven head of cattle, fifteen head of Sheep, one Bed and all his other household and Kitchen furniture.³⁴



Figure 4—William Taylor house. This “elegant two story Dwelling House” overlooking Lower Howard’s Creek, was built before 1802.

David Hampton, serving as Bryan’s attorney, held four bonds from Taylor totaling £500. All of the mortgaged property was to pass to Bryan unless Taylor paid off the bonds on schedule. The situation was so grim that Taylor put his land and mills up for sale. His properties were described at length in a notice he posted in the *Kentucky Gazette*:

Mills For Sale. The subscriber has for sale 196 acres of land, lying on Lower Howard’s creek, in Clarke county, the former property of James Bryant. There is on it an elegant two story Dwelling House, a good country Gristmill, a good new Fulling Mill, in good repair, well established; a good Still House. The buildings all well built of Stone, with other improvements. A meadow, orchard, and other land in cultivation, with never failing Springs of the best of water. The whole will be sold together or a part; with a Mill Seat, The best that is known in this county; for a Merchant Mill; the convenience and quality of Stone for building is scarce to be found—it is within two miles of Boonsborough, six of Winchester, fifteen of Lexington. A general warranty deed will be given. Terms will be made known by the subscriber living on the premises. William Taylor³⁵

Two terms for gristmills in this ad may need clarification: “country mill” and “merchant mill.” A typical country gristmill was a small structure often using locally-made conglomerate millstones to produce corn meal. The typical merchant mill, by contrast, was usually a much larger structure using imported “French buhr” stones to produce flour for export via the Kentucky, Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Economically, the major difference between them was that country mills ground locally-grown corn, and sometimes wheat, for

the farmers own use, while merchant mills provided a market for farmers to sell their wheat and corn.

Thus, Taylor, already having a country gristmill and a “new” fulling mill, had plans for building a merchant mill. Mention of “a good Still House” indicates that he was also operating a distillery in conjunction with his gristmill. His advertisement did not find a ready buyer for the mills.

Taylor’s gristmill burned sometime in 1803, and he accused Orson Martin of arson, adding that “burning his mill was not the worse [Martin] had done.” Martin sued Taylor for liable and, after being continued for some months, the case was settled out of court. Orson Martin operated a gristmill of his own, just upstream from Taylor in Factory Bottom. At the time, Martin’s promising career was in a downward spiral due to alcoholism. There is no record that he was ever brought to trial for arson.³⁶ Orson’s wife sued him for divorce, and one of the papers filed referred to Taylor’s Mill. Orson submitted an interrogatory that included the following question for his wife to answer: “Did not you say to me, ‘you had better go & burn William Taylors mill again’?”

An ad Taylor placed in the *Gazette* in 1803 referred to “a good Fulling Mill” and “a first rate Seat for a Merchant Mill” with “plenty of water in the season for two pair of stones.”³⁷ The anticipated site of the merchant mill was not indicated, but evidence points to the junction of Lower Howard’s Creek and West Fork. This is where William’s son Edmund operated a mill for many years.

Though failing to sell the mills, William finally did manage to pay off the mortgage. He received a clear title to the property one year after James Bryan’s death in Missouri. In 1808, Taylor entered a motion in the Clark circuit court seeking a deed from the heirs of James Bryan. In August, three county commissioners—James Sympson, Dillard Collins and David Hampton—acknowledging that the final payment had been made to Bryan, issued a deed to William Taylor for 167 acres.³⁸

With a good title in hand, Taylor proceeded to construct the merchant mill for himself. In July 1809, he petitioned the county court for permission to build a water gristmill “on his own land on Howards Lower Creek” and a writ was issued. The following men from the neighborhood served on the jury that inspected the mill site:

Daniel Orear	John V. Bush
Robert Richards	Benjamin Orear
Isaac Hockaday	John P. Gentry
Smallwood Ecton	John Lysle
James Ragland	Lewis Grigsby
John C. Orear	John Halyard

The jury’s report to the court in August found that the dam would result in no damage to the property of others, and the mill was permitted.³⁹

William Taylor was soon dealing with his own marital problems. In 1810, he sued for divorce from his wife Elizabeth, and she countersued him.⁴⁰ Divorce was granted for a very narrow set of conditions in early times. A man could only divorce his wife if she (a) “shall have voluntarily left his bed and board, with the intention of abandonment, for the space of three years” or (b) “shall have abandoned him and lived in adultery with another man” or (c) was convicted of a felony in any court.⁴¹

The divorce cases were continued until the following June, when Elizabeth's suit was dismissed, and the court issued a judgment in William's suit:

This cause came on to be heard and the court being now sufficiently advised of and concerning the premises delivered the following Decree. "It being proven in this cause to the satisfaction of the court that the defendant Elizabeth hath voluntarily left the bed and board of her said Husband, the complainant, with the intention of abandonment for and during the space of three years & upwards prior to the institution of this suit and that she hath been guilty of Adultery with another man. It is therefore for the causes aforesaid ordered and decreed by the court pursuant to the act of Assembly approved the 31st day of January 1809 entitled "an act regulating divorce in this Commonwealth" that the said William Taylor, the Complainant, be and he is hereby divorced from his said wife Elizabeth, the Defendant, and it appearing to the Court that the Defendant is destitute of property, it is by the Court with the assent of the Complainant ordered that he pay the costs of this suit."⁴²

In August 1813, William married Hannah Hinde Kavanaugh, the widow of Williams Kavanaugh. A record of the divorce, filed with the marriage bond in 1813, read as follows:

I Samuel M. Taylor, clerk of the Court held for the Circuit aforesaid, hereby certify that William Taylor obtained from the Said court a decree for a divorce from his wife Elizabeth Taylor on the 27th day of June 1811, conformably to the act of assembly approved the 31st day of January 1809 entitled "An act regulating divorce in this Commonwealth."⁴³

William Taylor died unexpectedly in February 1814, leaving two children—Edmund and William Jr.—and no will.⁴⁴ At April Court, Hannah was appointed administrator of his estate; her brother John W. Hinde provided security. At the same session, Robert Didlake, Thomas Scott, John V. Bush and Isaac Hockaday were directed to appraise Taylor's property and award the widow her dower. The final settlement statement, dated April 1817, reported the estate then totaled \$518—amount due on sales \$417, renting out fields \$48, renting out gristmill for one year and nine months \$53. Hannah's dower was one-third of the personal estate plus 49 acres of William's property on Lower Howard's Creek that included "the fulling mill and mansion House."⁴⁵ (Figure 5)

By law, the balance of the estate would have gone to William's two children, Edmund and William Jr. For some reason, the court delayed more than two years before appointing guardians for the boys. In May 1816, Hannah was named their guardian.⁴⁶

Records do not indicate who rented the gristmill, but we know that Henry Parrish carried on Taylor's fulling business in 1814. Parrish placed the following notice in the *Winchester Advertiser*:

Fulling Business. The subscriber returns his thanks to his friends and the public for a generous share of their custom since the death of Mr. Taylor, and wishes to inform them that he will carry on the Weaving and Fulling business in all its branches this winter, and will receive and deliver clothes the first day of every Court in Winchester at Mr. William Poston's store. Any person who may favor him with their custom, he will do the best he

can for them, and return their cloth in the best manner he can. Henry Parrish, Clark County, Lower Howard's Creek⁴⁷

By 1816, Stephen Miller had taken Parrish's place at the fulling mill. Miller announced in the *Kentucky Advertiser* that

he has started the Fulling Business with entirely new works, at the mill formerly occupied by William Taylor on Lower Howard's Creek.⁴⁸

Edmund Taylor's Merchant Mill

Edmund Todd Taylor (1814-1891), a son of William Taylor "the cloth manufacturer," was born the same year his father died. His brother, William Jr., died young, but Edmund lived a long life on Lower Howard's Creek. In 1835, Edmund married Mary Ann Gibson, the daughter of David and Polly (Morrow) Gibson. Edmund was listed in the 1850 census as a farmer with his wife and four children. It is uncertain who operated the merchant mill from the time William died until Edmund came of age. Edmund, who served as a county magistrate and county judge, did eventually take over management of the mill and kept it going until his death.⁴⁹

Hannah conveyed her dower lands to Edmund for the sum of one dollar in a deed dated 1847. The property was described as

the tract of land formerly occupied by William Taylor, deceased, the father of said Edmund T. Taylor and known by the name of Taylors Mill tract and now occupied by said Edmund T. Taylor.⁵⁰

The tract included William Taylor's fulling mill and mansion house. Wording of the deed suggests that Edmund was then living in the Taylor House, which had been part of Hannah's dower. Hannah died in 1852 at the home of her son-in-law John Stevens in Madison County.⁵¹

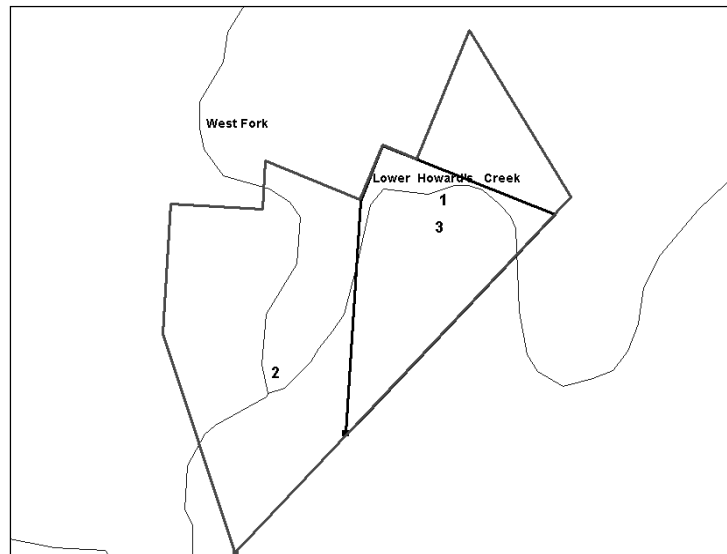


Figure 5—William Taylor's land. The large ten-sided figure is the 167-acre tract deeded to William Taylor (from James Bryan's heirs) in 1808. The enclosed four-sided figure with the fulling mill (1) and house (3) was Hannah Taylor's dower, awarded to her in 1815 as William's widow.

Edmund Taylor's gristmill was listed in the 1850 manufacturers census as a water-powered flour mill with \$2,500 capital invested and one hired employee. The mill ground 2,500 bushels each of wheat and corn to produce 500 barrels of flour and 2,500 bushels of meal with total sales of \$4,000. In 1860, reported production was down to 200 barrels of flour and meal and sales of \$1,000. The population census that year lists one John Fletcher living in Edmund's household. Fletcher was a sixty-year-old miller who probably ran the gristmill for Edmund.⁵²

Edmund sold off the northeast end of his tract in 1850, devising 20½ acres to Thomas Vivion. The year before, he had sold John Duncan 25 acres on West Fork. In the latter deed, Edmund reserved the right to erect a mill dam on West Fork "of any desired height" and to keep the mill road open "from E. W. Hockadays Mill to said Taylors Mill." This suggests that the merchant mill originally powered by a dam on Lower Howard's Creek and, at a later date, by two dams, one on the main stem and one on West Fork. It was understood that building the dam "will cause the road to vary in some slight degree from the present travelled way, but to run near the waters edge."⁵³

In time, Edmund's son William took over operation of the mill. William never married and lived at home and was an unlikely choice for a miller. According to Winchester newspaperman Charles Lyddane:

The miller was Judge Taylor's oldest son Will, who was virtually blind from birth but who knew every foot of the old mill as he knew his bed room. To the traveler passing in the night the suggestion was rather ghostly to hear the old mill running at full speed in the darkness with no light visible.⁵⁴

An 1861 map of Clark County shows E. Taylor's residence on Lower Howard's Creek and his gristmill downstream at the mouth of West Fork. An 1877 county map shows the residence of E. T. Taylor and the gristmill in the same locations.⁵⁵

Lyddane's history of Lower Howard's Creek confirms the location of Taylor's merchant mill and describes the mill's unusual water supply:

At the Junction of West Fork and Howard's Creek is Taylor's Mill formerly owned by Judge Ed Taylor. It was different in one respect from any other mill we ever knew. The water which turned the wheel and thus furnished the motive power was carried in a millrace dug high upon a hillside on the other side of the creek from the mill and when the water reached a point opposite the mill, it was conducted across the creek in a large trough, framed at the top of large cedar posts and fully forty feet above the bed of the creek.⁵⁶

Based on the ruins remaining in place today, it appears that Taylor's Mill was powered by two dams, one on Lower Howard's Creek and one on West Fork. A University of Kentucky Master's thesis supports the notion that there were two dams for the mill:

Taylor's Mill was situated below the present [1938] home of R. L. Quisenberry. It was operated by Judge Taylor. Two ponds were constructed for this mill, one on the main stream and another on West Fork.⁵⁷

Portions of the milldams exist today. The core of the dam on West Fork has washed away, but the abutments are still visible on both sides of the creek. Part of one stone wall of the gristmill still stands.

The 1870 manufacturers census provided additional information regarding “E. T. Taylor’s Flour & Grist Mill.” The waterwheel was rated at 10 horsepower, there were two sets of stones for grinding, one paid employee and the mill operated eight months out of the year. The business produced flour, meal and bran valued at \$4,840 which was “ground for private owners.” This was usually an indication that the products of the mill were going into a distillery for the production of whiskey, of which there were several in the area.⁵⁸



Figure 6—Edmund Taylor’s Mill ruins (left) and portions of the mill dam (right). The mill was located at the junction of West Fork and Lower Howard’s Creek; the dam was on West Fork.

More detail was provided in the 1880 census. The mill had a 20-foot fall of water to power a breast wheel 4½ feet in breadth and rated at 8 horsepower. That year the mill used 3,640 bushels of wheat and 3,750 bushels of corn to produce sales of \$5,845.⁵⁹

Edmund Taylor died on December 17, 1891. He did not leave a will; E. E. Taylor was the administrator of his estate. Perry Browning and Cicero Price were appointed by the court to prepare an inventory of his personal estate, which consisted of 8 horses, 8 cattle and 12 hogs, plus a judgment due from the Winchester Water Company, totaling in all \$860. The entire amount was set aside for his widow, China Taylor. This must have been Edmund’s second wife. China Gibson Taylor (1844-1911) is buried in the Winchester Cemetery.⁶⁰

We have not yet learned the exact year Taylor’s Mill went out of operation. We do know that after being in the family for 117 years, the mill tract finally left the Taylor name in 1914. In a civil action styled *Maggie McMurtry &c vs. Houston Taylor &c*, the Clark circuit court ordered a public sale of the property referred to as the “Taylor Mill Tract.” The master commissioner sold the tract to Robert L. Quisenberry for \$2,480. After payment of the last installment, a deed was issued to Quisenberry on May 2, 1914.⁶¹



More research is needed to complete the picture of the three mills identified in this essay—Jonathan Bryan’s country gristmill, William Taylor’s fulling mill and Edmund Taylor’s merchant gristmill. The Taylor house and portions of the mills, their dams and associated millraces still stand along the banks of Lower Howard’s Creek in one of Kentucky’s most prominent early industrial areas. Other sites remain to be evaluated and interpreted, which in turn will help flesh out the valley’s social and economic history. Such efforts will result in a fuller understanding of Clark County’s industrial beginnings and will aid in the preservation of these historic sites.

Notes

¹ Biological and cultural resource inventories of the preserve have been conducted; a National Register evaluation of the John Martin house completed; and the entrance to the preserve from Combs Ferry Road improved. Currently, a management master plan is being prepared; efforts are underway to preserve the Martin house and mill; the pioneer road down to the creek valley is being improved; a pedestrian bridge across Lower Howard's Creek is being constructed; and some of the stone walls are being restored. Many additional projects are planned. Ronald Cicerello et al., "A Biological Inventory of Lower Howard's Creek Heritage and State Nature Preserve, Clark County, Kentucky," Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and Eastern Kentucky University (Frankfort and Richmond, 2003); R. Berle Clay et al., "Cultural Resource Survey of Lower Howard's Creek Heritage Park and State Nature Preserve, Clark County, Kentucky," Contract Publication Series 01-145, Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. (Lexington, 2001); Deborah L. Rotman and J. Eric Thomason, "Phase II National Register Evaluation of the John and Rachel Martin House (15CK478) within the Lower Howard's Creek Nature and Heritage Preserve in Clark County, Kentucky," Contract Publication Series 03-51, Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. (Lexington, 2003); Grant Day et al., "John Martin's Mill in the Lower Howard's Creek Valley of Clark County, Kentucky," *The Millstone* (Spring 2003) 2:30.

² Jennifer Barber, "The Mills of Lower Howard's Creek, Preliminary Results," *The Millstone* (Spring 2004) 3:21.

³ William L. Kerns, *Historical Records of Old Frederick and Hampshire Counties, Virginia* (Bowie, MD, 1992, revised), p. 129; J. D. Bryan, "The Boone-Bryan History," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (1930) 28:244.

⁴ Draper MSS 22 C 6, 12, 13; National Historical Co., *History of St. Charles, Montgomery and Warren Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis; 1885); William Bryan and Robert Rose, *History of the Pioneer Families of Missouri* (St. Louis; 1876), pp. 132-133; J. D. Bryan, "The Boone-Bryan History," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (1930) 28:244.

James reportedly served as a colonel in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and for a period of time served on Washington's staff as his treasurer. Lilian H. Oliver, *Some Boone Descendants and Kindred of the St. Charles District* (n.p., 1964, copy at the Kentucky Historical Society Library, Frankfort, Kentucky), p. 75.

⁵ On January 12, 1780, before the Virginia Land Commission seated at Bryan's Station, James Bryan claimed a 400-acre settlement and 1,000-acre preemption at the head of the "south fork of Elkhorn Creek where Mr. Douglass began a large Survey that includes a part of Hickmans Creek." Kentucky Historical Society, *Certificate Book of the Virginia Land Commission, 1779-1780* (Greenville, SC; 1981), p. 130; National Historical Co., *History of St. Charles, Montgomery and Warren Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis; 1885).

⁶ Draper MSS 17 J 29; Margery H. Harding, *George Rogers Clark and His Men, Military Records, 1778-1784* (Frankfort, 1981), pp. 49, 106-7, 202-3.

⁷ J. D. Bryan, "The Boone-Bryan History," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (1930) 28:244; Draper MSS 28 CC 57; 22 S 99; Lilian H. Oliver, *Some Boone Descendants*

and Kindred of the St. Charles District (n.p., 1964, copy at the Kentucky Historical Society Library, Frankfort, Kentucky), pp. 74-77.

⁸ Fayette County Burnt Records 3:354; Old Virginia Grants 4:491; *Charles Morgan vs. William Dryden*, in James Hughes, *Report of [Cases] Determined by the Supreme Court of the District of Kentucky* (Lexington; 1803), p. 15.

⁹ Clark County Order Book 1:5, 23.

¹⁰ William Bush, 25 acres, to Orson Martin, October 1796, Clark County Deed Book 2:113.

¹¹ Clark County Order Book 2:118, 161, 186.

¹² Clark County Deed Book 6:131.

¹³ William Bryan and Robert Rose, *History of the Pioneer Families of Missouri* (St. Louis; 1876), p. 133.

¹⁴ Lilian H. Oliver, *Some Boone Descendants and Kindred of the St. Charles District* (n.p., 1964, copy at the Kentucky Historical Society Library, Frankfort, Kentucky), pp. 94-95.

¹⁵ Kathryn Owen, *Old Homes and Landmarks of Clark County, Kentucky* (Winchester, 1967), pp. 24-25.

¹⁶ Mary Taylor Brewer, *From Log Cabins to the White House* (Wooton, KY, 1985), pp. 319-329.

¹⁷ Kentucky Court of Appeals Deed Book U:11.

¹⁸ Kentucky Court of Appeals Deed Book N:215, U:11, 359.

¹⁹ Clifton R. Smith, *Lower Howards Creek* (Winchester, KY, c2000), p. 28.

²⁰ Clark County Chronicles, *Winchester Sun*, May 17, 1923.

²¹ Deposition in November 20, 1802, Kentucky Land Trials A:336. Other pioneers mentioned John Taylor at this time. George Michael Bedinger said Taylor was one of “the defenders & hunters of Boonesboro in 1779.” Ralph Morgan stated that Taylor, John Holder, Thomas Swearingen and seven others were out locating land on Muddy Creek in 1779. Bedinger Papers, Draper MSS 1 A 69; Ralph Morgan deposition, February 6, 1815, in Draper MSS 14 DD 107.

²² William Clinkenbeard interview, Draper MSS 11 CC 54, 59. Clinkenbeard also named Robert Taylor as a resident of Strode’s Station.

²³ Deposition circa 1813, in *Benjamin Bedford vs. Thomas Stark*, Bourbon Circuit Court, quoted in Mrs. W. B. Ardery, *Kentucky Court and Other Records, Volume 2* (Baltimore, 1984), p. 115. Reuben’s son, John Rankin, recalled an adventure with Taylor:

John Taylor, Joseph Berry, myself & a black boy came into the indian old fields the year we were at Boonsborough, with horses, hunting. . . . John Taylor went again to the Lick—ever since known as Taylor’s Lick. He had raised his gun & was just about to draw trigger when another gun fired.

Taylor ran back to the camp, cried “Indians! Indians!” and flew on his horse to Bush’s Station. John Rankin interview, Draper MSS 11 CC 82.

²⁴ Old Virginia Grants 3:212, 12:125, 14:45; Old Kentucky Grants 14:95, 16:159, 17:484; Clark County Deed Book 7:179, 507, 8:53.

²⁵ Clark County Deposition Book, p. 206; Clark County Deed Book 6:131; G. Glenn Clift, *“Second Census” of Kentucky, 1800* (Frankfort, 1954).

²⁶ Clark County Marriage Bonds, 1797, 1813, 1819. Dr. Thomas Hinde was born in England, educated in London, and commissioned a surgeon in the Royal Navy. In 1765 he settled in Virginia, where he became a friend and physician to Patrick Henry. Hinde served as a surgeon in the Virginia army throughout the Revolutionary War, and subsequently relocated to Clark County on a 1,000-acre tract located on Todd's Road, near the intersection of Basin Springs and Venable roads. Hannah Hinde married Rev. Williams Kavanaugh in 1798. He died in 1806, leaving his widow with six small children. A. H. Redford, *Life and Times of H. H. Kavanaugh, D. D.* (Nashville, 1884), pp. 22-24, 40-49.

²⁷ A. H. Redford, *Life and Times of H. H. Kavanaugh, D. D.* (Nashville, 1884), pp. 49-50, 52.

²⁸ Clark County Deed Book 6:131.

²⁹ John Martin to Orson Martin, 105 acres, June 1798, Clark County Deed Book 3:463.

³⁰ *Kentucky Gazette*, October 6, 1800.

³¹ Marion N. Rawson, *Little Old Mills* (New York, 1935), p. 266. In some areas "fulling" was pronounced as fullin', due to the Southern tendency to drop our g's.

³² Clark County Order Book 2:240, 256, 3:115. John Martin's Mill was known by the names of its subsequent owners, John Holder and Matthew Patton.

³³ *Kentucky Gazette*, April 16, 1802; Arthur McFarlan, *Geology of Kentucky* (Lexington; 1943), p. 12; Charles Richardson, *The Building Stones of Kentucky* (Frankfort; 1923), p. 125.

³⁴ Clark County Deed Book 4:487.

³⁵ *Kentucky Gazette*, April 16, 1802.

³⁶ *Orson Martin vs. William Taylor*, Clark Circuit Court, Civil Cases, 1804; *Orson Martin vs William Taylor*, Clark Circuit Court Order Book A, p. 167. Orson Martin sued William Taylor for slander. Martin's complaint stated that he was "a good, true, pious, faithful and honest citizen," etc. and had never been "suspected to be guilty of felony arson," and that nevertheless, William Taylor in the year 1803 did say "that he hath just cause to suspect and doth suspect that Orson Martin, Blacksmith of the County aforesaid, did feloniously, voluntarily and maliciously burn his grist mill house." And that at another time, Taylor pronounced in the presence of diverse other good Citizens "that burning his mill was not the worse the said plaintiff had done." Martin's complaint was filed in July 1803 by Henry Clay; the defendant's attorney, J. Bledsoe, entered a not guilty plea at the August term 1803.

The case was continued a number of times and then dismissed by agreement at the July term 1804. "This day came the parties aforesaid in their own proper person and they agree that this Suit shall be Dismissed. Therefore It is considered by the Court that the same be done accordingly and that each party pay his own costs."

³⁷ *Kentucky Gazette*, July 12, 1803. The ad read in full:

For Sale. 200 Acres of Land, a good fulling Mill with all its utensils on Howard's creek, Clarke county. Also, a first rate Seat for a Merchant, with the Dam and Race and a place for the Mill all ready, and plenty of Stone on the spot for building. A good Dwelling House and Still House and other improvements. Excellent Springs that never fail. There is 21 feet fall can be had and plenty of water in the season for two pair of stones. It is within two miles of Boonsborough and the same of Combs's ware-house, and good waggon roads to each. Some indulgence can be given the purchaser and part property taken. A general warranty deed will be given, and further particulars

made known by the subscriber, living on the place. Wm. Taylor N.B. The Fulling Business will still be carried on as usual.

In speaking of his Merchant Mill, Taylor states that “the Dam and Race and a place for the Mill all ready.” This raises another possibility: the mill that burned could have been a newly erected merchant mill. It might make more sense for a competitor to burn a new merchant mill rather than an old country mill. Orson Martin’s own mill was of the “merchant” variety, originally built in 1796 but not completed until 1801. Clark County Order Book 2:113; Clark County Deed Book 4:285.

³⁸ Taylor gave notice to the Bryan family in the *Gazette* in February, petitioned the court to issue the deed in May, and the court recorded the deed in August. *Kentucky Gazette*, February 23, 1808; Clark County Order Book 4:252; Clark County Deed Book 6:304.

³⁹ Clark County Order Book 4:327, 337.

⁴⁰ Clark County Circuit Court Order Book D:137, 156, 198, 210, 266, 285.

⁴¹ William Littell, *Statute Law of Kentucky, Volume 4* (Frankfort, 1806-1819), p. 19.

⁴² Clark County Circuit Court Order Book D:286.

⁴³ Clark County Marriage Bonds, 1813.

⁴⁴ This date was given in Hannah Hinde’s obituary in the *Louisville and Nashville Christian Advocate*, February 26, 1852.

⁴⁵ Clark County Order Book 5:170, 204; Clark County Will Book 3:344, 367, 4:232.

⁴⁶ Clark County Order Book 5:336, 337. Hannah was also appointed guardian for Hubbard H., Thomas, LeRoy, Mary, Benjamin and Williams Kavanaugh, the children of her first husband Williams Kavanaugh. Her brother John W. Hinde was again her security. Although it may seem surprising, widows were seldom appointed guardians of their own children, the courts leaning to the view that a male’s oversight and protection was needed for the “orphans” in a society that provided limited economic rights to women.

⁴⁷ *Winchester Advertiser*, August 19, 1814.

⁴⁸ *Kentucky Advertiser*, November 28, 1816.

⁴⁹ Redford, *Life and Times of H. H. Kavanaugh*, pp. 49-50. “William died before he was grown, and Edmund remained with her at home, full of attention and kindness, until her third marriage; her second husband having died in 1814. She remained a widow for two or three years, and was again married, to Mr. Valentine Martin, by which marriage she had two daughters, Martha and Ann Southgate.”

Edmund’s birth date is based on his age given in the U.S. Population Census, Clark County, Kentucky, 1850, 1860. Edmund was listed as a “farmer & miller” in the 1860 census.

The Clark County Chronicles reported that Edmund Todd Taylor, son of Hannah Hinde Kavanaugh Taylor Martin, “owned and operated the old Taylor mill on Lower Howard’s Creek and was for many years a magistrate from the old Germantown precinct, and served four years during the Civil war as county judge of Clark county.” *Winchester Sun*, May 17, 1923.

⁵⁰ Clark County Deed Book 33:286. The deed was signed by Valentine Martin and Hannah Martin.

⁵¹ Hannah’s obituary in *Louisville and Nashville Christian Advocate*, February 26, 1852.

⁵² U.S. Manufacturers Census, Clark County, Kentucky, 1850, 1860.

⁵³ Clark County Deed Book 35:201, 39:22. In 1849, Edmund W. Hockaday had bought Thomas Vivion's woolen factory in Factory Bottom. It is not apparent how a new dam on West Fork could have affected a road on Lower Howard's Creek (from Taylor's Mill to Hockaday's woolen factory). The dam could have altered a road up West Fork, however, which raises the possibility that Hockaday also had a mill on West Fork.

⁵⁴ Charles Lyddane, "History of Lower Howard's Creek," in *Clark County Republican*, April 15, 1916. Lyddane lived on Lower Howard's Creek and knew both Edmund and his son William.

⁵⁵ E. A. Hewitt, "Topographical Map of the Counties of Bourbon, Fayette, Clark, Jessamine and Woodford, Kentucky from Actual Surveys" (New York; 1861); D. G. Beers and J. Lanagan, *Atlas of Bourbon, Clark, Fayette, Jessamine and Woodford Counties, Kentucky* (Philadelphia; 1877).

⁵⁶ *Clark County Republican*, April 15, 1916.

⁵⁷ Joe Kendall Neel, *Lower Howard's Creek, A Biological Survey* (Master's Thesis, University of Kentucky; 1938). Neel had one of his collecting stations at "the remains of the pond of Taylor's Mill" on the main stem of Howard's Creek. The pond was "70 to 120 feet wide, 700 feet long, and 1½ to almost 6 feet deep."

⁵⁸ U.S. Manufacturers Census, Clark County, Kentucky, 1870.

⁵⁹ U.S. Manufacturers Census, Clark County, Kentucky, 1880.

⁶⁰ Clark County Will Book 29:208; Kathryn Owen and Ann P. Couey, *Early Winchester Cemetery Inscriptions* (Winchester, 1983).

⁶¹ Clark County Deed Book 87:147.