

# Glimpses of Bullitt County history: A troubling story

BY CHARLES HARTLEY  
LOCAL HISTORIAN

This troubling story begins on a 200 acre farm located in southern Jefferson County near what was known as the Fishpools. It was likely here that a boy to be known as Caleb was born in 1793 to a woman bound in slavery to a farmer named James Quertermous.

James and Elizabeth Quertermous had five children of their own including Elisha, Rhoda, Nancy Ann, James Jr., and Sarah Jane who would marry Jesse Willson and have a baby they named Thomas Quertermous Willson before Sarah died at 16, likely while giving birth.

From what records I could find it appears that James was much older than Elizabeth, as he was about 85 when he wrote his will in 1803.

In it he wrote, "I leave and bequeath unto my beloved wife Elizabeth the three negroes named Easter, Caleb and Adam with the one-third part of the land I now live on in her lifetime; also all the rest of my personal property; at my wife's death to be equally divided amongst the 4 children and grandson, Thomas Willson."

After detailing what his children were to receive, he wrote, "My wife Elizabeth is to do or dispose of at her death with the three negroes as she pleases."

James lived a bit longer, dying in 1809 at the age of 91. His will was probated without any issues, and Elizabeth continued to live on the farm until her death in 1823 at the age of 77.

Shortly before her death, Elizabeth dictated her own will. In it she decreed "First, I give and bequeath to my daughter Nancy Brown my negro woman Esther and my riding saddle."

She then decreed, "I leave my negro man Caleb to be hired in service for the term of four years and no longer and at the expiration of said term the said negro man Caleb is to be emancipated and set at liberty."

The third slave Adam had already died.

By now Caleb was

thirty years old, having spent his entire life as a slave to one family. It seems likely that Elizabeth told him of the arrangements concerning him in her will, so he now could look forward to freedom in just four more years.

Elizabeth's grandson, Thomas Q. Willson, was appointed as the administrator of her estate. Among the obligations against her estate was the claim of a bond given to Henry Robb signed by both James Quertermous and his son, James Jr., who was also now dead. Robb had transferred this bond to a man named John Murphy who now pressed a claim for its payment in the Jefferson Circuit Court.

No one from the family appeared in court to defend against the claim, and the court was obligated by law to rule in favor of Murphy, and order the sheriff to sell property owned by the family to pay this supposed debt.

Because of other prior claims on the estate, the only property left to be sold was Caleb who had been hired out to work in Bullitt County.

Caleb was sold to Ephraim K. Willson, a half-brother to James Q. Willson. Ephraim then sold Caleb to Abraham Field.

Thus the day in which Caleb should have been freed came and went, and he remained a slave.

A dozen years passed until 1838 when Caleb, now 45 years old, was somehow able to find a lawyer who would plead his case.

In April 1838, William R. Grigsby appeared before the Bullitt Circuit Court to present Caleb's plea for his freedom. The court was not sympathetic to his plea, and the case was dismissed.

Caleb then, through his lawyer, asked for an appeal to the State Court of Appeals. Grigsby put up the fee required by law, and the court, having no choice, granted the appeal.

Grigsby was joined by J. T. Morehead before the Court of Appeals where they sought to show that the Circuit

Court ruling should be overturned.

A careful reading of the court's decision suggests that the court would have preferred to let the lower court's ruling stand, but for two things.

First, it seemed clear to the court that the suit by Murphy in Jefferson Circuit Court had been based on fraudulent claims, and that Caleb should never have been sold for that reason.

Second, the court ruled that Elizabeth had a legal right to emancipate Caleb, and that such emancipation precluded him being sold for any such debt.

Their decision concluded with the statement, "The decree of the Circuit Court is reversed, and the cause remanded, with instructions to render a decree liberating Caleb from servitude to Field."

With this decree in hand the Bullitt Circuit Court in July 1840 ordered "that the complainant Caleb be forever liberated and discharged from servitude to the said Abraham Field; and that the said Caleb be and he is hereby decreed to be a free man entitled to all the privileges guaranteed to free men of color by the laws of this Commonwealth."

While the laws of Kentucky still limited what Caleb could do in various circumstances as a "man of color," for the first time in his life he could now take charge of his own life.

The next record we have of Caleb, now known as Caleb Quertermous (sometimes spelled Catermas), is when he appears in the 1842 tax rolls as the owner of a slave valued at \$400. We've found no record of how he obtained this slave, but she was almost surely Rachael who appears with him in the 1850 census.

Perhaps they had been a couple in slavery, and he had managed to purchase her. We do find a mortgage deed between Caleb and Nathaniel Pike of Hardin County in which Caleb gives "a certain Negro woman slave named Rachael, about 42 years

old" as collateral for the payment of a debt.

In 1844 Caleb was taxed for a horse and mule valued at \$20, and in 1846, he had three horses or mules valued at \$75; but no slaves are mentioned, leading us to conclude that their relationship was that of husband and wife.

The 1850 census found Caleb and Rachel Caturmas as two of only a handful of "colored" folks listed by name. He was 57, she was 50, and they were listed on the same census page with William Hogland, Elisha Hardy, Pope Masden, George W. Hardy, James Shanklin, and John Masden, placing their home amongst these folks.

Life was not easy, but


they survived until the summer of 1854 when the terrible cholera epidemic struck Bullitt County. In the long list of deaths, on June 24 we find Caleb, age 60, listed as married and living along Long Lick.

Robert Simmons was appointed administrator of Caleb's estate; Wilhite Carpenter, William H. Lacey and David Henderson appraised it, listing that it included a two year old gray colt valued at \$40, a bay horse at \$60, a two horse wagon at \$18, a cow and calf at \$22, 20 hogs and 13 sows at \$47, one field of corn at \$45, another field of corn to be gathered at \$52.50, and one negro woman named Rachael at \$75, as well as

numerous items of little value. On the same day a sale was made of most items except no mention made of what was to become of Rachael.

In June 1856, the estate was finally settled. After paying a number of debts, and following the sale of Caleb's meager possessions, a balance of \$73.49 was left. This was paid to the state which collected estate proceeds when there was no heir, indicating that Rachael was either now dead, or was not considered his legal heir.

We should remember Caleb with admiration and respect for the challenges he overcame in a society that valued him only for the profit his labor brought them.



## LEGAL NOTICE

**Notice of Fiduciary Appointments**

Pursuant to KRS 424.340, notice is hereby given that the following fiduciary. Appointments have been made in the Bullitt District Court for one month immediately. Prior to this notice. All persons having claims against any of these estates may present. Them verified pursuant KRS 396.025 to the fiduciary or attorney named below within six months.

GARY ANDERSON JR	DECEASED	MARY ANDERSON, EXEC MICHAEL CONNELLY, ATTY 410 W CHESTNUT ST STE 552 LOUISVILLE KY 40202
RITA FLINT	DECEASED	TIMOTHY FLINT, EXEC ISABELLA GRIFFEE, EXEC 318 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
MARY VINCENT	DECEASED	DAIRL VINCENT, EXEC HAYDEN SWEAT, ATTY 318 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
MATHA TUCKER	DECEASED	STELLA EARL, EXEC WILLIAM HUTCHINS III, ATTY 107 MANOR AVE STE 202 BARDSTOWN KY 40004
CYNTHIA JOHNSON	DECEASED	DAVID BLACKLOCK, EXEC JOSHUA BERKLEY, ATTY 77 MACK WALTERS RD STE 200 SHELBYVILLE KY 40065
RONALD NAPLES	DECEASED	TAMMY NAPLES, EXEC 237 MALLARD POINTE BOULEVARD SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
MARILYN PRYOR	DECEASED	TRAVIS CARGILE, EXEC MARK EDISON, ATTY 178 COMBS COURT SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
PHILLIP WICKER	DECEASED	THOMAS WICKER, EXEC ISABELLA GRIFFEE, ATTY 318 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
CAROL KENNEY	DECEASED	AMY KOEHER, EXEC 288 S AUTUMN RIDGE DR MT WASHINGTON KY 40047
ROGER PICKETT	DECEASED	MELISSA LAYTHAM, CONNIE HATFIELD, CLIFTON PICKETT, EXEC 229 SPRUCE LANE, MT WASHINGTON, KY 40047
NANCY GRAHAM	DECEASED	146 CEADERVIEW DR, SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165 186 CENTERVIEW DR, SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165
TONY CRAIN	DECEASED	JESSICA BOLIN, ADMIN 4344 BEECH GROVE RD SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
THOMAS MATTINGLY JR	DECEASED	KELLY DAVIS, ADMIN RICHARD WILLIAMS, ATTY 830 BROOKLINE AVE LOUISVILLE KY 40215
LINDA BAYLOR	DECEASED	THOMAS MATTINGLY III KAREN BASHAM, CO-EXEC JON GREGORY JOYNER, ATTY 2300 HURSTBOURNE VILLAGE DR SUITE 700 LOUISVILLE, KY 40299
DONNA BONHAM	DECEASED	SHELLY STEWART, ADMIN ROY WELCH, ATTY PO BOX 157 SHEPHERDSVILLE, KY 40165
GLADYS KIMBLER	DECEASED	RONNIE BONHAM, ADMIN LINDA BULLOCK, ATTY 661 S. HURSTBOURNE PKWY SUITE 200 LOUISVILLE, KY 40222
SHERRY HUTCHINSON	DECEASED	MARK KIMBLER, ADMIN ROY WELCH, ATTY PO BOX 157 SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
JOHN GAINES JR	DECEASED	MELISSA HOPPER, EXEC HAYDEN SWEAT, ATTY 318 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
MELVIN YANKEY	DECEASED	JOHN GAINES III, EXEC SEAN LOHMAN, ATTY 730 W MARKET ST LOUISVILLE KY 40202
CAROL BURKHEAD	DECEASED	DOLLY COOMES, EXEC JAMES MILLER, ATTY 216 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
MICHAEL REITER	DECEASED	MICHAEL MULLINS, EXEC J. KEY SCHOEN, ATTY 5226 BARDSTOWN RD LOUISVILLE, KY 40291
SANDRA FREEDMAN	DECEASED	BRENDA REITER, EXEC J. KEY SCHOEN, ATTY 5226 BARDSTOWN RD LOUISVILLE, KY 40291
MARYROSE BEELER	DECEASED	TYLER HORN, EXEC P. KEVIN FORD, ATTY 161 ST. MATTHEWS AVE, SUITE 1 LOUISVILLE, KY 40207
PAMELA DENNISON-ROGERS	DECEASED	DEBORAH ANN SLAUGHTER LEWIS, CO-EXEC REGINA ANN BEELER CARNELL, CO - EXEC JOHN WOOLDRIDGE, ATTY 754 SNIDER RD COX'S CREEK KY 40013
DONALD ZOCKLDIN	DECEASED	REBECCA DENNISON, ADMIN J. KEY SCHOEN, ATTY 5226 BARDSTOWN RD LOUISVILLE, KY 40291
MICHAEL OWEN	DECEASED	KIMBERLY ZOCKLEIN, ADMIN MELISSA RODDEN MAYS, ATTY 1939 GOLDSMITH LANE STE 152 LOUISVILLE KY 40218
WILLIAM HOWARD JR	DECEASED	THERESA TINDAL, ADMIN AMANDA SPALDING, ATTY PO BOX 1599 SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
PATRICIA HEWITT	DECEASED	SUSAN KOHLER, EXEC HAYDEN SWEAT, ATTY 318 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
JENNIFER STONE	DECEASED	CHARLES ROBINSON, ADMIN HAYDEN SWEAT, ATTY 318 S BUCKMAN ST SHEPHERDSVILLE KY 40165
		ALEX STONE, ADMIN NATHAN MITCHELL, ATTY 9200 SHELBYVILLE ROAD, STE 600 LOUISVILLE, KY 40222



## Kentucky Hospital Association

### UofL Health South Hospital earns top state honor

The Kentucky Hospital Association recently gave seven hospitals and one health system its annual quality awards for their achievements in quality improvement.

The honorees included a hospital located in Hillview.

The awards were announced at the KHA Quality Conference in Louisville on March 23.

The recipients of the award in each of the categories are:

Mercy Health — Marcum and Wallace Hospital — critical access hospital

UofL Health — South Hospital — acute

care hospital with fewer than 100 beds

Ephraim McDowell Regional Medical Center — acute care hospital with 100 to 250 beds

Pikeville Medical Center — acute care hospital with more than 250 beds

RiverValley Behavioral Health — freestanding psychiatric hospital

UofL Health-Frazier Rehabilitation Institute — freestanding rehabilitation hospital

Continuing Care Hospital — long-term acute care hospital

CHI Saint Joseph Health — hospital system

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