

English family, river, give name to Salt Air

BY TOM FORTNEY

SALT AIR: Pestilence, death and romance, expected elements of just about every pioneer community, played out their roles in the early days of one of Clermont County's oddest-sounding settlements.

The story involves not only Salt Air, the object of much speculation as to how it got its name, but Bantam some distance away plus two of the area's earliest and most prominent families.

First off, here is how Salt Air was named, an origin so ridiculously simple that it is a wonder it isn't better known.

The Salt family, which can trace its lineage back to the founding days of

Clermont, hailed from Northern England on the Aire River. Hence, Salt Air(e).

A scion of the family, Wilshire Salt, was engaged to marry Amanda Justice, pride of another clan, the Gustafsons, then Justesons and finally Justices, whose names gradually became Americanized after their arrival from Sweden in 1640.

Miss Amanda's father was the Rev. Jesse Justice, a Methodist attracted to the Bantam area, where he purchased 600 acres in 1805, by another minister, the Rev. John Collins, founder of the so-called "Jersey Settlement."

The name derived from the fact that Collins settled in Clermont in 1802 and

was so impressed with potential of the area that he traveled to New Jersey in 1803 to persuade several of his friends to join the settlement. Justice later joined the colony.

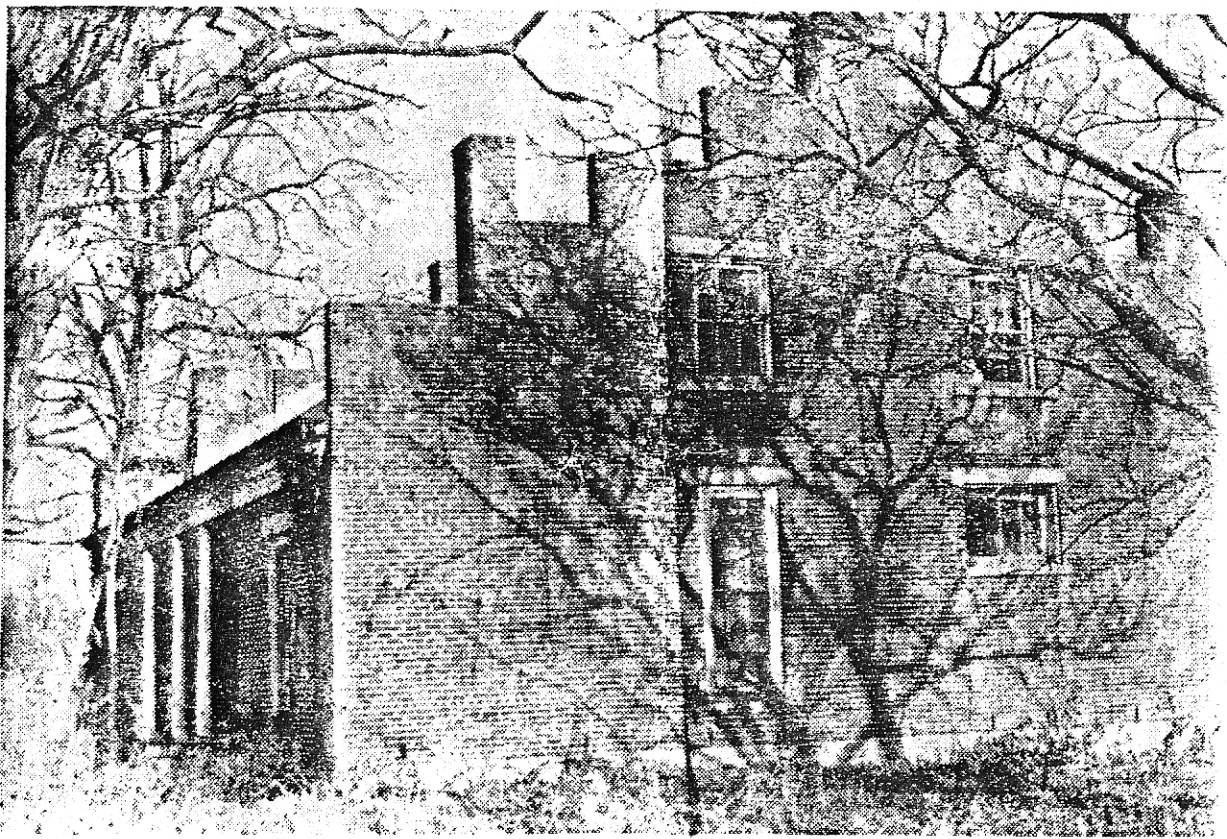
Had it not been for Justice's move, Ulysses S. Grant likely would not have been born in Clermont County. Justice and John Simpson, later Grant's grandfather, had served together for two years in the Revolutionary War in which Justice was a chaplain.

Simpson joined his friend at Bantam (which evolved from the Jersey Settlement) in 1816, moving from Bucks County, Pa. Justice and Simpson lie buried side by side in Old Bethel Cemetery on land Collins donated.

But back to Amanda Justice, who earned a reputation in the community as an "angel of mercy," always ready and willing to nurse the sick. Miss Justice did not shirk when a cholera epidemic swept the community.

She nursed a neighbor family and when the mother and father died of the disease, her father brought the surviving children to the Justice home. Amanda contracted the disease two days after the death of the parents, and died at the age of 19. She also lies buried in Old Bethel Cemetery.

Two years after Amanda's death, her younger sister, Ann, kept the betrothal vow for her by becoming the bride of Mr. Wilshire Salt.



This is the Salt residence, a distinguished old home gracing a knoll in the hamlet of Salt Air. Now abandoned, the brick structure is stand-out because of its styling.