“The often repeated story that the name of Covington was inspired by a label found on a Covington, Ky., whiskey keg is an absurdity,” says Adrian Schwartz, St. Tammany Parish’s congenial contemporary historian.

And he is right. The town of Covington, Ky., was not so named until 1815 and the whiskey could not have been distilled, aged, labeled and delivered to Louisiana by 1816—the year that Wharton, La., became Covington. It is worthy of note that Covington, Ky., which was responsible for the origin of the whiskey label myth, is today still noted for its breweries, distilleries, and wine-ries.

Both Covingtons honor the same man, Gen. Leonard A. Covington, a hero of the War of 1812. The following by J. H F. Claiborne gives an apt account of the life and death of the General:

“Leonard Covington entered the army at an early age; was lieutenant in Wayne’s legion in 1794, and greatly distinguished himself in the battle of the Maumee, led a cavalry charge and killed two prominent warriors with his own sabre. Subsequently, returning to Maryland, he was elected to Congress from the Prince George district.

“When it became apparent that we were to have war with England he re-entered the army with the commission of colonel, became brigadier-general, and at the battle of Chrysler’s Field in Canada Nov. 11, 1813, while at the head of his brigade leading it to the British entrenchments, he fell mortally wounded. He was riding a white charger, waving his sword, cheering his men, and was killed by a shot from Chrysler’s barn, in which a strong detachment of the enemy was posted.”

Before Covington was given its present name in 1816, it was known as Wharton. But its beginnings go back to December, 1803, when the land was bought by Jacques Drieux. Drieux, a New Orleans Creole, acquired 1,600 acres lying in the fork between the Rogue Falaya and Tchefuncte Rivers from the Spanish government. On this land he planned the town of St. James, but due to the instability of the times and the meager population nothing came of it. Sometimes after the annexation of the Florida Parishes to Orleans Territory, Drieux sold the “town” of four inhabitants to John Wharton Collins for $2,300.

On July 4, 1813, John Wharton Collins dedicated a portion of the area which he renamed the division of St. John of Wharton, in honor of the maternal side of his family.