



Kentucky's War of 1812: William Whitley

The Kentucky Historical Society's historical marker 1067 in Williamsburg commemorates Whitley County's namesake, Col. William Whitley.

Arguably one of Kentucky's hardest-fighting settlers, Whitley was born in Virginia in 1749 and moved to Kentucky in 1775. Although he first settled in present-day Lincoln County, he and his family soon moved to nearby Fort Logan (Stanford). Whitley served under George Rogers Clark during the Revolutionary War, was a state legislator and fought multiple campaigns against several Native American tribes.

During the War of 1812, the 64-year-old Whitley volunteered to fight. On Oct. 5, 1813, he led a charge at the Battle of the Thames and was killed in action.

Although known for his fighting nature, Whitley also influenced racing. He built a track at Sportsman's Hill, his home near Stanford. While English races ran clockwise, races on Whitley's track ran in the opposite direction, ensuring him a place in racing history. Today, most American races still run counterclockwise.

Pictured: William Whitley's house, Sportsman's Hill. Courtesy the Kentucky Historical Society.