

**THE POLITICAL CLUB, DANVILLE,
KENTUCKY, 1786-1790; BEING AN
ACCOUNT OF AN EARLY KENTUCKY
SOCIETY, FROM THE ORIGINAL
PAPERS RECENTLY FOUND**

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The Political club, Danville, Kentucky, 1786-1790; being an account of an early Kentucky society, from the original papers recently found by Thomas Speed

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THOMAS SPEED

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THE
Political Club

DANVILLE, KENTUCKY,

1786-1790.

By

Thomas Speed.

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THE POLITICAL CLUB

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BY THOMAS SPEED.

Author of "The Wilderness Road."

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DEDICATION.

I dedicate these pages to Centre College, which for seventy-five years has been an honor to the State of Kentucky and the pride of the town of Danville. It was my privilege to attend this institution as a student during the presidency of Dr. Lewis W. Green, whose father was a member of The Political Club, and my college days at Danville gave me a lasting attachment both for the school and the delightful place of its location.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

FIFTEEN years ago it was my fortune to discover among my grandfather's papers the records of "The Political Club," a society which had its existence at Danville, Kentucky, from 1786 until 1790. I have often been requested to publish these records, together with some account of the work of the club, but it has not been convenient for me to do so until now. To meet expectation on this subject I prepared this work and read it before the Filson Club.

I have felt that it is a duty I could not fail to perform. The existence of The Political Club is a chapter in Kentucky history worthy of even more detailed treatment than is here given. Nothing that has been recorded of the pioneers so well illustrates their character for intelligence. Professor Shaler, in his History of Kentucky, published in 1885, says: "The early records of Kentucky are too imperfect to afford

any clear insight into the condition of education or the intellectual motives of the pioneers. Recently, however, there has been disinterred a quantity of papers giving the record of a Political Club that existed at Danville from 1786 to 1790." . . . "The notes of this club give a very fair idea of the intellectual quality of its meetings. For several years, or until the changes of the shifting population removed its leaders far from their original abodes, this club industriously debated the questions of polity that concerned the settlements."

There is no historic mention of "The Political Club" prior to finding the records, nor was there any tradition of its existence; the old papers alone have preserved it from oblivion. Perhaps this is not strange under the circumstances. There was no newspaper to publish its meetings and discussions. Besides, what occurred at the meetings was not publicly known, as none were admitted except the members. When the club ceased to exist many of the members removed from Danville to other places in the State, and other interests superseded thought or memory of the club meetings.

The historian, Humphrey Marshall, knew of the club, though as he was not a member he could not have

known particularly of its work. It was not at all likely that the later historian, Butler, knew of the club at all, and Collins, though his history contains much in detail of every county in the State, failed to discover that there had been such a society at Danville.

The preparation for public service which the club gave to the body of men composing it was so soon made use of, and the ideas developed there so quickly embodied in the first State Constitution, that the club debates were overshadowed by real legislation. But it was these debates that laid the foundation of the practical usefulness of the actors in this legislation.

The sketches of the members show that for more than a quarter of a century they took a leading part in affairs in Kentucky. Going out from the sessions of the club to engage in the public transactions of the day, they made an impression upon the times, but the club itself, to which they owed so much for training in political knowledge, was lost sight of and forgotten.

In the preparation of this work I have deemed it advisable to point out some of the reasons, and particularly those of a geographical nature, which brought the town of Danville to the forefront in the early