

## A HICKMAN COUNTY DISTILLERY

John M. Muscovalley

The following is taken from Hickman County Deed Book Z, Page 505:

Muscovalley  
Deed to  
Clark and Martin

Whereas I John Muscovalley and Jane Muscovalley his wife have leased to Clark and Martin the following described tract or parcel of land lying and being in Hickman County Kentucky and being a portion of the land purchased from Berthold and Thompson and now of record in Hickman County Court Clerk's office and being a part of the homeplace on which I now reside and bounded as follows:

Beginning at a stake on the south side of the spring branch near the distillery erected by said Clark and Martin, thence south 86 feet to a stake thence west 45 feet to a stake near the corner of the bonded warehouse, thence north 86 feet to a stake, thence east 45 feet to the beginning for a term of three years from date.

And it is further agreed by said Muscovalley that said premises may be used for the purpose of distilling spirits subject to the provisions of the United States statutes—

In witness whereof we, the parties of the first part have affixed our signatures the 14th day of September 1888.

John Muscovalley  
Jane Muscovalley

This deed, a portion of which is reprinted above, confirms the existance of a distillery operating under U. S. statutes, with a bonded warehouse, already in production in 1888.

Halfway up a bluff rising from the Mississippi River bottoms flows one of the finest springs in Hickman County. This spring is located on the Muscovalley homeplace, which lies near Chalk Bluff south of Columbus, Kentucky. The John Muscovalley mentioned in the lease owned at that time 3000 acres of land in this vicinity and traded extensively on the Mississippi River. In fact, the 1850 census of Hickman County lists his occupation as a speculator.

The Muscovalley spring, never failing, has watered man and animal from prehistoric to the present time. It was a perfect place for a small distillery and was recognized as such by Will Clark, who was looking for a place to relocate his distillery.

The Will Clark Distillery was originally located at Kirksey in Calloway County, Kentucky. Not much is known of this plant except the mashing capacity was about 30 to 50 bushels per day. The reason for moving is not clear, but after leasing the Muscovalley plot, the plant was moved to this site about 1888. At the time of the moving Will Clark and Dallas Martin became partners and the new distillery was named the Clark and Martin Distillery. Dallas Martin was the former storekeeper and guager of the Will Clark Distillery at Kirksey.

This distillery, once in operation, was producing about 130 gallons of whiskey per day. The whiskey was sold mainly to river trade and local customers. Things prospered until about 1897 when disputes with the Federal Government forced the small distillery to close its doors. About this time Federal regulations began to specify the number of gallons of spirits per bushel of grain. This seems to have been about 2.6 gallons per bushel. The Clark and Martin Distillery was not meeting these regulations, so the government was taxing them on the difference between the 2.6 and the actual rum. Rather than rebuild and try to meet these regulations the distillery ceased operation. So ended a unique chapter of whiskey making in Hickman County.

Aside from the registered deed, much of the material concerning the distillery has been passed down as oral history. My father, grandson of John, well remembered the operation of the distillery when he was a boy, while my uncle Leo often told me of playing in the abandoned mash barrels as a small child. The vats, to him, were of huge size and required help to get out of if he was careless at play.

While all signs of the distillery and warehouse have long since vanished, the spring continues to flow and awaits the next attempt to capitalize on its waters. Anyone for bottled spring water?

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## MADRID BEND, WHERE THE COMPASS IS WRONG

Janie Bodkin

You're driving south along the Mississippi River when you look to your left and see a tow of barges headed north. The barges are actually on their way south. Almost unbelievable, but true.

This is an area known as the Madrid Bend, or sometimes Bessie Bend, where the River flows north. It's located along the Mississippi in the extreme southwestern tip of Kentucky, and encompasses an area of 16,000 acres, more or less. Some years, the River adds to the Bend, some years, it takes from it, causing the size to fluctuate.

The Bend section of Kentucky is a peninsula formed by the maneuvering of the mighty Mississippi. Here, where Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky meet, it formed a horseshoe curve. The result is that the people here live due west of a portion of Missouri, downstream from Tennessee, yet are north of Tennessee. At its largest, the Bend is about six miles wide and three miles long.

Its status as part of Kentucky, though separated from the remainder of the state, stems from the Virginia Commission, which in 1779 established the line between Kentucky and Tennessee. In 1859 the State of Tennessee requested ownership of the strip, but Kentucky refused to give up the ground.

Although the Bend is connected by land only with Tennessee, and it is necessary to travel some twenty miles through Tennessee to reach it, the area is part of Fulton County, Kentucky. And, although they are residents of Kentucky, the children of the Bend area attend school in Tennessee. They are transported by family or friends to and from the state line, where a Tennessee school bus completes the daily round trip to school.

Flood waters used to cover Kentucky 313, a road which starts at the Tennessee line and ends in the back shouglhs along the river, but it has been raised

some and now floods much less frequently.

About sixty people live in the Bend area, and they seem to like it. They claim it is a peaceful life, and don't seem to mind the occasional flooding, or even the scarcity of telephones. Partially as a result of their relative isolation, the residents are practically self-sufficient.

A few years ago, the Army Corps of Engineers planned to cut a new river channel through the Bend area. However, opposition on both sides of the River, from New Madrid, Missouri, and Tiptonville, Tennessee, was so strong that the plan was abandoned. New Madrid also was part of the area that suffered severe damage in the great earthquakes of the winter of 1811-1812.

A historical marker stands at the crossroads leading into the Bend. It tells of the Civil War battle of Island No. 10.

The New Madrid Bend area of Kentucky is a place of unusual beauty, where nature played a joke on the compass, that trusted instrument of direction.