

6. The Wilderness Road

BOONE'S men were assembled and ready to start when he arrived at "the Long Island" in the Holston River. There were thirty of them, all armed and mounted. There were his brother Squire Boone and his friends Stoner and Cutbirth. There was his old neighbor Richard Callaway. A certain Captain William Twitty had brought seven North Carolinians.

Though all were armed as a matter of course, they do not seem to have anticipated any more Indian trouble. Boone had just come from the signing of a friendly agreement and had left whites and Indians preparing to feast together. Their rifles were mainly to provide food. At the start, no one seems to have taken precautions of any kind against Indian attack.

On the tenth of March, 1775, axes began to ring. Daniel Boone and his men had started the Wilderness Road. They were all in high spirits. On the very first day they killed a bear and "had a fine supper," always a great help to the morale of any expedition. As Felix Walker, one of Twitty's men, later put it, with the immense satisfaction in rhetorical flourishes typical of the pioneer on those rare occasions when he took his pen in hand: "Every heart abounded with joy and excitement in anticipating the new things we should see, and the romantic scenes through which we must pass; and, exclusive of the novelty of the journey, the advantages and accumulations ensuing

on the settlement of a new country, was a dazzling object with many of our company."

Their leader had special reason to be joyful, for he had left just in time to escape an importunate creditor, who on April 19, 1775, issued a warrant against Boone's property. The paper still exists with the words, "no goods" written across the back. A warrant issued for his arrest for debt bears the words, "Gone to Kentucky."

They passed through Powell's Valley, on through Cumberland Gap, and then began to enlarge the old Warriors' Path, blazing and clearing it as they went, for fifty miles. At the Hazel Patch they turned west, following a buffalo trace pounded hard and wide and deep into the soil by the endless herds that had followed it since time began. From Hazel Patch their Wilderness Road went on to the Rockcastle River, where the pioneers had to cut their way through twenty miles of dead brush. Then it ran along a buffalo trace for thirty miles of thick cane and reed, on through what is today Madison County, to the Kentucky River.

When, a couple of weeks after starting, they emerged from the underbrush and cane, the whole party were delighted with "the pleasing and rapturous appearance of the plains of Kentucky. A new sky and strange earth seems to be presented to our view."

They were now within about fifteen miles of the site of the prospective settlement, and they had met with no real difficulty of any kind. No one seems to have kept any kind of watch. Indeed, the impossibility of getting anyone to do sentry duty was greatly exercising Henderson, who, a hundred miles or so behind, was following hard on their trail.

On March 24, 1775, Boone camped for the night in the gently rolling forest country just outside the modern town of Richmond, in Madison County. The many small hills and tiny

ravines offered perfect cover to any hostile force; and the next morning, as Boone's camp lay sleeping, there was a sudden volley from the woods, and Indians came rushing in, swinging their tomahawks.

Half awake and wholly terrified, the white men snatched their rifles and ran from the smoldering camp fire to the shelter of darkness and the forest. Once in safety, Squire Boone found that he had seized his jacket instead of his powder-horn and shot-pouch. Half naked, and with no means of defense, he crawled about in the darkness with his useless rifle until he could find his brother and borrow ammunition. Captain Twitty had been shot through both knees, so that he could not move. As the Indians burst into his tent to scalp him, his bulldog leaped at one brave, knocking him over. A second brave hastily tomahawked the dog. Then both vanished, leaving Twitty without further injuries. His negro slave Sam, hit by a rifle ball in the attack, leaped to his feet with one spasmodic effort, then fell dead into the camp fire. Felix Walker, though badly wounded, was able to join the scramble for the underbrush.

When the uproar at the camp had ceased, Daniel Boone gathered up his scattered men and went back. The Indians had gone, having stolen a few horses but nothing else. The expedition stood guard till broad daylight, but the attack was over.

Walker and Twitty were so badly wounded that travel was impossible. The others built a hasty log fort—long known as "Twitty's Fort"—and here they waited while Boone made simple medicines from woods plants and nursed the wounded men with what Walker describes as "paternal affection." Twitty soon died and was buried beside his negro slave. Rough stones, set in the ground, still mark their graves.

Three days later hunters out for provisions came upon "Samuel Tate's son," who told how his camp, at some dis-

tance from Boone's, had also been fired into. The little group had foolishly lighted a fire without posting guards and were busy with the usual nightly task of drying moccasins when the Indians shot into them. Two were killed. The rest scattered barefoot through the woods. The moonlit night and a late fall of April snow made it easy for the Indians to track them down. Samuel Tate himself escaped only by running down an icy stream, still called Tate's Creek in memory of the episode.

When Squire and Daniel Boone reached the scene, they found "two men killed and sculpted." Boone at once sent word to other scattered parties to assemble at the mouth of Otter Creek.

His men were appalled. Kentucky was by no means so "pleasing and rapturous" now as it had seemed a few days earlier. The weaker spirits in Boone's party packed up and started for home. One man remained in the forest, still afraid to come into camp. As a woman slave of Colonel Callaway's went out to gather firewood one morning, she saw the poor wretch peeping from behind a tree, apparently unable to make up his mind whether whites or redskins remained in possession of the field. She ran back, screaming "Indians!", and threw the camp into turmoil. Boone caught up his rifle and got his men behind trees, yelling to them not to run till they saw him fall—which seems to have been the best he dared expect. At this point the hero in the underbrush announced his identity and came in.

When Felix Walker was well enough to be moved, he was put into a litter between two horses—one in front and one behind—and the party pushed on toward the Kentucky River. As they came into the river bottom, they caught a cheerful glimpse of Kentucky's wealth of game. A herd of two or three hundred buffalo were moving away from the licks around two sulphur springs, "some running, some walking, others loping slowly and carelessly, with young calves playing, skipping and

bounding through the plain." Somewhat encouraged, the men set to work building shelter.

Meantime Henderson with other proprietors and a large party was painfully following some distance in the rear. Leaving only ten days after Boone, he brought his supplies along in wagons, improving Boone's roughly made road as he went along, until he reached the last settlement, Captain Joseph Martin's cabin in Powell's Valley, twenty miles east of Cumberland Gap. It was a kind of "jumping-off place" for Kentucky. While Boone was fighting the Indians off on the 25th, Henderson had peacefully "come to Mrs. Callaways." At Martin's he spent the 31st "making house for the wagons as we could not possibly clear the road any further," and tarried for nearly another week.

Other parties of settlers were following behind Henderson. On April 4 half a dozen recruits from Virginia caught up with him. They included a certain Abraham Hanks, uncle of Nancy Hanks, mother of Abraham Lincoln. On the way to Kentucky, Hanks lost his courage and turned back. On the way to the settlements again, he met still another group headed for Kentucky, changed his mind again, and reached Boonesborough after all, not far behind Henderson's party.

On April 5, while Boone and his men were hard at work at Boonesborough, Henderson got his pack train under way at last. There were endless discouragements. A hunter went out, and when he failed to reappear someone had to go and find him. Two pack-horses bolted into the woods. Word came that five people on their way to Kentucky had been killed by Indians. One traveler thereupon decided that he did not very much want to go to Kentucky with Henderson anyway, and "retreated back with his company and determin'd to settle in the Valley to make corn for the Cantuckey people."

As if this were not enough, the very same day came the mes-

senger with Boone's letter describing the attack on his camp.

"My advise to you, sir, is to come or send as soon as possible. Your company is desired greatly, for the people are very uneasy, but are willing to stay and venture their lives with you." As for the Indians, "now is the time to flusterate their intentions and keep the country, whilst we are in it." He himself was indomitable. In spite of all these alarms and excursions, "this day," wrote Dan'l stoutly, "we start from the battle ground for the mouth of Otter Creek, where we shall immediately erect a fort."

The news spread through Henderson's party, and William Calk entered in his journal: "this Eavening Comes a letter from Capt Boon at caintuck of the indians doing mischief and some turns Back." Next day Henderson's cavalcade met "40 persons returning from the Cantuckey on account of the late murders by the Indians." The inimitable Calk observes that as Henderson's column "put up & Started Crost Cumberland Gap," they "Met a great maney peopel turning Back for fear of the indians but our Company goes on Still with good courage." The men they met were probably those who had deserted Boone, together with other adventurers who had rushed off independently to be the first to claim Kentucky land.

Discouraged by the news they brought, several more of Henderson's party instantly made tracks for Virginia. These cheerful souls also suggested that even the handful who remained with Boone would probably desert him before Henderson could get there with reënforcements. To make matters worse, William Calk and two friends went up a mountain and there "Saw the track of two indians & whear they had lain under some Rocks."

Everything, Henderson noted, now "depended in Boone's maintaining his ground—at least until we could get there." At moments he expected to see Boone's face in every party of

returning emigrants. Henderson determined to send a messenger ahead, for the grimly determined Daniel had sent word that he relied on receiving assistance.

Who was to make the solitary ride through these Indian-haunted woods, from which everyone else was fleeing? It was vital to let Boone know that Henderson had not been scared off and was on his way to support him. Henderson himself was still desperately afraid "lest Boon & the men with him should abandon the Country."

A certain William Cocke rather dubiously volunteered to go, but he made two conditions. Henderson must give him ten thousand acres of choice land, and he must have at least one companion. Henderson appealed to his whole company, offering a second ten thousand acres to anyone who would go with Cocke. With tears in his eyes, he exclaimed that he and the Transylvania Company were all ruined men if the Kentucky project failed. Still there were no volunteers. Cocke at length agreed, rather glumly, to go alone, "and if he escaped with his life, to perform the trust."

Cocke was even less enthusiastic at the prospect next morning when the time came to start. It was a dark, gray day, and he faced a ride of 130 miles, entirely alone, through wilderness where murderous Indian bands were known to be active and about which he had been hearing nothing but gloomy tales for days on end.

However, Henderson "struck whilst the iron was hot," no matter how doleful poor Cocke might look, and "fixed Mr. Cocke off with a good Queen Ann's musket, plenty of ammunition, a tomahawk, a large cutt^oe * knife, a Dutch blanket, and no small quantity of jerked beef." Cocke carried with him, as Henderson confessed a few days later, "besides his own enor-

* *Couteau*, a word for the woodsman's knife, taken over from the French.

mous load of fearful apprehensions, a considerable burden of my own uneasiness."

All this perturbation was needless. There were no more Indians around. Cocke was not attacked and reached Boonesborough without difficulty. He was even able to communicate with Henderson by leaving notes along the road for him to pick up as he advanced, so that the proprietor was not surprised to find him safely with Boone when the two parties joined forces at last.

Fear is contagious, and it spread swiftly from the panic-stricken fugitives Henderson's party had been meeting. Some of Henderson's men simply deserted, slipping quietly away for Virginia. Others, as Henderson himself sardonically remarked, "saw the necessity of returning to convince their friends that they were still alive, in too strong a light to be resisted." Others went on because they were ashamed to go back.

But strange to say, rarely could anyone persuade them to stand guard, and all these terrified wights lay down to sleep in Indian country night after night, giving the Indians every opportunity to take them by surprise. William Calk's diary notes only twice, as something extraordinary, "we Keep Sentry this Night for fear of the indians," and on one of these occasions it was only "the forepart of the night."

It was another example of the same carelessness Boone had shown. Felix Walker thought that Boone had "conducted the party under his care through the wilderness, with great propriety, intrepidity and courage." But, he added, "was I to enter an exception to any part of his conduct, it would be on the ground that he appeared void of fear and of consequence—too little caution for the enterprise."

Carelessness and failure to provide security were to curse the first years of the new frontier. The first Kentucky settlers would neither reconnoiter if they could possibly avoid it, nor guard

their camps if they could possibly sleep. Worn out by the exhausting labor of wilderness travel, they wanted rest more than safety, and were willing to run any risk to get it.

Some years later, after a series of Indian attacks should have taught caution, Colonel Daniel Trabue noted in a party which he accompanied into the forest the same casual attitude toward their own security: "As the weather was cold we made large fires, and our Dogs was all the sentry we had if they would bark one man would go around and see what it was." Only the cautious Colonel Richard Callaway provided ordinary military security. On his trip back from the settlements with an ammunition train in 1779, he "was very cautious in the wilderness kept up Sentries every night, and marched in great order."

Henderson also wrote to his partners that "those who started in the morning with pale faces and apparent trepidation, could lie down and sleep at night in great quiet, not even possessed of fear enough to get the better of indolence."

They felt, he grumbled, that it was beneath their dignity "to be afraid of any thing, especially when a little fatigued. They would all agree in the morning, that it would be highly prudent and necessary to keep sentinels around our camp at night; but a hearty meal or supper (when we could get it) and good fires, never failed to put off the danger for at least 24 hours; at which time it was universally agreed, on all hands, that a watch at night would be indispensably necessary."

Neither wilderness, hardships, nor Indians could conquer Henderson's spirit and his rather sour sense of humor. He needed all his courage, for only once did he meet with any encouragement along that dreary way. He ran into the McAfee brothers. They had just finished a second journey to Kentucky and were on their way back to the settlements. But when

they heard of Henderson's plans, they turned in their tracks and went to Kentucky again with him.

As the party approached Boonesborough on the 18th of April, they were met, as William Calk notes in his diary, by "4 men from Boons Camp that caim to cunduck us on." They brought extra pack-horses to assist the travelers and "excellent beef in plenty." Evidently Daniel Boone had already taken time for a buffalo hunt.

Henderson and his men passed the scene of the Indian attack at Twitty's Fort next day, and on April 20 "git Down to Caintuck to Boons foart about 12 oclock wheare we Stop." Here, according to the expedition's other diarist, they "were saluted by a running fire of about 25 Guns, all that was then at the Fort—The men appeared in high spirits and much rejoiced on our arrival."

It was a joyful moment for them all. Henderson had felt gravely responsible for the dangerous mission on which he had sent Cocke, and it was a huge relief to find him safe. The march out had been exhausting, with the horses worked to the limit of their strength, men tired and fearful, tempers snappish with strain and exhaustion, "one whole month, without intermission, traveling in a barren desert country, most of the way our horses packed beyond their strength; no part of the road tolerable, most of it either hilly, stony, slippery, miry, or bushy; our people jaded out and dispirited with fatigue, and what was worse, often pinched for victuals. To get clear of all this at once, was as much as we could well bear; and though we had nothing here to refresh ourselves with but cold water and lean buffalo meat, without bread, it certainly was the most joyous banquet I ever saw. Joy and festivity was in every countenance."

Henderson's own spirits did not remain so joyful after he had inspected his new domain. He found only a few rude

cabins, without defense, though Boone's men had now been on the ground for weeks. Smitten with the land greed of the pioneers, they had neglected everything to survey land and establish claims.

Boone's hastily built structures near the spring were too small to house everyone, and their location on low ground was not satisfactory. In fact, it was dangerous. Sooner or later they were bound to be attacked. Henderson picked a better place for a fort a little farther up the river bank, and moved his tents.

In his diary, he sounds rather disturbed because "Mr Boone's company having laid off most of the adjacent good lands into lots of two acres each and taking it as it fell to each individual by lot was in actual possession and occupying them." As first comers, Boone's men proposed to be first choosers. But Henderson's followers, too, were infected with the land craze. Like the original party who had come with Boone, Henderson's men, too, wasted a great deal of time fussing about land. They spent nearly a week in running surveys, arguing about shares, drawing lots, arguing about that, and then drawing lots all over again—"at the end of which every body seemed well satisfied."

On the 26th, more settlers arrived and had to be shown land. Henderson held out "4 lots for the fort garden" in which he immediately "sowed small seed, planted cucumbers & c." It was already the end of April and high time to provide a future food supply, though his men must have worked heroically to get the land cleared so soon.

There were quarrels of some sort among the three partners in the land company who had made the trip together. Nathaniel Hart had behaved "in a very cold indifferent manner" about the fort site, admitting only that "he thought it might do well enough." Now he picked out land of his own and re-

tired to it, announcing "that he would have nothing to say to the Fort, things were managed in such a manner."

"Cannot guess the reason of his discontent," noted poor Henderson in his diary. John Luttrell, the third partner, sided with Henderson, and, when he finally moved off to his own land, left two of his men behind to help make a clearing for the fort.

Work had hardly begun when in came the first of a series of unexpected and not always welcome visitors. One of the surprising things about Boonesborough was the amazing way in which people began to pop up in that wild country as soon as Henderson and his companions went to work. These visitors were Colonel Thomas Slaughter and Valentine Harman of North Carolina. As Boone told the story of these wanderers long afterward:

When they came to the mouth of the Big Sandy they left the boat and took it on horseback—Harmon being a good Woodsman—They struck the Kentucky River about 1 mile above Boonsboro and came down to where we was at work building a fort about the 20th of April [the old woodsman's memory played him false: that was the day of Henderson's arrival] and they stayed with us two or three weeks, in which time they informed me of a Salt Spring they had found.

The pair were on their way up the river to Harrodsburg, where James Harrod was already at work on his settlement, whose future relationship to Henderson's Transylvania project was something of a puzzle.

Early in May, six or seven more men came in from the settlements. "They had heard nothing of our purchase, but merely set off to view the country." At first they seemed rather resentful at having been anticipated; but this wore off and they joined in Henderson's plans. Everyone was still busy on the fort when on May 3 a new complication arose. John Floyd came in from a camp on Dick's River, a little to the south,

where he had left thirty men; and four days later came James Harrod from Harrodsburg.

Henderson's Transylvania Company had bought the land they occupied from the Cherokees; but Harrod and Floyd were actually settled on it. Possession is nine points of the law, but there was no law in Kentucky. What to do?

It would certainly never do to drive them off; and that would have been impossible anyhow. Harrod and Floyd had as many riflemen as Henderson, if not more. It was likely that Floyd would take a hostile attitude. He was a surveyor for Colonel William Preston, of Virginia, who had done his best to thwart Henderson's plans.

As for Harrod, he was "determined to live in this country." Driven out by Indians the year before, he had come back with about fifty men, mostly young and without families, to carve a fortune from the wilderness. Six feet or over, with jet-black eyes and hair, with a hot temper, usually under control, he was not a man to trifle with. Henderson had moments of gloom as he contemplated his own settlers—"a set of scoundrels who scarcely believe in God or fear a devil if we were to judge from most of their looks, words, and actions."

Could the three parties come to a peaceable understanding?

Luckily, everyone was in a conciliatory mood. It proved easy to reach an agreement. Floyd and Harrod stayed a few days, and then "took their departure in great good humor," while the Boonesborough men went on with their "plantation business."

There were various small incidents. A horse got lost. Henderson and Boone went off together to hunt for it. The bread supply ran out. The hunters had no luck. Once Henderson notes: "No meat but fat bear. Almost starved. Drank a little coffee & trust to luck for dinner." Later he speculates greedily on his chances for some fresh greens from the vegetable garden.

Four men got lost in the woods, and a search party went out. A few new settlers straggled in.

Elections for the new government were held May 20, 1775. Daniel Boone, Squire Boone, and Richard Callaway were among the six men chosen to represent Boonesborough. Three days later delegates came in from the other settlements that had been established at Harrodsburg and near it—"very good men and much disposed to serve their country," according to Henderson, who was beginning to take a more cheerful view of his associates.

Near the fort stood a huge elm, "in a beautiful plain surrounded by a turf of fine white clover, forming a green to its very stock to which there is scarcely anything to be likened." It was four feet through the trunk and the first branches began nine feet up.

Like George Washington and other land speculators of the period, whose papers are full of notes like this, Henderson had a keen eye for trees and canebrakes. He studied these attentively as the easiest clue to the quality of the soil in which they grew. (Modern ecologists, incidentally, do exactly the same thing.)

The circle of the elm's branches was a hundred feet in diameter. On a fair day it threw a shadow of four hundred feet and "any time between the hours of 10 & 2 100 persons may commodiously seat themselves under its branches." Here the delegates gathered to establish the new government of Transylvania. There was a great deal of oratory in the florid, eighteenth-century manner. Henderson himself addressed the convention in resounding style:

You, perhaps, are fixing the palladium, or placing the first corner-stone of an edifice, the height and magnificence of whose superstructure is now in the womb of futurity, and can only

become great and glorious in proportion to the excellence of its foundation.

There were pages more of it. The proprietor suggested that the convention set up courts, organize militia, protect the game, and drive off intruding hunters—which was exactly the Indians' own idea! He also came out resoundingly against "vice and immorality," though how he expected his colonists to lapse into iniquity when there were no female vessels of sin for hundreds of miles (barring one or two negro slave-women) is a puzzle.

To Henderson's orotund periods, the settlers replied in the same vein:

We received your speech with minds truly thankful for the care and attention you express toward the good people of this infant country, whom we represent. Well aware of the confusion which would ensue the want of rules for our conduct in life, and deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of the trust our constituents have reposed in us, though laboring under a thousand disadvantages, which attend prescribing remedies for disorders, which *already* call for our assistance, as well as those that are lodged in the womb of futurity. Yet the task, arduous as it is, we will attempt with vigor, not doubting but unanimity will insure us success.

That we have an absolute right, as a political body, without giving umbrage to Great Britain, or any of the colonies, to frame rules for the government of our little society, can not be doubted by any sensible, unbiassed mind—and being without the jurisdiction of, and not answerable to any of his Majesty's courts, the constituting tribunals of justice shall be a matter of our first contemplation.

The two speeches are so much alike that one suspects Henderson of writing them both. The still loyal allusions to the British Government are interesting. Lexington and Concord had been fought. General Gage and his redcoats were having

a rather bad time of it in Boston. But all this had happened since the Kentuckians set out. For all they knew, they were still loyal subjects of the King, though the ties of allegiance had been wearing a little loose even before they started.

On May 28, when the Reverend John Lythe conducted services under the great elm, he is said to have read the prayer for the Royal Family, for the first and only time on Kentucky soil. Next day came a letter describing "the battle at Boston," and within three years his Majesty's officers were leading Indian forces against Boonesborough.

The convention set up legal machinery, established courts, legislated against "profane swearing and Sabbath breaking," arranged for militia, and provided for the punishment of criminals, if any. One of the first bills brought in was Daniel Boone's "for preserving game." There had been trouble from the very first with the "great waste in killing meat. Some would kill three, four, five or $\frac{1}{2}$ a dozen buffaloes and not take half a horse load from them all." Two or three hundred buffalo had been grazing near Boonesborough when the settlers arrived. Within six weeks "Fifteen or 20 miles was as short a distance as good hunters thought of getting meat, nay sometimes they were obliged to go thirty though by chance once or twice a week buffaloe was killed within 5 or six miles."

Boone got his bill through in short order. His committee reported the same day it was proposed. Squire brought in a bill "to preserve the range," and Daniel presented another bill "for improving the breed of horses." Kentucky was Kentucky from the very first—colonels everywhere, a wholesome interest in horseflesh, and, as soon as the corn began to grow, no lack of whiskey. Nor were romantic ladies long in arriving. Boone and Callaway brought out their daughters. Jemima Boone was so attractive that by the time she was fourteen Daniel had to discourage immediate matrimony. And as for the brunette

Betsey Callaway, a youth whose settlement her father's cavalcade passed on the way to Kentucky remembered Betsey and no one else when, as an old man of eighty, he sat down to write his recollections.

The new settlement was still a long way, however, from anything like completely democratic government. Henderson and the other "proprietors" retained the right to collect an annual quit-rent of two shillings per hundred acres on all land in Transylvania. Even when all the land was sold, the proprietors expected that they and their heirs would collect at that rate on twenty million acres for ever and ever. They also retained the right to appoint civil and military officers, and a few other special privileges. Daniel Boone was one of the committee which waited on them to ask that no new lands be granted to other settlers, except on the same terms that had already been accorded.

The feudal note was retained most clearly in a ceremony on the last day of the convention. Under the big elm, the Indians' attorney, John Farrar, handed Henderson a symbolical bit of turf. While both men held it, Farrar formally made delivery of seisin, and declared that Henderson was in full possession of the company's new domain.

By the middle of June Daniel Boone decided that the settlement was at last able to defend itself, and set off for the eastern settlements. He was in a hurry to get home. Rebecca had been with child when he started the Wilderness Road. It was nearly time for the baby to be born. With him went Colonel Callaway and a detail of men to bring back the salt that Henderson had stored at Martin's Station. Squire Boone soon followed. All three meant to bring their families back.

On June 8, just before Boone left, a dubious British visitor arrived—at least, later writers have regarded him with dark suspicion, though the settlers at Boonesborough gave him a

cordial welcome. This was John F. D. Smyth, later a captain in the Queen's Rangers, a Tory corps. He was a friend of the Earl of Dunmore, Royal Governor of Virginia, who had been a bitter foe of the whole Transylvania project.

Smyth had been traveling through Virginia and North Carolina with a single servant. He had met Indians and made friends with them. It is quite possible that Dunmore had sent him out as a spy to see what was really happening among both whites and reds. He certainly displayed a suspicious interest in fortifications. None the less, he was taken into the life of the little community, conversed with Henderson, and stayed six weeks.

Then two more visitors from Virginia arrived. These were James Wood, member for Frederick County in the Virginia Assembly, and Charles Lewis of Augusta County, who said they had "called to view the settlement." They must have been eager indeed to view it, for they had traveled down the Ohio River with a big backwoods batteau, accompanied only by two Chickasaw Indians and three whites.

Were they Tories, too? Smyth represents the meeting as accidental, but he lost no time in deciding to journey on down the Mississippi with them to New Orleans. Once there, he hurried on to join Lord Dunmore.

Just why all these men were wandering down Indian-infested rivers while the Colonies were aflame behind them is a little hard to understand, unless they were engaged in some kind of espionage. River travel was not so dangerous as it later became, and it never was so dangerous as travel overland. One could keep well out in the wider streams and avoid surprise. But even so, the Ohio-Mississippi journey was not one to be undertaken without good reason.

While Boone was waiting for his baby's birth and his wife's

recovery, Henderson in Boonesborough was chafing at his failure to return.

"We are informed that Mrs. Boone was not delivered the other day," he and another partner write in a joint letter, "and therefore do not know when to look for him; and, until he comes the devil himself can't drive the others this way."

The prospective settlers knew and trusted Daniel Boone as they trusted no one else. And so the whole grandiose scheme of a new feudal empire in the West waited on a baby's birth in a rough settler's cabin on the frontier, with no aid but a neighbor's crude midwifery. In late June or early July little William Boone was born, but died soon after.

The frontier was no place to nurse one's grief. Daniel and Rebecca were on their way to Boonesborough some time in August.

Henderson returned to Oxford, North Carolina, that same month to consult his partners. They voted a present of two thousand acres of land "to Colonel Daniel Boone, with the thanks of the Proprietors, for the signal services he had rendered to the Company," and thanks to Callaway "for his spirited and manly behavior in behalf of the said Colony." No gift was made to Callaway directly, but his younger son was given 640 acres, the usual North Carolina grant and the largest that the Transylvania Company was going to make in the future.

In the end, Daniel Boone received not a foot of all this land. When the company's claim to the whole territory was voided, his claim vanished with theirs. Later, when the proprietors were given two hundred thousand acres as compensation, no one thought of granting any of it to the man who had opened the whole country. A much later map of Boonesborough shows that both Luttrell and Hart retained valuable tracts near the fort, and that there was also a "town claim"

of 640 acres, but Daniel Boone owns none of this especially valuable land.

He had explored the country alone, established the boundaries, persuaded the Indians to make the treaty, opened the Wilderness Road, tended the wounded, stood firm when things looked darkest.

But people forget. That was the trouble all his life: People forgot.

Trouble was brewing for Transylvania. Denunciations by royal governors might not count for very much in the future, but the new democratically elected governors would not prove any more friendly.

The times were confusing. The King's governors were fleeing, or had fled, on all sides. The Declaration of Independence was still some months in the future. The Colonists in the East were not quite sure whether they were merely provincial Britons fighting for traditional British rights, or whether they were founding a new republic. Settlers in the Kentucky backwoods knew still less of what was happening. It was an awkward moment for land speculators who wanted to keep their titles clear.

As yet, Kentucky was not quite sure which side of the struggle it was on. The Transylvania Company contrived to balance water on both shoulders very adroitly. They sent a memorial to the Continental Congress, then sitting at Philadelphia. The proprietors of Transylvania, they explained, could not "look with indifference on the late arbitrary proceedings of the British Parliament. If the United Colonies are reduced or will tamely submit to be slaves, Transylvania will have reason to fear." They promised "assistance to the general cause of America," and expressed a hope "that the United Colonies will take the infant Colony of Transylvania into their protection."

So far, so good. These resounding phrases established their

loyalty to the American cause, in case George Washington succeeded. But suppose he didn't?

A special paragraph provided for that regrettable contingency: "The Memorialists by no means forget their allegiance to their Sovereign, whose constitutional rights and pre-eminences they will support at the risk of their lives. They flatter themselves that the addition of a new Colony in so fair and equitable a way, and without any expense to the Crown, will be acceptable to His Most Gracious Majesty, and that Transylvania will soon be worthy of his Royal regard and protection"—even if it had been founded in direct defiance of his Royal proclamation!

At any rate, British or American, the conquest of Kentucky was under way.