

The

Crestwood Story

50

50th Anniversary

COMMEMORATIVE EDITION



Virgin wilderness in the Crestwood Area. Drawing of a portion of Whitecliff Park by G. Bulle.

Introduction

The land comprising the area where the City of Crestwood now stands and the unincorporated areas known as Sappington, Gravois and Grantwood was (like other cities or areas) in the beginning inhabited by the Indians. Before the coming of the white settler, the areas mentioned were peopled by prairie Indians including Dakotas, Osage, Shawnee and Missouri. These tribes farmed the area and did not move from place to place too frequently. It has been reported the Indians in the St. Louis County area "numbered 450 souls in 1811."

However, the area was frequented by other Indian visitors who regularly used the "river highways" such as the Meramec, the Missouri and the Mississippi to travel from place to place. It has been reported mound-building Indians were in the area around Fenton because two big mounds were found in Fenton in the early 1800's.

The Crestwood area was also a good place for fresh spring water because there are three active known springs and possibly many others used by these Indians as they made their way through or settled temporarily in the area.

Arrowheads and other Indian artifacts have been found close to the spring located behind the Goetz Nursery property north of Highway 366 (formerly Highway 66 or Watson Road). Spear-making and uten-

sil-making sites have been discovered near the Meramec River. Other Indian tribes who are mentioned as being in or near the Crestwood area at one time or another include Illinois, Delaware, Greater and Lesser Osage, Fox, Sauk, Ohio, Miami, Peoria, Padukah, Mascoux, Pawnee, Kickapoo, Winnebago and Potawatomi.

This territory remained in the hand of the Indians until France took possession of it in 1682 as part of the French territory of Louisiana. The vast lands west of the Mississippi were transferred to Spain in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris, but in 1800 it was ceded back to France. As President Thomas Jefferson attempted to purchase New Orleans and West Florida, he found Napoleon of France willing to sell all French land in America. In 1803 the United States bought all the territory from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains for \$15,000,000.

March 9, 1804, became known as "the Day of the Three Flags" for St. Louis. The Spanish, French and American flags were raised and lowered over the fort in a span of 24 hours as the territory officially changed hands.

Missouri applied for statehood in 1818 and became a State in 1821. St. Louis County was organized on October 1, 1812.

Chapter 1

Early Pioneers

John Sappington Family

One of the earliest known land owners and settlers in the Crestwood area was John Sappington, eldest

son of John and Margaret Sappington, who was born September 3, 1753. According to The Sappington Genealogy, Missouri Historical Society Archives, John and his brothers Hartley, James and Richard

were recruited in Washington County, Pennsylvania, in 1775 to serve in the Revolutionary War. All four brothers have been identified with the 13th Virginia Regiment and John fought under Nathaniel Greene in the Battle of Brandywine, September 11, 1777, and was at Valley Forge in 1778 as a bodyguard to General George Washington. John was present at the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, October 10, 1781.

After his marriage to Jemima Fowler, John is said to have lived in Ohio County, Virginia, where four children were born — Zephaniah, Thomas, Mark and Margaret. In 1786, John and Jemima sold their property in Virginia and moved to Kentucky. In 1787, John was chosen one of the Trustees of Boonesborough, Kentucky, and is reported to have served in the House of Representatives in 1797. Fourteen children were born to them while they lived in Kentucky.

There are almost as many versions as to when John Sappington came to the Crestwood area as the man had children. One recollection states John and his entire family of 18 children came to the area now known as Sappington between Gravois Road and Eddie & Park Road in Carondelet Township. John had received a 600-acre grant from the Government of the new Louisiana Purchase Territory. He and his family built over 40 cabins on the tract (no doubt to make sure of their claim) and John returned to Kentucky to lead a wagon train of relatives and associates to the new territory. In this group were the Sales, Tesson and Pipkin families who later played an important role in the area's growth.

The Sappington Geneology in the Archives of the Missouri Historical Society states John came to the area in 1804 and bought a Spanish Land Grant from Pierre Didier one mile by three miles or 1920 acres. It was here he built a house. In 1805, he returned to Kentucky and brought his family, along with 40 other families, back to the area where they established a trading post.

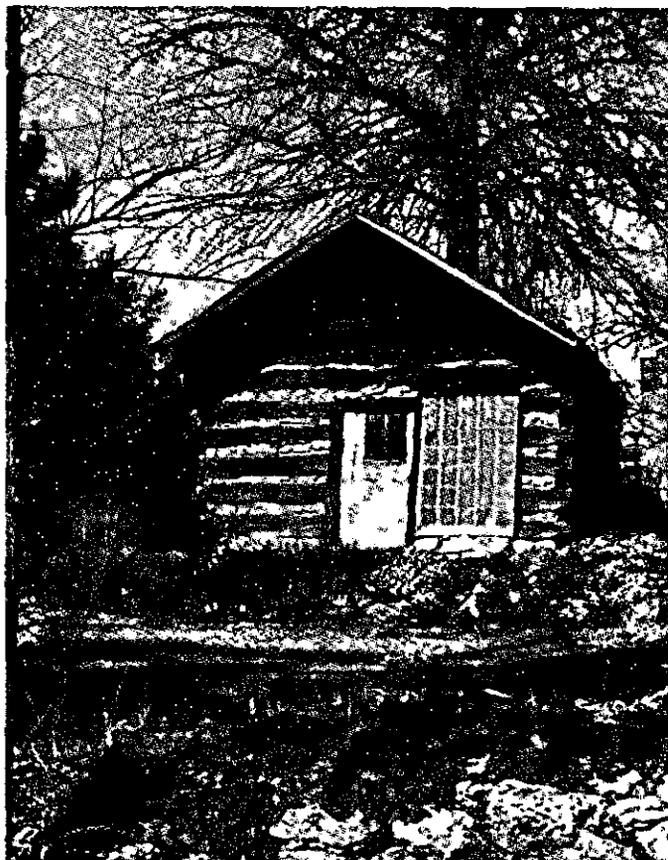
Another version is in 1805 John sent his sons Zephaniah and Thomas and son-in-law Jonah Parke to the Louisiana Territory to buy property and in 1806 they sold out in Kentucky and moved to the new location.

In a search of old titles, the earliest land transaction recorded was that of United States Survey No. 1936 sold to John Sappington by Peter Didier for a fee of \$800, a total of 800 arpents approximately 681 acres. This land purchase was confirmed April 28, 1816, by an Act of Congress one year after John died. Survey 1936 according to old township maps covers a majority of the land now incorporated in the City of Crestwood. The Thomas Sappington House, built or construction begun in 1808, lies within this survey. However, the Zephaniah Sappington house built between 1815 and 1820 along Gravois Road is not in this survey tract. Some historians say John lived along the Gravois and owned land there. Before his death John lived in a log

cabin south of Highway 366, across and up the hill from Sappington Cemetery.

In a Sappington Family History compiled by Mrs. Ada H. Buxton, she states John Sappington built a log cabin just two hills west of Gravois Creek on the old Gravois Trail. The history goes on to say John returned to Kentucky and in the following spring brought his wife and children to this new territory. He purchased a Spanish Land Grant one mile wide by three miles on Gravois Trail. Tradition has it he paid a gallon of whiskey to the Indians for each of the 1,920 acres of land bought.

Early St. Louis County historians record John Sappington, Jr., erected a horse-mill for grinding grain, the first in the Carondelet Township. During the 19th century Carondelet Township which took its name from Baron Carondelet, was considered the southwestern township of St. Louis County. The township of Central and the City of St. Louis were on its northern boundary, St. Louis City and the Mississippi River bounded it on the east and the Meramec River formed its southern and southwestern boundary. A portion of Bonhomme Township was directly west. As originally laid out, Carondelet Township included congressional townships 42, 43 and 44 north, ranges 6 and 7 east; but when the town of Carondelet was absorbed by St. Louis, the City of St. Louis extended its limits to include a large portion of the township. During the 1800's,



Original slave house on Z. Sappington property, now owned by J. Dressel. Photo by N. Wasson.

Gravois Creek was considered the northern part of the township and since a portion of the City of Crestwood is in the Gravois Creek basin, Carondelet Township included part of Crestwood.

The settlement of Carondelet Township was begun when the country was under Spanish rule. Many early settlers received or bought Spanish Land Grants and came to the area to develop farms and stock pastures as well as grist and saw mills.

Zephaniah Sappington, eldest son of John Sappington, also built a grist mill of "two-horse" power. Zephaniah was married to Margaret Parke before moving to the Gravois area or Carondelet Township. After serving in the War of 1812 in which he was involved in minor combat with the Indians around the area of Fort Mason, Illinois, Zephaniah returned home to his wife after the customary militia enlistment "hitch" of three months. Between the years 1815 and 1820, he built a log home along Gravois Road. Historians cannot be sure if his father lived in the house. However, it seems unlikely because John died in 1815. The two-story house made of large oak logs with huge fireplaces and chimneys at both ends is still standing although it has been covered with white boards. (More on this historic house later.)

Although John Sappington has been described as a wealthy man, his will shows he was practical and frugal. His first request was that he be buried "decently without any funeral oration." Secondly, he asked his honest debts be paid and "my little moiety is to be disposed of as follows: The moiety that I bequeath to my beloved sons Zephaniah, Thomas and Mark, namely the land they live on — two hundred arpens each with all its appurtenancies if confirmed." John Sappington requested his stock be sold except for four cows and their calves and they should be

divided between Resin and Richard when "they quit living together." He asked that there shall be two work horses left on the place with all the farming "utensils." Richard to have two plows and Resin to have two plows.

John gave Margaret Parke, Drusella Kinkead, Elizabeth Long, Mary Wells and Jemima Mason \$20 each and to his son John a negro girl named Maria and to Hartley a negro girl named Caster. He also stated that Resin and Richard have the remainder of the land they presently lived on, Richard to inherit the upper half and Resin the lower half. To his four youngest unmarried daughters, Patience, Rebecca, Nancy and Eleanor, he left \$120 each. Zephaniah and Thomas were named sole executors of his will dated May 1815 signed in the presence of subscribing witnesses: Joseph Wells, Joseph Sappington and John Sappington.

Thomas Sappington, second oldest son of John and Jemima Sappington, was born January 11, 1783. In a History of St. Louis County, it is reported Thomas married Mary Ann Kinkead on October 27, 1808, and their marriage is the first recorded marriage in the book in St. Louis County. The record of this marriage appears on the book as being in Bonhomme Township. Thomas was a lieutenant in the War of 1812 and received a letter of commendation from Major McNair, his commander at Fort Mason. Tomas was "applauded for his accustomed courage, caution and humanity" in the face of war's dangers and uncertainties. Like his brother, Thomas withdrew from active service in late 1812, but remained on call.

The Thomas Sappington House at 1015 South Sappington Road was built by slave labor about 1809 from plans brought by horseback from Kentucky. It is considered by architects as a prime example of the Federal architecture of the Maryland and Virginia



Thomas Sappington House, drawing by G. Bulle.

colonies and most unusual in Missouri at the time it was built. In contrast to the date it was built, the Missouri Historical Society's Portfolio of St. Louis Old Houses records: "The Thomas Sappington house, a two-story brick house of federal architecture, a style used between 1750 and 1830, was built by Thomas in 1816 and has hand-turned molding and the mantle is hand carved."

The City of Crestwood now owns the Thomas Sappington House and the 2.2 acre park site where it is located. The City purchased the House in 1961 and with the help of St. Louis County and a Sappington House Restoration Committee chaired by Mrs. Walter Buxton, a descendant of the Sappington family; Mrs. Audrey A. Walsh, Alderman; Mrs. William A. McDonnell, director of restoration; Mayor Paul T. Koenig and William Bodley Lane, architect, the house was restored. It was opened to the public in July, 1966. On June 28, 1974, the house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thomas Sappington died May 15, 1860. Among the papers with the geneology of the Sappington family is a copy of the following obituary: "Thomas Sappington died Tuesday morning May 15 at 5 o'clock at his residence in Gravois of bilious fever, age 77 years. He was a noted pioneer of the west having emigrated with his brothers from Lexington, Kentucky, to St. Louis, Upper Louisiana, in the spring of 1804, settling upon the tract of land upon which he lived and died for 56 years. He was an officer under Major McNair in 1814-15, passed through the perils at Cap Au Grist, Fort Mason, Quiver on Loutre Island and the rough marshes of Calhoun County and Illinois. He was an associate of the Ramseys, Boones, Harrisons, Whitesides and Longs in the early struggles in Upper Louisiana from savage and hostile bands of redmen. Such was the confidence reposed in his courage and patriotism he received as follows the complimentary note from General McNair.

"Sir: Therefore to you and you only can I be fully justified in entrusting this perilous adventure with your accustomed courage, caution and humanity; take the Doctor (Farrer) and my assurances that we expect such success will crown your little spartan band of St. Louisians. Alexander M. McNair, Commander, Fort Mason.'

"Thomas Sappington, that spirited soldier and quiet citizen, is now no more. Gone to meet officers and brother soldiers in another field. To meet again his old Revolutionary father, his brothers and sisters who have gone before him. He leaves four orphan children of his second marriage to mourn his loss. Rest in Peace."

According to a History of St. Louis County, the Sappington who is looked upon as the head of the wide-spreading family in St. Louis County was John Sappington, Jr., who was "familiarly and affectionately termed Uncle Jack" by all the clan. He came to this

area when he was 16 years of age with his father, John, and his 17 brothers and sisters. Uncle Jack is said to have settled down on the land extending northwesterly from the Gravois Road and, crossing the Watson, reached to the Big Bend near Kirkwood.

In June, 1812, Uncle Jack answered the call to arms for "home and country" as did his two older brothers. His recruiting officer was Nathan Boone, son of the famous old frontiersman, Daniel Boone. In May of 1812, Captain Nathan Boone had been commissioned by the President to raise a company of rangers for 12 months' service. Included in this group was John Sappington, Jr. Headquarters of the Boone unit was Portage des Sioux but the patrolling of the unit carried John as far west as Loutre Island and as far to the northeast as Fort Mason.

After his period of enlistment expired in June, 1813, John returned home but only for a short time. According to author-historian, Wilbur Morse Shankland, Ed.D., "Conditions were still troubled on the frontier and hostilities threatened. Once again young Jack was called to take up arms, and in August, 1813, he joined McNair's Mounted Riflemen of the Missouri Militia that was to take part in what was then called the 'O-P Campaign,' better known today as the Second Expedition Against the Peoria Indians under General Benjamin Howard." Young Jack has been described as being "in the lead" when the Missouri Mounted Rangers swam their horses across the Mississippi River to join 400 Illinois troops from Camp Russell.

With the war behind him, Jack returned to the area and on January 8, 1815, he married Sarah Wells. He had previously purchased a tract of land near the Sappington Post Office and he subsequently added to this other parcels of land totaling 2,000 acres. In 1815, he established a tannery on his farm which over the years reached a capacity of 30 vats. He also built and operated a large treadmill for grinding grain and sawing lumber with his nephew, Jonah Sappington, son of Zephaniah Sappington.



Inside view of Joseph Sappington House as it appears today, drawing by G. Bulle.

However, Uncle Jack was first and foremost a farmer. He discontinued his tannery business in 1845 and devoted himself to farming during the remainder of his life. He was very interested in the advancement of agriculture and was active in the organization of the Agricultural and Mechanical Association. In 1859, he received from the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association a premium for "The Model Farm" because of the remarkable perfection to which he had brought his agricultural capabilities.

In 1836, Uncle Jack was chosen an elector from the third electoral district. He along with other electors from the state cast the vote of the State of Missouri for Van Buren and Johnson. He was active in Whig politics and was three times chosen to represent St. Louis County in the State Legislature.

One biographer reports he and wife had 11 children. Another account says he had five children. He died March 17, 1864.

Joseph Wells Family

Another early settler "on the Gravois" was Joseph Wells who came to St. Louis County in 1806 and settled on the western part of Survey No. 9. Very little is known about Joseph except he was born in Pennsylvania on October 25, 1766, and served with his father Richard Wells in the 13th Virginia Regiment during the Revolutionary War. Old John Sappington was also in this regiment. However, it cannot be verified whether the two men knew each other during the war or if they met later when they settled in Kentucky. However, it can be said the two men did know each other after settling in the area. Joseph Wells' name appears as a witness to the will of John Sappington. His son, Richard Wells, who served in the War of 1812 during the Second Expedition Against the Peoria Indians with young Jack Sappington, married Mary Sappington, the daughter of John Sappington. Jack Sappington's wife, Sarah Wells, was his daughter.

Joseph Sappington

Interesting challenges presented themselves to this editor when researching the booklet. One of them was the Joseph Sappington House presently lived in and owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Lubbock. This house is located off Baptist Church Road on Clearwater Lane. The name of Joseph Sappington became a challenge

when going over the John Sappington geneology because there is no mention of a Joseph Sappington except for a Joseph who was a grandson of old John Sappington and a grandfather of a Crestwood resident, Mrs. Ada Buxton.

However, it can be verified a Joseph Sappington was in the area between the years 1815 and 1821. The will of John Sappington written before his death in 1815 was witnessed by Joseph Sappington and a petition dated May 23, 1818, asking for a road or highway from Resin Sappington's horse mill to the mill belonging to Wilson P. Hunt on River Des Peres and from thence to the town of St. Louis was signed by Joseph Sappington. Lubbock also has proof Joseph Sappington bought 312 acres in the vicinity of the house on May 9, 1821. Also, in researching Joseph Wells' family, it was discovered his daughter Elizabeth married a Joseph Sappington, but no date of the marriage is given.

According to Lubbock, the Joseph Sappington house began as a two-story log cabin built about 1809 possibly as early as 1804. Although Joseph Sappington did not acquire the property until 1821, he could have lived on the land and built the house long before gaining title to the property. The name of J. Sappington appears on Township plats covering the area where the house now stands during the 1800s.

The house is built of mostly oak logs with a fieldstone foundation. The chimneys were originally mortared with clay. Lubbock said the original log roof rafters, removed when the second floor was refurbished, were apparently "prefabricated" on the grounds. Each was notched and the peg holes drilled before they were put into place as each was numbered in pairs with Roman numerals.

This house became the property of a Rott family in the mid-1800s and of the Hertel family about 1915. The Lubbock family bought the house in 1953 and at that time all interior log construction and rockwork were covered with plaster except in the dining room where the interior was narrow wood paneling varnished with an imitation grain. Since that time the Lubbocks have restored the dining room, the center room and the north room. The original fieldstone fireplaces are now visible.

Jonah Parke Family

According to records, Jonah Parke, husband of Margaret Sappington, was a pioneer from Madison County, Kentucky, in 1804 and in 1807 or 1808 he "took up" residence on Survey No. 2995 and "enjoyed a long and happy life, loved and honored by all who knew him." Their children were Catherine (who married Stephen Smith of Carondelet), Greene, Resin and