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The Low Dutch Company A History of the Holland Dutch Settlements of the Kentucky Frontier

by Vincent Akers

A complete history of the Low Dutch settlements in Kentucky has never before been written. Fragments of the story have appeared in some of the published state and local histories and in several family genealogies—some published, some not. George W. Demaree wrote a history of the Shelby-Henry County Low Dutch Tract in 1873, but only portions of it exists today. Never before have all the pieces been put together into a whole.

This Low Dutch Company did not perhaps have the immediate or long-term implications of some better known ventures such as the Transylvania Company, but its history is no less interesting. Its origins in Kentucky date back to 1779. Already by 1784 its impact on frontier Kentucky was enough for John Filson's famous map to show two Low Dutch Stations. The Low Dutch were involved in two petitions to the Continental Congress decrying the monopolization of Kentucky land under the laws of Virginia. One of the petitions was exclusively Low Dutch. They were among the first settlers of Capt. Nathaniel Hart's White Oak Spring Station near Boonesborough. They built the stations bearing their name on lands rented from Col. John Floyd on Beargrass and from Col. James Harrod. They built Banta's Fort in Madison County. At least twenty-five of them were killed or captured by the Indians. Members served in the various Indian campaigns of the 1780s. They were involved in the Long Run Massacre, the Westerfield and Duree massacres and in the Dutch Defeat on Muddy Creek with Capt. James Estill.

The Low Dutch purchased thousands of acres in Shelby-Henry County, mostly from Squire Boone. They made their purchase in common as a company and formalized their organization with a constitution of sorts. They held the land as a company for fifty years keeping minutes of their meetings and accounts of their transactions.

Mr. Akers, a certified public accountant by profession, is also a skilled historian. A descendant of the early Dutch settlers in Kentucky, he has produced this detailed study as a tribute to them. Several installments will follow.

The Low Dutch were not merely adventurers. They were settlers and farmers. They were very clannish, but they were exemplar citizens—they were a moral and an educated people. They built schools and organized churches. They formed the first Dutch Reformed Church west of the Allegheny Mountains. Some of their members provided a nucleus for the Shaker movement in Kentucky.

The Low Dutch venture involved hundreds of families, thousands of whose descendans are spread today throughout Kentucky and the Midwest. The migration which brought the Dutch pioneers to Kentucky began in the mid-seventeenth century as group after group of their ancestors sailed from the Netherlands to New Amsterdam. The Monforts and Cozines were in America as early as 1640. Isaac VanArsdale came in 1645 and Simon followed in 1653. The Coverts and VanNuys settled in Brooklyn in 1651 and the Smocks on Long Island in 1654. The Banta family traces its origin to Epke Jacobs who came to America in 1659 on the ship *De Trouw*. The VanVoorhees (Voriss) family came in 1660 on the ship *Bontekoe* (The Spotted Cow). The Demarest (Demaree) family came three years later on the same ship.¹ Many of these families were prominent in the early government of New Amsterdam and in the settlement of nearby New Jersey towns.

The families for the most part were farmers with strong protestant religious convictions. Their church was the Dutch Reformed Church. A few of the families were of French Huguenot background having fled to Holland because of its more tolerant religious attitudes. These families had been readily assimilated into the close knit Dutch community, but still maintained some French characteristics. Even a century after arrival in America, the Durees and particularly the Demarees in Kentucky showed signs of French influence.

¹ There are several excellent published genealogies of Dutch families with Kentucky branches. Manuscript genealogies of many of the other Kentucky Dutch families are also available at many of the Midwestern libraries. References to strictly genealogical information in this sketch will not be cited.

The Dutch families were quite prolific. After a century the wilderness of New York and New Jersey, which had been separated by an ocean from European civilization, was becoming "crowded" for some. Vast family farms after two or three generations of division among heirs were now small. The government had long been taken over by the English and more and more the Dutch were having to associate with these "foreigners".

As early as 1765, the thirst for land and a desire for a place to themselves had led a large number of families to move to the Pennsylvania frontier where they founded a colony known by the musical name . . . "Conewago". The name survives today as the name of a stream and a mountain range. The colony was in Adams County (originally York County), near present-day Gettysburg. Settlers continued to move to the frontier colony for several years until there were not less than 150 families. Some names later prominent in the Kentucky settlement were: Aten, Banta, Bice, Brunner, Bogart, Bergen, Brower, Carnine, Cassart, Cozine, Conover, Commingore, Covert, Duree, Demaree, DeBaun, DeMott, Dorland, Hoagland, Monfort, Scomp, Smock, Terhune, VanNuys, VanArsdale, Voorhees, Wycoff, Westerfield and others.²

Beginning about 1769 and continuing through the early 1770s, several Conewago families moved to Berkeley County, Virginia (now Berkeley and Jefferson Counties, West Virginia), about forty miles southwest of Conewago. They settled near present-day Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Carnines, Durees, Demarees, DeBauns, VanArsdalen and Vorises were represented in the settlement.³ These families maintained close contact with their Conewago relatives,⁴ but living near the head of the eastern segment of the vast Wilderness Road, these were apparently the Dutch who first contracted the "Kentucky fever".

Many of the Dutchmen of the Conewago and Berkeley settlements participated in the Revolutionary War, serving in the Pennsylvania and Virginia militias. More than thirty Kentucky Dutchmen are known to have seen Revolutionary War service in the East before their migration to Kentucky. Simon VanArsdalen commanded a company of York County Militia largely made up of his own people. Captain Van Arsdalen's Company served at Perth Amboy in September 1776 and in the Philadelphia and Trenton, New Jersey area in December 1776 and early 1777.⁵

The young men of the Berkeley settlement who served in the Virginia militia saw their action on the western frontiers. John Voris and Andrew Conine served as privates in Capt. Robert Little's Company under Maj. William Morgan. (later Colonel Morgan). In April or May 1778 they marched from Martinsburg in Berkeley County, Virginia to Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), then went down the Ohio River to Holliday's Cove about twenty miles above Wheeling where they were stationed about four months as guards to the frontiers against the Indians.⁶ John Demaree and Garrett Vanosdall entered service at Martinsburg in late 1778. They also marched across the Allegheny Mountains to Fort Pitt where they joined a brigade under General McIntosh which built Fort McIntosh on the north bank of the Ohio thirty-four miles below Fort Pitt. They also built another fort or stockade on Tuscarawas Creek in present-day Ohio. They spent the greater part of the winter of 1778-79 on the frontier. Vanosdall recalled that the snow was very deep and they made boots out of bear skins with the wooly side in.⁷

These men were undoubtedly exposed to the wild stories

told about Kentucky by its earliest adventurers. During this period an idea developed which circulated among the colonists until like an epidemic it had infected every family and had become the master plan for the Conewago Dutch. The plan was to make a wholesale move to the Kentucky frontier and there to acquire thousands of acres of the cheap fertile land — enough to accommodate the colony for generations of large families.

The first Dutchman from Conewago to venture into Kentucky was fifty-six year old Samuel Duree. His was apparently a scouting mission. It is curious that one of the younger men was not chosen for such a task. Perhaps the suitability of Kentucky for a settlement was being left to the judgement of the colony's patriarchs. The older men were to play principal roles in the migration.

Duree left Shepherdstown on March 1, 1779 with eight other white men and two Negroes. Besides Duree the party consisted of William Morgan, Ralph Morgan, Thomas Swearingen, Benoni Swearingen, John Taylor, John Strode, George M. Bedinger, John Constant and two Negroes belonging each to the Swearingen brothers. All the men were apparently from the Shepherdstown vicinity.⁸ Duree was the only Low Dutchman among the group. George M. Bedinger was

² The principal source of information about the Conewago colony is Rev. Dr. John K. Demarest, "History of the Low Dutch Colony of Conewago" (several typescript and mimeograph editions are available of this work originally published as a series in the weekly *Gettysburg Star* beginning Jan. 8, 1884). Also of some interest, primarily for its genealogical information, is B.F.M. MacPherson, "A Bit of History About Early Settlers" (1964 mimeograph reprint of a series originally appearing 1960-1962 in the *Gettysburg Times*).

³ Revolutionary War pension applications of Andrew Conine (W9809), Jeremiah Conine (S42142), John Demaree (W7004), Daniel Harris (S36575), Samuel Harris (S10813), Cornelius Vanosdall (S4705), Garret Vanosdall (R10829), and John Voris (S14772). Andrew Conine indicated that his family moved to Berkeley Co. in 1769. Samuel Harris, whose father Daniel married a Demaree, said he moved when about seven years old (1770 or 1771). John Voris moved when twelve or thirteen years old (1770-1772). John Demaree moved at age twelve (1772 or 1773). Cornelius Vanosdall said he resided within five miles of Shepherdstown.

⁴ Mary A. Demarest and William H.S. Demarest, *The Demarest Family* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1938), 60-61, contains three letters to Pieter Demaree, New Bridge, N.J. from Samuel and Lea Demaree: Conewagen, April 20, 1772; Connewagen, Aug. 6, 1772; and Virginia, April 16, 1773. The last letter states, "We have just moved to here from Conewagen on a place belonging to Jacob Vanderveer and since Abraham DeBaan and our Minister were coming to the Jerseys we put a receipt in this letter, asking you also to send that money if you please with Abraham Debaun, Rev. Cozyn will convey it here. So soon as he arrives at home he will preach here . . ." There is a curious absence of reference to this Berkeley Co., Va. settlement in the various genealogical and Conewago related works.

⁵ Thomas Lynch Montgomery, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, Sixth Series, vol. 2 (Harrisburg, Pa., 1906), 455-456. Revolutionary War pension application of Samuel Banta (R479), affidavit dated May 6, 1833, Mercer Co., Ky.

⁶ Revolutionary War pension applications of John Voris (S14772), affidavit dated Mar. 14, 1833, Mercer Co., Ky.; and Andrew Conine (W9809), affidavit dated Dec. 3, 1832, Henry Co., Ky.

⁷ Revolutionary War pension applications of John Demaree (W7004), affidavit dated Aug. 9, 1832, Mercer Co., Ky.; and Garret Vanosdall (R10829), affidavit dated Apr. 5, 1834, Morgan Co., Va.

⁸ This description (together with its embellishments) of Duree's journey to Boonesborough and providential escapes from the Indians is from Draper's interview with G.M. Bedinger, Lower Blue Licks, Ky., July 1843, Draper Mss. 1A1-18. Bedinger lists the men in the party and gives the day of departure at Draper Mss. 1A12. He repeats the departure date and indicates the party consisted of nine white men and two Negroes at Draper Mss. 1A104. Deposition of George M. Bedinger (May 12, 1814) lists the same men, excluding John Constant, as the group who came with him to Kentucky, Henry Banta vs Green Clay, Madison Co. Circuit Court Com-

acquainted with the Low Dutch at Conewago as well as those in Berkeley County.⁹ Probably the entire group was well acquainted with their Low Dutch neighbors and Duree's mission.

The party journeyed to Kentucky by way of the Wilderness Road through Powell Valley and the Cumberland Gap to Boones Trace and on to Boonesborough where they arrived April 7, 1779 after two rather providential escapes from the Indians. This was just seven months after Black Fish's long siege of Boonesborough. The small garrison of the fort was still just barely able to keep the marauding Indians in the vicinity in check. About April 6th some ten or twelve men under Captain Starms, not relishing the frontier dangers and hardships, left Boonesborough headed for Virginia. Starms' party left the fort greatly undermanned. The Indians about the fort divided, some twenty or thirty following the trail behind Starms. About midday on the 6th the party which included Duree when some fifteen miles from the fort luckily missed the trail and wandered through the thick cane for perhaps a half mile before finding the trail again. Shortly before finding the trail the horses began snorting and showing alarm. When the trail was found they saw tracks of some thirty to forty persons and signs of Indians. They had evidently just missed Starms and the trailing Indians. Near dark they were within six miles of the fort. Someone proposed that for safety they go a little off the trail to set up camp and that they sleep without fires. Col. William Morgan, who had seen some service, dryly remarked they need not trouble themselves for they would not die until their time came. The others not wishing to be thought cowardly did not call the colonel's philosophy into question. A large blaze was kindled in the middle of the trail and they nestled down for the night before the cheerful fire. Next morning they had proceeded but a

plete Record Book D, 414-420. Deposition of Ralph Morgan (Feb. 6-7, 1815) indicates there were about twelve or thirteen who came with him through the wilderness to Boonesborough, *Banta vs Clay*, Box 68, Bundle 135, Madison Co. Circuit Court Records, State Archives, Frankfort, Ky.

⁹ Bedinger's father apparently was part of a German settlement formed in the 1750s on Conewago Creek in York Co., Pa. The family moved to Shepherdstown in the spring of 1762, Draper Mss. 1A2-3. Bedinger was a crier at the sale of Isaac Vanarsdall's estate at Conewago in 1773, *Simon Vanarsdall vs Barnabas Smock*, Administrators' Account, Box V-1, Mercer Co. Circuit Court Records.

¹⁰ Draper Mss. 1A13-15. Bedinger's deposition also states that the party arrived at Boonesborough before the middle of April 1779, *Banta vs Clay*, *loc. cit.*

¹¹ Draper Mss. 1A17-18.

¹² Depositions of G.M. Bedinger and Ralph Morgan, *Banta vs Clay*, *loc. cit.* Both depositions list the members of the improving party. The lists are in agreement except that Bedinger did not include John Holder.

¹³ Deposition of G.M. Bedinger, *Banta vs Clay*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴ Deposition of Jesse Hodges (Dec. 12-13, 1811), *Banta vs Clay*, Madison Co. Record Book D, 346-357.

¹⁵ Depositions of Aquilla White (Nov. 20-21, 1809 and Oct. 29-30, 1810), *Banta vs. Clay*, Madison Co. Deed Book I, 87-92, and Record Book D, 331-346. David Lynch's deposition (Sept. 11, 1811) also discusses the poor quality of Duree's or the Low Dutch claim. Lynch stated that Abraham Banta explained to James Estill that they did not want rich land, that they did not expect to raise much corn, but rather intended to raise small grain and believed their claim represented the best kind of land for small grain, Record Book D, 263-269.

¹⁶ Depositions of G.M. Bedinger and Ralph Morgan, *Banta vs Clay*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ Depositions of Albert Duree (July 8, 1814) and Daniel Banta (June 24, 1815) make it clear that this branch of the Dutch Company arrived at the White Oak Spring in March 1780, *Banta vs Clay*, Madison Co. Record Book D, 434-437, 480-481; Box 68, Bundle 135, State Archives. Frederick Ripperdan's deposition (Oct. 16, 1810) leaves no doubt as to

small distance when to their astonishment they discovered where an Indian party seeing the large fire in the night and the men and horses so boldly encamped on the trail, had evidently mistaken extreme carelessness for stratagem, and shunned the distrustful spot.

Duree and his companions soon reached Boonesborough to the infinite gratification of the inhabitants. The loss of the Starms group was now fully replaced — sufficient cause for an extravagant reception. Not more than two hours after their arrival, Jacob Starms, son of the captain, came in with the melancholy news that his father's party had been attacked the night before some twenty or thirty miles from Boonesborough and all save himself were lost. A few other survivors later came in under cover of darkness. The two successive escapes of Duree's party were considered fortunate, if not providential.¹⁰

Indians were very troublesome around Boonesborough that spring. The men of the fort were divided into hunting squads of four to five men each. They would leave before dawn, hide during the day, kill game near dusk, then return at night.¹¹ They were, however, not so cautious as to stop venturing out to make land claims. Samuel Duree along with nine other men — Thomas Swearingen, Benoni Swearingen, John Holder, William Morgan, Ralph Morgan, George M. Bedinger, Joseph Donather, John Constant and John Taylor — agreed to go out and make improvements, one for each man, and ballot for them. It was a common practice for such parties to band together for mutual protection. The company was loosely known as Swearingen's company, but was apparently piloted by Captain Holder.

The party began improving on Muddy Creek below Little Muddy in present-day Madison County. Three improvements were made and balloted for as they moved down the creek. On May 5, 1779 the party made an improvement on upper Muddy Creek at a place of considerable fall. Samuel Duree fancied the place as a mill seat, and, as the others considered it too poor, they agreed to give it to him without balloting. Above Duree's mill seat the party turned up a west branch which Duree marked and called Deban's (DeBaun) Run after his son-in-law. The party quit Muddy Creek after these improvements following the East Fork of Otter Creek back to Boonesborough.¹²

Duree was somewhat the eccentric of the improving party. He was referred to as the "old man". He in turn called some of the younger members "the boys".¹³ One resident of Boonesborough thought he must have been seventy years old and recalled that he spoke broken English.¹⁴ Duree told Thomas Swearingen that he intended to take up the Muddy Creek lands for the Low Dutch Company. Swearingen later made fun of the choice commenting that Duree's was the poorest selection made while the group was conducting their search.¹⁵

The party lived at Boonesborough that spring and summer and raised corn in the vicinity. Most of them, including Duree, returned to the old settlements in the fall.¹⁶ Undoubtedly Duree's report on Kentucky was favorably received by the Conewago and Berkeley Dutch settlements. Preparations must have already begun for the first migration of Dutch settlers the next spring.

That first migration was accomplished by two separate detachments of the Dutch who made the trip over vastly different routes. Old Samuel Duree led the Berkeley families over the Wilderness Road — Cumberland Gap route to the White Oak Spring Station where they arrived in March 1780.¹⁷

The trip was not without an unfortunate incident. David Banta was killed by the Indians as the group passed through Powell Valley, Virginia. His widow returned to Conewago, but finally completed the Kentucky migration about 1790 with her second husband, Cornelius Demaree.¹⁸

The White Oak Spring Station had been built the year before the Duree group's arrival by Nathaniel Hart six-tenths of a mile above Boonesborough in the same bottom of the Kentucky River.¹⁹ The Duree group settling there totaled over thirty persons including the families of Samuel Duree, Peter Duree, Henry Duree, Peter Cosart, Frederick Ripperdan, John Bullock and Cornelius Bogart, and single men Daniel Duree, Albert Duree, Albert Voris, John Voris, Daniel Banta and Peter Banta.²⁰

Late in 1779 Hendrick Banta, the ruling patriarch of the Conewago Colony and brother-in-law of Duree, led a large group of the Conewago families over the Appalachian Mountains to Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh). The following spring this group made the perilous journey down the Ohio River to the Falls where they landed in March or April of 1780. Henry Banta, grandson of Hendrick, recalled that it was with difficulty that the group reached Kentucky "owing to the great numbers of hostile savages which roamed the Wilderness at that time."²¹

The Hendrick Banta party, which included at least seventy-five persons, was unique in that nearly half of them were children aged twelve or under. A dozen families can definitely be identified with this group — families of Henry Banta, Sr., Abraham Banta, Albert Banta, Simon VanArsdale, Samuel Demaree, Sr., Peter Demaree, John Demaree, Gerardus Riker,

John Westerfield, Christopher Westerfield, Sophia Voris and Catharine Dorland. The party also included many unmarried young men who would play a prominent role in the Kentucky settlement — among these were Henry, John, Cornelius and Jacob Banta; John, two Samuels and Jacob Demaree; John Riker; Samuel Westerfield; James, John, Frances, Cornelius and Luke Voris; John and Lambert Dorland; and Abraham Brewer.²² The party was one of the largest, if not the largest, groups of Dutch immigrants. Several smaller parties would take the river route over the next several years landing at Limestone (Maysville) or at the Falls (Louisville).

Arrangements had evidently been made the previous fall for Henry Banta's group to raise corn near the Falls of the Ohio and to meet the Durees at White Oak Spring early in 1781 after the crop was in.²³ Kentucky experienced a tidal wave of immigration that spring of 1780. No less than 300 large family boats filled with settlers arrived at the Falls.²⁴ Louisville was little more than a fort and a few cabins. The settlers swarmed into the lands east of Louisville on Beargrass Creek in present-day Jefferson County. John Floyd built a station here in November 1779 on his 2,000 acre tract. This station, near present-day St. Matthews north of the creek on the west side of Breckinridge Lane, became the principal station of the area.²⁵ By May 1780, five new stations were built along Beargrass and one on the South Fork — the Spring Station, Hogland's, the Low Dutch Station, A 'Sturgis', Linn's and Sullivan's.²⁶ All of the stations except Hogland's are shown on John Filson's map.

The Low Dutch or New Holland²⁷ Station was located

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their route. To the question, "Did you come to this country by land or did you come by water down the Ohio River?" he replied, "I came by land through the wilderness." From answers to further questions it is clear that he came by way of the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap in company with Samuel Duree and others, Record Book D, 324-331.

¹⁸ Theodore M. Banta, *The Banta Genealogy: A Frisian Family* (New York, 1893), 107 indicates that David Banta was killed by the Indians at Conewago prior to 1785. The "author's interleaved copy" with manuscript notes, letters and cards inserted at the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, however, includes T. M. Banta's note, "David is said to have been killed by the Indians in Powell's Valley, Va. on the way to Kentucky." His death must have occurred before 1783 since his wife and her second husband had a child baptized May 25, 1783 at Conewago. In addition, a widow Banta appears for one year (1780) in the York Co. tax lists, William Henry Engle, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, Third Series, vol. 21 (Harrisburg, Pa., 1898), 233.

¹⁹ William G. Eaton, "Ill-Fated White Oak Spring Station Was Built Near Boonesborough In 1779," *Lexington Sunday Herald-Leader*, Jan. 10, 1965, B-2.

²⁰ This list of Low Dutch settlers at White Oak Spring is based upon the following depositions in Banta vs Clay, Madison Co. Circuit Court Complete Record Book D: Frederick Ripperdan (Oct. 16, 1810), 324-331; Albert Duree (July 8, 1814), 434-437; Albert Voris (July 27, 1815), 457-460; Daniel Banta (June 24, 1815), 480-481; Simon Vanosdale (Aug. 11, 1815), 481-488; and Peter Banta (Aug. 25, 1815), 516-518. Vanosdale's and the Bantas' depositions are also included in Box 68, Bundle 135, State Archives.

²¹ Revolutionary War pension application of Henry Banta (R480), affidavit dated Nov. 28, 1833, Bourbon Co., Ky. Banta also stated that the group left York Co., Pa. in the fall of 1779 and arrived at the Falls the following April. Henry Banta also referred to the April 1780 landing at the Falls in two depositions in Banta vs Clay: (Oct. 10, 1809), Madison Co. Deed Book I, 197-204; and (Aug. 6, 1814), Record Book D, 432-434. John Demaree in the affidavit (Aug. 9, 1832) included in his Revolutionary War pension application (W7004) said he landed at Louisville April 9, 1780. His deposition given more than twenty years earlier (Jan. 8, 1810) was, however, not so exact. There he said he came to Kentucky in the spring of 1780, in the month of April, as well as he could recollect, Jacob Bowman vs Daniel Brewer, Box B-32, Mercer Co. Circuit Court Records. John and Peter Voris in affidavits (Mar. 14, 1833) included in John Voris' Revolutionary War pension application (S14772) stated that they landed

at the Falls in March 1780. Simon Vanosdale also placed the event in March, Banta vs Clay, Record Book D, 481-488.

²² In addition to the documents referred to in the preceding footnote, this list of Jefferson County Low Dutch settlers is based upon signers of the 1780 petition to the Continental Congress (see footnote 37) and upon Low Dutchmen mentioned in Jefferson Co. Minute Book A prior to 1782, particularly those included in the list of persons granted 400 acre "poor rights" by the court on Dec. 3, 1781, Alvin L. Prichard, ed., "Minute Book A, Jefferson County, Kentucky, 1781-1783. Part I, *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Jan. 1929), 55-83.

²³ Abraham Brewer in a deposition taken June 28, 1819 referred to the common goal of the Banta and Duree groups in the following exchange (Albert Voorhis vs A. Banta's heirs, File marked "ORD 1800-1821," Henry Co. Circuit Court Records):

Question—were you acquainted with Henry Banta sr., Abraham Banta & Saml. Duree & others in the fall 79?

Answer—I was.

Question—was it not understood that it was their intention to settle together & did you not remove with them to this country?

Answer—Yes, that was the talk & I removed with them to this country with that view.

²⁴ John Floyd to [William Preston?], May 5, 1780, Draper Mss. 17CC125.

²⁵ Neal O. Hammon, "Early Louisville and the Beargrass Stations," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Apr. 1978), 154-155.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 155-157. The date of settlement of the Beargrass stations was a major point of contention in the court case Moses Hall vs Aquilla Whitaker, Bundle 46, No. 1, Shelby Co. Circuit Court Records. Testimony confirms that all the stations were built by May 1780 and that Floyd's was the principal station.

²⁷ Various records of the Western Commissioners appointed to settle the frontier military accounts refer nine times in the early 1783 to the station as either New Holland, the New Holland Station or Holland Station, James Alton James, ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers 1781-1784* (Springfield, Ill., 1926), 190, 192, 195, 197, 203, 306, 308, 349, 415. John Floyd in his will recorded June 3, 1783 left his son, William Preston Floyd, "the residue of the two thousand acres I live on lying on the South side of Beargrass, including the stations of Hoglins & New Holland," Alvin L. Prichard, ed. "Minute Book A, Jefferson County, Kentucky, 1781-1783. Part III," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (July 1929), 173.

Reformed Church affairs. Several of them helped to establish a Church in a new settlement, often subscribing to the building costs and four of his grandsons became elders. Whether this involvement with Church affairs was due to the Domine's inherited influence or the social climate at the time it is hard to say; it could have been a little of both.

Theodorus started life as a yeoman and a brewer, at first in Flatbush. Later, he developed into a land speculator though he always retained his interest in brewing. During his lifetime, he acquired a great deal of land, mostly around Jamaica where he set his sights after being denied access to Cow Neck. It may have been he was trying to form a land company to purchase acreage there, since three others joined him in petition for permission to patent land. In 1701 he did form a Dutch Company consisting of himself and eight others when they bought 12,000 acres in the Millstone River area of Somerset

The Low Dutch Company (continued from page 4)

about seven miles from the Falls near where present-day Browns Lane crosses Beargrass.²⁸ There is a road nearby known today as Dutchmans Lane. Floyd's Station was a little more than a half mile from the Dutch Station toward the Falls. Hogland's Station, where many of the Dutch families also settled,²⁹ was about a half mile further down stream at the site of the present-day Big Spring Country Club.³⁰

Generous terms were probably obtained from Col. John Floyd for the use of his land to build the station and plant crops. Small or free rents were the easiest ways of getting large tracts cleared.³¹ But many of the settlers became impatient with the 1780 delay on Beargrass. Parties were moving back and forth through the Beargrass stations with stories of the fertile interior and lands they had claimed.

In the summer of 1780 John and Christopher Westerfield decided to move their families to Harrodstown. They hired John Thickston, one of Floyd's scouts, to guide the party and help carry the baggage on his two horses. About three o'clock on the Monday morning after they set out Thickston awoke to see three Indians looking at his gun which reflected the light of the camp fire. Thickston jumped up and seized the gun from one of the Indians. The Indian raised his tomahawk to strike, but Thickston knocked him down with the breech of

County, New Jersey. So we see the gradual expansion of the Polhemius sons as Theodorus moved out to Jamaica and later to land in New Jersey which he had acquired. Although none of Theodorus' sons went to Somerset County, three of his nephews settled on the Millstone.

Not only did Theodorus Polhemius appear to be a successful and shrewd businessman, he was also a man of some standing. He was an overseer in Flatbush for a time and later became a Magistrate there. Although he did not inherit his father's classical education and cultural background, he did well in other ways, being a person of note in Flatbush at the early age of around thirty and later in Jamaica. It is believed he greatly influenced his sons, nephews and also Cornelis Barentse Van Wyck, his brother-in-law. Cornelis, along with a number of Theodorus' nephews, became a successful land speculator and farmer.

the gun. The firing commenced with a volley that sounded like thunder. Thickston was shot across the back of his neck but cleared himself and ran until he stumbled over a log. Here he stopped to look back and could see the Indians throwing pack saddles and everything they could find into the fire to make a light. He heard the crackling of skulls, plundering and screaming. He rose again and ran until he came to Clear's Station near Bullitt's Lick guided by the crowing of the roosters.

John and Christopher Westerfield and two others were killed during the attack. Polly, Debby and Garret Westerfield and Betsy Swan, all children, were captured. Garret Westerfield was taken with a seizure or fit. This upset the Indians terribly until at length one of them stepped up and tomahawked the boy. Betsy Swan was wounded in the shoulder; the Indians thought too badly, so she too was tomahawked. Polly and Debby were the only prisoners taken. They were taken to Detroit where they were exchanged.

The survivors returned the next day and buried the dead in a great hole. Mary Westerfield and her Samuel were among those who escaped. The story they told upon their sad return to the New Holland Station was but a prelude to the horrors to come for the Dutch.³²

To Be Continued

²⁸ The exact location is given by Hammon, "Early Louisville," 156. Vague locations given in Draper Mss. 8CC4 and 14CC214-216 indicates the Dutch Station was seven miles from Louisville near Mr. Brown's. Shane's interview with Capt. John Dial, a guard at Floyd's Station in 1781, indicates "Floyd's station was on the upper side of Beargrass and Hoagland's station and the Dutch Station on the lower side of Beargrass. Floyd's station and Hoagland's station, and the Dutch station formed an equilateral triangle — 7 miles from Louisville. The Dutch Station was above Hoagland's station on Bear-grass," Draper Mss. 13CC237. Revolutionary War pension applications of John Demaree (W7004) and Henry Banta (R480) both mention the Low-Dutch Fort or Dutch Station on Beargrass seven miles from the Falls. A picture taken March 22, 1922 at the site of the Dutch Station is on the front cover of *Kentucky Ancestors*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Apr. 1978).

²⁹ Col. William Fleming, one of the Western Commissioners, on Jan. 8, 1783 passed "the lower dutch station or Hoglans" on the way to the Falls. The Commissioners found the Falls to be an inadequate place at which to conduct their business and adjourned to some convenient place in the neighborhood. Finding no vacant house at Floyd's Station, they went over to "the upper Dutch" but did not succeed there either. Captain Sullivan made an offer for their lodging which seemed so extravagant that they determined to return to Lincoln Co., but by Colonel Floyd's influence got a cabin in the Dutch Station where they met in January, February and March 1783, William Fleming's Journal, Draper Mss. 2ZZ69. There is no evidence that any Hoglands (Hoaglands or Hooglands) were members of the Low Dutch Company. There were no Hogland signers of the 1783 Low petition (see page 26). The family was, however, of Holland Dutch

descent, was represented at the Conewago colony, and had intermarried back East with Kentucky Dutch families. It is perhaps no coincidence that James Hogland's Station in Shelby Co. also played a part in the Low Dutch story (see page 31).

³⁰ Hammon, "Early Louisville," 156.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 156, 164.

³² This account of the Westerfield massacre is based upon Rev. John Shane's interview with the daughter of John Thickston, Draper Mss. 13CC11-12. At the end of his notes on this interview, Shane wrote that he "might have had another sitting with this lady, but she seemed of so lively an imagination, my confidence flagged." Although the embellishments of the Westerfield story may be part of this imagination, the event itself is well authenticated. Shane's interview with [Miss. ?] Campbell, a May 1780 settler at the New-Holland, Low Dutch Station, includes: "Westerfelt's family killed, going to Harrodsburgh, near Bullitt's Lick. Samuel Westerfelt and his sister got back. This the same summer of 1780." Draper Mss. 13CC84. Administration of the estate of John Westervall was granted to Samuel Westervall by the Jefferson Co. Court April 4, 1781. This court held its first session March 7, 1781 which would account for the lapse of time since the massacre. Peter Demaree with others produced an appraisal taken April 18, 1781 of "the goods, chattels, & estate of John Westervall lately slain" which was recorded by the court Aug. 7, 1781. Mary Westerville was granted a 400 acre poor right by this court Dec. 3, 1781, Prichard, ed., "Minute Book A, Part I," 62, 66, 67-70, 74. It should also be noted that the signatures of Samuel Westervelt and Mary Westerfield "Widdo" appear together on the 1783 Low Dutch petition (see page 26).