4. First Attempt at Settlement

THERE is a haze over Daniel Boone's next two years. The second Indian robbery had left him with nothing to show for his winter's hunting and the capital outlay it involved. But with a farm and a rifle and some growing sons to bear a hand, it was pretty hard to starve in the backwoods. When the farming season was over, Daniel hunted as a matter of course. An old weaver in the vicinity had a famous pack of bear dogs, and the two chased bear in the mountains, coming home with their horses loaded down with bearskins. On one of these trips Boone went as far as French Lick on the Cumberland River, where he met French hunters who had come from the opposite direction, overland from the Mississippi.

By 1772 he was living in or near a hamlet called Sapling Grove in what is now Tennessee. Captain Evan Shelby, of Frederick County, Maryland, hard pressed by debt, had set up there as a store-keeper, with Daniel Boone as one of his customers. The entries in the Boone charge-account suggest that Rebecca and the children had come with him. Why else should a man be buying "17 pounds and half of Loaf Sugar"? In January, 1772, Daniel was buying "2 quarts of Rum"—plain evidence that the pious biographers of early days, who assert that Daniel never touched liquor, didn't know what they were talking about. Daniel himself later described to Audubon an incident

in which the Indians took away his pocket flask, a queer thing for a teetotaler to be carrying about with him.

During these years Daniel was probably traveling from one Cherokee village to another, living in the wigwams, hunting with the braves, talking with the chiefs. He was sounding the Indians to see whether they were willing to sell Kentucky. He is said to have concluded very soon that they would hand the country over to the white men if the price were high enough. He interested Richard Henderson, whose brother later said that he had been "induced to attempt the purchase of Kentucky from the Cherokees, through the suggestion and advice of the late Col. Daniel Boone."

But at the moment Henderson was much occupied with his judicial duties. He was interested in the Kentucky project, but while he was in office he could do nothing; and he remained on the bench until 1773.

Boone grew impatient. He went back with Benjamin Cutbirth and perhaps with others for another look at the fertile land that haunted his imagination. Early in 1773 he occupied his old cave on Little Hickman Creek, in Jessamine County. As usual, he carved his initials—"D.B.—1773"—on the cave's walls. Boone grew impatient. He was as delighted with the country as before. He even selected a site for his future home. He decided to wait no longer upon Henderson, but to attempt immediate settlement.

On his return, he sold his farm and all the household goods he could not carry with him, and spent the spring and summer in getting ready, with the aid of Captain William Russell, the Clinch Valley pioneer. Henderson and his wealthy associates were not yet prepared to underwrite the venture. As far as they were concerned, the Kentucky scheme would have to wait.

But delay was dangerous. Already surveying parties were

drifting down the Ohio, poking the noses of their little craft up the tributary Licking and Kentucky Rivers, making friends with the Indians, finding out where the best lands lay. The McAfee brothers, James and Robert, met two other explorers at the mouth of the Kanawha River, early in June of 1773. They joined forces and traveled on together. Presently they met another party led by James Harrod, also seeking land.

By mid-August the McAfees, on their way home overland, "met Boon, preparing to move his family to Kentucky with forty other individuals." The news that three parties of land-hunters had already been in Kentucky must have stirred his eager spirit still more intensely. These men had already surveyed for themselves the best land they could find. How long would it be before others came? How long would it be before all the best land was taken up? Daniel decided to start at once.

To the end of his days, wherever Daniel Boone went there were always plenty of eager adventurers to follow. Even in these early days, the man's prestige was enormous. He had persuaded his wife's relatives, the Bryans, still settled on the Yadkin, to go along. They agreed to come by the shortest way and meet him in Powell's Valley. Boone rushed home to attend to last minute business; five other families joined him there. The Bryans met the little caravan as agreed, and the daring band of forty souls were off to the wilderness at last.

It was a desperate and dangerous adventure, with every man's hand against the adventurers. The royal government had forbidden western settlement. The Governors of North Carolina and Virginia were already alarmed at violation of the edict. No agreement at all had been reached with the Indians. They were sure to object violently, with all the legal right on their side. But Boone had determined to chance it. It was Daniel's scheme. And if he approved it, the others would go along.

The patient, fearless Rebecca was ready now as always to

follow her man where he chose to go. Daniel usually chose to go where there was likely to be a great deal of trouble; but—except when she objected to settling in Florida—Rebecca Boone never complained. Kentucky might be an anxious land for wives and mothers; but it could not be much worse than the lonely anxiety of a cabin on the Yadkin, with Daniel off among the canebrakes, redskins, and wild beasts in the green tangle of the forests. Marry a man with an itching foot, and a girl is bound to have anxieties. It was the common lot of the frontier woman. Better to go and share it with him.

That, after all, was life as the wives of all the pioneers knew it. Marry your man and then follow him. Bear his children. Feed him. Watch his cattle. Lend a hand with the farm at need. Milk, churn, weave, sew. Mold his bullets. Load his rifles when the shooting got rapid enough to demand it. Beat off the Indians yourself if need be. Watch your husband set out again and again into the forests, with death or torture or captivity always in prospect. Men, the great babies, must have their adventures; and perhaps—who knew?—there might be wealth at the end of it. Daniel had grown up in the richest farming land in the country, back there in Pennsylvania; and he was enthusiastic about landed estates in Kentucky.

They started in September, 1773. Daniel and Squire Boone had a fairly substantial force of riflemen to protect the women and children; and like all nomads they drove their livestock with them—milch cows, young cattle, swine, "intended to constitute the herd of the western wilderness."

Compared to these men and women, the later pioneers of the nineteenth-century covered-wagon days traveled in luxury. There was no road in 1773, only a narrow "trace" winding among the trees. Wagons were out of the question. Not for two years would the trace be even roughly cleared with axes. One rode if there were horses enough. Otherwise one walked.

Some of the difficulties were ludicrous and, to the twentieth century, hard to imagine; but they were none the less real. Goods, provisions, powder and lead went on the lone file of pack-horses, faithful, sure-footed beasts, that needed only a path (not always even that), able to dodge in and out among the trees or crash their way through cane and underbrush. The trouble with a pack train was that it was so easily stampeded. An Indian attack or a casual bump against a yellow-jacket's nest might scatter an expedition's horses, cattle, and equipment through miles of woodland, whence the beasts had to be rounded up, in constant danger from the Indians' rifles.

The argumentative powers required to persuade a recalcitrant cow on the way she should go through several hundred miles of wilderness were very considerable. "Who ever drives Cattle here ought to have patience in great abundance," wrote Boone's friend John Floyd ruefully, after his own first trip to Kentucky with livestock.

There were three mountain ranges to cross. The Cumberland Gap opened through the last range into Kentucky itself. In or near Powell's Valley, after the whole group was united, Boone decided that he needed more flour and farm tools and sent his son James back to Captain William Russell's to get them. The party was still fairly near the settlements, and the boy seems to have ridden off alone without thought of danger.

He found Russell easily enough and started back with Russell's son Henry, a boy of about seventeen, two slaves, and a couple of white workmen. Either because they lost their way or because the cattle lagged, they camped that night (October 10, 1773) on Walden's Creek, only three miles behind Boone and the main body. Probably neither group realized how near the other was. There was always a tendency for travelers to string out along the narrow paths they had to travel.

No one anticipated Indian trouble. Only the month before

the McAfees had returned without any difficulty except that of getting food. They had found the Shawnees and Delawares friendly enough. But the vastness and silence of the wilderness, the unaccustomed sounds that occasionally break it, are always just a little terrifying to those who do not know them well. That night, as they sat around the camp fire, they heard wolves, or Indians imitating wolves, howling in the forest. The howl of the giant timber wolf (though the beast itself is usually harmless enough) is one of the most startling sounds in all nature. It begins with barking like a big dog's, and then ascends in an ear-splitting crescendo up and up the scale, until it dies into an even more terrifying silence. The howls made some of the newer members of the party nervous, until someone remarked that in a short time they would be hearing the bellows of buffalo as well as the howls of wolves.

Reassured by the indifference of the veteran woodsmen, they spread their blankets and went to sleep. Just before dawn a party of Indians fired into them, shooting James Boone and young Russell through the hips, and killing most of the others. One man, who got away into the woods, was never seen again. A skeleton supposed to be his was ultimately found some distance from the scene, where he had presumably died of his wounds alone in the forest. One negro slave managed to slip into a pile of driftwood by the river. Here he lay concealed, a terrified witness of the horrors that followed.

The Indians settled quietly down to a little enjoyable relaxation before proceeding on their journey. The two boys, helpless with their wounds, were unable to move. The Indians had a great deal of fun torturing them to death. There was no time for a formal burning at the stake, but they did pretty well with their knives.

James Boone had recognized among the band Big Jim, a Shawnee who had often visited his father's cabin. He was a

warrior of distinctive appearance. It was impossible to mistake him for any other Indian. Shivering in terror in his pile of driftwood, the negro heard James Boone begging his father's friend to spare his life. But the Indians were intent on torture. Again the hidden slave heard James Boone screaming for mercy, but this time the only mercy that he asked was to be tomahawked at once and allowed to die quickly. Again Big Jim refused. The torture went on, until at last the two boys died, their bodies slashed to ribbons, their nails torn out, their palms slashed in futile efforts to turn the blades of the Indian knives aside with bare hands.

That morning one of Daniel Boone's party had deserted. He had been caught stealing from a comrade, and though not sent back had been made to feel very uncomfortable. Slipping away before the camp was astir, he paused only to steal a few deerskins that Boone had left by the trail for his sons to pick up, and pushed on. He came upon the scene of the massacre just after the Indians had left. As he stood there staring at the horrible spectacle, Captain Russell came up from the other direction, on his way to join Boone's party. One man rushed ahead to warn Boone. Russell's party began to dig the graves.

Daniel Boone got his companions into safety in a ravine the moment the alarm was given, sheltering the women and children in a large hollow which running water had washed under the roots of a beech tree, posted sentinels, and prepared for attack. According to one story, the Indians never came. According to another, they attacked and were driven off, Boone himself killing one Indian and wounding another. But in spite of all the danger, Rebecca Boone sent back a linen sheet to cover her son and keep the earth from his body.

After beating off the Indians, Boone is said to have followed them down a little creek, returning at dusk to defend the camp. If this is true, the alarm lasted all day long. Dur-

ing the night, Indians were again discovered creeping up. The riflemen stealthily got ready and let them come within range before firing. Again the Indians fled.

Next morning Boone and some of the men followed them down-stream again and noted, with satisfaction, traces of blood. In spite of the darkness some of their bullets had gone home. Creeping on down the creek, they saw the Indians gathered around a fire. As the rifles cracked, they vanished.

The settlers were now too frightened to go on. Their cattle had been scattered. They suspected that larger war parties would be lying in wait for them farther on. They had already lost several men. Their courage failed completely, and the whole group started dolefully back for the settlements. At Snoddy's Fort the sadly shaken little company rested for a while. Then most of them moved on back to North Carolina.

The murders caused a tremendous sensation. They were, as a contemporary observes, "in every one's mouth." Indian murders were even then no rarity, but there was a peculiar horror about these.

Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, remonstrated with the Indian tribes in solemn council, but it was difficult to fix the guilt. The chiefs shuffled, evaded. Eventually the Cherokees consented to execute one man, but the executioners only wounded him and left him for dead. Learning that the guilty warrior was still alive, the colony's representative, at considerable risk to himself, insisted that the chiefs themselves go and kill him. Eventually they did so. One other Cherokee was condemned to death, escaped, and was later captured and executed.

Some of the stolen horses and other property turned up in Pennsylvania, having been sold to traders by the Indians. The Shawnees later surrendered some of Captain Russell's books,

which the murdered boys had been carrying. Why the Indians ever took them at all is a mystery.

The Indian murders led to a senseless act of retaliation by one Isaac Crabtree, either the same man who had been with the Boones or a relative. A group of peaceful Cherokees had come in to the North Carolina settlements to watch a horse race. They had had nothing to do with the murders, but the moment Crabtree saw the Indians he rushed at them and killed one before the astonished bystanders could interfere. He very nearly brought on an Indian war then and there. The Cherokees had consented to execute two of their tribe who had been involved in the murder of James Boone; but no one even tried to bring Crabtree to justice for this wanton slaughter.

The Boones, who were now without a home, settled down to what must have been a most unhappy winter at "Snoddy's on the Clinch." Daniel was beaten again. He had probably lost most of the money he had realized on the sale of his farm. But Daniel had been beaten before and he never stayed beaten very long. He intended to settle in Kentucky, and meantime he intended to live as near Kentucky as he could get. Captain David Gass gave the forlorn little family shelter, and they lived through the long winter, supported by what the Indians had left of their cattle and by Boone's long rifle.

A contemporary description preserves a picture of Daniel Boone at this time—one of a series that admirers left at various stages of his long life: "I have a distinct recollection of seeing Boone at my father's camp, on Reedy Creek, of Holston, in company with a tall young man named Crabtree, and some others—I think it must have [been] in 1773. Boone was dressed in deer-skin colored black, and had his hair plaited and clubbed up, and was on his way to or from Powell's Valley." To the

end of his days, Daniel insisted on wearing his hair "clubbed up."

Boone made a solitary trip back to Powell's Valley in May of 1774 to visit his son's grave. Indian troubles were gathering and the trip was dangerous, but Boone would not be diverted. Logs had, as usual, been laid above the graves to keep the wolves off, but the ravenous beasts had pawed them aside and dug part way down. Boone opened the grave to make sure that the bodies (which he now saw for the first time) had not been touched, and then carefully covered them up again.

While he was finishing, a storm broke, so violent that it was impossible to move. As he waited for it to pass, the gloom, the howling of the wind, the dreadful associations of the spot where his son had been tortured to death to amuse the savages, brought on a fit of profound melancholy which he later described as the worst of his life.

When the storm had cleared, Boone moved a few hundred yards away from the graves, "hoppled" his horse, put a bell on the animal so that it would be easy to find in the morning, and camped for the night. He could not sleep, and as he lay awake watching the sky, which had now cleared, he distinctly heard Indians creeping up on his lonely camp.

Instantly alert, Daniel slipped away from his fire, quietly caught his horse, and drove it slowly along, stopping to jangle the bell now and then, as if the animal were moving about casually and grazing in perfect security. At a safe distance he silenced the bell and rode for his life, leaving the raiders to attack an empty camp. But for the storm which delayed them, they would probably have killed the father on the very spot where they had killed the son.

Stirring matters were afoot in Kentucky in the spring of 1774, and it is no wonder that the Indians were uneasy. James Harrod made a second trip, taking a large group down the

Ohio, up the Kentucky, and thence overland to the present site of Harrodsburg. Scattered here and there through the Kentucky woods were small parties of surveyors, still laying out the lands for the proposed grants to soldiers in the wars with the French and Indians.

They could hardly have chosen a worse time to visit Kentucky, for the Indians were aroused. Already disturbed by the westward trend of the colonists, they were still more excited by the arrival of surveyors; and they were lashed to fury by a peculiarly brutal murder committed at Yellow Creek, near the Ohio River. A certain Daniel Greathouse made up his mind to kill the family of Tahgahjute, a famous chief who had taken the English name of "Logan."

Logan had always been a friend of the white men, and was widely known among both whites and reds. Probably born near Sunbury, Pennsylvania, he had lived for a long time near Reedsville, in Mifflin County, on amicable terms with his white neighbors, and had then moved westward. Greathouse's atrocious crime turned an influential friend into an equally influential foe.

Going into the Indian camp as a friend one day, Greathouse quietly counted the band. White men under a certain Captain Michael Cresap, patrolling the Ohio when war seemed inevitable, had recently killed some other Indians; and a friendly squaw, fearing for Greathouse's safety because the Indians were aroused, warned him to go home.

Finding that there were too many Indians in camp for himself and his friends to deal with, Greathouse did go, but persuaded a few Indians to come over to the white settlement. Here he got them so drunk that they were helpless. In the group were Logan's brother and his sister, who was with child when she was murdered. All of these were shot, at least one was scalped, and it is said that the unborn papoose was stuck

up on a pole. Two canoes full of warriors paddled over when they heard the shots, and many of these were also killed.

"Then," said Tahgahjute, "I thought that I must kill too." Greathouse, by his casual and purposeless brutality, helped to cause Lord Dunmore's war, which in the summer and early autumn of 1774 raged along 350 miles of frontier.

Aware that trouble was brewing, since there had been a series of killings all winter, Governor Dunmore wished to warn the surveyors in Kentucky. Captain William Russell, as a leading citizen of the Clinch Valley, was instructed by Colonel William Preston to select "two faithful woodsmen" to carry the warning. He chose Daniel Boone and his lifelong friend Michael Stoner.

Boone was the obvious man for the journey. He knew the country; he was living on the very edge of it; and there was little enough to keep him at home, especially as the militia were now mustering and he was certain to be called out.

"Mike Stoner, a large strong dutchman," was one of the numerous Pennsylvania Germans who had migrated with other Pennsylvanians. He was a good woodsman, and so muscular that legend said when he sat down to carve his name on a tree, he often did not bother to remove the pack, weighing two or three hundred pounds, from his shoulders. Russell reported:

> I have engaged to start immediately on the occasion, two of the best hands I could think of—Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner; who have engaged to search the country as low as the Falls, and to return by way of Gasper's Lick on Cumberland, and through Cumberland Gap; so that, by the assiduity of these men, if it is not too late, I hope the gentlemen will be apprized of the imminent danger.

"If they are alive," he also wrote, "it is indisputable but Boone must find them."

Boone received his first instructions from General Andrew

Lewis, soon to be the victor in the decisive battle of Point Pleasant, but these were countermanded by Dunmore, a fussy old gentleman who wanted to lay out the route himself. Boone was to "take the Kentucky and Meander to its mouth." This apparently meant that he was to follow the stream in all its windings. The governor wanted to make sure that he found somewhere in the valley the men he was looking for. No one knew just where they might be, as they had surveys to make at the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville), in the Kentucky River Valley, on Salt Lick River (Licking River), and along the Cumberland.

Shawnee war canoes were already blockading the Ohio River, so that the two men had no choice of route. They had to go overland along the very trace where Boone had just met with tragedy a few months earlier. Starting out June 27, 1774, Boone reached the new settlement of Harrodsburg, Kentucky, before July 8.

The diary which he kept during the trip has long since been lost; but one ludicrous episode of the trip remains, which illustrates the irrepressible pioneer humor that defied all perils. Like Homer's heroes, like epic adventurers in all lands and places, these men could laugh. No men ever traveled in greater danger than these two, but that did not prevent their pleasure in some innocent sky-larking. On the outward journey they came to a spot almost certainly identical with the future battleground of the Blue Licks. Here the salt-crazed buffalo had eaten the saline earth away to form trenches deep enough to conceal their huge forms. At one point, the animals had eaten from both sides so that only a thin wall of earth remained and in this there was a small hole.

As the two men approached, Stoner saw a buffalo licking the earth on one side, and said to Boone: "Shtop, Gaptain, and we will have shum fun."

Taking off his cap, the Pennsylvania Dutchman crept down

one side of the earth wall until he could thrust the cap suddenly into the face of the immense beast on the other side. The buffalo did not run, as Stoner had expected. Instead, it came charging straight into the thin wall of earth. As the horned head and shaggy neck burst through almost on top of him, the bulky Stoner scrambled for his life, yelling to Boone: "Schoot her, Gaptain! Schoot her, Gaptain!"

Seeing that the buffalo had stopped and that his frightened companion was in no danger at all, though still running, Boone rolled on the ground with laughter. Eight years later he was to carry his dying son in his arms across the very ground where now he lay and laughed.

At Harrodsburg Boone found cabins rising rapidly while Harrod and thirty-four men were also busily laying out the town. Each had been promised an "in lot" and a ten-acre "out lot." This was a bagatelle compared to the princely tracts Daniel Boone was later to claim, but at the moment it looked promising.

Daniel never could resist land, and he was nearly penniless. Indian war or no Indian war, he paused to register as a settler and confirmed his claim by building a cabin. The lot assigned him was next that of a certain Evan Hinton, and the two men met the demands of legality, and also saved time, by building a double cabin straddling the line. Boone never returned to claim it, but the double dwelling was known indiscriminately as Boone's or Hinton's cabin until the Indians burned it down in 1777. As a surveyor, Boone also helped lay off the lots.

In spite of the warning that he brought, Harrod's men stayed where they were until the middle of June. Then, after one man had disappeared and two others had been killed, the rest withdrew. Their buildings stood deserted but unharmed through the winter, and were occupied again in 1775 when Harrod returned to set up Harrodsburg permanently.

Boone and Stoner now "meandered" to the mouth of the Kentucky, pushed on to the Falls of the Ohio, and were back in the Clinch Valley after sixty-one days, having covered eight hundred miles of wilderness. They had found and warned part, at least, of the surveyors, most of whom got back safely, though a few were killed.