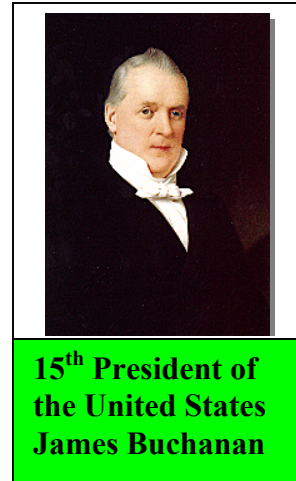


A young lawyer named James Buchanan in Hardin County, KY

James Buchanan came to Hardin County to help protect his father's investment in land. His father purchased almost 10,000 acres of land in Hardin County. One tract of this land was partly in what is still Hardin County today. Another tract started at the Doe Run where it intersects with the Ohio River in what is now Meade County. Disputes over land titles led to a lot of litigation in the early days of Hardin County.

James Buchanan became a lawyer at the age of 21 in 1812. He was sent by his father to take care of his Hardin County lands. Buchanan came down the Ohio on a flatboat with members of the Crutcher family who operated a store and other businesses in Elizabethtown. They disembarked at West Point and came by wagon over Muldraugh's Hill.

The Circuit Court session during which Buchanan's cases were litigated began on March 8, 1813. Buchanan's cases were filed on March 11th. It is likely that Buchanan arrived in early March and spoke with local attorneys about preparing these suits. The Buchanan suits were among the last to be dealt with in the court session, which concluded on Saturday, June 19, 1813. Buchanan gave local citizen Ben Hardin a power-of-attorney and then returned to Pennsylvania.



It is likely that Buchanan left very shortly after the conclusion of the court session in June. Buchanan probably stayed with the Crutchers during these four months. The Crutchers owned and operated a tavern located on the west side of the town square. The law offices to your left as you go north on 31W from the square now occupy the location of Crutcher's tavern in the early 1800s.

The best information we have about Buchanan during his time here is from Ben Hardin. Hardin believed that Buchanan came to Hardin County with the thought of making it his permanent home, but Buchanan became unhappy while he was here and decided to return to Pennsylvania. Buchanan's autobiography makes no mention of his time here, but Hardin recounts a discussion he had with Buchanan when both of them later served together in Congress. He quotes Buchanan: "I went to Kentucky expecting to be a great man there, but every lawyer I met at the Bar was my equal, and more than half of them my superiors, so I gave it up."

During his time here, Buchanan turned 22. Abraham Lincoln, who was also living in Hardin County at the time, would have turned 4 that year. Thomas Lincoln was also involved in land disputes. While court was in session, there were court days when people

would come from the outlying areas to town. Some Buchanan biographers suggest that Buchanan and Lincoln may have met, so to speak, in that Thomas Lincoln would have brought his children to town at some point during that four-month period in 1813.

After his return to Pennsylvania, Buchanan had a very distinguished career, serving as Congressman, Senator, Minister to Russia and Great Britain and Secretary of State. At the end of his career, he served as the 15th President of the United States from 1857 to 1861. Buchanan was tall, and stately and the only President who never married.

As President, he found himself presiding over a Nation in the process of tearing itself apart. Buchanan tried to avoid civil war by relying on constitutional doctrines to hold the nation divided by the issue of slavery together. During his term as President, sectionalism had realigned the political parties: the Democrats split; the Whigs were destroyed, giving rise to the Republicans. It was a Hardin County native and later a Republican from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln who followed Buchanan in office as the 16th President of the United States.