# Sheriff John Bartle – Campbell County’s 5th Sheriff


# Sheriff John Bartle
# Campbell County’s 5th Sheriff



*By Captain James D. Schaffer, Ret.*
*Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society*


A rugged pioneer, war-hardened soldier, and shrewd frontier businessman, John Bartle left New York after the American Revolution for the frontier territories surrounding the confluence of the Ohio and Licking Rivers. His prominent roles in this developing area eventually led to his appointment as one of the early sheriffs of Campbell County, Kentucky.

Little is documented about Bartle’s parents or early years as a child. History records that he was born on April 2, 1745 in La Marne, France and either migrated to America with his parents as a child or came as a soldier with General Marquis de Lafayette durin

g the American Revolution. There are conflicting reports, including his own, that he was born on this same date and raised in New York City, New York.
Bartle entered his patriotic service during the Revolutionary War and was commissioned as Captain in the Albany County Militia of New York on October 20, 1775, serving throughout the war

under the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th New York Regiments. Leading his company during the Northern Campaign in the autumn of 1777, Bartle was wounded in action during the fierce fighting at the Battles of Saratoga in upstate New York along the western bank of the Hudson River. In the summer of 1778, Bartle was involved with a detachment of the 3rd New York Regiment from Fort Stanwix, directed to destroy Fort Ontario under British control at Oswego near the mouth of the Oswego River in New York. Upon returning to Fort Stanwix, he was captured by the Iroquois near Wood Creek, within a few miles of the fort's safety. During his captivity, Bartle was traded among the Native American tribes until his eventual release in 1782 at the British Fort Niagara near present-day Youngstown, New York.

In the fall of 1789, Bartle moved west by flatboat down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh to Limestone Landing (Maysville) in Mason County, Virginia (now Kentucky). In 1790, he opened the first store in Losantiville (now Cincinnati) at Front and Broadway Streets and began selling and trading with the soldiers at Fort Washington, the townspeople, and the Indians. He was viewed by the Indians as being honest, having learned their language fluently.
While it was still part of Virginia in 1791, Bartle purchased four lots in the town of Newport across the Ohio River and built his home on one of them at the southeast corner of Central Avenue and Second Street. He became known as the area's first "commuter" by rowing a boat across the Ohio River to his store in Cincinnati.

In the spring of 1792, Bartle was in the centerstage in what was called the first riot in Cincinnati. Lieutenant Thomas Pasteur of the Fort Washington garrison had lured Bartle inside the Fort to settle a dispute, and while there, beat him severely. Lieutenant Pasteur was charged with assault and during examination in court on February 12, 1792, he was chastised by

Bartle's attorney. Lieutenant Pasteur returned to the fort, gathered support, and returned with thirty soldiers to settle the score with the attorney, resulting in a large fight between citizens and soldiers on Main Street between Front and Second Streets. An angry group of eighteen citizens disarmed the soldiers and ran them off. In total, about one-tenth of the population of the town was involved.

By 1793, Bartle had established Newport's first store while continuing to operate the one in Cincinnati near Fort Washington. Also, that year he was granted exclusive rights by the Mason County (now Campbell) Kentucky Court to operate a ferry across the Ohio River between Newport and Cincinnati, however after a lawsuit in early 1794, he lost those rights to General James Taylor V, Newport's founder.

Campbell County was officially established on December 17, 1794 and encompassed 1,200 to 1,400 square miles of what is now Boone, Kenton, and Pendleton counties and portions of Bracken and Grant counties. Under Kentucky's Second Constitution, a county's justices would meet and select two qualified individuals for recommendation to the Governor, who then appointed one as Sheriff. Bartle became sheriff in 1802, appointed by Governor Garrard, and again in 1805 appointed by Governor Greenup.

Bartle had at least two wives, however their names, wedding dates, and locations of marriage were found to be conflicting. It is historically noted that he had three children born in Newport: Eliza Bartle born in either 1791 or 1792 (died at birth), a second Eliza Bartle born on March 21, 1793, and James Flournoy Bartle born about 1801.

Bartle was living with his daughter Eliza (Bartle) Pierce in Cincinnati at the time of his death on December 9, 1839 and was

buried at the Presbyterian Churchyard at Fourth and Race Streets in Cincinnati. The grave was later moved to the Christ Episcopal Churchyard at Twelfth and Race Streets (Washington Park) in Cincinnati and has since been covered over and lost to history.

On October 19, 1909, the Sons of the American Revolution dedicated a bronze tablet in Cincinnati's Memorial Hall, 1225 Elm Street, containing Bartle's name and those of 184 other patriots who served in the American Revolution and buried in Hamilton County.

© 2026. All rights reserved to CAPT James Schaffer RET and the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society.