Joseph McCoun (1784-1829), Ancestor 40
By his great great great (3x) granddaughter, Linda R. Horton, 16 December 2021[1]

Joseph McCoun was born in Kentucky on 18 October 1784. He was the fifth of ten children of John McCoun (1754-1826) and Elizabeth Tilford McCoun (1757-1842).

On 19 June 1816, 31-year old Joseph married 24-year-old Esther Eccles. In their 13 years of marriage, they had six children, four of whom survived to adulthood:

1. Arethusa B. McCoun, 1817-1881, who married Merrit Cunningham.
2. William H.E. McCoun, 1819-1857, who married Vienna Peters in Missouri.
3. James M. McCoun, 1820-1824.
4. Mary Elizabeth McCoun, 1824-1908, who married James Earnest.
5. Joseph Eccles "Joe" McCoun, 1825-1897, who married Mary Louise "Luta" Pepper; they were our great great grandparents.
6. Arabella McCoun, 1829-1833.

On 19 July 1829, 44-year old Joseph died of unknown causes, leaving a will. Esther survived him by 52 years, a period in which their eldest son died a shocking and tragic death, the nation was riven by the Civil War, and her remaining son enjoyed brief wealth and then calamitous financial ruin that required him to resettle a thousand miles away from home.

This biography is the story of both Joseph McCoun and the house he built, shown above in a photograph taken in about 1981.[1] Built in 1820, the Joseph McCoun House was not only the homestead of Joseph and Esther, but also the birthplace of the next two generations of McCoun ancestors. It was there that our great great grandfather Joe McCoun was born in 1825 and his son, our great grandfather Robert Pepper McCoun was born in 1860. In 2005, the property was registered on the National Register of Historic Places.[2] That designation does not require a property owner to preserve it and, after years of neglect and pillage, the Joseph McCoun House is today no more than an abandoned pile of rubble in a littered field near a railroad track.

Joseph McCoun in the family tree

Joseph was both a third generation American and third generation Kentuckian. His grandparents James McCoun IV and Margaret Walker had immigrated from Ireland, settled in western Virginia, and raised a family of ten children, including Joseph's father John (1754-1826). Both ancestral couples—our five times great grandparents James and Margaret McCoun, and our four

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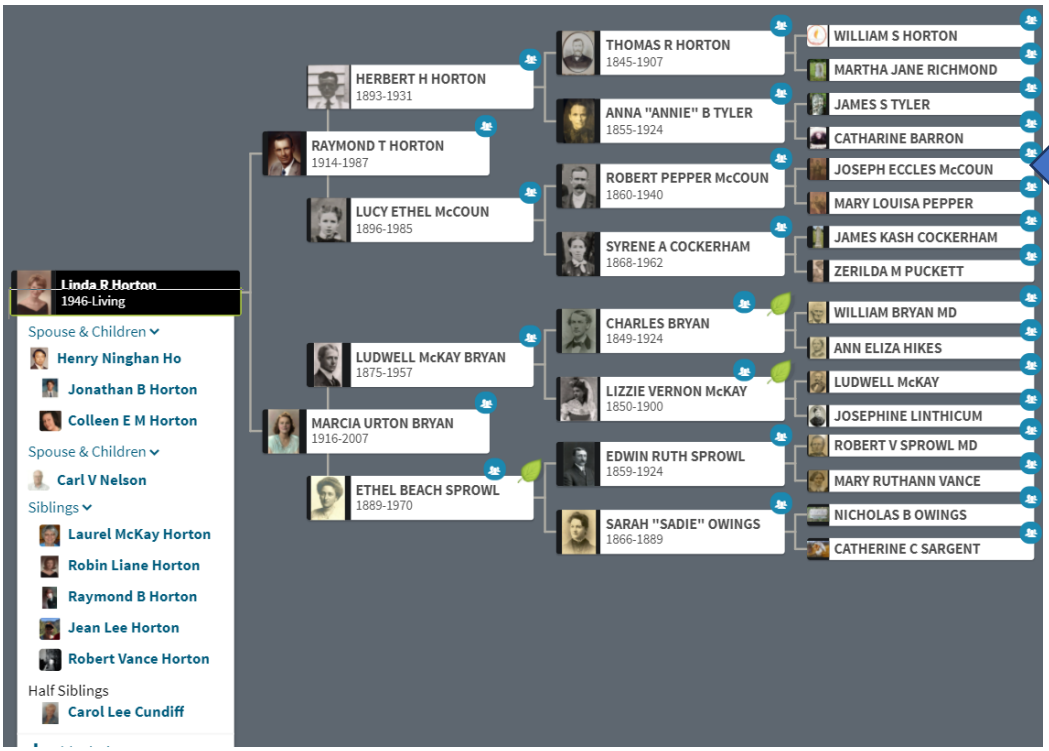
times great grandparents John and Elizabeth McCoun—were among a band of interrelated families who in 1779 sought better lives in central Kentucky as early pioneers in what is today Mercer County. They endured many hardships while clearing land, planting crops, and raising farm animals. They raised families while building a fort and later homes, churches, and schools that were part of small communities named Salvisa and McAfee, a few miles north of the legendary Fort Harrod. The arrows on the pedigrees point to Joe McCoun, son of Joseph.



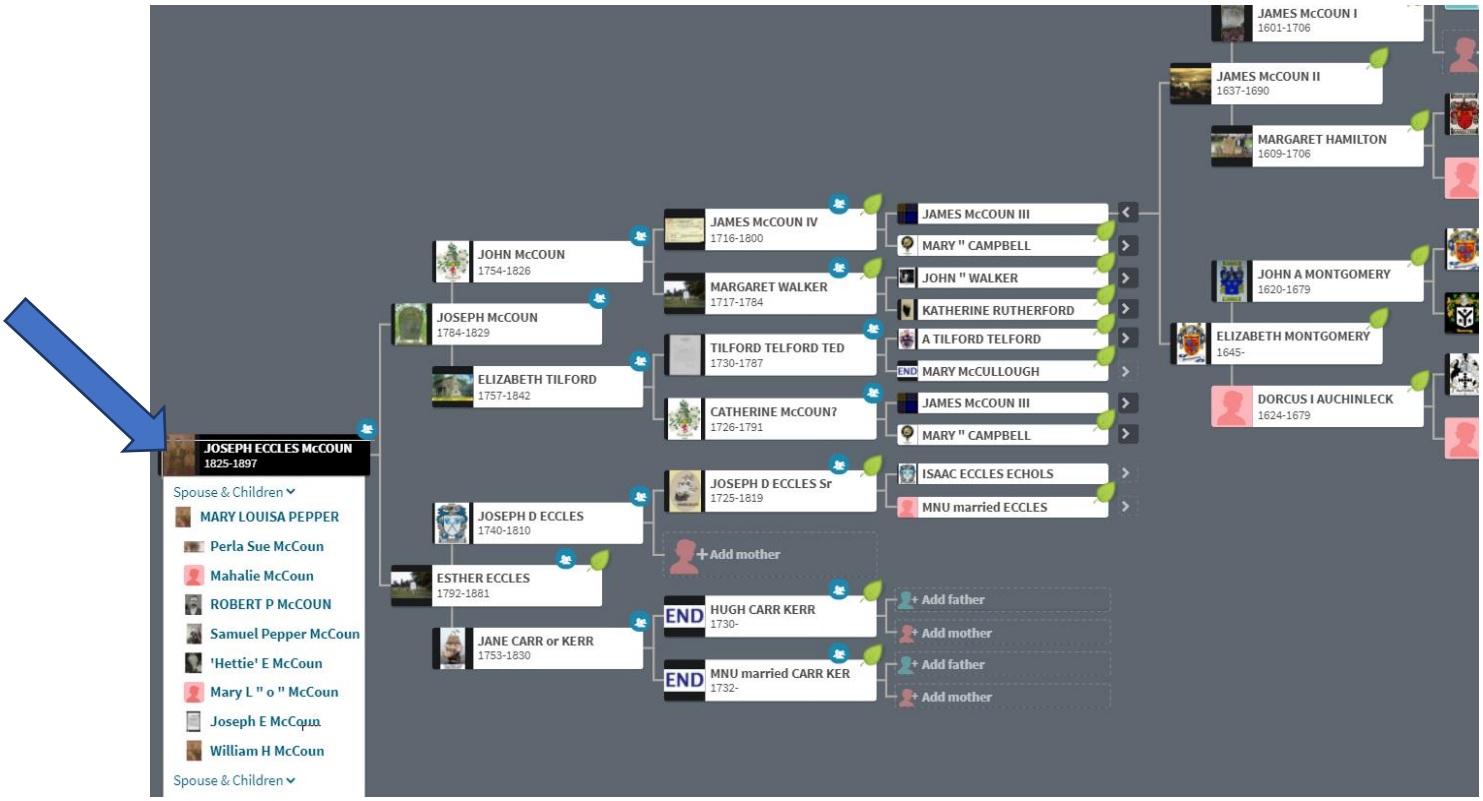


Figure 1: Linda and Colleen at grave of James and Margaret Maccoun, 22 February 2018.

The second pedigree on the preceding page shows Joseph McCoun's lineage back to our earliest known McCoun ancestor, whom the family calls James McCoun I. He was born in Scotland, possibly Linlithgow, in 1601, migrated to County Down, Ireland, and died there in 1706 at the astonishing age of 105.

On 22 February 2018, my daughter Colleen Horton and I visited the grave of James McCoun I and his wife Margaret Hamilton in the Magheralin Church Cemetery. What joy when our gloved hands touched the head stone of my eight times great grandparents and her nine times great grandparents. Under the skull: "Hear lyeth the body of James Mcoun who departed this life the 12th of March anno dom 1706 aged 105 years also his wife departed this life the 6th of March." Their grave is to the right of the entrance to the old Magheralin Parish Church.[3] The church's affiliation is Church of Ireland, the Irish counterpart to the Church of

Magheralin Parish Church

England, possibly reflecting the family's loyalty to the British crown. James McCoun II (1637-1690) died at the Battle of the Boyne fighting on the Williamite side. Burial in the Magheralin Church cemetery was not merely a matter of convenience: records in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland document many generations of McCouns' involvement in church leadership. In America, our McCouns were Presbyterian, probably influenced by Margaret Walker, wife of James McCoun I, who was noted for her devotion to the denomination.

Magheralin Parish in County Down, the seat of the McCoun family in Ireland, is in the northwest corner of County Down, Ireland, near the border with Antrim. Magheralin is 20 miles southwest of Belfast, marked by a star on the map. The smaller map shows the six counties of today's Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom, with County Down marked red.

The McCoun line from James I to us today is as follows:

JAMES McCOUN I 1601-1706

8th great-grandfather

JAMES McCOUN II 1637-1690
Son of JAMES McCOUN I

JAMES McCOUN III 1660-1735
Son of JAMES McCOUN II

JAMES McCOUN IV 1716-1800
Son of JAMES McCOUN III

JOHN McCOUN 1754-1826
Son of JAMES McCOUN IV

JOSEPH McCOUN 1784-1829*
Son of JOHN McCOUN

JOSEPH ECCLES McCOUN 1825-1897*
Son of JOSEPH McCOUN

ROBERT PEPPER McCOUN 1860-1940*
Son of JOSEPH ECCLES McCOUN

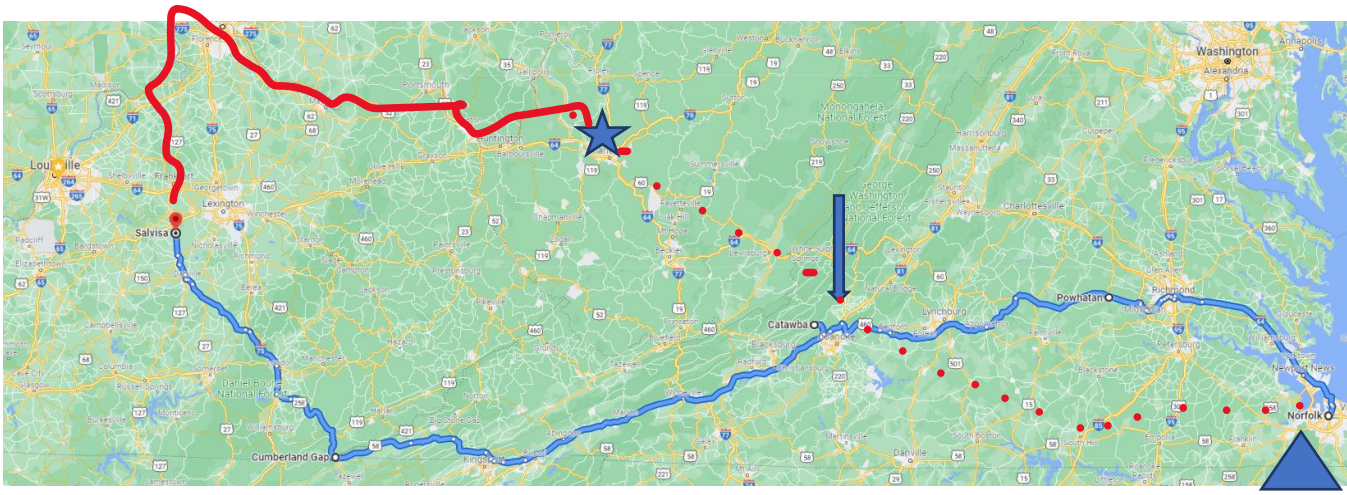
LUCY ETHEL McCOUN 1896-1985*
Daughter of ROBERT PEPPER McCOUN

RAYMOND THOMAS HORTON 1914-1987*
Son of LUCY ETHEL McCOUN

Carol, Linda, Laurel, Robin, Ray, Jean, and Vance
Children of RAYMOND THOMAS HORTON

A biography has been written for each McCoun (and his or her spouse) whose name appears in the preceding lineage with an asterisk by the name. Biographies are planned for the others, after completion of the current biography project focused upon the author's 64 closest ancestors who were great great great grandparents, or closer. For Joseph McCoun and Esther Eccles, the pioneering experience of their grandparents and parents was so immediately part of their own daily existence, that we shall discuss that experience here.

As was mentioned on page one, Joseph's grandparents James McCoun IV (1716-1800) and Margaret Walker (1717-1784) had immigrated from Ireland as single young adults. The map below shows the port where Joseph's grandfather James McCoun arrived in Norfolk, Virginia (at triangle) in 1742, accompanied by a cousin named William Adams. James and William met and married two sisters, Margaret and Mary Walker. The arrow marks the area where the McCoun and Adams families settled in Augusta County (later Botetourt County), Virginia on the banks of the Catawba River. In 1763 the McAfee family joined the community. In 1766, Robert McAfee married Anne McCoun, James' daughter and the older sister of our ancestor John McCoun.



While living in Virginia, the children of James McCoun I and his wife Margaret were born. Among the ten children was Joseph's father John (1754-1826). John met and married Elizabeth Tilford (1757-1842) who, like John, was born in Virginia to Ulster Scots immigrants. John was only 20 and Elizabeth 16 at the time of their 14 May 1774 marriage. John's brother, James McCoun V, married Elizabeth's sister Ann Tilford; inter-marriages among families in the community were common. At some point in the early 1770s, members of these inter-related families began to consider moving to Kentucky. They were receiving reports about the availability there of land that surpassed in quality the land on which they were farming in Virginia.

At least two exploratory trips were made to central Kentucky in 1773 and 1775 by men in the community who called themselves the McAfee Company. The first expedition included the eldest son of James and Margaret—a young man the family calls James V--and the second included also his younger son, our ancestor, John McCoun. The routes used by the explorers were interesting. The 1773 expedition began on horseback in May 1773. Having planned the trip carefully, the group decided to travel overland on horseback to the Ohio River (the route shown by the red dots between the arrow and the star). From there, the rest of the trip to Kentucky would be by canoe. When they reached the river, two members of the group would need to return

with the horses to the Catawba River settlement while the rest fashioned canoes from felled trees and continued down the Ohio River to Kentucky on the Ohio River, then on the Kentucky River (the rivers are shown as a solid red line on the map).

Joseph's father John, only 19, was entrusted with the task of getting the horses back home from the place on the map marked by the star. Therefore, he was not among the McAfee Company members who reached Kentucky in July 1773. Those who did included John's older brother James. The Company identified the optimal place for the families' settlement, which was in central Kentucky between the winding Kentucky River to the east, and a smaller river to the west later dubbed the Salt River. (The water in the latter river was fresh but there was a salt deposit near its confluence with the Ohio River.) The McAfee Company members surveyed land not only for themselves but also for absent members, including John McCoun and his parents. Intrepid travelers who had begun their lives an ocean away in Ireland, James McCoun and his wife Margaret Walker McCoun had less attachment to Virginia than to their children and grandchildren who had decided to migrate to Kentucky.[4]

The members of the exploratory mission returned to their homes on the Catawba River via a different route than the one on which they had come. They traveled through the Appalachians via the Cumberland Gap. Their return route is shown by the solid blue line on the map on the previous page, starting where the blue line meets the red and ending at the arrow. The overland route is much shorter in miles but presented daunting challenges of terrain, a shortage of water and food in many places, and the risk of Native American attack. The explorers were fortunate and happy to reach home alive. They knew enough about the Ohio River route and the Cumberland Gap route to know which was best in which circumstances.

In 1775, the McAfee Party returned to Kentucky, bringing cattle with them and seeds for planting. John McCoun was part of the group this time. In fact, while most of the group returned to Virginia, he was part of a small contingent that stayed through the winter. He constructed a small cabin on the McCoun tract near the spring where his father would settle. John cleared 15 acres and in April 1776 planted corn and fruit trees.[5] These steps were essential for anyone who filed a land claim, as perfection of that claim required occupation and use of the land, lest other claimants come along, asserting that their claims could displace earlier claimants who had failed to being farming the land. John returned to Virginia later in 1776 and likely gave his bride, Elizabeth Tilford, favorable reports about their future homeland.

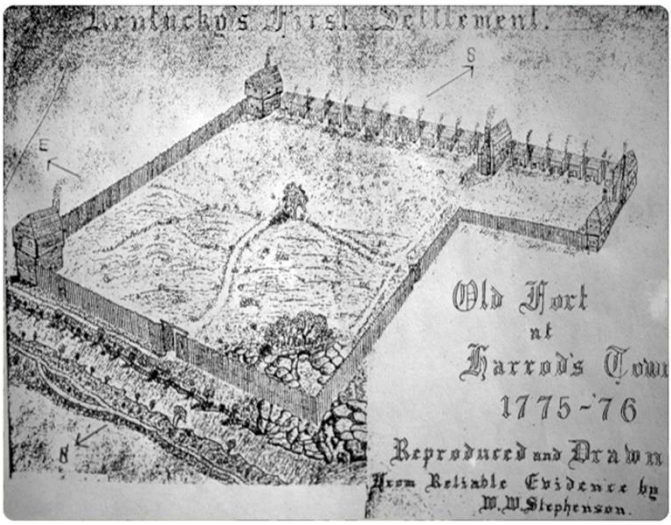
After the 1775-1776 exploratory trip, the McAfee Party resolved to move their families to Kentucky. The Revolutionary War and other circumstances delayed the move to 1779. In May of that year, the McAfee Company, this time with families, migrated to the banks of the Salt River in Kentucky via the Cumberland Gap route. A part of the Company transported furniture, farm equipment, seeds, and food supplies on flatboats via the longer but easier Ohio River route. Arriving on 28 September, they were delighted to find a good crop of peaches and some apples from plantings in 1775. There was no trace of the cattle that had been brought by the 1775 exploratory team and let loose in the area, but the families migrating in 1779 brought more.

The migrants who reached Kentucky in 1779 included two generations of ancestors, our five times great grandparents James IV and Margaret, and our four times great grandparents John and Elizabeth, who by then had two small children. We know with certainty that John and Elizabeth were among those who in 1779 migrated to Kentucky. In 1842 Elizabeth Tilford McCoun and

her son Samuel signed depositions to assist a neighbor in establishing his eligibility for a Revolutionary War pension. Elizabeth and Samuel each attested that their families had arrived in the area in the fall 1779 and that each had observed the neighbor serving in the local militia.[6]

That first winter in Kentucky was unusually severe. Most of the cattle and horses perished, as did many of the wild animals that ordinarily were game meat for the settlers. For many weeks there was nothing to eat but the meat of the starved and frozen animals.[7]

During those early years in Kentucky, attacks by Native Americans were a constant threat. John McCoun had a younger brother, Joseph, who in 1781 at age 18 was kidnapped and murdered by a band of Shawnee Indians. The boy had been tending the family's milk cows. A band of Shawnee Indians captured him and took him to what is today Ohio. There he was tortured, tied to a tree, and burned.[8] That horrific event in March 1781 cautioned early Kentucky settlers that Native Americans still posed a serious threat.



This event took place just three years before the birth of the Joseph McCoun who is the subject of this biography, born in 1784. The fifth of the ten children of John and Elizabeth, he was named for the uncle who had died so tragically three years before.

The specific location of the younger Joseph's 1784 birth is unknown: it was either in McAfee Station or a cabin on his parents' property. McAfee Station was a wooden garrison, a smaller version of nearby Fort Harrod, depicted in this image.[9] Built in 1777, McAfee Station was a fort-like structure that consisted of "quadrangular enclosures of cabins and stockades."[10] During the settlers' early years in Mercer County, and especially when there was a threat of Indian attacks, the McCouns sheltered in the Station with other local families who felt unsafe spending nights in their cabins on their properties. They spent their days on their tracts clearing trees, and planting and tending crops, but before dark they were in their family quarters to spend the night in McAfee Station.[11] Often their cattle and sheep would accompany them to the shelter, to guard against their theft by marauding Natives.

Considering that our Joseph's birth was expected at a time when the kidnapping and murder of his namesake uncle was still a fresh memory, the infant Joseph may have drawn his first breath in McAfee Station. Yet Joseph's first cousin born the same year, Robert B. McAfee (1784-1849), reported that, in 1783, his father Robert Sr. and his mother (Ann McCoun, sister of James IV) felt safe moving from McAfee Station and to their cabin nearby.[12] However, Roberts' parents' land was considerably closer to McAfee Station than was the McCoun land. If, by 1784, John and Elizabeth McCoun felt they could safely welcome their fifth child in their own home, that was at that time a simple log cabin on their farm.

We know generally the location of John and Elizabeth McCouns' tract because it was described in the will of his father, James "the immigrant" McCoun IV (1716-1800), who died in Mercer County on 4 October 1800.[13] The will, dated 26 April 1800, stated that he "gave" John "a tract of land on Salt River at the mouth of Birch Creek patented in my Name Containing four hundred

acres." Use of the past tense, "gave," suggests that, at the time of his father's death, John already had been given the tract on which he and Elizabeth lived. This previous land grant to John likely was mentioned in the Will simply to demonstrate James' equitable distribution of real property within the family, whether by gift or will. John's older brother, James, had passed away in 1790, and with the exception of John, only certain grandsons received land under the 1800 will.

Growing up in a literate family

We know little of Joseph's childhood except that he almost certainly attended school. The first two schools to begin operations in Kentucky were in Harrodsburg and at McAfee Station.[14] The latter school initially met in the log cabin that was the original house of worship of the New Providence Presbyterian Church.[15] This cabin was on the road connecting the land owned by the McCouns and McAfee Station. The church's name was in remembrance of their church in Virginia. Also, the title "New Providence" was an expression of gratitude that they had been delivered from savage attacks and had survived the particularly harsh winter of 1779-1780. The location was agreed at a meeting in the spring of 1785 in which Joseph's grandfather, James, was a participant. James also was one of the first church elders.

Joseph grew up in a home with books. It was to Joseph's father, John, that his grandfather James McCoun IV willed his books. Joseph was 16 years old at that time of his grandfather's death in 1800. Evidence of the intellectual caliber of the family in which Joseph McCoun grew up is that in 1802 a debating society was formed that met at a schoolhouse on McCouns Ferry Road.[16] His father, John McCoun, was usually chairman. The society continued until 1805.

From this memoir passage, we learn that several things. Firstly Joseph's father John McCoun must have been an erudite fellow; secondly, there was a schoolhouse nearby for local children that also was used for community purposes; thirdly, the road that today is still called McCouns Ferry Road was known by that name at least in the 1840s, when McAfee wrote his memoir, and possibly back in 1802-1804 when local debaters held forth in the schoolhouse; and lastly, that road's name implies clearly that, in one or both of these 19th century time periods, members of the McCoun family operated a ferry across the Kentucky River. At least one source said that Joseph's son Joe McCoun (1825-1897) operated the ferry business for several years.[17]

A final point about John McCoun and the debating society he chaired is that we can infer that, by the early 1800s our McCoun ancestors found their basic needs for shelter, food, and safety so fully met that they enjoyed free time in which to engage in an intellectually stimulating activity like debate. We might wager, too, that newspapers were part of the life of a family whose recreation was debate.

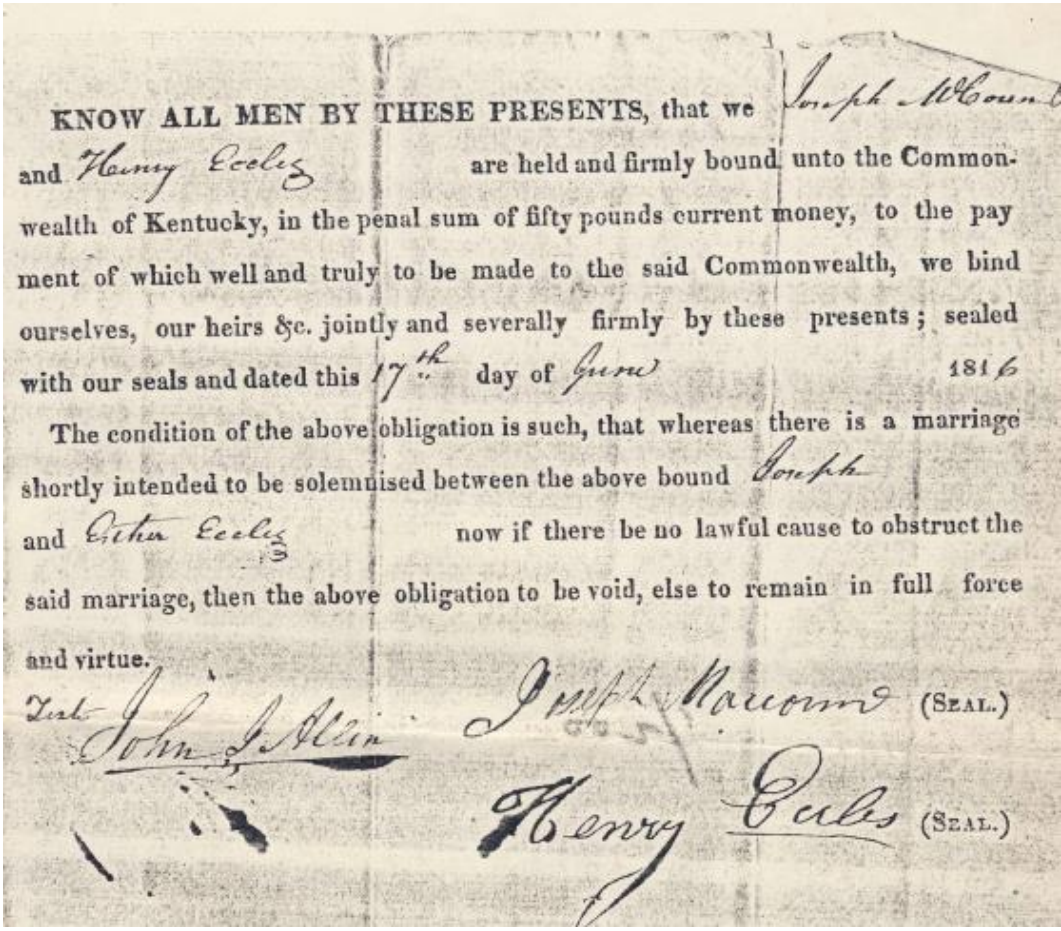
Sadly, this leisure time came at a steep cost. The 1800 Will of James McCoun IV that conveyed land to various offspring, and books to his son John, also bequeathed 18 enslaved human beings to John and others. How a devout Christian like James could fail to see the immorality of slavery confounds us today. His tolerance for this inhumane practice cannot be chalked up to immigrant naïveté. James McCoun IV had to be aware of the moral arguments against slavery. David Rice, the father of Kentucky Presbyterianism, was an ardent abolitionist. Rice had preached at the family's church in Virginia and, following his flock to Kentucky, Rice had officiated in 1784 at the funeral service for James' wife, Margaret (Joseph's grandmother), the first such service held at the New Providence Presbyterian Church.

Marriage, home building, and family

At age 31, Joseph was a mature man when, on 19 June 1816 he married 24-year-old Esther Eccles.[18] Two days before the wedding, Joseph and Henry Eccles, Esther's brother, posted a marriage bond, an image of which appears on the next page.[19] In Kentucky, as in many other jurisdictions, a marriage bond was required to assure the county court there was no legal reason to prevent the marriage from taking place.[20] If such a reason were to be discovered—such as that the couple was too closely related, or that one or both of the parties was underage or already married—then the bond amount had to be paid. A few notes about the marriage bond are these:

Literacy: The marriage bond provides additional clues that Joseph could read and write. As discussed earlier, we have reason to believe that Joseph could do so, growing up as he had, in a literary family. Analysis of handwriting suggests to me that he completed all the blanks in the marriage bond form except for the signature of his future brother-in-law, Henry Eccles.

The signators: Two parties were necessary to obtain a marriage license. In Kentucky as in Virginia—of which Kentucky was part until it became a state in 1792—women had no contractual rights. A bride could not arrange a contract for her own marriage. The groom and a male relative of the bride, or her guardian, would obtain the license. The bride's bondsman was usually her father or brother. Esther's father had passed away six years earlier, so her brother Henry served as bondsman. Esther had no choice but to acquiesce in a legal system that failed to permit her, as a 24-year-old adult woman, to sign her own marriage document. Was Esther irritated at that time that she couldn't sign her own marriage bond? As is recounted in her biography, when in her fifties Esther boldly went to court to protect her widow's property rights, suing her own children, and she also petitioned the Kentucky legislature. She succeeded in securing her rights when her youngest son, Joe, was eager to gather individual parcels of McCoun property, sell the combined lands to an outside buyer, and use the proceeds to buy a grander property in another county where his wealthy young wife preferred to live. In her middle years at least, Esther was not bashful about asserting her rights.



KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that we Joseph McCoun
and Henry Eccles are held and firmly bound unto the Common-
wealth of Kentucky, in the penal sum of fifty pounds current money, to the pay
ment of which well and truly to be made to the said Commonwealth, we bind
ourselves, our heirs &c. jointly and severally firmly by these presents; sealed
with our seals and dated this 17th day of June 1816

The condition of the above obligation is such, that whereas there is a marriage
shortly intended to be solemnised between the above bound Joseph
and Esther Eccles now if there be no lawful cause to obstruct the
said marriage, then the above obligation to be void, else to remain in full force
and virtue.

Test John L. Allin Joseph Maccoun (SEAL.)
Henry Eccles (SEAL.)

Maccoun. Joseph spelled his name "Maccoun" rather than "McCoun" as we spell it today.

Use of a form: Signators were given a fill-in-the-blanks form for completion, probably from a printshop. The form was not specific to Mercer County. In 1810, the population in Harrodsburg, its county seat, was only 313.[21] A printshop in Frankfort, the state capital, or in a larger city such as Lexington (1810 population 4,326[22]), may have been the seller of the form.

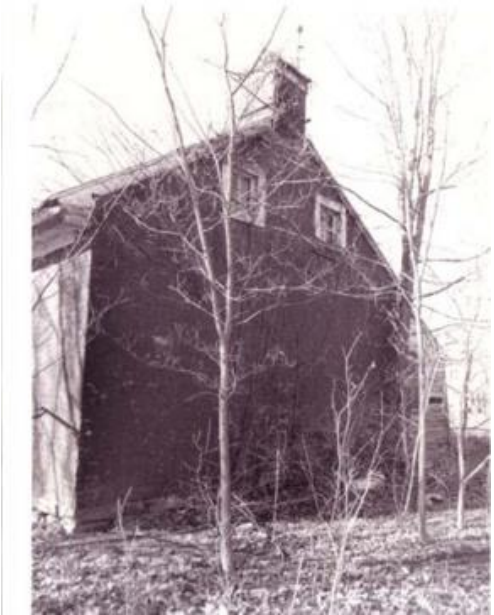
Currency. Fourteen years after the "Mint Act" specified the U.S. dollar as the currency of the United States,[23] the Kentucky marriage bond form specified payment of "fifty pounds." The reference likely was to Virginia pounds which, from 1773 to 1793, had been the official currency of Virginia and therefore the part of that state which became Kentucky in 1792.[24] The anachronistic reference to pounds in a marriage bond form executed in 1816 likely indicates that a not-yet-updated Virginia or Kentucky statute had specified the language about pounds. Virginia pounds were scarce in Harrodsburg in 1816. Of course, there would be need for payment only if a barrier to marriage were uncovered, likely a rare event. Yet the obligation to pay the bond in an obsolete currency likely reminded the signators of the importance of truthfulness in attesting to the ability of the couple to wed, as they might have wondered where they would locate the fifty pounds if they had to pay up.

After Joseph's and Esther's marriage, John and Elizabeth sold Joseph 93 acres.[25] It was on this property that Joseph built his 1820 house featured in the photos on page one and below.[26]

The construction and furnishing of the house, finished in 1820, was likely a happy project for Joseph and Esther. At this point we should study the photographs, taken in 1981, and try to imagine life in the Joseph McCoun house "Originally, the first floor was likely composed of two rooms and a central hallway," as is typical in Federal-style homes.[27]

> With only two rooms on the ground level, the plan, though technically a central passage, must have served functionally as a hall-and parlor. One room would likely have served as a private chamber or sleeping room; the central passage and other room would have been considered public, a multi-purpose area for sitting, sleeping, eating, and entertaining. The gable-roof allowed for additional attic space to compensate for the overall small plan. [The] House incorporated access to the attic area, indicating that it was used regularly.[28]

At left below is a view of the west side of the building. The two windows on the top floor suggest that the family used this level for living space, probably a bedroom. The white-clad addition at the rear of the house was added years after Joseph's time and so plays no part as we imagine the Joseph McCoun family's life in the house. At right is a view of the house's east gable. Again, we see upstairs windows, in this case on either side of the fireplace, indicating that the upstairs living space was heated. Access to the upstairs was gained through a staircase located at the rear of the



hallway. According to the application for application for the house's listing in the National Register of Historic Places, excerpted in Appendix B (page 17 below), the west side of the house had a similar chimney until it was removed sometime between 1981 and 2005. The photos on page one and the next page were taken in 1981 and included in the 2005 application.

In their 13 years of marriage, Joseph and Esther had six children, the eldest three before the house was completed in 1820: Arethusa B. McCoun, 1817-1881; William H.E. McCoun, 1819-1857; and James M. McCoun, 1820-1824. Joseph and Esther probably were living with his parents, John and Elizabeth, when the first three children were born. The youngest three children were born in the Joseph McCoun House: Mary Elizabeth McCoun, 1824-1908, who married James Earnest; our great great grandfather Joseph Eccles "Joe" McCoun, 1825-1897, who married Mary Louise "Luta" Pepper; and Arabella McCoun, 1829-1833. Biographical sketches of the children are appended to Esther's biography.

By and By Hard Times Comes a Knocking at the Door[29]

Whatever joy the Joseph McCoun family felt in their new home was soon clouded by sorrow. Their third child, James, died in 1824 when he was just four years old.

Then, in July 1829, Joseph contracted a serious illness, possibly cholera, as discussed on page 12. Although only 44, he wrote a will, saying that he was in a "low and afflicted state of body" and believed his days on earth to be few."[30] He died the day after he wrote the will, leaving most of his property, including 100 acres on the Salt River and other property, to his widow during her lifetime or widowhood.[31]

Will of Joseph McCoun

In the name of God Amen.

I Joseph Maccoun of the County of Mercer and state of Kentucky being in a low and afflicted state of body but sound in mind and memory and believing my days on earth to be few do ordain this Instrument of writing as my Last Will and Testament. First, I will my soul to God who gave it and my body to the grave to be decently buried at the discretion of my surviving friends as to any worldly substance which God in his goodness has given me, I will and desire that all my just debts be paid and the remainder disposed of in the following manner.

To wit. I will that my two Negroes Jones and Bokey be sold by my Executor to be hereafter named to the highest bidder at a credit of twelve months with all my personal Estate except the choose of two horses three cows twelve head of sheep two hogs and all the household and kitchen furniture to remain in the possession of my beloved wife Esther Maccoun to assist in the raising and educating of my children. I also will to my said wife Esther the entire use of my plantation on which I now live to assist her in raising and educating my children to remain in her hand during her life or widowhood, but should she again marry I will that all my Estate above placed in the hands of my said wife shall be sold for money and one third of the interest arising therefrom to be applied to the use and benefit of my said wife Esther during her lifetime. Secondly, I will and desire that all real or personal estate that may fall to me from my father's estate which is now pending in a suit in Chancery in the Mercer Circuit Court agreeable to a bill filed by Wilson's heirs for the settlement of said Estate, shall be sold for money and the interest arising

therefrom to be applied to the benefit of my children if needed to assist in their education if not to be equally divided among them. Third, also I will that my undivided interest in the grist mill and sawmill of Kennedy and Maccoun be sold, all my Estate be equally divided amongst my children to wit Arethusa, William H.E., Mary Elizabeth, Joseph E. Maccoun and my child that yet unborn as they severally arrive at the age of twenty one years. I also desire and request that my friend Aaron James shall be my Executor to this my last Will and Testament revoking all others whatever in witness hereof. I have set my hand and affixed my seal this 18th day of July 1829.

Joseph was buried in the cemetery of the New Providence Presbyterian Church. A photo of his headstone is at right.[32] Only four years later came another death, that of Arabella, the youngest child of Joseph and Esther. She was born a month after her father died and might have been a source of smiles for her mother in a period of grief. Esther, at age 37, was beginning what would be 52 years as a widow.

Family historian Marcia Bryan Horton speculated that Joseph's premature death, and the deaths of little James and Arabella, were due to cholera.[33] The passage that follows, written four years after Joseph's death, gives an idea of the magnitude of the cholera epidemic that plagued the world from 1826 to 1837:

At no period of our political history has it happened, that the citizens of our state have suffered by severe malignant disease as during the past year. In many sections of the Commonwealth, the dreadful epidemic which has visited almost every quarter of the Globe, and taken off more than fifty millions of inhabitants, remained for several weeks, carrying with it dismay, desolation and death. Long will the melancholy events of the past year be remembered by those who survive; many, many of our most valuable and interesting citizens have gone to that "country from whose bourne no traveller returns"—the busy scenes and bustle of life are, to them, no more; hushed and stilled by the cold hand of death: but it must be so : it was not the will of Heaven that the "cup" should "pass away." I am pleased, however, to be able to state that the country, at present, enjoys good health—perhaps to a greater extent than usual; for which, and the many other blessings we enjoy, religious and civil, we should be filled with thanks to the author of all good, and implore Him to continue his kindness towards us.

The above passage appeared in the introduction of the message that Kentucky's Governor, John Breathitt, delivered on 1 January 1834 to the State House of Representatives.[34] Those of us living today in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic are reminded that our forebears experienced pandemics also.

It is impossible to say whether John and the children had contracted cholera. Some accounts indicate that the specific bacterium that causes this disease, which originated in India, had not reached the central United States, including Kentucky as early as 1829 when Joseph died.[35]

Clearly it was in the region in 1833. Even if the culprit in the deaths of Joseph and his two children was not cholera but another pathogen, what is certain is that, in most of the 19th century, basic principles of sanitation were not yet understood. Many people succumbed to illnesses associated with consumption of contaminated water or food. Among these were dysentery, typhoid fever, cholera, tuberculosis, botulism, and scarlet fever.[36]

Esther's 52 Years Without Joseph

The years that Esther lived as a widow could not have been easy. Of the four children who survived childhood, two children, Mary Elizabeth and William, moved far away as soon as they reached adulthood. And, in the early 1870s, Joe also moved to Texas, returning to Kentucky only after his mother passed away in 1881.

Mary Elizabeth married James H. Earnest in 1846. The couple settled in Wisconsin, where James was at first a miner and later a farmer. There they had eight children and lived to advanced ages, before dying in their adopted state.

Joseph and Esther's son William suffered a tragic and early end that was, no doubt, a source of additional misery for his mother. Before age 23, William had moved to Liberty, Missouri, where he bought a farm, married, and had three children. Then—attracted by the 1848 Gold Rush—he moved to California, leaving his family in Missouri. Finding not gold but brief success in local politics, William served a term in the California State Senate. His fatal mistake was agreeing to participate in an ill-conceived plan by a former Senate colleague to invade Sonora, Mexico. The plot was discovered by authorities, and William and other Americans in the party were apprehended and executed by a Mexican firing squad on 7 April 1857. Imagine Esther's horror upon learning of her adventurous son's fate. William's wife died not long after that, and their orphaned teenage daughter Ella traveled from Missouri to live for a time with Esther.

This brings us to the other two children of Joseph and Esther, Arethusa and Joe. Every indication is that their eldest child, Arethusa, who was 12 when her father died, was a helpmate to Esther. Arethusa and her husband Merit Cunningham settled on McCoun family land, ran a good-size farm, and produced several grandchildren. She lived next door to, or with, Esther for rest of her days. But Esther outlived both her son-in-law, Merit, who died in 1860 at age 55, and Arethusa herself, who died in 1874 at age 57.

Joe, whose full name was Joseph Eccles McCoun, was our great great grandfather. He had been barely four when his father died, and then he was by his mother's side for the next 25 years. The 1850 census taker found Esther living with Joe, single and age 24, sharing the Joseph McCoun House. Only one other person lived there, a young male boarder who likely was assisting on the farm. Next door were Arethusa and her family.

Before the decade was through, Joe and his mother were in a court battle over the future of the McCoun land holdings. The seeds of discord were sown when Joe fell in love with a wealthy young woman, Mary Louisa Pepper, who lived in the neighboring county, Woodford. After their 1856 marriage, "Luta," as Joe's bride was known, may have been content to start her marriage sharing the Joseph McCoun house with her husband and mother-in-law, but she had grander plans. What happened next is told not here, where our focus is Joseph McCoun, resting in his grave since his early death in 1829, but rather in the biographies of Joe and Luta.

For now, here is a quick overview of what happened next in this branch of our family tree:

- Luta's father, Samuel Pepper, offered to sell his Woodford County homestead, the house in which Luta was born and its surrounding far, to Joe for $19,000 in three annual installments.
- To afford that property, Joe had to round up the disparate parts of the McCoun land that had been left his siblings by Joseph's Will. Joe's objective was to put together a substantial tract that he could sell to an outside buyer. Then he would have enough money for at least the first of three installments on his father-in-law's property.
- Esther became concerned that she would soon be ousted from her long-time home.
- By suing her children and petitioning the state legislature, Esther secured her rights under her late husband's will. For a decade she owned three properties totaling almost 68 acres. She eventually sold them to Joe, but only after he paid her enough money so that she had a nest egg on which to live during her last years of life.
- Joe sold the McCoun property that he had amassed.
- Joe and Luta bought the grand home and farm in Woodford County and lived for about six years as Kentucky gentry.
- However, Joe made an unwise decision to co-sign for funding needed to build a turnpike project initiated by his brother-in-law. Joe put up his own hard-won property as security.
- When the turnpike was not completed, Joe and Luta lost everything they owned. Their farm, home, furniture and farm equipment were sold at public auction.
- To make a new start, Joe, Luta, and their children moved to the Fort Worth area of Texas.
- In December 1874 Luta died in Texas, just 40 years old, died. The news of this death reached Esther just months after her daughter Arethusa's death.
- Joe and Luta's little son, William died nine months later. He was four years old.
- All of the remaining children of Joe and Luta, with the exception of their eldest sons Rob and Sam, returned to Kentucky to live with Esther. She may have wished that Joe, Rob, and Sam had also returned. Instead, they moved further west, to Throckmorton, Texas, and became cowboys.
- Esther died at age 89, on 12 July 1881.
- Later in the 1880s, Joe and Rob returned to Kentucky.

The family's story continues in the biographies of Esther, Joe, Luta, and Rob (our indomitable ancestors, Esther Eccles McCoun, Joseph Eccles McCoun, Mary Louisa Pepper, and Robert Pepper McCoun).

The Joseph McCoun House: a Federal-style house in Kentucky

Why is an old house as ordinary as the one pictured on the next page considered historic? In 2005, the Kentucky Heritage Council registered the Joseph McCoun House, a one-story, five-bay, brick side-gable building, on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.[37] It is "a restrained example of an academic style" and "an outstanding example of a vernacular expression of Federal architecture," influenced by classical architecture and the British architect Robert Adam.[38] Saying that Joseph McCoun's house was a vernacular structure means it was built with local building materials, in a particular regional style, or at a specific period or location in history. In this case, the expert justifying the registration of the house believed that the House provided insights into the Federal style in general. Notably, other houses in the region illustrated a similar conception, i.e., a five-bay symmetrical facade, central passage plan, interior end

chimneys, façade of Flemish bond brickwork, a lack of sidelights and transom, and a stone foundation. The fact there were several similar houses in the area indicates that in Mercer County there was introduced a variation on the scale and detailing of a more academic Federal-style house such as the one shown in the second photograph below. According to the application to register the Joseph McCoun House,

> "What makes vernacular architecture is not an occupant who builds but a cultural congruity among design, construction, and use" (Glassie 2001:46). In other words, although vernacular offers a local interpretation it does not necessarily reflect an individual builder, but more likely represents the preferences of a social environment.

Consequently, the Joseph McCoun House "reveals the mores of a social group that is not represented within evaluations of purely academic examples." Rather, its form, plan, materials, and characteristics…, though individually common, come together to form a powerful representation of an historic environment embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Federal style while also displaying the social patterns, rituals, and codes of the period itself. [39]

A well-known example of the Federal style of architecture is Farmington,[40] the Louisville home of James Speed and Lucy Fry Speed. Their son, Joshua Fry Speed (1814-1882), was Abraham Lincoln's lifelong best friend.[41] The future president spent many weeks visiting in this house. Farmington has another presidential connection: its architect was the third president, Thomas Jefferson, best known for designing his own home, Monticello, and the most iconic buildings on the University of Virginia campus. Lucy Fry's grandfather, Thomas Walker, had been the guardian of Thomas Jefferson after the death of his father. Farmington was built in 1816, only four years before the Joseph McCoun house 65 miles away. In an odd coincidence of the sort that genealogists love, while writing this piece I realized that, in 1888, the granddaughter of Joseph and Esther Eccles McCoun married a first cousin of Joshua Speed Fry. The 1888 marriage of Esther "Hettie" McCoun (1865-1955) and Thomas Joshua Fry (1854-1930) had nothing to do with the architectural similarity of the two homes built seven decades earlier, but the coincidence reminds us of the interconnectedness of early Kentucky families. Our grandmother's older sister, Hettie Fry McCoun, born in 1892, was named four the aunt who four years earlier had married into the Fry family.

Each “Hettie” was also named for Esther Eccles, the wife of this biography’s subject.

Appendix A: My Search for the Joseph McCoun House

I have twice gone to Mercer County, Kentucky in search of the Joseph McCoun House. My first trip, in October 2017, was unsuccessful while my second effort on 11 November 2021 succeeded in finding the house. In 2017 I failed to find the house because I was looking for a place resembling the photo on the preceding page. By that time, the Joseph McCoun House was already a heap of rubble.

The aerial views that follow trace the demise of the House. At right is the undated aerial view that was in the 2005 application for registration of the red-bounded property on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. The arrow points to the Joseph McCoun House.

Below is an image from Google maps that I saved before my 2017 trip.

At right and below are images from Google maps accessed in 2021 in preparation for my 11 November trip. It is clear that, in the four years between the 2017 and the 2021 images, the Joseph McCoun House has continued to deteriorate. The close-up image below showed the back half of the gabled roof as almost entirely missing, exposing to the elements the latticed support beams and the interior of the house. The structures that resemble boulders in the lower portion of the photo were not evident in the earlier photos.

The days in Kentucky's Bluegrass Region that preceded my 11 November 2021 drive to Mercer County to search for the Joseph McCoun House had consisted of one genealogy success story after another. I had toured an ancestral home and two distilleries with family connections, viewed and photographed ancestors' headstones, found references to other ancestors' obituaries, found a treasure trove of information at the Woodford County Historical Society, and above all, through a day at the County courthouse found and copied deeds resolving which house was the one that Joe and Luta McCoun wanted, bought, and lost.

I set out for Salvisa with a can-do attitude that this time I would succeed where I had earlier failed. I would find the Joseph McCoun House this time. I got a little lost on my way there and decided first to drive past the New Providence Presbyterian Church and its nearby cemetery. That worked well, because my approach from the south included a road where, from a hilltop, I

had a splendid view of the Crews Street area depicted in the aerial images. Even from a half mile away, I could easily pick out the heap that once had been the Joseph McCoun House. View, and weep. Someone had picked all the brick off the house like feathers from a chicken. Perhaps those boulder-like structures in the 2017 aerial photo were piles of bricks.

What was left was being used as a storage shed.

The above view photograph hints that the structure once was a house.

I was disgusted but unsurprised by the current condition of a house where three generations of ancestors once lived. Listing of a property on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places "places no restrictions on what a non-federal owner may do with their property up to and including destruction" but offers financial incentives to the owner to preserve the property.[42] The current owner appears to be content not only to allow this two-century-old historic house to disintegrate, but to hasten its demise by purposeful scavenging and damage. It will not be long before the Joseph McCoun House reaches the end of its days and joins the dust of what once had been the McCoun clan's enclave in Mercer County, Kentucky.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Application for Registration of Joseph McCoun House on the National Register of Historic Places; registered 3 August 2005[43]

The verb tense in the following application should generally be in the past tense: many years have passed since the Joseph McCoun House resembled the description in the application. What follows is not exciting reading, but the author is including a lengthy excerpt from the application as part of the family history legacy represented by the ancestral biographies. Although today the application may be found on the internet, it could be removed at any time, particularly if an effort is made to remove no-longer-existent buildings from the National Register.

Description Summary:

The Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House (Me-154) [referred to in the companion biography as "the Joseph McCoun House"] is a one-story, five-bay, brick side-gable building with two rear frame additions clad in weatherboard. This house is located within Bondville, east of the railroad and the Salt River. The community of Bondville is located along the Salt River west of US 127, and northwest of Salvisa. The area remains rural, with large acreage surrounding homes. The community of Bondville is composed of residential and agricultural buildings, with no related commercial structures remaining. The facade of the McCoun/Sharp House is oriented to the south toward a tributary of the Salt River and Bondville Road. Crews Street diverges north from Bondville Road, southwest of the dwelling and travels along the western edge of the property. The house is accessed by two driveways. One dirt driveway travels from Bondville Road north, approaching the house along the east side. An additional gravel driveway accesses the west side yard, running perpendicular from Crews Street and traveling east. The Southern Railroad travels between Crews Street and Bondville Road through the community of Bondville, west of the dwelling. A stone-and-brick root cellar is located southwest of the house. A frame, gable-roof garage with shed-roof side wings is located northwest of the dwelling. A gable-roof barn and gable-roof privy are located northeast of the dwelling. The area proposed for listing includes 4.75 acres.

The chain of title for the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House is unclear and partially broken as a result of missing deeds, wills, and the absence of clearly recorded land divisions. It appears that the original acreage, prior to the construction of the house, was part of a 470-acre property located on Salt River owned by James McCoun, Sr [the accompanying biography refers to him as James McCoun IV]. Several properties were inherited by John McCoun from his father James McCoun, in 1800. Though the actual division of land (located in Mercer, Shelby, Franklin, and Henry counties) is unclear, it is likely that this is how John acquired the property now associated with the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House. In 1816, John and his wife Elizabeth sold 93 acres of land to their son Joseph who had just married Esther Eccles (MCTA 1801, 1803, 1816, 1819; McCoun Family Files; DB 10:151; MB 1:200).

The next change in acreage occurred in 1829, when Joseph died and willed the majority of his estate, now including 100 acres along the Salt River, to his wife and seven children. In 1855, Esther acquired ownership of 40 acres of the original 470-acre property. Though a house is not mentioned within the deed, it is likely that Esther would have inherited or was already residing within the house she previously shared with her husband. Though deeds were not officially filed, the property appears to have passed, along with additional acreage, to Esther's son Joseph (MCTA 1828; WB 9:228; DB 29:470; DB 25:73).

In 1864, the property was combined with other parcels to form a 173 3/4-acre tract that was sold to John L. Jarvis. John L. Jarvis and his wife Mary C. Sharp are not recorded as residents within the county until the 1870 census. [Discussion of later ownership is omitted.] …Though no concrete evidence was available, it appears that the house has been abandoned since [1996].

The current property contains 42.89548 acres and is rural in nature with pastureland and hay fields encompassing approximately 90% of the total acreage. The remaining 10% appears to have been historically used as the domestic lot, with no signs of pasturage. Very few fences remain within the total acreage; those that do appear to be modern wire fences used to separate the northern portion into pastureland. Although the agricultural portion of the property appears to have been recently used for hay and cattle, the house and its surrounding domestic lot is

abandoned, and littered.

The 4.75 acres within the proposed portion of the property for listing includes only the domestic area and the acreage that appears to have defined the setting of the house throughout history.

The residence is a brick one-story, five-bay, side-gable house. Due to the rear collapse and the inability to gain interior access, only the exterior of the house was documented. The facade is laid in Flemish bond, whereas the sides feature five-course common bond. A gable-roof pediment projects from the front roof slope over the facade entry. A lunette window is located within this pediment and features a two-light sash and segmental brick arch. The central three bays are contained within a slight projection that supports the gable-roofed pediment. Extending approximately four inches from the plane of the facade, the masonry extends through the gable of the pediment and contains the lunette window. Wall thickness for the central three bays is slightly deeper as a result of this projection.

The single-leaf entry is centered on the facade and features a channeled reveal. Windows on the facade have two-over-two-light double-hung sashes and feature jack arches. The facade retains its molded wood cornice. The east elevation of the primary block has two windows within the attic level of the gable and none on the first floor, whereas the west elevation has two windows within the attic level of the gable and a first level window with two-over-two horizontal-light sashes. The primary mass of the house rests on a stone foundation, and its roof is clad in asphalt shingles. A brick, interior end chimney projects from the ridgeline near the east side gable. A photograph of the house from the 1981 survey by Clay Lancaster indicates a similar chimney was located on the west side gable. It has since been removed. The primary mass of the house has a flush verge with wooden vergeboard.

A one-story brick addition projects from the rear of the primary block in alignment with the west gable wall. …

The one-and-one-half-story five-bay brick portion constitutes period one of construction. Originally, the first floor was likely composed of two rooms and a central hallway. As evidenced through the collapsed rear addition, access to the loft area was gained through a staircase located at the rear of the hallway. Original windows on the first level possibly had six-over six-light double-hung sashes. With five-course common bond and stone foundation, it is likely that the rear brick addition had a construction date near that of the original mass. Although no physical evidence indicates, the void between the east wall of this addition and the rear of the original brick mass would likely have served as a porch area. The existing rear frame additions, with weatherboard siding and three-over single-light double-hung sashes, appear to date to the late-nineteenth century, post-dating any rear porch that may have existed. …Other additions to the original mass include the facade porch with turned wood columns and spindle work brackets. The house has also been painted. Windows within the original mass have been replaced with historic two-over two-light double-hung sashes, an alteration likely taking place in the late nineteenth century.

A stone semi-subterranean root cellar is located south of the house within the front yard. It is constructed of limestone rock. The below-ground portion of the cellar appears to be assembled from quarried stone. This is particularly evident within the two retaining walls that line the stone access steps. Rocks within the walls are large, level, blocks that allow for tight joints and a flat, smooth surface. The rear of the above-ground portion of the cellar is mounded and

consists of a grassy area. Bricks are located within the rear mound, but do not appear to provide any structural support. The facade of the above-ground area consists of a stepped stone parapet wall that serves as a retaining wall for the rear mound. The wall comes to a point approximately four feet above the entrance to the storage area. This above-ground section is constructed of quarried stone; portions of it have been covered in parging, perhaps a treatment added later as a result of settlement or degradation of the wall. The above-ground facade wall is topped by rock coping. Rocks within the coping appear to be field stones. Though no evidence exists, the cellar was likely constructed using the same quarry source that was used for the foundation stones of the house. Although the cellar likely dates to the circa 1820 construction period of the house, it is considered a non-contributing resource, as it does not contribute to the architectural significance of the site. …

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House (Me-154) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type (five-bay, central passage, Federal architecture in Mercer County) and period (Federal-era/style architecture of Mercer County) of construction. The house is significant within the context of circa 1820 Federal style architecture within Mercer County as an example of its type and period of construction. The majority of previously documented Federal style houses within Mercer County are larger, academically executed examples of the style. The Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House, with its single-pile depth, salmon-colored brick, and modest embellishment is a smaller, less academic example of the Federal style in Mercer County. As a restrained example of an academic style, the house represents an outstanding example of a vernacular expression of Federal architecture. The term Vernacular is commonly accepted as meaning a local interpretation of a widely known form and often termed "regional architecture" (Carter and Herman 1991:2; Upton 1986:315). Within that definition, the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp house, constructed in the early-nineteenth century, represents an outstanding example of a vernacular interpretation of an academic style in Mercer County and as a result merits eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

Historic Context: Circa 1820 Federal style architecture within Mercer County The architectural inventory of Mercer County contains eight examples of one-and-one-half-story, five-bay Federal style dwellings (ME-9, ME-83, ME- 144, ME-150, ME-172, ME-H-3, ME-H-13, and ME-H-14). Features shared by all of these examples include stone foundations, Flemish bond masonry, and openings topped by jack arches. Gable-end chimneys, either single or paired, are also common. One-story side pavilions are present in two examples, and three display a fanlight above the entry. Transoms and sidelights are also represented. All of the previously documented houses are constructed around a central passage plan, and three are double pile. The Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House, while similar in many respects, differs from other Federal style houses. It shares a five-bay, central passage plan with other Federal houses of the county. The Flemish bond facade, stone foundation, end chimneys, and jack arches are also common features. Distinct differences emerge in the facade projection of the central three bays, seen in one house, an urban example: ME-H-3. Architectural detailing of the cited examples of Federal architecture includes porticos and other facade ornamentation, but none carry the masonry pediment of the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House. Its restrained entry, without transom, fanlight, or sidelights is more closely associated with less academic architecture. Of the other nine examples of one-story, five-bay, brick, Federal style houses in Mercer County, two (ME-H-13: Alexander Buchanan House and ME-9: Moses Jones House)

share this simplified entry without transom or sidelights. Similar to the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House, these two examples also feature side gables and lack pavilions.

The Federal period of architecture spanned from 1780 to 1820 in most parts of Kentucky and in some areas remained popular well into the nineteenth century, with many examples constructed as late as the 1840s. Gaining popularity on the American Eastern seaboard following the Revolution, it is commonly referred to as Adam style or Adamesque, named for British architect Robert Adam. Working with his brother, Adam was influenced by the classical architecture of Italy and the Mediterranean. Generating more awareness of the classic Greek and Roman monuments, Adam's influence upon British architecture and eventually American architecture resulted in a style featuring symmetry, verticality, and a strict sense of proportions and ornamentation. In general, the style is characterized by its symmetrical form, typically featuring five facade bays with an accented central entry. Federal style homes are commonly straightforward in plan, with a central hallway flanked by two or four rooms. In particular, window openings were made more prominent during the Federal period versus that of the earlier Georgian style. Panes were typically larger, fewer, and lighter in appearance as a result of slimmer muntins. Lintels, jack arches, and segmental arches typically accented window openings. The facade entry was perhaps the most elaborate exterior accent of Federal style architecture. These ornate entries commonly featured fanlights, sidelights, paneled doors, as well as sophisticated surrounds with pilasters, dentil molding, and porticos. Though frame examples were prevalent during the period, the most common wall material was brick, laid in a Flemish or Common bond (Lanier 1997:127-138).

Through the early eighteenth century, the hall-and-parlor plan with a large multipurpose hall and a parlor or chamber was prevalent along the east coast; it remained a common form within Kentucky through the early nineteenth century. The introduction of a central hallway came about as a means to more clearly separate the private and public spaces of the dwelling, making the original parlor and chamber more difficult to access. Within the purely academic examples it formed a ceremonial area where visitors were greeted and afforded further access to the house according to social ranking. The creation of the central hallway also served practical purposes. It allowed air to circulate through the center of the house, providing an area with seasonal uses. The hallway was eventually considered a less formal place, serving as a socially neutral area (Wenger 1986:137- 149; Upton 1986:317, 318).

Within Kentucky, the Federal style was introduced in the 1790s and continued to hold its popularity through the 1840s. In his book **Antebellum Architecture of Kentucky**, Clay Lancaster discusses three types of Federal style architecture: the Georgian survival; the geometric phase; and the classic phase. Liberty Hall (1796-1804), in Frankfort, is an example of the transition to Federal within Kentucky and is categorized by Lancaster as a Georgian survival. The house features a central passage plan, with the drawing room and dining room in the front side bays, and the chambers to the rear. The house is laid in Flemish bond and features a central facade pediment. A slight projection of the masonry wall includes the three central bays of the facade and is carried through the pediment. Lancaster compares the overall massing and scale of the house to the urban forms found on the East Coast such as the Matthias Hammond House in Annapolis. Located in the capitol city and being the residence of a former United States senator, Liberty Hall is a textbook example of regional high style architecture. Visitors to Frankfort were likely impressed with the house, as it represented the influences of the East Coast and Mid-Atlantic. Other academic examples within Kentucky include Henry Clay's original Ashland (ca. 1813-1815) in Lexington and Federal Hill (My Old Kentucky Home) (ca. 1818) near Bardstown. One story examples include Farmington (1810)

and Ridgeway (1817) both in Louisville, and the William Morton House (ca. 1810), Lewis Manor (ca. 1800) and Rose Hill (ca. 1812) all in Lexington. All five examples have hip-roofs. This roof type would have been more difficult to construct and would have eliminated portions of the attic space. The Morton House and Rose Hill did not have staircase access to their attics, indicating a lack of use. The double-pile plan of both dwellings and the presence of one-story side pavilions likely provided ample living space (Kornwolf 2002:1494-1496; Lancaster 1991:118-127, 143- 148).

The variations between the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House in comparison to academic Federal style buildings within the county, such as the lack of pavilions, restrained entry and window bay detailing, and the use of salmon colored brick in conjunction with the single-pile plan indicate that the house is a vernacular interpretation of Federal style architecture within the county. The term vernacular is commonly accepted as meaning a local interpretation of a widely known form and often termed regional architecture (Carter and Herman 1991:2; Upton 1986:315). Though commonly used to interpret the more widespread bungalow or prevalent twentieth century architecture, the term is routinely used to further interpret early academic styles such as the Federal as well as industrial and agricultural buildings.

Evaluation Within the Historic Context

According to scholar Dell Upton, the one-and-one-half-story, single-pile, central passage plan was one of the most common forms in Virginia during the eighteenth century. Upton classifies them as being a quarter of the ideal type" Virginia house (Upton 1986:318). Similarly, the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp house is a more restrained version of Kentucky Federal style architecture. It incorporates the projected central three facade bays carrying through to a masonry pediment, similar to Liberty Hall. It also features a five-bay, central passage plan similar to Rose Hill and Lewis Manor. Other federal features include brick jack arches, Flemish and common bond, and a stone foundation. The single-pile depth and gable-end roof, however, indicate a more restrained interpretation of the architectural style. With only two rooms on the ground level, the plan, though technically a central passage, must have served functionally as a hall-and parlor. One room would likely have served as a private chamber or sleeping room; the central passage and other room would have been considered public, a multi-purpose area for sitting, sleeping, eating, and entertaining. The gable-roof allowed for additional attic space to compensate for the overall small plan. Unlike Rose Hill and the Norton House, the McCoun/Sharp House incorporated access to the attic area, indicating that it was used regularly. The need for this extra space may explain the decision to incorporate a gable-roof rather than following the idealized hip-roof model.

Kingston Heath explains that "Vernacular architecture represents a localized response to broad cultural systems, historical events, and environmentally determined regional forces" (Heath 2001:185). The Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House is an excellent example of this analysis. The builder was clearly influenced by the culture that surrounded him, observing examples of Federal style architecture within the county as well as those outside of the area within larger cities. The influence of cultural or social systems is also evident with the use of the central passage plan. The house, with central passage plan, gable-roof pediment, Flemish bond, and symmetrical form represents a localized response to the environment, trends, and influences within the Federal period and particularly those manifest within the Federal style. Heath further explains that "When manifested in the built form, such buildings and their settings are capable of imparting a contextually rich bounty of learned cultural codes, patterns of behavior, local building processes, and social rituals" (Heath 2001:185). This is the essence of

significance within vernacular architecture. Structures that embody this regional or local response to broader patterns provide insight into a social aspect of architecture that is otherwise not necessarily provided within high style academic architecture or written documents.

A vernacular structure such as the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House provides a type of autobiography on a specific period and location in history. In particular, it provides insight into local interpretations of the larger Federal style. Other houses in the county, such as the Moses Jones House (ME-9) and the Alexander Buchanan House (Me-H-13) illustrate a similar conception. The Moses Jones House (ca. 1809-1811) is an earlier example than the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House; similarly, it has a five-bay symmetrical facade, end chimneys, stone foundation, and single pile form. Another similarity is the lack of detailing such as entry sidelights and transom. The Moses Jones House does, however, display additional detailing not found in the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House, such as Flemish bond brickwork along all four sides, as well as two-coursed jack arches and a somewhat restrained but prominent central portico with pediment. It also features a hall-parlor plan rather than a central passage.
Although it has undergone unsympathetic alterations, the Alexander Buchanan House (construction date unknown, but pre-1833) forms another example of Federal style architecture within the county that is comparable to the characteristics of the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House. Similar to the McCoun/Sharp House, it features a five-bay facade, central passage plan, interior end chimneys, facade Flemish bond brickwork and a lack of sidelights and transom.
Though a casual comparison of these three structures tells us little about them as individual five-bay, central-passage Federal style examples, their similarity does indicate the desire of Mercer County builders to provide or introduce a variation on the scale and detailing of the academic Federal style house. According to architectural scholar Henry Glassie, "What makes vernacular architecture is not an occupant who builds but a cultural congruity among design, construction, and use" (Glassie 2001:46). In other words, although vernacular offers a local interpretation it does not necessarily reflect an individual builder, but more likely represents the preferences of a social environment. As a result, the McCoun/Sharp House reveals the mores of a social group that is not represented within evaluations of purely academic examples. The form, plan, materials, and characteristics of the Joseph McCoun/D.S. Sharp House, though individually common, come together to form a powerful representation of an historic environment embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Federal style while also displaying the social patterns, rituals, and codes of the period itself.

Integrity

The rear brick addition was likely added to allow space for an additional chamber. It appears to date (based on materials, brick bond and foundation) near the original construction date of the house. Although the addition incorporates a large end chimney, it is unlikely that the space was used as a kitchen due to the rarity of indoor kitchens during the time period (Kennedy and Macintire 1999:14). The two frame additions, with weatherboard siding and three-over-single-light double hung windows, appear to date to the late nineteenth century. These areas were likely added to supplement space, while respecting the central passage plan of the original mass. The two frame additions join west of the central hallway, allowing for the circulation patterns of the original construction to remain intact. Rather than extending the entire rear wall of the house, ell additions were introduced to accommodate the central plan, further demonstrating its importance. Though it is difficult to determine emphatically, these additions

were likely added following the Civil War. Homeowners were restricted financially, making it more efficient to merely add space rather than constructing an entirely new structure. In addition to allowing the continued use of the central passage, the additions are flush with the side walls of the original five-bay brick mass. This allows for the retention of the five-bay central passage form. In essence, the additions allowed for the expansion and alterations typical of a building of this age, while not affecting the original form and facade of the Federal period mass. Though the frame additions have severely diminished integrity, the failure of their framing does not detract from the overall shape, form, scale, plan and massing of the brick dwelling. They indicate the evolution of the dwelling from its original construction in the early nineteenth century through its expansion into the twentieth and do not detract from the characteristics that make the house eligible under Criterion C (Upton 1979:181-182).

[Bibliography omitted, along with Verbal Boundary Description and Boundary Justification[44]**]**

I hope you enjoy reading these biographies as much as I enjoy writing them.

Linda Horton, lrhorton@comcast.net, 16 December 2021

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[1] The application to add the Joseph McCoun house to the National Register of Historic Places referred to a photograph accompanying a 1981 survey that had been done by an individual named Clay Lancaster.

[2] The Joseph McCoun House has since 3 August 2005 been registered with the National Register of Historic Places as the "McCoun, Joseph/Sharp, D.S. House." This biography omits reference to the Sharp family who owned the property many years after the time period covered in this biography. http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/ky/mercer/state.html

[3] The images of the church and the map are from Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magheralin

[4] Woods, Neander M. *The Woods McAfee Memorial*, Louisville, Kentucky, Courier Journal Print Co. 1905, at 435 (reprinted the James McAfee Journal of 1773 and Robert McAfee's Journal of 1840s) https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t8rb7r654&view=1up&seq=1

[5] McAfee, Robert B, *The Life and Times of Robert B. McAfee*, in *Kentucky Ancestors*, Vol. 42-2 (Winter 2006), at 103.

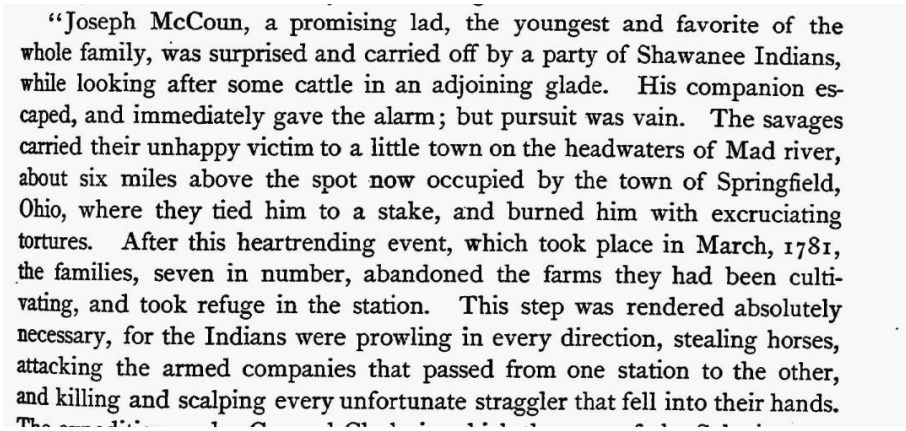
[6]

> Deposition of Elizabeth McCoun, Sr. taken at their own residence in Mercer County; this May 17th, 1842. This deponent being first duly sworn states that on the 29th August 1843, she will be age 86 and came to this country in the fall of 1779, and settled at McAfee's Station on Salt River and was then a married woman and she is now aged and infirm that she is unable to attend any Court as she lives eleven miles from Harrodsburg, the seat of Justice of said County, that not long afterwards she became acquainted with Solomon Sharp, who is now present, that said Sheriff (Sharp?) acted as a soldier and guard at said station and the adjacent stations, and was called out upon all occasions when the Indians were troublesome and was under the command of Gen. Clark and Major Hugh McGary, afterwards Major, and served until the close of the war as the Indians were almost continually annoying the station. That said Sheriff was in service a year before the Revolutionary War ended and over….
>
> Deposition of Major Samuel McCoun, age 60, and came to this country with his parents in the fall of 1779 when he was young and recollects in 1782, Solomon Sheriff (Sharp?) and he were then told that said Sheriff was one of the guards to McAfee Station and etc. same as above.

This is copied from the application of Solomon Sharp for benefit of Revolutionary War Pension, compiled by Lucy Kate McGhee, and published in two volumes under the title of *Historical Records of Harrodsburg*, Volume II—Sections 292 & 293.

[7] Horton, Marcia Bryan, *A History of the McCoun Family compiled as a Memorial to my husband, Raymond Thomas Horton (1914-1987)*. 1989, at A-21.

[8] Id.; Smith, Z. F. *The history of Kentucky from its earliest discovery and settlement to the present date, embracing its prehistoric and aboriginal*. 1886.: Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, Publishers, at 151:



"Joseph McCoun, a promising lad, the youngest and favorite of the whole family, was surprised and carried off by a party of Shawanee Indians, while looking after some cattle in an adjoining glade. His companion escaped, and immediately gave the alarm; but pursuit was vain. The savages carried their unhappy victim to a little town on the headwaters of Mad river, about six miles above the spot now occupied by the town of Springfield, Ohio, where they tied him to a stake, and burned him with excruciating tortures. After this heartrending event, which took place in March, 1781, the families, seven in number, abandoned the farms they had been cultivating, and took refuge in the station. This step was rendered absolutely necessary, for the Indians were prowling in every direction, stealing horses, attacking the armed companies that passed from one station to the other, and killing and scalping every unfortunate straggler that fell into their hands.

[9] http://friendsoffortharrod.com/gfile/75r4!-!JEJJFK!-!vzntr5/fort_harrod_sketch_by_ww_stephenson_2.jpg

[10] Smith, Z. F. *The history of Kentucky from its earliest discovery and settlement to the present date, embracing its prehistoric and aboriginal*. 1886.: Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, Publishers, at 150.

[11] McAfee, Robert B, *The Life and Times of Robert B. McAfee*, in *Kentucky Ancestors*, Vol. 42-3 (Spring 2007), 129. 132. *Kentucky Ancestors*, the genealogical quarterly of the Kentucky Historical Society published the entire memoir in three parts in 2006 and 2007. Robert B. McAfee wrote his memoir in the 1840s. It was published in 1927 by a descendant.

[12] *Kentucky Ancestors*, Vol. 42-3 (Spring 2007) at 133.

[13] https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GP32-9ZGD?i=101&wc=37R5-BZC%3A173587801%2C173605301&cc=1875188

[14] Stephenson, Martha, *Education in Harrodsburg and Neighborhood since 1775*, Press of the Harrodsburg Herald, Harrodsburg, Kentucky (1910) at 4. University of Kentucky Libraries, Special Collections Research Center, https://exploreuk.uky.edu/catalog/xt71rn30317m#page/1/mode/1up

[15] Klimcheck, Maurie McCoun, *James McCoun & Margaret Walker & Their Descendants*, Vol. II, at 47.

[16] Horton, Marcia Bryan. *A History of the McCoun Family compiled as a Memorial to my husband*, Raymond Thomas Horton (1914-1987). 1989, at A-23.

[17] Letter from Marcia Bryan Horton to Alma Ison, 10 February 1980, in the author's records.

[18] "Kentucky, County Marriages, 1797-1954," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V653-G3K : 9 March 2021), Joseph McCoun and Esther Eccles, 18 Jun 1816; citing Marriage, Mercer, Kentucky, United States, various county clerks and county courts, Kentucky; FHL microfilm 192,267.

[19] Mercer County Marriage Bond collection, Box 6, marriage bond dated 17 June 1816.

[20] http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~adaircountyfamilies/genealogy/mge_types.html The marriage bond took the place of the marriage banns of an earlier day. Banns were typically announced in church or publicly posted so that anyone who knew of a legal reason for the marriage not to take place could come forward in advance of the event. https://groups.google.com/g/soc.genealogy.misc/c/pI-DnunKYXQ?pli=1

[21] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrodsburg,_Kentucky

[22] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexington,_Kentucky

[23] An act establishing a mint, and regulating the Coins of the United States, 2 April 1792, 1 Stat. 246.

[24] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_pound

[25] (MCTA 1801, 1803, 1816, 1819; McCoun Family Files; DB 10:151; MB 1:200), cited in the 2005 application for registration of the Joseph McCoun House on the National Register of Historic Places, supra, note one. Original source: *The Kentucky Land Grants*; Volume Number: *1*; Part: *1*; Title: *Chapter VI Kentucky Land Warrants (1816-1873)*; Section: *The Counties of Kentucky*; Source page number: *658.*

[26] The photographer of all images of the Joseph McCoun House was Rebecca G. Rapier. Negatives were archived by Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort, Kentucky.

[27] Rapier, Rebecca G. National Archives Catalog https://catalog.archives.gov/id/123851427

[28] Id.

[29] "By and by hard times comes a knocking at the door" is a line from *My Old Kentucky Home*, the state song, written by Stephen Foster in the 1850s. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/complicated-legacy-my-old-kentucky-home-180975719/

[30] Mercer County, Will Bk. 9, pages 228-229.

[31] Will of Joseph McCoun, 18 July 1829, Mercer County Will Book 9 at 228-229. The will was witnessed by Samuel McCoun, William W. Nourse (husband of Mary Eccles ,1795-1833, a sister of Esther), and William McCoun. The will was proved in September 1829.

[32] Image is from FindaGrave.com https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88715710/joseph-mccoun

[33] Horton, Marcia Bryan. *A History of the McCoun Family compiled as a Memorial to my husband*, Raymond Thomas Horton (1914-1987). 1989, at A-23.

[34] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky*, at 16. https://books.google.com/books?id=xbwlAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22Kentucky.+General+Assembly.+House+of+Representatives%22&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&source=gb_mobile_search&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwigz9X-hp7yAhXHLs0KHQBgDwkQ6AF6BAgDEAM#v=onepage&q&f=false

[35] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1826%E2%80%931837_cholera_pandemic

[36]https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4840a1.htm

[37] http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/ky/mercer/state.html

[38] National Archives Catalog https://catalog.archives.gov/id/123851427, Appendix B.

[39] Id. See Appendix B.

[40] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmington_(Louisville,_Kentucky) Farmington is registered on the National Register of Historic Places. It was mentioned in the application for listing the Joseph McCoun House on the National Register of Historic Places. See Appendix B, page 21. http://farmingtonhistoricplantation.org/

[41] A 2021 book discusses Lincoln's friendship with Speed: Ginsberg, Gary, *First Friends: The Powerful Unsung (and Unelected) People who Shaped Our Presidents*, Grand Central Pub.: 2021.

[42] https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/how-to-list-a-property.htm

[43] https://catalog.archives.gov/id/123851427 ; added 2005; #05000788.
McCoun, Joseph/Sharp, D.S. House. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, certified by David L. Morgan, Kentucky Heritage Council, Historic Preservation Office on 16 June 2005; received by the National Park Service, 20 June 2005; entered in the National Register by signature of Edson Beall, 3 August 2005.

[44] Id. The omitted sections are available in transcribed form from Linda Horton, lrhorton@comcast.net