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Hamilton County was established long before Ohio achieved statehood. On January 2, 1790, Governor Arthur St. Clair of the Northwest Territory issued the proclamation creating the county, marking one of the earliest acts of civil government in the region. Its boundaries followed the Symmes Purchase, stretching from the Little Miami River west to the Great Miami River, then north to the Standing Stone Forks before turning east again to the Little Miami River. For a brief period in 1792, early territorial adjustments extended the county's northern reach as far as the Cuyahoga River, thereby encompassing nearly one-eighth of the land that would form the State of Ohio. Later, numerous counties were carved from this vast expanse.



Among the first civil officers appointed to serve this new

county was John Brown, named sheriff by Governor St. Clair immediately after the county's creation. Brown served from January 1790 until March, 1792, and was also involved in laying out early townships within the Symmes Purchase. Brown was born on October 22, 1752, in Woodbridge, Middlesex County, New Jersey, to George Brown and Mary Alston Brown.

Brown, as sheriff, would have been part of the government structure when John Cleves Symmes, the principal visionary of the Symmes Purchase, was territorial judge from 1783 to 1803. Brown's appointment and contemporary references describe him as a "gentleman," a term indicating literacy, social standing, and suitability for public office. In 1789, Brown was lauded by General Jonathan Dayton in a letter to Symmes as "a good horseman, a spirited fellow, and one who will be very serviceable to you in your skirmishes with, or pursuit of the Indians". Dayton was a prominent New Jersey politician, a Revolutionary War veteran, the youngest signer of the United States Constitution, and a principal investor with Symmes.

Brown carried out his duties from Fort Washington, the military and administrative center of the Northwest Territory's southwestern division. The fort served as the seat of government, the place where county officers were appointed, and the site of the first courts and civil proceedings. As sheriff, Brown delivered writs issued at the fort, attended court sessions, coordinated with military officers stationed there, and executed the full range of sheriff's responsibilities within the fort's jurisdiction. Through his work, Brown helped establish the earliest functioning law-enforcement structure in what would become the State of Ohio in 1803.

Brown had attained the title of Captain before he departed from Woodbridge, New Jersey, shortly after 1789. However, according to an official roster of officers and men of New Jersey in the

Revolutionary War, Brown was a Private in Colonel David Forman's Regiment, Continental Army; a Sergeant in Colonel Oliver Spencer's Regiment, Continental Army, and a Lieutenant in Captain David Edgar's troop of Colonel Elisha Sheldon's Regiment, Light Dragoons, Continental Army. He was also mentioned in a pension letter of Morris D. Camp as being a Cornet (2nd Lieutenant) in Captain William Barnett's Company of Colonel Elisha Sheldon's Regiment, Light Dragoons. It is believed that he participated in the Battles of Brandywine and Staten Island. His service in the Light Dragoons, a cavalry regiment, would coincide with the previous comment by General Dayton that he was "a good horseman".

General Dayton, on August 5, 1789, wrote to Symmes: "Captain John Brown, of Woodbridge, proposes to start next week for the Western country. He is not yet entirely determined whether to sit down in Kentucky or with you."

Brown settled in North Bend, previously settled by Symmes, just north of the Ohio River in about 1790. According to his will, probated on January 22, 1824, in Boone County, Kentucky, he owned land in the Symmes Purchase, specifically in Tract One, where the Village of North Bend, Ohio, is located. An excerpt of a letter by Symmes on April 30, 1790, regarding North Bend proclaims: "Captain John Brown fenced one of these lots in order to sow it with hemp, but the same night his fence was all burnt and laid in ruins."

Later in the 1790's, Brown purchased 650 acres of the Christopher Clark Grant in the North Bend area of the District of Kentucky, Commonwealth of Virginia, south of the Ohio River from North Bend, Hamilton County. After Kentucky became a state, this area would become Boone County in 1798. The grant was situated along the Ohio River in the northern part of the county. He was known to cross the Ohio River frequently to visit

his close friend, John Cleves Symmes. His residency is documented in the U.S. Census and tax records for Boone County, Kentucky, in 1800, 1810, and 1820.

In 1803, Brown was commissioned as the third Sheriff of Boone County, Kentucky, but he did not qualify due to his refusal to post a bond. At that time, the sheriff was responsible for collecting taxes, so any shortfalls would have become the sheriff's responsibility.

Brown's granddaughter, Clarissa Brown Pike, married John Cleves Symmes Harrison, son of President William Henry Harrison and grandson of John Cleves Symmes, in 1819.

Brown died on November 18, 1824 and is buried in the Harrison & Pike Cemetery in Boone County, Kentucky.