

JAMES FRANCIS MOORE

SOLDIER, FRONTIERSMAN, POLITICIAN

BY
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As one of the area's early citizens, James Francis Moore was to play a significant role in the early development of Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky. Very few works on early Kentucky history fail to make note of him, but none make more than casual reference.

An important link to his origin is found in papers filed with the Filson Club by the late Dr. Frank P. Strickler, M.D. Dr. Strickler was a descendant of Moore and in his file are certified copies of church records establishing the following:

James Moore, Jr. married Hannah Willmott 28 August 1744, in Baltimore County, Maryland. Their children were__

Elizabeth, b. 9 August 1746
Mary, b. 11 May 1748
Rachel, b. 8 January 1749
James Francis, b. 12 August 1751
Nicholas Ruxton, b. 21 July 1754
Eleonor, 14 May 1759
John Gay, b. 8 March 1761

The elder Moore was an early tobacco grower and farmed lands on the waters of the Gunpowder River near Joppa, Harford County, Maryland. The oldest son, James Francis married Ann Standiford, 18 February 1772. A daughter, Elizabeth was born to this union, but Ann died a shortwhile later, leaving Moore a young widower.¹

At this point there is a short gap in the recordings of young James F. Moore's life. It seems evident, however, that he was with the Company of James Harrod, his first cousin, during the establishment of Ft. Harrod (Harrodsburg), Kentucky, in late 1773. Moore's father and Harrod's mother were brother and sister. An event described later does establish him in Kentucky during those early years.²

In 1774 and 1775, Moore is found on the tax roles of Turkeyfoot Township, Bedford County, PA. (Turkeyfoot Twp. later became part of Somerset Co., PA, in 1795.) By 1775, he had become a spokesman in the

county and was among the first who strongly advocated rebellion against the British. When General Washington called for the forming of the Continental Army, Moore joined Colonel Samuel Miles' Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment and on 19 March 1776, was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant. On 12 August, Col. Miles' forces were brigaded with three other regiments and all were ordered to New York under the command of Brigadier General Lord Stirling.³

On 27 August 1776, The Continental Army, made up principally of Pennsylvanians and forces from Delaware and Maryland, established contact with the British and German Hessians at Long Island. The ensuing battle was disastrous. The small Colonial army of some 5,000 was encircled by nearly 20,000 British and Germans. The number of the latter killed was surprising large compared with the numbered lost by the Colonists, but the number of Americans taken prisoner, wounded or missing was quite large. Col. Miles was taken prisoner, and Lt. Moore's company commander, Captain Richard Brown was captured as well. In the encounter, Moore's Rifle Regiment and accompanying Musketry Battalion was so broken that Washington ordered the remaining forces to be considered one regiment under the command of LTC Daniel Brodhead. While attempting to maintain their position, on 19 September, the regiment mutinied and some 200 men deserted.

While the remnants were undergoing additional regrouping, James Francis Moore was promoted to Captain on 25 October 1776, replacing the missing Brown. When the consolidated forces again made contact with the enemy, it was a more formidable army. It was engaged in the capture of the Hessians at Trenton on 26 December; fought at Princeton on 2 Jan 1777; layed part of the winter at Philadelphia, and then moved down to Billingsport, New Jersey in March of 1777.⁴

It is significant to note that in 1978, the Ruxton, Maryland,

Chapter of The Sons of the American Revolution named their chapter in honor of Colonel Nicholas Ruxton Moore, the younger brother of James Francis. Edward E. Steiner wrote the biography of young Moore, and when reviewing it, it is obvious that the two brothers fought on the same battle field during the early stages of the war, Nicholas serving with the forces from Maryland, and James Francis from Pennsylvania. It is not known if they were aware of the other's
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presences.

On 9 May 1777, Captain Jas. F. Moore mustered a company of men at Red Bank, NJ, that became part of the Pennsylvania Regiment of Foot, under the command of Colonel Walter Stewart. During the remainder of '77, the regiment was engaged with the British at Brandywine, Germantown and Fort Mifflin, all of which were successful encounters for the
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Colonists.

On 1 July 1778, Moore was reassigned to the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment, serving again under Col. Dan'l Brodhead. Washington ordered the 8th to Pittsburgh to defend the Western Frontier against the savage attacks of the British led Indians. Moore served there until
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2 August 1779, when he was honorably discharged by Brodhead.

With the encounters of many important battles of the Revolution behind him, he returned to Bedford County, bought land and was
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obviously preparing to settle there. However, still a young man at age 28, and a war experienced soldier, adventurism placed its mark on Moore. He learned of the pending secret move into the Northwest Territory while serving in western Pennsylvania, for Col. Brodhead thought he would be the one to lead the expedition. In any event, Moore joined the Virginia State Militia and was with Gen. George Rogers Clark in early 1780, for on 4 April, Clark wrote Col. William Fleming from Louisville, requesting that "Governor Thomas Jefferson receipt Captain James Francis Moore, Deputy Commissary General of

Purchases, Twenty Thousands Pounds to defray the costs of labor and material required to build 100 boats to pursue the venture of pushing the British and Shawnees out of the Northwest for good." Three previous encounters at Vincennes, on 5 July and 17 December 1778, and again on 23 February 1779, were of little success. The logistics involved in this new undertaking, underscores the faith Clark placed in Moore and Commissioner General William Shannon.

It was while serving in these capacities that Shannon and Moore were later unjustly accused of mishandling Treasury purchases. Their accuser was Major George Slaughter, commander of Ft. Nelson. (Falls of the Ohio). On 13 April 1781, it was proven before a Board of Commissioners consisting of John Floyd, William Oldham and Robert Todd, that Slaughter erred in his complaint, and in one indictment, Clark himself made purchases of corn and "directed Moore to receive same and give bills on the Treasury for payment".

In a letter bearing the above date, Slaughter wrote Governor Thomas Jefferson: "In that I have not proved the charges against that gentleman, I have nothing to say in justification of my conduct, more than that I have put too much confidence in the information from whom I before thought were men of the strictest veracity and honor, but as I have been inadvertently led to make those charges, in justification to Captain Moore's character, am in duty bound to make all the satisfaction in my power, therefore, hope that no part of the information recited in my letter of the 17th January, last, respecting that gentleman will injure him in your esteem". The next day, while at Bullitt's Lick, he wrote Jefferson a similar letter exonerating Shannon.

It doesn't seem that the above daunted the respect that Moore and Slaughter was to have of the other in later civic affairs or business matters. The first recording of Moore on the public records of

Jefferson County, was 10 April 1784, when it was "Ordered. George Slaughter and James F. Moore, Gentlemen, are recommended to His Excellency the Governor, as proper persons to act as Sheriff, one of whom is to be commissioned for one year." (On 4 May 1784, Moore produced before the Court a commission appointing him a Lieutenant Colonel in the Virginia Militia.)¹¹

On 1 June 1784, Moore took title to two contiguous land grants totaling 2395 acres located "on the waters of the Fishpool Creek beginning at the fork of the roads leading from the Salt Works (Bullitts Lick) to Beargrass and the Falls of the Ohio..."¹² The point of reference today is the intersection of the Gene Snyder Freeway and Preston Highway (KY 61) in south central Jefferson Co. It was here that James F. Moore established and built his "Fishpool Station"; readily accessible to travelers on the Danville - Bullitts Lick leg of the Wilderness Road, to and from the Ohio Falls. It was this route that John Floyd, his brother Charles, and Alexander Breakinridge were taking in early 1783, from their Beargrass Station on the way to Bullitts Licks. Upon approaching George Clear's Station they were ambushed by Indians, and John Floyd was mortally wounded. He died two days later on 12 April. On 24 April 1783, Floyd's widow gave birth to a son, John, Jr. In 1830, John Floyd, Jr. was elected Governor of Virginia. In turn, his son, John Buchanan Floyd became Governor in 1850.¹³ (Clear's Station, in northern Bullitt Co., was located at the site known locally today as Huber Station.)

Col. Moore had recently married his second wife, Elizabeth Higgins, and soon after settling at the "Fishpool", started a new family. Children of this union were daughters Cassandra and Zerniah; sons Hector W., Nimrod H., Robert Kerney, Joseph Hamilton David, Jas. F. (Jr.), and Hiram W.¹⁴

While making a home for a growing family in a new frontier, Moore

was also establishing personal wealth. Through grants, treasury warrant assignments and purchases, Moore was to own in access of 34,000 acres of land, the larger part of which was located in Jefferson County. This was not a part of the 149,000 acres north of the Ohio River that he, George R. and William Clark, Abraham Chapline, Richard Taylor, William Croghan, Alexander Breckenridge and Andrew Hyne held in Trust for those who served in the Illinois Regiment and warranted same.

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In May of 1784, he became a Justice for Virginia's new county. This body, normally consisting of twelve, served as judge and jury on all matters. In a singular event, on 10 August 1785, Moore, Justices Richard Taylor, (father of to-be President Zachary Taylor), William Oldham, and David Meriwether, tried and found guilty a slave, Peter, for "burglary and felonious stealing sundry merchandise, the property of Robert Watson and Co." It was ordered he be hanged on 24 August 1785. If the sentence was in fact carried out it was the first of it's kind recorded in Jefferson County.

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It was during this same era that an interesting and continuing tradition grew locally regarding the "Moundbuilders, Welch Indian, Madoc, or White Indian Theory". One who was strong believer in the tradition was John Filson. While in Louisville collecting material for his History of Kentucky, published in 1784, Filson discussed the subject with such men as "General George Rogers Clark, Major John Harrison, Colonel James Francis Moore and others". Moore was told by an aged Indian that the first inhabitants of Kentucky were here long before the Indians, were assailed by the Indian, slaughtered and driven from the country and that the last great battle between them was fought at the Falls of the Ohio. Clark was told by Chief Tobacco, leader of the Kaskaskians, and who was of lighter complexion than most Indians, that the final battle which deprived the first inhabitants of

Kentucky of their country and gave it to the Indians, was fought at Sand Island at the Falls. The celebrated Chief Cornstalk told Col. McKee that Kentucky was once inhabited by a race more familiar with the arts than the Indian; that they were builders of mounds of which the Indians knew nothing, and they were exterminated by the Indian. ¹⁷

On 14 February 1787, James F. Moore, Richard Clough Anderson, William Taylor, Robert Breckinridge, David Meriweter, John Clark and Alexander Scott Bullitt, were appointed Councilmen for the City of Louisville. It was their responsibility, on behalf of the Virginia General Assembly to see that the Trustees of the city, on demand, paid the amount of the sales of lots to secure various notes. On 5 May 1790, Moore was reappointed to this body and Abraham Hite, Abner Martin Dunn, Basil Prather and David Standiford were selected to serve as well. ¹⁸

In 1793, Moore served part of Robert Breckinridge's term in the infant Kentucky House of Representatives, then but a year old. ¹⁹ It was then that family and personal matters seemed to take more precedent with him. Elizabeth, his daughter by his first wife was coming of age. It is not certain where she had spent her youth after the death of her mother, but it is believed she had lived with her grandparents in Maryland until her father remarried and then came to Kentucky with her uncle, John Gay Moore, the youngest brother of James Francis. Nonetheless, she was to soon marry Jesse Eliot Pendergrast. He was the son of Garret Pendergrast, a native of Westmoreland County, PA, who on 28 March 1777, while outside the protective walls of Ft. Harrod, was captured, killed and scalped. ²⁰

It was to become a custom of Col. Moore to give each child a tract of land as a wedding gift. In so doing, he advanced to the newly wed couple the "Fishpool Plantation". Today part of the estate is owned by descendants who live there and continue to operate it as

farmland. Part of the original structure is said to still stand.

On 2 November 1792, Moore took assignment on a 197 acre tract some 4 miles west of the "Fishpool" that was originally granted to Brackett Owings. Situated on the waters of Pond Creek, it constituted what today is a large section of Fairdale, KY. (Fig. 1) On the north and south portion of the tract, the land lays rather flat but near its center a knoll or mound forms. Here Moore established a new homesite that he called his "Farm of Mt. Holly" One would wonder if his attraction to this site was in some way related to the "Moundbuilders Tradition".²¹

While living there, Moore became extensively involved in the salt industry. East of and contiguous to his new homesite he acquired a 2/3 ownership in a 600 acre tract that layed on both sides of Manns Lick Creek and down same to the point where it emptied into Pond Creek and beyond. This gave him a dominate interest in the area's important salt trade.²² Fairdale High School is now situated on this parcel. (Area maps currently show Mann's Lick Creek now named Wilson Creek.)

After Alexander Scott Bullitt had served as Jefferson and Bullitt Counties' lone Senator to the Kentucky State Legislature from 1792 to 1800, and Abraham Hite from 1800 to 1803, James Francis Moore was elected to serve his first term in 1803.²³

Two things of significant note occurred while he was in the General Assembly. On 13 December 1804, he was called to give a deposition on behalf of Major John Finley, Plaintiff, and a Barbour, Defendent, involving a long standing dispute over lands situated in the Blue Licks region of todays Robertson County. Finley laid claim that he was the first to have it surveyed, and had cleared ground on it. Moore deposed that he filed the claim on behalf of Finley before the Fayette County Court, and at said filing, produced a witness to the Court to support it. He had sent the witness because he was with

Louisville
2 miles

Sheperdsville Rd.

Preston Hwy.
(Ky. 61)

Mann's Lick Saltworks
Moore owned 2/3 interest
in surrounding lands.)

Pond Creek

National Trpk.
(Ky. 1020)

600-A
Tract

Originally Mann's Lick Crk.
Now named Wilson Creek.

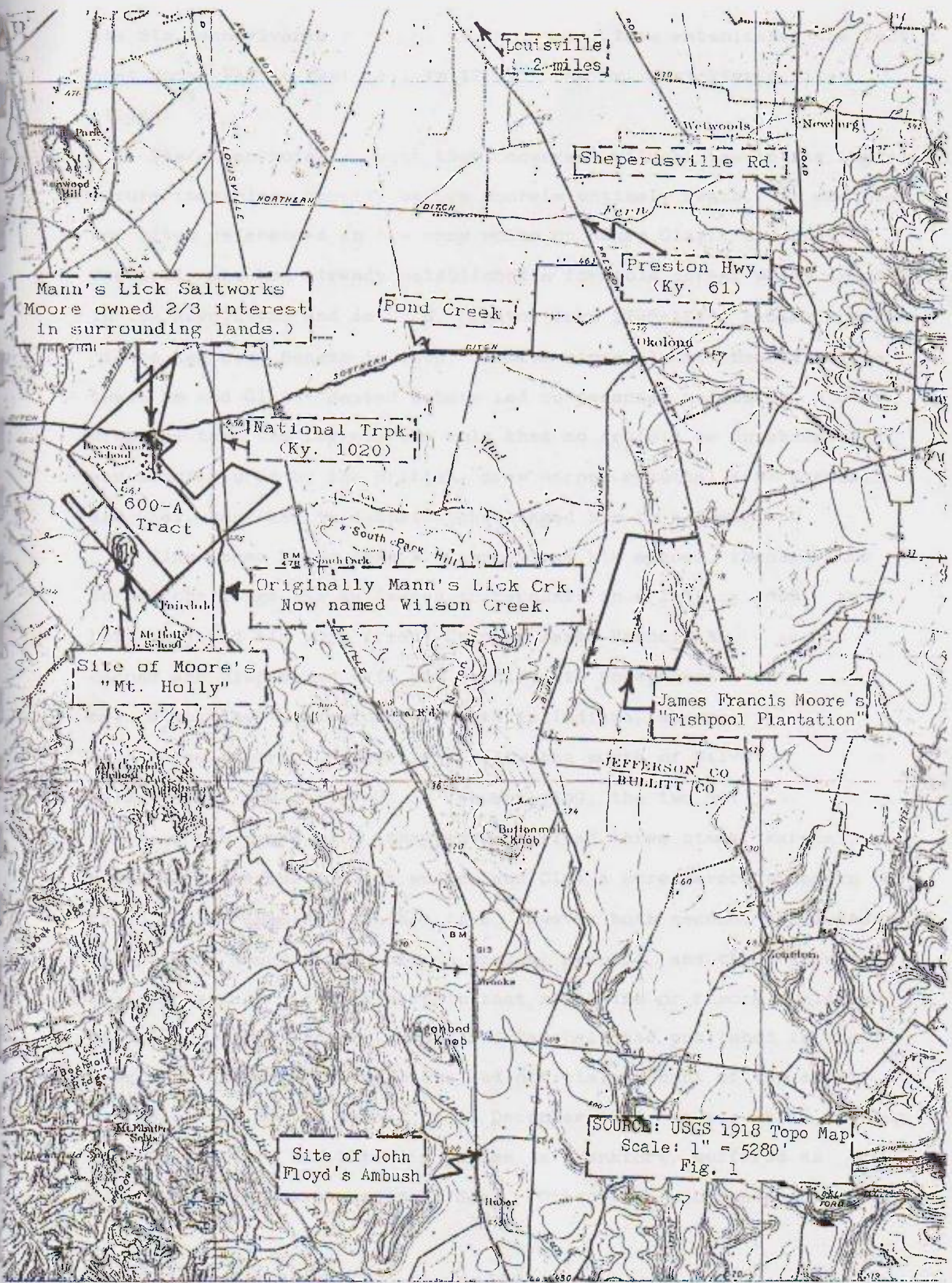
Site of Moore's
"Mt. Holly"

James Francis Moore's
"Fishpool Plantation"

JEFFERSON CO
BULLITT CO

Site of John
Floyd's Ambush

SOURCE: USGS 1918 Topo Map
Scale: 1" = 5280'
Fig. 1



the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment at the time. This establishes the fact that Moore WAS in Kentucky, in 1773/74, as Dr. Strickler's files
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allude.

The other notable event that occurred while he was in the Legislature took place shortly before Moore's untimely death. It was one not often referenced in the many works on Henry Clay. Humphrey Marshall, who had already established a formidable career while serving in the Revolution and as U. S. Senator from 1795-1801, became a member of the Kentucky Senate in 1808. Debate arose almost immediately between he and Clay. Heated debate led to personal animosity. A Clay proposal that the Legislature rule that no article be purchased that was manufactured by the British, drew strong rebuttal from Marshall, and Clay, somewhat in despair, challenged him to a duel.

Clay chose Major John B. Campbell as his second, through whom the formal challenge was delivered to Marshall on 4 January 1809. Marshall selected his good friend Colonel James Francis Moore as his second and dispatched with him to Clay his acceptance. Duels having been disclaimed in Kentucky, a site in Indiana, across the Ohio River from Shippingport (Louisville), below the mouth of Silver Creek was selected for the duel. On 19 January 1809, the two met. At a distance of ten paces each "snapped", or fired three times. Marshall received a grazing stomach wound, and Clay a more severe wound to the thigh. Clay demanded another fire, however both seconds concluded that Clay's wound placed him on unequal grounds, and the duel was declared ended. To make certain that misclaims or rumors would be dispelled, on 26 January, Moore and Campbell had published in the
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"Lexington Reporter" a complete and official account of the affair.

Some ten months later, on 14 December 1809, Moore, while walking with Marshall in the latter's garden in Frankfort, suffered an apparent heart attack and fell dead. Other than published obituaries,

no tribute or memorial is known to have been recorded of him then or from that day forward. An abrupt and final end to a distinguished career.

On 24 March 1960, Mrs. John T. Slack, Sr., a descendant of Moore who at the time resided at "The Fishpool", wrote to the Kentucky Historical Society inquiring as to the location of Moore's gravesite. Her letter was acknowledged with the reply, "no information available". The reverse side of her letter noted an attempt to research him, and concluded with the following excerpt from the newspaper "Palladium", a tabloid that reported news of public record: dateline Frankfort, 16 December 1809, "James Francis Moore---members of the General Assembly will attend body today to the grave". On Tuesday, 19 Dec 1809, the Kentucky Gazette recorded his death with an obituary: "Col. James Francis Moore, Senator from Jefferson and Bullitt Counties [died] Thursday evening, 14 December 1809, in Frankfort." From this, one would conclude his remains rest there, likely in an unmarked grave in the Frankfort Cemetery.

Nicholas Ruxton Moore followed similar footsteps as those of his older brother. He likewise distinguished himself in the Revolution, and returned to his native Maryland and became a gentleman farmer. He later served the people of Baltimore County as their Representative in Congress, and became well known for his staunch support of the far reaching policies of President Jefferson. His identity became well established and will long be remembered in his native environs.

Two brothers, each willing to sacrifice of themselves for their new nation and did so. One returned to his homeland and became rather renowned. His older brother, James Francis, also with a desire to achieve, pressed on into the frontier, setting out to establish a better place for those who followed to live; knew and stood on equal footing with those who were to later become known as the great in the

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Dr. Strickler's file includes certified copies of pages from the manuscript copy of the parish registers of St. John and St. George P. E. Churches, Baltimore and Harford Cos., Maryland, and other data relative to the Moore family.
2. Ibid.; "Harrod's Men", Kathleen Harrod Mason, Filson Club Qtr., Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 230 - 231.
3. Third Series, PA Archives, Vol. 22, p.80; "The History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Cos., Waterman and Watkins, Chicago, 1884, pp. 81, 84; "Hist. Reg. of Officers of The Continental Army During the War of the Revolution", Francis B. Heitman, 1914, p. 399; Second Series, PA Archives, Vol. 10, p. 202 - 207.
4. "Pennsylvania in The Revolution, 1775 - 1783", edited by Egle, Harrisburg, 1880, p. 204. Col. Miles was exchanged on 20 Apr 1778. In 1790, he became Mayor of Philadelphia.
5. "Nicholas Ruxton Moore: Soldier, Farmer and Politician", Edw. E. Steiner, Maryland Hist. Mag., Vol. 73, No. 4, Dec 1978, pp. 375 - 388.
6. Ibid., "PA in The Rev., 1775 - 1783", p. 268; Ibid., 2nd Ser., PA Archives, Vol. 10, pp. 276, 277, pp. 785 - 787.
7. Ibid., Heitman's "Hist. Reg. of Offs. of The Cont. Army...", pp. 399, 649; The Pennsylvania Magazine, Vol. 12, p. 474.
8. Third Series, PA Archives, Vol. 22, p. 167.
9. "List of the Revolutionary Soldiers of Virginia", H. J. Eckenrode, 1912, p. 316; "Geo. Rogers Clark Papers, 1779 - 1781", pp. 407 - 408, Illinois State Historical Library Collections, Jas. A. James, 1912; Heitman (Note 7.) sets out three previous unsuccessful engagements in Indiana against the British and Indians, p. 681.
10. Ibid. Clark Papers, pp. 519, 524 - 525. George Slaughter was of a prominent Orange Co., VA, family. His wife was the daughter of Col. John Field, who was killed in the historic battle at Pt. Pleasant, West VA. Slaughter later removed to Charlestown, IN, where he died in 1818.
11. Jefferson Co., KY Minute Book 1, pp. 22, 28.
12. "Master Index, VA Surveys and Grants, 1774 - 1791", Joan E. Brooks - Smith, p. 143.
13. "Louisville's First Families, Kathleen Jennings, 1920, p. 162; "Early Louisville and the Beargrass Stations", Neal O. Hammon, Filson Club Qtr., Vol. 52, No. 2, p. 162, April 1978.
14. The wills of Moore in Jeff. Co., KY, WB 1, p. 228, that of his wife's in Jeff. Co. WB 3, p. 10, and son's, Robt. K., in WB 3, p. 160, name his heirs..

15. "Calendar of Warrants for Land in KY", abstracted by P. F. Taylor, 1917, reprinted by Gen. Pub. Co., 1975, pp. 84 - 85; "Old KY Entrees and Deeds", W. R. Jillson, p. 258; note 12. above; Jefferson Co., KY Grantee Index, 1784 - 1838; "Rev. War Records", G. M. Brumbaugh, Vol. I, Plate 5 opposite p. 164.
16. "Memorial History of Louisville", J. Stoddard Johnston, Vol. 1, p. 3; Jeff. Co. Minute Bk. 1, p.121.
17. "History of Clark Co., IN", Baird, B. F. Bowen & Co., 1909, p. 21; "The Prehistoric Men of KY", B. H. Young, 1910, pp. 3, 5; "Mem. Hist. of Lou.", Johnston, Vol. II, p. 33.
18. "History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties", L. A. Williams and Co., 1882, Vol. I, p. 597; Henings Statutes of VA, p. 148.
19. "History of Kentucky", Collins, Vol. I, p. 776.
20. Ibid., "G. R. Clark Papers, 1779 - 1781", p. 21
21. Ibid., Moore's Will. He willed to his wife, "The farm of Mt. Holly where I live..." She willed it to son Robt. K. and he inturn sold it to Wm. Wood, 27 Aug 1836. The tract is outlined on Bergman's 1858 Map of Jeff. Co.
22. Jeff. Co. DB 7, p. 466; "Bullitt's Lick, the Related Saltworks and Settlements", Robt. E. McDowell, Filson Club Qtr., Vol 30, No. 3, pp. 253 - 254, July 1956.
23. Ibid. "Hist. of KY", Collins, Vol. I, p. 776
24. "The Thompson Expedition of 1773", R. S. Cottrell, Filson Club Qtr., Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 190 - 191, July 1946.
25. "The Life and Times of Hon. Humphrey Marshall", A. C. Quisenberry, 1892, Sun Pub. Co., pp. 192 - 103.
26. Ibid., Dr. Strickler's papers; KY Hist. Soc. Lib., Moore Family files; Dr. Lyman C. Draper's "KY Papers", 4cc 143 - 156, letter from Mark Hardin dtd. Jan 1863, referencing the death of Moore, "11th Dec 1809, Col. James Francis Moore died in Frankfort when a member of the Senate many years."