

U. S. Census
1850

THE LOUISA COUNTY HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

Volume 1

December 1969

Number 2

CONTENTS

Boswell's Tavern	39
by <i>Kathleen Richardson Perkins</i>	
McGehee Family Record and Notes	42
by <i>George H. S. King</i>	
A Prescription for Fever	50
Sheriff Joseph Bickley and the First Jail	51
by <i>Josephine Henderson Neal</i>	
The Louisa County Standard Measure	55
by <i>Porter C. Wright</i>	
Oakland Cemetery Tombstone Inscriptions	57
contributed by <i>Porter C. Wright</i>	
The Will of David Yancey	72
To Make 15 Gall ^s . Small Beer	74
United States Census 1850 – Louisa County	75
Secretary's Report	90
New Members	91
Necrology	

*Published semi-annually by the Louisa County Historical Society
P. O. Box 111, Louisa, Virginia 23093*

Subscription: \$5.00. Single copy: \$2.50, Non-members. \$1.25, Members

The Society does not assume responsibility for statements of fact
or of opinion made by contributors.

Second class postage paid at Louisa, Virginia

Cover: Louisa County Courthouse 1818-1905

SHERIFF JOSEPH BICKLEY AND THE FIRST JAIL

by Josephine Henderson Neal
Louisa, Virginia

The sheriff's position in Colonial Virginia was one of prominence and responsibility as evidenced by George Webb's writings and compilation of laws in 1734. The sheriff according to Webb

. . . is an Officer of great Antiquity, to whom, long before the Conquest of *England* by the *Normans*, the Government and Conservation of the Peace of his County was committed by the King: . . . Between 31 *January* and 31 *March*, Annually, every County Court of this Dominion [Virginia] must recommend Three Justices of their County, to the Governor, who thereupon grants his Commission to One of the Persons recommended, to be Sheriff of that County . . . Every Person appointed Sheriff before he is sworn and before he executes his Office, must give Bond with Two Sureties, in 1000 *l Sterling* . . .¹

At the first Court for Louisa County, held on December 13, 1742, Joseph Bickley, Gentlemen, together with John Carr and John Poindexter, Gentlemen, his sureties, produced a Commission from the Hon. Lt. Governor of Virginia dated 5th November 1742 appointing him sheriff of said County. He took the oath appointed by Act of Parliament to be taken instead of the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy and also the Oath of Abjuration and subscribed the same and the Test and then had the Oath of Sheriff administered unto him.² When Joseph Bickley qualified as sheriff, he appointed Charles Smith his under-sheriff; and Smith was so sworn and admitted by the Court.³

Joseph Bickley was a responsible member of the community. He was serving as a Justice of the Peace on the first Court for Louisa County at the time of his sheriff's appointment.⁴ As mentioned, being a justice was requisite for appointment as sheriff. He served as overseer of a road as at the same Court which appointed him sheriff, Benjamin Dumas was appointed overseer of the road in place of Joseph Bickley.⁵

Joseph Bickley acquired land and established his home in Louisa County before 1742 when the county was formed from Hanover. The neighborhood near Joseph Bickley's home, now known as the "Bickley neighborhood," lies on the north side of the South Anna River just off State Route 659. The road, known here as Price's Road, leads from Louisa Courthouse to Bells X Roads. A secondary road, Route 642, leads off from this road just east of Ruffner's Bridge, runs parallel to the South Anna River, and meets Route 632 at Waldrops Chapel. There are a number of Bickley descendants still living in this neighborhood.

Sheriff Joseph Bickley and the First Jail

Three children of the late Edwin C. Bickley, Mrs. Nannie Bickley Waldrop, age 99, Mr. Arthur Bickley, age 88, and Mr. Humphrey Cleaveland Bickley, age 85, live at the home of their father in the Bickley neighborhood on Route 642. Mr. Humphrey Cleaveland Bickley recalls that as a small boy he had gone with an old man named White to the site of the first jail on the old Joseph Bickley place and that some of the foundation rocks were then visible in an open field. His brother and sister say they have always heard that the first jail was located at the spot described.⁶ The place is now owned by their niece Mrs. Lorena Houchens Payne, daughter of Bessie Bickley and T. J. Houchens.

Between the Edwin Bickley place and the Payne property is the farm of Humphrey Bickley, Sr., great-grandfather of the above Bickleys, now owned by Mr. Claude Bickley. The house, although not the first erected on the site, is quite old with dormer windows on the rear portion and a two story frame portion on the front.

The Payne property, located on Route 642, is the site mentioned as "the old Joseph Bickley place."⁷ The present house is located a short distance from the road on a picturesque hill overlooking the lowlands of the South Anna River. Mrs. Payne says that at least two other houses have occupied the site and that one, which had been an addition to an older house, had a cellar over which the present house was built.⁸ In front of the house site is an old cemetery, surrounded by the remnants of a rock wall, in which there are a number of graves but no tombstones. In a field a short distance to the left of the house, as it is approached from the road, is the site of the first jail.

It would seem from county records that the jail on Bickley's property was used from the time the county was formed until 1745. An order entered by the court at the first session directed the sheriff to give public notice for workmen to appear at the next court to be held for the county in order to undertake the building of a prison.⁹ Then, on January 10, 1743, John Taite was awarded a contract to build a prison according to "proposals this day made."¹⁰ The exact nature of the proposals was not recorded. In April 1743, the court ordered John Carr in presence of the sheriff to mark off the prison bounds not to exceed ten acres.¹¹ The location was not specified. On September 24, 1745, commissioners, previously appointed, made a report to the court designating the prison bounds as follows: "Beginning at a spring¹² and including the Court-house, Ordinary and other outhouses and both paths leading to the spring and including same."¹³ It seems that then the jail at Bickley's was abandoned. Matthew Jouett had obtained a license to operate an

Sheriff Joseph Bickley and the First Jail

ordinary at his building adjoining his home at the first court, which was held at his home. Evidently a courthouse had been built prior to the order setting the prison bounds. Also, at the September 24, 1745 court, Joseph Bickley, Sheriff, came into court and objected to the sufficiency of the prison and the court answered thus: "There was a building just finished and bounds well marked by blazed trees and chops."¹⁴ From a plat, which specifies the metes and bounds, it would seem that the building was located on the opposite side of the street from the present county buildings.¹⁵

At the November 26, 1745 Court, Ambrose Joshua Smith was appointed sheriff and Charles Smith was reappointed deputy sheriff.¹⁶

¹George Webb, *The Office and Authority of a Justice of Peace*, William Parks, Williamsburg, 1734, pp. 292-306.

²*Louisa County Order Book 1*, p. 2.

³*Ibid.* p. 3.

⁴Josephine Henderson Neal, "The Genesis of Louisa County", *The Louisa County Historical Magazine*, Vol. 1, p. 3.

⁵*Louisa County Order Book 1*, p. 5.

⁶Interview by the author, accompanied by Mrs. Bertha Bickley Forsythe and Mrs. C. M. Bickley, with Mrs. Nannie Bickley Waldrop, Mr. Arthur Bickley, and Mr. Humphrey Cleaveland Bickley in July 1969.

⁷This place is only a short distance from Old Byrd Mill which had operated since the early 1700's until it burned in December 1968.

⁸Interview with Mrs. Lorena Houchins Payne in July 1969.

⁹*Louisa County Order Book 1*, p. 3.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹*Ibid.* p. 31.

¹²It is interesting to note that this spring, so often mentioned in the records as "Courthouse spring," is the same large spring now furnishing the greater part of the water for the town of Louisa.

¹³*Ibid.* p. 168.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Louisa County Judgements, September Term, 1775.*

¹⁶*Louisa County Order Book 1*, p. 174.