

FORMER EDITOR'S WIDOW IS KIN TO BUILDER OF DAM

Mrs. Spalding Trafton Writes from California to Supplement Messenger Story of Project.

Mrs. Louise Rucker Trafton, Los Angeles, Calif., widow of Spalding Trafton, former Henderson postmaster and for many years engaged in newspaper work there and in Hopkinsville, read and appreciated the story of the Spottsville dam with its accompanying pictures of the century old structure in the Owensboro Messenger of Sunday, October 13. The Captain William Brown referred to in the story was Mrs. Trafton's great grandfather. She has written the following article which includes many details of the builder, among whose descendants are M. Furman Cravens and his sister, Miss Lee Belle Cravens, Owensboro:

"Captain William Brown, builder of the Spottsville Dam in 1840, was born in New Hampshire, in 1793, one of the eight children of Silas Brown, Revolutionary soldier, and Mary Brown Nims whose father, Ebenezer Nims, was born in captivity, his parents having been taken by the Indians in the Deerfield, Mass. massacre, February 29, 1704, and held many years prisoners at Quebec later being ransomed.

Related to President

"Captain Brown was the sixth generation from Thomas Brown, who came to America from England in 1630, locating with the colony at Plymouth, Mass. His descendants feel he was a truly representative American. One of his ancestors was Robert Hinsdale, of Deerfield, an ancestor of President Franklin D. Roosevelt through his mother, making the present generation of which I am a part, seventh cousins of the president.

"Captain Brown married Mary Minot, daughter of Samuel Minot, Jr., a Revolutionary soldier of Putney, Vermont, in 1815.....

"When awarded a contract to build the Spottsville dam Captain Brown opened a rock quarry at Rock Island, Ill., and brought stone to Spottsville by his fleet of barges and boats. His

son, William Brown (Jr.), was the civil engineer in charge of the project. Captain Brown's mother (likely William Sr's wife, Jr's mother), Mary Minot Brown, died in the East while the Spottsville dam was under construction. He was one of the founders of the Green and Barren River Navigation Co., which leased the locks on these rivers from the state and operated them some years, until they were taken over by the federal government.

Located at Brown's Lock

"After completing the Spottsville dam, Captain Brown bought some property at Dam No. 5 (Lock No. 1), in Barren river, later known as Brown's Lock, and built there a handsome home, water mill and store, carrying on an extensive business. While living in New England he was an abolitionist, but after coming to Kentucky where he found the labor situation difficult, he became a slave owner and owned several negroes when President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation freed them. He died at Brown's Lock, in 1874, at 81 years of age. His son William married Sarah Ann Ayer, daughter of Dr. Alexander O. Ayer and Esther Johnson Ayer of Daviess county. The Brown's two sons, William, Jr., and James H. Brown, died before their father. Each son left a son but neither married, so the name Brown in this line died out.

"Mary J. Brown, oldest daughter of the captain, married Metellus Cravens. They were the parents of the late Estill Cravens, also of Miss Lee Belle and M. Furman Cravens, living in Owensboro, and Mrs. Edwin Green, the former Gertrude Cravens, of Columbia, South Carolina. The other Brown daughter, Sophia Belle Brown, married Thomas Garland Rucker, of Henderson county, and of their seven children only three survive, James M. Rucker, Houston, Texas; Lee Brown Rucker, Fulton, Ky., and myself, Louise Rucker Trafton, of Los Angeles. The name William Brown is borne by William Brown Cravens, one of the twin sons of Furman Cravens, Owensboro."

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